

Preservings

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“A people who have not the pride to record their own history will not long have the virtues to make their history worth recording; and no people who are indifferent to their past need hope to make their future great.” — Jan Gleysteen

Our Flemish Roots - A Century of Struggle

Notwithstanding the most severe persecution of the Reformation, the Mennonite Church survived in Flanders from 1530 until 1650. Three-quarters of the 1204 martyrs in the Spanish Netherlands were Mennonites (almost half of them women) as opposed to the Reformed (Calvinist) faith. As many as seventy percent of the martyrs in Ghent, Bruges, and Coutraï were Mennonites. Two-thirds of the martyrs from the Lowlands documented in T. J. van Braght's 1660 *Martyrs' Mirror* were Flemish. “For the Flemish followers of Menno Simons it was ‘a century of struggle,’” writes historian A.L.E. Verheyden. Where the brotherhood of the Northern Netherlands soon divided under the influence of the individualism of elders, “...the severe repression in the South saw the Mennonites rallying anxiously around the church and expecting from it the greatest blessing,” *Anabaptism in Flanders* (Scottsdale, Pa., 1961), page 9.

During this time a steady stream of refugees left Flanders and Brabant fleeing to Holland and Friesland with many eventually settling in the Vistula Delta where they were known as the “Clerken” (clear, pure or “Reine”). Some 40 to 60 percent of the genetic heritage of the Polish-Prussian Mennonites (and hence of the Russian Mennonites) can be traced to the Flemish lands of modern Belgium.

The diaspora carried with it the spirit of medieval monasticism and the core teachings of the Catholic faith which gave it birth. It was the Flemish Mennonites who successfully transplanted their Christo-centric communities from Flanders, Brabant, Holland, and Friesland, to the Vistula Delta starting in 1530, and in 1789 to southern Russia. It was the Flemish Mennonites, as opposed to the Friesians, who - after the division of 1567 - were predominant in the Vistula Delta and in Imperial Russia. The “Rein” Flemish (the Grosse Gemeinde), constituted 80 percent of the population in the Molotschna Colony during the 1860s. In Chortitza, the Flemish influence was even more prominent, clearly dominating spiritual and cultural life of the “old” Colony until the demise of the Mennonite commonwealth in the



het Gravensteen, Ghent. In the courtyard and dungeons of this prison-castle our Flemish Mennonite ancestors were tortured and executed for their faith. “All in all, 146 Mennonite martyrs were imprisoned and executed here (105 were burned at the stake just outside the castle's main gate),” Jan Gleysteen, *Mennonite Tourguide to Western Europe* (Scottsdale, Pa., 1984), pages 246-247.

aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Even in 1920, the Flemish-based Kirchliche congregations included 80 percent of the 100,000 Mennonites in Russia. The three denominations immigrating to Manitoba in 1874 to 1878 - the Kleine Gemeinde, Bergthaler, and Old Colonists - were all of the Flemish Ordnung.

Through the *Martyr's Mirror* our Flemish Mennonite ancestors left a ringing testimony of their faith and theology. Although constantly under attack by Satanic forces, many of their best traits have been carried forward for almost 500 years and are still practised in hundreds of traditionalist (Kirchliche) and conservative communities in North and South America. Their profound ethical, moral and spiritual values and Christo-centric biblicism continue to be reflected

in the day-to-day lives of modern Mennonites and other descendants, totalling some 600-700,000 souls. The Editor.

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Introduction - "The Flemish Mennonite Church - 1530-1650"

Our ancestral roots in Europe - spiritual and cultural - are a significant element of our history. Historians such as Henry Schapansky and Johan Postma have estimated that genetically we are 25 to 65 percent Flemish (Schapansky, *The Old Colony*, page 46/Postma, *Das niederländische Erbe*, page 107). An examination of these roots will add considerably to what we know about who we are as a people of God and a community of faith.

The Anabaptists in Flanders were influenced almost exclusively by the wholesome Christocentric teachings of Menno Simons. Notwithstanding the severest persecution of the Spanish Inquisition, the church struggled heroically and, almost miraculously, survived from 1530 to 1650, a period characterized by historian A. L. E. Verheyden as "a century of struggle." Verheyden adds that "...tolerance became the principle characteristic of the Mennonitism of the South" (*Anabaptism in Flanders* (Scottdale, 1961), page 10), a trait shared by its descendants in Polish-Prussia and Russia. The liberalism and assimilationist agenda which fractured the Doopsgezinde in the north, and the intolerance and strictness of the ban plaguing the Dutch Mennonites, were not imposed on or exported to the South where the "...church was always first, and individual achievements were secondary," (Verheyden, page 3). Moderation and clear biblicism were evident at every step of our five century-long exodus across Europe, Asia, and North and South America. The Flemish Mennonite Church was not extinguished, as has sometimes been reported, but became an expatriate - often suffering and sometimes prospering - people in exile. In every important sense, the traditionalist (Kirchliche) and Conservative Mennonites of Canada, U.S.A., Mexico, Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay, as well as the Umsiedler (Ausseidler) of Germany are the true heirs of our noble Flemish Anabaptist legacy. Flemish cities such as Antwerp, Ghent, Brugge, and Brussels were permanently impoverished by the loss of many industrious citizens, frequently the price of intolerance and prejudice against minorities.

The martyr's accounts gathered in the 1660 *Martyrs' Mirror* of Thilemann J. van Braght, became the preeminent historical source for the Flemish Mennonite church. A number of these accounts are published here to remind readers of the noble sacrifices made by our ancestors - many sealed their faith with a baptism of blood.

Teacher and Chaplain Arnold Regier, Newton, Kansas, had a great interest in the Flemish Mennonites and researched the topic extensively. Although he did not leave a manuscript at his passing in 2000, we are able to publish some of the material he gathered as a background article on the Flemish Mennonites and Belgium. A precis of A. L. E. Verheyden's book, *Anabaptism in Flanders* (Scottdale, 1961), 136 pages, surveys the Mennonite church in Flanders and describes the social and cultural context under the despotic rule of Emperor Charles V of Spain. Henry Schapansky has provided an insightful article on

the Flemish and Friesian roots of the Polish-Prussian Mennonites.

Topics for future study include: the unique Flemish inheritance laws and customs providing equal inheritance for women; the Flemish confessions of faith and their significance in the 17th century battles for doctrinal orthodoxy as well as to modern Mennonites; the research of Russian Mennonite family names in Flanders and the resources available in modern Belgium; a pictorial tour guide to cities and sites in Belgium of significance to the descendants of the martyrs; the story of painters such as Hubert and Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, Hans Memling, Joachim Patinir, Jan Gossaert, Quinten Metsys, Peter Paul Rubens, Jakob Jordaens, Anthony von Dyck (*Pres.*, No. 16, page 129), and Pieter Bruegel - the elder and younger, and the influence of Flemish art and culture; the prominence of Flanders and its cities in medieval trade, commerce, printing and education and its impact upon the ability of Flemish Mennonites in the centuries following to fight off incessant hordes of sectarians, apostates and quislings, on the one hand, whilst wresting region after region across four continents from untamed wilderness and establishing indigenous communities, with the other, and clinging tenaciously to a faith centered on Jesus Christ and the narrative of His life, teachings and commandments. Their descendants will be strengthened and enriched through connecting their personal story and that of their spiritual communion with their Reformation ancestors, the Flemish Mennonites, who struggled so heroically to preserve their teaching and church.

The faith and practice section includes sound and inspiring articles by Walter Klaassen (Mennonites neither Catholic or Protestant), John Neufeld (conversion) and David Schroeder (discipling).

Biblical God-fearing Evangelists do not run around desecrating, maligning and slandering other Christian communities. *Preservings* has been critical of so-called missionaries who claim to represent Christ, but who in reality are out there to steal sheep, spread false teachings and to establish their own denominations. Hutterites, Amish, Old Order and Conservative Mennonites, and many Catholic and Anglican Missions and Orders, have traditionally carried out the Great Commission by extending the hand of Christian charity to the stranger in need. When I think of genuine missionary work, I can imagine no better example than Mother Teresa, the humble Albanian nun who ministered to thousands in the slums of Calcutta. Her life and legacy affirm the resonance between the core spirituality of Catholics and traditionalist and conservative Mennonites, speaking for a faith rooted firmly in the narrative of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount.

The editorial examines the 1860 secession of the Brüdergemeinde in Russia - faith or folly? In 140 years, Kirchliche (traditionalist) Mennonites, for various reasons, have declined to respond to the charges and allegations made against them by the "Ausgetrenne" (separatists). Hopefully, this

will be only the first of several issues to bring forth material from that perspective.

The past six months have again been marred by the horrible tragedy of war, perceived by some around the world as the aggression of a Superpower against the small country of Iraq and the Muslim people. Others, particularly in the U.S., have rallied patriotically around the flag, seeing the "Blitzkrieg" (a.k.a. "Shock and Awe") as the liberation of a subjugated people from an evil dictator, albeit that Saddam Hussein was himself put into power by the U.S. in the previous regime change. In an already familiar process, we are now hearing chatter on the news from "informed" insiders about the evils of Iran. In this highly charged atmosphere, the guest essay by Dr. Harry Loewen, "Following Jesus - Christian Pacifism" is a timely reminder to the followers of Christ as to where their ultimate loyalty must lie.

The articles section includes another account of the Ebenfeld/Steinbach massacres of 1919 as well as the stories of two Ältesten (Abram J. Buhler and Peter P. Reimer) and an article by Ältester Daniel Janzen, Warendorf, Germany, about the Neu-Samara settlement in the Volga region of Russia. The material culture article, "The History of Plautdietsch," by linguist Reuben Epp, traces our colloquial language across Europe, from medieval times to the present.

The book section includes a variety of exciting and informative books of interest to our faith and culture. Henry Schapansky reviews the essay of Dr. J. B. Toews, "Mennonite Brethren Beginnings," in the recently published denominational history, *For Everything there is a Season*, celebrating the 125th anniversary of the M. B. Conference. Schapansky goes beyond the professions of the "Ausgetrenne", to examine the deeper and often disguised meanings of some of their allegations and rhetoric.

A.L.E. Verheyden's account of "Anabaptism in Flanders, 1530-1650," provides a defining narrative for our Flemish Mennonite ancestors which the Russian Mennonite diaspora can proudly claim. "Endeavour always to build up one another," these were the parting words of [37 year-old] Jacques de Rore," executed at Brugge on July 10, 1569 (Verheyden, page 12). These words form a worthy admonition for the Mennonite people as they bravely continue their pilgrimage into the future and on into eternity.

The Editor.

Attention: Readers responses, critical or otherwise, are welcome. The editor can be contacted at 1(204)326-6454 office, fax 1(204)326-6917, mail Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0. Website - hshs.mb.ca - e-mail delplett@mb.sympatico.ca

Please remember that we are now the Flemish Mennonite Historical Society Inc. (FMHS) and all cheques and payments for memberships and subscriptions to *Preservings* should be changed accordingly.

Flemish Mennonite Martyrs 1535 to 1597

“Flemish Mennonite Martyrs, 1535 to 1597,” as recorded in *The Bloody Theatre or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenceless Christians* (Scottsdale, Pa., 1972).

Introduction.

The *Martyrs Mirror* is a collection of historical accounts, court proceedings and judicial records as well as the testimonials of the martyrs found in their own letters and writings. In her doctoral thesis about the Flemish Mennonites, “Religious Text as a Bridge to Pluralism: The Epistemology of Flemish Anabaptist Martyrs’ Literature,” Marjan Blok writes: “The letters of the martyrs were written in secret, often at night. Some of the letters are of a highly spiritual nature, while others convey great suffering and fear...The letters are written with an intensity which is hard to equal and not a few are written with considerable literary skill,” (page 131). The martyr stories are presented chronologically with a short biography followed by their personal confessions, letters or court records of interrogation.

It is well-known that the *Martyrs Mirror* and other inspired devotional writings evolved as polemic works in the battles for doctrinal orthodoxy by the conservative Flemish and Friesians, tenaciously clinging to the wholesome, Christo-centric teachings of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, in the face of repeated attacks from the culturally liberal and assimilationist (and in some respects, more Calvinistic) Waterlanders under the autocratic Hans de Ries. Marjan Blok writes: “Thus we see how the martyrologies became polemic weapons in a context of ever increasing internal pluralism, here text develops as the legitimization of one’s own symbolic universe,” (page 129). In the process of defending their faith, 17th century leaders like Thielmann Jansz van Braght and P. J. Twisck created an inspired canon of devotional literature which has sustained and enriched the conservative and traditionalist Mennonites over the centuries.

The first Mennonite martyr book in 1562, *Het Offer des Heeren* (“The sacrifice of the Lord”), “...offers a collection of short texts penned by the Anabaptist martyrs themselves which were circulating as small (probably handwritten) letters and booklets at the time of compilation” (pages 118-120). Marjan Blok writes: “The contents of the *Offer* are generally not concerned with polemics. It is too early, or the situation too urgent, for the tone of the voice of the later religious debates and conflicts....it becomes immediately obvious that more of the martyrs were of Flemish origin....The *Offer* thus gives us clear insight into the earliest thinking of the Flemish Anabaptists (page 121)...Of all the Anabaptist martyrs literature in the sixteenth century, the *Offer* enjoyed the greatest audience judging by the number of editions (page 118)...Brad S. Gregory has drawn attention to the parallel between Menno’s *Troestelijke Vermaninge* (“The Cross of the Saints”) (1554/5) and the preface to the *Offer des Heeren* (1562-3). It is rather amazing, yet explicable, that this parallel has only recently been pointed out” (page 120).

Marjan Blok writes: “A martyrs book of 1577, still extant, in the main contains texts by Flemish Anabaptists...[and] appears to be intended to de-

fend the Flemish cause” (pages 122-2)...The choice of literature chosen for inclusion in the martyrs book of 1577 indicates its intent. Here we find a defense of the Flemish position in the context of the conflicts between Frisian and Flemish Anabaptists. All the texts presented are by Flemish martyrs....and were written after the earlier *Offer des Heeren* had attained its more or less final form....The martyrs book of 1577 takes sides against the Frisians, and the issue of the ban demands far more attention in the work of 1577 than in the *Offer des Heeren*. The Flemish were somewhat more moderate than the Frisians concerning the issue of the ban but on the other hand also more strict than some other groups.”

Several dozen other martyr books were published but the *Historie der Martelaren ofte waerachtighe Getuygen Iesu Christi* published in Haarlem in 1615 by the Waterlanders (Hans de Ries), incorporated a number of these works including *Het Offer des Heeren*. The Flemish material was gathered by Jacques Outerman, born in Flanders and elder of the Flemish congregation in Haarlem (Zijlstra, page 446). This work was countered in 1617 by another *Historie der Martelaren* compiled by the Friesians Pieter Jansz Twisck and Sywaert Pieters. Marjan Blok writes that “The more liberal Waterlanders...had taken the liberty to modify the texts somewhat to suit their theological interests (all changes concerned references to the incarnation), much to the grief of more conservative Anabaptist Frisians who in turn published their ‘improved’ 1617 version...” The Waterlanders responded with another edition in 1631, with a new preface, “probably written by Hans de Ries.”

Van Braght’s “renowned *Het Bloedig Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel der Doopsgesinde of Weerloose Christenen* published in 1660 represents the culmination of a century of development in martyrs literature....Van Braght initially intended to publish a new edition of the martyr book of 1631 but ultimately integrated a substantial amount of new material with that corpus. The work was published in two volumes, the first dealing with the martyrs from the early church through the middle ages (closing with a confession of faith by Pieter Jansz Twisck), and the second, twice as voluminous as the first, dealing with the martyrs of the sixteenth century. The *Martyrs’ Mirror* thus places Anabaptist martyrs in a church historical perspective which emphasized the continuity of the persecuted church; as such it makes a real attempt to set the Dutch Anabaptist community within a universal ‘framework’....A reprint published in 1685 boasted the artful etchings of Jan Luyken....The *Martyrs’ Mirror* was nevertheless destined to become the ‘classical’ martyrology for Anabaptism,” (page 129-130).

In a marvellous way the *Martyrs Mirror* also tells the story of our Flemish Mennonite ancestors. Marjan Blok writes that roughly two-thirds of the martyrs from the Lowlands dealt with in van Braght’s *Martyrs Mirror* were Flemish and that the work depended to a large extent on the

texts of these martyrs. Marjan Blok adds: “The significant contribution made by the Flemish church to the martyrs literature has often gone unnoticed as ‘Dutch’ in the literature,” (page 130). This is a view echoed by Johan Postma, who writes that “historical correctness demands a definite expression of the Frankish elements, which is still missing in Mennonite historiography,” Postma, *Das niederländische Erbe*, page 47. Marjan Blok makes a strong argument that “It would be more accurate to credit the Flemish church and recognize its legacy, for which it paid so high a price” (page 131).

The first Dutch martyr was a Sacramentarian, Jan de Bakker, “burned at the stake in 1525 because of his faith. The Sacramentarian movement, however, was hardly limited to the Northern Provinces. Already in the fifteenth century we hear of the rejection of transubstantiation in Leuven and the names of Henry Schhlaetschap and Henry Rol of Grave are cited as known Sacramentarians in the south. Interestingly enough, even the martyrs of Brussels in 1523 gave evidence of the presence of the movement in the southern Lowlands when they declared that ‘The body of Christ is not being sacrificed but partaken in his memory.’ A certain Mees de Wyer in Maastricht insisted on the interpretation of the Scripture by laymen when he was tried for heresy in 1529. Thus a break with the church was taking place, as yet without definite form or organization, but already offering up martyrs,” (page 79-80).

The first Flemish Mennonite martyrs were probably executed in 1535, namely: “Jerome Pael, beheaded in Antwerp, Willem Mulaer, beheaded in Ghent, Arendt de Jagher and Jan van Gent-Brugge” (page 97). The last martyr died in 1597 “Anneke van Uytenhove, burned at the stake in Brussels in 1597.” Marjan Blok adds that “In the period following this last execution, exile and heavy fines - usually set at 600 guilders - were the usual means employed in the further suppression” (page 102).

A number of martyr accounts are reproduced here to provide the reader with a feel for these noble Christians ready to seal their faith with their blood. Included are six etchings by Jan Luyken (1649-1712), representing Flemish Mennonite martyr scenes. In the case of Soetgen van den Houte, executed in 1560, her letters provide insight into the theology and mindset of our Flemish Mennonite forebears as they faced martyrdom. What is significant about Soetgen’s epistles is that these same formulations of faith could come just as easily from across the pulpit of any Old Colony congregation in Mexico or Bolivia, or from the papal seat of Pope John Paul III in Rome, or from the writings of Mennonite theologians such as David Schroeder, John Neufeld, Walter Klaassen, J. Denny Weaver, Harry Loewen, or others. Let us appreciate and respect the sanctified heritage which God has given unto His people.

The Editor.

The Bloody Theatre of the Defenseless Christians

Philip de Keurs, A.D. 1537.

In the year 1537, there was at Castle, in Flanders, a God-fearing pious brother, whose name was Philip Keurs, a joiner by trade. And since he had also separated from this present wicked world, and had entered upon the peculiar way of the cross, which leads to the kingdom of God, he, like his Lord and Master, Jesus, was hated, despised and persecuted by the servants of this world, so that he finally fell into the hands of tyrants, who cruelly maltreated him with severe imprisonment.

But as he was not founded upon drifting sand, but upon the immovable Rock (Matt. 7:24, 26; 16:18), he remained steadfast in every respect, as gold which is tried in the fire. I Pet. 1:7. And since nothing could move him to swerve from the truth, he was sentenced to death at said place; in this manner confirming the faith of the truth with his death and blood. And as he here became a partaker of the sufferings of his Lord and Master Christ Jesus, so he shall also, when His glory shall be revealed, receive and enjoy great gladness and joy, and in eternity the crown of everlasting glory. II Tim. 4:8 (page 447).

John Stytaerts, and Peter, A.D. 1538.

About this year, there were, in Flanders, two cousins, one named Stytaerts, the other Peter. These two blooming and God-seeking youths resided with their parents in a village called Mereedor, in Flanders. And as they were very zealous for God, and searched the holy Scriptures, they soon perceived, that the believing and regenerated - according to the doctrine of Christ, as a sign of having buried the former sins, and risen with Christ, and walking in newness of life - had to receive Christian baptism, in the water; and since they were desirous of this, they journeyed to Germany, to seek others of their fellow believers.

But as they could not find such as suited their wishes, they soon returned to their parents in Flanders, where they earnestly sought the Lord their God, so that they had a good report, doing much good to the poor, and saying with Zaccheus, that if they had defrauded any one, they would restore it fourfold. Luke 19:8. When the blinded papists, who most bitterly hated the light of truth, perceived this, they took these two young lambs out of the houses of their parents, at Mereedor, and brought them beyond Ghent, into a village called Vinderhout, where they most severely imprisoned them in a dungeon. Jer. 38:6. Once when their sister came to bring them some fine shirts, they told her that they could not keep them for the worms, which were in their food, eating it, and in their clothes and shirts on their bodies. They fur-

ther said: "Here is a Bible, the contents of which, as well as the cause of our bonds, will yet come to light after our death."

The aforesaid John Stytaerts was once released from prison, on account of sickness, and, as is thought, could easily have obtained his liberty; but he voluntarily returned to prison, desiring gladly to die with his dear brother for the name of Jesus. Thus after a certain time they were led to the slaughter. Peter, who came forth first to die, casting his eyes up to heaven, boldly called out to John Stytaerts: "Fight valiantly, my dear brother; for I see the heavens open above us." Acts 7:56. They were together put to death with the sword at Vinderhout.

Thus these young branches in the court of the Lord (Jer. 17:8; Ps. 1:3), were also devoured by the awful beast which rose up out of the sea (Rev. 13:1), but they had no power over their immortal souls, which escaped from them unto God, where they shall forever live in unspeakable joy. When their parents came from Mereedor to Vinderhout, and inquired for their children, the villagers told them that they had already been executed with the sword. And thus they were deprived of their children by these tyrants (pages 449-450).

Walter of Stoelwijk, A.D. 1541.

On the eleventh of February, A.D. 1538, another pious and faithful brother, named Walter of Stoelwijk, at Vilvoorden, in Brabant, fell into the hands of the ravening wolves (Matt. 7:15), and had to suffer much for the truth, from these envious papists. But he, as a wise builder, had founded his house upon the firm and immovable rock, Christ Jesus; and therefore remained steadfast in all these great trials, though he had to suffer cruel imprisonment for three years, and much severe and tyrannous examining and torturing from these bloodthirsty men. Finally, on the 24th of March, in the year 1541, he was sentenced and burned at said place. Thus he remained faithful to his Lord and Creator unto death, and steadfastly confirmed with his death and blood the genuine faith of the truth, and his unwavering, living hope. He shall therefore, as an obedient sheep, also hear the voice of the great Shepherd of the sheep saying to him: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." John 10:3; Heb. 13:20; Matt. 25:34 (page 455).

Hans van Monster, and Bartel, and old Jacob, put to death in the Castle of Berchem, near Antwerp.

As it has from the beginning been abundantly heard and seen, that the truth is envied and trampled upon by its enemies and haters, and that its pious confessors have had to suffer from them in manifold ways; so, among many other examples, it was verified, at a certain time after

Mary van Beckum and her sister had been offered up at Delden, in the case of a faithful brother named Hans van Monster, who lay imprisoned for the truth, in the castle of Berchem, near Antwerp.

And since Jesus very earnestly teaches and recommends to us the visiting of the sick and imprisoned, in their tribulation (Matt. 25:36; Heb. 13:3), a single man named Old Jacob, and another by the name of Bartel, moved by the spirit and brotherly love, went from Antwerp to Berchem, to comfort their brother, according to their ability, in his tribulation. When they arrived there, the enemies watched them, supposing that old Jacob was a teacher and elder; for at that time the bloodthirsty papists had put a reward of three hundred guilders upon teachers, to be given to any who should deliver them into the hands of the executioners; and as old Jacob was very eloquent, and could defend himself very ably with the Word of God, they hoped to earn said money by him, in which, however, they failed as Jacob was no teacher.

Nevertheless, they kept them, and imprisoned them with their fellow brother; and as they together were built upon the immovable rock Christ Jesus, they remained steadfast in all these tempests; and since no torment could induce them to depart from the truth, they were together put to death in the castle of Berchem, valiantly offering their lives for the truth, and are now waiting with all the saints of God, the blessed resurrection unto eternal life. Rev. 6:11; I Thess. 4:16.

In the beginning of the conversion of the before-mentioned Bartel, and another, named Gerrit, it occurred that these two young men were present when Mary van Beckum and her sister were offered up in the castle of Delden; and they testified that they heard Mary van Beckum declare publicly before the people, when she was placed at the stake, to be burned: "You shall see this stake at which I am to be burned grow green, by which you may know that it is the truth for which we here suffer and die." These two young men, who heard this themselves, some time afterwards went of their own accord to the stake, and saw it flourish. Terrified thereby, they went together to Antwerp, to inquire for such people; and having come to an elder by the name of Hendrick van Aernem, and Jan Lubberts of B., they related the above to them. Thereupon Hendrick van Aernem replied: "I would not dare repeat this after you." They said: "Should we not tell what we have heard and seen ourselves?" Thus they adhered to their assertion concerning what had occurred with regard to Mary van Beckum, and, accordingly, lent their ears to the truth, repented, became converted, and united with the church of God. Afterwards Gerrit went to Amsterdam, where he resided until his death; but Bartel lost his life for the truth, and has been heard (page 500).

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A Smith at Komen, A.D. 1551.

In or about the year 1551, a smith was apprehended for the divine truth, at Komen, in Flanders. He freely confessed his faith, and as he would not depart from it, he was sentenced to death in two ways, namely, if he recanted, he was to be executed with the sword; otherwise to be burned alive. To this end, two-fold preparations were made; but seeing the multitude, and fearing trouble, the authorities kept the brother in prison. Hence, some climbed to the top of the prison and broke through the roof, to see what was being done with the doomed man. At last, one knocked at the door of the prison, desiring to know whether the brother was alive or dead. Having been admitted, he immediately returned with blood on his hand, which he showed to the people, saying: "He is dead! He is dead!"

The dead man was then brought out on a ladder, with his head lying between his legs, and the ladder placed upon the wall of the churchyard, where the priest made a long speech (a sermon probably), saying among other things, that he had renounced his heretical belief, and re-accepted the Roman church and her saving faith; and "holding now a good resolution," said he, "he was instantly executed, lest he might fall back into his old error." But it was firmly believed that the priest slandered the dead man, and this the more so, since after relating the sentence, he said that he obstinately adhered to his previous confession. Thus God constrains the wicked, in the telling of their lies, themselves, unawares, to reveal the truth of the matter (page 502).

Gillis and Elizabeth, A.D. 1551.

On the 21st of July, A.D. 1551, two pious Christians, a brother by the name of Gillis, and a sister named Elizabeth, were sentenced to death as heretics, pursuant to the imperial decree, at Ghent, in Flanders. They were not led forth to death at the usual time, but at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Having ascended the scaffold, they prayed to God. In the meantime, the executioner unlaced the gown of Elizabeth, which, when she arose, fell down, so that she stood there in her shift and linen trousers, which the executioner, by way of mockery, had made her put on. Feeling greatly ashamed on this account, she immediately went to the stake, and then said: "I thank Thee, O Lord, that I am worthy to suffer for Thy name. I now stand at the touchstone, at which God's elect are tried. O Lord, strengthen me, and delay not."

Gillis said: "Dear sister, be patient in your suffering, and comfort yourself in God; He will not forsake you."

"O dear brother," said she, "I will never de-

part from Him."

Gillis then cried: "O Lord, forgive them their sins, who inflict death upon me; for as they do not know Thee, they know not what they do."

Finally they cried out: "O heavenly Father, into Thy hands we commend our spirits." And



Title page of the 1685 edition of the Tileman J. van Braght Het Bloedig Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel, 1685, demonstrates the graphic genius of Jan Luyken (1647-1712), Rotterdam. The two volume set was republished by the Haarlem Mennonite Church in 1984. In 2002, the editor was delighted and honoured to receive a gift of one of these two volume facsimile sets, now proudly occupying a prominent place in the editor's library.

thus, through fire, they died a blessed death well pleasing unto God (pages 502-503).

Joris, Wouter, Grietgen and Naentgen, 1551.

On account of the severe and great persecution which was carried on everywhere in the Netherlands, against the true Christians, four pious believers, among others, named Joris, Wourter, Grietgen and Naentgen, fled, in the year 1551, from Lier in Brabant, to Ghent in Flanders. They had not resided long in the latter place when they were betrayed by a Judas, and brought prisoners from their houses to the castle of the count, where they joyfully thanked God, and sang praises to Him, because they were counted wor-

thy to suffer for His name.

When assailed by the monks and other sophists, they freely confessed their faith, from which no subtlety could turn them; but they valiantly withstood, with the truth, the seducers who sought to murder their souls, and were then condemned to death by virtue of the imperial mandate, because they had apostatized from the Roman church, condemned infant baptism, and had been baptized upon faith. They were sentenced to be burned at the stake without being strangled.

They thanked the lords, and Grietgen said: "My lords, save three stakes; we can all four die at one; for we are spiritually of one mind." Rom. 12:16. They were joyful in the Lord, and thanked God greatly. Naentgen said: "This is the day for which I have longed so much." Eight monks then came, to torment them; however, they did not accept their advice, but Grietgen said: "Take off your long robes and teach yourselves, before you undertake to teach others." They were led to death like sheep to the slaughter, the monks accompanying them, to whom they said: "Stay back; let us in peace, for we know you well, and do not wish to hear you."

Having ascended the scaffold, Joris said to the people: "Be it known to you, that we do not die for theft, murder, or heresy." At this the monks became enraged, and contradicted it.

They then fell upon their knees, prayed to God, and arose and kissed each other with the kiss of peace. But when they with glad countenances addressed the people, the monks, to hinder them, went and stood before them; but one of the people cried out: "You furious antichristians, stand back, and let them speak."

Wouter said: "Citizens of Ghent, we suffer not as heretics or Lutherans, who hold in one hand a beer mug, and a testament in the other, thus dishonouring the Word of God, and dealing in drunkenness; but we died for the genuine truth." The execu-

tioner then hung each of them by a rope to a stake, but did not strangle them. They then strengthened each other, saying: "Let us fight valiantly, for this is our last pain; hereafter we shall rejoice with God in endless joy." Matt. 25:23. As they were hanging in pain, before the fire was kindled. Joris fell through the rope, and Wouter cried: "O brother, be of good cheer!" "O Lord!" exclaimed Joris, "in Thee do I trust; strengthen my faith." Luke 17:5. The fire then commenced to burn, and they cried out: "O God Father, into Thy hands we commend our spirits." Thus they offered up their sacrifice according to the will of the Lord, and their faith was tried like gold in the fire, and found good, and so accepted of God (page 503).

Catharine Burned at the Stake, A.D. 1551.

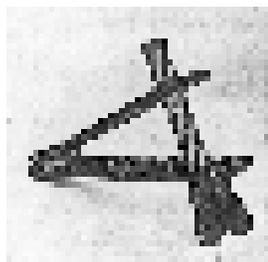
Eight days after the sacrifice of the preceding persons, a woman named Catherine was also sentenced to the fire. While yet in prison, she was greatly tormented by the monks, in order to make her apostatize, but she said: "I stand so firmly to my faith that for it, to the honour of God, I will suffer my self to be burned at the stake. What would you do for your faith? Not much, I think. Hence repent, before you be brought to shame."

Having been sentenced to be burned alive, and on her way to death, she was saluted by a brother. When she arrived on the scaffold, her hands were untied at her request. She then knelt down, and prayed fervently to God for strength, which He also gave her; for when she had arisen, and was tied to the stake, she boldly said: "I am put to death for the truth's sake; whatever you are able to inflict upon me, I am freely ready to suffer." A seducer then came up, to comfort and strengthen her, as he said, but she replied: "Be still, I am tired of your tormenting; forbear comforting me, and comfort yourself; for He whose name I suffer, shall now be my comfort."

Thereupon, calling with a firm confidence upon God, she was burned alive in the sight of all men, steadfastly offering up soul and body to God, as a burnt sacrifice (page 503).

Jan Van Paris, Pieter van Cleves, Hendrick Maelschalck, and Lauwerens Pieters, A.D. 1568.

Jan van Paris, Pieter van Cleaves, Hendrick Maelschalck, and Lauwerens Pieters, had not yet united with the church, but were novices and ready to unite; hence going to hear the Word of God preached, they were apprehended, at Ghent, in Flanders, in the year 1568, and taken to the Count's Castle. After a bold confession of, and steadfast adherence to, the faith, they were sentenced in Passion Week, to be strangled and burned. But when they had mounted the scaffold, the Spanish Provost (there being at the time nineteen companies of Spanish soldiers in Ghent), seeing that it was the intention to strangle them, compelled the executioner to fetch other appliances. Hence the executioner fetched a basketful of chains. When the brethren heard that they were to be burnt alive, they raised their voices



The tongue screw was a popular instrument of torture during the Inquisition. It was also used to keep Mennonites from testifying to the assembled crowds as they were led like sheep to the slaughter. Photo - Cornelius Krahn, Witness of the Martyr's Mirror (Newton, Ks., n.d.), page 19.



In 1573 Maeyken Wens was burned at Antwerp with a tongue screw in her mouth. Here her sons search and find the screw to keep in memory of their mother. Maeyken Wens also left several letters published in the Martyrs Mirror as a testimony of her faith. Drawing - Martyrs Mirror, page 980.



Jacques de Rore (1532-69) was a prominent preacher of the Mennonite church in Flanders. He was apprehended in Brugge where he was severely cross-examined by the Franciscan monk Cornelius. In prison he wrote 19 letters. Marjan Blok has written about Jacques de Rore and his faith and ministry. He was executed on May 9, 1569. Etching by Jan Luyken, Het Bloedig Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel, 1685, page 345.

Maeyken Wens, and some of her Fellow Believers, Burnt for the Testimony of Jesus Christ, at Antwerp, A.D. 1573.

The north wind of persecution blew now the longer the more through the garden of the Lord, so that the herbs and trees of the same (that is the true believers) were rooted out of the earth through the violence that came against them. This appeared, among other instances, in the case of a very God-fearing and pious woman, named Maeyken Wens, who was the wife of a faithful minister of the church of God in the city of Antwerp, by the name

of Mattheus Wens, by trade a mason.

About the month of April, A.D. 1573, she, together with other of her fellow believers, was apprehended at Antwerp, bound, and confined in the severest prison there. In the meantime she was subjected to much conflict and temptation by so-called spirituals (ecclesiastics), as well as by secular persons, to cause her to apostatize from her faith. But when she could by no manner of means, not even by severe tortures, be turned from the steadfastness of her faith, they, on the fifth day of October, 1573, passed sentence upon her, and pronounced it publicly in court at the afore-mentioned place, namely, that she should, with her mouth screwed shut, or with her tongue screwed up, be burnt to ashes as a heretic, together with several others, who were also imprisoned and stood in like faith with her.

Thereupon, the following day, the sixth of October, this pious and God-fearing heroine of Jesus Christ, as also her fellow believers that had been condemned with a like sentence, were brought forth, with their tongues screwed fast, as innocent sheep for the slaughter, and each having been fastened to a stake in the marketplace, deprived, by fierce and terrible flames, of their lives and bodies, so that in a short time they were consumed to ashes; which severe punishment of death they steadfastly endured; hence the lord shall hereafter change their vile bodies, and

fashion them like unto His glorious body. Phil. 3:21.

Further Observation.

The oldest son of the afore-mentioned martyress, named Adriaen Wens, aged about fifteen years, could not stay away from the place of execution on the day on which his dear mother was offered up; hence he took his youngest little brother, named Hans (or Jan) Mattheus Wens, who was about three years old, upon his arm and went and stood with him somewhere upon a bench, not far from the stakes erected, to behold his mother's death.

But when she was brought forth and placed at the stake, he lost consciousness, fell to the ground, and remained in this condition until his mother had been burnt, and hunted in the ashes, in which he found the screw with which her tongue had been screwed fast, which he kept in remembrance of her.

There are at present, 1659, several grandchildren (well known to us) still living of this pious martyress, who are named after her. Touching the others, her fellow believers, who were put to death with her, were not able, because it is so long ago, to give their names, but it appears to us, that they are those who are mentioned in the next following account (that is, the women*) since it is stated of them, that they were, on the same day, namely the sixth of October, 1573, also put to death, at Antwerp, by fire. This by way of notice (pages 979-981).

Soetgen van den Houte, and Martha, A.D. 1560.

At this time also a pious woman named Soetgen van den Houte fell into the hands of the persecutors of the truth, so that after severe assaults and imprisonment she testified and confirmed the faith of the ever enduring truth with her death and blood, on the 27th of November, 1560, in the city of Ghent; and with her another woman, named Martha. Soetgen van den Houte also states that her husband had previously likewise valiantly trodden the winepress of suffering and fearlessly testified the truth, and gave his life for it, as the following testament clearly shows.

A Testament of Soetgen van den Houte, which she left her children, David, Betgen and Tanneken, for a memorial, and for the best, and which she confirmed with her death, at Ghent, Flanders.

In the name of the Lord:

Grace, peace and mercy from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, this I wish you, my dear little children, David, Betgen, and Tanneken, for an affectionate greeting, written by your mother in bonds, for a memorial to you of the truth, as I hope to testify by word and with my death, by the help of the Most High, for an example unto you. May the wisdom of the Holy Ghost instruct and strengthen you therein, that you may be brought up in the ways of the Lord. Amen.

Further my dear children, since it pleases the Lord to take me out of this world, I will leave you a memorial, not of silver or gold; for such jewels are perishable: but I should like to write a jewel into your heart, if it were possible, which is the word of truth, in which I want to instruct you a little for the best with the Word of the Lord, according to the little gift I have received from Him and according to my simplicity.

In the first place, I admonished you, my most

beloved, always to suffer yourself to be instructed by those who fear the Lord; then you will please God, and as long as you obey good admonition and instruction and fear the Lord, He will be your Father and not leave you orphans. For David says: "What man is he that feareth the Lord: him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose." Ps. 25:12. He also says: "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him; for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Ps. 33:18, 19; 34:7, 9; 111:10.

Therefore, dear children, learn to fear the Lord, and you will receive wisdom. The wise man says: "A wise son heareth instruction. Whoso loveth correction and instruction loveth knowledge. A wise son feareth and escheweth evil. A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son putteth his mother to shame. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be like them. He that refuseth correction and instruction destroyeth his own soul; but he that heareth reproof will become wise."

O my most beloved depart not from correction. The wise man says: "Chasten thy son while there is hope." Prov. 19:18.

Hence, my most beloved, grieve not when you are corrected, and speak not crossly to those who correct you. A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger. Prov. 15:1. If you are crossly spoken to, learn to answer kindly, and you will be loved by all men; for humility and meekness are acceptable to both God and men.

Furthermore, my dear children, I admonish you, to beware of lying; for liars have no part in the kingdom of God. Rev. 21:8. It is also written: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, and he whose mouth lieth, his soul shall die." Prov. 12:12;

Wisdom 1:11. Therefore, my dear children, beware of it; for he that deals in lies is loved by no one.

My dear children, keep this in your hearts; my dear lambs, guard your tongue, that it speak no evil; neither practice deceit with your lips; nor be guilty of backbiting, for thereby come contention and strife; but Paul teaches us to live peaceably with all men if it be possible. I Pet. 3:10; Romans 12:18.

My most beloved, keep this sent you from your mother; and obey your parents; and those whose bread you eat, and all who admonish you to virtue. Eph. 6:1. Always be diligent to do your work, wherever you be; for Paul says that if any will not work, neither shall he eat. II Thess. 3:10.

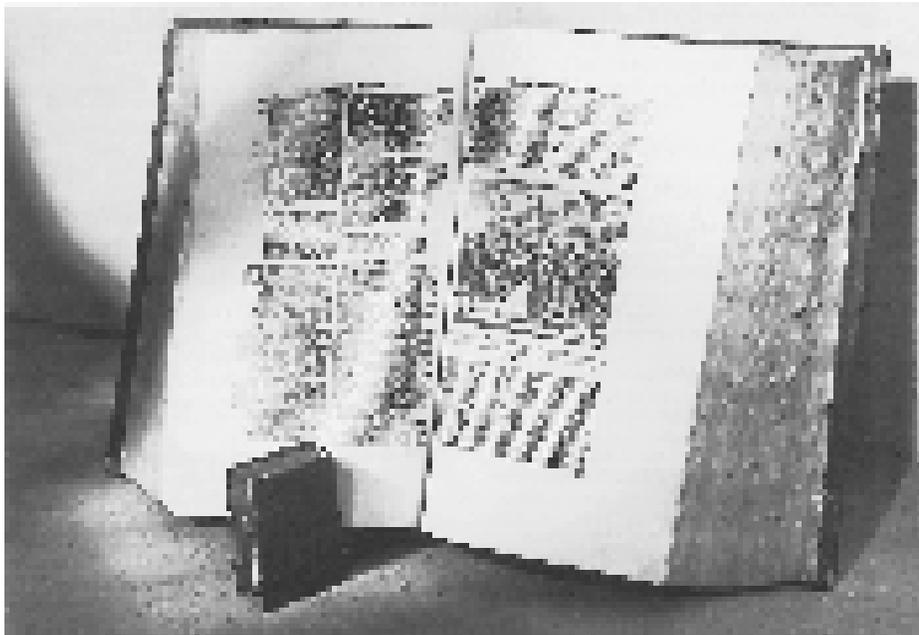
It is also written: "Be diligent to labour, that you may have to give to him that needeth." Eph. 4:28. Hence, turn not your face away from the poor. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." Prov. 21:13. Tobit taught his son, saying: "Son, if thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly: if thou have but little; be not afraid to give according to that little." Tob. 4:8. Alms given of one's labour is acceptable to God. The wise man says: "Alms purge out sin." We also read of Cornelius and Tobit that the angel said: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God, whom thou didst beseech with tears, and didst leave thy dinner to go and bury the dead." Acts 10:4; Tob. 12:13.

Therefore, be diligent in prayer, and love the poor; for Christ also was poor for our sakes. II Corinthians 8:9. Be therefore also merciful, even as your heavenly Father is merciful; for such shall be blessed, and shall obtain mercy. Also learn to be meek and lowly in heart; for such are blessed and shall inherit the earth. Luke 6:36; Matt. 5:5. And blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

Hence, my dear children, let no impure thoughts remain in your hearts, but engage yourselves with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and evil thoughts will have no room. Neither let filthiness proceed out of your mouth; for of this an account will have to be given. Eph. 5:19, 4; Matt. 12:36.

Furthermore, my most beloved, wherever you be esteem yourselves as the least, and be not wise in your own conceit, but always suffer yourselves to be instructed by those who are above you, and always be silent when others speak. Humble yourself beneath all men; for whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; but he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. Matt. 23:12. For Christ, who is the greatest, made Himself the least, for an example unto us. Ps. 8:6; John 13:13. And, as is written: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself and thou shalt find favour before the Lord; for the power of the Lord is great, and he is honoured of the lowly." Sir. 3:18, 20.

My children, be also just in all your dealings; for in the way of the just there is life, and in the beaten path there is no death. It is joy to the righteous to do that which is right, but fear to evildoers. Further, choose to earn your bread by the labour of your hands, and to eat your bread with peace. Seek not to be a merchant, nor be anxious for great gain. Better is little with the fear of God,



The large Martelaarsspiegel of 1685 and the small Offer des Heeren of 1562. The early martyr books were small - pocket size - reflecting the realities of believers often fugitives from justice. Photo - S. L. Verheus and T. Albertda-van der Zijpp, Het Bloedig Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel der Doops-Gesinnde of Weereloose Christenen Inleiding Bij de Heruitgave (Haarlem, 1984), page 14.

than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dry morsel, and quietness, than a house full of sacrifices with strife. Prov. 15:16; 17:1.

My children, love not dainties, nor wine. He that desires costly feasts will not become rich; but be content with the labour of your hands. Overtax no one, but be satisfied with what is reasonable, as you have seen of me. Be burdensome to no one, as long as you can obtain the things needful. It is

more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35. And Paul says: "If ye have food and raiment, be therewith content." I Tim. 6:8.

Hence, my dear children, take an example from this, and always go on in the ways of the Lord with sobriety and thankfulness, as you have heard me read of Daniel, of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were selected by the king of Babylon, to be nourished with the same wine and

meat which the king drank and ate at his table, in order that they might be beautiful, to serve the king. But they would have nothing but pulse and water; they wanted to observe the law and commandments of their fathers with sobriety and thankfulness in the fear of God, and they were fairer and fatter than those who ate of the king's dainties. Dan. 1.

Thus faithfully they walked in the ways of the Lord, with prayer and supplication made themselves acceptable to Him; therefore God did great things through them, and delivered them from the den of lions, and out of the fiery furnace. And Joseph; when he was sold into Egypt, desired no dainties, nor wine, because the Egyptian women sought to seduce him; but he feared God, and God preserved him. He pleased God by sobriety and prayer, so that he was appointed ruler over Egypt. Gen. 37, 39, 41.

My dear children, take an example from this, in your youth, and you will please God, and He will keep you from all seduction.

O my lambs, you are still in your youth, in your infancy; you have yet your part in your Father's kingdom, see that you keep it well and do not as Esau did, who gave his inheritance or birthright for a mess of pottage; not regarding his father's blessing. He gave it away for perishable food. Gen. 25:33. But Jacob chose the better part, and was obedient to God and his father, walking the ways of the Lord with all righteousness.

My most beloved, seek instruction, so that you may be taught, and know which is the true way; for you may now choose life or death, good or evil; whichever you desire, shall be given you (Sirach 15:17); namely, if you delight in evil, so that you choose the pleasures of the world (from which springs all unrighteousness), namely, lying and cheating, gambling, playing, swearing, cursing, backbiting, hatred, envy, drunkenness, banqueting, excess, idolatry, covetousness, lasciviousness, vanity, filthy conversation, dancing, and so forth; which things, though the world does not consider them sins, but amusements, are nevertheless abominations in the eyes of the Lord. I Pet. 4:3.

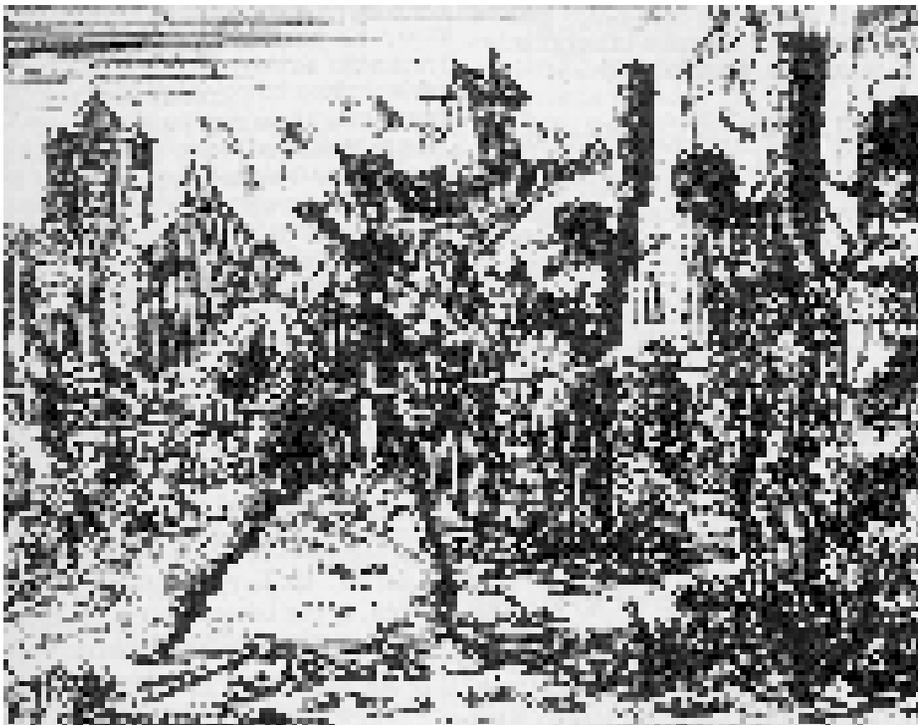
Therefore, my dear children, take heed; if you take pleasure in these things, you sell your birthright or the inheritance from your father, for a mess of pottage, namely, for a few temporal pleasures, which lead you to damnation. See whether all the great multitude do not choose to walk this way. Hence Esdras has truly said that there is much more earth found, to make earthen vessels, than gold, to make golden vessels. And as the wave is greater than a drop, so there will be more that will be damned. II Esd. 8:2, 3; 9:15, 16. For many are called, but few are chosen, for they do not heed their call; as Christ says: "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me; but these follow the great multitude of the ungodly and false prophets." John 10:27.

Hence Isaiah says: "Hell hath opened her mouth wide, to receive the proud and all that do unrighteousness, and all that will not repent." Isa. 5:14.

Therefore, behold, my most beloved, if you suffer yourselves to be instructed in virtue, you will follow the voice of the Lord, as from the time



Hans van Overdam was executed at Ghent on July 9, 1551. He had been baptised by Gillis van Aken and was a very active and courageous witness, even addressing the crowd assembled around the place of execution. Etching by Jan Luyken, Het Bloedig Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel, 1685, page 89.



The execution of David van der Lyden and Levina Ghyselins burned at the stake in Ghent, 1554. David's sister Tanneken was drowned at Antwerp in 1555, his brother Lauwers beheaded at Antwerp in 1559. Levina was burned at the stake with David but her arrest was not related. Her shoemaker husband, Willem, had been executed some months earlier. Her execution was postponed because of her pregnancy. After the coals had died down around David's supposedly lifeless body, the spectators cried out that he still lived. Goaded by their jeers, the executioner plunged a large iron fork into David's breast. Etching by Jan Luyken, Het Bloedig Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel, 1685, page 161.

of Abel until now many who suffered have done; they were rejected, despised, persecuted and killed because they would not follow the wicked world and her false prophets.

Behold, my most beloved, choose rather to suffer affliction with the children of God, so that you may be rewarded with them; for they are the ones to whom belong all the beautiful promises, but they must suffer much, for the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Matt. 11:12. It is also written: "Ye must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven." For David says: "We are led to death as sheep for the slaughter." And Paul says: "We which live are always delivered unto death." It is also written: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned to joy. Ye shall have tribulation for a little while, but be of good cheer and be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." Revelation 2:10. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. John 16:33. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. We further read: "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." Rev. 19:7-9. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father." Matt. 13:43.

See, my most beloved, this is the better part and reward of all those who fear the Lord, walk in His ways and keep his commandments. These are they to whom the Lord says: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye few men of Israel; I will not leave you orphans; but I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and I will keep you as the apple of mine eye; yea, if ye keep my commandments, though ye were cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather you from thence, and will bring you unto the place that I have chosen." Isa. 41:14; 51:7; Zech. 2:8; Deut. 30:4; Neh. 1:9.

Oh, who would not love such a Lord and Father, who has chosen us, as He chose Israel, and has given us His commandments and laws, namely, His Gospel, which teaches us to do His will, and His pleasure; and such He has made heirs of all the riches of heaven. Isa. 49:7.

O my dear children, I have written this in tears, admonishing you out of love, praying for you with a fervent heart, that, if possible, you might be of this number. For when your father was taken from me, I did not spare myself day or night to bring you up, and my prayer and solicitude were constantly for your salvation, and even while in bonds my greatest care has always been that my prudence did not enable me to make better provision for you. For when it was told me, that you had been taken to Oudenarde, and thence to Bruges, it was a hard blow for me, so that I never had a greater sorrow. But when I thought that my coming or providing could not help the matter, and that for Christ's sake we must separate from all that we love in this world I committed all to the will of the Lord, and I still hope and pray constantly, that He in His mercy will preserve you, as He preserved Joseph, Moses and Daniel in the midst of wicked

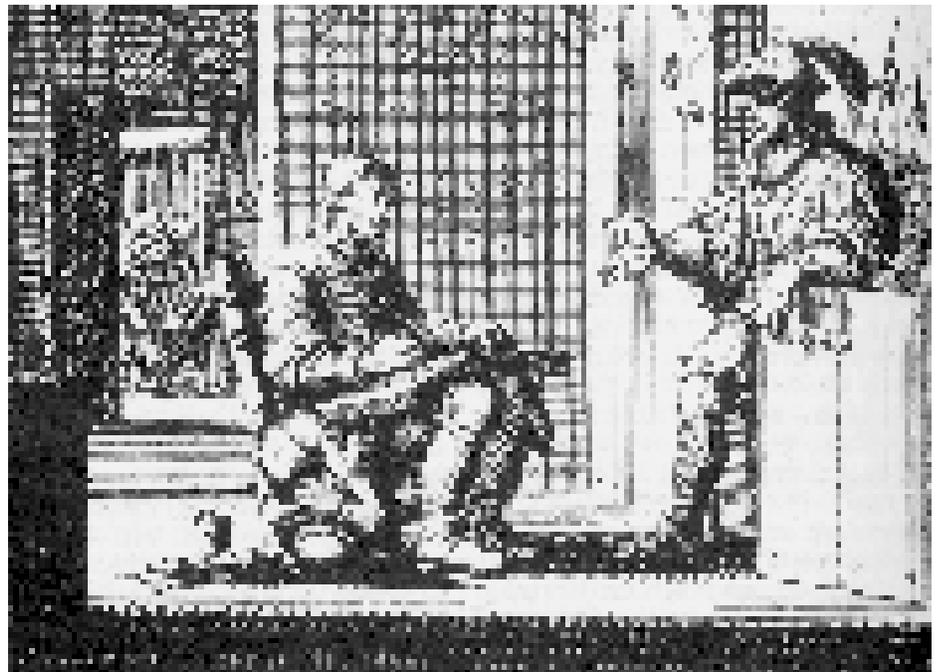
men. And He will do this, if you give diligence to follow the truth; then the angel of the Lord will be with you, even as He was with Tobias, guiding him until He brought him to his father's house, where he rejoiced with his father and his friends, thanking God for His great goodness. Tobit 7:11.

Thus also, if you will follow good instruction, it will guide you safely through every danger, and bring you to your Father's house, where there is such joy prepared, that ear has not heard, nor eye

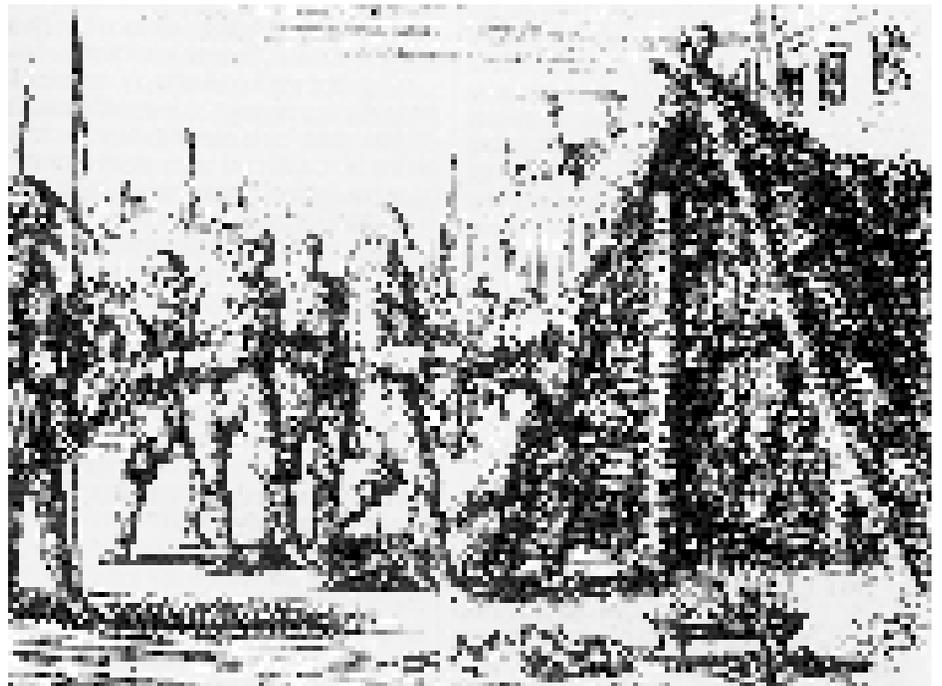
seen, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what joy is prepared for the elect; but to the elect God has revealed it by His Holy Spirit. Isa 64:4; I Corinthians 2:9, 10.

May the word of the Father bring you to this, through the mercy of the Son, and may the wisdom of the Holy Ghost strengthen you, that you may apprehend it. Amen.

David, my dear child, I herewith commend you to the Lord. You are the oldest, learn wisdom,



Andreas Langedul was beheaded in the Steen prison in Amsterdam, November 8, 1559. He was captured while reading the Bible and taken from his wife who had just been delivered of a child (see illustration). Etching by Jan Luyken, Het Bloedig Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel, 1685, page 262.



Christiaan Janssens, called Langedul, burned alive in huts in Antwerp, together with Cornelius Claesz, Matheus de Vik and Hans Symonsz, 1567. They were captured during a meeting to mediate a dispute. After severe torture they entered the huts of death singing praises to God. Etching by Jan Luyken, Het Bloedig Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel, 1685, page 345.

that you may set your sisters a good example; and beware of bad company, and of playing in the street with bad boys; but diligently learn to read and write, so that you may get understanding. Love one another, without contention or quarrelling; but be kind to each other. Let the one that is wise bear with him who is simple, and admonish him with kindness. Let the strong bear with the feeble, and help him all he can, out of love. Let the rich assist the poor, out of brotherly love. Let the younger obey the older in that which is good. Admonish one another to be industrious, so that people may love you. Exhort one another to good works, to modesty, honourableness and quietness. Always care for one another; for the time has come, that love shall wax cold; yea, if it were possible, the very elect would be deceived. Matt. 24:12, 24. Hence, take heed and learn diligently to search the Scriptures, so that you may not be deceived; but always hold to the first and second commandment, which will teach you aright. Do not easily believe it, when evil is told you of another, but examine the matter; and make no commotion when you are slandered, but bear it for Christ's sake.

Love your enemies, and pray for those who speak evil of you, and afflict you. Rather suffer wrong, than that you should grieve another; rather suffer affliction than that you should afflict another; rather be reproached, than that you should reproach another; rather be slandered, than that you should slander another; rather be robbed, than that you should rob another; rather be beaten, than that you should beat another, and so forth.

Behold, my most beloved, all this is wrought through brotherly love, and is all comprehended in the second commandment; hence, you must constantly see that you do not seek solely your own profit, but always care for those with whom you have dealings, whether they be young or old.

Further, my dear children, Betgen and Tanneken, my beloved lambs, I admonish you in all these same things, as that you obey the commandments of the Lord, and also obey your uncle and aunt, and your elders, and all who instruct you in virtue. To those whose bread you eat, you must be subject in all that is not contrary to God. Always diligently admonish yourselves to do your work, and you will be loved wherever you live. Be not quarrelsome, or loquacious, or light minded, or proud, or surly of speech, but kind, honourable and quiet, as behooves young girls. Pray the Lord for wisdom, and it shall be given you. Diligently learn to read and write, and take delight therein, and you will become wise. Take pleasure and engage in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Seek for the only joy. Learn to please the Lord from your youth, as did the holy women and virgins, as Judith. Judith 8.

Esther also was a virgin who feared God; she was adorned with humility, was gracious, honourable, kind, and humble of heart; hence she pleased King Ahasuerus above all the other virgins. Esther 2:17. But in her high estate she was not proud; though she shone in royal apparel, she humbled her heart, with fasting and prayer to the Lord, for her brethren, that they might be delivered out of the hands of their enemies; she did not esteem herself better than one of the least of her brethren.

See, my most beloved, when you have attained the years of understanding, see that you adorn yourself with good works, namely, the works of the Spirit, that is, with all manner of goodness, gentleness, meekness, humility, obedience, long suffering, righteousness, modesty, honourableness, purity, peaceableness, steadfastness, mercifulness, wisdom, diligence in good works, faith, hope and love; to love God above all that is in the world, and to do to your neighbour as you would have men do unto you, on which hang all the law and the prophets. Gal. 5:22, 23; Matt. 22:37, 40.

Behold, my dear children, this is the adornment of the saints, etc.

O my most beloved, labour for such a wedding garment, so that you may enter in among the number of the children of God to the marriage of the Lamb, where they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Rev. 19:7; Matthew 13:43.

May the strong hand of the Lord bring you to this; may He lead you as He led Israel out of Egypt, and bring you to the New Jerusalem, that we may see each other with joy in the day of the resurrection.

Herewith I commend you to the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; may He keep you to the end of your lives. Amen.

My dear children, this I leave you as a memorial or testament. If you put it to good use, you will gather more treasure by it, than if I had left you many riches, which are perishable; for the riches of this world may be lost through fire, war, or misfortune.

Hence, he is not wise who sets his heart upon anything that is perishable, since we have no assurance of it for an hour; we must leave it all behind; therefore, grieve not, though what we had

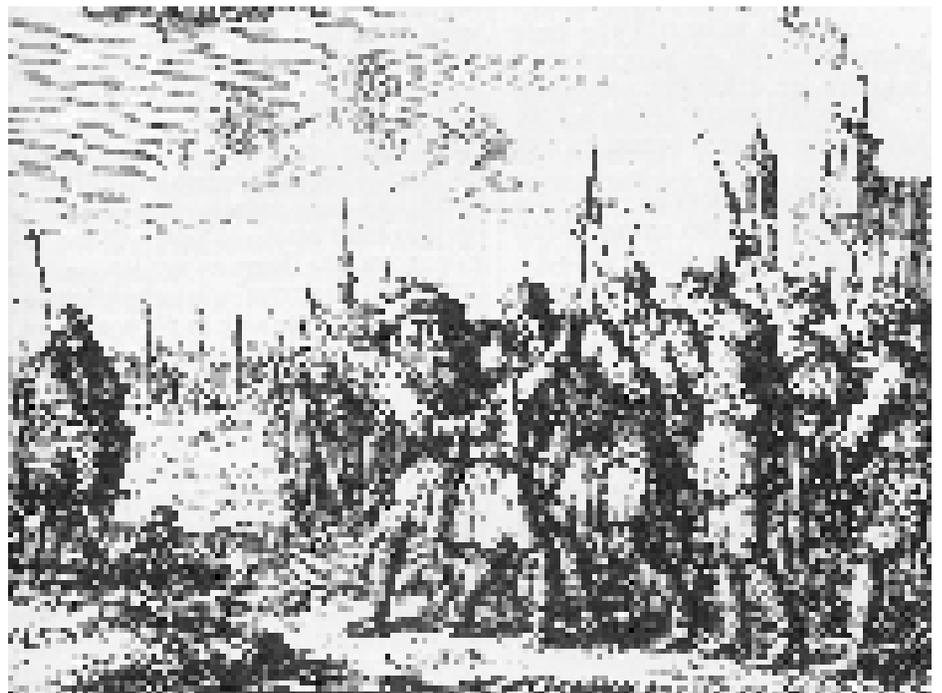
is scattered or lost, as the prophet says: "We are a prey to every one." Isa. 59:15. Hence you are to thank the Lord yet, that He let us have it until I have brought you up so far: and if you walk in all righteousness, the Lord will give you enough. Take an example from Tobias. Tob. 4:19. David also says that the righteous shall not want, nor his seed go begging bread. Ps. 37:25.

Therefore covet no one's property or treasures; nor envy any one because he has more than you. Neither regard any person for his gifts, but follow the little flock, who walk truly in love; for love is the bond of perfectness, and the command of love is superior to all others. Luke 12:32; Col. 3:14. Therefore, see constantly that you follow those who walk most in love; for the tree is known by its fruit, though these are hid from all men; but Christ was too, and the servant is not better than his lord. Matt. 10:24.

Herewith I will bid you adieu: adieu my dear children, and adieu all my dear friends.

My most beloved, though our adversaries tell you, that your father and I are not of the same faith, do not believe them; for he confessed the truth concerning baptism and the incarnation of Christ, in all that he was able to comprehend, and he valiantly testified to righteousness, giving his life for it, pointing out to you for an example, the same way which the prophets, the apostles and Christ Himself went. He had to go before through the conflict with much tribulation and suffering, and leave his children behind for Christ's sake; hence do likewise, for there is no other way. Give diligence to read the Testament. Amen (pages 646-651).

The story of Soetgen van den Houte is dealt with in greater detail by C. Arnold Synder and Linda Hecht, eds., *Profiles of Anabaptist Women* (Waterloo, 1996), pages 365-377.



Jakob Dierks was a tailor at Utrecht. He fled to Antwerp where he and his two sons, Andries and Hans were seized. When on the way to the execution, his youngest son, Peter met them and threw his arms around his father, he was rudely torn away. They were burned on March 17, 1568. Etching by Jan Luyken, Het Bloedig Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel, 1685, page 371.

Tielman Jansz van Braght (1626-64), was born in Dortrecht, son of a cloth merchant. He studied languages and learned Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and German. In 1648 he became a minister of the Flemish Gemeinde in Dortrecht and served for 16 years. He was a staunch defender of Mennonite principles, particularly engaged in rebutting the attacks of the Doopsgezinde and its assimilationist agenda. One of his best known debates was with Gerardus Aemilius, the Reformed pastor of Oud-Beyerland.

Van Braght played an important role during the difficulties which developed between the preservationists (Mennonites) and cultural assimilationists (Doopsgezinde) in the Holland about 1660. He was completely on the side of the conservatives. In Utrecht he helped to depose the more assimilationists preachers. Van Braght was the chairman of the Synod of Leiden of June 1660, where the conservatives united against the Collegiants.

In 1657 van Braght published his *School der zedelijke deught* (School of Moral Virtue) to encourage young people unto virtuous living and lead them to true fear of God. The book went through 18 editions. He became best known for his *Het Bloedig Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel der Doopsgesinde of Weerloose Christenen* ("The Martyr's Mirror") published in 1660. In 1660 he was summoned before the Reformed Church to answer for the boldness of his tone; but he was able to defend himself so well, that his good name was merely enhanced thereby.

Tieleman van Braght was widely celebrated as a preacher. A book of his sermons was published by his brother, *53 Predicantie, over verscheyde Schriftuerplaetsen* (Amsterdam, 1670). Although the *Bloedig Tooneel* edition of 1685 bears his name, it was completed by someone else, possibly brother Cornelius, who became Oudste of the Gemeinde in 1669.

In their book, *Mirror of the Martyrs*, John S. Oyer and Robert S. Krieder, write: "One is astonished at his [T. J. van Braght's] unlimited capacity for hard work, at the passion with which he constantly searched for new sources about his martyr subjects. He was indefatigable, writing much of the book from his sickbed" (page 84). Of the *Martyr's Mirror*, Cornelius Krahn wrote, "The book is one of the most impressive and startling records of the Anabaptist witness," *The Witness of the Martyr's Mirror* (Newton, Ks., n.d.), page 3. Marjan Blok writes: "The reliability of this source [the *Martyrs Mirror*] has been established and it has been one of the most important and trustworthy sources for studying the martyrs literature" (page 116).



Tielman Jansz van Braght (1626-64), Flemish Mennonite Oudste (Ältester), and inspired author, valiant defender of the faith. Photo - Verheus and van der Zijpp, *Het Bloedig Tooneel*...Inleiding Bij de Heruitgave, page 3.

Jan Luyken (1649-1712) lived a life of mis-spent youth during which he wrote and published his bombastic book of poems *Duyste Lier* (1671). In 1673 he was baptised in the Lamist Mennonite congregation in Amsterdam. In 1675 he forsook his bad company and committed himself to follow the Lord. He was a very important Dutch engraver, in the generation following Rembrandt, 3275 of his works have been identified. 104 of his copper etchings illustrated the 1685 edition of the *Martyr's Mirror*. See *Men. Ency.*, Vol. 3, page 424, and Jan Gleysteen, *Men. Life*, Oct. 1965, pages 168-71.



Jan Luyken (1649-1712). Photo - Krahn, *Witness of the Martyr's Mirror*, page 2.

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Map showing areas of Anabaptist-Mennonite activity in Central Europe, 1550. By the 1550s the biblical, Christo-centric Anabaptists in all centers were emerging as disciplined denominations and popularly known as Mennonites, reflecting this evolution. Map - C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History, Student Edition*, page 208.

Historical Background of Flemish Mennonites

“A Collection of Vignettes and Writings Regarding the Cultural, Spiritual and Historical Heritage of the Flemish Mennonites,” compiled from the files of Dr. Dr. Arnold Regier, Newton, Kansas, courtesy of Ted E. Friesen, Box 720, Altona, Manitoba, R0G 0B0.

Belgium - Background.

Belgium was a mixture of Germanic and Latin blood. Invasions brought on infusion of strange and mixed cultures. Flemish art shows the great suffering under foreign occupations. There was a constant struggle for political freedom. They did not raise large armies and navies to rampage across other lands and neighbours.

Belgium lived on craftsmanship for hundreds of years, long before the industrial revolution started in England. When England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain were constantly fighting each other, Belgium developed the industries of the west.

In Ghent there were trade unions and more than 54 guilds in the 16th century. It became famous for cloth-making, John Decavelle, a Ghent historian listed Anabaptist vocations as having: Tailors 9; Shoemakers 7; Linen Weavers 1; Farmers 3; Millers 3; Carpet weavers 2; Bakers 2; Carpenter 1; Diamond polisher 3; Painter 1;

Mason 1; Butcher 1; Iron worker 1; Silk weaver 1; Ropemaker 1; Wool merchant 1; Basket maker 3; Brewer 0.

Hoarace Shipp wrote that education has been a fetish with the Belgians as far back as the 9th century. They had schools before any other country in the Anglo-Saxon world. There were both public and Catholic schools throughout the years. Both systems provided the choice of French and Flemish languages. Belgium universities stem from the 15th century. Special education included agronomy, veterinary medicine, tropical medicine and applied economic science.

In ancient history a tribe from Flanders sailed across to England and established themselves in Hampshire. They were known as “Firbelgos”. In the 10th century Poland invited Belgium manufacturers to their country. Later they asked Flemish farmers to assist in draining the flooded areas along the Vistula River and to develop good agriculture. In the 16th century Flemish Anabaptists joined them in Poland.

Flemish art in its early years was closely re-

lated to Dutch painting. They improved the methods of painting in oil colours supplementing the old tempera method. Rogier von der Weyden carried on the tradition of the Van Eycks.

In the 15th century the Flemish were some of the most important sculptures in Europe. They were remarkable for the accomplishments in wood carving and tapestry weaving.

Flemish architecture begins with churches erected in Flanders before the 12th century. Some famous town halls were built in the 16th century. Later Flemish architecture was devoted mostly to pleasing domestic buildings whose style became influential throughout the world.

The earliest history of the Flemish language is closely connected with the Dutch Language. The Universal Standard Encyclopedia states that both the Dutch and Flemish languages are related to the Friesian-Franconian dialects in Germany. The Flemish also absorbed a number of French words.

The Belgium government made Flemish one of the official languages of the country. The Royal Flemish Academy was founded in 1886. A monthly publication called “Van Nu in Straks” (Today and Tomorrow) provided a forum for writers of the period.

In 1950 the census showed that about 4,100,000 Belgium citizens spoke Flemish whereas 3,100,000 spoke French. In the middle ages some Flemish families emigrated to the United States. Jean de Forest was one of the founders of the city of New York. Flemish Americans still have cultural festivals in which participants join in the festivities and games. Flemish music is heard on the radio during that time.

Sources: Shipp, Hoarace, *The Flemish Masters*, Philadelphia Library, Inc. N. Y. 1914; Cowie, Donald, *Belgium: The Land and the People*, A. S. Barnes and Co. 1977; *The Universal Standard Encyclopedia*, Unicorn Publishers, Inc. New York, 1954.



Map of the area of modern-day Belgium showing the Flemish lands of Flanders and Brabant where our Mennonite forebears established disciplined conventicles of believers, loyal to the Gospel-centric teachings of Menno Simons. Map - Verheyden,

Flight to Polish-Prussia, 1530-1600.

It was not only Reinländer who fled to the eastern lands via Kölm [Germany]. Many an Anabaptist during the times of Hermann von Wieds from the genetically-related Niederfränkisch-Flämischen regions of Flanders and Brabant, and indeed Menno himself, found refuge behind the fortress walls of the mighty city along the lower Rhine. Hans von Brüssel and Jan van Deventer, who played decisive roles in the Danziger Gemeinde in the 1580s, came to Prussia through Kölm.

The Anabaptist movement [in Flanders] had other origins than in the north and also encompassed a different class of people. Hardly any traces of the "Melchorite movement" - whose Chiliasm readily led to excesses - are to be found in the southern Netherlands, today's Belgium. The intensive study of the New Testament, available since 1523 in the local language, persuaded the educated people of the land of the correctness of the Anabaptist teachings. In 1535 an edict against the Anabaptists was issued in Antwerp. Meister Lieven, a diamond cutter from Ghent, was forced into exile for "eternal times". Apparently he fled to Danzig. In the same year, Michel Janson from Oisterhout in Brabant also came to Elbing, where he served the Gemeinde as deacon during the 1540s.

By the middle of the 15th century, the Mennonite Anabaptist movement had unquestionably become the largest non-Catholic religious community in Flanders. In Antwerp alone - in the year 1566, the year of the uprising - there were many thousands of Mennonites. In the great cities of Flanders - Ghent and Brügge - a large percentage of the middle classes belong to the Anabaptists.

Already before the rebellion and prior to the arrival of Duke Alba in the Netherlands, the persecution was harsh and inhuman. Jan van der Veste, a Burgher from Brügge, was actually thrown into prison together with wife and children. The evidence indicated that the couple had been baptised five years earlier, the family had periodically lived in Holland, and had also occasionally changed their place of residence in Flanders. Hanskin, the 15-year old son, who had worked for a time in Oldenburg in the east, later broke out of prison by sawing through the one-and-a-half inch thick iron bars of the window and lowered himself down on a bed sheet. When asked about accomplices, Frau Livine, the mother of the children, replied, that she had heard about Jan van der Driesche, that he lived in Danzig and that he belonged to their sect.

Parts of the widely branched family of van der Veste, like that of van der Driesche, appears to have moved to the Danzig Werder. In 1582, Gerdt Veste (Fast), signed a petition of [Vistula] Werder Mennonites to the Council of the City of Danzig. They were followed by the wife and children of Hermann de Timmermann, Ältester of the Antwerp Gemeinde, who was physically

burned alive in Antwerp in 1569. They were apparently the ancestors of the Danziger branch of the Zimmermann family line. They lived on the "Long Knights" Street in Antwerp.

Both in terms of numbers and elevated cultural standing, these Flemish Anabaptist refugees from Flanders and Brabant had an extremely important significance for their new homeland in Danzig and Prussia. When Alba implemented his bloody regime in Antwerp in 1567, it no longer held the freedom loving artists - the sculptures, the architects, and the master builders - at home in Mechlen and Antwerp: the architects of the Flemish renaissance, Anthony van Obbergen, the sculpture Wilhelm von dem Block (with ancient noble roots) and the building master Peter van



Street view of Het Steen, Antwerp. The prison-castle was built in 843 and enlarged in 1520 just in time for the Spanish to torture and execute a great number of heretics. Today Het Steen serves as a Maritime Museum. Photo - Feb. 3, 2003, by Adrien Hengstmengel, Homelife Realty Steinbach, Manitoba.

Eghen. They were soon working for the Kings of Denmark and Poland, for the Duke of Prussia, and finally all were to serve in Danzig, at that time the commercial metropolis of the Baltic Sea, with their creative genius. They were the ones who gave the ancient Hanseatic city [Danzig] the face of the Flemish renaissance.

How the city of Danzig became a place of refuge for young women is shown by the story of Tannekan van Mechlen. She was arrested together with her husband Hans van der Straten in Antwerp, and brought to Brussels by Alba. The man died a martyr's death on the burning stake. The young 17 year-old woman, only married for six weeks, was severely tortured as a consequence of which she fell from faith, and was sequestered away from the world in a cloister in Breda. From this cloister, she fled to Danzig, where after full repentance for her fall from faith, she was again received into the Gemeinde and also died in the faith.

Danzig was not only the final place of refuge for those who were threatened by the Inquisition, there was also an active exchange of ideas between the Gemeinden in Flanders and Brabant and the refugee Gemeinden in Prussia. Leenart Bouwens, who made three round trips through Flanders, the Hennegau, and Brabant in 1563 and who won 300 people for the Anabaptist faith in Antwerp alone, extended his mission journeys to Danzig in 1563. He had been asked to come here to help resolve matters of faith. A number of members were banned. It seems that those disagreements had already arisen which finally led

to the division into the so-called Flemish and Friesian Gemeinden [1566]. During his stay in Danzig, Leenart baptised three persons who were willing to receive baptism.

The Antwerp Anabaptists placed great interest upon the Frisian-Flemish disputations in West Friesland. Hans de Wever and Hendrik van Arnhem, together with Ältesten from other places like Hendrik van Roosevelt, travelled to Friesland. But by then the division was already a completed reality. They opted in favour of the Flemish party and sent a delegate, Class de Vries, to the Prussian Gemeinden, in order to provide clarifications there. Hendrik van Roosevelt, himself, left his homeland, and went to Prussia via Emden, where he played a significant role in the Montauer Gemeinde at the end of the century.

Decisive for the emigration of the Flemish Anabaptists to Prussia, and above all to Danzig - the suburb Schottland in those days was known as a Belgium, that is to say, a Flemish quarter - and also to Königsberg and Elbing, was the advance of the Duke of Parma, who in the 1580s, was able to vanquish all the southern Provinces [of the Netherlands]. The year 1585 was conclusive, with the fall of Antwerp, the greatest commercial city along the Schelde. The victor gave all non-Catholics the choice, to immigrate within a period of years or to return to the mother's bosom of the Catholic Church. At that time 35,000 people left the city.

For the next 200 years, Antwerp, the commercial center of the Netherlands, became a dead city. In those days, the Antwerp families of van Bergen, van Duhren and van (der) Leyhen appeared in Königsberg, and in part also in Elbing and later in Danzig. In 1598, Ambrosius Vermollen from Lier in Brabant, was accepted as a Burgher [resident] of Danzig in spite of the fact that he was a Mennonite.

A certified list of residents for the Bishopric's village of Hoppenbruch near Danzig from the year 1619, shows how strong the Anabaptist immigration from the southern Netherlands, must have been. Among 23 Mennonite names we find here: Kilian Vitus (Feith), Sartor (Gärtner) from Brussels in Brabant, Hendrich Peterson, mustard-oil painter von Schwolen from Belgium, Jan Brun from Flanders, Trüpmacher. He became a deacon of the Flemish Gemeinde in 1621, Gerg Jansen, from Brabant, linenweaver, Jakob Henrichs from Brabant, linenweaver.

By the end of the 16th century the direct immigration of Anabaptists from the southern Netherlands came to an end. The forceable re-Catholicization raised the spectre of death over the religious freedom of the land. Flemish families such as the Mombers, Spruncks, Behrends, who came to Danzig and the Vistula Delta in the next decades, immigrated to Prussia by way of intermediate places like Holland, East-Friesland or Hamburg.

From Horst Penner, *Die ost- und westpreussischen Mennoniten* (Weierhof, 1978), pages 34-38.

Pre-Reformation Flanders.

In 1951 I met Dr. Wilhelm Guderjahn, a Mennonite historian in Hameln, Germany who had doctorate degrees from Hamburg and Boston Universities. He researched early Christian history in Europe and early European settlements in the United States.

When he learned that I was a Regier he encouraged me to go to Belgium to research our early Flemish history.

In Hameln he showed me a statue of Demeter, the Greek mythological goddess of agriculture, rural life and marriage. He introduced me to the Flemish family that had brought the statue to Germany in the 16th century. Wilhelm said that this statue was found in many Flemish Anabaptist families. They had agricultural festivals in which our forebears participated. Wheat was one of the most important crops at that time. During the early Christian period this Greek influence was stronger than the Roman Catholic missions.

In 1308 an anonymous Franciscan Monk in the Ghent Convent wrote about Flemish Biblicists who refused to serve in the Belgium military forces. Hilda Johnston translated these Latin documents into English in 1951. I found this book in the Wichita State University Library. Later I returned to the library to xerox parts of it only to find it had disappeared from the reference shelf....

Otto Regier, who is now deceased, has researched his family history to Eeelo, Belgium. He also included in his research the life of Rogier von der Veyden (1399-1464) who learned to paint in a



"Woman reading a book," by Rogier van der Weyden (1399-1464). According to Arnold Regier, the painting portrays the influence which women had in the early Flemish Reformation.

Franciscan Monastery. The two paintings that interest me most are, "Dr. Luke visits Mary and the Child" in which he portrays native grassland with wildflowers in a doorway. The second painting is "Woman reading a Book". In that period Francis of Assisi met with women Bible study groups in which they studied the teachings of Jesus in the gospels in Ghent.

Our Flemish forebears had a unique historical background leading to the Anabaptist faith. It included a sustainable agriculture, a pacifist concern, and an enlightened religious perspective. It needs further exploration.

By Arnold Regier.



"Dr. Luke visits Mary," by Rogier van der Weyden (1399-1464). Note wildflowers in door and there is no halo around Mary's head.

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A Recent Trip.

I stayed at the Beguininhof in Leuven. The Beguin Order of Independent Christian Sisters was founded in the 14th century. They are thought to have been forerunners of the Anabaptists, since they had an independent Christian community. They were Catholics, but not under any bishops. So I slept there and I wondered if any of my ancestors had been in Leuven.

By Dr. John H. Janzen, University Of Kansas.

Pieter Bruegel - Artist

Pieter Bruegel studied art in Italy in the Mannerists school and was greatly influenced by the paintings of Rogier von der Weiden, a Flemish artist of the 15th century. He represented people in physical contact with one another. In his paintings he emphasized the inner emotional and psychological motives rather than the external appearance.

He was influenced by the peace teachings of Erasmus. He had close contacts with the Anabaptists as seen in his painting of "The Sermon of St John the Baptiste." Art historian M. Auner of Vienna lists Pieter as being a Flemish Anabaptist. In the right hand corner of the painting we find Bruegel's wife in a red dress and a bearded man thought to be a self portrait.

As we study the painting we see how the artist achieved an animated and colourful effect of the countless differences of Anabaptists in a worship service in a wooded area. One of the men is portrayed listening to the sermon with eyes closed. We see business men, sailors, financiers and women dressed in colourful Flemish cloth. A Chinese man and woman must have been an everyday sight in Ghent and Antwerp in the 16th century.

Derzi writes: "Bruegel was discovered in the 20th century, the first large-scale scholarly monographs were written in the years when modern art was born: this is further proof that even after hundreds of years his art retained its freshness and stimulus. It is no wonder that it captured attention in an age of innovation and of revolutionary change."

Source: Gerzi, Terez, *Bruegel and His Age* (Taling Publishing Company, N. Y. 1970).

"In no way were the recently arrived Mennonites from Flanders and Friesland the only ones in West Prussia: on their missionary journeys, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips and others had not worked here without good results, and of those Mennonites who had immigrated to Russia after 1787, according to Adolf Ehart, page 5, over 90 percent were of the Nether (lower)-German race, whose dietsche (duytsche) plattdeutsche dialect (page 21), is of Nether (lower)-franconian/Friesian origins and which bares striking resemblances to the Flemish language, of which I have personally satisfied myself in discussions with Flemings who have immigrated direct from Flanders. The Russian Mennonites were not the only ones in Russia possessing this Plautdeutsche dialect as their colloquial language: in the district of Mariupol [Bergthal] there were also Lutheran and Catholic Germans, who spoke exactly the same Platt and whose ancestors had also immigrated from Prussia. Compare with item under 1823-1824, page 179," quoted from J.J. Hildebrand, *Hildebrand's Zeittafel*, page 67.

A Plucky Belgium

Belgium is a microcosm of western man. There are mixtures of Germanic and Latin blood. Later through invasions we find the infusion of strange and mixed cultures. The richness of the soil, the large mineral deposits together with a temperate climate influenced people to work hard. It has been redeemed by continual beauty of both art and nature.

The southern half of Belgium was French speaking. In 1504 it came under Spanish rule. The northern provinces were mostly Protestant after the 16th century. Belgium was caught between English, French and German rivalry.

Flemish art shows the great suffering under foreign occupation. There was a continual struggle for political freedom seen in the paintings of Pieter Bruegel, the Elder. They were subjected to the fury of Spanish soldiers.

Belgium remained small throughout the ages because the government was never given sufficient money to raise large armies and navies to rampage across the lands and neighbours. It was the main inventor of modern industry and was actually living on its craftsmanship for hundreds of years, long before the Industrial Revolution started in England. When France, Germany, Italy, Spain and England were mainly concerned with fighting as a means of livelihood, Belgium developed the industries of the west. The nature of her people was to produce the best products and not sit around and moan about it.

In the 16th century, weavers, fullers, spinners and other craftsmen united to overthrow their masters to get a fair share of their earnings. It was a people's revolution. There were more than 54 guilds and trade unions in Ghent at that time. Today Ghent has 30 spinning mills, 62 weaving mills and it has 266 acres of warehouses.

Horace Shipp wrote that education has been a fetish with the Belgians as far back as the 9th century. They had schools before any country in the Anglo-Saxon world. There has been an innate culture in Flanders with the realization that knowledge means industrial power. There were both public and Catholic schools throughout the years. Both systems provided the choice of French and Flemish languages. Belgium Universities stem from the 15th century. Special education included agronomy, veterinary medicine, tropical medicine and applied economic science.

Antwerp from 1500 to 1560 rose from nearly nothing to become the first and richest port in Europe. Erasmus developed the idea of an utopia in Antwerp. Flemish Protestants fought against Catholics on the streets of Antwerp.

Ghent became famous for cloth making. The damp climate helped spinners and weavers develop these crafts. In 1453 the men in Ghent refused to pay taxes levied on them by Duke Philip the Good. 20,000 citizens of Ghent died on the battlefield against the armed forces of Philip. In the 16th century Ghent had a population of more than 100,000. The Castle of the Counts was built to assure peace in the region. In the 16th century it was a prison for Anabaptists during the Spanish Inquisition. It had many instruments of torture.

In ancient history a tribe from Flanders sailed

across to England and established themselves in Hampshire. They were known as Firbelgos. In the 10th century Poland invited Belgian manufacturers to their country. Later they asked Flemish farmers to assist in draining the flooded areas along the Vistula River and to develop good agriculture. They were joined by Flemish Anabaptist in the 16th century.

Sources:

Shipp, H., *The Flemish Masters* (New York, 1914); Cowie, D., *Belgium, The Land and the People* (A. S. Barnes and Co., 1977).

Brotherly Love.

Mennonite hospitality can be traced to 1290 when an unknown Franciscan monk wrote about our Flemish forebears who refused to take up arms against an English military invasion in Belgium. These families invited the soldiers into their homes and befriended them. As a result there was no bloodshed nor vandalism in Belgium at that time.

Peter Titelman, the relentless Spanish inquisitor wrote that the Anabaptists had developed the concept of fellowship and neighbourly love. They helped each other and gave employment when needed. Some worked as linen weavers under one roof to develop a true brotherhood.

By Arnold Regier

Flemish Women.

Rogier van der Weyden, a famous Flemish artist in the 16th century portrayed a woman reading the Bible (Note One). In another painting he portrayed Luke speaking to Mary with the Christ child. He did not put a halo around Mary's head. In this painting he included an area of native grass with wildflowers.

Edward Vose portrayed women in Flanders who were fond of flowers in the 15th century (Note Two). They had a unique way of preparing meat. Lacemaking and patching clothes were evidence of painstaking husbandry. They wrote poetry about birds.

Professor Larry Frankowitsch, a Franciscan historian in Wichita, Kansas has travelled to Belgium to research the experience of Francis of Assisi accompanying his father to buy cloth in Ghent. He learned about women in the 14th century who sought freedom from the domination of the Catholic Church. Francis joined them in Bible study groups. They inspired him to read the gospels.

In the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* we read of Jacques Bostyri, a widow of Martyr Gillis Roose. She had such a strong influence in the Anabaptist community that later a song was written in her memory. (Vol. III page 66). In the same source we read of Anne Gressy who was beheaded after she gave birth to a child in 1560. The child also was beheaded and put into the grave.

Her memory was celebrated in a song, "Ic moet ein Liet beginnen" (I would like to start a song). Vol IV p. 683

In Brought's *Martyr Mirror* we read about Pierentgen Looseveld who had a scholarly theological perspective. Her statement on the Triune God shows that she had discussions with other Reform leaders. A Lutheran historian near

Hannover, Germany has recently found that Martin Luther revised his extreme doctrines of the Trinity to incorporate Flemish Anabaptist views.

Johann Decavele, a Catholic historian in Ghent, Belgium lists names of Anabaptist women who were resourceful Bible students in the 15th and 16th century (Note 3). Some Flemish women were Sacramentarians before joining the Anabaptists in Ghent.

Two of the first converts to Anabaptism were Cornelia Androes and Eva Pieters. They received baptism at the hand of Jan Mathysz. They protested the reverence that Catholics had for the Virgin Mary. When they gave birth to children they raised questions about the traditional Christening service. No godparents were designated for their children.

In the 16th century reform leaders did not give women status in education and leadership roles in the church. They relegated them only to homemaking. In contrast we find that Flemish men respected women and encouraged them in developing their own religious beliefs. During the Spanish Inquisition in the 16th century Catholic leaders had a difficult time dealing with these women. They came from many walks of life. Some were tradespeople, farm women, daughters of government officials and wives of Mennonite pastors. The inquisitors realized that they could not inhibit the Anabaptist influence without silencing these women. It was for this reason so many suffered persecution until Elizabeth I of England intervened and provided refuge for them.

Decavele continues to write that Catherine Arents was married to a bonnet maker and a grain merchant. She travelled with their wares from market to market. She provided shelter for foreign Anabaptists and extended hospitality to Anabaptists released from prison. On one occasion Catherine prepared a statement refuting Catholic doctrines and placed it on a priest's door. She was summoned to appear before the City Council to answer charges against her. A reformed Ambrosian monk interceded for her and saved her from a death sentence.

There are records in Ghent that showed daughters of prominent Catholic families fled from convents and were baptized in the Mennonite Church. These were not persecuted by the Catholic authorities.

Petronella, a woman peddler of linen wares, did not have a good reputation. She was expelled from Ghent. Later she returned to Ghent and married a Mennonite. They had a baptismal service at the wedding. About 100 Mennonites attended the wedding. Johann Decavele found many such public documents in the Ghent historical files.

Are there more recent Flemish Mennonite women that deserve our attention....I am sure that other Flemish historians can think of other such women with vision and fortitude.

By Arnold Regier.

Notes:

1. A. Davies, *Rogier van der Weyden* (London, 1972); 2. E. Vose, *The Spell of Flanders* (Boston 1975); 3. Decavele, Johan, *De Dageraad van de Reformatie in Vlandern* (Brussels, 1975).

Johan Decavale, *Flemish Anabaptism 1530-1565*

Flemish Anabaptist-Mennonite sources from 1530 to 1565 researched and recorded by Johan Decavale, *De Dageraad van de Reformatie Vlaanderen 1550-1565* ("Verhaldenlingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België", Palais der Academien, Brussel, Belgium, 1975), notes by Arnold Regehr, Newton, Kansas, U.S.A. between 1986 and 1999.

In 1530 Herman Bystervent expounded the pre-Anabaptist spiritualistic doctrine of the Lord's Supper and Baptism as being merely a symbol. p. 329.

Jacob de Graves taught that believing men ought to be rebaptised. p. 332.

William Muller (Miller?), Jan. van Gendbrugge and Arent de Jaeghere were beheaded in 1535 at the Castle in Ghent. p. 333.

Cornelie Andries (Andres?), Margrite Musinghe, Eva Pierers, Madelena de Vos and Adriene de Vyne were women mentioned as being active Anabaptists. p. 335.

Peter de Pau travelled to Germany to be baptised there. They were disappointed at the rebellious atmosphere among German Anabaptists. They were owners of extensive lands and he was a person of some authority in his native district. They were arrested in 1538 and beheaded in 1542. Anabaptism flourished in their community after 1550 until the middle of the 16th century. Illem de Pau was executed in 1566.

Henrik van der Brouke (Brooks?) was a municipal carpenter and was punished in 1527 for heretical utterances and having suspicious meetings in his home. p. 340.

Henrik of Kortryk was a lapsed priest who had been rebaptised. He travelled about Flanders instructing Anabaptists. A feeling of close fellowship was expressed by the kiss of charity. He often stayed in the textile town and lodged at the inn of the priest's son, Karel Herman. Later converts from this area took over the leadership of Anabaptists in Ghent. p. 340. Some arrested Anabaptists became informers and caused other believers to be arrested. p. 342.

Anabaptists had an effective warning system which helped many to escape before they were arrested and executed. p. 342

Joris Godschalch was one who thus escaped to Zeeland on the boat owned by Jacob Loys. p. 342

The Council of Flanders and the Ecclesiastical Court of Tornai worked together in arresting and executing Anabaptists.

Karl Herman, a priest's son, made his tavern available for Anabaptist meetings. p. 343

The wife of Lieven de Walle was executed in Ghent in 1536. p. 343

People living in the underground knew much about each other. The Anabaptist movement of this period could be characterized by a solid unity. p. 344

Mathieu Waghens was a spokesman for the Muenster revolutionary movement in Flanders. He did not win many converts. p. 356.

Emigrants left wives behind to sell houses and chattels, to collect outstanding debts and bring them to England, Germany and France. p. 384

Catherine Arents of Ghent was married to a bonnet-maker and grain merchant. She travelled with their wares from market to market, went



"Klooster" - Monastery, Brugge, Belgium. Photo - Feb. 3, 2003, by Adrien Hengstmengel, Steinbach, Manitoba.

with Mennonites and established good relations with Calvinists. She allowed French Psalms to be sung in her shop. She provided shelter for foreign Anabaptists. p. 387

Herman Vlemijk - A Calvinist who became a pioneer of the Mennonite congregations in Ghent and Bruges in 1563. p. 387

Michael Ratghiers was a Protestant but leaned toward Anabaptists. p. 393. In Eeklo parents denied the right of teachers to teach the mass and church services to children. p. 403

Emigration to Germany - 38 persons fled to Emden. Some were surgeons. p. 414.

Queen Elizabeth allowed refugees from religious persecution to return to their homes and openly offered them protection. p. 418 She provided refuge in England. p. 438. 30,000 Flemish refugees in England tried to bring about peace and tolerance. p. 463.

Leaders had disappeared in 1538. They sought safety abroad. p. 466.

The number of persons baptised in Ghent grew from year to year. Despite the numerous

executions, there was scarcely any noticeable slackening of the pace of advance in the Mennonite movement. In the years 1554 to 1556 - 46, and in 1557 - 70, were baptised in Ghent. p. 476.

Mention is made of Anabaptists as being stock breeders. Antoine Rocque purchased cows but had no barn to house them. p. 478.

Hans de Vriese (Friesen?) was a prominent leader in the Mennonite fellowship. He opened his home to fellow-believers. He was imprisoned in Ghent but a man skilled as an ironworker cut the iron bars and helped him escape. p. 485.

Adrian de Block provided lodging for Mennonites. p. 487. Adrian Rogier (Regier) was a hatter who is mentioned in *Martyr Mirror*.

William de Duyck (Dyck?) was given a death sentence in 1566. p. 492.

Jan de la Beecke was a reaper. p. 496.

Anabaptists in Bruges cut themselves off from the "wicked world". They had no financial means at their disposal. So they boarded out their children to others and sought to earn their livelihood in the employ of those who shared their views. p. 497. This remarkable solidarity was nonetheless generally inadequate to alleviate the greatest need. The fact that they knew only too well that their wretched existence might end at the stake. They referred to themselves as little lambs slaughtered for Christ. (Menno Simons).

Martin van de Walle (Wall?), a silk weaver was baptised by Gillis van Aken in 1550. A number of his family members embraced the new teachings. When Martin was asked if his wife shared his religious views he answered, "she is big enough to speak for herself."

Ruffelaert de Cock - Rhetorician p. 516. In 1566 Anabaptist activities continued unabated p. 515.

Gallaume de Duntsche preached the word in a very active Anabaptist congregation in little village of Lauwe. p. 518.

Prominent leaders included Hans Buschaert, Pauwels de Bachere, Jacob de Rore and Jochim de Suikerbakker. p. 518.

Reference is made about a widow whose husband had been executed who committed suicide. p. 524

Jan van den Driesche, influential cloth merchant confiscated his property to enable him to leave in time of persecution. p. 525

Bailiff rented his houses to foreign Anabaptists who sought safety. Mayken de Cat, daughter of bailiff executed in Antwerp in 1559. p. 525

Anabaptists worked as linen weavers under one roof to develop true Anabaptist brotherhood outside of Ypres. p. 527

Pauwels de Backere, was called Paul the Baptist. He was foremost preacher. p. 530

Mennonites in small towns suffered more than in big cities. Yet forests offered an excellent pro-

tection for massive gatherings. In 1561 some 80 to 100 persons were in attendance. p. 532.

Mennonites fleeing persecution in 1563 sought refuge in Friesland, Holland and Danzig. p. 543.

Joas Aelbrect (Albrecht?) was arrested in 1551. He owned an extensive library with suspect books. p. 544.

“The rigorous persecution aimed more at the Anabaptists than the Reformed Church members, forced Anabaptists to adopt a pattern of constant mobility in search of safety and protection in anonymity. This also explains why new converts seldom stayed for any length of time in their native districts as members of the brotherhood but chose instead to go underground in surroundings where they were unknown. As a result the local congregations were in state of constant flux. The remarkable solidarity of such heterogeneous and ever-changing groups therefore testifies all the more clearly to the power of the religion under oppression.” - p. 549. Johan Decavele

“No firm organizational pattern is to be discerned during this period. Nevertheless there existed a tightly-woven network of links maintained by itinerant ministers. Moreover this network was interwoven with Menno Simons and his successors. Hence the unity and uniformity of the Mennonites in Flanders never suffered.” - Johan Decavele, p. 550.

“After 1550 there is no sign of any revolutionary inclinations. Anabaptism developed along purely pacific lines, completely accepting the concept that the government, even if godless, is instituted by God, and evidencing extreme submission even during periods of harsh persecution. They kept aloof from violence even during the period of Iconoclasm” - Johan Decavele, p. 551.

Early Anabaptist influence in Flanders was directly connected with the disturbances in Muenster and North Netherlands in 1534 and 1535. Small isolated revolutionary “Wederdopers” sought refuge in Flanders. Little or nothing of this revolutionary influence had any part in the future development of Anabaptism. Under the inspiration of Menno Simons [the] emphasis [was] on the purity of the congregation and obedience to the commandments of the gospel.” - Johan Decavele, p. 660.

Lynken Claes (Claassen?) In 1561 we read: With the stake before her eyes she says that even if she were alone on this earth and if those who had brought her to it came to convert her, she would not renounce her faith.”

Bethin Vervest, 13 years of age told his judge, “Members must be baptised when they have understanding and have improved their lives, such as be no longer lying and cheating.” - Johan Decavele, p. 666.

One man stated that he had not been baptised because he frequented taverns.

A practical difficulty arose from the desire to avoid allowing newly born children to be baptised in the Catholic church. Catholic midwives called



Townhall in Brugge, Belgium. Photo - Feb. 3, 2003, Adrien Hengstmengel.

in to help could, of course, become suspicious about this. Therefore outside help was seldom called at a confinement. Similar secrecy was maintained during deaths. p. 669.

Twenty-five different Flemish Confessions of faith were assembled by government officials between the years 1550 to 1565. Some Flemish Anabaptists stood close to the Antitrinitarians. It is not known how the origin of this view reached the Flemish Anabaptists. p. 671.

Anbaptists in Flanders developed a concept of fellowship of believers and neighbourly love. They helped each other and gave employment were needed - Johan Decavele, page 665.

51.

Excerpts from *Glaubens Bericht der Alten Flamischen Tauffgesinneten Gemeinden in Preußen...* Gedruckt im Jahre des Herrn 1768 [From the introduction by Hans von Steen, Ältester of the Flemish Gemeinde in Danzig]: “The Almighty has sustained His sheep in many lands such as France, England, Hungary, Bavaria, Moravia, in Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, in Piedmont and in Lombardy. Since then they have been known under many names such as Waldensians, Albegensians, Groebenheimers, and Moravian Brethren,” (page 11).

Notes by Arnold Regier.

Arnold Regier (1913-2000).

Arnold Regier was born in Elbing, Kansas, in 1913. In 1939 he married Helen Buhr from Morse, Saskatchewan. In 1947 he served as the first President of Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. Arnold and Helen were active in the work of the Mennonite General Conference. In 1962 they co-authored the Living Faith graded Sunday School series. In 1994 they wrote a 125 page history of his home town, *Elbing - Next Stop*. Arnold taught at Rosthern Junior College (1953-57) and served as Caplain at Bethel Deaconess Hospital, Newton, Kansas (1957-65). He retired in 1978 and passed away on August 6, 2000 at his home on Newton, Kansas.

Arnold Regier had a long standing interest in the Flemish roots of the Polish-Prussian and Russian Mennonites but died before being able to pursue his interest to the point of completing a manuscript for publication. He was associated in his quest with Mr. Ted E. Friesen, Altona, Manitoba (*Pres.*, No. 20, pages 89-97). In Ted's file of correspondence with Dr. Regier are found references to others sharing this interest, including Marjan Blok, Professor at St. John's International School, Waterloo, Belgium, Harold E. Huber, Menno Simons Library, Eastern Mennonite College, Harrisonburg, Virginia, Professor John Janzen, Newton, Kansas, and Dick Epp, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. In 1986 Arnold corresponded with Johan Decavele, Verlorenbroodstraat 16, 9220 Merelbeke, Belgium, author of the pioneering work on the Reformation in the Flemish lands.

Dr. Regier envisioned a writing program encompassing the entire history of the Flemish Mennonite diaspora of which the Russian Mennonite period would be by far the most significant manifestation, with current descendants numbering some 650,000-700,000 (of whom half are German and half English readers). My goal would be the more modest one of exploring and documenting the roots, background and spirituality of the Flemish Mennonites in the 16th century and attempting to extract and assess the significance of this historical legacy on our modern-day lives and contemporary Christian faith.

Dr. Arnold Regier had a particular interest for pre-Reformation religious and cultural roots in Flanders, a topic that is fascinating indeed. He had a special passion for 16th century Flemish painters and other cultural icons as well as associations of Anabaptists in Flanders to various earlier educational endeavours and spiritual renewal efforts within the Catholic Church.

— The Editor



Arnold Regier. Photo - Fünfzig Jahre Konferenzbestrebungen, page 410.

Anabaptism in Flanders - A Century of Struggle

“Anabaptism in Flanders 1530-1650 - A Century of Struggle: A Vivid Account of the heroic struggle of the stalwart Flemings for the Anabaptist Faith,” by A. L. E. Verheyden, Laureate of the Royal Academy of Belgium, a precis of the book published by Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania in cooperation with the Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, 1961, 138 pages, summary compiled by Delbert Plett, Steinbach, Canada.

Introduction.

To seek to evoke a perfect image of the significance which Mennonitism attained in the province of Flanders during the agitated century of the Reformation seems to me to be a completely illusory enterprise. Powerful manifestations of a sharply resisting Mennonitism reveal themselves often, now in this, now in that town....time has wrought havoc with the archival sources....In particular we must be wary in the use of quotations from the chronicles in the discussion of the history of the Mennonites in the Spanish Netherlands, since the authors are either Roman Catholic or Calvinistic, and *ipso facto* can never be entirely acquitted of prejudice when they treat of Mennonitism.

A still more dangerous stumbling block is the supernatural courage with which the Mennonites answered their examining judges. The best read as well as the least-read Mennonite under trial answered fervently the questions of his judges when he had to defend the doctrine, but was silent when he was interrogated about the organization of the group to which he belonged or about his fellow believers in other places. The most inhuman practices failed to get the tortured victim to disclose the name or the residence of his brethren who were still at liberty, and certainly not the residence of the leaders. In those cases when the one on trial did give out exact indications, the persons mentioned were either already dead or out of reach at the moment of

the disclosure.....

It is therefore not surprising that this far Karel Vos has been the only historian to undertake the study of a Mennonite congregation in the Southern Netherlands, namely, the congregation at Antwerp....Certainly as long as Flemish Mennonitism is so little known a very important aspect of the Reformation in the Southern Netherlands is neglected. Since the Mennonites produced nearly three-quarters of the total number of Spanish Martyrs and continued the struggle against the Hapsburg authority for a century, we insult logic by writing the history of the Reformation without giving a large space to Mennonitism alongside of Calvinism and Lutheranism.

For this reason we have undertaken to write this monograph on Menno's disciples in the province of Flanders. We are aware that actually it has turned out to be no more than a "sketch" of the indefatigable activity of the Mennonites on Flemish soil.

....The historiography of the Mennonite movement will follow quite different lines, depending on whether it concerns the Northern Netherlands or the Southern Netherlands. It will not do, for example, to use for Flanders Kühlers subdivision... of Mennonite history in Holland: The North Dutch brotherhood, from its rise until 1581, lived in a period of persecution by the state. Until 1554, however, this persecution was not of the sort to prevent the establishment of congregations, nor, after 1554,

participation in great debates, which led, disappointingly enough, to numerous schisms. After 1581, the year in which the Reformed faith was elevated to the position of a state religion, the brotherhood entered a new contest with the proponents of other Reformation churches in order to be recognized by them. This was in effect attained in 1672. Then the internal reconstruction was started which led to the foundation of the "Alegemeene Doopsgezinde Societeit" in 1811.

This chronological division cannot be used even in part for the history of the Flemish Mennonites....during the entire period of its existence this faith never received recognition as a religious movement. For the Flemish followers of Menno Simons it was "a century of struggle"...The fluctuations in the zeal of their opponents to persecute them are the only milestones in the agitated years of their existence.

Originating about 1530, this movement had reached most of the centers of the country by 1550, certainly the larger ones....the scattered executions failed to prevent a considerable expansion. In 1550, however, came the signal for an incredibly bloody oppression. Mass arrests occurred all over the country. Many Mennonites were executed, and others were exiled for life. This storm of persecution did not decrease until 1576, when the rise of Calvinism became more and more evident. The period 1576-1586, which was (until 1584) the Golden Age of the Calvinists, eliminated the fear of death, but did not bring the recognition which the Mennonites so greatly desired.

After 1585 persecution flared up again. In this year Alessandro Farnese initiated a real hunt for the leading figures of the brotherhood, who were mercilessly condemned to death, while the ordinary members were expelled from the provinces. The years 1586-1640 were the period of the most obstinate resistance of the last Mennonite families who sought to be worthy of the honourable tradition of their ancestors. But it was an unequal fight. A gradual emigration to the Northern Netherlands [and to Polish-Prussia] took place, which was completed by about 1640.

....it will be necessary to write about the doctrines which held the chief place in the faith of the Flemish Mennonites.

The feeling of sharing a common lot, based upon and purified by incessant persecution, kept the Mennonites of the Southern Netherlands indivisible in doctrine. Here the church was always first, and individual achievements were secondary. The doctrine of Menno Simons, as this Frisian elder proclaimed it at the beginning of his career, was maintained by the Flemish brotherhood to the end. Seldom did the Mennonites of the Southern Netherlands experience divergence in doctrine; those who ventured to disagree had no significant success. Nowhere were divisions completed; never was the individual to hold his own against the church.

Preface.

"Dr. A. L. E. Verheyden, formerly lecturer in History at the University of Liege, later Professor in the Academy at Aalst, devoted long years of painstaking study to the reconstruction of the history of Anabaptism in his country. He wrote exhaustive local martyrological studies - Bruges (1944), Ghent (1946), Courtrai and Brussels (1950),....[culminating with] his *Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden in de zuidelijke Nederlanden in de XVIe Eeuw* (Brussels, 1959). This recent work includes within its broader treatment the main lines of the history of Anabaptism in Flanders, those now being published in the present volume, but with less detailed documentation."

"Beyond his interest in Anabaptist studies, Professor Verheyden was a respected authority on other aspects of Reformation history. His *Le Bilon du Conseil des Troubles* (Royal Academy, 1960), recounts one of the darkest chapters in the history of religious repression in Europe. His *De Hervorming in de zuidelijke Nederlanden in de XVIe Eeuw* (Brussels, 1949), an official publication of the national Belgian Protestant Synod, was the first Reformation history in Belgium to describe fairly the place of Anabaptism in the early years of the Reformation."

"The present volume offers the first comprehensive study of Anabaptism in Flanders in the 16th century. Based upon a massive use of sources, it is thorough, completely objective and fair, and exhaustive. The picture it presents is a new one in its evidence of the surprising extent of the spread of the movement geographically, as well as its depth and tenacity in the face of the severest persecution. That Anabaptism persisted in Flanders almost a half century beyond 1600 was not clearly known before. That apart from certain aberrations at the very beginning Flemish Anabaptism was completely peaceful, nonresistant, and evangelical, largely after the pattern of Menno Simons, is irrefutably demonstrated. A major gap in our knowledge and understanding of continental Anabaptism has now been closed in an exceptionally competent fashion by a master in the field."

"The manuscript was originally submitted for publication in 1947 but [was not published earlier] because of delays in translation. The translation was completed by Meintje Kuitse of Amsterdam and Jan Mattheijssen of Meppel, while exchange students at Goshen College. The entire manuscript was then edited and revised by John Howard Yoder in consultation with the writer. Mr. Lewis Martin, Harrisonburg, Virginia, generously contributed to the cost of the translation."

For the Mennonite Historical Society, "Harold S. Bender".

The actual basis of the Mennonite faith is the rejection of the sacraments. What distinguishes Mennonites theologically from the other Reformation groups is their conception of baptism and the Lord's Supper....[For] Menno Simons and thus also for his Flemish followers baptism was only a sign. First the inner battle with the devil had to be won and full surrender to God achieved; only then could baptism be considered....Adult baptism, fundamental to the Mennonite faith, counts only as an external sign and therefore dare not in any respect have sacramental character.

Reception into the brotherhood demanded of the convert an exemplary life, a through knowledge of the doctrines, and a total surrender to God. When he expressed the wish to be considered for baptism, he knew that he would be subjected to a through examination of his faith in the presence of the Bishop...at his next visit, and he would not be surprised if his first request was fruitless.

It is worthy of note that the Mennonites did not make it easy to join their group, in spite of the severe persecution and the infrequent visits to the Flemish area of those who were authorized to baptise...

It was not unusual for a common labourer to hold his own in the defense of the doctrine....the high demands...made of the candidate-convert...meant...a thorough purification of life, also a rising of the intellectual level...it is no wonder that some of the candidates ...had to wait several years....Baerbele Pieters had to wait three years before she was received as a sister...

Godewvaert Jasperssoone...has given some clarification [to the form of baptism and] described the ceremony as follows: One takes a dish with water, into which the minister puts his hand and then drops water upon the head of the recipient in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost upon the basis of the faith that he, the recipient, has in this baptism."

...All sacramental character is denied to the [Lord's] Supper. "It is a sign in the first place of the love of God in Christ, consequently of the unity of the believers, finally of their spiritual fellowship with the body of Christ and His death..."

Adult baptism and the conception of the Supper brought the final rupture both with the Catholics and with the other Reformation groups. The other points of the Mennonite faith...only deepened the existing rupture....

In the course of the 16th century much debate in Mennonite doctrinal thinking was occasioned by the discussions about the nature of Christ. The Mennonites found it impossible to conceive that Christ bore in Himself anything of the purely human sinful nature, since His death on the cross could then not have blocked out the sins of the world. Upon this basis the Mennonites did not admit that Jesus would have received His flesh from Mary... our investigation...always led to the conclusion that the followers of Menno in the Southern Netherlands in general defended against their opponents the concept that Christ was born "out of" the Virgin Mary, who remained a virgin, but not "of" Mary. This means that Christ did not receive His human nature and being from the mere body of the Virgin Mary, but that He descended from above by the power of the Holy Spirit into the Virgin, as the Scriptures assert.

Still less clearly did the Flemish Mennonites develop their conception of the resurrection of the dead at the return of Jesus Christ on earth. They believed that neither purgatory nor heaven is the dwelling place for the souls of the departed; they go somewhere to await the redeeming hour of the Last Judgement....The fact that they considered confession, adoration of saints, fasting, and the authority of the pope not to be in accord with the requirements of the Bible certainly needs no further demonstration.

The refusal to swear oaths, the retention of non-resistance, and the use of the ban (excommunication) are also considered typical Mennonite practices....

The Flemish followers of Menno seldom expressed themselves about the principle of nonresistance, a principle that did not achieve full recognition until the second half of the 16th century. It has been proved, indeed, that the brotherhood remained entirely neutral - it was, moreover, a voluntary neutrality - toward any manifestation of worldly power or use of weapons....After the restoration of Spanish absolutism, which heralded the triumphant return of Catholicism, there were in Ghent and Bruges, several instances of Mennonites refusing to serve in the civic guard....

With great care the Mennonites sought to establish and maintain the church without "spot" or "wrinkle". Immediately, however, the question arose as to who would be charged with discipline - the congregation or the elders (leaders of the general brotherhood). The Northern and the Southern Netherlands each solved this problem in its own distinctive way. The brotherhood in the Northern Netherlands was soon divided under the influence of the individualism of the elders desirous of leadership; this mania for division continued in fact far into the 17th century. The greater freedom of movement with which the Mennonites there could spread their faith was certainly not without effect....

The South, however, where the repression was maintained with the exception of short periods of peace, saw the Mennonites rallying anxiously around the church and expecting from it the greatest blessing. The brethren were often thrown on their own resources, since they were frequently deprived of their leaders and, after the travels of Leenaert Bouwens (1554-56, 1557-61, 1563-65), were only rarely visited by ministers from the Northern Netherlands. Consequently it was natural that the church assume the authority to remove undesirable elements. In any case, united deliberation about certain cases necessarily diminished in actual practice the chances for inconsiderate decrees of excommunication. The Flemish Mennonites were in this respect faithful to the directives given by Menno in his *Loving Admonition* published as early as 1541. Only when the guilty brother persisted in his wickedness did the congregation have to interfere; up to that point no opportunity to restore the erring to the right path was neglected. This spirit, which was dissipated in the North under the pressure of particularistic animosities, persisted undiminished in the South....

Admonition from man to man, handling the case within the church and only then expulsion - this was the way in which the weapon of excommunication was used in the South. They considered as "a wrinkle or spot" those who committed theft,

lying (this was considered a serious delinquency), adultery, or other acts contrary to the general Christian teaching.

Jacques de Rore, one of the most influential leaders of the second half of the 16th century...urged caution and asked them not to consider the delinquent from the beginning as an enemy, "but to admonish him as a brother, for the admonition serves to improvement, likewise the shunning and the excommunication serve to improvement." Thus tolerance became the principle characteristic of the Mennonitism of the Southern Netherlands; yet this prudent wielding of the weapon of excommunication never degenerated into laxity.

....The affair of Fierin Grysperre provides a vivid testimony....This time it was not a matter of one having abandoned himself to worldly practices. On the contrary, Grysperre was one of the ministers of the Ghent congregation, who after personal study had come to conclusions which were not completely in accord with Menno's teachings. Approached immediately about the matter, he obstinately maintained his point of view. Evidently he was then summoned before a wide circle but without success. On the ground that the accused would not submit, he was expelled from the brotherhood. Fierin Grysperre thereupon appealed to the full congregation. He expressed himself as follows: "Because he was not excommunicated by all the brethren and sisters of the congregation, he gave them to understand that he would prove that he had to be heard before all the brethren and sisters, since he was only excommunicated by some of them and not in the presence of all the brethren." The final decision, according to this testimony of 1582 belonged most positively to the congregation.

In the light of this, the significance of the Mennonite conference which was held at Antwerp in August 1567, can better be grasped. This meeting (where not only Mennonites of Antwerp were present) had been arranged especially to consider which fellow believers could no longer be tolerated because of the persistence in a licentious life.

The weapon of excommunication, exercised by the whole brotherhood, can frequently, for the South, not be considered an evil. The Flemish Mennonites always preferred tolerance without laxity, and expelled only hardened "sinners".

For these reasons we cannot follow Kühler in concluding, on the basis of the attitude of Hans de Ries and Charles de Nielles, that the Southern Netherlands followed the North on the road of divisions....it is at least rash to equate the spiritual life of the Antwerp congregation with that of the whole Flemish brotherhood, which had to contend with totally different conditions.

"Endeavour always to build up one another" - these were the parting words of Jacques de Rore to the leaders of the Flemish Mennonitism. Those who are familiar with the history of the Mennonites in the province can see in these words the answer that directed all followers of Menno Simons to unite in order to sustain for a century the unequal struggle with the confederated powers of church and state in the country of Flanders, a land deprived of its liberty of thought.

We have no other purpose than to light up this heroic struggle in order to better understand the Flemish Reformation. "A. L. E. Verheyden"

I. Rise of the Brotherhoods 1530-1550.

The religious emancipation of the 16th century in Flanders was not a sudden outburst but only the final phase of a consistent development from roots far in the past. The last decades of the 14th century had already been powerfully influenced by an impulse seeking real and deep religious experience, free from all dogmatic prejudice, an impulse which could no longer be suppressed.

The activity of the Brethren of the Common Life in bringing the Bible to the people in the vernacular, which released the individual from conformist thinking and enabled him to express his religious views freely, penetrated into the broadest areas of contemporary Flemish society.

Of course the "modern devotion" movement, being a creation of the Middle Ages, was still attached to the prestige of the decadent Catholic Church; nevertheless the masses of the people were aroused from their ancient religious rigidity by the creative preaching and the revivalistic writing of Geert de Groote's followers.

This nonecclesiastical revival defied the spirit of the time and counted even more followers in the 15th and especially 16th century, while the clerical dignitaries of the period were straying further and further from their religious calling....

Claes de Praet, a Mennonite martyr of 1556, summarized the decadence among the clergy with this satirical tirade:

"You preach to the people not to get drunk, but you yourselves walk the streets as drunk as swine. You preach to the people not to be stingy, but where can more avarice be found than among the priests and monks?...."

In their attempt to restore real significance to religion as a living factor in the folk consciousness Martin Luther and John Calvin, each in his own way, made fundamental changes in the traditional doctrines, but essentially both replaced the Catholic Church and its dogma by their churches and their dogma. Thus the history of Lutheranism and of Calvinism is that of two distinct church groupings, which never deviated from the original dogmatic concepts of their respective founders.

Both elements - church and dogma - lose for a great part their authoritative character among the Anabaptists, to whom the ideas of the elders - these are the leaders of the movement - are only the directives in the realization of their religious ideal, which is a consistent *imatatio Christi*....

From the beginning Anabaptism had two as-

pects: while numerous zealots were swept away by the hope of having the whole world at their feet before long and, as the elect, of escaping the imminent destruction of the heathen (i.e. all non-Anabaptists), the others - originally a minority - were dedicated to an ideal which renounced the world and shunned violence, and devoted their best efforts to the building of a



A grain mill in Flanders. Photo - Jan Gleysteen.

peaceful brotherhood, which was to include all "who believe in Christ's name."

The former group won a quick victory over the pacifist-minded group in the Northern Netherlands; the call to action issued by Jan van Leiden, Jan Matthijs van Haarlem, and others found such a good response that many magistrates looked with fear at the growth of the revolutionary idea within their respective jurisdictions....Münster (which was to become the New Jerusalem) surrendered to the bishop's armies, the movement of the Adamites at Amsterdam was merely a brief hysterical show, and the assault on the Oldeklooster near Bolsward was a tragic fiasco.

This series of failures inevitably had serious consequences. First of all, it furnished the secular authorities with an easy justification for their draconic repressive measures against the peaceful Anabaptists. Although fundamentally absolutely different, the peaceful Anabaptists were always equated with the revolutionary Anabaptists and consequently no penalty was too severe for them. (For anyone familiar with

the martyrology of the Southern Netherlands, it is no secret that the worst death penalties, such as burning at the stake or burial alive, were inflicted on the Mennonites.)

The actual spiritual life of the brotherhood also underwent decisive change. The peaceful brethren, who had previously had to be silent, now left their minority position and assumed the leadership. Flemish Anabaptism did not, however, suffer so violently under the storm that raged over the Northern Netherlands brotherhood.

About 1530

Melchiorite teachings had penetrated into the cities of Bruges and Ghent, and then spread rapidly in the Southern Flemish cities and villages....it should be noted that after the ruthless condemnation of Anabaptism by the Diet of Spires in 1529 many Anabaptists fled to the Meuse provinces and thus it is not at all impossible that many a refugee may have had the impulse to hide in the protective shadow of the great Flemish industrial and commercial cities....It was this close connection with the Anabaptist movement of the Northern Netherlands which exposed the South, during the period of crisis, to the dangers of revolutionary degeneration which we have already mentioned.

....I believe that the temptation to resort to violent methods like those of the Northern Netherlands brethren also existed in some Flemish Anabaptist circles, but was not

responded to with the same enthusiasm....

Anabaptist views also reached the Flemish groups in a more direct way by means of the travels of Cornelis van Valconisse and Pieter van Gelder....

In the southern brotherhood...the brotherhood always was true to the peaceful and spiritual principles which were the basis of the first congregation. Not only did the appeal of Rothmann's *Van der Wrake* ring very faintly in the Flemish country, but after the collapse of the Münster tragedy, the Anabaptists here rapidly rallied to the discipline of faith promoted by the Frisian Menno Simons. Already in 1536 Menno declared all use of force as absolutely unacceptable and strongly rejected the building of a church and a kingdom of God on earth by the sword....The same spirit filled the Flemish Mennonites....

In the South the "quiet" Melchiorites seized the first stable guidance which corresponded to their own aspirations, and from then on, Flemish Anabaptism followed the path of Northern Mennonitism. The others....came to their senses

after the example of Obbe Philips and joined the ranks of the "peaceful".

About 1535 in Ghent...there developed such a revolutionary Anabaptist community...this group stood in close relation to the Southern and Eastern Flemish communities; thus here also there were brethren (this is the way these fellow believers always addressed each other, expressing their sincere attachment with the kiss upon greeting or parting) who had not yet given up the hope of achieving by action what the absolute majority of Mennonites tried to achieve by word alone - the purification of the spiritual life....

The first general spreading of Mennonitism in Flanders was followed by a sharpening of the imperial edicts. The mandates of October 10, 1535, January 24, 1539, and December 14, 1541, were especially meant to exterminate Mennonites....Charles V simply put them in the same category as the thieving wandering mercenaries.....in the city of Münster."

....The Southern Netherlands Mennonites retained this tag of "evil-minded" until the end of the century....Whoever broke with the Catholic Church and accepted adult baptism became *ipso facto* a public enemy. Adult baptism was a rallying point for all those who would without fail seize the first opportunity to destroy the existing political and social order and to introduce absolute anarchy.

...Hardly, however, had the first Anabaptists made their voice heard when the number of executions increased rapidly. And when the martyr lists are carefully studied, it is striking to note to what extent it was the Anabaptists who were the victims of the persecutions....At Ghent, Bruges, and Courtrai,...the number of Anabaptist martyrs in the 16th century passes 70 percent of those executed for non-Catholic thinking (the other 30 percent consisted of Lutherans, Calvinists, iconoclasts, and people of unidentified religious convictions)....Whoever became a Mennonite knew what he would face in the case of arrest; no wonder that among the arrested Mennonites there were so few who would recant.

The mandates on heresy - more specifically on Anabaptism - were the cause not only of many executions but also of a first emigration. Anyone who was aware that he was known as a Mennonite lost no time in placing himself beyond the reaches of the authorities. So the first Flemish groups of Anabaptist exiles came into existence, opening the way for the later, more massive emigration....

In London (once more the attraction of the big city asserted itself) two Flemish Anabaptists and their wives were burned on November 23,

1538, while a third escaped the death penalty by abjuring his faith.....On a larger scale there was emigration to the Northern Netherlands, a logical consequence of the close linguistic relationship. Most of them settled in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, where not seldom they were accepted by the municipal labour institutions because of their technical skills.....

Although the first congregations, presumably well established around 1545, could rejoice in having faithful and convinced members, they still lacked the binding element to build a strong fellowship in Flanders....They saw the need for having someone to be constantly available to travel and visit all the Flemish congregations, to give them guidance, in particular in spiritual matters.



Outside Brugge. "Knotwilgen" willows, harvested for twigs. Photo - Jan Gleysteen.

To have an elder (of Bishop)....from their own ranks became daily a more urgent necessity. An elder, however, was supposed to be a constant example of unquestionable purity in spirit and behaviour and to show in the area of faith an infallible knowledge. Such a man was not available in these relatively young congregations in the period before 1550. The Anabaptists of the first period came in general from the working class. The converts had joined the new confession with enthusiasm, and with unbroken zeal they had appropriated the Mennonite doctrines. None of them, however, had the necessary schooling and the requisite spiritual strength to assume the leadership of the entire Flemish Mennonite brotherhood.

Hitherto the congregations had to be satisfied with the visits of the Northern elders, who rarely came through Flanders....[they] were all too well known to the clerical and secular police to be able to allow themselves extended visits to

any one town....

..The first man to fill the difficult office of elder for Flanders was apparently Hans Busschaert (or Hans de Wever), a man who completely met the requirements....above all he proved to be a righteous and dauntless leader....[but he] was not active in Flanders until 1555....

The fact, however, that Mennonitism could experience such expansion without the desired centralized leadership and in the midst of many dangers is in itself very significant....no elaborate argument is needed to picture Antwerp as a focus of Anabaptism. In its shelter the Anabaptist and later the Mennonite teachings developed rapidly....

The greater security offered by Antwerp also made it possible for visiting Northern Netherlands elders to dwell here for longer periods unnoticed, which of course raised the local brotherhood in the estimation of the less privileged groups and thus procured for it a prominent position in the fold of the Southern Netherlands Mennonite brotherhood. Besides, the metropolis was of far-reaching importance for the Anabaptist groups as a distribution centre for Reformation literature.

In and after 1534 some particular writings appeared, which were very much sought after by the Northern Anabaptists and with which the South as well was probably well supplied....In the course of that year Adriaan van Breggen published *Een profitellic ende troostelic boexken van den gheloove ende hoope, wat dat oprechte ghelove is. Ende welcke ghenade die menschen doer het ghelove vercrigen. Ende how scadelicken dat onghelove is. Noch een boexken van die liefde die god tot ons heeft, en wat liefde*

werct, ende hoe schadelic die liefde des werelts is, allen menschen seer troostelic....

Jan Claeszen - later hanged at Amsterdam - declared that in 1544 that he had had 600 copies of Menno's writings printed at Antwerp....

Focal point of Mennonite spiritual life, preferred place of residence of the most prominent leaders, centre for the publication and distribution of writings - all this brought the congregation in Antwerp to the fore. It is consequently not surprising that the Flemish congregations, which had to do without all these privileges, turned for help to the Antwerp "mother" group in the hope of becoming able to take an independent position in the second half of the 16th century. However unfinished the task may have been, yet in this period before 1550 the solid foundations were laid which made it possible for Mennonitism, after the mid-century, to withstand over a long period the heavy blows which it was obliged to endure from its embittered adversaries.

II. Growth and Struggle, 1550-1576.

At the beginning of the second half of the 16th century Mennonitism was irresistibly becoming the largest non-Catholic confession in Flanders. There, where the Mennonite brotherhood had victoriously defied the merciless edicts, Lutheranism lost much of its prestige,....Lutheranism was out-run by about 1530, first by the radical Anabaptist movement, afterward by the Mennonite movement.

Calvinism...did not prosper before 1550, even in cities like Brugs and Ghent....[the attention of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities] was caught all the more by the increasing spread of Mennonite teachings, in the cities as well as in the rural areas. That this expansion disturbed even the highest government authorities becomes evident in their lively interest in the arrival of Jan van Sol in Brussels.

Jan van Sol was born at Dortrecht, but left the Netherlands in 1530 because of debts and settled in Danzig. Even before his flight he revealed himself to Amsterdam authorities as a zealous opponent of Anabaptism by betraying the plot of Hendrik van Hasselt. After some years in Danzig, he had the bitter experience of increasing hostility in return for his anti-Mennonite activities....at the beginning of 1549 Jan van Sol decided to return to his homeland and offered the government there his experience and his services in combating the Anabaptist menace.....

....his proposals were sent on December 8, 1550, to Viglius, president of the Secret Council. As a result van Sol was granted an interview...with J.

de Wierden, secretary to the emperor....van Sol's report included, besides well-known generalities, many details worth knowing. He saw in Anabaptism three well-defined movements, the Melchiorites (the peaceful Mennonite group), the Davidites (after the teachings of David Joris, seldom heard in the Southern Netherlands, and the Batenburgers. Of the three groups - Jan van Sol continued - the first was the most important. The movement was under the leadership of Obbe and Dirk Philips, as well as of Menno Simons (the only one of significance for Flanders). These leaders sent out teachers, who preferred to enter a town by night and were immediately brought to a safe hiding place by some fellow believers.

Van Sol described furthermore the important function of the "purse-bearers," deacons charged with the financial affairs of the congregations. Very interesting is his statement that these deacons made loans to the less fortunate brethren, who returned the borrowed funds as soon as they were able. According to van Sol, this practice was the only explanation for the fact that ever more well-to-do people were to be found in Mennonite circles....

The next day, December 24, 1550, Jan van Sol again appeared before de Wierden....[he] spoke about the development of the Mennonite brotherhoods in Danzig. Explicitly he assured the imperial secretary that the Dutch Anabaptists were not unwelcome there, because the authorities saw in

their immigration a profitable affair....the working methods [of the Dutch immigrants] resulted in an undeniable improvement in the local agricultural and textile industries; these changes were, of course, regarded very favourably by the Danzig authorities.

The case of Jan van Sol....was drawn up in 16 articles....a child should be baptised within 24 hours of its birth in the presence of its father....The plan advocated the division of villages and small towns into four parts, so that everyone, regardless of rank, could be subjected to through surveillance....It called for an obligatory oath of loyalty to the customs and laws of the court....to a Mennonite this obstacle was insuperable, since an oath was forbidden to him....As for immigrants suspected of Anabaptism who did not return, their goods would



Brugge, an evening scene. Windmill on city walls. Photo - Jan Gleysteen, Mennonite Tourguide, page 239.

immediately be confiscated, half of the proceeds returned to the family and the other half given to the imperial treasury.....

The numerous confiscation lists which were made up after Duke Alba arrived and the obligatory oath of fidelity to the Spanish regime imposed after the restoration of the Hapsburg authority by Alessandro Farnese, proved that van Sol's proposals were useful....

...shortly after 1550 a savage storm of persecution broke out over a number of cities in the Flemish province....The urgent tone of Jan van Sol's proposal demonstrates that the expansion of the Mennonites had become a problem for the fearful Catholic population as well as for the highest civil authorities. The martyrs mentioned provide eloquent evidence for the effective inner flowering of the Mennonite groups, as their statements during the trials amply confirm.

....in the period at hand, 1550-75, we find many active personalities. It is true that the actual leaders, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, never dared to be personally active in Flanders, but these Northerners saw to it that the Flemish field was not deprived of spiritual leadership and material help. In addition the Northern Netherlands sent a dauntless worker in the person of Leenaert Bouwens. He had joined the leadership of the Northern brotherhood at a time when it urgently needed competent helpers.

As a result of regrettable developments the places of Obbe Philips and David Joris had become vacant by 1540, while the remaining elders, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, had had to take refuge abroad, the former in Emden and Holstein, the latter in Danzig.

Between 1542 and 1547 the brotherhood ordained five new teachers: Adam Pastor, Hendrik von Vreden, Antonius van Keulen, Frans Reines de Cuyper and Gillis van Aken....Leenaert Bouwens, after serving as an evangelist for many years, was ordained as elder in 1553 by Menno Simons. The next year he began to teach and to baptise in the Southern Netherlands. In the words of his convert Jacques d' Auchy, "He taught amendment of life, putting off the old man and putting on the new one." The first trip by Bouwens lasted until 1556....and added to the Southern brotherhood 225 members, as reported in his diary....

Especially for Flanders the recruitment of new elements for the propagation of the faith was of the highest importance. Even more than the great number of brethren who joined, thanks to Bouwens activities, these new missionaries...laid the groundwork for the success which Mennonitism was soon to have in the Southern Netherlands. Equally fruitful were Bouwens' visits to Flanders in the periods 1557-61 and 1563-65, during which his baptismal lists for the South were extended with 367 new names.

However, Bouwens stopped his fiery preaching and his successful baptising in the South after 1565 to devote all his powers to the guidance

of the Northern brotherhood. Stubborn enemy of every compromise in matters of exact application to the doctrines in everyday life, he soon came into conflict with Menno Simons, advocate of a wholesome tolerance. With the help of Dirk Philips, Bouwens embittered the last years of Menno's life, not only pushing him mercilessly out of the leadership but also forcing him to make concession with which he did not really agree.

The new leaders, whose position was untested after Menno's death on January 31, 1561, bore the heavy responsibility for the tragic divisions in the Northern brotherhood and for the indisputable stiffening of Mennonite doctrines. In Flanders, Bouwens never succeeded in bringing the name and theology of Menno Simons into discredit, as is clear from the testimony of Martin Micron, who pictures Menno's influence in Belgium as predominating. Neither was Bouwens able to stir up warm sympathy for his exaggerated disciplinary action in the Mennonite groups....because of the strict control by civil and clerical authorities, his visits in the Flemish cities were too short to have far-reaching results. Furthermore the Southern congregations were too busy with the common struggle for existence to listen to the dangerous advice of Bouwens....

After Gillis van Aken had had to admit that his preaching in the North had little success he went to the Southern Netherlands. Here his activity left

many traces: not only was his presence reported in the most widely spread and the most isolated towns, but he also did much for the expansion of the Flemish brotherhood by his numerous baptisms.... Gillis van Aken was beheaded on July 10, 1557. After his execution, his right hand was cut off and exhibited in a wheel outside the city.

To the Mennonites, who in the words of Jeronimus Segertsz would "rather be tortured ten times a day than to forsake the faith which I have confessed," the cowardly attitude of Gillis [in recanting] was a great disappointment. Vincken Verwee, who knew that by recanting she could mitigate her sentence, nevertheless did not hesitate one moment with her statement: "It would grieve me to die as he [Gillis van Aken] had died, for he forsook his faith."

....[Joachim Vermeeren was] An active propagandist of Menno's teachings, he baptised many in Flanders during the period 1557-60...already in December, 1558, 300 carolus-guilders were promised to any who would deliver the "dangerous baptizer"....Neither this serious threat nor his wife's imprisonment in a dungeon by the Antwerp government in May, 1559, could keep Joachim (de Suikerbakker, i.e. the Pastry Cook as he was called by the Flemish Mennonites) from continuing his baptizing in the Southern Netherlands. In 1565, however,...he fell into the hands of the local magistrates....he,....surrendered soon to the persuasive talents of the Cologne theologian George Cassander....[and] was irrevocably lost to the Mennonites.

Besides these three...leaders in the period before 1560, the Fleming Hans Busschaert, called de Wever (the Weaver), could be noted. He was ordained an elder by Menno Simons in 1555 and chose the South as his chief field of labour, only rarely attending the leaders' conferences in the North, where he always persistently advocated Flemish tolerance in matters of discipline.

....we notice now the almost permanent presence in the Flemish country of Gillis van Aken, Joachim Vermeeren, and finally of Hans de Wever. [which]...caused a remarkable change in congregational life. Urged by these evangelists to study to be more fit for the battle against the "heathen" environment, simple workmen felt obligated to learn to read and write. That they accomplished this feat is amply proved by the few trial records, letters, and hymns which have been preserved....

Typical of these "self-made preachers" was Hans van Overdam, who went to the stake at Ghent on July 9, 1551....He rapidly became so ardent and fearless an advocate of Menno's teachings that in 1545 he barely escaped arrest by the police. He probably took refuge in Antwerp....He was present among the restless crowd which on April 11 attended the execution of Margriete van den Berghe, Jooris Cooman, Wouter van der Weyden, and Naentgen Bornaige, four converts of Gillis van Aken....As soon as their imprisonments became known, he repeatedly asked the Antwerp congregation to remember the prisoners in prayer, that they might be steadfast in their faith to the bitter end....In vain the monks tried to silence them. When the inquisitor Titelman tried to speak to the people before the scaffold, shouts arose: "You mad antichrists, stand aside and let them speak."

...Hans van Overdam drew up a sharp manifesto,...and posted it at different points in the city. In merciless language he made serious charges against the clergy...."Take account, noble Lords, of this abuse and mishandling of your estate and office; we confess it to be not of God, but of the devil"....In his unshakable conviction of the indisputable superiority of the Mennonite teachings over all the other existing faiths, he did not shrink from proposing to the government a public debate...The loser of the debate thus organized was to be burned at the stake! Sharply Hans van Overdam added to this sensational proposal: "But your hooded ones [monks] would tremble too much if they had to debate with me at the risk of the stake."

....He was finally trapped with a group of fellow believers just as he was planning to return to Antwerp....he charged the messengers whose task it was to invite the members to a meeting to announce a farewell meeting for the next day in the woods of St. Antelinks (near Aalst)....[he had] fallen into a trap. The meeting - as became clear during the trial - had been betrayed "by a Judas, who was among us and who seemed to be the most pious brother of all"....

The regent, Margaret of Parma, had to intervene in the case and oblige the municipal authorities of Ghent to take charge. As a result the prisoners had to be transported to the city. At their departure from the castle Hans and the others were encouraged by his sister-in-law and another unknown brother. The officers caught both of them and put them on the wagon. A little further on, another woman shared their fate for saying to the transported, "God keep you." About noon the group reached Ghent, where meanwhile a large crowd had assembled, of whom not a few demonstrated their sympathy for the victims. Hans van Overdam said, "It they had arrested all who addressed us, they would have needed more than 20 wagons."....

The investigators often had a hard time, When one of the clergymen, enraged at the stubborn defense of the Mennonites, exclaimed: "Fools, fools, heretics, heretics, that's what you are," he was immediately answered by van Overdam: "Look there, isn't he a fine preacher? Paul says that a teacher should not be quarrelsome nor angry!"

After such an attitude there could be no question about the fate of this fervent Mennonite. With him 11 other Mennonites were executed on 1551, a particularly heavy blow for the brotherhood in Ghent....

Repeatedly the Council of Flanders, the city governments, and the clergy were urged not to relax their zeal in persecuting the non-Catholics. It is not strange, that besides numerous lighter sentences, no less than 25 Protestants, among them 19 Mennonites were put to death.

Bruges, Courtrai, and all of Southern Flanders showed an identical picture in the mid-century. One result of this general wave of repression was that many Flemish Mennonites fled from the province and found refuge in Dortrecht, Leiden, Amsterdam, Emden, and other Dutch cities [and Danzig]....

According to Claes de Praet - executed at Ghent in 1556 - many citizens of Ghent must have been

hiding at Emden. Equally unsafe was Antwerp, since Annetgen Muliers (perhaps related to Willem Mulier, the first Mennonite to be executed in Ghent, on July 15, 1535), Truyken Boens, Lijnken, Anneken Boens, and Barbara Thielemans left Antwerp for Amsterdam. Jeronimus van der Capelan and his wife were less fortunate. They left Ghent because his activity had been noticed, and since then they had been hiding in Antwerp, where they were arrested early in 1557 and executed.

In view of this wave of persecution, the extensive emigration in 1549 and the following years (until 1553) can no longer be called an inexplicable phenomenon, but only the normal result of the severe action of the government against the followers of the Reformation in the Southern Netherlands....

....On order of Charles V these ecclesiastical dignitaries used their right to appoint assistants in the provinces in 1545. Thus there came to Flanders Pieter Titelman, Dean of Ronse, and Jan Pollet, canon of St. Pieters at Rijsel. They were charged with the purging of the province of all heretical activity. Especially Titelman and his attorney Nicolaas de Hondt, who was in charge of taking notes and keeping record of the accumulating information, became notorious as inquisitors.

Titelman considered it useless to combat the Reformation by trying to convert the heretics with religious discussions and disputes. His strategy allowed only one means to make a final purification; namely, brutal extermination. To reach this goal all the forces of church and state had to cooperate. When Titelman attempted to execute this program in utmost thoroughness in Flanders, his work was undermined by the refusal of city governments, which felt their ancient prerogatives threatened by the stubborn resistance of the menaced Protestant groups, and also by the disgust of the populace, whose interests were poorly served by the ever-increasing emigration.

An anonymous manifesto from Hondschoote, probably inspired by returning emigrants, argued in 1561, for the first time in print, that the work of Titelman and his helpers would drive prosperity from the town. For that matter, it had by now become well known that the establishment of the Inquisition together with the resultant emigration had caused a serious decline in the national industrial level. Discontent mounted when this economic disorder was accompanied by a rise in prices, the price of wheat, for instance, doubling within one year (1565-66)....

Since 1545 Titelman had moved heaven and earth to extend his hegemony over all administrative bodies, ecclesiastical as well as civil, and to dedicate everything to the project nearest to him; namely, the extinction of the heretics. While in Brabant the resistance of the civil authorities immediately became so substantial that after 1529 no ecclesiastical inquisitor could summon a lay person for heresy, the final reaction in Flanders did not take place until the second half of the 16th century. The cause of this reaction was unquestionably Titelman's excesses. It soon became impossible for him to carry out his program in the Flemish region where the Reformation had penetrated so deeply. For instance, the authorities re-

mained passive when the inquisitor was prevented by crowds of two and three hundred from making a planned arrest. The resistance of the municipal authorities expressed itself also in delaying action when they were to hold trials or to pronounce and execute sentences.....

Titelman's work in the Flemish towns and villages was becoming increasingly difficult, so much so that even his life was often in danger during his attacks on heretical groups....In 1564 the bomb burst: Bruges, Ghent, Ypres, and Bruges' Freeland, stepped determinedly out of the shadow of passive resistance and joined forces in the effort to destroy Titelman's hegemony....Alarmed by the growing resistance - the four allies of Flanders sent three more requests - they urged the inquisitor to be more moderate and discreet than he had been in the last few months....but the Spanish King, Philip II, blinded by his religious fanaticism, would hear of no compromise....

The Iconoclasm and the first rumours of war were on their way, dreadful heralds of a long-lasting period of uninterrupted religious and political tension.

In this period of increasing administrative confusion and of active resistance among the people, the Reformation spread in the province as never before.....Not only did Calvinism, during the period 1550-65, get its roots deep into the broadest strata of society; not only was Lutheranism rejoicing in a remarkable growth in Bruges and Antwerp; Mennonitism at this time also wrote some of the most heroic pages of its history on Flemish soil.

....The synchronized attacks made throughout the country in 1551, which resulted in sharper control in the next few years, had thoroughly shaken the Mennonite congregations. Many brethren left their homeland for the Northern Netherlands, England, or Germany [or Danzig]....Many a Mennonite left the town he knew best, but before resorting to a long journey to distant places tried to settle in one of the large Flemish cities....in the hope - alas, too often in vain - of escaping the searchlight of the investigator. Consequently the life of many Mennonites became a hard wanderer's existence; a new place of residence had to give not only some guarantee of "safety," but also an opportunity for the fugitive to find work in order to keep his family alive....Indeed, every large Flemish city was continually host to zealous propagandists of Menno's teachings, not excluding extremely conservative Bruges....In the meantime other powerful leaders had arisen in the group at Ghent, Pieter Coerte, Antheunis Hellegoete, Hans de Vette, Caerle Tanghereet, and Adriaen Peterssz-Pan, all of whom paid for their zeal with their lives...The author of the *Doopsgezinde martyrology*, Thieleman van Braught, tells of a rich cloth merchant, Lenaert Plover, who publicly joined the local brotherhood at Meenen.

Again it is certain that Jacques de Rore led the first meeting at Roeselaere in 1556, while one year afterward the presence of Joachim Vermeeren is

reported at Meenen....That Mennonitism in this period reached one of its high points of expansion is most evident from Titelman's own testimonies....In Antwerp the situation was even more critical: here the teachers had to circulate among 25 or 30 meetings in order to give all members the opportunity to partake in the ceremony. Titelman....was content to state; "As for Hondschoote, there is no number to be given; it is a bottomless abyss."

....The best proof for the growth of the congregation at Bruges is given by Friar Cornelis, who reported that meetings were announced throughout the city....

Likewise in Southern Flanders the prestige of Mennonitism increased even more, for this area lay between the two radiating centers, Ghent and the northern cities of today's French Flanders (such



Quiet reflections at Lissewege, near Brugge. The parish church in the background. Photo - Jan Gleysteen, Mennonite Tourguide, page 245.

as Armentieres). Furthermore, several particularly zealous preachers counted Southern Flanders as their field of labour. We meet here Jacques de Rore, who was mentioned earlier, and the very capable and eloquent Daniel Vaercampt. Southern Flanders was also the special field of Pauwels van Meenen, who, except for his ministry in Bruges at the home of Maillaert de Grave, was there constantly....In view of this spread of Mennonite teachings throughout the country it would be indefensible for historians to deny any longer to Mennonitism an important place in the framework of the Flemish Reformation life in the period preceding the Iconoclasm....

As for the Mennonites, they were more than ever true to their non-violent principles.... Nowhere could a Mennonite be brought before the judges on the charge of Iconoclasm....In contrast with Lutheranism and Calvinism, Mennonitism, as was said before, resolutely remained aloof from any attempt to conquer the world by violence....With Menno they wished to establish on this earth their "church of Christ", to which they invited everyone who would leave every worldly ideal behind to devote himself exclusively to the practice of the faith which would prepare him to enter God's kingdom....

Typical here is the testimony of Hans

Vermeersch (executed at Waasten in 1559), who, to the question which was the "True church," quietly and simply answered the inquisitors, "The assembly of believers in Christ's name." This attitude by no means led to a complete isolation from society, but it did commit the Mennonites to strictness and holy living as examples to the sinful world. It was not at all an easily maintained discipline behind the cloister walls, but an unshakable self-discipline in the midst of the turbulent atmosphere of the everyday life with its numerous temptations.....

The voluntary adhesion to the nonresistant position cannot then be called a myth. There is no other explanation for the fact that the Mennonites maintained unitedly to the very end their aloofness from the Iconoclasm, than that this aloofness sprang from principle and from their view of the church.

To the believer only God's Word was valid as a means of bringing the world to better insights; therefore any means which were not in line with the Gospel were regarded as evil....state and church made every possible attempt to prevent the public from learning of the nonresistance of the Mennonites,...to label this rejection [of violence] as a clever move to deceive the credulous. This fictitious charge - that the Anabaptists were seeking to win a large following in order to bring about a new revolution which would destroy both religion and social order - was, however, always widely believed....

It would be hard to deny that their attitude during the Iconoclasm contributed much to bring them into a more favourable light in the eyes of the mass of the people. It is remarkable that their significance, already

great before and during the "Wonder Year", becomes actually preponderant in the years immediately following, until the outburst of the new wave of persecution in 1568. The provost Morillon pictured the growth of Mennonitism as terrifying (September 15, 1566)....Only a few weeks after the Iconoclasm the Mennonites held meetings outside the Peterselie Gate in Ghent, at each of which 300 or more were counted. During the meetings the speakers not only proclaimed their own teachings, but also attacked the Calvinists and their ministers, whom they pictured to be "rebellious people, seekers of revenge."

All these eloquent evidences of a strongly developing Mennonite group forced the magistrates to interfere. In the middle of October, 1566, the Ghent authorities sent an armed band to attack a Mennonite meeting....At Ypres the Mennonites felt so safe that they no longer thought it necessary to have secret meetings; every meeting was well attended...At Hondschoote the situation was bad for the government. The informers...reported six or seven thousand people living apart from the Catholic Church "in several sects," among whom the Mennonites were strongly represented....At Bruges Friar Cornelis lamented on February 15, 1568, the weakness of Protestantism in his city and stated that "their devilish congregation [Men-

nonite] is at least 700 strong in this city of Bruges.”....

During the first years after the Iconoclasm, Mennonitism developed under entirely different conditions. Until then the churches had been compelled by necessity to accept leadership from the North. But as mentioned above, this very close co-operation had serious disadvantages, and the Flemish groups never ceased to desire a Bishop from and for their own country, who would, according to the old regulations of Menno Simons, “travel throughout the country during a certain part of the year, to baptize those who were ready....”

After 1566, however, the continuing and paralysing religious disputes began in the Mennonite North, occupying the leaders almost continuously. From now on, the North would not forsake Flanders, would never cease to help, especially financially, but only very seldom would send leaders on a systematic trip through the Flemish country, not even in periods of relative religious freedom.

Fortunately, 36 years of preaching the faith had in the meantime raised up capable workers in Flanders. Now native elders were able to assist the Flemish Mennonites in counsel and in deed. A long cherished hope had found fulfilment. If ever again a Northerner came to Flanders his influence would not longer equal that of the native leaders, to say nothing of his being able to force upon them his own views. This ability to stand firmly on their own feet saved the South from the tragic divisions of the North. The unity of the Flemish brotherhood, strengthened by manifold sufferings, remained fundamental in the smallest as well as the largest groups.

Thus it is not strange that there were here not large-scale division, nor any noticeable success on the part of David Joris or Adam Pastor, although both schismatics visited the country. Unchallenged and, what is more important, united, Pauwels van Meenen and Hans Busschaert now assumed the leadership in Flanders.

Pauwels, born of a prominent family in Meenen, has been described as “a tallish man with a brown beard.” Since we may assume that he was an elder by the end of 1567 or early 1568, he must have been a member of the movement for some time previous to this date. The office of elder was not entrusted to untested novices....His wealthy background presupposes also a good education....

Just as Pauwels van Meenen preferred to be in the South, his colleague, Hans Busschaert, visited the congregations in Northern Flanders. A native of Dadizele, he was described...in 1565 as “a man with a small beard” close to 40 years of age. After 1565 Hans had taken the place of Leenaert Bouwens. His presence was most noticeable at Ghent. Here it was that he baptised Herman Vlekwijk, the faithful friend of Jacques de Rore, together with eight other believers.

Beside these two leaders special mention should be made of Jacques de Rore, surnamed the Candlemaker (de Kaarsgieter), for his tireless defence of Mennonite teachings....he was probably, if not the best-read, at least one of the most zealous propagandists of Mennonitism who ever worked in Flanders. The known facts about his life follow.

Jacques de Rore was born at Courtrai in 1532 of a working man’s family. His father was by profession a chandler, whence Jacques received his surname. Like many of his countrymen he chose the weaver’s profession....before he was 19 years old, he had Mennonite leanings. In 1551 he left the Catholic Church under the influence of Laurens van Gelder (later executed at Antwerp) and lived from then on in Mennonite circles. Instructed in the new faith, he appeared four years later with some others before Gillis van Aken in the woods of Marken (near Courtrai) to be baptised. From the very beginning he gave promise of becoming more than a simple member. After first serving as a messenger (the member who called the brethren to a meeting), he soon had a leadership function in the brotherhood at Courtrai....From Courtrai Jacques visited many places in Flanders, among them Meenen, Wervik, Rosealere, Ypres, Tielt, Ghent and vicinity, and Bruges. After 1566 he hid in the latter town till 1568 and contributed his part to the growth of the Mennonite brotherhood there, much to the grief of Friar Cornelis.

When the spy services of the Duke of Alba went into full action, a longer stay in the West Flemish capital seemed impossible for Jacques. He left the country and travelled without incident to Cleve, but did not stay for long. Early in 1569 he was in Gelderland, where he met Herman Vlekwijk. Herman told Jacques that he would soon return to Flanders for business reasons. The temptation to visit his former field of labour was too strong for Jacques. In April of the same year we find both men in Bruges. This journey was to be fatal for both of them, since they were arrested by the agents of Alba.

Until his martyrdom Jacques stood in the service of the brotherhood. From the dungeon he consoled his wife, encouraging her to give their children a Christian education. Again he exhorted his brethren to be tolerant and warned Pauwels van Meenen to be careful with the use of the ban....The famous martyr continued to inspire the faithful long after his death; both his letters and the reports of his trials were preserved and were spread far and wide, both by word of mouth and in printed form....

Under the capable leadership of the trio, Pauwels van Meenen, Hans Busschaert, and Jacques de Rore, there must have been a legion of simple, convinced witnesses whose quiet work brought about countless conversions...all of them worked together through these years to bring the brotherhood to a high point and assure a solid foundation for the future. Thus when Flanders was represented at the Mennonite assembly in Hoorin in 1567, this representation had behind it a flourishing brotherhood....it is difficult to determine whether Hans Busschaert at that time represented the congregations in Flanders or the refugees from Flanders and Brabant living in the North; but this distinction is unimportant, since the viewpoints of these two groups corresponded in the desire to defend the authority of the congregation against certain authoritative individuals....

Without doubt the beginnings of this “Flemish colony” go back to 1551....Many of them

(refugees) settled permanently in the North, especially those who could find employment or whose financial resources permitted a new start. This wave of migration, second in importance only to the one caused by the Spanish Restoration under Alessandro Farnese, sprang from the drastic intervention of Alva. The new governor...saw in the Iconoclasm an opportunity to restore his and the Catholic Church’s authority in the most brutal way.

....Fully imbued with his master’s intentions, the duke did not hesitate to employ the most arbitrary methods to attain the ultimate goal, the breaking of all resistance. In addition to dictatorial economic measures....and similar ones in the political realm...., the ultimate in absolutism is his institution of the Council for Troubles, popularly called the “Blood Council.”...Dozens of sentences were pronounced daily; long lists of suspects were transmitted to the magistrates; officers were sent from city to city to supervise the measures against heresy. The non-Catholic population experienced a most dreadful wave of persecution in early 1568. Fully unexpected, a massive raid swept over all Flanders beginning March 3. Alva had laid his plans carefully...heretics were seized in every city and town. Sympathizers with the Reformation were dragged into prison by the score. The plan was carried out in complete secrecy;...a study of the martyrologies for 1568-69 reveals the faithfulness with which the plan was executed.

The mobilization of the Blood Council filled everyone with horror. The greater the distance from Brussels, the more rapidly the zeal of the local authorities diminished, especially after the first rage had subsided. The Northern Netherlands calmed down first; once again this was a place where many settled while waiting for better times. The “Flemish colony” grew visibly in numbers and became an appreciable factor in the Northern brotherhood.

Still this movement was not enough to cripple the Mennonite churches in the South. That large-scale meetings were abandoned is natural, considering the new measures of control. But in the cities the brethren defied the spies and continued to hold small meetings with the most trustworthy members. In the smaller centers those Mennonites who remained were no longer able to meet. Yet all these faithful, in town or city, nonetheless maintained their bonds with one another. This was of the greatest importance for the fugitives who stayed within the country, seeking safety by a continual change of domicile, because they knew in advance where they could go. Jacob van de Wege - arrested and burned at the stake in Ghent in 1573 - had in this way succeeded in evading the authorities for seven years; he had hidden “with good friends here and there in Flanders.”

The dangers faced by the fugitives should, however, not be underestimated....In spite of all these dangers the brotherhood stood firm....More and more meetings came to be held outside the cities, preferable in wooded areas. Even in Bruges, which was the most dangerous by reason of the 500 soldiers permanently stationed there since 1565 with the assignment of raiding every known meeting, was no exception to this rule. Undismayed by

this small army, the faithful Mennonites met in the Tillegem wood - barely two miles from the city - under the leadership of Willem Verron. On the afternoon of Ascension Day, May 4, 1570, they were surprised there near the castle of the Lady Anna of Ostend. Many, among them the preacher, were nonetheless able to escape....

In spite of the repeated court sessions, the investigators were unable to obtain any useful information. The following text from the record of hearings is clear: "Refuse to name any of their accomplices or teachers, notwithstanding whippings already administered and threats of further torture. All that the judges learned was that meetings had been held regularly since 1565.

To generalize for all Flanders this unbroken continuity would be unrealistic. Through the dispersion many a smaller group was threatened with extinction.... The reader of the *Martyr's Mirror* can ascertain that during the period 1569 to 1574 the inquisitors never ceased to have work at Ghent, Courtrai, Ypres, Meenen, Tielt, and Asper. Jacques de Rore may well have spoken the truth when in answer to questioning about his fellow believers he said that they were "all scattered." Yet when Hans van de Wege was led to the Vrijdagmarkt for execution in 1570 there were still brethren there to greet him and call to him, "Hold fast!" and "Fight a right for the truth."

This public manifestation of sympathy drove the Ghent authorities to action. The next day they announced a prize of 50 carolus-guilders to anyone who would denounce one of the demonstrators. It had become evident to the city government that the Mennonites had not given up the struggle, but that unknown to the authorities an undeniable regrouping of the remaining forces had taken place.

The chronicler de Jonghe, commenting on the arrest of Mennonites in 1573, says that the government had been able to lay hands on a book "in which were the names and surnames of those who gave weekly gifts for the expenses of the poor within their sect." ...In 1574 it was discovered (did one of the prisoners talk too much?) that the local congregation had regular contact with the believers in Zeeland.....

In late 1572 or early 1573 Pauwels van Meenen visited Ghent to administer baptism. The 22 year-old Adriaen van der Zwalm (arrested at Bruge and executed there August 7, 1573), one of those baptised by Pauwels, confessed that the ceremony had been attended by 20 or 30 people. The bare fact that the brotherhood dared to hold a meeting of that size in the city proper is ample proof that the crisis had once more been surmounted. Maurissus van Dale must have been quite active himself as well, to be called "the Bishop of the Anabaptists" by his neighbours. Another noteworthy apostle in this period was Christoffel van Leuven; as "minister of the Word of God" he visited the Flemish brotherhood and was especially active around Ghent.

When the Reformation in general had encountered better times and a Calvinistic regime was about to be set up, Mennonitism had again sunk roots deep into Flemish soil. It was ready to face new problems and to conquer the bitterest of disappointments, namely, the refusal of other Reformation confessions (when they came into power) to recognize the Mennonite brotherhood.

Hans de Ries (1553-1638)

Hans de Ries was born to Catholic parents at Antwerp, Belgium in 1553. As a youth he shunned gay society and interested himself in religious things. He first turned to the Reformed Church but was disappointed to find them at worship services with weapons to defend themselves in case of attack. Eventually he became acquainted with Anabaptists and decided to unite with them.

Hans de Ries was baptized and ordained a minister by the bishop Simon Michaels of the Waterlander Doopsgezinde. He was arrested and arraigned before a magistrate during the Spanish Inquisition. He said that he was ready to shed a handful of blood if it had any value to his persecutors. It made such an impression on the inquisitors that he was given an opportunity to escape.

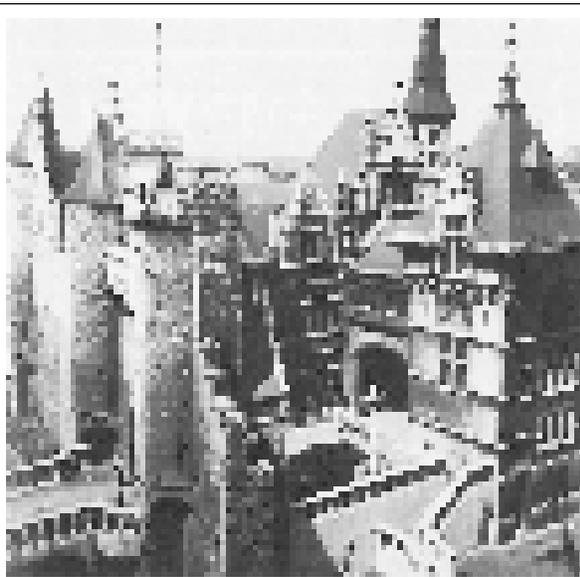
He then served as a minister of the Waterlander Church at Emden, Friesland. After 1600 he served as leader of the Waterlander congregation at Alkmaar. His sermons proved attractive to many outsiders. By a prolonged study of medicine he became a proficient medical advisor and took delight in serving the poor without remuneration.

Hans de Ries did not follow Menno Simons in many aspects of his teaching. He "...thought little of the external (visible) church. He was a spiritualist, i.e. he believed that the believer must be completely open to the spirit of God. Church constitutions, regulations, offices, sacraments, ban and the church itself are of minor importance....," *Men. Ency.*, Vol. 4, page 330. He worked for unity among the Doopgezinde but on his terms, efforts in the end resulting in further divisions, including the departure of many of Waterlander congregations. De Ries did not follow the teachings of Menno and "was one of the first....to replace silent prayer with audible prayer by the minister," reflecting his bias against the disciplined brotherhood traditionally uniting together in the spirit as equals to pray, not to be led as sheep by some cleric. "De Ries was a man of some authority. At times his action seems headstrong and imperious, for which reason some of his opponents called him 'Pope Hans,'" *Men. Ency.*, Vol. 4, page 331.

Hans de Ries wrote a Flemish Confession of faith in 1581 and it was published in 1610 upon the request of John Smyth who was an Anglican in England but through the influence of Hans de Ries became an Anabaptist. Hans had contact with Polish Socinians who were driven out of their home land by the Prussian military invasion. He also wrote a book about martyrs in which he connected the Anabaptist to the Waldensians. He died in 1638. Influenced by his Calvinistic tendencies and driven by an assimilationist agenda, Hans de Ries was not in tune with the heroic Mennonitism of his homeland, working zealously to counter its spread. The Editor.



Hans de Ries (1553-1638), as drawn in 1641 by Michiel Jans van Mierevelt. Photo - S. Zijlstra, Om de ware gemeente en de oude gronden: Geschiedenis van de dopersen in de Nederlanden 1531-1675 (Leeuwarden, 2000), page 279.



Het Steen, Antwerp, view of the courtyard from the tower. By 1560 there were about 2,000 Mennonites in Antwerp meeting in small groups. Photo - Jan Gleysteen, Mennonite Tourguide, page 253. Marjan Blok writes that "The Netherlands would have never had its 'Golden Age' of the 17th century had it not been for the many immigrants of both Jewish and Protestant origins.... Well founded statistics establish that half of Antwerp migrated after its fall in 1585 and at one point Amsterdam was 20 per cent Flemish," (page 102).

III. Relative Freedom, 1576-86.

During this period hostilities between Catholics and Calvinists flared up in full force.... What we shall observe is more than the struggle of the Reformation against the reaction of church and state; it is at the same time the common struggle of the people of the Netherlands for political emancipation, a struggle completely successful in the north, but only moderately so in the South.

The sudden death of the governor Requesens, whose administration had permitted a revival of Calvinism, created political confusion, which was to lead to the first reconciliation of the Calvinistic North with the Catholic South....the king [Philip II] bypassed the Council [of State] and corresponded secretly with Geronimo de Roda, assessor in the "Blood Council,"....a stubborn advocate of Spanish absolutism and of the Catholic Church; hence there as no danger that he would make concessions to the other camp. Willing instrument in the hands of the Madrid government, he was feared and shunned by his fellow councillors and by the people.

The inactivity of the Council of State gave William of Orange an occasion to seek to unite the North and the South and to free the Netherlands from Spain. The arrest of the members of the Council of State and the *coup d'etat* of the Brabant estates were the milestones in the development which led to the signing of the Pacification of Ghent on November 8, 1576....Seen in this light, the Pacification did not produce the desired results. Their signatures, notwithstanding, both parties retained their respective religious conceptions. The Catholics hoped to undo in the future the rights conceded to Calvinism in the North, and their adversaries never ceased to be offended by the fact that Reformed doctrines could not be preached in the South....it was no more than a truce, accepted while waiting for conditions which would enable a final settlement.

The Union of Brussels, signed on January 9, 1577, brought an initial clarification in a strictly anti-Calvinistic direction....It speaks explicitly of the unanimous determination of the signers to resist "the Spanish tyranny..." But, in reality, this document was intended to crush definitely the Calvinists in the South....

Fortunately for the Calvinists, Don Juan was unable, upon his arrival in the Netherlands, to take advantage of this Catholic strength. In his haste to end the revolt, the new governor so displeased his fellow Catholics that co-operation between Catholics and Calvinists again became possible. This merger of all the Netherlands compelled Don Juan, in spite of his initial military successes, to retreat to Namur. He thus made room for William of Orange, whom the South greeted as a liberator.

The political situation being thus clarified, the

religious problem came into focus again....The Prince of Orange sought to dampen this fierce particularism and urged both camps toward tolerance. His "Religionsfrid", roughly a second Pacification of Ghent, submitted to the States in July 10, 1578, gave Calvinists the right to exercise their religion freely, but in turn forbade them to attack the Catholics. But the dictatorial tendencies of the Calvinist leaders of Ghent and Antwerp made any durable agreement impossible. The Catholics soon became the victims of divers kinds of discrimination, which progressively grew into real discrimination. At this point the alliance fell apart. The division could then be used by the new governor, Alessandro Farnese, to promote his plans for a reconquest.

In the midst of these constant realignments of forces, now to the advantage of the Catholics, now in favour of the Calvinists, Mennonitism



Typical canal of Flanders. Strong west winds cause the trees to lean to the east.
Photo - Jan Gleysteen.

found itself in an extraordinary position between 1576 and 1586....When the religious struggle became intertwined with the revolt against Spanish absolutism the common man was still more militantly ready to defend his rights.This was hardly a favourable situation for the Mennonites, who sought to unite humanity in a spirit of brotherly love....For the great majority, whether Catholic or Calvinist, the primary concern was to gain control in the city and country; purely religious issues took second place....When the various religious truces were drawn up, the interests of Calvinists and Catholics were taken into account, but the Mennonites were never mentioned. Not one of the agreements - the Pacification, the Union, or the Religionsfrid - recognized them....The Mennonites continued to be regarded as not belonging to Christian society, so that, even if events had taken a different turn, the brotherhood would still not have been granted the right to exist.

Yet even though not one of the 25 articles of the Pacification was meant for them, it cannot be denied that the treaty brought the Mennonites

great advantages. Freedom of movement throughout the Netherlands (Article IV),...[release from] the fearsome "blood edicts"....(Article V). With rejoicing the brethren who had escaped the clutches of the police must have greeted their imprisoned brethren at the opened prison gates (Article IX). Many may have been able to reclaim confiscated goods....

Except for the return of the emigrants...these concessions were not applied immediately. The Union of Brussels, signed a few months later, actually brought new restrictions....The Pacification was not effectively applied until its confirmation by the Religionsfrid....the Mennonites no doubt profited by the regulations in Article VII...."And if said services are not held in public, no one shall be questioned or interfered with in any way in religious matters concerning what he does within his home."...believers....could

own church buildings only if they were represented at a given place by at least 100 families....It is worthy of note that the Mennonites of Ghent actually petitioned the magistrate to designate certain churches for their use....it is very probably that the Mennonites [in Bruges] would also have been able to make such a request....Notwithstanding the workings of the inquisitorial power - from 1568 to 1573 20 Mennonites were handed over to the executioner in Bruges - as soon as the Catholics lost their power to the Calvinists, the Mennonites as well were present on the religious scene. This was never more than a "presence."....it can be assumed that the Mennonites of Bruges made an appeal for the right of assembly....But like their fellow believers at Ghent, the Mennonites probably met with no success. Everywhere

outside their fellowship the brethren encountered suspicion and hostility. We have already mentioned the refusal of Prince William of Orange; to him the mere existence of Mennonite groups was a constant menace to the maintenance of general peace and social order. As for the Catholic population....they hated most violently those whom they still called the "Münsterites"....

Jacobus Regius, the minister of the Reformed Church at Ghent...is typical of the untiring adversaries of Mennonitism....To him there was, besides Catholicism, no teaching more pestiferous than that of Menno Simons and his followers. He left no means untried to prevent the spreading of this faith, while awaiting the time when it could be completely destroyed....

The most formidable of the enemies of the brethren was, however, Marnix of St. Aldegonde. This faithful friend of William of Orange shared the prince's views on the matter of Mennonitism....In speaking of "fanatical doctrine," Marnix, of course, made no distinction between revolutionary Anabaptism and peaceful Mennonitism....He emphasized the revolution-

ary phase of Anabaptism and with equal zeal discussed the divisions in the Mennonite brotherhood in the Northern Netherlands. His treatment of David Joris' *Wonderboek*, of Hendrik Claessen's *Evangelium des Rijcks* and *Spiegel der gerechticheyt*, of the *Paradys des vrees* by "another bird of the feather", of Hendrik Jonszen's *Verborgten Ackerschat*, of Sebastian Frank's *Paradoxan* and *Boom der Wetenschap*, as well of numerous other publications like Niclaes' *Het Huys der Liefden*, had the same purpose.....Marnix now knocked at the door of the States-General in 1595. He urged them to apply without hesitation the most severe restrictive measures against the "Münsterites"...This was the first time Marnix had expressed himself so explicitly against the Mennonites, even advocating "corporal punishment" - a kind of protestant inquisition - for them.....

Caught between the two antagonistic religious-political parties, without much relation to either of them, the Mennonites resumed their preaching work on a larger scale. Though they were pursued by the hostility of their opponents on both sides, they were nonetheless free from serious threats of the torture room, the stake, the gallows, or drowning. That the Mennonites felt relatively free during this time is evident in the letter written by Joos de Tollenaere (hanged at Ghent on April 13, 1589) to the brethren of the North, admonishing them not to underestimate the benefit of the freedom they enjoyed. He warned them that sudden disaster might destroy their accustomed security, and that the storm might break at the most unexpected moment, "as now in Flanders, where we also had such freedom, for about seven years."...This date 1577-78 marks the beginning of the steady decline of Catholic power which led to the Religionsfrid. And 1583, the end of "about seven years", was the date of Alesandro Farnese's assumption of power....

...The political leaders, both the Orange party striving for unity and the more particularistically-minded Calvinists, were completely occupied with the Catholics....It is easy to understand that in such a race the Mennonite problem was of minor importance. In the Calvinistic camp it was known that nothing could be expected from the Mennonites by way of support from attack against Catholics, as least as the Calvinists understood such an attack.

On February 21, 1573,...some Calvinistic leaders arranged a secret meeting with the spokesmen of the Mennonites. They conferred on the problem of unseating the Catholic domination. Weapons would be necessary "to kill and to pillage the Catholics."...That the Mennonites of 1573 could not accept the proposal of the Calvinists is one more expression of a position which was not motivated by strategic consideration but was integral to their faith.

...the period 1575-83 gives evidence of zealous activity on the part of their evangelists....they were able to increase their members to a remarkable extent....While the Calvinists succeeded in establishing their rule between 1575 and 1580, the Mennonite brotherhood experienced years of remarkable prosperity.

At a meeting held in Amsterdam in March

1551, the Flemish Mennonites were represented by Antwerp and Ghent. The presence of this representation is in itself a significant index of the position which the Flemish churches held in the framework of the Dutch brotherhood....The Flemish churches were confronted with a thorny problem. On August 1, 1555, it had been decided at Wismar that "no one shall take it upon himself to preach or teach of his own will, if he is not sent or ordained by the congregation or the elder." This resolution still remained in force. Its rigid application had unfavourable results in the South, where the maintenance of contacts between the congregations was always difficult if not in fact dangerous. Many congregations, probably the majority, had to do without a teacher, and there as little chance of improving the situation. Inevitably this led to confusion and weakened the efforts toward expansion.

The discussions at Amsterdam brought a satisfactory solution....As a general rule those congregations that had no teacher available were in the future to have the right to entrust a deacon with the leadership,...If it should happen that a congregation could not find a proper teacher among their deacons, the members should limit themselves during their meetings to the reading of the Gospel....

Though less well organized than the Northern congregations, the Flemish brotherhood evangelized so intensively after 1580 that the Calvinists, terrified by the expansion of the "Münsterites", decided in favour of more effective suppression, for members of their own congregations left their ranks to join the Mennonites. One case which must have caused them much grief was that of Michiel de Cleercq, later hanged at Ghent. Though we must discount H. Q. Janssen's statement that Michiel was known already in 1556 as one of the most zealous Calvinists at Eecloo...he may be counted among the best workers of the church at Sluis. In spite of his humble parentage - he was a weaver - the holy fire of preaching burned in him....In 1581, at any rate, he was living in Ghent, attracted by Mennonitism. Michiel was baptized in 1588 by Pauwels van Meenen and from then on devoted his best energies to the local Mennonite congregation, filling shortly afterward the office of deacon-teacher.

...the problem of the alarming growth of the "Anabaptist and similar heretics" was placed on the agenda of a provincial synod of the Flemish Reformed churches held on March 8, 1581. The decision made was not very original; if the "Münsterite danger" were to become worse, a debate should be held similar to the one at Frankenthal where Petrus Dathenus had spoken 10 years before....it may be assumed that serious misgivings were expressed as to the ultimate outcome of continued Mennonite expansion. Many may have feared that the Mennonites, strong even before 1581, would soon demand recognition beside the other confessions and threaten the Calvinistic hegemony.

Early in the following year it became clear that this danger was real. It has already been noted that in 1582 the Mennonites of Ghent emerged from their withdrawal and hiding, and

addressed themselves to the authorities, laying claim to the provisions of Article XXV of the Religionsfrid,...and requesting authorization to possess a church building....This request placed the Calvinistic authorities before the development they had feared and obliged them to carry out the provisions of the 1581 synodal resolution....The "public debate" which the resolution had called for became a debate before the City Council behind closed doors, which was held on February 28, 1582....presumably the intention was to give the debate a minimum of publicity in order to prevent the Mennonites from obtaining any propagandistic advantage....Presumably the Council awaited the end of the discussion before deliberating on the Mennonite request for the right to meet.

....It is probable that Jacobus Regius was a participant....[he was] somewhat of an anti-Anabaptist specialist....It is still more difficult to establish who might have been the Mennonite participants in the debate....It may be assumed that the Mennonites, aware of the importance of making a good showing in this debate, called on the best of their leaders, especially those acquainted with the Ghent congregation....Other ministers may well have been sent from Antwerp, but we know too little to hazard a guess at their identity.

Although de Jonghe says nothing more, there can be no doubt of the outcome of the debate. It is unthinkable that the Calvinists in power should have made the slightest concessions to the Mennonites. Their decision was certainly of a piece with the hostility shown by the same authorities in the following year. In May, 1583, it was announced that all citizens must declare under oath that they considered Philip II as having been dethroned. The performance of such an oath was, of course, inadmissible for the Mennonites. Lieven Tobast was summoned to appear before the Ghent Council for his refusal to obey the command. Asked whether he had reconsidered his position, he answered that he could not change his attitude, and added that in his part of the city there were many of similar convictions. Immediately Lieven Tobast was banished for life. The same sentence was pronounced against Vicente Roose, also for refusal to take the oath of loyalty to the new regime. Only a few months later Fierin Grysperre, an overly active dissenter, who had announced his meetings by distributing notices throughout the city, was also permanently banished from the city.

These arrests and sentences as well as the debate were typical of the attitude taken toward Mennonitism by the Calvinists at the height of their power. They indicate that the brotherhood, even though enjoying greater numerical strength compared to official confessions, continued to suffer under severe limitations of freedom. Practically, the Mennonites had been tolerated since 1576 only in so far as their convictions and their claims did not conflict with the Calvinistic regime. Although conditions were improved, the conflict had not reached a peaceful resolution. This perhaps explains in part their ability to resist the restored Catholicism in the last years of the 16th and the first quarter of the 17th century.

IV. Emigration 1586-1640.

Under the capable leadership of Alessandro Farnese the restoration of the Spanish regime did not follow the pattern of Alva's terrorism....On their campaign through Southern Flanders the soldiers were no longer allowed to sack the conquered cities. In the peace negotiations as well the new governor showed deep diplomatic insight, and his religious policy was equally adroit. He controlled the activity of the new Great Inquisitor, Pieter de Backere, just as he had formerly kept the army within bounds.

The Acts of Surrender, e.g. those of the City of Ghent (September 17, 1584), show the new governor's intent to follow a clearly conceived policy..."...to show that we do not desire to destroy or depopulate said city,....aforesaid freemen, citizens, and inhabitants....will be free to leave the country whenever they wish within said two years...." Severe, in that henceforth no dissent was to be tolerated, and at the same time moderate, in the provision of a two-year period for adjustment, these treaties represent a departure from all former methods of struggle. At the same time the goal remains the same: the removal of all signs of Protestant activity from the King's Netherlands.

Soon enough the authorities were to observe on the part of the Mennonites a complete indifference to the measures taken against the Protestantism. At least in the large cities, the Mennonites were behaving as if there were no prohibition of preaching and other activities and as if no changes at all had been made. On March 17, 1585, hardly six months after the ratification of the Reconciliation Act, the magistrates of Ghent arrested nine Mennonites just as they had assembled at the home of Jan de Cleercq to collect contributions and prepare for the distribution of these relief funds to the poor of their congregation....The first of these told his judges forthrightly that the meetings of the brotherhood had never been interrupted and that those meetings were held sometimes inside the city, sometimes outside....

The Council of Flanders cautiously declared itself incompetent to give advice to the Ghents emissaries. In view of the exceptional circumstances prevailing in the months just following the Reconciliation Act, the Council, however, ventured an advisory opinion....It favoured immediate prosecution of the prisoners for violation of Farnese's orders....

On March 26, 1585, the three emissaries,....were summoned the second time by the Ghent Council to the Council of Flanders. During this audience it was decided that the nine Mennonites should be punished at least with banishment....Because of the undiminished activity of the Mennonites at Ghent, the Council of Flanders further recommended a thorough investigation of the religious convictions of the citizenry as well as the institution of an obligatory loyalty oath. In a missive of April 10, 1585, the city fathers informed Alessandro Farnese...and asked his advice....The governor desired the punishment of the prisoners,....and further suggested that Pieter Haesbaert and his fellow prisoners be submitted to further interrogation to gather information concerning the activity of the brotherhood in Ghent..."There is not reason," he declared, "to maintain that the Anabaptists are less covered by the terms of the present [treaty] than are the

Calvinists or other sectarians, who are no less pernicious; yea who are more seditious, violent, turbulent, and dangerous than are said Anabaptists."

....The Ghent authorities considered the problem of dissent from a local viewpoint and judged that the most resistance came from the Mennonites....Now the fate of the prisoners could be quickly determined. The Council of Flanders having requested the 50 year banishment...., this sentence was pronounced by the Ghent magistrate on September 20. The fact that the deliberations on this case had taken more than six months demonstrates the serious difficulties that arose from the arrest of non-Catholics during the two-year religious "cooling-off period."

...In Bruges, which had surrendered to the Spanish on May 20, 1584, the same observation was made. Here, however, the Mennonites were....not alone in their opposition to the Catholics. During the winter of 1584-85, the Calvinists, convinced that Spain could make no claim to a final victory as long as Ghent had not fallen, had accomplished an impressive regrouping of forces....Accordingly the Calvinists also bore the brunt of repression following the indiscretions of a 13 year-old boy who had betrayed their plans....Between 1584 and 1587 over 100 sentences of expulsion were pronounced against Calvinists. It is consequently not surprising that little notice was given to the capture of two Mennonites, Jan van Metminne of Cologne, and Aernout Soen of Courtrai. The former admitted that the youngest of his four children had not been baptized, and refused to serve in the civil guard, in line with the Mennonite position as defined in Wismar in August, 1555.

Aernout Soen was no less troublesome. Originally from Courtrai, having belonged for some time to the brotherhood at Antwerp, he had settled in Bruges in 1581. He had not had his three-year-old child baptized, and refused to change his mind. He was given 24 hours to reconsider, facing the threat of a 50 guilder fine and further persecution. On the following day, still refusing to yield, he was required to confess his guilt publicly and pay the fine; meanwhile someone had been sent to get the child from Soen's house and take it to church.

In contrast with the large centers of population, it was impossible for the Mennonites to remain in the smaller towns. Anyone who desired to be further useful to the church, or anyone who feared persecution because he had been too visibly active, sought safety in the cities. Joost Bostijn of Courtrai was one such person. As long as possible he had remained in the city of his birth; in 1585, however, he had to leave for Bruges, where he offered his services to the local congregation. The case of the nine Mennonite prisoners at Ghent was similar. None of them were of local origin; all had left their original scenes of activity in order to serve the church where its existence was still considered possible.

The situation in the interim 1585-87 was difficult; but after the expiration of this period continued activity became fully impossible. A veritable man-hunt was made for the remaining leaders of the brotherhood. These leaders knew that they were especially sought and that if caught they faced certain death. This was characteristic of the repression now beginning. The leaders were killed in the least spectacular way possible - no longer burned at the stake - but the authorities were relatively mild in

their treatment of ordinary members, even if they stubbornly stuck to their faith.

The archival records of the last days of the Mennonites as preserved in Bruges, Brussels, and especially Ghent, deserve special attention for their witness to the sacrificial efforts of the brethren to keep their church alive.

On December 12, 1567, Jooris de Rieu of Halewijn appeared before the Ghent authorities. He had become acquainted with the brethren in Ghent, and had become an active participant in their work. The court instructed the clergy to examine him. In spite of their numerous shrewd questions he held to his convictions and the clergy recommended life-long banishment. Sentence was pronounced accordingly on December 18, Jooris de Rieu was led to the city gates and given three days to leave Flanders and three weeks to leave the Netherlands.

Hardly a year later the city fathers discovered to their surprise that the brotherhood was still alive and strong. A man and his wife, whose names are not recorded, were arrested about January 10, 1598. The woman testified that she had been baptised only three months before somewhere in the fields around Ghent. Further she told the judges, without betraying any details as to place or attendance, that she had shortly before attended a meeting in the city itself.

In the meantime the home of the arrested couple was searched. Large quantities of meat and bread, as well as a "book containing the distribution of alms or support among those of their sect," were found. After the discovery of these stores the Ghent Council wrote to Farnese on January 12: "Therefore we find the matter somewhat delicate, for the times are still so confused." The emigrant van Meteren pictured the situation in perhaps too dark colours when he gave the following description: "The hunger there is so great this year (1587)...that substantial, stately, respectable people, splendidly dressed in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Bruges, and other cities have been begging for bread in the evening when it was dark and they could not be recognized. Rich people dressed in velvet and silk, begged for bones, turnip peels, and anything edible; they even picked up and ate a dead dog at Bruges. The wheat prices are higher than ever heard of before. The famine was less severe the next year (1588), since the fields were well taken care of and the population had decreased." Discounting possible exaggerations of this emigrant historian, his description testifies nonetheless to the great poverty of the people. The discovery that these two Mennonites had in their possession considerable amounts of scarce food is proof of the prosperity of some members of the congregations; their liberality in sharing is likewise evidence of the sense of unity which bound the brethren together. Indirectly the Councilmen expressed their respect for the welfare work of the brethren, when they expressed their disinclination to act harshly: "So that we thus are concerned about how we should treat these sectarians."

Such considerations bore no weight, however, in higher government circles. On the contrary, these deacons were regarded as the most dangerous and the most influential elements of the brotherhood, and logically so. The deacons were the ones, who besides their social work, informed the brethren of the meetings, who lodged the teacher and brought

him to his destination, and who often preached themselves. As deacon-teachers they were in fact the responsible ministers of the last Mennonite groups on Flemish soil.

The judges showed their understanding of the importance of the deacons in the course of the trial of Michiel Buesse and Joos de Tolenaere. Both had belonged to the brotherhood for some time, having experienced the times of relative freedom. After the Catholic victory they had not ceased their work. The restrictive measures against all Protestants which began to be applied in 1587 after the expiration of the interim did not frighten them. Hans Busschaert visited repeatedly in their homes in 1587 and 1588. The two men were responsible for his safety. They were the ones who found places, within or without the city, where the faithful could be strengthened by the eloquent preaching of their beloved teacher, and where new members of the group could be baptized. Buesse and Tolenaere also took the risks involved in collecting money and gifts in kind for the needy of the congregation. Rightly the verdict of April 13, 1589, called them "the main pillars among the brethren of your congregation." After death by strangling inside the count's castle in order to avoid the sensation of a public execution, their bodies were hanged outside the citadel.

The same day a Mennonite woman, Joosijne Swijnts, met the same fate. She had been baptized just seven months before by Hans Busschaert. The charge against her consisted only of having been rebaptized and attending several meetings, yet we believe that her activities were more far-reaching and that she had a more important function than that of a mere member. For on May 9 Tannekin van de Zande was condemned only to exile, on a charge much more serious than the one cited against Joosijne Swijnts. Tannekin had been baptized by Hans Busschaert at Ghent, not seven months but 13 years previously. She had never left the city and during all those years she had been a faithful attendant at all the Mennonite meetings within and without the city. When arrested she refused to betray any of her fellow believers and avoided every trap by declaring that "most of them have left the city." Just as stubbornly she clung to her faith in the face of efforts to lead her to recant. Nevertheless she escaped the death penalty. This is due probably to the fact that she had never been more than an ordinary member, where Joosijne had borne great responsibilities.

Eighteen months later, on November 9, 1590, Geeraert van de Walle of Hansbeke appeared for trial at Ghent. He was a simple workingman, who sometimes supplemented his income by making brooms for farmers and who by his own study had learned to read very well and to write a little. During the trial he stood his ground, answering in a clever, even a mocking way, the judges' shrewdest questions. Van de Walle recounted that he had belonged to the Mennonite fellowship since 1578. Since the requirements for admission were very high, he had not been baptized until 1587, by Hans Busschaert at Vlissingen. Asked by his judge for more details about the baptismal ceremony and those baptized with him, Geeraert complained of a bad memory and said he could recall only that "there had been two or three." When the questions concerned him more personally he was again able to answer. He had returned to Flanders from Vlissingen two years

before. He had stayed with his uncle Willem van de Walle at Hansbeke, later with Karel Verlpaetzen at Nevel; now in Ghent he had been living with a weaver, Joos Boethals, and sometimes with his cousin Karel Steyaert. Geeraert must have known when he named these friends that they were already in security. The criminal files show that none of them were persecuted. He betrayed little about the meeting he had attended six days earlier in the city. He would say only that at a certain time he was in a weaver's workshop where some girls were spinning, and that after him several other people from inside and outside the city also entered; one of this group had led the meeting. He avoided answering the question whether he himself had taught at this meeting by asking the judge whether in his opinion this would not have been for the benefit of those in attendance. Further asked whether he was a "teacher," he admitted having spoken a few times at Hansbeke, but said that otherwise he "only desired to hear and to learn to the best of his capacity and knowledge." The only correspondence with Zeeland which he would admit to carrying on was with his own parents. Asked whether he would again use the New Testament which had been taken from him if it were returned to him, he answered sarcastically, "That's what it's made for."

...Logically he should have been condemned to death after this confession, but no sentence can be found in the archives. Nor are there any traces of the further fate of the Mennonite Wouters Wychelssone, who was arrested at Sint-Winnoxbergen in May, 1591. We are better informed about the last three Mennonites who came up for trial in the 1590s: Reineux Pantens, Cattelyne van Hulle and Michiel de Cleercq.

Reineux Pantens was tried in June 30, 1592. He was 48 years-old, a native of Roselaere. Sought by the Ghent police since 1577, he had escaped by continually changing his residence....He had remained active after the expiration of the interim of 1585-87,....He refused obstinately to give information about Mennonite meetings, asking the Council whether they considered it a "meeting" when "three of four of them had walked together." The interrogators were more successful with his 12 year-old daughter, who was brought into the courtroom after he was led out. Intimidated by the proceedings in the impressive "castle" (which in modern times is the post office), Lyntken in her innocence revealed many details which her parents would never have betrayed under the worst torture. She related that her father had most to do with Dierick de Schryvere, Jan Stamp, and the sisters Adrianeken and Tanneken Kiekepost. All of these people met at her father's room at least every Sunday at two o'clock, when her father or sometimes Stamp read "something from several books." She reported that the parents of the Kiekepost sisters disapproved of their Mennonite sympathies and had repeatedly asked them to return to the Catholic Church. Recently Pantens had been having difficulties with....his Catholic landlord, because of the meetings, but thus far he had been able to avoid being evicted.

Lyntken suddenly became very careful when asked who was the owner of the money which had been found in a trunk in her father's room, and whether it was to be used for the support of the poor members of the congregation. First she re-

plied that "she could not answer that question, neither would she name the owner." Under further pressure her answers were vague. She thought the givers must have been Franchois and Jan; she did not remember their full names. They lived somewhere "outside the Keyser Gate, without knowing exactly their residence or last name."

Lyntken was led on to describe a typical country meeting. With her father, Jan Stamp, and Dierick de Schryvere she had recently gone for a walk. Once outside the Keyser Gate, she noticed that they had been joined by several "country folk whom she does not know." Suddenly they stopped walking and seated themselves behind a hillock. Here, in the open air and far from all indiscreet observers, her father and Jan Stamp spoke after the reading of a passage of Scripture. This was followed by a discussion of the same subject in which everyone present participated.

The Council was fortunate to have obtained some information from this child, for her father would reveal nothing. Again and again Reineux Pantens was dragged to the rack, but he never betrayed any of his brethren. He incriminated only himself by the admission that he had done everything within his power to prevent the goods of refugees from coming into the hands of the authorities. He helped his fellow prisoners to escape and took care of their property for them as well. The standard sentence for Mennonite leaders, death by strangling within the count's castle, followed by public hanging of the corpse, was pronounced on September 15, 1592.

Another prominent figure from this period was Michiel de Cleercq, whose activities we have already traced until 1588. After this date he became more active, together with Reineux Pantens. Michiel took care of the poor in addition to his preaching. He collected money and gifts in kind and took the risk of hiding in his room part of the collected goods. The day before his arrest, June 29, he had hauled three heavy sacks of food to his home with the assistance of a woman whose name he refused to disclose in spite of torture. He had gone to bed after the day's hard work, when he was aroused by hammering at his door. His attempt to escape by the window was futile for the house was surrounded.

Michiel stood firm to the end. However sorely he was tried, not a single incautious word passed his lips. The only Mennonite he named was one Franchois Hubrecht surnamed Lochtentie, a yard merchant. This revelation was however, of no importance, since de Cleercq refused to indicate Hubrecht's place of residence. Rightly judged to be one of the pillars of the brethren, he died on the same day the same death as Reineux Pantens, September 15, 1592. He was the last Mennonite martyr in Flanders, indeed in the entire Netherlands.

The authorities were less severe with Cattelyne van Hulle, Dierick de Schryvere, and Jan Stamp. Cattelyne had been baptized at Ghent by Pauwels van Meenen in 1581 and had made the acquaintance of Jacob Martens, one of the brethren, whom she later married. The mother of four children, she was not spared many trials. During the siege of the city by Farnese's armies her husband and second-youngest child died; hardly two years later the youngest died. None of this kept her from being faithful in attending meetings outside the St. Baafs Gate, where Hans Busschaert preached. Arrested,

she remained true to her convictions. Her goods were confiscated and she was condemned to "eternal" exile, under the threat of hanging should she return.

Dierick de Schryvere, who undoubtedly had been a member of the brotherhood for a long time, since his home served as a collection centre for gifts for the poor of the church, and Jan Stamps, who had often spoken in meetings, were less steadfast. Their conviction weakened before the first test. Already on July 1, 1592, the day after their arrest, they were released on condition that they report to the authorities wherever summoned.

The trials thus far described show that during the period 1587-92 Mennonitism had not ceased to struggle with all the means remaining at its disposal. Meetings in limited groups within the city, larger meetings outside the city walls, collections in favour of the less fortunate in the congregation - all this went on as usual. Those responsible, the deacon-teachers, fulfilled their tasks well. They were also the best qualified persons to take care of the interests of those who were forced to flee, since they were most closely in touch with the Mennonites in Holland and Zeeland, where a large number of Flemish refugees had already resettled.

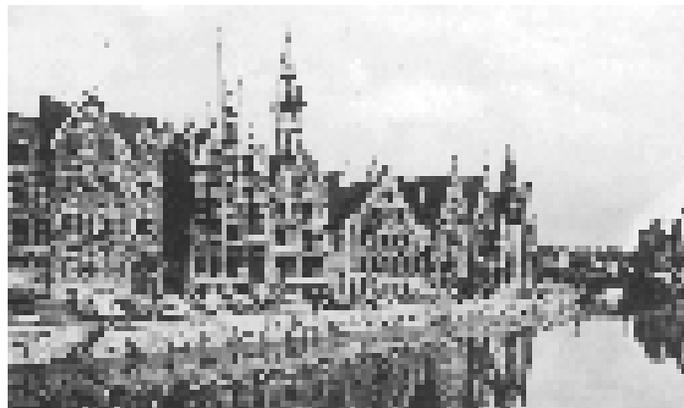
Probably Hans Busschaert was the most effective liaison agent between the Northern and Southern Netherlands. Flemish himself, very well acquainted with the Northern Netherlands, especially Zeeland, where he is reported to have baptized in 1587, Busschaert never abandoned the sorely tried brethren in his native province. Repeatedly his presence was reported to the authorities, but always too late. Busschaert knew better than anyone else the needs of the Flemish Mennonites. Despite the lack of formal proof, it is indubitable that he told about these needs in immigrant circles in the North. His appeal did not go unheard. In 1589 Joos de Tollenaere received the sum of 100 guilders from the congregation in Haarlem to be used for the support of the poor; Zeeland as well did not fail to help when needed.

In 1592, when the known leaders were executed, this assistance from the North was probably instrumental in preventing the almost inevitable disappearance of Flemish Mennonitism. Soon signs of revival could again be seen in some of the traditional....centers. Joost Bostijn was called before the Bruges Council in 1593, and confessed to having maintained contacts with the Mennonites in the city.

At Ghent, Janneken de Meyere declared to the authorities on August 21, 1598, "that they should not have arrested her, for there were at least 1000 male Protestants in the city." This figure is certainly exaggerated; had there been 1000 Protestants in the city there would have been other signs of their presence. Nonetheless, the statement attests to the continued existence of Protestant groups, just as there is no reason to doubt the existence of the Mennonites, even though the documentary traces of their presence grow more and more rare....

Three years later information was received in Brussels of frequent large Mennonite meetings in and around Lovendegem. The Mennonites felt relatively secure, thanks to the presence in their midst of the Council member Cornelis Arents, who had long been a sympathizer. In recent weeks, according to the message sent to Archduke Albrecht on November 7, 1609, a teacher from the Haarlem congregation had been present. The archduke reacted by ordering all civil authorities to renew the proclamation of the edict against the "rebaptizers."

At a meeting of Catholic bishops held at Mechelen in 1617 it was noticed that Mennonitism still existed in the southern provinces, and the decision to combat it mercilessly renewed. In 1630, respond-



Merchant houses along the Graslei in Ghent, Flanders. Ghent was a rich medieval city but in 1592-96, Protestants (Reformed) and Mennonites fled Flanders, north to Holland, Friesland and on to Polish-Prussia. The departure of the Mennonites from Ghent enriched Holland, and Amsterdam, in particular. Photo - Jan Gleysteen, Mennonite Tourguide, page 247.

ing to news of Mennonite activity continuing around Lovendegem and Zomergem, the Council of Flanders ordered an investigation throughout the entire country. This measure resulted in the arrest of Samuel Pits and his 73 year-old mother, Lady Maria de Provin, both of whom were induced to talk. They revealed that a prospering congregation, already several years old, existed in the area. The brethren were mostly rich merchants, who frequently visited the Aardenburg market. When in Aardenburg they never failed to attend meetings held at a place called "ten Biezen." For a long time the congregation at Lovendegem had held its meetings in an attic. By 1629, when the group had become too large for the room, it was decided to furnish a house for the meetings. Before long this building was found to be too small, and a second was built. The financial resources of this congregation must have been exceptional. In addition to their buildings they supported a minister whom they called from their midst, Jacob van Maldegem, born at Zomergem (or Hansbeke?), who had grown up among the Flemish. He had seen the birth and growth of the group at Lovendegem and had probably had a large part in urging the scattered Mennonites in Flanders to regroup themselves and to establish this new congregation.

The churches in Zeeland followed this new development with interest. Direct contact could be made at Aardenburg on market days, at which time money gifts could be sent. An elder from Zeeland visited Lovendegem twice a year to baptize new

converts; he also brought clothing for the poor in the congregation.

As alert as the "Government of the Counterreformation" was, it was unable to check this development because of the impossibility of checking the movement of merchants. Even in 1630, after the arrest of Samuel Pits and his mother had given them abundant new information, the police were unable to capture anyone else. The members of the church either had left the country or were hiding under a safe pseudonym. Thus the Council of Flanders was unable to affirm to the Secret Council that the Lovendegem area had been purified of the heresy.

The Council expressed the opinion that it was not sufficient to require that everyone attend the parish church. Many, it was feared, could preform this *acte de presence* and remain free, as soon as the occasion should allow, to give expression to their true Mennonite convictions. The fear, implicit in this warning, that Mennonitism might yet find a new lease on life, was unfounded; and yet clandestine small groups continued to exist through the 1630s. After 1636 a wealthy cloth-merchant, Christiaan van Eeghem, was obliged to leave his home at Lichtervelde. He and his son Jacob were to become pillars of the Aardenburg congregation. Christiaan's nephew, Adriaan van Eeghem, was a teacher or elder in Middleburg from 1655 to 1709. Adriaan was born of Roman Catholic parents at Kortemark, four miles southwest of Torhout, in 1631. His parents

were considered to be good Catholics, and he served for some time as a choirboy; yet they were part of a small group of Mennonite emigrants who fled to the North in 1639 or 1640. The fact that in the late 1630s new converts were still being made is a substantial guarantee that Mennonitism was still very much alive. Further more, there is no clear reason to regard this known migration of 1639-40 as the last. It would be premature to attempt to fix an exact date for the final disappearance of Mennonitism in Flanders.

It is easy to see why the migrations, individual and collective, from Flanders to the North generally went in the direction of Aardenburg. Jacob van Maldegem, already named as the founder of the Lovendegem-Zomergem congregation, was also the father of the Aardenburg group. Aardenburg and Sluis had been occupied in the name of the Northern Netherlands by Maurice of Orange, who did not legally recognize the Mennonites but at least did not disturb them. Aardenburg was thus the natural place of refuge and temporary residence for the emigrants until they could settle farther north in Holland.

This northward retreat concludes the last phase of the unequal battle which the Flemish Mennonites sustained for a century before finally conceding defeat before the authorities who sought their complete elimination. Their story is a moving page in the history of the Southern Netherlands Reformation. May the writing of church history henceforth give them their due!

Ghent and Het Gravensteen Castle, Flanders

“Ghent and Het Gravensteen Castle, Flanders,” from *Mennonite Tourguide* (Scottsdale, Pa., 1984), pages 246-247, by Jan Gleysteen, 16095 13th Street, Goshen, Indiana, 46626.

Ghent, Flanders.

Ghent is the richest of all Belgium cities in architectural treasures. But unlike Brussels, Ghent has the gift of being able to incorporate them into its continuing life. In the city's center we are surrounded by the cathedral of St. Bavo, the Cloth Hall, the Belfort, and the church of St. Niklaas. These are but a stone's throw from the incomparable Graslei, so we have no sense of being in an old city. The modern world and all its hustle and bustle is all around us. Truly, this area is home to the most remarkable collection of architectural treasures anywhere.

Inside the St. Bavo's is the priceless *Adoration of the Lamb*, by Huebert and Jan van Eyck, an early oil painting by the brothers who invented the technique. It has been in the church since 1432. The nearby town hall has two distinct styles. We can readily see where the Gothic builders stopped and where the Renaissance architects resumed the work 60 years later. Along the Graslei, mentioned earlier, stands an uninterrupted row of ancient mansions, quietly reflected in the water of the Leie River. These stately homes were built between the 12th and 16th century.

Other points of interest in Ghent include the Little Begijnhof and the Old Begijnhof, both established in 1234 to provide homes for Beguines (a women's lay order), and the *Dulle Griet* (hoarse Margaret), a massive 15th century cannon known better for its dull roar than for its effectiveness in lobbing cannon balls.



Gravensteen Castle, Ghent. Photo - Jan Gleysteen.

het Gravensteen.

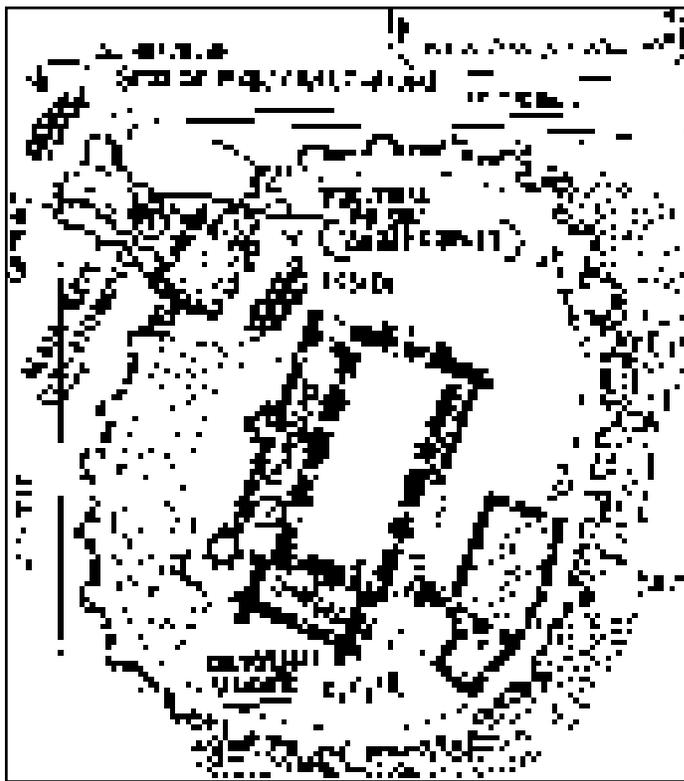
For students of Mennonite history the chief attraction of Ghent is “het Gravensteen,” the castle of the counts of Flanders. With the exception of Antwerp, no other Flemish city has a longer list of martyrs as Ghent and the grim castle played a large role in their suffering. All in all, 146 Mennonite martyrs were imprisoned and executed here (105 were burned at the stake just outside the castle's main gate).

The castle was built in 1180 by Philip d'Alsace on the remains of a much older fortification whose walls now form the bottom of the dungeons. More than likely, Philip had seen similar castles built by the crusaders in the middle east,

which explains the likeness of het Gravensteen to the fortress ruins in Lebanon and northern Israel. A tour of the moated castle takes about 1 1/2 hours. Inside we find dungeons, torture rooms, the castellan's residence, supply stores, and the large hall of knights, in which the Order of the Golden Fleece held its meetings. There is an extensive collection of torture instruments and branding irons.

Dungeons.

The dungeons of het Gravensteen were in use until well into the 18th century. Accused persons stayed here from six weeks to 13 months for preventative imprisonment, that is to say, before their trial. The unsanitary conditions and, the intense winter cold, all but killed the unfortunate prisoners. Once the trial was held, punishment was swift and little time was wasted in erecting the pyres for burning. The exhibits which show man's inhumanity to man are sobering, especially when one realizes that the use of torture is on the increase again in many parts of the world. Currently the countries violating human rights and/or using torture number 117,

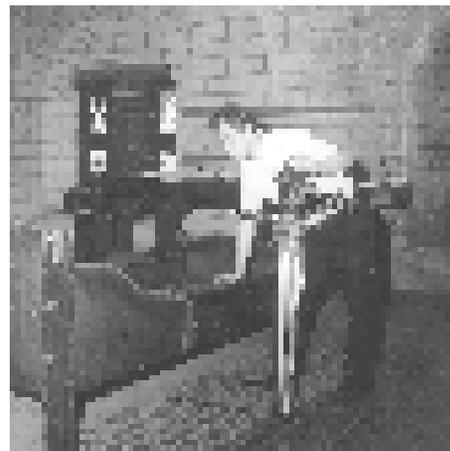


Layout of Gravensteen Castle, showing location of dungeons, holding cells for prisoners and site of public executions. Courtesy of Jan Gleysteen.

with the United States and the United Kingdom conveniently looking the other way when it involves their allies.

Source:

Jan Gleysteen, *Mennonite Tour Guide to Western Europe* (Scottsdale, Pa., 1984), pages 246-7.



In 1969 Mennonite historian John L. Roth collaborated with Jan Gleysteen documenting European Mennonite history through a number of research trips. Here Dr. Roth examines a “coercive bed” - a torture tool in Het Gravensteen. Photo - Jan Gleysteen.



The pre-trial prison room in the Gravensteen Castle. The only light came from a cross shaped open window at the end of the long narrow cell which was always cold and damp. Photo - Jan Gleysteen.

Torture.

The visitor of the Counts' Castle....can also have a look at a remarkable museum,the most important one of its kind in Belgium. On the first floor of the so-called "Counts' residence" a Museum of Judicial Objects has been set up,....

Among the oldest and at the same time also often the cruellest objects in the Museum are, apart from a number of manacles (some of which date back to the 15th century), ten thumb screws (all from the 17th and 18th centuries), a bridle (composed of a broad leather strap with on one side in the middle a pear-shaped wooden "plug", used for the water ordeal) and two iron collars,....

The smallest and the oldest of these collars is probably the most cruel object in the whole collection. It is set with five rows of 20 sharp, 1 centimetre long pins on the inside; the upper and lower edge also have pins, bent more or less to the

inside. On the outside are four rings for ropes, by which the collar was fastened diagonally to the walls, so that it was hanging neatly in the middle of the room. The tortured one, fettered and handcuffed, had to sit on a small chair, his neck in the collar. As long as he was sitting straight up and did not move, nothing happened, but as soon as he began to sag of fatigue or made an unexpected movement, the pins pierced through his flesh.

The second collar in the Museum is bigger and younger. On the inside, there are no pins, but a sort of little knobs. This kind of torture would have come into use at the end of the 16th century and was employed, amongst others, by the Council of Flanders and the College of Oudburg (to which, after all, the small collar belonged) in the so-called Square on the first floor of the gateway of the Counts' Castle.

A particularly attractive and worthy exhibit are nine judicial swords (some of them with matching sheaths)....in an oak frame, carved in 1690.... Five of these

swords were ordered by the aldermen of Gent in 1593; the other four date from 1608 and 1712 and were manufactured in Solingen (Germany).

A particularly beautiful specimen has framed inscriptions on both sides;

on one side:

"Hüte dich thue kein Bösses nicht
Wan du wilst flehen dis Gericht
Wan ich das Schwerdt thue aufheben
So wünsch ich de a.(rmen)
S.(ünder) das ewige Leben"

These swords were formerly used for the decapitation of special categories of criminals, but, as symbols of justice, they were displayed in the court-room of the City Hall until the 19th century....According to a superstition, prevalent at the time, judicial swords must not be used more than a hundred times; if they were used more, one had to dread their revenge. The last execution took place in 1671 by order of the Council of Flanders....

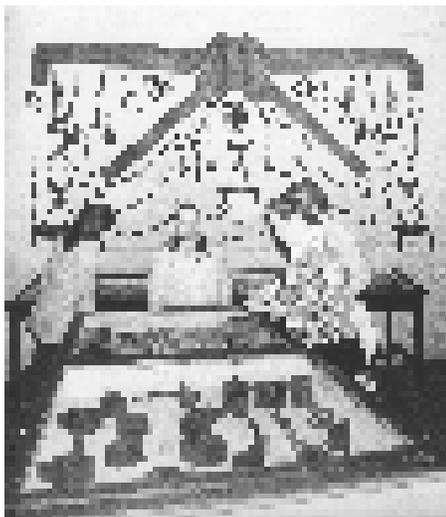
Most condemned people were hanged, others (mostly in religious cases,....and only when condemned by the Council of Flanders) were burnt. A 2.10 metre long fork, with ingeniously adorned shaft, used not only for throwing straw and wood on the fire, but also to drive back condemned people trying to escape from the flames, reminds us of the pyre.

Museum pamphlet, courtesy of Jan Gleysteen.

Jan Gleysteen.

Preservings readers are indebted to artist, writer and popular speaker, Jan Gleysteen, Goshen, Indiana, who graciously provided many of the photographs and background information about Mennonites in Flanders for this issue.

Jan Gleysteen was born in Amsterdam and came to the U.S. in 1953 to study at Goshen College, and to work at Mennonite Publishing House. Together with historian John L. Roth, he researched the European history of American Mennonites leading to the publication of his renown *Mennonite Tourguide to Western Europe* in 1984. In 1970 Jan led the first of many European heritage tours. He is a frequent speaker at church and school functions, sharing his passion for the Mennonite story and the importance for young people to know their religious heritage



Mennonite visitors examine historical torture instruments in the Museum of the Gravensteen Castle, Ghent. Photo - Jan Gleysteen.



Jan Gleysteen. Photo north of Amsterdam on the Zaan River. Photo - Keeping the Heritage Alive pamphlet.

Flemish and Friesian Mennonite Roots

“Flemish and Frisian Roots of the Polish-Prussian Mennonites,”

by Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack St., New Westminster, B. C., V3L 4V5, a paper presented March 9, 2002, at Family History Day, sponsored by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc., at Steinbach, Manitoba.

Introduction.

When we look at traditional Mennonite culture and society as it existed a few years ago, we find a diversity of hidden ethnic, linguistic, theological and historical elements, masked by an apparent homogeneity. That there was such a homogeneity and uniformity follows from the fact that this (perhaps former) culture and society existed. What is interesting are the diverse strands which have coalesced to present a homogeneous image, but which occasionally unravel in curious ways to reveal separate identities in the least expected areas.

In these various strands, we can see the following cultural and ethnic elements: the Swiss, Austrian, Moravian, Flemish, Dutch, Friesian, South German, Prussian, Russian and Polish. Each of these elements has made a cultural, ethnic, linguistic and historical contribution to the formation of the Mennonite identity.

Ethnic and Cultural Identity.

Because of this diversity, political, economic or social expediency has led groups, at various times, in various places, to emphasize one of these elements at the expense of others. So for instance, in World War I Russia, the Dutchness of the Mennonite identity was emphasized to distinguish the Russian Mennonites from the enemy, the Germans, and to avoid confiscation of property and wealth. In the 1930s and 1940s however, some groups emphasized the Germaness of their Mennonite identity, again for political and economic reasons. In more recent times, Mennonite immigrants to Germany once again emphasized the Germaness of their Mennonite identity, quite incorrectly in my opinion, to facilitate their integration in their new homeland, and prosper economically.

“....some groups emphasized the Germaness of their Mennonite identity, again for political and economic reasons.”

One trademark of this unravelling of the Mennonite fabric is the demise of the Low German or Plautdietsch language, once maintained by the Mennonites over centuries. Many of the 1920s immigrants to Canada dropped this language, ostensibly because it could be difficult for their children to learn three languages and preference was given to High German as a second language for their children. It is distressing to see that the recent Mennonite Umsiedlers to Germany now only speak High German and Russian, presumably because these languages have a so-called higher cultural status. Many of these immigrants had themselves only learned High German as a third language and could only speak Plautdietsch and Russian before coming to Germany.

I mention these items as a preface to my talk,

because these distortions of the elements making up the Mennonite identity add to the difficulties in understanding this identity, and lead to an unclearness and misunderstanding of Mennonite history, which is after all, of interest to all of us. Of the claims advanced to promote one element over others, the claim of the Germanic element is one of the least tenable. Many, if not a large majority of our ancestors, lived at most 20 to 30 years in a country called Prussia, and many of these, not at all.

Most of our ancestors lived for 200 to 300 years in a country called Poland, making a claim to a Polish identity very strong indeed. However, almost no one asserts a Polish connection relative to the Mennonite identity. This is in spite of the fact that a significant number of our ancestors were from ethnic Polish families, or were able to speak and write Polish at one time. The Dutch claim (made mainly by Dutch historians) is especially unclear, since most of our ancestors who came to Poland, from the Rhine delta and valley, did so before any emergence of a Dutch nation, and lived in the Holy Roman Empire.

The Mennonite identity (as it used to be) consists rather of all of these elements combined, and not one or even several of these cultural, linguistic and ethnic elements in isolation. The bonding forces of a common history and theology have united these elements into a single identity.

“The Mennonite identity (as it used to be) consists rather of all of these elements combined,....”

Refugee Status.

In a sense, the difficulties in unravelling the strains making up Mennonite history and culture can be resolved by remembering that the Mennonite community, for much of its history, has had what we might call refugee status. In a real sense, the uniqueness of the Mennonite identity consists in a refusal to belong to any particular nation or ethnic group. As others before me have mentioned, Mennonites have always formed a society within a society or a commonwealth within the nation. Or differently expressed, the Mennonite community was always a refugee community. For the 250 or more years that the Mennonites lived in Poland, they never felt that they were Polish nationals. Indeed, in the territory of Danzig city, they were never granted citizenship. Likewise, in Russia, their special status meant that they were often not considered as full Russian citizens. The Canadian (and American) Mennonites who moved to Mexico and Paraguay, can likewise be considered as refugees from discrimination and repression.

“....the Mennonite community was always a refugee community.”

On a deeper level, we find the idea of a permanent refugee community in the theological belief that this world is not our true home, but a temporary abode, a place of transit on our way to eternity. While this idea is not necessarily unique to Mennonites, it may have been more consistently actualized in Mennonite history and culture than elsewhere. This idea makes the claim to a material or ethnic identity seem trivial by comparison. One could argue that being a refugee is an inherent part of the Mennonite makeup. Where people begin to assume positions of status in a national or ethnic group, something of the Mennonite identity is lost.

Flemish and Friesian.

One of the most underemphasized elements of the Mennonite identity is the Flemish component. That is, Flemish as opposed to Netherlandic, Dutch or Friesian. But one cannot review aspects of this Flemish component without also reviewing the Friesian component. The long-standing division of the West Prussian Mennonite community into Flemish and Friesian sections, is of vital importance to the history of the Mennonites in Russia. I have attempted to demonstrate this, in somewhat abridged form, in my recent book. A great deal more needs to be said on this subject, which I hope to do in a second edition of my book, on which I am currently working.

“One of the most underemphasized elements of the Mennonite identity is the Flemish component.”

Briefly, although this division arose, both in the Rhine lowlands and the Vistula lowlands, from apparent ethnic differences, the principal reason that the division continued for centuries was an ideological one. Briefly again, the section labelled as Flemish was focused on the community, the community of Christians that is, and in living as a community apart from the world. On the other hand, the section labelled as Friesian, placed a higher emphasis on the individual as opposed to the community, and favoured assimilation and integration to some extent into society. Again, I have outlined some of these divergent ideologies in my book.

Prussian and Russian Mennonite historians have downplayed these divisions because, in their view, the conflict in the Mennonite community was one of progressive and reactionary forces, and they did not wish to acknowledge the valid views of the Flemish party by delving into the origins of their thinking. They preferred to dismiss this viewpoint as simply reactionary. Likewise the Brüdergemeinde movement divided the Mennonite community into the godly and the ungodly, with the traditionalist Flemish group being associated with the ungodly. In a very real sense,

the struggle between the Flemish and Friesian viewpoints is continuing today, although under different labels.

There are many paradoxes connected with the Flemish-Friesian division. Many Mennonites from Friesland went over to the Flemish section and many Flemish went over to the Friesian section, at a very early point in the history of the Mennonites. Dirk Phillips, first Ältester of the Flemish Gemeinde at Danzig, was born in Friesland and was a native Friesian. If we look at family surnames, the name which means a person from Flanders (the heartland of the Flemish) is Fleming, but in the 1770s all of the Mennonite Flemings of West Prussia belonged to a Friesian Gemeinde. On the other hand, most of the Friesens belonged to a Flemish Gemeinde. Of course, Friesen does not mean "a Friesian" as I have previously explained. Fröse is the name which means "a Friesian". All of the Fröses in 1776 did belong to a Friesian Gemeinde, but it seems that many of these Fröses were descendants of Friesians who had come to Poland and the Vistula delta long before the era of the Mennonites.

What I am attempting to illustrate is the fact that the ethnic component of the Flemish-Friesian division must not be overrated, and that a very large crossover took place at a very early period. Perhaps most of the members of the Flemish section were ethnic Friesians, while a large number of those subscribing to the Friesian viewpoint were ethnic Flemings.

The former popularity of these labels does however have something to do with Flemish and Friesian culture and history. Friesland was a land of independent, individualistic and isolated individuals and farms. There were then, and are today, very few large towns in Friesland. Friesland was perhaps the most independent area of the Holy Roman Empire, and is considered by historians almost as a republic at that time.

Flanders (home of the Flemish), on the other hand, was a land of many large towns, small towns and villages, where commerce and industry were of primary importance. Community cooperation was of importance with respect to this aspect of the economy, as well as in protecting the land from the ravage of river floods and North Sea storms. The dyking requirements, for instance, in the Flemish south, for protecting the land, were very different and much more difficult, than on the coast of the current Friesland.

To see how the Flemish-Friesian Mennonite split took place, we need to look at the historical context in which this division took place, and need to look at the culture and history of the Rhine lowlands. In this paper, I am avoiding use of the words Low Countries or Netherlands because these words generally refer to a political unit which did not exist at the time of the Flemish-Friesian division, or during the first Mennonite migrations.

Languages and Cultures.

There were three major languages and cultural groups in the Lowlands in 1500:

1. The Friesians: in the Northern areas;
2. The Low Saxons: in the Eastern and Northern areas;
3. The Low Franconians: in the Western and

Southern Lowlands and in the Waal and Maas river deltas.

1. The Friesians:

Friesian was the language of the Friesian peoples who once inhabited the coastal areas of the North Sea from the southern lowlands to Denmark. Over time the Friesian language and culture were gradually pushed into the corner of the modern Netherlands known today as the province of Friesland. This language and culture suffered from natural and manmade division. A large part of Friesland, formerly West Friesland and now North Holland, was cut off by the incursions of many North Sea storms from the main part of Friesland. During the Middle Ages, the North Sea eroded the land peninsula connecting West Friesland and Friesland, and turned the former lake, the Zuider See, into an inlet of the North Sea and isolated the West Friesians across the water.

2. The Low Saxons:

In the east, Low Saxon culture and language began to replace Friesian all along the coast from Denmark to East Friesland, Gröningen, and even in the main Friesian areas in the West. Linguists tell us that Friesian is the closest language to Old English. As a native speaker of both English and modern Low Saxon (Plautdietsch), I find that Low Saxon is, in my view the closest language to modern English.

Low Saxon culture and language gradually came to dominate the Eastern and Northern Lowlands. Low Saxon came to be the dominant language all along the northern coastal areas of Europe, and was the official language of the Hansa (the Hanseatic league), the most powerful trading organization of the Middle Ages.

3. Low Franconians:

These were the Salian Franks who came down the Rhine river and settled in the deltas of the Rhine (Waal) and Meuse (Maas) rivers. There were of course, Franks all along the Rhine Valley and in middle Germany. These Franks gave the name of Franken to areas of middle Germany, while other groups of Franks entered the Old Roman province of Gaul and transformed that province into "Frankreich" while losing much of their culture and language in the process.

Low Franconian culture and language did however survive in the river deltas and became known as Nieder Duitsch--as opposed to Hoog Duitsch, the language of the peoples further up the Rhine and in southern-central Germany.

The main dialects of Low Franconian include:

- Hollands;
- Brabants (south of the great rivers);
- Limburg.

The delta lands had originally been settled by the Friesians and Low Saxons, but were eventually replaced by the Franks. The Brabant dialect was originally dominant, but was later replaced by Hollands. During and after the struggle for independence, conscious efforts were made to create a more universal language and to eliminate the influence of foreign, including Low Saxon, elements from the language. Nevertheless the North and East of the Lowlands still retain much of the Low

Saxon elements.

Political Organization.

Politically, the Lowlands were part of the Holy Roman Empire. The various areas had been organized as follows:

1. Bishoprics (lands governed by the church headed by a Bishop)
 - Utrecht,
 - Liege.
2. Duchies (lands governed by a duke)
 - Brabant,
 - Limbourg,
 - Luxembourg (still a grand Duchy today),
 - Gelderland (previously a county).
3. Counties (lands governed by a count)
 - Flanders,
 - Hainault,
 - Holland
 - Gelderland (subsequently a Duchy),
 - Zeeland,
 - Namur,
 - Artois (now part of France),
 - Drente,
 - Zutphen.
4. Other small territories

Historical Influences.

There are some remarkable aspects of this organization which require further comment. Firstly there is the unique situation of Friesland. Nowhere in Friesland did any feudal institutions make any inroads. Serfdom never existed in Friesland. Attempts to transform Friesland into a regular county of the Empire failed repeatedly, and as mentioned earlier, some historians refer to Friesland as a sort of republic. Secondly, elsewhere in the Lowlands, feudal institutions only made very minor inroads, and feudal institutions, such as they were, existed only in very modified forms. Very early during the Middle Ages, local rulers and governments realized the principle of consultation and cooperation with local inhabitants.

This was due, to a great extent, to the geographic situation, and to the problems of geography of the Lowlands. The various rivers, marshes and bogs made these territories easily defensible by those who knew the terrain, and difficult to invade by large numbers of troops unfamiliar with the country.

The people of the Lowlands soon became masters of the waterways, the rivers and the Sea. They became expert sailors, fishermen and boatbuilders. On land, they became expert marshland farmers; they began to learn the art of building dykes, and later the art of reclaiming land from water covered areas. Their success in managing the marshes and waterways had two important results. One was an increase in prosperity and population. The other was the spread of their reputation as masters of the marshlands.

These two factors in turn led to the invitation of other wetland jurisdictions to settle on their lands elsewhere in Northern Europe. As a result, various Friesian, Low Saxon and Low Franconian groups immigrated as invited settlers to various areas including the land of Bremen and the lands of the Vistula Delta. These immigrations occurred long before the Reformation. These immigrant

settlers were always free from local institutions of feudal control and serfdom, and which distinguished them from the local farming population.

Friesians.

There were some important polarizing differences between the Northern and Southern Lowlands. These differences involve Friesland and the Flemish counties (which I define here as including Flanders, Brabant, and Artois). These differences are, I believe important in the later Friesian and Flemish Mennonite divisions.

As mentioned earlier, medieval Friesland had no central government, and local villages formed the main political and social units (these were grouped in administrative districts called Grietenijen). None of the towns, such as they were, received or required a charter as elsewhere, since they were considered as just slightly larger free districts. The one large town, later city, Gröningen, found itself isolated in Friesian society, so that in the later United Provinces, the city of Gröningen and the surrounding countryside – the Ommeland – were considered and treated as two distinct sub-provinces.

Many of the Friesian farmers had isolated residences built on wide raised mounds of earth (called terps) to protect their homes from flooding. These isolated raised homesteads persisted even when the establishment of dykes had made the area safer from flooding. Elsewhere too, in the Vistula Delta for example, we find this form of raised homestead. It is interesting to read in David Mandtlers autobiography of how he raised the level of his homestead in West Prussia in the 1700s.

In this discussion Friesland is taken to include West Friesland, Friesland, Middle Friesland (the lands around Gröningen) and East Friesland.

I would like to suggest that Friesian culture and society did impact and influence the development of what later became known as the Friesian division of the Mennonites. Living generally on isolated farming homesteads, extremely independent, never having experienced serfdom or any strong central government, the Friesians contributed the following:

- An individualistic self-sufficiency and independence
- A pre-disposition to farming as a way of life
- A disposition to resent the encroachments of others into their personal or economic lives, with a consequent pre-disposition to accept hierarchical church structures of neighbouring (non-Mennonite) groups.

Flemish.

The southern Lowlands, immediately south of the great rivers (Rhine and Meuse), had a very different historical and cultural development. The Flemish, also largely free from the restraints of feudal institutions, established an early economic and cultural well-being, that was renown throughout Europe. Many Flemings lived in small towns or cities, and were craftsmen, tradesmen and merchants, as well as farmers and sailors. These lands were the economic and cultural centre of the entire Lowlands. They were much less subject to sea and river flooding, a fact which may have led to

the rapid economic growth. Later, however, this circumstance was to be a negative factor, because the Flemish counties were far less easily defended from outside invaders and intervention. This was to lead to the subjugation and outright annexation of various Flemish territories by foreign powers, and by their cousins to the North.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the towns and cities of the Flemish territories thrived. The cities included Brugge, Ghent, Antwerp, and Brussels. Flanders was at the crossroads of European trade and shipping. One of the mainstays of the Flemish economy was the textile industry. Originally producers of wool, Flemish craftsmen turned to the production of wool and the development of the weaving industry. The tapestries of Arras (in Artois) achieved international recognition. Later, when the woollen industry declined, the Flemings turned to the raising of flax and the weaving of linen. They also developed the important lacemaking industry.

Agriculturally, the Flemish lands were the most productive in all of Europe, with higher crop yields than elsewhere (Note One). Shipping, trade and commerce were equally important. Flemish ships and sailors were in demand throughout Europe. Flemish ships had been an instrumental means of transport during the Crusades (and it should not be forgotten, that Flemings played a leading role in the Crusader kingdoms). Along with the Hollanders and Friesians, the Flemings had by far the largest fishing fleet in the North Sea. All of the Lowland ports, except those of Holland and Zealand which were then only fishing ports, belonged to and were members of the Hansa. Baltic trade came to be of primary importance to the Flemish and Friesian economies. In the latter part of the 1400s, shipping through Polish ports (including Danzig) contributed to the expansion and development of the Vistula grain trade, and generally to the trade in raw materials down the Vistula.

It was only much later, in the mid-1500s, that the Zealand and Holland ports, which had never joined the Hansa, began to compete for a position in Baltic shipping. This too became of primary importance, and it is said that the United Provinces, led by Holland, owed their economic and political existence to the Baltic trade.

Flemish cities were the leaders in Northern European trade, shipping and commerce. Brugge was for a long time the chief port of North Europe. Later it was surpassed as the main port of North Europe by Antwerp, which was also the most important city of North Europe in 1500, and the centre of commerce and finance. In 1500, in particular, the county of Flanders was perhaps the most populous and economically and culturally advanced area of Northern Europe.

The economic growth of the Flemish lands was accompanied by a corresponding cultural growth. Perhaps the most literate people of the European world of 1500 were the Flemish of Flanders and Brabant. Antwerp was, after Paris, perhaps, the leading publishing centre of Europe. In 1550 there were 56 printing concerns in Antwerp (Note Two). The oldest vernacular literary works in the Lowlands were produced in Flanders, by Jacob V. Maerlant.

Flemish work in the fine arts was renown in Europe, and in particular in painting. Flemish art-

ists and painters of this period included the v. Eyck brothers who were representative of a large number of artists earning their living through the patronage of middle-class merchant families.

The villages, towns and cities of the Flemish lands had long maintained a political independence, and the vestiges of feudal institutions had disappeared early in the middle ages. Encroachments on this independence were fiercely resisted. Attempts for instance, by the French to control Flemish lands met with generally successful resistance. In 1302, for instance, a weaver Peter de Coninck led a revolt where the French in Brugge were surprised and defeated. Later that year, the citizens of Brugge defeated the French army led by King Philip (the fair) at the Battle of the Golden Spurs.

This Flemish independence, unlike that of the Friesians, was built around the community. Sometimes however, the idea of community was rather small and was confined to a few trade guilds only, so that at times, guilds within the same town were at war with each other.

I would suggest that Flemish culture and society added the following to the Mennonite tradition:

- an appreciation of the importance of the community and of the democratic nature of community life;
- a high level of culture, literacy and theological and philosophical sophistication;
- a tradition of non-agricultural employment, in crafts, trades, commerce and industry; including the occupations of linen weaving, lacemaking, brewing, distilling, engraving, printing, and of merchandising.
- a propensity to live near towns and cities.

Low Saxon.

We need to also briefly consider the two other main traditions in the Lowlands, namely, the Low Saxon and the Franconian north of the great rivers. The Low Saxon provinces included Gröningen, Overijssel, Gelderland and Drente. Of course, the main cultural contribution may have been the Low Saxon (Plautdietsch) language, although Low Saxon was a prestigious and widely used language all along the North Sea and Baltic coasts, as well as in Franconian areas.

It is harder to describe the possible contribution of the Low Saxon provinces to the Mennonite tradition than for the Fleming and Friesian, because the latter remained distinct cultures in the political vicissitudes that followed the age of the Reformation, whereas the Low Saxon elements were gradually absorbed in the new Franconian nation of the United Provinces of the Netherlands which evolved in the late 1500s. Some historians have speculated that had the leading Low Saxon political figure of the times, the Duke of Gelderland, gone over to or sought the support of Lutheran or even Calvinist powers in Europe, a powerful Low-Saxon state would have been created. As it was, the Duke of Gelderland remained a firm Catholic and participated in the persecutions of the Protestants (Reformed and Lutheran) and Mennonites.

The Low Saxon areas were, however, productive of new innovations in education and theology. In Overijssel and Gelderland, the religious move-

ment known as the "Devotio Moderna" (founded by Geert Groote (d.1384, Deventer)) evolved into the association known as the "Brethren of the Common Life", which laboured for the improvement of education and developed new schools in Deventer and Zwolle. These institutions were new forces helping to continue the prestige of Low Saxon culture throughout the Holy Roman Empire.

One of the most popular and widely-read books of all time was compiled by Thomas a Kempis (1379-1471) who was born in Kampen, Gelderland, and who worked in a monastery near Zwolle. It may be a matter of conjecture whether this book, "De Imitatione Christi" had deep influence on the later Anabaptists and Mennonites. Certainly, later Calvinists were deeply taken by the book. Many of its themes, including those of simple, non-ostentatious living, humility, and the transitory nature of this world as compared to the next, sound very familiar to Mennonite ears. George Elliott (who often used Mennonite-Quaker ideas in her novels) uses this book as a pivotal point in the troubled life of a young girl in the well-known novel "The Mill on the Floss". As an aside, it seems likely that Mennonite families with the surname of van Kampen, Kamp, Kemp, and Kempener originate from this same town of Kampen.

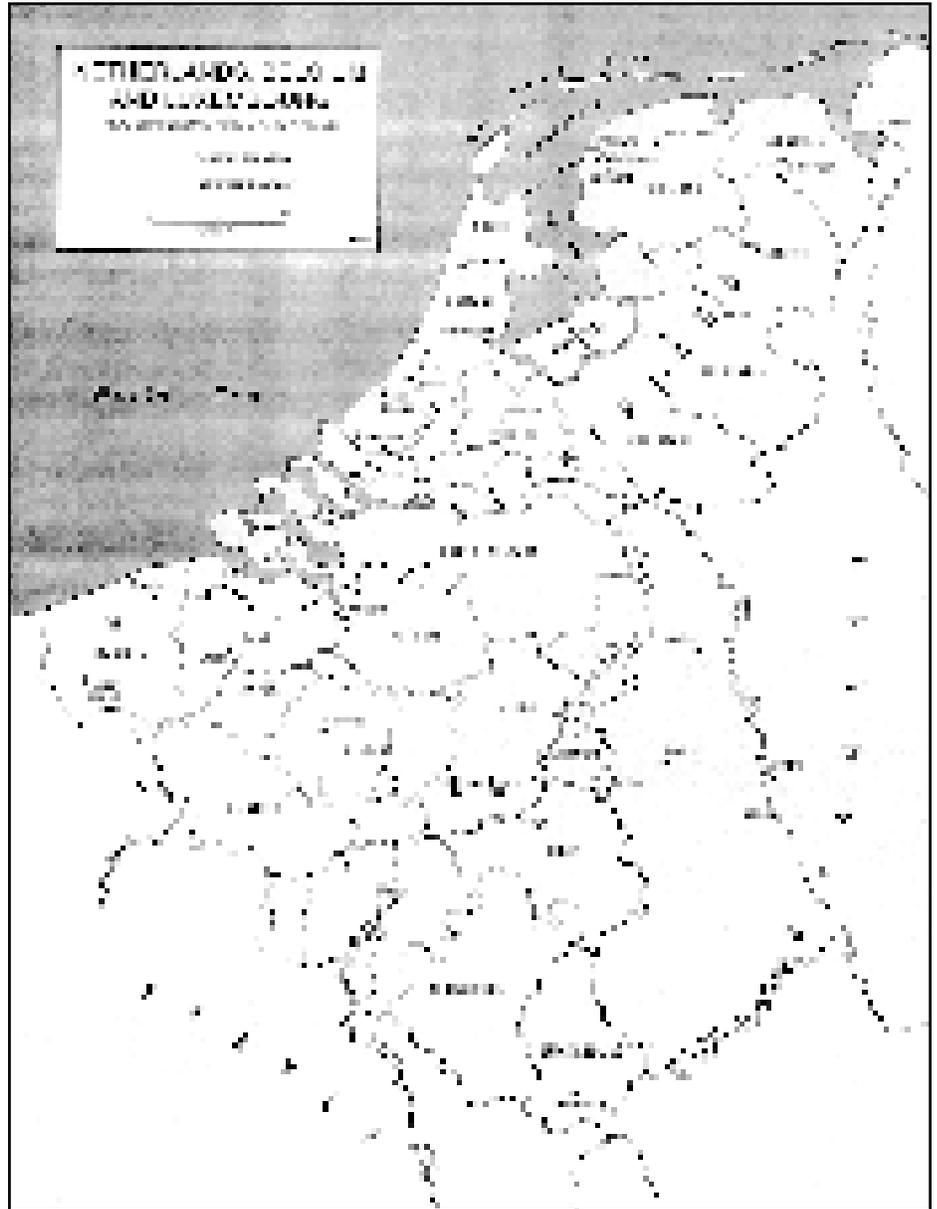
Franconian.

Lastly, we have the Franconians north of the great rivers. This area includes the provinces of Zeeland, Holland and Utrecht. Their geographic position was very favourable to the maintenance of an independence separate from the rest of the Empire. They were more easily defendable because of the vast systems of waterways, dykes, marshes and lakes throughout their territories, as well as because of the great rivers to the south (The word Holland is thought to derive from Holland, meaning marshy-land). These three provinces were to be the nucleus of the United Provinces. The early Anabaptists movement was very strong in these provinces.

The later history of the United Provinces was to reflect in large part the provincial attitudes of Holland, and the efforts of the middle and upper classes of the cities of Holland to secure their own well-being. Holland came first to dominate Zeeland, then the other provinces of the Union, and the later policies of the Union reflect in large measure the interest of the middle classes of Holland. Nowhere was this more evident than in their abandonment of the Flemish territories south of the great rivers. The burghers of Holland preferred to keep the ports of Flanders, particularly Antwerp, closed to shipping, rather than admit them to the Union as free economic rivals. The question of open shipping for the port of Antwerp remained an unresolved and contentious issue for over three hundred years.

The Thesis.

I have discussed, perhaps at length, some of the general characteristics of the four main areas and cultural groups of the Lowlands, namely, the Southern Franconians (Flemish), the Northern Franconians (Dutch if you will), the Friesians and



Map of the modern Low Countries - Belgium, Netherlands and Luxemburg, showing the areas of Frisian, Dutch and Flemish concentration in the 16th century. Map by Wm. Schroeder, Historical Atlas, page 6.

the Low Saxons. I have done this for the following reasons.

1. The majority of Mennonites of West Prussia, and therefore the majority of our ancestors, came from one of these four groups. Exactly when and from which of these regions our ancestors migrated to Poland is of interest from both a historical and genealogical point of view.
2. An understanding of these regions at the time of the Reformation will assist in understanding the cultural, linguistic, theological, ethnic and other differences which arose later in West Prussia and Russia. In particular, I would claim that the classification of the Mennonites in West Prussia into Flemish and Friesian divisions had a real basis originating in differences between the Flemish and Friesian regions of the Lowlands.
3. Where firm historical evidence is lacking, circumstantial evidence in respect of culture and tra-

dition, together with a clear chronology of external political events, can assist in the clearer description of the immigration movement to West Prussia.

4. In particular, an object of this study is to compare the migration of Lowland Mennonites to West Prussia with other and subsequent migrations to determine if any similarities exist and to what extent the first migrations parallel or provide a model for the following migrations.

Historical Review.

A brief chronological outline of the political events in the four regions of the Lowlands is an important tool in this study. This will help to localize the regions in which Mennonites were most persecuted and the relatively safer regions.

By the mid-1400s, the counties of Flanders, Zeeland and Holland, as well as the Duchies of

Brabant and Luxemburg, had come under the political control of the Dukes of Burgundy. The (French) Burgundian royal house had visions of transforming the lands under their control into an independent kingdom. Each individual Lowland territory however had long had its own assembly of deputies, called the States (after the French estates or *etats*, but not, as elsewhere, divided into social ranks (e.g. clergy, nobility, bourgeoisie). The local representative of the Duke, the lieutenant-governor, was known as the *Stadhouder*.

The last of the Burgundian princes died without a male heir, and political control over their Lowland territories passed by marriage to the Hapsburg family. The Hapsburgs were at this time, establishing themselves within the Holy Roman Empire, gaining control over various territories, and securing the votes of the Electoral College (which elected the Emperor), through various alliances and marriages. The Lowland territories, because of their economic and cultural wealth, were regarded as the jewels of their crown. The Lowland territories had, in fact, (excepting parts of the Flemish lands), always been part of the Holy Roman Empire.

Charles the V, Emperor from 1506 to 1555 was born in Ghent (Flanders). He succeeded in extending Hapsburg personal control over other Lowland territories as follows:

- 1521 The lands of Tournai,
- 1524 The lands of Friesland,
- 1526 The lands of Overijssel (previously part of the lands of the Bishop of Utrecht),
- 1527 The Bishopric of Utrecht,
- 1536 The County of Drenthe,
- 1536 The lands of Gröningen and the Ommeland,
- 1543 The Duchy of Gelderland and the County of Zutphen,
- 1543 The Bishopric of Cambrai.

In 1548, at the Diet of Augsburg, formal recognition was accorded to the unity of these territories within the Holy Roman Empire.

In 1500, that is before the Reformation and the great separation from the established (Catholic) church, there was already a significant alienation and estrangement of the Lowland population from the established church. This was due to several reasons. Firstly, the organization of the church in the Lowlands did not reflect the existing demographic and cultural situation. The only bishoprics in the Lowlands were those of Utrecht and Liege, and these came under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Cologne. Much of the Northeast came under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Münster and parts of the South under the Archbishop of Reims. This poor organization was recognized by Philip II, who finally obtained approval from the Papacy for a massive re-organization which began in 1559. As a result numerous Lowland based Bishoprics were created. Partly because of the poor organization, the established church in the Lowlands suffered from absenteeism, lack of discipline and poor morale.

At the same time, particularly in urban areas of Flanders, Brabant, Zeeland, and Holland, the population was the most literate in Europe. The educational reforms, which had their origins, as previ-

ously mentioned, in the Low-Saxon Lowland areas were felt throughout the Lowlands. The later Humanist movement, as a result, had a great impact. The publishing industry, particularly at Antwerp, was turning out new material for domestic as well as for foreign markets.

“...in urban areas of Flanders, Brabant, Zeeland, and Holland, the population was the most literate in Europe.”

As a result, there was already, in 1500, a great disillusionment of the upper and lower middle classes with the established church. There was a vague Protestant movement throughout the Lowlands, and in particular the provinces just mentioned. In 1525, Erasmus reported that most of the people of Flanders, Zeeland and Holland had heard of or had read the works of Martin Luther.

These provinces were, however, under the direct control of the Hapsburgs. The Hapsburgs were staunch Catholics who had good political reasons for promoting a strong central government and a strong central church. As a result, religious persecution was most severe in the provinces directly controlled by the Hapsburgs. As they extended their political control over the other provinces, one by one, religious persecution likewise followed.

In the period 1526 to 1566, the number of safe provinces was gradually reduced, and a wave of persecution moving over time from the south-west to the north-east followed. In a similar manner, there was a movement of religious refugees from the south-west to the north-east.

In 1522, Charles V appointed Franz v.d. Hulst as inquisitor-general in the Hapsburg Lowlands. The first execution followed at Brussels in 1523. The first persons executed were Lutherans. Nevertheless, the Lutheran church never gained any substantial support in the Lowlands. Instead the population remained vaguely Protestant, and many of the upper and middle classes, fearful for their wealth, social position, and their lives, kept their religious views to themselves. William the Silent, later organizer of the revolt and stadthouder of the United Provinces, was a typical figure of this time. He although a Protestant very early on, kept his religious views to himself (whence his sobriquet), and as a result was able to maintain and extend his political presence and position in the central government.

When Anabaptist ideas began circulating in the Lowlands, they immediately gained great and widespread acceptance. These ideas first appeared in Flanders (Note Three). They appeared later in the North with the arrival of Melchior Hoffmann in 1530 (via Emden) from Straßburg. The County of East Friesland was one of the first territories to adopt Lutheranism, and as a result, was to be initially one of the safe areas for Anabaptists and Mennonites. Although the counts of East Friesland were somewhat open-minded, the situation of the Mennonites became more dubious with the more well organized influx of Calvinist agents (beginning with John a Lasco in 1540).

As a natural consequence of Anabaptists te-

nets, none of the *Gemeinden* received any strong central direction, as did in contrast, the Calvinists. Many pseudo-Anabaptist groups also arose at the same time including the mystics under Melchior Hoffmann, or David Joris (Delft), and the social revolutionaries who included Jan Mathisz (Haarlem) and Jan Beukels (Leiden), leading large numbers of Lowlanders in the Münster revolt of 1534. Other pseudo-Anabaptists of the social revolutionary stamp could include the terrorists under Jan v. Batenburg.

Emigration.

Persecution, as mentioned before, was particularly severe in the Hapsburg provinces of Flanders, Brabant, Zeeland and Holland. For the period 1526 to 1566 for example, in Antwerp 139 out of 161 persons executed for religious reasons were Anabaptists. In Ghent it was 50 out of 56 (Note Four). As a result, by about 1538, many of the Anabaptists had either fled to the north, gone into hiding, become “silent” (like William the Silent), or been executed. In general, it was the more influential or outspoken Anabaptists who were executed (e.g. booksellers, preachers, etc.). A later re-emergence of Mennonites in the 1550s occurred, partially through the efforts of Leenaert Bouwens in the northern areas, and Gillis v. Aken in Antwerp, Ghent, Kortyk and Aachen. Most of these Mennonites were again forced to flee to the North in later years, particularly after the beginning of the revolt of 1566.

In the northern provinces, persecution only began after the assumption of control by the Hapsburgs, that is after 1536, and as a result was not as severe as in Flanders. It is estimated that about 25 percent of the population of Friesland was still Mennonite in the late 1500s (Note Five).

We know that significant numbers of Lowland Mennonites had established themselves in and around the towns and cities of the Vistula Delta in the years 1526 to 1566. Exactly who they were and when they came in is still problematic.

The overall picture, however, that we obtain from the circumstantial historical evidence, is as follows: the Anabaptist and Mennonite following was very strong throughout the Lowlands, except for the French speaking areas. It was particularly strong in Flanders, Zeeland and Holland. Large numbers of Flemish Mennonites moved to the northern provinces and East Friesland in the years 1530 to 1538, along with others from Zeeland, Holland, Gelderland and Overijssel. Many only stayed in Friesland, Groningen/Ommeland, or East Friesland for a short period, before immigrating to the Vistula Delta.

A second wave of immigration, consisting of mainly Flemish Mennonites, to the northern provinces probably occurred between 1550 and 1566. Many of these refugees also likely continued on to West Prussia.

Lastly, a further wave of Flemish Mennonite refugees left for the north after 1566, when the war of independence began and made Flanders and Brabant extremely unsafe.

In the years 1526 to 1566, other Anabaptists and Mennonites, primarily from Zeeland and Holland, found refuge in England, in particular, on the east coast of Anglia. After 1566 to 1572, many

likely returned to their native provinces.

We know that generally, in these periods, there was a large scale migration of Flemish refugees across the great rivers. Mennonite or non-Mennonite there was a great deal of resentment of the native inhabitants to the new Flemish arrivals. The previous superiority of the Flemish in cultural, economic and political affairs generated antagonism and hostility in the northerners towards the Flemish refugees. Unfortunately, this resentment also carried forward to the Mennonite communities.

“The previous superiority of the Flemish in cultural, economic and political affairs generated antagonism....”

Many of the refugees, both in England and in East Friesland, Anabaptist, Mennonite or undecided Protestants, became converts to Calvinism. Until about 1559, the Calvinist (or Reformed) church was nowhere a strong force in the Lowlands. However, unlike the Mennonites, the Calvinists, headquartered at Geneva, were extremely well organized. The organizational genius of Calvin and the Calvinists have been compared with that of Lenin and the Communist Party (Note Six). Parallels include the underground system of agents whose program was the international expansion of Calvinism. A later consequence was the seizure or attempted seizure of power by minority Calvinist groups.

Eventual successes followed to a degree, with the minority Calvinist groups gaining partial control in the new revolutionary government of the United Provinces, a later success followed in England with the establishment of a theocratic Puritan government, 1649 to 1660. In the Lowlands, Calvinist agents, formed in the refugee groups in England and East Friesland, as well as in the county of Cleves, and other Rhineland territories, began returning to the Lowlands in the late 1550s and began a successful proselytization campaign. Many Mennonites turned to the well organized Calvinists and abandoned their faith for the more centralized, militant and perhaps more articulate Reformed Church.

War of Independence, 1566.

The War of Independence in the Lowlands began in 1566. The main causes of the war were, in order of importance, the increased efforts of the Spanish Hapsburgs to centralize the government of the Lowlands and reduce the power of the General States and the Provincial States, the increasing levels of taxation, the agitation of the Calvinists, and lastly, the brutal methods used by the central government to suppress political and religious dissenters. The results of the war include the creation of the new nation of the United Provinces (north of the great rivers), and a relocation of population, with protestant refugees from the south moving to the north and Catholic refugees from the north moving south. The Provinces forming the nucleus of the new nation were Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht.

The war itself had several phases:

1566-1579 - ending with the union of Utrecht;

1579-1609 - a period of reversals and successes with imperial forces occupying many of the eastern and northern provinces before the republican forces eventually turned the tide. At this time, the provinces of Flanders and Brabant were in essence abandoned by the Republic;

1609-1648 - a period of intermittent struggle and conflicts ending with formal recognition of the Republic by the Spanish Hapsburgs in the Treaty of Münster.

Flemish-Friesian Schism.

The great division of the traditionalist Mennonites into the Flemish and Friesian factions was initiated in 1566, the year that the revolt and war of independence began. I have already mentioned the widespread hostility or resentment in the northern areas towards the Flemish who had been streaming northwards over the prior 40 years, and which spilled over into the Mennonite communities.

There is no doubt that these ethnic and cultural differences played an important role in the initial disputes. But it was the cultural and ideological differences, rather than ethnic characteristics, which were the determining factors in the maintenance of the division for so many centuries. The labels Flemish and Friesian maintained their significance because fundamental differences involving differing concepts of the role of the community and the individual in Christian life.

Briefly the two outlooks can be summarized as follows:

The Flemish - a democratic community-oriented outlook, with strong emphasis on the interplay between the individual and the community: involving a closer integration of spiritual and secular life, a stricter church discipline and more individual involvement in the community.

The Friesian: a more individualistically-oriented outlook. This outlook involves more of a division between spiritual and secular life, with less involvement in community Christian life and relegation of church discipline to a hierarchical church structure.

Although both groups were originally regarded as strict, the Flemish ideal can be regarded as more traditionally Anabaptist and stricter than the Friesian. This is also substantiated by subsequent events. The Friesians in the Lowlands eventually united with the Waterlanders, while the perhaps more traditionalist High Germans formed closer bonds with the Flemish. Although this point cannot perhaps be stressed, it should be noted that the Waterlanders were originally from the area of North Holland and West Friesland, originally ethnically Friesian lands until relatively recently.

“...the Flemish ideal can be regarded as more traditionally Anabaptist and stricter than the Friesian.”

The Flemish view was more attractive to the more culturally and economically sophisticated village and townspeople, whereas the Friesian views may have been more attractive to farming peoples. It appears highly likely that a great many ethnically Friesian persons went over to the Flemish

ideological views, since for example, Dirk Philips himself was an ethnic Friesian.

By Friesians, I mean here of course all the Frieslands, including West Friesland, Friesland, Grönigen and Ommelands, and East Friesland. It seems highly likely that many citizens of Grönigen went over to the Flemish camp, since Grönigen itself was in continual conflict with the surrounding farmers of the Ommeland, and since we know that an Alt-Flemish Gröninger Gemeinde of some significance existed. Many Mennonites from the Low Saxon provinces, particularly from the towns of Overijssel, as well as refugees from Flanders, Brabant, Holland, Zeeland, likewise subscribed to the Flemish ideologically. Likewise, the Friesian camp probably attracted many non-ethnic Friesians.

It is interesting to note that other traditionalist groups, such as the Moravian Brethren and Hutterites were originally mainly craftsmen and manufacturers, rather than farmers.

Emigration Model.

At this point, we can consider the basis questions of this paper: to what extent did the migration from the Lowlands parallel subsequent Mennonite migrations, and to what extent were the various immigrating groups comprised of Flemish or Friesian Mennonites, ethnically or ideologically?

Elsewhere, I have suggested that many Mennonite migrations were divided into pre-war and post-war phases. The pre-war migrations consisted of traditionalist Mennonites wishing to preserve the Flemish ideal of Gemeinde and community. The post-war migrations consisted of groups moving, to some extent, because of the war.

“...many Mennonite migrations were divided into pre-war and post-war phases.”

In the present context, we also have a major war whose two main phases lasted from 1566 to 1609. We know too that a large contingent had immigrated to the Vistula Delta before 1566. Although the actual division into Flemish and Friesian did not occur until 1566, can we suppose that the pre-war (pre 1566) immigrants were nevertheless ideological or ethnic Flemish, generally speaking?

The circumstantial evidence indicates that this may indeed have been so. Is it likewise probable that ethnic or ideological Friesians were pre-eminent in the post-war phase? Again, the circumstantial evidence indicates this too is likely.

This circumstantial evidence includes:

- the severity of repression in Flanders and Brabant in the pre-1566 period,
- the relative safeness of the Friesian provinces in the pre-1566 period,
- the settlement patterns in the Vistula Delta,
- the evidence of surnames and of individual immigrants in West Prussia,
- the languages used in West Prussia.

Ethnicity:

It seems likely that Dirk Philips was not the

only ethnically Friesian, but ideologically Flemish Mennonite of the pre-1566 period. When the split into Flemish and Friesian did occur in West Prussia, the Flemish were the majority group, indicating that the majority of West Prussian Mennonites were pre-disposed, on ethnic or ideological grounds, to join the Flemish. Even the Montau Gemeinde in the Vistula valley, later a leading Friesian Gemeinde, was in the Flemish camp when the split occurred.

On the surface, it would seem that persons subscribing to the ideals of a non-worldly separate Mennonite community - thus easily identifiable to authorities - and having abandoned their home territory, would be the first to leave for Prussia. On the other hand, persons living in the relatively safe territories of the Frieslands, on isolated individual homesteads, subscribing to a more separate division between spiritual and secular life, might be unlikely to leave. As mentioned earlier, about 25 percent of the population of Friesland even after 1566 was still Mennonite. On the other hand, the eastern provinces and the northern provinces were the battlegrounds in the war, particularly Grönigen and the Ommeland. It would appear that if ethnic and ideological Friesians did leave for West Prussia it would have been during or after the war.

Settlement patterns:

In West Prussia, the first Mennonites settled in and around the major towns. This in itself does not mean these settlers were Flemish. The continuity and persistence of these settlements near the towns, however, increases this likelihood. They remained in these areas for many generations. In Elbing, they were often able to obtain citizenship. But in Danzig, the continuous hostility of the Lutheran clergy and the guilds eventually forced many Mennonites across the river into the Grosses Werder and into farming occupations. The early and sustained hostility of the Danzig guilds indicates that many of the new settlers were regarded as competitors, and therefore skilled craftsmen and tradesmen, hence likely of Flemish, rather than Friesian background.

Occupations:

The wide range of occupations in evidence in the West Prussian Mennonite community again points to Flemish rather than Friesian roots.

Early West Prussian Mennonites were prominent in the fine arts and painting, and are often known by name. For instance, the various Blocks of the fine arts were from Mechelin in Flanders. As previously mentioned, the preeminence of Flanders in the fine arts at this time is universally acknowledged. It is likely that early West Prussian Mennonite artists were from Flanders. Flemish Mennonite ideology, however, viewing the fine arts as incompatible with a simple and humble lifestyle, eventually caused many of these Mennonite artists to join the Friesian Gemeinden, or to leave the Mennonite community entirely.

Flanders likewise was preeminent in the textile industry. Linen-weaving was a mainstay of the Flemish economy. In West Prussia, even in the late 1770s there are many Mennonites listed as linen-weavers, or part-time linen weavers and part-

time farmers. These linen weavers are found in both Flemish and Friesian Gemeinden. Linen weaving is a skill most often passed down from father to son, and again this occupation points to Flemish ethnic roots in this 1528 to 1568 immigration period.

Of greater interest are the lace-makers, the Bortenmakers, or the Bortenwerkers. Lacemaking (on a commercial scale) is a highly skilled art, learned through a lengthy apprenticeship. The early lacemaking industry was centred at Antwerp. Lacemaking, as an occupation, can with some confidence be labelled as an ethnically Flemish domain. In West Prussia, the Mennonites were the first to introduce lacemaking. Later, non-Mennonite apprentices established their own businesses and began to compete with the Mennonites. Because of the superiority of Mennonite wares, and their pioneering efforts in this trade, a degree forbidding the recognition of Mennonites as Master lacemakers was not passed until 1749 (Note Seven).

Many of the other specialized occupations, including brewing, distilling and engraving, and the generalized activities of trading and merchandising may have their origins in the skills of original Flemish immigrants. It is difficult to place these occupations in the pre- or post-1566 period. A further complication occurs owing to the likely cross-over between Flemish and Friesian Gemeinden.

Surnames:

The evidence of surnames is circumstantial as well. Probably still the best book of several on the subject is that of H. Penner. His work however suffers from many drawbacks. One is his predisposition to relate all families of a given surname to a known first arrival in West Prussia. This methodology is at best questionable.

On the other hand, Penner ignores the transformation of names which occurred in West Prussia. He seems, for instance, mystified by the disappearance of the Bartsches in the Vistula Valley. The various versions of this name, deriving from Barthelëmäeus, include Bartsch, Bartel (also used as a first name) and Barthelëmäues. Other names were likewise transformed linguistically over time - v. Riesen into Friesen, and de Veere into Fehr. A more contemporary example is the transformation of the v. Dycks into Dick, Dueck and Dyck.

Additional difficulties occur with the use of surname evidence. Many Mennonite surnames became extinct for various reasons: cross-over to Calvinist or Lutheran churches, death due to natural or man-made disasters (the plague of 1709 on the Baltic coast, for example, wiped out large sections of the Mennonite population). To some extent too, native West Prussians joined the Mennonites, as did Moravian and Hutterite brethren from southern areas.

A further difficulty with the use of surnames evidence is that, even when a surname can be localized as originating in a particular area, persons of that surname were not necessarily living in that area or natives of that area at later points in time, in the present context, the 1500s.

Names derived from first names are by far the

most common of the Mennonite surnames in the West Prussian Mennonite families of the 1700s. These are of somewhat limited use, since they were widespread in the Lowlands of the 1500s. The Friesians, however had a very unique system of surnames. The surname generally (except in the upper social classes) derived from the father's first name, so that Jan Willms' son Peter would go by Peter Jans, not Peter Willms.

Appendix - Horst Penner's List of Immigrants to Prussia

List of individual Mennonite immigrants to West Prussia in the early period: from H. Penner, Part IV:

- Peter Allert: from Delft (Holland), to Königsberg 1542, later to Danzig.
- Adrian Florissin: from Holland, Schultz in Schönberg, East Prussia 1557-61, later to Danzig.
- Hans von Amersfort: b. 1-11-1536 Amersfort (Utrecht) married 1559 in Antwerp, to West Prussia - date unknown.
- Martin v Bergen: Antwerp. To Königsberg 1585 (East Prussia).
- Wilhelm v Block: Mechelin (Flanders) to Königsberg (East Prussia) before 1570.
- Ebert v Dühren: Antwerp to Königsberg (East Prussia) 1585-90.
- Gysbert Janz de Veer: b. 1556 Schiedam, d. 1615 Danzig. First moved to Danzig before 1600.
- Thomas Fransen: Utrecht to Danzig 1583.
- Cornelis Gerbrandtzen: Wormer, N. Holland to Danzig 1549.
- Dirk Gerbrands: Weesp, N. Holland to Danzig before 1549.
- Johann de Mepsche op den Ham: Ommelands to Danzig 1580, d. 1588 Danzig.
- Michael Janszoon: Oisterhout, Brabant, to West Prussia before 1550. d. 1550. Mennonite Deacon in Elbing.
- Hugo Mathias: b. Den Haag (Holland), to West Prussia 1533-4. Weber, Löffelmacher, Krämer.
- Anton Obbergen: b. 1543 Mechelin (Flanders), to Danzig circa 1586.
- Anton Momber: Antwerp/Amsterdam to Danzig 1610.
- Jan Pieters: Gorcum (Zeeland) to Danzig before 1558.
- Jacob Pieters: Amsterdam (Holland) (?) to Danzig before 1552.
- Dirk Phillips: b. 1504 Leewarden (Friesland) d. 7-3-1568 Emden. To Danzig before 1566.
- Hendrik v. Roosenfeldt: Antwerp to West Prussia after 1570.
- Hans Steffen: Herzogenbusch (Brabant) to Danzig before 1575.
- Peter Siebert: Friesland. To West Prussia before 1614.
- Kornelius Siemens: Amsterdam (?) (Holland). To Danzig before 1552
- Jacob de Waal: Amsterdam (?) (Holland) to Danzig before 1549.
- Adam Wiebe: Harlingen (Friesland) to Danzig 1616.

In general, indications are that names derived from a first name, particularly those ending in an “s”, are from ethnically Friesian families. Remnants of this naming system are still evident in the Friesian Gemeinden in West Prussia. In the Friesian Gemeinde of the 1700s, we find the names Janz and Klaas used as surnames, instead of the Low Saxon/Flemish counterparts Janzen and Klassen. Both the Friesian “s” and the Low-Saxon “en” are possessive markers and not true patronymics. The use of true patronymics, such as Klaasoon and Klaasdochter were used in the Franconian regions and often confused with their Friesian and Low-Saxon counterparts. (Where true patronymics are in fact used, a Low Franconian origin may be assumed). This generalization, however, has many limitations, particularly in respect of common first names. We know for example that Gerard Geerts (Goertzen) was born in Rotterdam, and not in Friesland as we would expect (Note Nine). He is better known to history as Erasmus. Where relatively unique Friesian first names are used, however, as surnames, we can be somewhat more confident. Such names include Wiebe, Wiens, Epp, Enns, Dau, Eck, Tjahrt and, perhaps others, including Hamm and Löwen.

Generic names such as Fleming and Fröse generally indicate ethnic Flemings and Friesians, who very early left their native lands, perhaps moving to West Prussia or elsewhere, before the Mennonite migrations. It would have, or course, been pointless to have such a surname in their native provinces as an identifier. Although Reimer appears to be related to the Reimerswald in Zeeland, the existence of a similar Reimerswald in West Prussia pre-dating the Mennonite immigrations likewise indicates that the first Mennonite Reimers may have been West Prussian natives, who came to Prussia from Zeeland before the Mennonites.

Occupational names such as Schultz, Schmidt, Schroeder, Harder and Bergmann are generally of no use in locating families. Most of the names ending in “mann” are such occupational surnames. Of limited use are more specific occupational names such as Theichroeb (Dyckgraf) or Dyckmann.

Generalized place names such as Neufeld, Neustädter, etc. are also not very helpful. Others, such as Berg may indicate that a person was from the county of Berg. Lepp may derive from van der Lippe.

More useful however are those names with a van or de, which identify a specific locality. Such names include:

- van Riesen (Friesen) – from Rijsen in Overijssel,
- van Kampen – from Kampen in Overijssel,
- de Veere (Fehr) – from Veere in Zeeland,
- de Waal - from the Waal river area,
- von Bergen – from Bergen op Zoom (W. Brabant),
- van Hoorn – from Hoorn, West Friesland,
- Kauenhowen – from Couwenhoven, Utrecht,
- Van Niessen – from Neuß, lower Rhine,
- Westerwick – from Westerwick in N. Brabant,
- Twisk – from Twisk in West Friesland.

Again, however the movement of individuals over time makes it difficult to determine from where

a person may have been from at the time of immigrating.

The evidence regarding individual early immigrants to West Prussia from the lowlands is very scanty. H. Penner has identified a number of individual immigrants, but the number of immigrants was much larger of course. Most of the immigrants had concerns other than record keeping and documenting family history. Most of H. Penner’s immigrants dated from well after 1566. Of the individuals identified as Mennonite immigrants of the early period, the majority of the pre-1566 immigrants are from Flanders, Brabant, Holland and Zeeland.

On the other hand, many Friesians, including Adam Wiebe, came in the post-1566 period. (One of Adam Wiebe’s sons, Abraham, joined the Lutheran church in 1660, and it is unlikely that Adam Wiebe is the forefather of many, if any, of the later Mennonite Wiebes, as claimed by H. Penner and many others) (Note Ten). Of course this evidence is inconclusive, since it is likely that the Flemish immigrants kept better records than the Friesians. (See the Appendix to this article, where I have listed some of the H. Penner immigrants.)

Languages:

The languages used in West Prussia by the Mennonites are discussed at some length in my book. Briefly, forms of Dutch, including “Oostergeklurd” Dutch, were retained longest by the Flemish Gemeinden and first abandoned by the Friesian Gemeinden (see *Pres.*, No. 18, pages 120-130). The reasons for this are complex, and include the importance of Dutch as a commercial language in the cities. This fact does, however, suggest that not only were the Dutch or Franconian dialects not as important in the heritage of the Friesian Gemeinden, but also more importantly, that the Friesians were more accommodating to, and prone to assimilation by their Lutheran neighbours who used High German as a church language.

Low Saxon (Plautdietsch) was the traditional language of most of the Friesian immigrants and of the immigrants from the Low-Saxon provinces as well as those from the Low-Saxon neighbouring territories. It was probably understood by most of the Franconians, including the Flemish.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the evidence, however scanty and circumstantial, does support the conclusion that there may have been a pre- and post-war immigration to West Prussia, with ethnic or ideological Flemish pre-eminent in the pre-war immigration. The ethnic or ideological Friesians were, it seems, immigrants of the post-war period. In this, these first immigrations may have been similar to all subsequent Mennonite migrations. This model may very well be key to understanding the fragmented evidence we have to date on the immigrations to West Prussia. It may also help in the understanding of the subsequent history of the West Prussian Mennonites.

Endnotes:

1. Israel, page 111.

2. Meeus, p. 162.

3. B.H. Unruh, pages 25-29, who cites Blaupot ten Cate, T.V. Braght and K. Vos.

4. Israel, p. 93.

5. Israel, p. 93.

6. A.E. McGrath, p. 127.

7. H. Penner, p. 376 note 6.

8. H. Penner, p. 410.

9. Meeus, p. 138.

10. Herman Thiessen, Note in *Altpreußischer Geschlechterkunde*, 1995.

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5. *Evolution of the Dutch Nation*, Bernard Vlekke, Roy Publishers, New York, 1945.
6. *Die Ost- und Westpreussische Mennoniten*. Horst Penner, Mennonitescher Geschichtvein E.V. Weierhof 1978.
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8. *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia*, H. Schapansky, Rosenort, 2001.
9. *A Life of John Calvin*, McGrath, A. E., Oxford, Blackwell, 1990.
10. *Das niederländische Erbe der preußisch-rußländischen Mennoniten in Europa, Asien und Amerika*, Johan Sjouke Postma, A. Jongbloed c.v., Leeuwarden, 1959.
11. *Das Mennonitentum in Rußland von seiner Einwanderung bis zur Gegenwart*, Adolf Ehrt, Julius Beltz, Berlin-Leipzig, 1932.
12. *Die Familiennamen der westpreussischer Mennoniten*, G.E. Reimer, 1963, Weierhof.

The Greater Wealth

I do not ask
The praise of men to cheer me;
The honored task,
Or jeweled hosts to hear me;
The glitter of
A glut of gold for clasping
In place of love.
These leave but fruitless grasping.
But I will hoard:

The baby’s hugs;
The crickets in the hollow;
The children’s tugs
Compelling me to follow;
An inner calm;
The quest of daily growing;
A whispered psalm;
And joy that comes in knowing
Our precious LORD.
S.J.L.

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Name Origins of Polish-Prussian Mennonites, 1776

“Name Origins of the Polish-Prussian Mennonites in the 1776 West Prussian Konsignation,”
by Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack St., New Westminster, B.C., V3L 4V5.

Introduction.

The tables below attempt to identify surnames of the 1776 census by likely area of origin, using 1550 as an approximate theoretical point of departure. Each surname has been further classified as to whether the majority of families with a particular surname belonged to a Flemish or Friesian Gemeinde in 1776. For each surname it seems a clear majority did belong to one or the other. Where a significant minority existed belonging to the other, this has been indicated by an asterisk (*).

The Prezchowko Gemeinde was firmly in the Flemish division until well after 1764. After 1764, undoubtedly due to the influence of relatives in the filial Neumark Gemeinde, as well as their Friesian Gemeinde neighbors, some members of this Gemeinde came to adopt some Pietist views, and the Prezchowko Gemeinde came to increasingly resemble the neighboring Friesian Gemeinden.

There are some obvious problems with the list. Firstly the 1776 list is incomplete: Districts of Danzig, the Nehrung, the Scharpau and Thorn and suburbs, where Mennonites lived, are not included; some individuals or families living with other families as employees or relatives are often counted in with those families and not separately identified.

Secondly, the tables do not reflect the number of families per surname, and no attempt has been made to weight the analysis by numbers per surname. Ten or so of the most common surnames (including Penner, Dyck, Klassen, Janzen, Ens) represent a large percentage of the 1776 population.

Thirdly a large number of West Prussian Mennonite surnames were extinct in 1776 (because of disaster, plagues, extinction only in the male line, or crossover to other confessions)

Yet another difficulty lies in identifying the original homelands of the ancestors of the 1776 Mennonites. This has, however, been a popular theme and several books have been written on the subject. Those based solely on etymological or linguistic methods occasionally arrive at some rather silly proposals. Many, if not most of the ancestors of West Prussian Mennonites had been, or their parents or grandparents had been, refugees moving several times. Thus it becomes difficult to ascribe a homeland in such cases. To illustrate: a known immigrant to West Prussia was a Peter Dyck (1632-96) of Stavora, Friesland. Should he be classified therefore as a Friesian? Likely not. He was probably a descendant of a Flemish refugee family who moved north in 1526-66.

Some surnames have a place identifier. What these names indicate is that, while a person may have been originally from that place, when the surname became fixed he was not living there. Thus the first appearance of a “Fleming”

(a person from Flanders) is in Holland (or England). To illustrate: if I, for instance were living in Steinbach (or better still in East Africa) it would make sense to call me Henry Schapansky from Vancouver, but it would make no sense at all if I were living close to Vancouver. Its use as an identifier would be nil.

For these reasons, we need to define “homeland” more precisely, and I use the date of 1550 as the theoretical point of departure. It is probably impossible, except in a very few cases to identify the 1550 homeland of an ancestor of a 1776 family. Nevertheless, it is possible in many cases to make a reasonable conjecture, and it is necessary to define the terms of reference, even if difficult to apply in practice. I have used 1550 because at that time, the Mennonites themselves were becoming well defined, and the great movements of the Mennonites were just beginning.

Part of the value of such a table is indeed the fact that it is not weighted by the number of families per surname. The natural increase in many families over 200 years is eliminated, and we do get a bit closer to the period of first settlement. In this sense, it would have been even more useful to analyze all the West Prussian Mennonite surnames known to have existed.

The work of Horst Penner is still probably the best source in respect of the homelands, because, in my opinion, the methodology is superior. His work attempts to track the movement of individuals over time, and takes into account changes in surnames over time. I have also found the work of B. H. Unruh, G. Reimer and J. Postma useful. I have not hesitated, however, to disagree with any or all of these authors, where more convincing evidence is found elsewhere.

Surnames do evolve over time, as I think we all know, but often forget when we study the Mennonites. Sometimes these changes are based on pronunciation differences and sometimes on cultural reasons. Thus we have the name v. (short for von) Dyck evolving into Dyck, Dycke, Dick, and Dueck, and so Jacobs became Jacobsen. Janzen became Jansoon or Johnson occasionally because someone consciously wished to identify with another cultural group.

Then too, we have spelling variations. Thus Coeler, Kehler and Kähler are all the same name, and not equivalent to Käthler. Krüger and Kröcker are not the same name nor should Kröger, a derivative of Kruger be identified with Kröcker. Sometimes a north-south (delta-valley) variation appears, and we have a pairing of names, for instance Buhler-Buller, Vogt-Foth, Bartsch-Bartel, Janzen-Jantz and so forth. In the table, I have attempted to respect this pairing as there is clear evidence that these

names evolved from one form to another.

The 1776 list does have some typographical or transcription errors. Thus Riett is really Plett (as I mentioned in a 1993 talk), Luttermann is Sudermann, Liebert is Siebert and so forth. In the table I have, where evident, grouped transcription errors and spelling variants together. There may still, nevertheless, be some fortuitous names in the table.

Also to be noted with reference to the 1776 list is that widows' surnames are often in the weak or possessive adjectival form, so that widow Mrs. Braun would be referred to as de Bruhnsche, Brunin, or Brunen. These I do not consider to be a spelling variant.

Names ending in “er” or “mann” most often denote a place or occupation. Boschmann for instance may derive from “woodsman” or more likely, van dem “Bosch”, a short form of the town in Brabant.

Many Friesian surnames had by 1550 spread along the North and Baltic Sea coasts, so that in some cases, it may indeed be difficult to ascribe a purely Friesian origin to some typically Friesian names.

What do the charts tell us? I would conclude the following:

1. Generally, more ethnic Friesians joined Flemish Gemeinde than the reverse;
2. Families of Low-Saxon background are not insignificant in both divisions;
3. A surprising number of families, of Swiss or Moravian Brethren background, or from southern and central Germany, joined the Mennonites. Many undoubtedly came 1525-1600 via Silesia to the Vistula valley, some of whom eventually reached the delta;
4. Names of the oldest West Prussian natives joining the Mennonites show the greatest variation in spelling or pronunciation.
5. Flemish Gemeinden accepted more outsiders than the Friesian. If we exclude the single case of a significant numbers of outsiders who joined the Lithuanian Mennonites circa 1713, this disparity is even more dramatic.

Name endings.

Many writers are confused on the ending “en” at the end of a name such as Klassen. The weak or feminine adjectival ending in German uses “en”. This is the same in Low Saxon. Thus the “en” represents an adjectival form of Klaas (Nicholas) or a possessive form. Klassen, taken apart, means belonging to the “Klaas” family. It does not mean “Son of Klaas”. As an example, we often say, in Low Saxon Wieben Hauns, Ensen Marie, etc. This form of speech became fixed for many surnames.

Different is the ending “son” or “soon” as in Janson. This is a Dutch name and is rare in the West Prussian Mennonite Community. This form does indeed mean “Son of Jan”.

The Friesian possessive case is like English, denoted by an "s". Thus Jansen in Friesien should be Jan's, which indeed survives today in the form Jantz or Janz. This typically Friesian marker occurs in names with an ending in "s" such as Peters=Peter's.

North-South, or Flemish-Friesian variations.

Some names show a north-south, or Flemish-Friesian variation, or both. The northern or Flemish version is usually harder in pronunciation reflecting Dutch, Flemish or Friesian influence, which the southern softer variant shows German influence. Examples include:

Southern (Flemish) - Northern (Friesian);
 Buhler - Buller;
 Vogt - Voth;
 Becker - (Prezchowko only) - Becher;
 Bartsch - Bartel;
 Driedger- Diediger;
 Konrad- Kohnert;
 Dirksen - Dirks;
 Görtzen - Görtz.

Chart I.

Names likely of Flemish origin (include natives or immigrants to Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht).

Flemish Gemeinden 1776.

Andres (Andreas)
 Baerlen (Boerlen, Baerten, Baehrlen)
 Bergen (v. Bergen, Bargaen, Obbergen)
 Bergmann (Barkmann, Bargmann, Boekmann)
 Bolleé (Baleé)
 Boschmann
 Behrend (s)
 Braun (Brann, Brun, Bruhn)
 Bruchs (Brucks)
 Breuil (Breicht)
 DeFehr (DeVaer, Du Verre, DeVeer, Fehr)
 Dyck (v. Dyck, Dack, Dick, Dieck, Dirk)
 Theichrob (Thiechgraf, Dickgres, Dickgrew)
 Dickmann
 Fast (Facht, Fuht)
 Focking (Faking, Fokking)
 Feith (Fett)
 Goosen (Gassen, Goss)
 Giesbrecht (Gisbrecht)
 Hooge (Hag, Hage)
 Joost (Jost)
 Jansoon (Janson) (rare)
 Kempner
 Koop (Kopp)
 Krahn
 Klasson (Klasoon, Klaason) (rare)
 Klassen (Klaasen, Claasen, Claassen, Classen)
 Mahl
 v.d. Meurch (Wander Meursch, v.d. Mars), (Maas/Meuse)
 Momber
 Pankert
 Regehr (Regier, Riger, Rigebr)
 v. Roy
 Sprunck
 Steffen(s)
 Sudermann (Zudermann, Sutermaann,

Luttermann)
 Wall
 Westerwick
 Warkentin (Markentin)
 Zimmermann

Friesian Gemeinden 1776.

Allert
 Bestvater (Bestvader)
 Block
 V. Dühren
 Fleming
 Franz(en)
 Jopp (Joob)
 Penner * (where derived from Pennaerts or V.
 Paene)
 Roose (Rose, Ras, Ross, Rosse)
 Rosenfeld (Rosfeld)

Chart II.

Names likely of Friesian origin.

Flemish Gemeinden 1776.

Brandt
 Etsch
 Eggrath (Egrath)
 Ens (Entz, Enns)
 Öhmsen (Emsen, Höhmsen)
 Epp
 Esau
 Gröningen (Grönig)
 Günther ? (Ginther)
 Hansen
 Isaac
 Jacobs (en)
 Gillis (Gilz)
 Grawert
 Lowen (Leben, Laewen, Leeben)
 Lehn
 Matties (Mattis, Matis) (2) Mathies
 Thiessen (Thiesen, Tiesen) (2)
 Töws (2)
 Stoez (Stews) (2)
 Neufeld *? (Neufeld, Niefeld(t))
 Siemens * (Clemens, Czimm, Ziemens, Simon)
 Wiebe (Wieb, Wib)
 Wiens (Wienss, Wünsch)
 Willms (Wilhelm, Willems)
 Zacharias?

Friesian Gemeinden 1776.

Abrams (Abrahams)
 Adrian (Aderjan)
 Arend (t)
 Bartsch (Bartz) (1)
 Bartel (Bartelemaeus) (1)
 Daniel(s)
 Dau
 Dirksen * (Dirks, Dirk, Dörksen)
 Eck
 Eckert (Eggert, Ekert, Ekker)
 Ewert
 Gerbrandt*
 Görtzen (Götz, Goritz, Gertz, Gerth)
 Harm (s)
 Heinrich
 Horn
 Janzen*
 Jantz (Gantz, Jantz)

Kasper
 Klas (rare and changed)
 Kornelsen (Cornelius, Cornelsen, Knels, Knelsen)
 Kopper (Kobber)
 Lammert (s) (Sammert)
 Martens* (Märtens, Mertens, Martin)
 Michaels
 Ott
 Pauls*
 Peters*
 Phillips(en) (Philipsen)
 Pötker (Pöttcher, Böttcher, Putger, Petcher)
 Quapp? (Quap, Quab)
 Schmidt*
 Siebrandt
 Siebert (Sievert, Liebert)
 Soels? (Sels, Sells)
 Tjahrt (Fahrt, Fiart, Tahrt, Tiaht, Tiart)

Note 1: Bartsch is northern, Bartel southern, deriving from Bartelemaeus

Note 2: Names deriving from Matheus

Chart III.

Names likely of Low Saxon origin (the Low Saxon provinces of the Netherlands and the Low Saxon territories of Germany e.g., Berg, Julich, Cleves, Westphalen).

Flemish Gemeinden 1776.

Berg (Barg, Bark, Barch) (1)
 Born
 Doell (Dill, Dell)
 Hamm (Hamann, Hahnen, Han)
 Hiebert (Hübert, Hubert, Gubert)
 Hoppner (Heppner, Hepner, Hopner) (2)
 Höwener (Howen, Hawenehr, Howner, Hoffner, Hübner)
 Konrad (Conrad)
 v. Kampen (Kemp)
 Kauenhowen (K-hawen, K-hoefen)
 Kröcker (Kracker, Kräcker)
 Lepp (Löpp, Lipp)
 v. Niessen (Niesen)
 v. Riesen (Friesen, Riesen, Riess, Rielen)
 Thielmann
 Thunn (Thimm)

Friesian Gemeinden 1776.

Cornies? (Cornin)
 Dahl
 Ediger (Odger)
 Gäddert (Godert, Gödert)
 Gädde (Göde, Gehde)
 Konert (Conert, Ronert, Rönert)
 Köhn
 Kädtler (Käthler, Kettler)
 Kliever (Kleefer, Klievert)
 Nachtigal
 Quiring
 Schröder (Schröter, Schrötter, Schrött)

Note 1: also possibly Swiss.

Note 2: H. Penner identifies Hoppner with Howener, which is probably not correct.

Chart IV.

Names likely deriving from Swiss or Moravian Brethren, including regions of middle or south Germany, the Pfatz, Alsace, Sillesia, Hungary.

Flemish Gemeinden 1776.

Buhler (Baller)
Bachmann
Bückert (Bickert)
Decker (Dacker) (Prezchowko Gem. only)
Frey (Prezchowko Gem. only)
Klippenstein
Klingenberg
Rempel (Rompel, Rump)
Richert (Kulert?) (Prezchowko Gem. only)
Driedger
Schellenberg
Walde
Wiehler (Wieler, Willer)

Friesian Gemeinden 1776.

Albrecht *
Buller (Butler)
Baltzer (Biltzer)
Becker (Prezchowko Gem. only)
Becher (3)
Bergtholdt
Boldt (Bolt, Baldt, Boll, Bott)
Donner
Engbrecht (Erbricht)
Falk
Funk (Lunorz, Tanck)
Hein
Kerber (Gerber, Kerwer)
Knop (Knos)
Olbitz (Olwitz)
Plenert
Penner* (when derived from Bender)
Riediger (Ridiger) (1)
Scheffler (Schepler, Schäfler, Schäffer)
Unger (Uner)
Unrau (Unruh, Unru, Purau)
Vogt (Fodt, Voht) (2)
Voth (Foth) (2)
Wedel (Wedell, Wiedel)
Wedler, Wedling
Wohlgemuth (Wohlgemut)

Note 1: In the 1776 list, Martin Riediger is incorrectly listed as "Martens, Riediger."

Note 2: Vogt, etc. is the northern form, Voth, etc. the southern.

Note 3: See note (1) under table VI.

Chart V.

Names found in West Prussia, Predating the arrival of the Mennonites.

1776 Flemish Gemeinden:

- of Friesian Origin.

Wölcke (Wälck, Wolcke, Walcke, Wilke, Wolck, Welcke, Welk)

- of Flemish Origin.

Conwentz
Harder
Rahn
Reimer (Reymer)

1776 Friesian Gemeinden:

- of Friesian Origin

Fröse (Frös, Friese, Frese, Fräss, Fresch)

Edse (Eds, Eitzen*) (1)

- of Flemish Origin.

v. Steen (v. Stein) * (1)

Low Saxon Origin.

Nickel (Neckel, Nackel)

Note 1: See Note (1) under Table VI under names originating in West Prussia

Part VI.

Names likely originating in West Prussia (also neighboring territories eg. Pommern, Mechelburg).

Flemish Gemeinden 1776.

Busenitz
Dolesky
Fieguth (Fiegut)
Harpath (Prezchowko Gem. only)
Hensel
Janke (1)
Klein (Hein)
Kremsky
Letkemann (Lötkemann)
Lempky
Liessau
Mandtler (Mantler, Manteler)
Mierau (Mieretz)
Neudorf (Neudorff)
Neustädter (Neusteter, Neysteter)
Olfert (Alfert, Olfers, Olfers)
Pankratz (Prezchowko Gem. only)
Peterkau (Pätkau)
Pries
Ratzlaff (Tezloff) (Prezchowko Gem. only)
Rogalsky
Sawatsky (Sowatske, Seiwatski)
Suckau
Schultz
Tessmer (Tesmer) (Prezchowko Gem. only)
Tilitsky
Utesch
Wolf (Wulf, Wulff)

Friesian Gemeinden 1776.

Baalau
Bauer (Buhr)?
Butthwig
Fisch (1)
Jenke (Janke) (1)
Götz (Getz)
Götzky (Götzki, Jetzke) (1)
Grunau
Hill (Huell) (1)
Krause (Kruse) (1)
Leycke (1)
Meckelburger
Neubauer (Niebuhr) (1)
Peckerun
Schapansky (1)
Stobbe (Stab, Stob, Stobe)
Wichert (Wickert) (1)

Note 1: Did or may have become Mennonite in Lithuania at the time of the migration to Lithuania 1713.

Chart VII.

Names of unknown origin possibly of West Prussian origin represented by only one or a very few families.

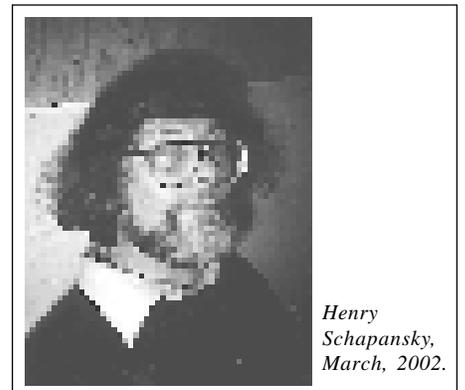
Flemish Gemeinden.

Bachler
Bachdach
Bench (Bönch, Benk, Penk)
Dunkel
Dietrich (s)
Friedrichs (en)
Heide (Hyde, Neide)
Heidebrecht (Heidbrecht)
Hildebrandt (Hilbrand)
Kasdorf (Kasdorff)
Kähler (Kehler, Coeler)
Kurtz
Ludwigs (en)
Plett (Riett)
Reinke (Rheinke)
Redekop (Rederkopf)
Renpennig
Scherling (Schierling)
Schwartz
Seeler
Seemann
Torborch
Walradt
Weiss (Weis, Wass)
Wittenberg
Werner
Zander

Friesian Gemeinden 1776.

Banmann (Balmann, Baumann, Bengmons) (1)
Biling
Drupp
Guhr (Gurr) (1)
Holzrichter (Haltrechter)
Kneiphoff (Knippolt)
Krüger (Kröger) (1)
Kuckel (Kücken, Kickel) (1)
Linger (Lindger)
Lirns ?
Neumann
Rohd (e) (1)
Schütz (1)
Stenfeder
Steingard (Steingart)
Spent

Note 1: See Note (1) under Names likely originating in West Prussia.



Henry
Schapansky,
March, 2002.

Anabaptism: Neither Catholic Nor Protestant

“Anabaptism: Neither Catholic Nor Protestant,” by Walter Klaassen, 606 Victoria Ave., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 0Z1.

Introduction.

I have been given the daunting assignment by the editor to summarize a book that was, even when it was first prepared in 1969, already a summary (96 pp.). Over three decades have passed since then and the writings on Anabaptists, who they were, where they were, and what they did and thought, have become a flood. There is no hope of taking account of all of that. I summarize here what I wrote then.

The word “Anabaptist” was a nickname given to groups of people during the 16th century reform as a term of reproach. It means ‘rebaptizer’. Implied by this was that the people to whom the name was given were heretics because they dared to rebaptize people who had already been baptized as infants.

The 16th century reform also gave rise to Lutherans, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Baptists. Every movement, religious or otherwise, has birth pangs and the confusions of childhood and adolescence. The true bearers of the name have to be identified and others who claim the name but disagree with the majority, have to be weeded out. The Anabaptist movement, which arose in Switzerland and South Germany in the 1520s and in the Netherlands in the 1530s, had its share of people and viewpoints which were gradually expelled. There were those who advocated that all external forms of Christian belief such as baptism and the Lord’s Supper should be abandoned since they were only occasions for strife with other Christians. There were those, like the Anabaptists of Muenster who justified the use of the sword and oppression to get rid of all ungodliness. That list could be expanded considerably. Anabaptism, as all other reformation movements, had its share of black sheep. Menonites should be very careful not to romanticise the 16th century movement. We should also remember that when Anabaptists (most of them) rejected any participation in war or refused to swear the oath of citizenship, they did represent a threat to the society and that became a reason for persecution.

In my book, *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic Nor Protestant*, I tried to describe the convictions of Anabaptists in five brief chapters: radical religion, radical discipleship, radical freedom, radical theology, and radical politics.

1. Radical Religion.

Like Lutherans and others, Anabaptists attacked much of what constituted the church at the beginning of the 16th century. Their understanding of what was sacred or holy departed radically from what they saw being done every day in the churches, where sacred words, things, places, persons, and times were central to understanding what the church was. So they followed their first mentor, Huldreich Zwingli, the reformer in Zurich, in getting rid of that view. The words about the Lord’s Supper in the New Testament, they said, were words of institution, not words of consecration. The bread and wine in the Supper were, they insisted, only bread and wine, and the cup, the chalice used, should be an ordinary cup out of the kitchen cupboard. Church buildings are not holy places, in essence different from other build-

ings. They rejected most strongly the idea of the sacred person, the priest, who performed sacred acts lay people could not do. All the members of the church are saints; all have equal access to God. Finally, all times are equally God’s time. Hence Sundays and saints days are like any other day.

What pleases God, they announced, is not sacramental ordination or consecrated bread and wine but a godly life. Holiness divorced from truth and love is deception.

Still, the holy God revealed himself by becoming man in Jesus. The person who has faith in Jesus is sanctified, made holy, by God’s Spirit. Scripture, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and the community of faith all play a part in the process of sanctification.

2. Radical Discipleship.

All Anabaptists shared the belief that God made himself known in Jesus, the Jesus of flesh and blood. They shared with all Christians the belief that Jesus was the example for Christians. His human life, his work, teaching and death provided that example. Conversion was only the beginning of the Christian life of holiness. For Anabaptists holiness was not given to the believer once for all at baptism; it was a process and had to be given expression in thoughts, words and actions. Menno Simons wrote: “Whosoever boasts that he is a Christian, the same must walk as Christ walked...” This conviction is found in all streams of Anabaptism.

Discipleship as they understood it began with baptism which was a visible confession that one was a disciple of Jesus. The baptism itself, since it was a repudiation of the baptism of infants, was an unlawful act, perhaps at least what we would call civil disobedience. Becoming a disciple, therefore, immediately put one into conflict with the authorities in church and government. An important aspect of discipleship was the refusal to use coercion in matters of faith, and therefore a call to freedom for believing. Church and government officials regarded this as an invitation to anarchy because commitment to common forms of belief was thought necessary to societal stability. The refusal to coerce was also extended by Anabaptists to bearing arms because killing in war was the ultimate form of coercion. They rejected the swearing of oaths to governments, because all governments in the 16th century regarded it as their mandate to preserve one form of faith and eliminate all others.

Discipleship was not private; it was part of living in the community of faith which helped the disciple stay on the narrow path and gave support in suffering. It also involved accountability of the members to each other. Their process of dealing with evil in the community was based on Matthew 18. Exclusion could happen if a member refused to be accountable. But they did not kill people who disagreed with them; rather they let them go their way.

Much suffering was the result of the deliberate nonconformity of Anabaptists. They accepted it as part of being a disciple if God called them to it. Thousands endured torture, prison, exile and death for their faith.

3. Radical Freedom.

Church discipline can easily fall victim to legalism. Anabaptists were charged with legalism by their contemporaries and tried to explain the difference they saw between trying to earn salvation by works and the works of discipleship which were the product of obedience and grace.

Many who joined the reform begun by Martin Luther thought that his emphasis on salvation by grace alone meant that there was no requirement for holy living. Anabaptists regularly pointed to the fact that there was very little improvement of life among Luther’s followers. Notorious evil livers were admitted to the Lord’s Supper without question. They rejected the works Luther rejected, the masses, vigils, pilgrimages, prayers to the saints, fastings and buying of indulgences. But that did not mean that works were not important. Menno Simons wrote that the true works of faith are “pure love and fear of God, love and service to neighbours, mercy, friendship, chastity, temperance, humility, confidence, truth, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Doing these were what following the example of Jesus as Lord called for. It was not following a law but a person in obedience to him in things great and small. They freely accepted this obedience; no one forced them to it.

Basic to that was the already mentioned commitment to accountability and submission to the help and admonition of the community of faith. Because of the unrelenting outward pressure of persecution it was very important that there be the common commitment in all things which then prepared them for the ability to answer their accusers.

But the danger of legalism does in fact exist whenever codes of living and the details of discipleship are the issue. Matters which are not central to the faith such as clothing become points of controversy, schism, and exclusion. Church discipline among Anabaptists was sometimes excessively harsh and unjust. But there were also those who, like Pilgram Marpeck, were especially concerned about hasty judgements and exclusions. Allowances need to be made for growth in discipleship, and the Christian virtues of patience and forbearance given room.

4. Radical Theology.

Anabaptists levelled harsh criticism at the educated Catholic and Protestant religious leaders. The fact that they themselves had educated leaders means that it was not education itself which they condemned. They distrusted what may be called idealism, the view that Christian faith could be defined by ideas apart from actions. There was, for example, a device called a syllogism, often used by theologians to prove the truth of their claims. Here is an example:

All who belong to God have the Holy Spirit;
Children belong to God,

Therefore children have the Holy Spirit.

From this it follows that since the Spirit is necessary to faith, the possession of the Spirit by infants proves that they have faith and can thus be baptized. Anabaptists responded that that was a way of avoid-

ing the clear teaching of Scripture and that by such means one could make a new Christ out of a pumpkin.

When Martin Luther said that only faith was required by God for salvation, that appeared to Anabaptists to be an abstract intellectual matter because it was not accompanied by any visible expression of that faith in attitude and deeds. This teaching was, they said, a learned subtlety which was popular because such an idea made no demands of obedience on anyone.

Moreover, the apparatus for interpreting the Bible which had developed in the Middle Ages was problematic for Anabaptists. It held that in addition to the literal meaning there were three other levels of meaning in the text, all of which could easily oppose the literal meaning. To this were added other scholarly devices which, Anabaptists charged, were used to neutralize the literal and clear teaching of Jesus. The words of the Great Commission to make disciples, baptize, and teach should not be rearranged into baptize, teach and make disciples to justify the baptizing of infants. Scripture should be taken as it was written. The test of a theological statement was always the life and teachings of Christ and the apostles. There is, they said, a test for the truth of a doctrine. If people accept the articles of the confession of faith but don't do them their doctrine is false. A theology that produces an evil life can't be true.

Anabaptists did not reject either creeds or learned theology, but they refused to exempt any professing Christian from obedience to Christ and the path of discipleship.

5. Radical Politics.

Although Anabaptism was a religious movement, some prominent elements of its confession were profoundly political. They held to the basic view that church and government should be separated. The Protestant reformers saw that as the way to the destruction of Christian society. It was a dangerous political view to hold in the 16th century.

It expressed itself in five ways. The first was the Anabaptist refusal to hold government office. Government, they taught, was God's servant to keep order in unregenerate humanity and to do it with the sword of coercion. It punishes evil and protects the good.

The church is the domain in which Christ the Lord rules and is king of peace. Violence and coercion have no place there. The Reformers held that a Christian was commissioned to function in both; Anabaptists said, it had to be one or the other. A true Christian could not be part of government because of its use of the sword, and no ruler with the sword could be ruler in the church. At the same time governments were to be obeyed and taxes paid wherever it did not conflict with the teachings of Christ.

Second was the refusal to swear oaths, especially the oath of loyalty to the state which included a commitment to defend it with the sword. Anabaptists could not do that. Refusal to swear was a dangerous political act.

The third was the refusal to participate in warfare. It is important to remember that any war in Europe in the 16th century was war between professing Christians, all claiming as Lord the Prince of Peace. To fight and kill, said Anabaptists, was



Walter Klaassen, lecturing.

simply a "denial of Christ and Christ's nature." They were not free to kill any person, much less someone who with them confessed Christ.

A fourth expression of the separation of church and government was the insistence on religious freedom. This was totally rejected by the Protestant reformers. But Balthasar Hubmaier wrote: "The inquisitors are the greatest heretics of all, since, against the doctrine and example of Christ, they condemn heretics to the fire, and before the time of harvest root up the wheat with the tares. For Christ did not come to butcher, destroy and burn, but that those that live might live more abundantly."

Catholics and Protestants claimed for themselves the right to live their faith without coercion, but were prepared to force Anabaptists from their faith with violence. Anabaptists said that was totally wrong and un-Christlike.

Lastly, their economic views were also political because they rejected the charging of interest on loans which was then already the lynchpin of the European economic system. They sharply criticised religious leaders for refusing to share their own wealth with the poor of their own churches.

While most Anabaptists owned property, they always taught that it was not theirs to do with as they pleased but to be shared with anyone in need. The Hutterite Anabaptists renounced private ownership altogether and held everything in common. This action, if it became widespread, could undermine the European economic system. It was therefore ruthlessly opposed by leaders in church and government alike.

So What?

Much of what Anabaptists stood for and suffered and died for long ago has become commonplace today. Separation of church and state is taken for granted in democratic countries. Religious freedom is widely defended and enshrined in law. The Christian churches more and more know themselves to be a minority in the world and are experiencing the removal of special privileges once enjoyed.

There is growing understanding today between the heirs of the persecuted and persecutors of the 16th century, and a growing recognition that they are all children of one Father and subjects of one Lord. Others are learning from the Anabaptist tradition; Mennonites are learning from the Christian expression of other denominations. May that increase so that all together may be in the Kingdom of

Christ and invite into it all nations so that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father.

Acknowledgement.

"Anabaptism: Neither Catholic Nor Protestant," a precis of the book by Walter Klaassen, 606 Victoria Ave., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 0Z1., published by Conrad Press, Waterloo, Ontario, 1973, 94 pages.

The following quotations are from "Anabaptism: Neither Catholic Nor Protestant," by Walter Klaassen.

Pluralism.

Like most religious movements of the time - including Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican, Anabaptism had its share of black sheep. There was the foolishness of the biblical literalism from St. Gall. Because the Gospel said that we must become as little children to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, some people literally behaved like children, playing with toys and babbling like babies. There was the apocalyptic lunacy of certain Anabaptists from Thuringia, one of whom claimed to be the son of God. Most important of all there was the violent terror of the Kingdom of God of Münster, when Anabaptists turned to violence and oppression" (page 2).

The Bible.

[The Bible] occupied a central place in Roman Christianity, and was elevated by Luther into the supreme authority over against hierarchy and tradition. But for some Anabaptists the Bible too was too highly rated. They saw Protestants making a fetish out of it, making the divine salvation of humanity depend on one thing to the exclusion of all others. Hans Denck valued the Scriptures above all earthly treasures. But, he writes, "salvation cannot be tied to the Scriptures, however important and good they may be with respect to it. The reason is that it is not possible for the Scriptures to improve an evil heart even if it is highly learned. A pious heart, however, that is a heart in which there is a true spark of godly zeal will be improved through *all things*." The scriptures were unquestionably important to Denck, but he considered them always only a material witness to the Word of God which can never be ultimately tied to things (page 16).

When Hans Denck refused to call the Bible the Word of God, he did so only because he reserved that title for Jesus himself. "Jesus Christ is the Word of God" we hear again and again from all segments of Anabaptism. It is the human Jesus about whom they speak, God revealed in the man of flesh and blood. Pilgrim Marpeck constantly argued the necessity of beginning with the humanity of Jesus in order to penetrate into God's intentions. Thus the Gospels with their accounts of Jesus' words, actions, teaching and death become very important. By Jesus' death, which was an expression of the love and mercy of God, sin is removed and man forgiven (page 19).

Baptism.

The observance of baptism and the supper upon

which they insisted by the authority of Jesus, had significance in terms of their role in the community not because of the rites themselves or their sacred function. Baptism signified a changed life by virtue of Christ's death but by no means in an individualistic sense. Repeatedly they insisted that no one is "to be baptized without Christ's rule of binding and loosing" (Matt. 18:15-22). That means basically that the one baptized commits himself to the discipline of the community. He thereby declares himself ready to participate in dealing with sin in the community in a new and redemptive way. He not only commits himself to live the new life in obedience to the words of Christ, but he also agrees to receive and to give advice, deliberate help in doing so (page 17).

Hans Hut too spoke of the christian's true baptism as suffering, a continuous experience of tribulation under the cross of Christ for the sake of Christ and the truth. It is necessary to learning the truth; suffering is "the school of tribulation." Menno Simons wrote of suffering as a mark of the church (page 27).

The Church.

God wants all men to live together in harmony. Ulrich Stadler in his *Cherished Instruction* says that the ordinances of Christ "should constitute the polity for the whole world." Since, however, not everyone will follow Christ, those who do will form the community which God desires and will live according to his will in mutual truth, love and aid. They conceive of themselves, therefore, not as another community that participates in certain religious actions, but as the community of those who deliberately resolve to realize, in the present, God's will for the whole of mankind.

Peter Reideman writes about the church: "The Church of Christ is the basis and ground of truth, a lantern of righteousness, in which the light of grace is borne and held before the whole world, that its darkness, unbelief and blindness be thereby seen and made light, and that men may also learn to see and know the way of life. Therefore is the church of Christ in the first place completely filled with the light of Christ as a lantern is illuminated and made bright by the light, that his light might shine through her to others;" (page 18).

Community.

Life in the community is necessary in order not to lose hold on the truth....It is in the community of faith under the Lordship of Christ that a threatened disciple will discover how he ought to act and live in the midst of pressures that threaten his physical and spiritual life. In a world marked by the confusion, chaos and folly of evil - a world which calls white black and black white - the company of Jesus provides a centre of "wisdom, moderation, good sense, discipline, friendliness," a place of refreshment, security, order, human friendliness and quiet relaxation....men learn to live with each other as they ought to live, "peaceable, united, lovingly, amicably, and fraternally as children with one father" (page 24).

Among a majority, a community of goods involving only consumption [community of sharing] was normative. In both instances the community of goods was part of their ordering of the new com-

munity of the disciples of Jesus (page 61).

The Lord's Supper.

The purpose of the Supper, especially, is to express in signal form the reality of this new community of love and peace and truth. The letter of Grebel and his friends to Müntzer repeatedly makes reference to "the rule of Christ" or "Christ's rule of binding and loosing."....The Supper should never be used without it....This is surely one of the most radical aspects of Anabaptist discipleship for it is clearly assumed that the company of Jesus' disciples - that is the church - forgives and retains sin. If this community is in fact to be the community of obedience - and this, writes Menno, is one of the marks of the church - it must deal with disobedience (page 25).

The Supper signified the oneness and unity of the church, and participation in it was a pledge of peace with one's neighbour and a commitment to each other (page 45) [Note: Among Flemish Mennonites communities, such as the Kleine Gemeinde, until recently, the Lord's Supper or Communion was referred to as "Einigkeit" or "unity". Editor.]

Faith.

Faith then is confidence in the certainty of God's love and grace as shown in Jesus and includes following him; this experience of following is the evidence that the confidence is genuine. Christ is Lord not only because salvation is available through him alone, but also because he becomes the one who determines what a person is and does as the model and example of a God-pleasing life. "True evangelical faith," writes Menno "...sees and considers only the doctrines, ceremonies, commands, prohibitions, and the perfect example of Christ, and strives to conform thereto with all its power." And again: "Let Christ Jesus with His Spirit and Word be your teacher and example, your way and your mirror." Or again, "whosoever boasts that he is a Christian, the same must walk as Christ walked" (pages 20-21).

Obedience.

But to accept Him as Saviour is only the beginning of faith. For the Jesus that died also arose again and was for his obedience and lowly service made Lord by God. God's authority is embodied in him. It is to him that God bids men listen....Thus it is not only dependence upon the shed blood of Christ that constitutes "listening to him". In his work, *The New Birth* Menno Simons touches on this point: "...We reply: If your faith is as you say, why do you not do the things which he has commanded you in his Word?...Since you do not do as He commands and desires, but as you please it is sufficiently proved that you do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, although you say so" (page 20).

Becoming a disciple did not isolate him [the believer]; it brought him for the first time into a true community in which he could find himself, in which he could get resources and help on the incredibly steep and narrow way he had chosen to walk....Life in the community is necessary in order not to lose hold on the truth (page 24).

Discipleship is therefore very much a communal matter...When one becomes a disciple he recog-

nizes that the christian is not capable of being a disciple by himself; rather that he needs the help and understanding of others to walk the steep and narrow way of life (page 25).

Christians and Property.

[T]heir discipleship led them into a new attitude toward property. When people entered the community they put all that they had at the disposal of the community. While this did not necessarily involve a common treasury it did mean that no Christian could claim property as though it had nothing to do with others. In 1528 a group of Anabaptists moved to a common treasury under pressure of external circumstances. Ulrich Stadler writes about property as being directly related to human selfishness. This view of property was radical on both the individual and social levels. Those in positions of political and economic power were afraid of this for if it ever became widespread, they would be the ones to lose. Many, including the Reformers felt that it was an invitation to economic and political anarchy (page 24).

Believing and Doing.

Another part of the context [in which Anabaptists worked out their faith] was Luther's theology. The Anabaptist attitude to it is typified by the words of Hans Hut: "For the teaching one hears from them is nothing else than: Have faith! And goes no further."

Luther was understood by many to be saying that all one could do to be saved was to have faith in the merits of Christ, that this was the only response God required of human beings, and that it was the only one God accepted. This view appeared to Anabaptists to be an intellectual matter, for they could see in it no visible expression. Their understanding of the church and of discipleship called for a faith that was plainly visible in attitudes and deeds. Words lend themselves too easily to misrepresentation and to making claims which go beyond actual experience. They regarded Luther's doctrine of salvation "by faith alone" as another example of learned subtlety which was popular because it made no demands on anyone (page 43).

Christo-centric.

For them [Anabaptists] revelation was the source of truth, and this divine revelation was mediated by the Scriptures. It did not primarily consist of a collection of theological ideas, but came primarily in the life and words of Jesus Christ and the apostles. It is important to emphasize again that the words of Jesus were not separated from his life and actions. His life had theological significance, for it was the model of what God wanted men to be (page 43).

The test of a theological statement therefore was always the life and doctrine of Christ and the apostles. By this they also established levels of authority within the Bible; they did not take a uniform view of it as though all parts were of equal significance. They rejected as God's word for their day, whatever did not agree with the life and doctrine of Christ, even though it be in the Bible (page 45).

"No one can know Christ unless he follows him in his life," wrote Hans Denk (page 47).

Government.

What God required of [the government] was to

keep order "outside the perfection of Christ." Marpeck writes that God had erected natural statutes that are applicable to all persons everywhere. They are not the sum of what human beings are capable of by God's grace, but they are sufficient for humanity's external needs. Marpeck as well as Menno saw the rulers in Old Testament times as those appointed by God to exercise justice. They insisted that the rulers who were their contemporaries likewise could be expected to exercise justice and adequately to fulfil their function according to God's will. Marpeck quotes Proverbs 8:15-16 in support of his contention that all rulers, be they Jews, Gentiles, or heathen, have available to them God-given natural wisdom to rule justly. But the magistrate does not need the wisdom of Christ for his function as a ruler, although it would most certainly be highly desirable. Nevertheless, the wisdom of Christ includes love of enemy, the cross, patience, nonviolence, all of which fit only with difficulty into the function of a ruler. Menno insisted that the rulers could exercise their function faithfully and adequately with a lot less violence and oppression than they did, and quotes the Old Testament prophets at length to make his point (pages 56-57).

Faith or Works.

Especially from the Anabaptists of the Netherlands comes a strong emphasis on the Incarnation. If God could become man, then God and man were not so distant from each other. If God could become humanized, then it followed that man could, in a measure and by God's grace become divinized....The person who has faith is gradually changed into the holiness of God after the image of Jesus by the action of the Holy Spirit; this sanctification then becomes visible by the life that is lived. Good works are both the consequence and the evidence of being made holy (page 17).

One of the chief criticisms against Anabaptism has always been that it was legalistic in nature. Luther was one of the first to make this charge when he dismissed Anabaptism as a revival of monasticism....When the Anabaptists criticized what they understood as a one-sided insistence on "faith alone" and emphasized that faith is visible and genuine only if expressed in action, Luther saw nothing but a new system of righteousness by works....The same kind of charges were made against the Anabaptists by most of the reformers and their successors. One still finds it in textbooks of church history.

The Anabaptists were very sensitive to this charge and regularly replied to it and rejected it. Two statements by Menno Simons illustrate that they regarded the charges as false and slanderous: "Because we teach from the mouth of the Lord that if we would enter into life, we must keep the commandments; that in Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything but the keeping of the commandments of God; and that the love of God is that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous; therefore, the preachers who have to call us heaven-stormers and meritmen, saying that we want to be saved by our own merits even though we have always confessed, and by the grace of God ever will, that we cannot be saved by means of any-

thing in heaven or on earth other than by the merits, intercession, death and blood of Christ" (pages 28-29).

They [the Anabaptists] denied that what they called the "new law" was simply another external code of behaviour analogous to the Law of the Old Testament. It was a law written on the heart. Jesus was for them a living Lord. They were not obeying some abstraction; he was with them in his spirit, and it was by the power of his ever-present spirit that they were set free to obey him. Therefore, they did not, as their enemies said, labour under an impossible burden, they had been set free to obey him....The Anabaptists were thoroughly biblical in their use of the term "law" or "commandment". They made a great deal of the new commandment of love in John 13:34, the fulfilment of which was a mark of "genuine faith and true Christianity". Jesus himself had called it a "new commandment" and therefore their usage of it rested on the highest authority. There is frequent reference to the new law which is written not on stone tablets but on the human heart. This is based on Jeremiah 31 and 2 Cor. 3:3....The commandment to love had content, they believed, usually identified as the ethical injunctions of Jesus and his apostles (pages 32-33)

Anabaptists had been given some of the liberty of their Master who had walked this way before them (page 36).

Catholicism.

Those of us who belong to the Anabaptist tradition can therefore never completely dissociate ourselves from Catholicism. It is the soil out of which we grew and we have brought with us more from that soil than we remember. We are the children of the Catholic church and the sooner we acknowledge it the better for us....Together with them we all belong to the church of Christ (page 66).

Several decades ago the late Anabaptist scholar Robert Friedmann argued that Anabaptists were not Protestants in the traditional definition of the term. For this he was criticized by, among others, the present author. He now believes that Friedmann was probably right in his judgment (page 77).

Lay Monasticism?

One Christian movement that had provided repeated breakthroughs of renewal within the church was monasticism. In its beginnings the monastic movement was in part a protest against the development of a double standard of morality. The view developed in the church that only the clergy and other select persons could live out the teachings of Jesus, but that Jesus' teachings were too demanding for the common people. The first monastics were lay men and women who took it upon themselves to obey and live out the Counsels (poverty, chastity, obedience) and Precepts (the rest of Jesus' ethical imperatives), at first by themselves, and later in committed communities. It was an attempt to reinvigorate the church, to call it back to the demands and promises of Jesus, and to present a fighting front to the devil against all of his temptations to compromise (pages 66-67).

When Martin Luther disposed of Anabaptism as a revival of Monasticism he was in one sense totally right. For Anabaptism was in a very real

sense the continuation of the medieval Catholic ideal of community and authority....The community on earth was held together by the authority of Christ mediated through the abbot; therefore the individual was subject unquestionably to that authority....The individual therefore does not achieve salvation by himself but only in community (pages 68-69).

For them [Anabaptists] the church was a company of disciples (page 74).

Anabaptism is an example of the renewed concern in the church for taking seriously the Sermon on the Mount in everyday living. Monasticism was an earlier example of the same concern. Like the original monastic movement, Anabaptism was a lay movement. Both were committed to non-violence; both were critical of private property; both made a great deal of obedience;....Anabaptism insisted that the Counsels of Perfection should be obeyed by ordinary people everywhere. We are hearing that same claim made again, but now especially within Roman Catholicism. James' statement that faith without works is dead has become a commonly accepted teaching today (pages 78-79).

Today few will dispute that the old way of opposing faith and works is a serious error (page 80).

Exegesis.

[H]ow were these Scriptures, which Catholic teachers rightly insisted were difficult for the laity to understand, to be correctly interpreted? To this question Anabaptists gave a twofold answer. First of all they took an historical view of the Bible. That is, they understood the coming of Jesus to be the most important event in Israel's history. They saw his coming as the event in which God revealed himself more clearly and with greater authority than anywhere else. What Jesus said and did as well as the words and actions of his first followers therefore had greater authority than anything or anyone else. The first principle of interpreting the Bible therefore was "the life and doctrine of Christ and the apostles." Whatever in the Bible was contrary to these lost its claim to authority. Jesus was thus moved unquestionably into the centre; particularly Jesus living a human life upon this earth.

Secondly, Anabaptists spoke to the question of method. Scholarship in and of itself was not despised nor neglected, but they saw its limitations. They saw that Luther and Zwingli - both of them accomplished Bible scholars - did not agree in their interpretations.In spite of this it was always the scholars who decided which interpretation was correct and which in error; the nonscholars had no part in this decision. Anabaptists took Luther seriously when he insisted that every believer, no matter how humble, had the Holy Spirit, and could therefore legitimately interpret Scripture. But they went a step further and held to the old principle that ultimately it is the church that interprets Scripture. While this was clearly Catholic teaching, it assumed, among Anabaptists, a form which reflected their view of the church. It is not the hierarchy as in Catholicism nor an appointed group of scholar-teachers as in Protestantism which interprets the Bible, but rather the gathered disciple-community. This community struggles with the meaning of Scripture and reaches, where possible, a common understanding of its intent.

Toward an Understanding of Conversion - Part Two

Toward an Understanding of Conversion - Part Two, "Focus on Words and Expectations,"
by Dr. John H. Neufeld, 290 Emerson Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3G 1G4, 2002.

Review.

In Part One (December 2002 Issue of *Preservings*) I focused on four fundamental concepts (mystery, free will, opposition and patience) and then explored the variety of memories that we have in reference to evangelism and conversion. The last segment of Part One dealt with the variety of experiences that people have had – Paul, Timothy, a Brazilian weaver, a Mennonite medic in Russia, and a psychiatrist in Japan. Hopefully, every reader took the time to reflect on his or her own memories in regard to this important subject.

The great variety of experiences that people have in "coming to believe in," and commit themselves to Jesus Christ and the church leads to the inevitable conclusion that there is no correct way in which to become a Christian. Let us rejoice in and affirm the variety of ways in which God, through His Word and Spirit, through the faithful witness of others, and through personal reflection on experience, enters our lives and invites us to become his followers.

In Part Two, I want to continue the emphasis on "variety." We will review the variety of words that are used to speak of the experience of coming to faith as well as the range of expectations that we may have, particularly in reference to children and young people who grow up in Christian homes and within the context of a Christian congregation.

Variety of Words.

In addition to a great range of experiences in reference to conversion, there is also a great variety of language. It is true that we "live by story," but we must also add, we also "live by words." Some persons insist that we have to use certain words to speak about salvation or we are not really Christians. When I have spoken about this subject in a variety of churches I have asked the people to list the words that they associate with salvation. In each of those lists as well as in Scripture, there is a wide range of usage. (Those who have access to a concordance and/or a Bible dictionary can find information on these terms.)

Some of the terms suggested by the people are these: born again, believe, trust, faith, saved, salvation, redeemed, redemption, forgiveness, converted, committed. Billy Graham, Charles Colson and many others use the term "born again" regularly (the term is found in the KJV). In the more recent translations the term is translated "born anew" (similar to the German "*von neuem geboren werde*") and occurs only four times in the New Testament (John 3:3, 3:7, 1 Peter 1:3, 1:23). When we look into the New Testament we find that the "born anew" language is found in the writings of John (John 3, 1 John 3:9, 4:7, 5:4, 5:18) and in 1 Peter, but we are struck by the fact that Paul, who was certainly an expert on the theme of salvation and conversion, never uses this term.

Many times in the gospels, in Acts and in the epistles we find that the term "believe," is very frequently used. "Believe" is found many times in the gospel of John and several dozen times in the epistles. Examples of this usage are found in Mark 1:15, 9:24, John 9:35-38, Ephesians 2:8-10 and 1 Cor. 3:5 where Paul says about himself and Apollos that they are, "Servants through whom you have believed."

The cluster of words associated with salvation are widespread in both Testaments. We find "saved," "save," "savior," and "salvation" in many passages. "Salvation" is used some 87 times in the Old Testament; "save" is used repeatedly in the Psalms and in the prophets (some examples: Psalm 55:16, Isa. 35:4, Jer. 17:14, 30:11). When we turn to the New Testament we note that "salvation" is used some 40 times; "save" is also used frequently (e.g. Luke 19:10); and "savior" appears 24 times.

Some times the terms "redeem," "redeemed," and "redemption" are used. The word "redeem" is often used in reference to slavery or in the context of the system of sacrifices, but also to speak about redeeming Israel from captivity. (Exodus 6:6 and Psalm 26:11 are but two examples out of 35 occurrences.) In Titus 2:14 we find one of the three New Testament occurrences of the term "redeem." "Redemption" is found 17 times in the Old Testament (Psalm 111:9, e.g.) and nine times in the New (three examples: Romans 3:24, Eph 1:7, Col. 1:14).

"Forgiveness" and "forgive" are also salvation-related terms found in the Bible, occurring some 37 times in the Old Testament and 37 times in the New. When we look up verses with these terms we note that often the focus is on God forgiving but there are also a number of passages in which forgiveness happens or is expected to happen between people. "Forgiveness" is found in the gospels, Acts and in the epistles of the New Testament (Mk 1:4, Acts 2:38, and Eph 1:7 serve as examples). In the Old Testament there are only two occurrences, in Psalm 130:4 and Daniel 9:9. "Forgive" is used of God's forgiveness as in 1 John 1:9 and between persons as in Col. 3:13.

Conversion.

It is striking that the words "conversion" and "convert" are not found in the Old Testament at all and seldom in the New. "Conversion" is found only once, in Acts 15:3 and "convert" appears twice, in Romans 16:5 and 1 Timothy 3:6. Another term used only once in the New Testament is "received Christ," found in Col. 2:6.

Underlying each of the terms mentioned is a foundational assumption that is found in both Testaments, namely, the assumption of repentance. The term repentance is related to the Hebrew word *shubh* which is translated as "re-turn," "turn back," or "Umkehr." The term is used in reference to the covenant God had entered into

with Israel. The people are called to return to the conditions of the covenant they had once accepted. Jeremiah uses the term frequently in posing the choice between worshipping idols or following Yahweh (See Jeremiah 3:7, 10, 5:3).

In the New Testament the term *shubh* is taken up by two Greek terms *epistrephein* and *metanoein*. These terms are translated as "turn" ("they turned to the Lord" Acts 9:35) and "repent," which means to change one's mind or being. Taken together these words speak of the "turning of the total being to God away from the powers of darkness, sin and evil." (Paul Loffler, *Conversion to God and His Kingdom*, unpublished paper, 1966).

In the New Testament too, according to Loffler, conversion is a response to God's action in history. An expression of this is Jesus' announcement, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15) In other words conversion is the response of the individual to Jesus Christ and involves a re-orientation to God and a commitment to follow Him in a life of discipleship and service.

What shall we conclude from this mass of evidence, this variety of terminology used in reference to the experience of salvation? It seems clear to me that we must accept the variety of terms as valid and encourage and affirm the use of all of these terms when we speak of salvation. Some congregations will prefer the use of one term over the others but it would certainly be incorrect and unbiblical to insist that any one of the terms used to speak of salvation must be used to the exclusion of the others. God's salvation is too great and wonderful to be captured in one or two particular terms. Let us learn from the Bible to accept, affirm and use the variety of terms available to us to speak of that which God has done for us through the sending of his Son!

Expectations.

In addition to the variety of experience and the language we use to speak about salvation there is also a variety of legitimate expectations in reference to coming to be a believer. As I have already said, "we live by story" and "we live by words" and now I want to also say, "we live by expectations."

What I want to focus on particularly in this section is the question: what expectations can we legitimately have for children and young people who grow up in the bosom of the Christian family and a nurturing congregation? Should we expect that those reared in a Christian setting ought to have a Damascus Road experience as Paul did? Should we expect that young people growing up in the context of a nurturing congregation should have dramatic conversion experiences?

Perhaps I can pose the issue by referring to Johnny Penner and Nicky Cruz. Will Johnny Penner, who grew up in a Christian home and

was raised within a congregation, experience salvation in a way similar to that of Nicky Cruz, who grew up as a member of a street gang in New York city? The conversion story of Nicky Cruz was sensational and gripping. That was a real conversion with a radical turnaround, a distinct “before and after.”

But the story of Johnny Penner’s coming to owned faith will never be written up. There was no dramatic turnaround, no sensational change from “before to after.” Penner’s experience was so ordinary. Nicky Cruz might be invited for an interview on a talk show, but Johnny Penner would probably not be invited. His story is too ordinary.

This illustration raises additional questions: Is it to Johnny’s advantage that the family he grew up in was Christian, that he attended Sunday School, vacation Bible school, youth group and camps? Was it to his advantage that he learned to pray and to sing? I think everyone would agree these experiences are an advantage, but these nurturing experiences do not guarantee that he will be a Christian. Having a Christian upbringing is certainly a privilege but never a guarantee. **Christian Formation.**

Don’t many parents (and maybe some pastors as well) sometimes secretly wish that their children could have a critical and decisive conversion experience after a brief period of estrangement or alienation? Then they would be sure that they had really responded to the call of Christ in their lives. When these wishes and questions arise in us who are Christian parents, doing our best with our children, we must carefully consider our expectations. Is it really possible and necessary for children growing in our churches to experience a radical conversion, like Nicky Cruz?

Some years ago, Marlin Jeschke, a Mennonite who grew up in Saskatchewan and worked for decades as professor of religion and Bible at Goshen College, wrote a helpful book, *“Believers Baptism for Children of the Church.”* (Herald Press, 1983) He argues that the gradual way of nurture is the more excellent way – for those who have the advantage and privilege of Christian nurture. I would like to elaborate on his argument.

Jeschke argues that the New Testament pattern of conversion and baptism is that the adult convert enters the church from the outside world. This pattern will continue as long as the church is faithful in communicating the gospel so that persons from the non-Christian world continue to cross over into the Christian faith. But, he continues, for us and our children, the situation has changed. As Christian parents we have created a new environment for our children so that they do not need to grow up in a non-Christian environment but can be brought up, as Paul says, “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Eph. 6:2)

This new situation has implications for what we can expect from our children. Our children will not cross over from a non-Christian sphere into the Christian sphere. They are within the nurturing experience that is referred to in Deuteronomy 6. That environment communicates to the young the meanings of the faith by which the parents and the spiritual community live. This

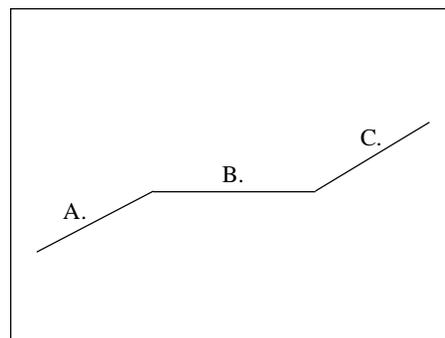
is done in two basic ways: modelling by example, and instructing by word of mouth, in both formal and informal settings.

Owning the Faith.

Growing up in such a context is an advantage and a privilege but it does not remove the necessity of personal decision, of each person owning the faith. We hope and pray that each of them will appreciate and appropriate the faith in which they have been nurtured as children and young people. We should not expect that they will have to reject or repudiate an earlier way of life to embrace a new one. We should expect that they would only need to consciously and personally affirm the faith and the community of faith in which they have grown up.

When I served as pastor of First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg I faced this situation annually in the catechism and church membership classes (1969-1984). Most of the young people in the classes had grown up in Christian homes and in the church and I had to find a way in which to affirm that advantage and yet encourage them to personally own the faith, rather than simply joining the church because their parents or grandparents expected them to do so.

I invited the class members to come for their interviews with me in groups of three. This was less intimidating for them and also helped them to express “where they were at” in the presence of others. In probing the question of their personal faith and commitment, I drew a diagram (see below) – a slope (A) representing their childhood, a plateau (B) representing their teen years and then another slope (C) (in the same direction as the first), to indicate their present life. I described the first slope as a period of time in which they were influenced and taught by parents, Sunday school and church and basically accepted what they were taught. The plateau represented the period in their lives when they began to seriously wonder about their upbringing and asked questions about it. For some this was a time of rejection of what they had been taught and confusion about the direction they wanted to take in their lives.



The point where the plateau ended and the second slope began, marks a significant point in their life’s pilgrimage in the present. I suggested that they had several options: one, they could say, “Yes, I want to consciously lead my life and believe the way I was taught;” two, they could say, “No, I do not want to consciously believe and live the way I was taught;” and three, they

could say, “Not yet. I am not ready to make a conscious, personal decision one way or the other.”

After explaining the diagram to them, I said that I wanted each of them to think about where they would consciously and deliberately place themselves on the diagram. Then, I invited them to initial the diagram at that point. After the initialing I then had each one explain why they placed themselves at that particular point. This led to their sharing with each other (and with me) their own understanding of their faith and Christian commitment. During the second interview in that four month period, I reviewed where they had placed themselves and affirmed their declaration of faith and commitment or encouraged those that were not ready to identify the questions or issues that were keeping them from making a commitment to Christ and the church.

It seems to me that in some such way the young people who have had the privilege of growing up in the church have to have the opportunity of declaring “where they’re at” and “owning the faith.” For many of them this conscious step of faith declaration could not involve a movement from the “darkness into the light” but rather an affirmation that the way they had been taught to believe and to live was the direction that they now chose to continue. Such “owning of the faith” does not need to have any sensational overtones connected to it. It is quite ordinary, reaping the results of faithful teaching and modelling of the Christian life by parents and others in the church community.

The decision our young people make to owned faith is more difficult to discern than the decision of a Nicky Cruz, for example, but the signs of owned faith will be there. Jeschke writes, “The decision of faith by a youth of the church may not be expected to show the dramatic contrast of a converted adult. But the confession of faith will still include: conscious acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior and a decision to walk in the way of Jesus (discipleship) in company with others (the church).” When they make this kind of commitment then we should feel ready to say: “You ought to be baptized, received into the church and continue in the life of growth and discipleship.”

What has happened is that the young person has consciously appropriated the faith in which they were raised. This is not necessarily sensational, but it is still very important. The advantage of the path of nurture is that children and youth receive the sustained teaching of the faith and the modelling of the Christian life. The trap we may fall into is to believe personal decision is no longer necessary. All of us must be reminded that personal, owned faith, is not hereditary, it is not received by osmosis, it must be personally appropriated.

Childhood Conversion?

Now I want to return to the issue I raised near the beginning of this article – the status of children in the eyes of God. In other words, what do we believe about children? Some would pose the question: are children saved or lost?, but Marlin Jeschke believes that that is not the right ques-

tion. His conviction (in line with Anabaptist-Mennonite thinking on this subject over the centuries) is that children are innocent, not responsible or accountable for their behaviour.

If we accept this view (which I will elaborate on a bit later) then we reject several different sets of convictions about children. We reject the Roman Catholic teaching that children are guilty of original sin and need baptismal regeneration. If we believe that children are innocent and not responsible, we also reject the 17th century English Puritans who taught that children are “totally depraved and lost.” We reject the view of Jonathan Edwards (1740) that “children are young vipers, who are in the most miserable condition if they are out of Christ.” George Whitefield spoke of children as “rattlesnakes and alligators.”

If we agree with Jeschke then we also reject the views of the evangelists Moody, Sankey and Finney, who believed that a child had to be lost before he could be saved. And we reject the teaching of John H. Overholzer, the founder of the Child Evangelism Fellowship (1935) who taught, “Any child is already lost or soon will be.” For Overholzer and the CEF movement, conviction of sin is based on specific acts, such as lying, swearing or stealing, not on the basis of the awareness of a sinful nature.

Jeschke’s position is in harmony with the understanding that our Mennonite forbears had, according to the article on “Original Sin” in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. Our forbears held that “innocent children are not accountable and are acceptable to God” and “so also Adam’s sin does not impair anybody except the one who makes it part of his own being.” In his book, *The Nurture and Evangelism of Children*, Gideon Yoder (Herald Press 1959) comes to the same conclusion (p. 63), “Prior to the age of accountability children are not lost nor responsible before God. They are not able to make the response necessary for being converted in the New Testament sense.” He goes on, “When the adolescent youth is mature enough to recognize himself as a moral failure and free enough to voluntarily transfer control of his life to Christ, conversion can take place.”

Innocence.

During childhood we must nurture the children toward faith, inviting them to respond to God’s love and call with child-faith. They are not yet capable of an adult faith. They respond as children to the story of Jesus. They invite him into their lives and they pray. We need to affirm this and accept this level of response as appropriate to their being children. But let us not equate a child’s confession with an adult’s decision.

Some may well be raising the question now, what is the biblical basis for this view of children? I openly admit that we have no proof-texts in Scripture that say, in effect, “children are safe.” This conviction rests more on the general teaching and the spirit of the Bible than on specific passages. However, there are several passages that are looked to in this regard. In Deuteronomy 1:39 Moses is telling the people of Israel who will be permitted to enter the promised land. Rebellious adults are refused, but “your little ones, all your children, who this day have no knowl-

edge of good or evil shall go in there.” Notice the clear distinction made here between accountable and responsible adults and innocent and not yet accountable children of those same adults.

Jesus’ well-known saying about children is found in three of the gospels (Mt 19:13, Mk 10:14, Lk 18:16) “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” This seems to be a re-affirmation and an endorsement of the viewpoint of Deut. 1:39. If Jesus had rejected that which Moses taught he would have said, “Moses said so and so, but I say unto you” but that is not at all what he said. His statement about children is in complete harmony with the comments found in Deuteronomy 1. W.T. Conner writes, “The child does not have personal guilt. That is impossible when the conditions of personal responsibility are lacking. These are absent in the child’s life until powers of self-consciousness and self-determination arise. There can be no personal guilt except in the case of a personal agent,” (Quoted in Yoder, *The Nurture and Evangelism of Children*, page 63).

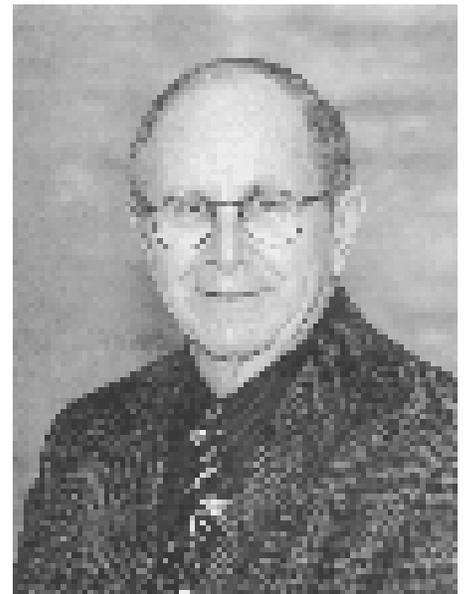
To believe in the innocence of children means that a time of personal accountability is coming, a time when they become morally and spiritually responsible. Yoder, Jeschke and others place this time of personal accountability in adolescence. It seems appropriate that in that period of time when the adolescents evaluate everything they have been taught, they are also capable of making a decision that will either affirm and confirm the direction in which Christian nurture and education has pointed them, or they will consciously decide not to confirm it.

Childhood Faith?

But what about the faith of our children? Let’s examine this a bit further. The child is under the grace of God and is not held accountable for the tendency to sin. Further, we must recognize that the religion of childhood is radically different in character than the religion of adolescence or adulthood. One is “lived within the context of innocence, the other within the framework of responsibility,” (Yoder, p. 108).

During childhood, religion is mostly in concrete rather than abstract terms. Good and bad are conceived of only in terms of individual acts. It is only later in adolescence that the growing person recognizes good and bad as being in himself, as a part of his very nature. Since abstractions are as yet beyond the maturity of the child, he is not able to make a “master commitment,” which is by nature abstract and general. The religion of childhood is a religion of innocence, it lacks maturity, it cannot judge or generalize. It is largely a reflection of the social-religious environment of the child. Gideon Yoder goes on to say that “no commitments made during childhood can substitute fully for the commitment that needs to be made at the age of moral consciousness (during adolescence),” (p. 108).

What are the practical implications of this understanding of children and youth? Children ought to be invited to become followers of Jesus throughout their period of childhood and long before they are old enough to accept Jesus as



Dr. John H. Neufeld, pastor, writer and educator.
Photo - Pres., No. 21, page 36.

Lord and Savior in the adult sense. It is quite in order that children make some sort of commitment – but we must understand that this is a child’s commitment, based on the child’s maturity. It is not and cannot be an adult-level commitment. Conversion must be more than from particular sins. If it is not then it tends to be related only to particular moral lapses. Healthy childhood experiences form a good foundation for decisions that will need to be made later on.

In Romans 3:1 Paul asks the question, “then what advantage has the Jew?” His answer was that it was a benefit to “be entrusted with the oracles of God.” I see this as parallel to the experience of children growing up in a Christian context. Children who grow up in a Christian environment have the advantage of becoming familiar with the biblical story. Before anyone can make a decision for or against Christ they must have acquired a certain familiarity with the faith. This is provided through Christian nurture and education for children growing up in our settings. The decisions made in the direction of Jesus and his teaching in childhood can lead to the possibility of a master commitment as they grow up.

The More Excellent Way.

As I have already indicated those who come

Attention:

This is the second instalment in a series by Dr. John Neufeld entitled “Toward an Understanding of Conversion.” The first instalment, “Salvation by Experience” was published in *Preservings*, No. 21, December 2002, pages 33-36. Dr. John H. Neufeld, is Past-President of Canadian Mennonite Bible College, and former senior Pastor of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba. He is the author of *The Story that Shaped Us: Sermons by John H. Neufeld* (C.M.B.C. Publications, Winnipeg, 1997), 161 pages.

to a consciously held master commitment to Christ and the church following a period of nurture and involvement in the Christian community are often hard-pressed to identify when they became Christian. But this is the “more excellent way” of coming to the faith, as Jeschke says. Such persons are consciously underway with Christ and continue the life of discipleship, growth and sanctification within the community of believers.

I have thought of two life experiences that illustrate what I have just said. The first analogy is that of marriage. When did I fall in love with the young woman I eventually married? I cannot tell exactly when that happened, but one day I knew that I loved her and that we wanted to spend our lives together. Since then we have reaffirmed our love and commitment to each other again and again. Our wedding service made public the commitment we had made to each other in private some months earlier.

Having a wedding, getting married, is just the beginning, isn't it? Every couple has to “keep on being married” throughout its life together. In a similar way, Christian baptism makes public the commitment to God and the church that each person had made in the privacy of their own heart. Making a decision for Christ, being baptized on the basis of it, is just the beginning. Every believer has to keep on being Christian throughout life.

The second analogy comes from our vocational life. Deciding on a life's vocation is not the same as achieving it, but the decision to set one's life in a particular direction is of crucial importance. Life is then lived toward the future, the goal, within the framework established by that major decision. It seems to me that a decision to believe in and follow Jesus is similar to these common experiences. We say yes to Christ once and again and again, seeking always to live in the direction of that primary commitment of faith, seeking always to grow in the relationship with Him who has become our Lord and Savior.

Another way of saying this is that being a Christian is more a dynamic relationship than a static state. It means that we have consciously and deliberately set our lives in the direction set by Jesus Christ. Being Christian is being underway under the guidance of our Lord, not arriving at a particular point. In biblical terms, Paul writes about the Christian life as having the goal of being “conformed to the image of his son” (Romans 8:29) and entering into a life-long process of transformation (Romans 12:1-2).

The sense of the Greek term for the word “transform” is “to keep on being transformed” and “keep on not being conformed to this world.” Let us never give the impression that conversion, a conscious decision to follow Jesus, is the final step. In actuality it is one of the preliminary steps that needs to be followed by Christian nurture, education and transformation into “the image of his son.”

The final expectation I want to mention is this: that all those who come to a personal decision to be Christian enter a period of growth and maturation through Christian education and nurture. Our concern as churches is not only that persons make decisions to be Christian but that

they will continue to make decisions based on a vigorous and lively conversation with the whole of Scripture. The experience of “not being conformed” to the world and “being transformed” by the renewal of our minds is to be ongoing throughout life.

According to Paul, being a member of the body of Christ, the church, has the goal that every believer be equipped for a life of service (Ephesians 4:12) and that every believer will grow up in the faith so that they will not “be tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine,” (Ephesians 4:14). Cumulatively, bit by bit, year by year, the process of transformation and growth happens within the context of the Christian congregation, and all believers come closer to maturity as defined by Christ.

May we as churches accept the challenge of being involved in this life-shaping and transforming ministry with one another!

Conclusion.

Since the focus of this article has been on the experiential aspects of conversion, I have omitted entirely the theological discussion of the theo-

ries of atonement. This is an important area of concern, but beyond the intent of this article. What I have done is identify four foundational concepts that need to be kept in mind as we reflect on conversion – mystery, free will, opposition and patience. Following that, the emphasis has been on variety – the variety of memories we have about evangelism and conversion, the variety of experiences that are shared through conversion stories, the variety of words that are used to speak of salvation, and finally, the variety of expectations we can legitimately have, particularly when we think of the differences between those who grow up in a Christian environment and those that do not.

While the emphasis on variety may be disturbing to some, I believe we must accept the fact that there is no uniform and correct way in which to come to faith in Jesus Christ. Let us rejoice in the creativity of God's Spirit at work in the lives of people and affirm the wide variety of ways in which people come to faith.

May each of us continue to grow in faith and in faithfulness to him who is our Lord, Savior and Head of the church.

Brussels, Belgium

Brussels, the capital of Belgium, has 1,000,000 residents. It has become the headquarters of many European Union authorities as well as of NATO. The heart of Brussels is the Grand Place, the

historic trade centre of the old city. This sumptuous square in the Italo-Flemish Baroque style bears testimony to the power of the Guilds that rebuilt it after the bombardment of the French in 1695.

The square was the scene of many historic events. In 1568, Counts Egmont and van Hoorne were executed here by the Spanish because they dared ask for basic freedoms. Mennonites were also burned at the stake here. The last martyr in Brussels was Anneken van den Hove, buried alive a mile out of town on July 19, 1597.

Eighteen kilometres southeast of Brussels is Waterloo, site of Napoleon's fateful defeat on June 18, 1815.

Since the Second World War, three Mennonite congregations have emerged in Belgium, two in Brussels and one in nearby Rixensart.

From Jan Gleysteen, *Mennonite Tourguide*, pages 240-243.

Brussels, the Grand Place at night. Photo - Jan Gleysteen, Mennonite Tourguide, page 241.



The Rule of Christ - Discipling

“The Rule of Christ - Matthew 28:16-20: Discipling through Binding and Loosing,”
By David Schroeder, 745 Coventry Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3R 1B8.

Introduction.

The Great Commission indicates that there are two aspects to the proclamation of the Gospel. They are both spoken of as “making disciples”. The first has to do with inviting people to faith in Christ. The second has to do with teaching people to do all that Christ commanded. In this paper I will be concerned mainly with the second - with ‘Discipling’ those who have already committed themselves to Christ in faith.

The Anabaptists understood that everyone, who chose to follow Christ in life, committed him or herself to “The Rule of Faith”. By this they meant that those who claimed to follow Christ placed themselves voluntarily under the admonition of the church. It was expected that each member of the church was responsible for encouraging and admonishing fellow believers. Only in this way could the church be expected to grow and to remain pure in spirit and in teaching.

They based this understanding of the mission of the church on Matthew 18:15-20. This passage indicates how an erring member is to be exhorted and corrected. First there is to be a personal appeal made to the person to return to the way of Christ. If this is not honoured, then the same appeal is to be made in the presence of one or several witnesses. If this still does not lead to repentance and a new walk, the matter is placed before the church. If the person does not respond to what the church considers to be binding on all its members, then the person is no longer regarded as being part of the church. This is the process of binding and loosing referred to in Matthew 18.

The acceptance of this rule of faith was significant in what it said about the Anabaptist understanding of the meaning of the church. They rightly sensed the importance of this rule of faith. It spelled out clearly the nature of the priesthood of believers. Each member of the church carries responsibility for every other member of the church. It also made the church a visible church. That is, they insisted that the Christian faith be manifested in a holy life. People were to see by their manner of life that they belonged to Christ. The rule of faith was also an instrument for the constant renewal and growth of the church.

This understanding of the rule of faith was correct even if the actual practise of it could have been different. It gave a lot of power to the leaders of the church - power that could be misused. At times it was used to keep things the way they had always been and did not allow for any change. Some leaders used this power to expel from the church any persons who did not agree with their interpretation of Scripture or their church policies. Needless to say, the rule of faith was misused to the extent that its validity was questioned and it was used less and less with time.

Had there been a broader understanding of the rule of faith and how it is central to the faith itself, the abuses of the rule might have been

avoided. It will be important, therefore, for us to gain a new understanding of this rule of faith so that we may be able to return to its use in the church. I believe that, if the rule of faith would be used with full biblical understanding, it would lead to the renewal and the purification of the church in our day.

We can gain a new appreciation of the rule of faith by relating it to the character of God and the character of Christ. The way in which the rule of faith is to be used is in harmony with the way in which God deals with us in life.

God as a Loosing and Binding God.

The character of God was revealed in events in history. God came to the help of the people in very specific times of crisis. God came to the people when they were slaves in Egypt. They could not free themselves but God, through Moses, freed the people from bondage to Pharaoh. The event revealed to the people what God was really like. They saw that God was a God of love who came to set the people free. They now understood that God is always like that. God is love. God is a loosing, freeing, saving, redeeming God. God wants above all that the people should be free to be responsible people before God.

Israel, through the Exodus, understood that God had created humans as responsible persons and that God does not want people to be enslaved or in bondage. God wants them to be free so that they can be responsible to God in the choices that they make. God wants them in all freedom to choose life by choosing to be obedient to God. God frees people from bondage and then asks them to do the will of God and receive life.

Freedom was not an end in itself as it so often is today. Being set free from bondage meant that now people were in a position to make responsible decisions. They could, if they wanted to, choose life. But it was not a given that they would in fact choose life.

God realised that the people did not know what actions would lead to life and what actions would lead to death. God, therefore, gave to them the law. God set before them the Law of Moses, which outlined what they should and should not do if they wished to have life and blessing. And then God appealed to them through Moses to choose life by keeping the commandments.

If the Exodus speaks of God as a freeing God, Sinai speaks of a God who invites us always to bind ourselves to the will of God and live. Both in the Old and New Testament there is the emphasis on “teaching them to observe” what was commanded. The two actions - loosing and binding - are to be seen together. Freedom alone is not yet life, but using that freedom to bind ourselves to do the will of God is life.

God also made a covenant with the people. God promised to be their God and to be there for

them in all circumstances of life. God promised to always lead them in the direction of life. God in this way was bound to the people. God did what we are to do. God was not forced by anything but the expression of God’s love. God as is indicated by the Exodus and by Sinai, is a binding and loosing God.

We are called to be God-like in character as well. We are to relate to others the way God relates to us. We are to show the same concern for others that God shows towards us; we are to respond to others in love the way God loves us. We are to work to set people free from bondage so that they can become responsible people. We are to invite people to know and to do the will of God so that they can have life indeed.

The Binding and Loosing of the Scribes.

Even though Israel had promised to do all that God had commanded, they did not always keep their promise. With time they strayed from the faith and no longer kept the commandments. The prophets had to tell them that God no longer wanted their sacrifices and offerings. The presenting of the lamb to God was to indicate that the worshipper offered him or herself totally to God. Since the people were not dedicating their lives to God the sacrifice was a lie. God could not honour it. And God promised that if they did not return to the covenant they would again be taken into captivity, into exile.

The Exile was an important time for Israel. Here they realised that the prophets had spoken for God and they repented of their sins. They also received through the prophets the message that God would bring them out of captivity if they would bind themselves once more to law of the covenant. The people dedicated themselves anew to keep the covenant law.

Since the people had thought earlier that they were doing the will of God when in fact they were not doing so, they resolved to do better now. They recognised that you never have the word of God without interpretation. The law says you should not work on the Sabbath but it does not indicate what all belongs to “work” and what is not work. Someone has to interpret. The law indicated that you can do ‘good’ on the Sabbath but it does not indicate what kind of good work you may do. Someone has to interpret. This task of interpreting what the law means for daily living was given to the Scribes to sort out. The Scribes were to study the scriptures so as to spell out how the law could be kept from day to day.

With time a whole system of interpretation was developed which spelled out in detail what persons were free to do, allowed to do, required to do and forbidden to do. The Scribes in fact became the ones who did the loosing and the binding. They were the judges and the teachers and the interpreters of the law. The people were no longer free nor were they directly responsible to God. They were under bondage once again.

This time they were in bondage to the oral law of the Scribes. They were captive to the interpretation of the Scribes rather than obedient to the will of God.

Jesus recognised that the people were not free to serve God and he opposed the oral law by not honouring it in his life and teaching. When he healed the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1-6) he broke with their interpretation that said that only in cases of life and death could a person heal of the Sabbath. Jesus broke with this system because the Scribes had made themselves lords over the scriptures through their interpretation. As a result they had barred the door to the kingdom for the people.

Jesus Saviour and Lord.

Jesus came to save sinners. Jesus came to set people free from bondage to sin. He was doing for us what God did for the children of Israel. Jesus freed people from sickness and brought healing. He saved those who were possessed and restored them to responsibility. Jesus freed people especially from bondage to the law. He saw that the law, as interpreted by the scribes, was a heavy burden to bear and did not allow people to respond freely to the call of God.

Jesus freed people from their bondage to the structures of society by breaking down the barriers between Jews and Samaritans and Jews and Gentiles. He spoke to tax collectors and women as morally responsible persons who could respond personally to God.

Jesus did not abide by the customs of the Scribes as he taught the people. He turned to the will of God as indicated in the Scriptures and not as indicated by the oral law of the Scribes. Jesus came to save, to free, to loose people from bondage.

But Jesus also came to invite people to bind themselves to him and through him to God. Everywhere people heard his "Come, follow me"! Jesus invited people to bind themselves to the will of God. He invited people to have faith in God and to do what was right. He asked that people to take up the Cross and to follow him in his obedience to the will of God (Mark 8:34-9:2).

Jesus was and is a saving (loosing) Lord who invites us to bind ourselves to the will of God. Jesus relates to us the way God has always related to people. We call him "Saviour" because he frees us from sin; we call him "Lord" because we have bound ourselves to his will for our lives. This is what loosing and binding is all about.

The Church as a Loosing and Binding Fellowship.

Jesus invited the church to become a loosing and binding fellowship. There are three texts that report this to us in three different contexts. Matthew 16:13-20 speaks of it in terms of Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah). To Peter, that is to the disciples, he gave the keys of the kingdom. They were called to loose and to bind in the name of Jesus. In Matthew 18:15-20 loosing and binding is spoken of in relation to a person who sins. In John 20:19-23 it indicates that what they forgive on earth shall be forgiven

in heaven, (Note One).

What Jesus invited the church to do is to relate to people the way God in Christ relates to us. We are first of all called to bind ourselves to the will of God by accepting Christ as Lord and Saviour. We do this by committing ourselves fully to God. We do this through our prayers, through our worship, through the study of the Word of God, through preaching and teaching, and through daily encouragement, exhortation and admonition.

We are also called to make the will of God known to other people and to invite them to bind themselves in faith to God through Christ. We are called to make known the will of God to a world that does not know God. We are called to name what is of God and leads to life and we are to name what is not of God and leads to death. On that basis we are to call on people to choose life - to bind themselves to that which will be life to them.

When we bind ourselves to Jesus Christ we are freed from the principalities and powers of darkness; we are separated from a world that does not know God as we become the Body of Christ in the world, and we are freed from serving the powers of evil in our day. The Spirit of Christ sets us free from captivity to the philosophic, religious, and cultural powers that seek to reign over us. The Spirit of Christ helps us to live Christ-like lives in the economic, political and social structures of society that have become dysfunctional and do not lead to life.

As Christians we also seek to speak to the liberation of others who do not know Christ. We proclaim that Christ has set us free from the powers of death and is able to save all that come to him in faith, trust and commitment. We also seek to set others free by seeking to remove that to which they are captive in every possible way.

The practise of binding and loosing.

As we said in the beginning, it was in the *practise* of loosing and binding that the early Anabaptists did not always succeed in living out their theology. In practise it was too often used as a tool to punish persons or to excommunicate persons who did not agree with the leader. Not enough time was taken to discern the will of God together; not enough effort was put into becoming of one mind. The loosing and binding has to happen under the direction of Christ the Lord. The way in which we proceed has to be in harmony with the character of God in Christ.

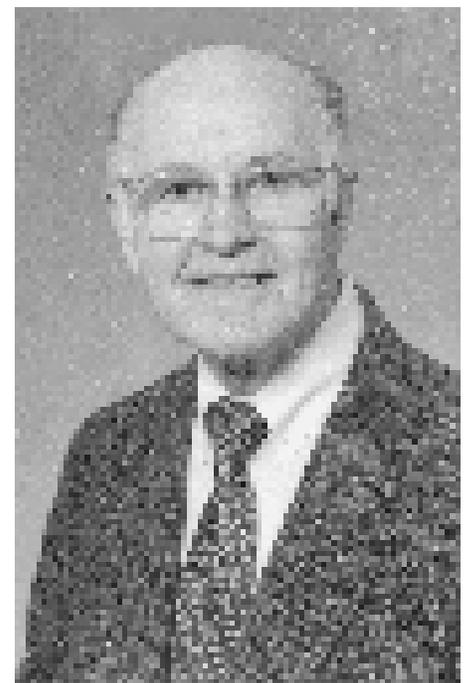
The process of loosing and binding depends on coming to know what is already bound in heaven. We have usually read the words "whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven" to mean that anything the church binds on earth will be bound in heaven. But that cannot be right, because then we as humans would have power over God. A better translation is "whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven". In this reading it is important to know what has already been bound in heaven; it is important to know the will of God. In this reading the emphasis is placed on first learning to know what is of God.

Loosing and binding in this sense places a

heavy emphasis on learning to know the scriptures and on interpreting the meaning of the Word of God for our time. The church then becomes a discerning and interpreting community. Every member of the church plays a part in learning to discern the will of God. It is not to be the way it was in Judaism. There the specially trained scribes, the religious rulers, decided amongst themselves what was of God. In the church the Spirit of God is given to all that are in Christ and the Spirit of Christ works in and through the believers to know what is of God. If and when a congregation earnestly seeks to know the will of God on a matter, and is open to the Spirit of God, the Spirit will lead the church to know the promise of God for them.

The proper exercise of loosing and binding results in Christian or spiritual growth. It is not first and foremost an instrument of *discipline* or *excommunication*. It is rather a way of sanctification, of growth. It is a way of discovering and responding to the failure to translate into everyday life our confession of faith in Christ. When we exhort each other we point out areas in our personal lives and in our corporate life where we have not acted in the spirit of Christ and where we have not been obedient to Christ's call. If we then respond with repentance, faith, forgiveness and obedience we grow to further maturity in Christ.

Wherever there is a healthy exercise of loosing and binding in the church, it will lead to a strong affirmation of the basic tenet of our faith. We will affirm that we are saved by grace; that salvation is the gift of God; that we have received the Spirit that leads us to know the truth; and that the scriptures are in truth the word of God. The basic confessions of faith and the teachings of the catechisms will be affirmed as those things that we bind ourselves to, as a faith community.



Dr. David Schroeder. Photo - Pres., No. 12, page 48.

Other things may not be immediately clear. It stands to reason that agreement cannot be reached immediately on every detail of how to apply the gospel to life. Not all persons are at the same point of maturity in their faith and life. Not all are at the same level of commitment and they do not all experience the same problems or difficulties in their lives. Others are novices in the faith and need the help of the rest of the church members in their pilgrimage. There would be no possibility of growth if we were all at the same point in our faith.

What is important is to learn to distinguish between those things that are basic to the faith and those things on which there can be differences of opinion and practise in the Christian community. The Amish distinguish between divine rules and man-made rules and regulations for the church body. The divine ordinances and tenets of faith have to do with the basic confessions of faith and the central teachings of the church. The man-made rules apply to rules and regulations that spell out what the community has judged to be best for its members so as not to be conformed to the world about them and not to be torn apart by dissension and strife. These rules apply to having their own schools, not using tractors, cars, phones or electricity, etc. It is not that these things are wrong in themselves but they have decided that the community of faith can be better sustained without them. In every Christian community a similar set of judgments must be made between that which is basic to the tenets of faith and that about which there could be a difference of opinion.

The scribes in Judaism had a way of working with issues on which they could not agree. They debated the pros and cons of such issues daily and with great intensity. But where they could not yet come to agreement the debates (i.e. the process of discernment) simply continued. What they could not agree upon was regarded as 'undecided' or open. Action on such issues was not prohibited nor encouraged. They would wait until new insight would help them to clarify what was of God. In Jesus' day the scribes had not yet come to agreement on divorce and what actions would justify a husband to divorce his wife.

We too should recognise that some things take time to sort out. The position against slavery was not arrived at in a day. Even today many denominations do not yet recognise war as sin. It takes time to come to full agreement. Sufficient time should be built into the process of coming to know the will of God on specific issues. In fact there will not be an end to the process of loosing and binding during the period of the church on earth for various reasons. For one, we are fallible in our judgements and actions as Christians. With changing times and circumstances also come new problems demanding further considerations. For instance, the Amish decided to remain farmers as much as would be possible. But now they are running out of farms to buy and have to make new regulations as to how to relate to jobs in factories and how to establish their own industries and businesses. But the same is the case in every Christian's life and in the life of every congregation.

The process of loosing and binding requires that there be a constant study of the scriptures and

a careful study of the world around us. The scriptures need to be mined for information on what we need to be delivered or freed from (on what constitutes bondage) and what we should bind ourselves to in our particular circumstances and time. We need to hear Paul's long list of what we ought to 'put off' (anger, wrath, slander, evil desire, idolatry, etc.) and what we ought to 'put on' (compassion, kindness, forbearance and forgiveness) in Colossians 3:5f, 12f. More than that, we need to determine what these words mean when translated into daily living.

We also need to understand the world in which we live. We need to be able to name just and unjust; what policies, institutions and structures work for good and which tend to enslave people. For this kind of discernment we can resort to all the various disciplines of study and persons in those disciplines. And we know that the Spirit of God leads us in this search. It may take time and effort but there comes a time when the church can say, "it seemed good to the Spirit and the church" and can act on what the church knows to be of God.

Discipline.

There is a place also for discipline and Matthew 18:15-20 tells us how to go about this so as to be fair to the person under discipline. But discipline of this kind should be for the sake of winning the person back to full fellowship with Christ and the church. It is not about punishment but about a loving witness to Christ. It is about leading a person to a recommitment to Christ through forgiveness and restoration. Discipline has to be about those things that are central to our faith in Christ, those things that relate to our basic confession of faith and not to man-made regulations.

Where an alternate position is taken to what the church has agreed upon and which is in itself not wrong, the person should not be excommunicated but asked to join a church that is sympathetic to his or her position. Such a person has not transgressed against the basic tenets of the Christian church.

Proper loosing and

binding will shift the focus from things we *do* to what we *are*. Through exhorting each other learn to discern what belongs or does not belong to the Spirit of Christ; we will be more and more concerned about whether our lives manifest the right spirit; we will ask more and more to see the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. In short, we will be concerned about God-like character and Christ-like actions not about legalistic rules. We will insist rather on members manifesting the character of Christ in their relation to others and we will ask about how we can best grow in grace and in the virtues of the Christian life.

Endnote:

Note One: For a fuller treatment of this passage see David Schroeder, "Binding and Loosing: Church and World" in *Church as Parable: What-ever Happened to Ethics*, Harry Huebner and David Schroeder, CMBC Publications, 1993.

Brugge, Belgium

Brugge was founded by Vikings in the 9th century on an inlet from the North Sea. Within a century Brugge became the greatest trading center between the Mediterranean and the Baltic Seas with a population of 35,000 by 1340 - unheard of at the time. During the 15th century the approaches to the harbour silted up and Brugge found itself 14 km. from the sea. As a result the merchants departed for Antwerp and elsewhere.

Mennonites were prominent in medieval Brugge, with one hunter of heretics complaining there were 700 in the city. We know of 47 martyrs here, of whom two died in prison, two were buried alive, and 43 burned at the stake. Others were captured and executed elsewhere and by 1630 the last survivors had moved north in the Netherlands.

From Gleysteen, *Mennonite Tourguide*, pages 248-251.



The age-old art of lacemaking, mastered by many Mennonites in Danzig and Elbing in Polish-Prussia. Photo - Gleysteen, *Mennonite Tourguide*, page 250.

Mother Teresa - "For the Love of Jesus"

Background.

Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu (now Mother Teresa) was born August 26, 1910; baptized August 27 in Skopje, in Macedonia. Her family belonged to the Albanian community. They were Catholic, though the majority of the Albanians are Muslim. The Turkish Empire ruled the country. The name Gonxha means "rose-bud" in Albanian.

Her father, Nicola, was a businessman, owning a large building company connected to a food shop. His firm constructed the first Skopje Theatre. He travelled a lot, was multilingual and very interested in politics. He was a member of the community council. He taught Agnes her first lessons in charity, together with Drana, his wife and Agnes' mother.

Totally unexpected, when Agnes was nine, her father died. It was 1919 and Drana had to raise her three children, Agatha ("Aga") (1904), Lazar (1907) and Agnes Gonxha (1910) alone. To look after their needs she sewed wedding dresses, made embroidery and worked hard. In spite of all this, she made time for the education of her children. They prayed every evening, went to church every day, prayed the rosary every day and assisted the service for the Holy Virgin. A great and warm attention went also to the poor and needy who came to knock at the door. During the holidays a stay in the pilgrimage place of Letnice, where Our Lady was venerated, was a custom for the family.

Agnes liked to be in church, she liked to read and to pray and to sing. Her mother also took care of an alcoholic woman in the neighbourhood. She went to wash and feed her twice a day and she also took care of a widow with six children. When Drana could not go, Agnes went to do this charitable work. And when the widow died, the children were raised in the house as if they were family. Lazar won a scholarship in Austria, Aga entered commercial school and Agnes went to the Lyceum. She studied well. Together with Aga she was in the Choir, Agnes was a soprano, Aga second voice. Agnes also played the mandolin.

The Call.

A great part of their time also went to the Legion of Mary. Agnes helped a father, who had difficulties with the language, to teach catechism and read a lot about Slovenian and Croatian missionaries in India. At 12 she felt for the first time the desire to spend her life for God's work, to give it to Him and to let Him decide. But how could she be sure?

She prayed a lot over it and talked about it with her sister and her mother. And also the Father to whom she confessed, she asked: "How can I be sure?"

He answered: "through your JOY. If you feel really happy by the idea that God might call you to serve Him, Him and your neighbour, then this is the evidence that you have a call."

And he added: "the deep inner joy that you

feel is the compass that indicates your direction in life".

At 18 the time had come! The decision was made. The last two years she assisted several religious retreats in Letnice and it was clear to her that she would be a missionary for India. On Assumption Day in 1928 she went to Letnice to pray for Our Lady's blessing before leaving. She was going to join the Sisters of Our Lady of Loreto, who were very active in India.

September 25 Agnes left, accompanied to the station by the whole community: friends, schoolmates, neighbours, young and old and of course her mother and sister Aga (later a translator and a radio announcer). And everybody wept (Source: *A life: Mother Teresa*, by Lush Gjergji, Albania).

Agnes travelled over Zagreb, to Austria,



Mother Teresa, Servant of God. Born Skopje 26 August 1910. Died Calcutta 5 September 1997.

Switzerland, France to London and then to the abbey close to Dublin where the mother house of the Loreto Sisters was located. She learned to speak English and was trained in religious life. She received the clothes of a sister and chose the name of Sister Teresa, in memory of the Little Teresa of Lisieux, where they stopped on the way to London.

In the meantime her papers were ready and 1928 on December 1, the crossing to India started: the country of her dreams. It was a long and tiring journey. Some other sisters were on board but the main group was Anglican. For weeks they could not attend mass or receive communion. Not on Christmas either. But they made a crib, prayed the rosary and sang Christmas songs.

In the beginning of 1929 they reached Colombo, then Madras and finally Calcutta. The journey continued to Darjeeling, at the feet of the Himalayas, where the young sister would

receive her training. On May 23, 1929 she was accepted as a novice and two years later she made her first vows. Immediately after that she was sent to Bengali to help the sisters in the little hospital caring for sick, starving and helpless mothers. She was touched by the endless misery which she saw here.

Preparation.

Sister Teresa was sent to Calcutta to study to become a teacher. Whenever she could she helped in the care for the sick. When her study was finished, she was named to be teacher and has to cross the city every day. The first work was to clean the classroom. Quickly the children learned to love her for her enthusiasm and her tenderness and their numbers rose to 300.

In another part of the city there were 100 little students. She saw where they lived and what they ate. For her care and her love, they soon called her "Ma". Sundays, whenever there was time, she went to visit these families.

On May 24 in 1937 she made her final vows in Darjeeling. She was named headmaster (principal) of a secondary school for middle class Bengali girls in the centre of Calcutta. She was their teacher for history and geography for some time. Close to the institute is one of the great slums of Calcutta. Sister Teresa could not close her eyes: who cares for the poor people living on the streets? The great charity that spoke through her mother's letters, reminded her of the basic call: to care for the poor.

The Legion of Mary was also active in this school. Sister Teresa went regularly to the hospitals, the slums, the poor. They do not only pray. They talk seriously about what they see and what they do. The Belgian Walloon Jesuit, Father Henry, who was the spiritual director, was a great inspiration in this work. He directed Sister Teresa for years. Under his inspiration the desire grew to do more for the poor, but how?

Second Call.

With all this in her head she left for a retreat in Darjeeling on Sept. 10, 1946. "The most important journey of my life" she said afterwards. It was then that she really heard God's voice. His message was clear: she had to leave the convent to help the poorest of the poor and to live with them. "It was an order, a duty, an absolute certainty. I knew what to do, but I did not know how". Sept. 10th is important in the Society and this day is called "Inspiration day".

Sister Teresa prayed, talked with some other sisters, asked her superior, who sent her to see the Archbishop of Calcutta, Mgr. Perrier. She explained to him her vocation, but he refused her the permission. He talked it over with Father Henry, who knew Sister Teresa well. They considered thoroughly the problems: India was about to be independent and Sister Teresa was a European! What were the political and other

dangers? Would Rome approve this decision?

The bishop told Sister Teresa to pray over this decision for at least a year or to join the Daughters of Saint Anna, sisters wearing a dark blue sari and working among the poor. Sister Teresa did not consider this the right response for her. She wanted to live among the



Esther Reimer Crowe holding one of the babies in Mother Teresa's care. Esther is the great-great-granddaughter (twice) of Klaas Reimer (1770-1837), founder of the *Kleine Gemeinde*.

poor, but ever obedient she agreed.

When after a year Sister Teresa renewed her intention, the archbishop wanted to grant the permission but decided it would be better to ask the permission from Rome and from the Loreto Mother-General in Dublin. This decision took a long time.

Decision.

In August 1948 she received the permission to leave the Loreto community under the condition that she keep the vows of poverty, purity and obedience. She was 38 when she said goodbye to her sisters and religious Loreto robe, to exchange it for a cheap white and blue sari. First she went to Patna for nurses' training with the sisters there. It is obvious to her that she could only help the poor in their dirty, sickening habitation if she herself knew how to prevent and cure disease. This medical training was indispensable for the fulfilment of her new call.

The superior in Patna, a doctor, gave her good advice when Sister Teresa talked about how she wanted to live among the poor and how she wished to care for them. When Sister Teresa said that she wanted to live on rice and salt, like the poor, the superior answered that this would be the best way to hinder herself in following her call: this kind of life demands a strong and good health.

Back in Calcutta, Sister Teresa went in the slums and the streets, to talk with the poor, to help them. All she had was a piece of soap and five rupees. She helped to wash the babies, to clean the wounds. The poor people are astonished: Who is this European lady in that poor sari? She spoke fluent Bengali! And she helped them wash, clean and care! Soon she started to teach the poor children how to read and write, how to wash and to have some hygiene. Later it would be possible to hire a small place to start a school.

She herself slept with the Sisters of the Poor. God was her great refuge for strength and material support. And He was: always she found the right medicine, clothes, food and a place to receive the poor to be able to help them. At noon children received a cup of milk and a piece of soap, when they came regularly, but they also heard about God, who is love and who - contrary to their obvious reality - loved them.

Touching Moment.

One day a Bengali girl, from a well-off family and former student of Sister Teresa, wanted to stay with Sister Teresa and help her. This is a touching moment. But Sister Teresa is realistic: she speaks about the full poverty,

about all the disagreeable aspects of the work which is hers. She proposes the girl to wait some time.

March 19th, 1949, the girl came back with no jewels and in a poor dress. The decision was made. She was the first to join Sister Teresa and took her maiden name: Agnes. Other women follow: in May they were three, in November five, next year seven. And Sister Teresa prayed fervently for more vocations to the Lord and to Our Lady. There was a lot of work. The sisters arose early in the morning, prayed a long time, had adoration and attended mass to find in their spiritual life the strength to do the material work in the service of the poor. Thank God, a certain Mister Gomes offered the top floor of his house to Sister Teresa for her first community.

In this year also Sister Teresa became an Indian citizen. Sister Teresa saw the community grow and knew she could think seriously about starting a congregation. For the first constitutions she asked the advice of two of her first helpers: Father Julien Henry s.j. and Father Celest Van Exem s.j. The last reading was done by father P. De Gheldere. The "Constitutions of the Society of the Missionaries of Charity" could be presented to the Archbishop, who would send them for approval to Rome.

Mother Teresa - Eulogy

"Mother Teresa - Eulogy," by Leslie Schrivener, Faith and Ethics Reporter, *Toronto Star*, Sunday, Sept. 14, 1997, pages D6-7.

Her features were plain, even homely, but her appeal was as irresistible as that of any great beauty.

When the late writer Malcolm Muggeridge left Mother Teresa at the train station in Calcutta in the 1960s, he said he felt he was leaving behind all the beauty and joy in the universe.

She shone, though her sari was patched and mended, her hands gnarled, her feet rough. She was cheerfully unsentimental, her biographer Navin Chawla wrote.

She was not an eloquent speaker. She was quick, practical, more interested in actions than words. She often said thank God, as in "It's a hot day, thank God," Chawla recalled.

There were always people around her, often visitors with cameras. She would reach out and touch the hand or head of anyone near her, says Toronto writer Lucinda Vardey.

Vardey recalls seeing her at a mass in Rome in June, Mother Teresa was in a wheelchair, looking frail, yet she stood for the reading of the Gospel. When Vardey last saw her speaking to a priest, "it looked as if she was telling him to do something, she had her finger going at him." It was a reassuring image that she was still strong.

Vardey, in her 1995 book, *A Simple Path*, compares Mother Teresa to the equally charismatic St. Francis of Assisi who, too, wore coarse clothing and cared for lepers and outcasts (see *Pres.*, No. 18, page 58).

St. Francis was seen as a radical in the 12th century for living with beggars and offering a fresh view of the church, one that followed the example of Christ in the Gospels.

Mother Teresa discouraged writers from writing about her. If you know the work I do, she told them, you will know me. The work was prodigious. The numbers alone daunting: 1,400 lepers treated each month at Prem Nivas, a center built for and by lepers, outside Calcutta; 1,000 people fed daily at Shishu Bhavan, the children's home in Calcutta, often the only meal they would have all day. There, 300 children are cared for and up to 2,000 patients seen each week.

Her message of simple service and deep love resonated around the world. At a time when interest in vocations is declining, the order she founded, the Missionaries of Charity, is growing, with 4,000 brothers and sisters worldwide.

In *A Simple Path*, Vardey captures the essence of Mother Teresa's beliefs and teaching. She also spoke to ordinary people, the volunteers, nuns and priests who follow that teaching.

The passages that follow reflect Mother Teresa's loving view and love of Christ. Vardey suggests those of other faiths or no religious faith, could substitute another word or symbol of divinity for the name of Jesus.

Everyone, Mother Teresa said, can do something beautiful for God.

Woman of God eased pain of the dying

"Woman of God eased pain of the dying," Paul Watson, Asian Bureau, - *Toronto Star*, Sunday, Sept. 14, 1997, "Requiem for Mother Teresa."

Calcutta, India.

Battered old bus brought Neelam Lakra to the stadium for Mother Teresa's funeral and her wheelchair carried her the final distance.

She came from Calcutta's Howrah South Point Handicapped Children's Home, one of the hundreds of charities Mother Teresa founded around the world, to thank a woman she had never met.

Lakra, 20, saw Mother Teresa from across a crowd once, and she had to strain for a better look from her wheelchair. She still felt very close to the nun she calls simply Mother.

"She loved us very much and she respected us," Lakra said. "Not only us, but the whole world."

As Lakra waited for Sharmila Tamange to push her chair through the stadium gates, the staff member of the disabled children's home considered a question of many minds.

Will anyone ever be able to replace Mother Teresa?

"Maybe someone will come," Tamange replied, "because God is always with us. He will help us."

The simple fact that Mother Teresa lived at all is proof of that to those like Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Vatican's secretary of state, who believe she is a sign of God's concern.

"At the close of a century which has known terrible extremes of darkness, the light of conscience has not been altogether extinguished," said Cardinal Sodano, Pope John Paul II's representative at the funeral.

"Holiness, goodness, kindness, love are still recognized when they appear on history's stage."

Mother Teresa lit a flame of love for her sisters to carry forward, Cardinal Sodano said. "The world badly needs the light of that

flame," he added.

It's a measure of our times that the passing of a nun who found her answers in religious faith must be analyzed to death by talking heads on network television for its deeper implications.

The question that keeps coming up again and again is whether Mother Teresa's mission will survive, whether anyone has her power to keep the money coming in.

It's a question that misses the point of her life, and one which is ridiculous to those who had listened to Mother Teresa and who shared the religious faith that burned in her heart.

"The less we have, the more we give," she once said. "It seems absurd, but it's the logic of love."

Mother Teresa did not leave everything up to the uncertainties of God's will. As her health failed, she supported Sister Nirmala, 63, as

Early in autumn the papal approval arrived. On October 7, 1950, the feast of the Holy Rosary, the founding was celebrated in the chapel of the sisters. The Archbishop celebrated mass and Father Van Exem read the foundation papers. That moment there were 12 sisters. Every year hundreds of sisters over the world celebrate on the feast day of Our Lady of the Rosary the founding of the Congregation. Not even five years after this day the congregation became papal, meaning they obtained their authority from the Pope.

It was a basic rule of the Society that the sisters, out of love for Jesus, devote themselves out of their free will, to the service of the poorest of the poor and this is, in fact, their

fourth vow. This was their way to live and spread the gospel and work for the salvation and the sanctification of the poor.

Mission.

While the number of poor and sick that asked for help was increasing, the admiration for the free devotion of the sisters was growing as well. To find a suitable house to accept the increasing number of sisters was a real necessity. After a novena to Saint Cecilia the solution came: a Muslim leaving town to Pakistan sold his big house for a cheap price and this became the famous Mother House on Lower Circular Road.

The postulants first came from Bengaly, then from all over India and finally from all over the world. The foundress herself was the novice mistress. For the spiritual training she asked one of the fathers, but for the matters of the house and the Community, it was clear, this was not his responsibility. She did not want interference from the outside in the inside matters.

The first confession Father was Father Edward Le Joly s.j. Like the other Jesuits he was of Belgian origin. He was a good contact and a good co-worker and wrote some of the first and most respected books about Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity.

Succession.

While the society grew in work and number Mother kept praying for vocations and the work kept growing. Houses were opening and some closing down from one day to another for one or another political, social or security reason. The society was very much alive and moving. Mother Teresa went all over the world to help people, rescue children, advise her sisters; to organize and to talk.

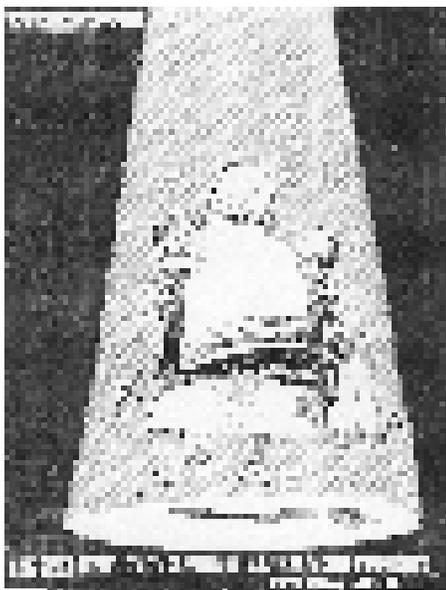
More and more she was asked to address

words to a group of sometimes 'ordinary' sometimes very important crowds. In spite of the fact that her message was often the same, could be summarized in few sentences and that she certainly many times had a quite "traditional" point of view, she was listened to carefully. In spite of her age she continued to search for means to help the poor people all over the world and she helped with the means she had. In every continent, even in Russia her sisters are present in their service to the lost, for the love of Jesus. In 1992 by the election of the New Superior general, she was prepared to hand over the responsibility.

But she was re-elected. When in 1996 her health started to fail seriously, due to her heart getting worn out by her love and action. She expressed the wish not to continue. On March 13th, 1997, the assembly of sisters elected Sister Nirmala to continue the beautiful work, for the love of Jesus.

On September 5, 1997, late in the evening around 9.30, Mother Teresa went to Heaven in the Mother house in Calcutta. She was totally depleted and worn out, having given herself completely, freely and unconditionally to the service of the poorest of the poor, for the love of Jesus.

A prayer: "Jesus, You made Mother Teresa an inspiring example of firm faith and burning charity, an extraordinary witness to the way of spiritual childhood, and a great and esteemed teacher of the value and dignity of every human life....May we follow her example in heeding your cry of thirst from the Cross and joyfully loving you in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor, especially those most unloved and unwanted. We ask this through the intercession of Mary, your mother and the Mother of us all."



A cartoon that says it all: "The greatest among you will be your servant, Matthew 23:11. Saturday Sun, Sept. 13, 1997, page 10.

her successor.

Sister Nirmala was elected by secret ballot last March, and Mother Teresa spent the remaining months of her life trying to ensure that her work would survive her death.

The experts are even called on to debate whether Mother Teresa would have liked the state funeral that India's government insisted she would have.

It was only the second time that someone who did not serve as a government leader had received a state funeral in the 50 years of Indian independence.

The first was Mahatma Gandhi, which says more than anyone can about India's reverence for Mother Teresa, who was born to Albanian parents in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

The sight of a simple nun who won the Nobel Peace Prize riding to her burial in a gun carriage and on the shoulders of soldiers does seem a contradiction.

She probably would have complained at the money that was spent in her name, just as she rejected the traditional celebratory banquet



Mother Teresa, sunken in prayer. A true warrior for the Cross of Christ.

when she won the Nobel prize in 1979 and insisted the funds be used to feed the poor.

U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton's entourage required three bullet-proof limousines flown in from Washington, along with an ample supply of mineral water and other necessities.

The Big Three U.S. television networks sent along the cortege's route for their broadcast booths, and that cost money, too.

But Mother Teresa's humility in life made her a favourite photo opportunity for those with much bigger egos, so it was in her death.

Ghana's President Jerry Rawlings, a former flight lieutenant who seized power in a coup and then transformed himself into a democrat, brought his own TV camera and photographer to the funeral.

And if any of the dignitaries listened carefully to Mother Teresa's funeral, they might take heed to the words of a reading from the scriptures which describes the day of reckoning for the powerful.

"In the time of the visitation, they will run like sparks through the stubble," it said "They will govern nations and rule over peoples and the Lord will reign over them forever."

As he praised Mother Teresa, the Pope's envoy did not ignore the fact that many disagree with her conviction that poverty can be a blessing and think she only salved a wound that must be cured.

"It has been said that Mother Teresa was aware of this criticism. She would shrug as if saying: 'While you go on discussing causes and explanations, I will kneel beside the poorest of the poor and attend to their needs.'"

In essence, she was saying that the debate is a luxury the poor cannot afford.

Since there's no argument that Mother Teresa helped people who needed it, why argue at all?

"The dying, the handicapped and the defenceless unborn, who are without a constituency in the utopian ideologies which have been trying to model the perfect world, need a loving human presence and a caring hand," he said.

Even some invited to her funeral, like Hillary Clinton, must have had problems with Mother Teresa's stands on birth control and abortion.

But no matter how much sense they make to others as a solution to poverty, unwanted children and the population bomb, Mother Teresa did not waver in opposing them.

"Perhaps the greatest message she has given to the world is the value and dignity of human life," Calcutta's Archbishop Henry D'Souza said in his eulogy.

"All human life is precious, in whatever

I've always said we should help a Hindu become a better Hindu, a Muslim become a better Muslim, a Catholic become a better Catholic. - Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa: "Prayer feeds the soul - as blood is to the body, prayer is to the soul - and it brings you closer to God. It also gives you a clean and pure heart."



Mother Teresa, her last journey. Borne by the steady hands of a military honour guard, the tiny woman known as the Saint of the Gutters goes to her final resting place. Mother Teresa - who brought comfort and dignity to the poorest of the poor - is carried along a Calcutta street in a flag-draped open casket to the convent where she lived and did her life's work. It is a simple burial place for one of the century's most towering figures. "This is the place she loved to be," said Sister Nirmala, her successor as head of the Missionaries of Charity. "This is her home." Photo - Toronto Star, Sunday, Sept. 14, 1997, pages D4-5.

condition we find it, from the womb, to the tomb."

Mother Teresa's body arrived in Netaji In-

- Toronto Star, Sunday, Sept. 14, 1997, page D1.

"Dear Lord, the Great Healer, I kneel before You. Since every perfect gift must come from You, I pray, give skill to my hands, clear vision to my mind, kindness and meekness to my heart. Give Me singleness of purpose, strength to lift up a part of the burden of my suffering fellowmen, and a true realization of the privilege that is mine. Take from my heart all guile and worldliness, That with the simple faith of a child. I may rely on You." The prayer, written by Mother Teresa, that every Missionary of Charity says before leaving for his or her Apostolate.

Mother Teresa - The Saint of the Gutters

“Mother Teresa - The Saint of the Gutters,”

by Esther Reimer Crowe, 2511-40 Homewood Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M4Y 2K2.

How did Mother Teresa, the most lauded woman in the world, and this wayward Mennonite ever meet, a prospect for which even Cardinals would vie? I'm sure it was not a quirk of fate - it was a few definitive, momentous “calls”, and obedience to those calls.

Mother's calls have already been delineated. In obedience to her first one, she went to India via the Loreto convent, donned in a black habit. She gave up that black habit for a humble blue bordered white sari spun by leprous hands to coincide with her second call, which was to leave the Loreto comforts and identify with the “Poorest of the Poor” on the merciless streets of Calcutta. She started the order of the “Missionaries of Charity” with only a few rupees but an indomitable faith in her possession. It was that faith, combined with beyond human determination, that ultimately whisked her to her world fame.

That Mother's calls and mine so disparate in nature and so far apart could suddenly come together seems almost mythical. But it was the same Almighty God who pieced the unlikely links together.

My calls were a lot more subtle. I had no career plans till one day in the corridor of a hospital in Winnipeg, a laboratory technologist nonchalantly swung her basket laden with needles and tubes into me. In a friendly gesture she asked, “Ever thought of becoming a Lab Tech?” I have my entire career to prove the dynamics of that moment. You could call it a

“call”!

Necessity compelled me to move to Toronto, followed by Saudi Arabia. I'm omitting a huge chunk of my life-story, although I know it is preciously relevant, just to fast-forward to my trek to India. I want to emphasize that my family support followed me wherever I went, “Step into the Red Sea, and the waters will recede,” they assured me.

While in Saudi Arabia my boss, knowing my desire to volunteer, called me into his office one day, and stated that he had an idea for me. He went on saying that Mother Teresa was just a hop away, and that his daughter had worked for her and thinks that Mother Teresa is the greatest! “You work hard, but it's worth it!” He didn't have to finish his sentence; the Red Sea receded on the first phrase! The “call” was unmistakable!



Esther Reimer Crowe with Mother Teresa in the Home of the Dying, Calcutta, India.

In 1995 upon my retirement, I was bound for Calcutta. From my first encounter with Mother Teresa, an inexplicable peace came over me. There were no words, but I knew I would never be the same.

door Stadium in a colonial gun carriage the British left behind. It was decorated with wreaths of white jasmine.

Eight soldiers served as Mother Teresa's pallbearers and eight more flanked them as they entered the stadium followed closely by Christ on the cross.

Her coffin was draped in the white, green and saffron Indian flag, and her rosary beads were tucked between the withered hands folded across her stomach.

The soldiers gently lowered the casket onto a white platform, took two steps backward and saluted.

As Indian musicians played tabla drums and a harmonium, sisters and brothers in the Order Mother Teresa founded filed in.

“Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis deo,” sang the nuns in the Missionaries of Charity choir.

The first gift in the offertory procession was a picture of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, carried by a brother.

A co-worker followed carrying a single candle, the light of love that Mother Teresa wanted every person to see.

An orphan girl delivered flowers in memory of Mother Teresa's hope that all children, even the unwanted, would be allowed to live.

A sister brought a pencil in the belief that

all people are but instruments in the hands of God.

A woman released from jail bore water as a reminder that Mother Teresa said we all thirst for love and freedom.

A leper offered wine, the gift of compassion.

A deaf person brought bread to show the hunger for human dignity.

And Sister Nirmala placed an empty chalice on the altar, a symbol of the empty hearts offered to God so that He might fill them with Mother Teresa's spirit.

After her body was sprinkled with holy water, and the invited guests had laid the wreaths at her casket, Mother Teresa's pall bearers carried her out of the stadium to the waiting gun carriage.

The casket was wrapped in clear plastic now because during the funeral mass, thunder clapped and lightning flashed, and it had be-come to rain.

“To the dying and the suffering, she brought her tender compassion, washing their wounds, easing their pain,” Archbishop D'Souza recalled.

“And one of them said so touchingly, ‘Mother, so long I have lived as an animal, now I am dying as an angel.’ She had restored

to him human dignity and worth.”

It was the same lesson Jesus preached, and Mother Teresa had unshakeable faith in a belief that many who respect her selflessness still find troubling: that poverty is good because it teaches us.

“She said the poor people are great people,” Archbishop D'Souza recalled in his eulogy.

“They can teach us many beautiful things. The greatest injustice we have done to our poor people is that we think they are good for nothing.”

“We have forgotten to treat them with respect, with dignity as a child of God. Often I think they were the ones to whom we owe our greatest gratitude. They teach us.”

Mother Teresa provided shelter, food and water for the people she called the poorest of the poor, but she always said there was something much more that all of us need, even the Son of her God.

“Jesus is thirsting for our love and this is the thirst of everyone, poor and rich alike,” Mother Teresa said.

“We all thirst for love of others, that they go out of their way to avoid harming us, and to do good to us. This is the meaning of true love, to give until it hurts.”

I chose to work at the “Home for the Dying”. It was Mother’s favourite center. On the first day when I entered the place and surveyed the patients, I was taken aback. I know my eyes were agog, but as I stood there gazing at these motionless bodies I suddenly saw them through Mother’s eyes. She insisted that every bed occupied held either a sick, abandoned, or a dying CHRIST! It hit me so vividly. I definitely saw CHRIST in the man who smiled the day his limb was amputated without anaesthetic - as a leper he felt no (physical) pain. I could see CHRIST in the puny bodies with stomachs protruding hideously from prolonged malnutrition and in those with gaping sores infested with maggots and definitely in those that were beyond recovery; how peacefully they slipped away! We had up to five deaths in one day. Can you imagine us volunteers bathing and enshrouding them as if they had just gone to sleep? It seemed completely natural at the time. Even accompanying them to the “ghat” (crematorium) was not daunting at all.

I remember those powerful images and I believe that is what makes me so restless now. I just can’t forget how these people expressed joy in their nothingness, and how I have succumbed to self-indulgence here. The contrast is so staggering. One “self” tells me to give all to the poor, but my other “self” is in perpetual battle, trying to dull that nagging feeling. Oh God let me always remain RESTLESS, never complacent, as long as we have the poor around us. “Why should I be cosy in bed, when others have no cover?” (quote, Mother)



Mother Teresa with an inmate in the Home of the Dying, Kalighat, Calcutta. Photo - Navin Chawla, Mother Teresa The Authorized Biography (Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1992), photo plates.



Mother Teresa. A prayer: “Mary, Mother of Jesus, give me your heart, so beautiful, so pure, so immaculate, so full of love and humility that I may be able to receive Jesus in the Bread of Life, love Him as you loved Him and serve Him in the distressing disguise of the Poorest of the Poor. Amen.” Printed as a gift to the Missionaries of Charity by the Knights of Columbus.

Not one day goes by that I don’t think of Mother. She was so lustrous in her simplicity. I see her most clearly the way I witnessed her in chapel, when her face was sunken in prayer (photo). Then just seconds later, that same face would light up like a sunbeam greeting hundreds of people that came pouring in to get her blessing. One of her best qualities was her ability to interact with all of them equally, and make everybody feel a unique self-worth. Those little seeds of self-worth are probably tall strong trees by now. Mother’s warm, personality was sprinkled with good humour and wit. Her philosophies were uncomplicated and fun. “Always keep a smile on your face for the poor!” That’s a must!

I was shocked when I received the “Governor General’s Caring Canadian Award” this year. Our Rt. Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, or somebody, made a huge mistake. On the other hand, over 20 awards, including the Nobel Prize, were conferred to Mother Teresa. She held a string of honorary University Degrees, including Cambridge and Harvard. When she received the Nobel Prize in 1979, she said that it would not lull her into thinking she deserved it! I shall always bear that in mind!

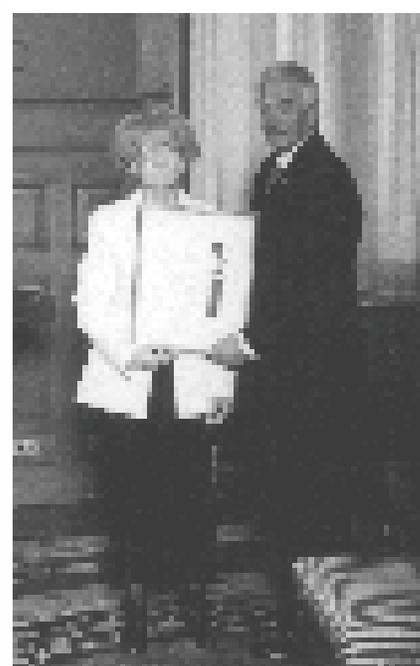
Here are Mother’s own words: “At the moment of death we will not be judged according to the number of good deeds we have done or by the diplomas we have received in our lifetime. We will be judged according to the love we have put into our work”. (Mother died in September 1997, and the world lost a Hero!)

By Esther Crowe, nee Reimer.

Errata

We welcome and encourage readers to take the time to draw errors and omissions to our attention. This can be done by a letter or fax to the editor (1-204-326-6917), or call the editor at 1-204-326-6454/e-mail delplett@mb.sympatico.ca. If you want to write but do not want your letter published, please so indicate. We will try to publish as many letters as we can. We really appreciate any and all assistance with corrections and clarifications as this is critical to the process of documenting our history.

1) An error was made on page 108 and elsewhere in *Preservings*, No. 21, in describing David Janzen, Hines Creek, Alberta, as a minister and an Ohm. David Janzen is not a minister and the reference to him in this manner was the editor’s error. Further on page 100, an anecdote about Ältester Johann Friesen (1869-1935), Neuenberg, West Reserve, Manitoba, was attributed to Gerhard Krahn, and should have been attributed to Aron Krahn of La Crete, Alberta. We sincerely apologize for these errors and appreciate when mistakes such as these are brought to our attention.



Esther Reimer Crowe receiving the Governor General’s “Caring Canadian Award” from James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, October 21, 2002, at Queen’s Park, Toronto, Canada.

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President's Report

By Ralph Friesen, 410-1281 Grant Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3M 1Z6. friehof@autobahn.mb.ca

As I am researching in preparation to write a history of the village of Steinbach (1874 to 1946) I puzzle over the dilemma of perspective. I wonder how much interpretation to provide, which facts to include, how to acknowledge that in some way whatever I write will be an unwitting comment on my own time and place, and even on myself, just as much as it will show the reader something about life in earlier times.

I have resolved to try to avoid comparisons. That is, comments along the lines of how primitive and backward people were back then, compared to how superior our life is now. The Steinbach pioneers took two days to get to Winnipeg using oxen, whereas now it's less than an hour by car, so we must be smarter, right?

Wrong. The pioneers had qualities of endurance, courage, adaptability and faith that were demonstrably deeper and stronger than what we can claim today. But I don't, either, want to denigrate the strengths and accomplishments of our own generation.

Despite the recent development of a more positive picture of conservative or traditional Mennonites, it is still a challenge, even for the sympathetic commentator, to refrain from condescending toward them, especially when it comes to their historical opposition to technological innovation. We ourselves have lived with such innovation all our lives, and take it for granted. We are not amazed when a new technology arrives; in fact, we have no way of keeping up with everything that's out there. Many of us persist in the false confidence that new technologies can provide solutions to the very problems that they create—giant oil spills on the ocean can be cleaned up, missiles can blow enemy missiles out of the sky, drugs can defeat depression, etc.

From that standpoint it seems absurd, now, that the first Kleine Gemeinde elder Klaas Reimer earned the disapproval of a number of the brethren in 1835 because his son invented a self-propelled wagon. Or that elder Reimer's grandson and namesake the merchant Klaas Reimer in Steinbach should have been criticized by his brothers when he bought a giant Watrous tractor steam engine in 1889 (stationary steam engines were the norm). Or that elders in Steinbach, Manitoba thought it unseemly when the elder's great-grandson Gerhard W. Reimer rode along the village street on a "high wheeler" bicycle in 1892.

And so it goes, with each generation. How ironic, given Steinbach's later evolution into "the Automobile City," was elder Peter R. Dueck's stubborn but futile battle against cars, the first of which had been introduced to the village by another Reimer descendant, J. R. Friesen, in 1910.

The remarkable inventor Isaac B. Plett was probably spared some criticism when he built a helicopter in 1917 just because the idea seemed so outlandish (this was 20 years before Sikorsky built the first machine of this type that would actually fly). Plett's machine, powered by a Model

T Ford engine, would not lift off the ground.

When a 25-year-old Steinbacher of Berghthaler background, Frank W. Sawatzky, started to take flying lessons in June of 1930, he was, as G. G. Kornelsen remarked in *Die Post*, a "trail blazer among Mennonites"—at least among the Mennonites of the East Reserve. His marriage to Annie, daughter of J. R. Friesen, did not ground him in

would show, and as is still true today. It is a moot question as to how many Mennonites or Steinbachers today would have a problem with that.

There are few Mennonites today who refuse to fly in airplanes for religious reasons. Even J. K. Dueck admitted that "it would do no harm if a child of God who was in a great hurry to get



Wm. P. Wiebe, left, and Frank W. Sawatzky, right, with Frank Brown, ex-World War One pilot who test-flew the first Pietenpol airplane on May 2, 1932. Photo - Reflections, page 149.

the literal sense of the word, anyway, even though she had Kleine Gemeinde roots.

Sawatzky and his brother-in-law William P. Wiebe actually built their own airplane, called the Pietenpol, in J. R. Friesen's garage in 1931. Sawatzky was at the controls of the Pietenpol when it participated in Steinbach's first air show in July of 1932. An estimated 6,000 spectators watched, applauding Steinbach's own pilot when he did a few maneuvers and landed safely.

Not everyone was pleased, however. J. K. Dueck of Morris wrote that he had read the story in the *Post* three times, because he could not believe that a show of this kind, with its military overtones (there were demonstration bombing runs using sacks of flour) could actually take place in a Mennonite community. "What would our forefathers say?" he demanded to know. "They founded this village. Mennonites left Russia to avoid military service and what now? Some of them live in close association with the world and still want to call themselves Christians. What if a war should break out again? Then we would see that almost every Mennonite or Steinbacher would abandon air shows and bombing and run to the preacher to get a registration card indicating he is a Mennonite, as we saw in 1917."

Whatever else we might now say in answer to J. K. Dueck, he demonstrated acuity in recognizing that aviation was associated with participation in war, as the events of World War II

somewhere took an airplane." But for those who retain a concern about the problem of the "world," and who see the value of at least some degree of separation from the world, the question "what would our forefathers say?" can be one part of the map we use in trying to live a Christian life. There are countless ways in which, whether through practicality or lack of faithfulness, we have departed from our ancestors' vision. That vision, of being separate from the world, was achieved at great cost. Even if it was not perfectly consistent, we owe it to ourselves and to our children at least to know what it was.

Our "narrow-minded" elders might have been off the mark in opposing bicycles or steam tractors or air shows. But if we understand their concern in the light of the effects of new technologies on our spiritual and moral well-being, it seems more justified today than ever.

Note: My wife and I will be moving to Nelson, B. C., this August. We will be driving, not flying, but must confess that our choice of transportation has nothing to do with participating or not in the things of this world. And your e-mail messages are welcome.

Attention Readers: The editorial opinions expressed in the editorial and/or elsewhere in *Preservings*, are those of the editor alone and do not reflect the views of the FMHS, its board of directors, and/or its membership.

Editorial

“The 1860 Brüdergemeinde Secession: Faith or Folly?” by Delbert F. Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0.
1(204)326-6454/fax (204)326-6719, (e-mail delplett@mb.sympatico.ca) websites: “www.hshs.mb.ca” and “www.mts.net/~delplett”

The entity known as the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in North America, which began in 1879, was formally dissolved in 2002. Similar to the Mennonite Church (the amalgamated General Conference and Mennonite Churches), the M.B. church structures have been reorganized as U.S. and Canadian entities. Such an event calls for sober reflection as well as celebration. One of the ways chosen to celebrate was the publication of a book, *For Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren in North America 1874-2002* capably edited by Paul Toews and Kevin Ens-Rempel, both of Fresno, California. *For Everything a Season* consists of 14 essays written by an excellent representation of M.B. writers from across North America. It is a coffee table book (11" x 8" inches), attractively illustrated. We will leave it to M.B. periodicals and media to review and evaluate the many well-written and thoughtful articles.

From the standpoint of the wider Mennonite community the most significant item is the opening essay by veteran academic and highly respected historian John B. Toews, recently-retired Professor of Church History and Anabaptist Studies at Regent College, Vancouver, B.C. His article “Mennonite Brethren Beginnings” (pages 3-13) is of particular importance as it attempts to articulate a response to the question, why was it necessary for the founders of the Brüdergemeinde or Mennonite Brethren movement not only to separate from the main body of the Mennonites, but also to denounce so harshly its entire validity as a Christian confession, entirely beyond all hope of redemption or salvation? A contemporary, Ältester Peter Toews of the Kleine Gemeinde, has reported statements by the Brüder categorizing the traditional Mennonite communion as a “devil’s service.”

The resulting split in 1860 was to have serious consequences for Mennonites, not only in terms of interference with the peaceful functioning of long established Christian Gemeinden, but also in terms of the untold personal pain, trauma and family and community dislocation caused by the Separatists (“Ausgetretene”), creating a division (chasm) which eventually spread through the entire Mennonite commonwealth across Imperial Russia - to some extent actually crippling the community.

In the introductory essay to *For Everything there is a Season*, Professor J. B. Toews quotes the 1860 document of secession which cites “...the decadent condition of the Mennonite brotherhood” as the grounds for separation and thus “for conscience sake” the separatists “...could no longer continue within the fellowship of the existing church” (page 3). This is, after all, the *Urtext* which later M.B. historians use - without any consideration as to its truthfulness - in many of their later writings. For Dr. Toews, the various moral and spiritual offenses dealt with by the Old Colony ministerial recorded in the 1837-1843 diary of

David Epp become the centre pieces of evidence to substantiate the Brüdergemeinde condemnation of the traditionalist Mennonites (see *Pres.*, No. 21, pages 134-7).

I believe, to the contrary, that a careful and unbiased reading of the Epp diaries reveals a documented record of a truly remarkably Christian and highly moral community. Considering that the Chortitza Colony by 1841 had a population of 6,029 souls (*Hildebrand's Zeittafel*, page 191), the transgressions indicated are in fact surprisingly few. One cannot but be moved by the sensitive and compassionate way in which the diary describes the renown Ältester Jakob Dyck (1779-1854) of the Chortitza Colony dealing with believers in spiritual crisis.

In textbook after textbook, Brüdergemeinde historians have echoed the self-serving epithets of moral and spiritual decay of the Kirchliche or traditionalist Mennonite congregations. Even the current website of the M.B. Conference makes the rather outlandish - and factually unsupportable - claim that “The Russian Mennonites faced social, economic, intellectual and spiritual stagnation.” To his enduring credit, Dr. J.B. Toews, in fact, appears to be making one of the first - albeit, rather unconvincing - attempts to establish the veracity of these allegations based on actual evidence. In reality, the charges of the Ausgetretene appear to be little more than the jargon typically associated with sectarian movements. (As one M.B. pastor recently remarked, these same statements might just as easily be uttered today by some of those forsaking the M.B. church in Winnipeg to join the Springs or Meeting Place churches, for example).

The real meaning of the accusations hurled at the Kirchliche (which I might note, the Kirchliche were always too Christian to respond to in kind), can only be found and understood by examining the code words and templates of Separatist Pietist religious culture which have their basis in entirely foreign concepts of what it means to be Christian, and completely misunderstood meanings of terms such as community, sin and salvation. What does it mean to be Christian? Does it mean, for example, to follow the teachings, commandments and narrative of Jesus Christ, or to obey the latest directives from the Separatist Pietist professors in Basel or Württemberg, or the most recent pronouncements from the reigning gurus at Moody Bible Institute or Dallas Theological Seminary? Faith after all is defined as “belief that is not based on proof.” What kind of faith is it to enunciate a state of certainty which has to be induced by psychological techniques such as positive cognitive conditioning (the constant repetition of catchphrases and slogans)?

These are questions of great importance to the wider Mennonite community. How do we evaluate the seemingly harsh and uncharitable Brüdergemeinde accusations in light of numerous reports by outsiders lauding the morality and faith

of the Mennonites and exalting them as models for all of Imperial Russia? I would suggest that the regurgitation of self-serving sectarian epithets, without historical and factual evidence, is extremely prejudicial and harmful to the wider Mennonite community, especially when resources are so desperately needed to witness to the truth of the Gospel and the narrative of Jesus Christ. I would suggest also that if the cruel sectarianism of the Brüder movement in 1860 was unjustified, then perhaps the comparable divisions being initiated today in Christo-centric Mennonite communities across North and South America by Fundamentalist “missionary” societies such as the Gospel Missionary Union, are equally unwarranted and reprehensible. Certainly, it is inappropriate for large, reputable religious organizations such as the M. B. Conference to continue to repeat and project untruthful characterizations of their own ancestors and faith predating 1860. As part of the sober reflection of their 125th anniversary celebrations, would it not be possible to cease and desist from what amounts to 140 years of slander and to make appropriate apologies for such conduct? After all, this is the 21st century. Surely the descendants of the Brüder can move beyond ritualized conversionism and legalistic requirements for salvation such as immersion baptism, and return to the Biblical teachings of our Flemish Anabaptist forebears, at least if they honestly profess to be adherents of the Mennonite faith.

Was the 1860 secession of the Brüder faith or folly? In this and future issues of *Preservings* we hope to publish various writings which may shed light on this question. In this issue, New Westminster historian Henry Schapansky reviews Dr. J. B. Toews' essay and places the birth of the Brüdergemeinde movement into the historical context of the Rudnerweider and Gnadenfelder Gemeinden of the Molotschna (see book review section). The Editor.

Of the secession of the Brüdergemeinde in Russia, J. J. Hildebrand writes: “September 15, 1862: The representatives of the Brüdergemeinde, received written permission....that they could settle on the Kuban River in Stawropol in the Caucasus....now they were able to have a separate settlement district alone for themselves, and where not a single one from the ‘devil-serving Babylonian church’ had a right to settle and where they without any hindrance could now work their salvation in all peace and brotherly unity. However, after a number of like-minded were present together here [in the Kuban],....It became clear that the roots of the evil - which they had until now believed to be in the ‘devil-serving Babylonian church’ - were within themselves as well and grew rapidly here on the Kuban,” *Hildebrand's Zeittafel*, page 212-3.

Guest Essay

Following Jesus - Christian Pacifism

“When Nations Rise Against Nations: Reflections on Christian Pacifism and Following Jesus,”
by Harry Loewen, 4870 Parkridge Pl., Kelowna, B.C., V1W 3A1.

Introduction.

On March 12, 295 AD., at Theveste in North Africa, young Maximillian, 21 years old, was brought before Proconsul Dion and ordered to serve in the military. Maximillian said, “My service is to my God. I cannot be a soldier for this world. I am a Christian.” Dion said, “There are Christian soldiers and they serve.” Maximillian said, “They know what they have to do. But I am a Christian and I cannot do what is evil.” Maximillian was executed for his disobedience to the state. For many mainline Christians, including Evangelicals, the New Testament teaching of peacemaking (pacifism, non-violence, nonresistance) is an ethical option and not a principle of faith. Some, including many Mennonites, go so far as to maintain that the peace issue is a peculiar teaching of the so-called “Historic peace churches” (Mennonites, Quakers, Brethren in Christ) and not an essential part of the Gospel message. For young Maximillian in the third century and for many others before and since then the peace witness was an important part of the Gospel for which they were willing to die.

In what follows I wish to reflect briefly on why I believe that the peace issue is central to the Gospel, indeed that it is at the heart of the Christian message. I base my thoughts on the extensive reading and thinking I have done in the area of Christian pacifism.

Jesus’ Teaching.

At the heart of New Testament pacifism is the love of God for humankind as expressed in Jesus’ life and teaching. God’s love includes forgiveness, reconciliation, peace and peacemaking. The love of God includes all people and extends to one’s enemies as well. Positively, to love means to seek the good of others; negatively, it means not to harm, injure, or kill fellow-humans. Not only did Jesus teach “love of enemies,” but he also demonstrated this love in human relationships and real-life situations. He did not resist when he was hated, beaten, tortured and killed. He told his disciples not to defend him with a weapon. Jesus even prayed for forgiveness for those who crucified him.

Can we imagine Jesus taking a gun and killing a human being? Or pushing a button to release a bomb to destroy a city and killing and mutilating thousands of men, women and children? If we claim to follow and imitate Jesus, how could we do otherwise? The teaching and example of Jesus must be, I would think, the basis of his followers’ faith and life.

Early Christians.

The first followers of Jesus took it for granted that as Christians they could not serve in the military. In fact, we have no direct or reliable evidence for the existence of a single Christian soldier until after 170 A.D. (Cadoux, pages 97,105). Why did the early Christians not serve in the Roman legions? Adolf von Harnack enumerates the various features of mili-

tary life which prevented Christians from serving: “The shedding of blood on the battlefield, the passing of death-sentences by officers and the execution of them by common soldiers, the unconditional military oath, the all-pervading worship of the Emperor, the sacrifices in which all were expected in some way to participate, the average behaviour of soldiers in peace-time, and other idolatrous and offensive customs—all these would constitute in combination an exceedingly powerful deterrent against any Christian joining the army on his own initiative.” Is it any wonder then that many Roman soldiers after their conversion to Christian faith abandoned the military profession and rather suffered martyrdom than continue serving Caesar?” (Durland, page 83).

There is little reason to believe that the nature of the military and soldiering has changed. The recruit still has to swear absolute allegiance to his country and flag and adhere to a strict military code. He is trained to hate and kill. And even in peacetime he is part of an institution in which Christian compassion and practice are not part of its image of force, destruction, and bloodshed. The only difference between the ancient Roman legions and armies in modern times is that destruction and killing today have become less personal and more remote, and our euphemisms for killing (“collateral damage” for death of civilians, and “Little Boy” and “Peacemaker” for atomic weapons of mass destruction) hide the evil of war.

Church Fathers.

Among the many early Christian peacemakers there were church leaders such as Tertullian (160-220), Origen (185-254), and Cyprian (200-258) who wrote against Christians’ participation in the military. By 200 A.D. there were Christians who served in the Roman legions, although the church still did not approve of the military profession. Tertullian, for example, wrote, “Shall it be made lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaimed that he who takes the sword shall also perish by the sword? How shall a Christian man wage war, nay, how shall he even be a soldier in peacetime, without a sword which the Lord has taken away? Christ in disarming Peter ungirt every soldier.”

Similarly Origen said about Christians that “no longer do we take the sword against any nations nor do we learn war anymore since we have become the sons of peace, for the sake of Jesus who is our leader.” Origen said Christians need not fight or go to war for their kings. The only way for Christians to fight for their government is with their prayers. He stated that “none fight better for a king than we do. We do not indeed fight under him, although he require it, but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army, an army of piety, by offering our prayers to God.”

Tertullian, Origen and other early church fathers demanded that converted soldiers leave the military,

for the Christian faith and service in the army were incompatible with one another. Thus while some Christians in the early part of the third century served as soldiers, the majority-view of the church was pacifist.

Just-Unjust War.

When Emperor Constantine early in the fourth century made Christianity an official religion of the empire, the church abandoned pacifism and Christians began to enlist in the Roman legions in greater numbers. In time (416 AD) the unthinkable happened, non-Christians were barred from the military and only Christians were allowed to serve in the army! Church leaders such as Athanasius, the so-called “father of orthodoxy,” Ambrosius of Milan, and Saint Augustine all argued that it was not only lawful, but praiseworthy, for Christians to kill in war. For the first time “the meek and peaceful Jesus became a God of battle, and the cross, the holy sign of Christian redemption, a banner of bloody strife.” The kind of Christianity that Constantine symbolizes, writes Jean-Michel Homus, “is also the kind of Christianity against which Christ himself stands as an uncompromising accuser.” (Homus, page 212).

It was Bishop Augustine and later Thomas Aquinas who developed the so-called just-unjust war theory. Augustine formulated this theory as follows: “In general war is wrong; war is contrary to the gospel of peace. But there may be conditions under which war may not be a violation of the gospel, but may be an act of mercy and love. When these conditions are faithfully fulfilled during the entire war, then the war is not morally wrong” (McSorley, page 82). The most important conditions of the just-war theory include the following: War can only be declared and waged by a legitimate government; war must be the last resort; a good intention must guide the side declaring war; and the war must allow for the protection of the innocent and civilians. Which modern wars, it might be asked, have ever fulfilled these conditions?

While well-intentioned, the just-war theory hardly ever worked in practice. Rulers and governments always maintained that their wars were just, and in the name of justice, or God, or freedom, or democracy, or country—they destroyed, maimed and killed. And believers were caught in the middle. They prayed for victory for their own side and they killed fellow-believers on the “enemy” side. Hardly ever did rulers or governments exhaust all possible means of settling their problems before going to war. Moreover, the innocent civilians, especially old people, women and children, were usually the real victims of war.

The just-unjust war theory presupposes that wars can be unjust. The question then is, will the proponents of this theory refuse to fight when they know that the war is unjust? Or will they like Martin Luther argue that when there is a question of doubt about the justness of the war they will give the ruler or the government the benefit of the doubt and go to war?

Historically, since the time of Constantine, many Christians went to war, fighting crusades or national and dynastic wars, without much thought about the possibility that the war might not be justified. John Howard Yoder challenged the proponents of the just-unjust war theory as follows: "If the tradition which claims that war may be justified does not also admit that it could be unjustified, the affirmation is not morally serious. A Christian who prepares the case for a justified war without being equally prepared for the negative case has not soberly weighed the *prima facie* presumption that any violence is wrong until the case for an exception has been made" (Yoder, 1984, page 82).

The Peace Principle.

During the Reformation of the 16th century there was a serious attempt by reformers to restore a biblical faith and values which during the Middle Ages had been forgotten or lost. The cry of the reformers was: "back to the sources," including the Bible and original Christianity. Principles such as "by faith alone," "by Scriptures alone," the "priesthood of all believers," and following Jesus in life were restored and emphasized.

For the "radical reformers," the so-called Anabaptists, restoration also included Christian pacifism and nonviolence in all areas of life, something that both Catholics and Protestants did not stress. Similar to the medieval Waldensians before them, the peaceful Anabaptists believed and taught that followers of Jesus must demonstrate their faith in practical discipleship, including love and nonviolence toward all people, even love of enemies in all areas of life. For them "the sword was outside the perfection of Christ," according to their earliest Confession of 1527. For this belief and practice the Anabaptists suffered and died by the thousands at the hands of their Catholic and Protestant rulers. In fact, some 4000 were killed in the 16th century alone.

Menno Simons, after whom Mennonites are named, in all his writings not only emphasizes the nonviolent nature of Christianity, but he also speaks of his co-religionists as peacemakers. Followers of Jesus are obedient to their governments, they pray for their rulers and their country, but they do not enlist in the military. Menno appeals to "Christian" rulers not to persecute those who seek to follow the way of peace. He even goes so far as to question the moral validity of capital punishment because it entails the shedding of blood of a human being.

The Peace Witness.

As time went on and Mennonites entered the various occupations and professions, they adhered to their biblical-historical principle with varying degrees of success and failure. In the Netherlands the Doopsgezinte soon abandoned their peace position and served in the army. In Prussia some Mennonites began to serve in the military as early as the Franco-Prussian war (1870-71). In the First World War many Mennonites served in the military. And when Hitler came to power in Germany, Mennonites gave up their peace position voluntarily and in the Second World War fought for Nazi-Germany alongside their German comrades. Even German historians lament the loss of pacifism among the traditional peace-loving Mennonites (Barbara Beuys, pages 528-529). In Nazi-Germany there were some Christians who died for their Christian pacifism, but there was not a

single Mennonite among them (Roehm, II, pages 12-13).

In Russia Mennonites were "privileged" not to have to serve militarily because of their faith. In the First World War they served as medical orderlies in lieu of serving in the army. However, after the Revolution of 1917 when law and order broke down some of them, to protect their property and loved ones, formed self-defense units against the Makhno anarchists and fought them with weapons (Toews, 1982, pages 79-94). There were, however, many Mennonites in Russia who rather suffered loss and death than joining the *Selbstschutz*. Mennonites later believed that in forming self-defense units they had betrayed their historic peace position.

Similarly Mennonites in Canada during the Second World War were divided with regard to military service. About 5000 Mennonite young men were classified as conscientious objectors (COs), doing alternative service in various camps. Some were involved in medical services, healing people rather than inflicting wounds. An equal number of young men enlisted in the Canadian forces, believing that it was their duty to serve their country in wartime. Some of these Mennonite soldiers, although not all, had given up their Mennonite-Christian faith. When they returned home to their communities they were not always treated well by their churches.

During the last fifty years Mennonites have become increasingly assimilated in North American society and adopted its values, including in many cases its religious values. In the process the Mennonite-Christian faith tradition is suffering a decline and even loss, especially the peace position by which Mennonites were known for centuries. Many individual Mennonites and congregations no longer feel comfortable with their Mennonite label or distinctives, believing that they are not important faith principles. As a result they remove the Mennonite name from their churches and no longer teach and stress the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith principles. They believe that for the sake of greater unity and cooperation with Evangelicals, outreach to non-Mennonites, and church growth, they must deemphasize those faith issues which non-Mennonite churches don't stress (John E. Toews, pages 178-9). Many congregations cease to be Mennonite.

Mennonite Brethren cooperation with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has made it for MBs more difficult to maintain their historic peace principle. MBs may have to rethink their relationship with the EFC and other evangelical groups which support militarism. Editor Harold Jantz in an editorial in the *M.B. Herald* some time ago wrote: "... if we are linked to the justification of militarism which is now sweeping through evangelical circles, we may need to ask whether we shouldn't withdraw. The cause of Christ around the world is being hurt by the arguments for force, by the dependence upon the power of the state, which evangelicals in America are now displaying."

Ironically, there are today an increasing number of non-Mennonite Christians who are appropriating the gospel of peace--while many Mennonites are abandoning the peace position.

Christian Pacifism.

Opponents of Christian pacifism argue that the peace position is not practical, that it flies in the face of natural self-preservation and protection of one's

life and property, and that the lofty ideals of the Sermon on the Mount could not be applied to real-life situations but were meant for some future kingdom of God. Most importantly, the opponents claim, the peace issue is not a faith principle that is part of Christian discipleship, but an option, a mere matter of interpretation, an unimportant add-on to our Mennonite theology (Weaver, *Pres.*, No. 19, 20 and 21).

Jesus and the early Christians certainly would have disagreed. They taught and demonstrated love, peace and peacemaking in their daily living, and they were willing to suffer for this teaching of Jesus. The followers of Jesus, including the Waldensians and the Anabaptists, took the Sermon on the Mount seriously, seeking to realize God's Kingdom in their life and time. In our own time there are writers (including non-Mennonites such as Peter Brock and Thomas P. Sockrat) who have dealt with the question of pacifism seriously, showing the impact that peace groups like the Mennonites, Amish, Hutterites, and some individual Christians in main-line churches have had on western and Canadian society (see Brock and Sockrat). The peace teaching of the Gospel is not a peculiarity of Mennonites only, but applies to all those who claim to be followers of Jesus (Yoder). To treat the peace teaching of the Gospel as an option in Christian discipleship, is to misunderstand the love of God for all humankind in today's world.

Practical Considerations.

Speaking practically, Christian pacifism does not mean standing by passively in the face of evil and violence. I will and must protect myself or my family when faced with threats or danger (Matt. 24:43). I hope and pray, however, that I will have the wisdom to seek for options that will prevent evil from taking place and I will not have to resort to violence and killing. Here we might pray in earnest: "Lord, lead us not into temptation."

Nor does pacifism mean the abandonment of all law enforcement. There is a difference between soldiers who are trained to hate and kill in war and the work of policemen who need to uphold law and order in society (Rom. 13:4). But even law-enforcement officers (called "soldiers" in Lu.3:14) are told not to abuse their power, not to intimidate anyone, not to accuse anyone falsely, and to be content with their wages. Soldiers in war not only intimidate and use force and violence, but they also destroy and kill in the name of their government, and sometimes even in the name of God and Christianity.

When it comes to being faithful to the Gospel message, a Christian will have to choose the Kingdom of God over the dictates of Caesar, as the Apostles did (Acts 4:19-20), as young Maximillian did, and as many other faithful believers have done through the centuries. In the final analysis, the issue of Christian pacifism is not so much an issue of faith or creed as it is a belief in God's love for all humankind and our commitment to love God and his creatures. Could it be that many Christians today, including many Mennonites, have lost their "first love" (Rev.2:4) and with it their "love of enemies"? The relationship between the two may be closer than we think.

As the war clouds darken again, Christians are called upon to be messengers of peace and love in a broken world.

Letters

We welcome letters to the editor and appreciate feedback from our readers. We welcome criticism of articles and editorial commentary. We will assume that all letters and e-mails can be published, unless a contrary intention is indicated. We reserve the right not to publish any letter/e-mail or not to respond. We reserve the right to return, discard, edit and/or shorten letters/e-mails as deemed necessary. E-mails should not contain attachments. All letters and e-mails should contain the writer's name, address and home phone number, although a street address will not be published if this is requested. Letters should be short (preferably under 300 words) and to the point.

Box 20252, Steinbach
Man., R0A 2T1

December 23, 2002

Mainstream evangelical, fundamentalist, or Billy Graham religion has been likened to the bar code on items we purchase at a store which only the computer can read. In this religion the saved person has a bar code which only God can read but which is invisible to the rest of us. God thus knows that this person is saved but the rest of us see no difference in their lives; they may be good, moral and decent people but then so are a lot of atheists, Muslims, and Buddhists or even lukewarm pew warmers. This is a religion of correct verbal behaviour coupled to an afterlife theory and to varying emotional overtones.

I think that we can also use the analogy of the switch, which perhaps brings things into sharper focus than does the bar code. Thus each of us has an on-off switch, thus saved-unsaved, though only God can see it. If you die with the switch in the saved position you go to Heaven, either immediately or after a soul sleep up to the second coming. But if you die with the switch in the unsaved position you go to Hell, immediately or after your soul sleep, or in a few variations to annihilation. You are conceived with your switch in the saved position but in early childhood, because of the need for "child evangelism", the switch moves over to the unsaved position until such time as Billy Graham or one of his many colleagues can invoke their Wizard of Oz type of Jesus and jerk the switch over to the saved position.

But a rather different type of switch theory can be useful, that of the switch on a lamp where when it is turned on there is a clearly visible effect and of course the readers of this letter are fully aware of some of the well known biblical references to this type of switch.

I do not think that the Anabaptist Hans Denk can be identified with Pietism. It was Denk who said that no one can know Jesus unless he follows him in life, suggesting the type of lamp switch alluded to above. I am not aware that present day Pietists or their admirers identify with Denk.

"Jay Delkin"

Received Oct. 20, 2004

Keep up the good work in "Preservings". A great collection of interesting material. Best of wishes for success in the future.

I. Hildebrand, R.R.3, Box 30, Winkler, Manitoba, R6W 4A2.

P.S. While I enjoy theory in Mennonite history, please don't let your excellent historical magazine get too caught up in like articles. The pioneer stories, etc. are better by far....

I think you outdid yourself this time [Issue 20] - the pleasant colouring and excellent articles contained in your June issue. I am still reading and rereading it.

Thank you for running the small note about the picture "Grace" on page 77 (perhaps you could delete the "r" from my name?). Thanks!...

Clysta Buerge, 6501 Springhill Dr. NW, River Valley Br, Albany, Oregon, 97321.

Editor's Note: Thank-you also for sharing with our readers about the commemorative Netherland's Menno Simons stamp. You will have seen by now, that I referred to this in Issue 21, page 52. Sorry about the name misspelling.

From: Herman Rempel
<hrempe@mb.sympatico.ca>

Sent: Monday, December 23, 2002 7:17 PM
Subject: the pamphlet

Henry Unger passed on to me the pamphlet "Are You Saved?" For a number of years I subscribed to your magazine/journal and always appreciated it and mostly agreed with your views. However, you do come on somewhat strong at times. Maybe that is needed. At any rate Del I have a desire to put this into my computer and distribute it to selected individuals if I get your permission. I am getting on in years and no longer have the energy to be really involved in projects that take a lot of energy.

Herman from Morden Merry Christmas!!

Editor's Note: Yes, by all means distribute it. The tract was distributed as an insert in the December *Preservings*. It was most directly inspired by a Baptist preacher Sullivan who is "roowsing" around Winkler like some mad peacock with all manner of lies and deceit trying to see how many decent Mennonite kids he can seduce and mislead into converting themselves over to his pathetic southern-fried dispensationalistic-ritualistic-conversionistic-obsessed, fear-based religion built on dead Calvinistic traditions which could only be considered Christian in the most general cultural sense of the word. This individual is obviously a sociopath, without regard for the truths of the Holy Gospel or for the feelings of the families he is tearing apart. He outperforms even our own Jakob Funk and Dick Harms. Even in the Soviet Union our Kirchliche brethren and sisters in Christ were sometimes betrayed by Baptists and our churches sabotaged by their doubledealings.

Thank-you for your wonderful Low German dictionary "*Kjenn jie noch Plautdietsch?*" which has blessed so many people and which is now also, I believe, available on line.

From: Henry & Betty Unger
Sent: Saturday, December 21, 2002

Good Morning,

Just got the *Preservings* - excellent as usual. Thanks for the additional copies. Will be working on Elias background for you - have not been able to do much yet - hope the new year brings more energy. As ever, Henry Unger #105-55 Gaslight Drive, Morden, Man., R6M 2G4

Editor's Note: May God be with you as you and Betty deal with serious health problems. Our prayers are with you.

Date: Sat, 28 Dec 2002.
From: Vince & Emily Rempel
<e.rem@sasktel.net>

Subject: Tract in No. 21 Dec 02 *Preservings*.

Dear Delbert: thank you for your succinct bible-grounded expose of the "Morsavians" in our society. I will be pleased to pass it on to my grandchildren (and their parents, of course)! After making a copy, that is, to leave enclosed in #21 *Preservings*. The message struck home, as I recall feeling guilty every time I resisted the "call" at such things as revival meetings. Finally, when I was about 19, I realized that I had absorbed the essence of Christian faith at my mother's knee and that I was quite ready for baptism in preparation for marriage at age 23. Thanks again, and for the exposition of the "American Taliban" in *Preservings* articles and editorials.

Vincent W. Rempel, Box 1617, Swift Current, Sask., S9H 4G5

Dec. 26, 2002
Box 1674, Battleford
Sask., SOM OEO

Many thanks for *Preservings* and for the most comprehensive coverage on Ältester Isaak Dyck, an outstanding Mennonite church leader. My father Isaak J. Nickel (1895-1960) was baptized by Ältester Dyck upon confession of his faith in the late 1915-20 period, or possibly the early 1920s, am not sure exactly when.

Sincere Christian greetings. "John P. Nickel"

Dec. 21, 2002
411 Vahalla Dr., Winnipeg

...Thanks for the "Preservings." The article by Anna Dyck Klassen was very interesting. The article by Dr. Neufeld is very good. It's tone is so peaceful, calm, didactic, Biblical, convincing. Wish you all the best for Christmas and 2003.

Ben Hoepfner.

Editor's Note: Again, our sincere thanks for the many thousands of hours you have spent translating the precious writings of our blessed forebears. Through your work and diligence their thoughts and spirituality can continue blessing others.

*From: "Ed Klassen" <tempo829@mts.net>
Subject: Evangelical Baptism
Date: Fri, 3 Jan 2003.*

I am a new reader of "Preservings" having read No.s 20 and 21. I find that your writings reflect a depth of theology, faith and community that is very refreshing and positive. I was particularly impressed by the article in No. 20 "Evangelical Baptism" and the enclosed tract, "Are you saved?" If possible I would be interested in purchasing copies of both pamphlets.

These articles bring back memories of my high school days, and the spiritual arrogance of some of my peers who relegated us to a second class status, since we practised baptism by pouring. Do you really believe that a few sprinkles of water will wash away your sins? In those days it was required that immersion be performed in a flowing stream. To their credit some of these people have since apologised for their narrow stance.

Because of this pressure I was compelled to study this issue for my own peace of mind. Our first resource of course is the Bible, Old and New Testament. The New Testament refers to two Old Testament baptisms in 1 Cor.10,1-4, Ps.77,17 and 1 Peter 3, 20-22. For those that dogmatically assert that "baptizo" can only be understood as immersion, may want to note that the children of Israel and Noah's family were seen to be baptized, while the unbelievers were not baptised but immersed.

I have yet to find an illustration in the Scriptures where one person immerses another person. To dramatise my point, I offered my Jehovah Witness visitors, \$1,000.00 for one such example. Their initial elation quickly evaporated, when after a few weeks of intensive research, that they could not find such an example. The imagery both in the OT. and NT. of ritual washings, purification and atonement rites, anointing and Spirit baptism, are all performed sprinkling or pouring. At this point it should be noted that all the major cults have embraced immersion as the only valid mode of baptism.

My research also led me to a church that equates salvation with immersion. One of their pastors informed me that they recognise no immersion except if it is performed by one of their pastors. He told me that they have infiltrated entire Baptist congregations, re-immersing them to bring them into the true church of Christ. Sadly the mandate of the church is corrupted and the witness of Christ is damaged, while they are openly cannibalizing each other, based on their narrow legalistic whims. Maybe the law of sowing and reaping is at work here.

Finally, the more recent findings in the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating back to the time of John the Baptist, are quite instructive, there is a description of some of their ritual washings by sprinkling and they refer to them as baptisms. Once

more I commend you for hi-lighting this important and timely issue.

Erdman (Ed) Klassen, Box 549, Carman Man. Ph.(204) 745-2736.

Editor's Note: You make a good point that those who preach that immersion baptism is a necessary pre-condition for salvation are almost never Christo-centric Christians. They typically have secondary agendas and teachings which are equally unbiblical such as ritualistic conversionism, promotion of American civil religion, etc.

*Berlin, Deutschland
Dezember 2002*

Sehr geehrter Herr Plett!

Bitte um Verzeihung für die Störung. Möchte mich herzlich bedanken für das Buch "Diese Steine". Unsere Vergangenheit, unsere Geschichte - und die Wahrheit!!!

Ich bin eine Russlandmennonitin, geboren, aufgewachsen dort, Verbannung, alles hell im Gedächtnis. Jetzt mit Familie in Berlin, Gott sei Dank! Sind glücklich und zufrieden. Die Vergangenheit ist eine lange traurige Geschichte. Mein Heimatdorf, Grunfeld, Seite 474. Leider schon alt und krank. Das Buch ist für mich ein teures Geschenk von Cousine in Canada.

Wir haben hier Verwandte, die keine Ahnung von unserer Vergangenheit haben. Also, darf ich noch um 1-2 Bücher bitten für die ?? Bitte!! Wenn ja, dann senden Sie es bitte auf die Adresse meiner Nichte in Canada: Elsie Reimer, Box 304, RR4, Saskatoon, SK, S7K 3J7, auch die Kostenumernahme.

Im Voraus meinen herzlichen Dank!
Wünsche ein gesundes, gesegnetes Neues 2003 Jahr!

Mit herzlichem Gruß und alles, alles Gute.
Fr. Dyck....

*258 Meilicke Rd.
Saskatoon, SK
January 23, 2003*

I am a great-granddaughter to Isaak Dyck. I appreciate the articles on his life, ministry, and family. Some of the stories I had heard before, but many were new to me. I am happy to have them compiled and recorded for our family. Thank you.

I would like to comment on the question, "Is the future for Mennonites Evangelical?" My husband, a Mennonite pastor, has a plaque hanging in his office that says: "True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant./ It clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry./ it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute./ it serves those that harm it..." Menno Simons 1539. From this quote it would appear that Menno Simons considered himself evangelical.....

After over 30 years of relating to the evangelical community, I cannot identify with the extremes mentioned in the article. To me, being an evangelical means acceptance of the authority and inspiration of Scripture, and salvation through Jesus by faith in Him. Is the future for Mennonites evangelical? I believe it began there with



The Bush War II. "Baptism under fire." Born-again Evangelicals bring Christianity to Iraq with tanks and missiles. Photo - Time, March 17/03, page 38. Providence College, Otterburne, Manitoba, with two-thirds of its students of Mennonite background, "...had the sobering, first-time ever experience of sending off a student with prayers and best wishes, into a war," Carillon, April 17/03, page 2A. I'm sure Rev. Ben D. Reimer and other alumni will be proud.

Menno Simons. Sincerely, Eleanor Braun.

Editor's Note: I define genuine Evangelicals as those who center their faith and life upon the narrative, teachings and commandments of Jesus Christ (the Holy Gospel). This was the faith espoused by Menno Simons, St. Francis of Assisi (Pres., No. 18, page 58), and, before them, the Apostles. The world is full of self-styled Evangelicals who claim the name because they find some verse in the Bible that suits their disposition, and then they build a theology and religious culture around this. Evangelicalism, of course, is a specific historical socio-cultural movement grounded in American Civil Religion and Calvinist ideology. With their incitement and enthusiastic promotion of the Bush War II, Evangelicals have reached a new zenith in their campaign for world conquest with a kingdom to be headquartered in Jerusalem. We recognize that there are millions of fine individual Evangelical Christians, but one could aptly describe the so-called Evangelical Church as the Republican Party at prayer with socio-economic policies and philosophies at the right hand of the political spectrum, cleverly projecting their influence on the domestic front to defend their bastion of privilege and affluence. We congratulate them on the success of their expansionary operations but to call the movement Evangelical, in the sense of being particularly biblical, would be a perversion of the English language.

Feb. 7, 2003
Box 720, Altona
Manitoba, ROA OBO
tedf@friesens.com

Just want to comment on some of the articles in *Preservings* #21, December, 2002... Again I am amazed at the amount of material, and time spent in editing, gathering and researching much of the material. You are truly to be commended also for faithfulness in preserving our heritage.

The articles that I found of personal interest are on the 75th Anniversary of the founding of Menno Colony, Paraguay. This was a remarkable event. Memorable because of its history and its development from a primitive state to a modern one which has most of the amenities of modern civilization. It is a story of hard work, faithfulness, and cooperation. Not easy history, but one that has lessons for us as well.... There have been several books and videos produced for the occasion. If anyone is interested, they could contact me....

The second item of interest was the report on the Altona District Heritage Centre. Thanks for putting that in....

I was also very much interested in the articles on Mexico. That history has some analogy to the Paraguayan one, but with some differences. Their leaders were perhaps more interested in the preservation than in progress. However, it was good to see that they are moving ahead on many fronts. Both areas, indeed all of Latin America, needs the support of Canadian and U.S. Mennonites.

And thank you Al Reimer for writing that absorbing and memorable history of growing up in Steinbach....

And last but not least the two articles on Low German are very interesting indeed. First of all the one on Russian Loanwords in the Low German language and secondly Russian words in Mennonite Low German by Reger and Delbert Plett. Both of them had to have an understanding of the language in its present day form....

So each issue is a treasure and one that I always look forward to. Thanks again Del for your unflagging dedication to a preservation of the verities of our heritage. Sincerely, Ted E. Friesen

23 Feb 2003
606-1610 College Ave.
Regina, Sask., S4P 1B7
<tony.nickel@sasktel.net>

Subject: Missional rather than Evangelical/Fundamentalist

It's been a real pleasure browsing through the back and current issues of *Preservings*. It is very affirming to know that not everyone in "Mennonite circles" has fallen into the evangelicalism/fundamentalism theological trap. The more I read of Weaver's articles and books and your editorials, the more clearly I see just how "right" my own Father lived his life in tune with the reign of God.

Weaver clarifies salvation like this: "Salvation is to be free from those evil forces and to be transformed by the reign of God and to take on a life shapedmarked...by the story of Jesus,

whose mission was to make visible the reign of God in our history." J. Denny Weaver, *The Non-violent Atonement*, 2001. My response is simply, "Yes!"

Your editorial (Is the future for Mennonites Evangelical?) in the latest edition of *Preservings* is, I believe, very timely. Although I must say that I enjoyed reading your 8000 word essay, it is also clear to me that there is another audience, one much larger, who need to hear your message. Now, how to say "it" in perhaps 500 words, or perhaps even less, perhaps much less, and in words inviting to all those believers (Mennonite some of them) who I believe are simply waiting eagerly to hear the wonderful story of God's reign in a way that may empower them to "pass it on by living it." But then again, it would only be a start. I believe it was my good friend Albert Schweitzer who a hundred years ago said in the culmination of his book, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus": "He (Jesus) comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words: 'Follow thou me!' and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is."

Still, I'd like to encourage you to write, or have written, a position statement in language that invites us to renew our 500-years of experience in a continued commitment to the reign of God.

Thank you for your faithfulness. God continues to bless you and many, many others through you. "Tony Nickel"

Editor's Note: Ironically Albert Schweitzer's, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, was a book that greatly influenced me as young teenager. I agree that the truth's of Jesus need to be passed on in more popular venues. Perhaps someone is out there with both the gifts and access to our media who could develop such writings. It would indeed be a blessing to many.

January 19, 2003
#1-9723 103rd Avenue
Fort St. John, BC, V1J 2G9

My people came to Canada in the 1870s. I enjoy seeing pictures of life in the Ukraine, also of their universities and factories. There were also some beautiful pencil or ink drawings. It amazes me how these letters and pictures have survived with all the harassment and moving. This is all a part of our history that should be preserved for our future. In the early '40s I left Manitoba for B.C. and have lived there ever since. I do have family in Manitoba with whom I've kept in contact, especially since I retired.

The contributions of J. Denny Weaver in the December 2002 issue on the "basis of non-violence" and Dr. John H. Neufeld on the "Understanding of conversion" are a great help for my understanding of these issues. I'm thankful that there are still scholars and teachers teaching the

basics of the Mennonite faith.

I'm glad that you took the time to visit the Mennonite colonies in South America and Mexico. The press usually gives us a very negative view of their lifestyle. All I ever heard at the time of their migration was about the English language. In later years we heard about incest and in Mexico drug dealing. I'm pleased to read from your reports and articles that a lot of good things are happening. The good and the positive doesn't make good reading in the newspapers.

A friend of mine sends me his reports on the Mennonite activities written in "The Canadian Mennonite". In it are reports on wheat donations, food and clothing donations, besides all the work M.C.C. is doing. This doesn't hit the press either.

It saddens me that some of our ultra modern churches are diluting their faith and making it more politically correct. Like in a building, you can make some re-arrangement in the rooms, but you can't remove the bearing walls.

I'm enclosing my subscription renewal. Keep up the good work.

With respect, "John B. Loewen"

985 Augusta Farms Rd.
Stuarts Draft, VA 24477
Jan. 29, 2003

Please note the change of address as it had formerly been Harrisonburg, VA.

Your publications are very informative and helpful.

Re: *Preservings* #21, page 2 "The Ältester..." In the third paragraph you say "always... democratic vote." I was curious, would the vote for action or change have needed only a 51% majority? In the Amish church two peoples' votes can keep a change of customary procedure from being executed. The article is excellent and insightful. Thank you very much!

May God bless you richly in the work!

Your brother in Christ, James D. Hershberger
Editor's Note: It is important to recognize and respect that each Gemeinde establishes its own Ordnung (it must, of course, be in accordance with the Holy Gospel), although historically this best happens in groups or clusters or districts of congregations. A truly democratic vote should never result in the tyranny of the majority, nor should a small vocal or obstinate minority be able to defeat indefinitely the will of the Holy Spirit.

Box 255, Steinbach,
Man., ROA 2A0
Feb. 23, 2003

This is to inform you that I will not be renewing my subscription to *Preservings*. It is with mixed feelings that I do this. I find your publication very interesting, as far as historical events and people are concerned. However I am unable to accept your continual criticism of other Mennonite groups than those that you champion. After reading the latest copy, where in response to a letter from Jack Klassen you in so many words suggest poisoning a certain group of people, I

think you have gone too far in your expressed hatred of others who do not conform to your ideas. I find it hard to understand that a person in your position would stoop to that level in your response to a letter from a reader.

“Helmut Friesen”

935 Windermere Ave.
Winnipeg, Man., R3T 1A2
May 11, 2003

I am remitting \$20.00 for my June and Dec. issues of *Preservings*. There is such a wealth of information in your publications that articles lend themselves to repeated readings. We enjoy the publication immensely - food for an inquiring mind. Sincerely, “Arthur Toews”

Goshen, Indiana, 46526
April 1, 2002

Thanks for sending me the three back issues of *Preservings*, an ambitious and worthwhile undertaking. I appreciate the mix of history and theology, and I am glad to see you take after those who are all too willing to trade our theology or “Nachfolge”, costly discipleship, for a mess of popular Churchianity.

It is an ongoing battle, all the more in “Busch-America”! Our people should read the *Martyrs’ Mirror* now, discover what our spiritual ancestors stood for, were willing to die for!.....

Looking forward to working with you, Jan Gleysteen

Editor’s Note: We are honoured to hear from. You will note that since issue No. 12, we have carried your insightful quote as our *Preservings* motto? Thank-you for your many contributions to preserving our faith and heritage.

April 7 2003,
680 Buckingham Rd.
Winnipeg Man., R3R 1C2

As always, we enjoyed Al Reimer’s story in the December 2002 issue of *Preservings*. which included a picture of my Father, Johann S. Kehler in his military uniform (“The Fiey-Dokta,” *Pres.*, No. 14 ,pages 87-88).

I have since been asked, mostly by my cousins, if that was an authentic photo, and if Father a member of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church really had joined the Military. So I thought it might warrant an explanation.

As a young man Father liked to travel....and ended up in Lethbridge Alberta where he again found employment. Since this was possibly 1915, WW I was still raging in Europe, and the army was desperate for recruits. As fate would have it, Father was out walking, when he was approached by a Military Recruiting Team, who enquired as to why he was not in uniform, to which he replied that he was a Mennonite and therefor exempt from bearing arms.

I guess this excuse was completely foreign to them and they marched him over to the recruiting office, where he was inspected, injected, selected, and inducted, thus became an instant soldier in the Canadian Army to fight for King and Coun-

try.

Father then contacted his father Jacob K [Berliner] Kehler, who asked their Church Minister to accompany him to rescue his son.They armed themselves with documentation to prove his exemption, and headed for Giroux to catch a train to Winnipeg, and on to Lethbridge.

After proving to the proper authorities the authenticity of the exemption, Father was an instant ex-soldier, but not before he had a picture taken to prove to his brothers and friends that he now had exclusive bragging rights (which was important to him), and could tell everyone about the time he was in the Canadian Army.

I’m sure this story and the variations thereof, was a good source of entertainment for many an evening. Regards, Glen Kehler

gwright@sentex.net
Niagara Falls, Ont.
14 Feb., 2002

Subject: *The Divine Conspiracy*, by D. Willard.

Ich moechte auch fuer dein weiteres Lesen ein anderes Buch Empfehlen....

Der Autor scheint mir viele von deine Bemerkungen ueber die Schwachheiten unsere gegenwaertige evangelischen Gemeinden zu teilen. Er scheint aber mit merkbare Klarheit die Ursache fuer diese bedauerliche Irrtuemer ans Licht zu bringen....

This is the book I have been searching for all my life. Like Michelangelo’s Sistine ceiling, it is a masterpiece and a wonder. The central theme of the book up to the point I have read names two erroneous gospels, both indeed at opposite ends of today’s theological spectrum, but both equally erroneous. One he calls “the gospel of sin management” and the other “the gospel of social ethics.”

I will give you a couple of excerpts to demonstrate how he describes the weaknesses of the first, the evangelical Right. “One of the leading Christian magazines in this country recently editorialized about a rumor to the effect that a leader at a certain evangelical institution had resigned because of ‘moral failure’. The rumor was confirmed but the magazine decided not to report on this case. In explaining this decision the editors commented that these cases were so numerous `that the magazine has been forced to set criteria to decide which ones are newsworthy.’ Their reason for not running the story was that they did not consider this individual `a top-level leader.’

He goes on to notice that one often wonders if the celebrities who advertise certain foods and beverages on TV “actually consume” what they are selling. This is the very question most pressing for those of us who speak for Christ. Surely something has gone wrong when moral failures (among the leadership) are so massive and widespread among us. Perhaps we are not eating what we are selling. More likely I think, what we are “selling” is irrelevant to our real existence and without power over daily life.

At the other end of the spectrum, “the gospel of social ethics” he has some equally thoughtful comments to make.

“By the late 1950’s and early 1960’s the older

liberal theology with its ‘social gospel’ had pretty well proven itself unable to accomplish the transformation of the human existence.” He says at this point this theology found itself “bludgeoned to its knees by world events, its intellectual capital exhausted.”

At this point liberal theology became born again as it took up and began to champion the cause of social liberation everywhere. Social and economic equality for black Americans followed by issues of gender, sexual preference, ecology, speciesism and generalized “correctness” followed.

He speaks of people in this movement finding “in the redemptive language of the civil rights movement a virtual substitute for religious belief.....”

The author summarizes the current position of a majority of would-be Christians as follows - “There is no gospel for human life and Christian discipleship, just one for death or one for social action.”

As with all criticism it is of no value if the critic offers no alternative. This one does. He says there is no alternative “unless what Jesus himself believed, practised and taught makes sense to us.” Isn’t this what Menno Simons also taught and believed?.....

Before I close this attempt at summarizing the author’s thoughts I want to quote something he said which seemed to me remarkably like what I think Menno Simons must have believed in his innermost mind and tried to express as best he could in the language of a medieval churchman.”The disappearance of Jesus as teacher explains why today in Christian churches - of whatever leaning - little effort is made to teach people to do what he did and taught.” He asks who of his readers knows a seminar or course of study and practice” which aimed at teaching the students “how to love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who spit on you and make your life miserable.”

Surely it was exactly that teaching which led Menno Simons to separate himself from the other reformers....The author, Dallas Willard, is a professor at the University of Southern California’s School of Philosophy....The title of the book is *The Divine Conspiracy*. It’s published by Harper San Francisco.....

“Gerald Wright”

P.S. This book is only for people who like the challenge of something that makes them think.....

Editor’s Note: Thank-you for sharing with our readers about this valuable book. We too have thus far refrained from reporting on the countless moral failures of Evangelical leaders. Although this is the standard strategy of Evangelicals when they want to denigrate Hutterites, Amish, Old Order and Conservative Mennonites and make them more vulnerable to their proselytizing programs, but we do not want to stoop to their tactics.

I believe you have very well expressed some of the foundational precepts of Menno Simons and the Flemish Mennonites. May God bless you. (see *Pres.*, No. 12, pages 46-49).

News

A. G. M. January 18, 2003

Report on HSHS Annual General Meeting, January 18, 2003,
by Ralph Friesen, 410-1281 Grant Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3M 1Z6.



President Ralph Friesen and Recording Secretary Ernie Braun, at the business meeting, January 18, 2003.



Queuing up for the food. President Ralph Friesen (left) and MCC director Ron Dueck, and wife Wendy (right), Kleefeld, at the table in the foreground.

Name Change.

The annual general meeting of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, held at the Lion's Centre in Grunthal on Saturday, January 18, 2003, was, in its own modest way, historic.

It was the first HSHS meeting to be held in Grunthal. It was also the occasion of the announcement of an official name change – the HSHS became the FMHS, or Flemish Mennonite Historical Society. The new name reflects more accurately the direction the Society has been taking in the last few years, beyond the borders of the Hanover Municipality, to a greater interest in traditional Mennonite and other Anabaptist groups wherever they may be

found.

The two main cultural streams of Mennonites in the Netherlands at the time of the Reformation and afterward, have been given the names “Frisian” and “Flemish” - the Frisians a northern, agricultural people, the Flemish, more urban, coming from the south and from Belgium and Flanders. The Old Colony, Kleine Gemeinde and Bergthaler Mennonites who came to southern and southeastern Manitoba from South Russia in 1874 were of Flemish stock.

The descendants of these people make up the main - though certainly not the only - constituency for the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society. But these descendants also now live in great numbers in Bolivia, Belize, Mexico

and Paraguay, as well as in south-central Manitoba in the area once known as the West Reserve. This publication has been expressing this broader geographical reality for some time now. Changing the name to “Flemish” merely catches the name up to the activity of the Society.

It should go without saying that the Flemish Mennonite Historical Society still has a strong interest in the history of the East Reserve, and will continue to serve that interest in its publications and activities. Whether a new group with an exclusive focus on the East Reserve will form, remains to be seen. Certainly the FMHS would make every effort to provide support for such a group.

Elections.

Resigning were long-serving board members Irene Kroeker and Henry Fast. Hilton Friesen's and Ernest Braun's terms ran out and



Jakob L. Peters (left), President of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, visits with Gil Brandt, Mennonite Books. Gil again brought his wonderful display of books for people to browse through.



Vernon Froese, Grunthal (left), Herman Kasper, Steinbach (middle), visit with Provencher M. P. Vic Toews (right).



John Klassen, Grunthal (left), and Richard Martens, Steinbach (middle), of the Jubilee Quartet, visit with Andy Kehler, Steinbach.



After-dinner speaker, R. M. of Hanover Reeve John Driedger. John gave a moving description of the former village of Alt-Bergfeld. All photos for this article are courtesy of Henry Fast, Steinbach.

they did not stand for re-election. We thank these board members for their years of work and many fine contributions they have made. Continuing on with the Flemish Society board were Ben Funk, Jake Doerksen, Orlando Hiebert, Delbert Plett and myself.

Spatzierung.

The business meeting was followed by a banquet of Ukrainian and Mennonite delights – farmer sausage, verenike and dessert, set out by a Sarto caterer. The 60 people in attendance included MP Vic Toews and John Driedger, Reeve of the R.M of Hanover. I sat at a kind of “Friesen” table, with my cousin Hilton and his wife Steffie, and my “cousin-in-law” Herman Kasper. Ron and Wendy Dueck of Kleefeld joined us, so we had to establish our genealogical connection. And sure enough, Ron’s great-grandfather Jakob L. Dueck was a brother to our great-grandfather Abraham L. Dueck of Kleefeld. Wendy thought that made us third cousins, which I will have to accept at face value.

Keynote Speaker.

After the meal Reeve John Driedger, himself a Grunthal native, spoke on “Alt Bergfeld,” the village which pre-dated present-day Grunthal. He drew an eloquent portrait of the terrain on which the village was situated, including an area of woods and a stream and a pool in the shelter of shade trees where children used to swim. It was a beautiful elegy to a piece of the earth later transformed by the forces of progress.

Enthusiastic gospel singing by the Jubilee Quartet: Richard Martens, John Klassen, Ed Wiebe, Philip Penner and pianist Kathy Penner, rounded out the evening.

President Carter wins Nobel Peace Prize

Oslo, Norway - October 11, 2002: Former American President Jimmy Carter was declared the winner of this year’s Nobel Peace Prize. With the award Carter also received a cheque for \$1,000,000.00 U.S. The five member commission, which has considered worthy candidates for over three months, made the decision today, on the basis of Carter’s service during and after his term in office as President of the United States. Carter was President of the U.S.A. from 1977 to 1981 and distinguished himself particularly in pursuing peace.

One of his most significant accomplishments was the peace treaty established between Israel and Egypt in 1978. For 13 days, Carter hosted the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin at Camp David, in order to bring the peace process to a conclusion.

Carter, who started as a peanut farmer in Georgia, became better known, winning the Presidency for the Democrats in 1976. In 1980 he lost reelection by a landslide against Ronald Reagan, largely because of the hostage drama in Iran in which American hostages were held in the American Consulate for 444 days by terrorists. Carter was not in the position to resolve the matter at the time.

From *Mennonitische Post*, Oct. 18, 2002, page 24.

A Peacemaker Blessed

Jimmy Carter has enjoyed an entirely new life after leaving the White House in 1981. Leaving behind the ruthless struggles and pathos of the Iran hostage crisis, Carter seemed a doomed and tragic figure, his ubiquitous smile forever drawn into a line of wordless suffering. For a few years, he was seen as the unfinished president, the politician of frustration, of unrequited ideals, of rescue missions that crashed in the desert and blew up in a fury of wheels and rotor blades. His promise and his yearning for world peace - in Israel, in eastern Europe, in Latin America - were lost among the malaise of a dull and stagnant time.

Not long after, however, another Carter quietly stepped onto the scene. This Carter was the diplomatic wizard who stopped wars and monitored elections in places most Americans still knew nothing about. His ideals, his political morality, stood out in stark relief to those of the arms-for-hostages cowboys who succeeded him. Carter - the face of Habitat for Humanity, the negotiator who averted war in Haiti, the voice for reconciliation in many places of conflict - had re-emerged. He was, and is, a man of justice and unflinching faith.

As America readies itself for another war, Jimmy Carter was further redeemed the other week when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts of the past 20 years. That he is a voice and presence for peace and reconciliation now goes without saying. That he is a representative of faith in the teachings of Jesus Christ shows that there is much to be gained by taking the quiet path, the path of healing and justice and hope, and doing so fearlessly. Robert Rhodes, from *Men. Weekly Review*, Oct. 28, 2002, page 4.



Former President Jimmy Carter. Photo - Men. Post, Oct. 18, 2002, page 24. Through the Carter Center, Jimmy Carter and wife Rosalyn play a continuing critical role in establishing peace and democratic institutions across Africa and South America. Carter is also active in “Habitat for Humanity”. See also “Jimmy Carter leaves Southern Baptists,” in Pres., No. 18, page 57. In his biography *Living Faith*, Carter states: “...both the Amish and the Mennonites offer significant examples of Christian living for me because of their apparently successful attempt to live out, within their close-knit families and communities, the principles of peace, humility, and service, above the grasping for modern luxuries,” (page 241).

M.C.C. Bureau, Zaporozhe, Ukraine

M.C.C. Bureau, Zaporozhe, Ukraine: an interview with Mary Rajber, office manager of M.C.C., Zaporozhe, Ukraine, July 19, 2002, by Adina Reger, Weißenthurm, Germany.

Head Offices.

"We have 12 different partners within the territory of the C.I.S (Commonwealth of Independent States). but our headquarters is here in Zaporozhe. Our central business office is located in Switzerland. In the past our central headquarters was in Moscow. It was not easy to recruit workers in Moscow and it was also difficult to distribute the goods and to manage and support the individual groups and missions. For a time the work in Moscow went well, but then the central offices were closed.

"We opened our bureau in Zaporozhe in 1999. We are 10 workers of whom six originate in the



Mary Rajber is the business manager of the M.C.C. offices in Zaporozhe. She is also responsible for the distribution of relief supplies. Photo - Adina Reger.

U.S.A. and the remainder come from the cities of Priasowsk, Tokmak and elsewhere. Our workers are mostly young people or couples who have been placed with us for relatively short terms. In the near future, we wish to recruit co-workers who can remain with us for somewhat longer.

"Usually we begin our work in the groups with small projects. Once a certain amount of experiences have been gathered through working together, the financial assistance is terminated.

"The principle purpose of our activities here is to find solutions to problems. One of our co-workers here, Andrej Solotarjow, organizes courses on this topic.

Credit Unions.

"A second important purpose here is to establish credit funds. Our chairman here, Steve Shirk and a brother from Priasowsk are leading this work. They assist small groups of believ-

ers to organize these funds, that is to say, that through various self-initiated endeavours the groups themselves raise the funds for the use of their congregation. In the present day, people have understood that this is a good resource, and are interested in the establishment of such funds. Our assistance to these groups consists of advice and some initial financial aid, the remainder they organize themselves. In such situations it is not merely a matter of money but also in working together with the people. They learn to work together and how to make decisions. Such a project demands of the participants, that they can come to a consensus and



Steve Shirk, head of the M.C.C. bureau in Zaporozhe. Photo - Adina Reger.

arrive at a united decision whereby the mutual aid is much strengthened.

Aid Distribution.

"My main responsibility is to distribute throughout the entire C.I.S. the containers of relief supplies which come from Canada and the U.S.A.. This year we had serious problems with the containers in Primorje and Wladiwostok. Our brothers and sisters there asked us not to send any more containers, and to send money instead, with which they can buy the goods and then distribute them to the needy. We have worked out a new project pursuant to which we are now only sending money there. Through this project the local believers avoid the problems with the containers, which very often are plundered. This project has brought very favourable responses. From here the relief supplies go to Rowno, Tscherepowez, Zaporozhe, Donets, Kiev, and other cities in Russia.

Theological Training.

In addition, I teach church history and other subjects in theological training schools. Previously I instructed in the Donets Christian University. Presently, I am teaching in the schools in Jakutsk, Wladiwostok, Rowno and other cities. The development of these schools for the last while has been very positive. In some cities we have permanent facilities, but in most cases,

people take courses three times a year. A course takes two weeks. The people are very eager to take these courses, and then they return to their homes and serve further. One of our co-workers, Rebecca, Rector of the Donets University, occupies herself with doing social work in the local schools.

Assistance.

Our office works together with various organizations. In Neu-Datschino, Altaj, we have helped to build a cheese factory. Today we have no workers there anymore.

In Makeewka, Ukraine, we are helping with



Andrej Solotarjow, co-worker of the M.C.C. offices in Zaporozhe. Photo - Adina Reger.

the construction of a childrens' shelter. In as far as I am aware, this is the first Christian establishment of this sort for children. The work has been richly blessed. It was founded in 1996 and at the time we also had our workers there. A couple by the name of Hess has worked here, who later were also working in the Caucasus and Wladiwostok. Legally this facility can only take children for a period of three months--really only a very short term. Since children can be received into a Internat for longer periods, we are also trying to organize an Internat [an Internat is a boarding school, often for orphans and also indigenous families].

There are thousands of homeless children living on the streets of the Ukraine--in the markets, train stations and elsewhere. Most of the time these are not orphaned children, and so they must also obtain money for their parents, mainly alcoholics. There are different homeless children--those with parents, without parents, children who repeatedly run away from home, children whose parents are imprisoned, children that have run away from the Internat, drug seeking children, and children with various

physical problems.

With our help an Internat was opened in Priasowsk, situated 20 km. southeast of Melitopol. In order to provide for the financial support of this Internat and the achievement of financial independence, a farm cooperative was founded--counselled by a Canadian couple. Our mission in this project was - the successful planning of this operation. This Internat is an exception. Only through the grace of God were we able to obtain the license for this Internat. Provisionally only 11 children were accepted here, since the requirements on the part of the government do not allow more children to be received (registration, licensing, standards upgrading of the facilities). According to the recently received license, the Internat can take in 28 children.

A few days ago we had a situation where a mother brought her child to the Internat and drove away. Later it turned out that the child was only one year old, and that his three year-old brother already lived in the Internat. We do not yet know what will happen with this little child, since the Internat can only receive children that are three years and older. We will need to seek means whereby we can keep the child in the Internat.

Medical Association.

In Zaporozhe we also have a very active group calling itself the "Medical Association". They drive into the villages where there are no medical services and all work voluntarily. We finance the expenses. This group was established in 1992-93, and consists only of believers. In the first year of its operation, the group had only three workers--two doctors and one pharmacist. Today the group consists of 50 persons, of whom many are nurses. The group considers its work as a mission. Their headquarters is in the Baptist church in Pawlo-Kitschkas, Zaporozhe, where they also have a walk-in clinic (Sprechstunden). We distribute medical relief supplies, since they are more familiar with the needs of the individual localities, such as hospitals, etc. In the near future we are sending a container of medical relief supplies to Kirowograd, where there is also a successful doctors' association.

We also work with a committee for social security. In the Zaporozhe University, there is a group of younger people, not necessarily believers, who visit the ontology dispensary in Zaporozhe or the psychiatry ward in Molochansk [Halbstadt, Molotschna], and simply provide the patients with a few pleasant hours, by singing folksongs or by presenting dramas. We assist them with the transportation or pay for magazines for the patients, etc.

The repair of an old school being refurbished as a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts, is being financed through us.

Every year a couple from Canada comes to the Zaporozhe area, and does voluntary work in the hospitals. A woman from Canada wanted to do something good to honour her mother who was born and grew up in the Ukraine. It was determined that one of the most pressing needs was an operating table in one of the hospitals.

In this case, our responsibility was to find the right connections, whereby the correct operating table could be obtained.

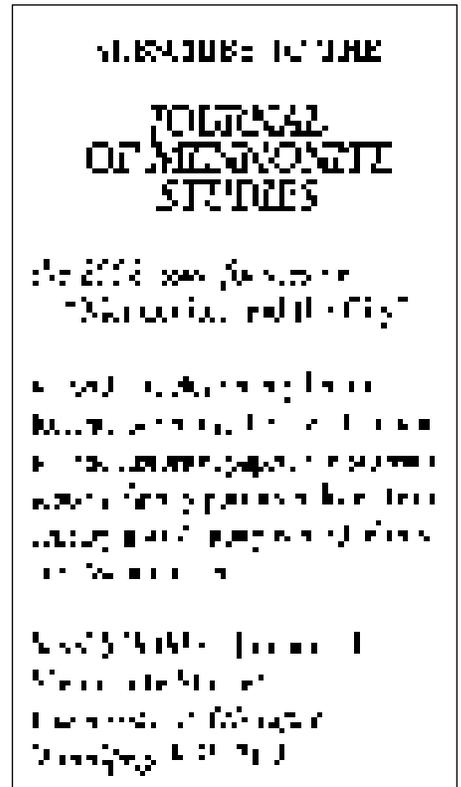
Conclusion.

As already mentioned earlier, our main work here in Russia is to provide the correct connections. We facilitate the people who are willing to give, to spend what is necessary, and to ensure that it is sent to the right location. This is certainly a work that can take a year and even longer. We do a lot of work together with Canada. The opening of a Mennonite Centre in Molochansk is a part of our work. We know one another, work together, but at the same time, each has their own special mission.

There is much to be done. The work is multifaceted. We have no problems with not knowing what to do with our time. We trust and hope that our work will honour and glorify the Lord our God.

Address:

The address of the M.C.C. Bureau is: 69087 Zaporozhe, Ul. 40-let Sowjetskoj, Ukraine, 68-58. Telephone:0038-0612-132998; - 133659; MCC's country representatives in Zaporozhe are Steve and Cheryl Hochstetler Shirk: e-mail: steve@mcc.marka.net.ua



Mennonite Monasticism

We used to think of early Anabaptists as radical Protestants - pushing the protest against the Catholic church much further than other reformers did. Then historian Walter Klaassen popularized the notion that Anabaptists were neither Protestant nor Catholic.

Now Arnold Synder is building on research showing that Anabaptist piety was shaped by the monastic tradition of the Roman Catholic church.

"Anabaptism is not best described as 'Protestantism taken to its proper ends,' but rather, it appears to be a 'Protestantized ascetic piety,'" he said in the May issue of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre Newsletter.

Snyder compared Anabaptist and Catholic spirituality in a course in Toronto last fall. Teaching with him was a Catholic theologian, Sister Margaret Brennan.

Anabaptists extended monastic piety to the whole church, says Snyder. They saw the New Testament church as a community in which every member takes the vows of disciplined, ascetic living. No wonder Martin Luther called Anabaptism a "new monkery." At the same time, Anabaptists threw out most Catholic liturgy, ceremony, and even prayer as unnecessary to faith, thereby aligning themselves with the "modernizing" trend of western Christianity.

The influence of the monastic asceticism helps to explain the Mennonite emphasis on discipleship and sacrificial living. Even with our contemporary compromises, Mennonites are still a remarkably disciplined community. Think of relief sales, for example. Who but Mennonites could get so many volunteers to commit themselves to such a massive undertaking year after year.

Daily doing good is probably the most obvious remnant of our spiritual heritage, but there is increasing interest in deeper connections. Mennonite pastor Arthur Boers exemplifies a direct spiritual link with the monastic tradition. He has found his daily discipline in The Rule of St. Benedict, a sixth century guide to running monasteries. He finds his practice as a Benedictine oblate extremely compatible with his Mennonite beliefs.

"Anabaptists and monastics are a least spiritual cousins," he noted in the March 20, 2000 issue. "Monasticism, like Anabaptism, is rooted in protest against compromise in the culture and the church." Evangelical author Alan Roxburgh suggests that the missional church in our age should take the form of "urban monastic communities." What a thoroughly Anabaptist notion! By Margaret Loewen Reimer, *Canadian Mennonite*, Aug. 13/01, page 9 (see *Pres.*, No. 21, page 28).

Editor's Note: Perhaps Alan Roxburgh should check out the hundreds of Mennonite monastic communities in Mexico, Bolivia, Belize and Paraguay - we call them colonies.

Borosenko Memorial Dedication - Oct. 5, 2002

“Borosenko Memorial Dedication in Ebenfeld (Uljanowka), Ukraine - October 5, 2002,”

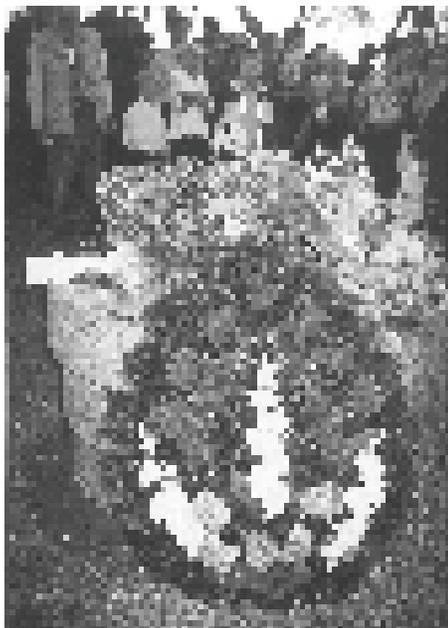
by Margaret Bergen, 405-246 Roslyn Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3L 0H2.

One cold December night in 1919, a band of Machnovetse brutally massacred 67 men, women and children in the village of Ebenfeld, and 54 in Steinbach, Borosenko. Only few managed to escape. The dead were hurriedly buried in mass graves by men from neighbouring Mennonite villages.

The Mennonite cemetery in Ebenfeld still exists. It is surrounded by acacias, and has been maintained by the Ukrainian family on whose property, it is located, and who described it as “sacred ground”. They know the exact spot of the mass grave (see *Pres.*, No. 12, 41-49 for photos - website www.hshs.mb.ca).

The International Mennonite Memorial Society adopted the Borosenko memorial project. Professor Harvey Dyck, Toronto, engaged designer Paul Epp, to design the stone. It was made in the Ukraine by Aleksandr and Elena Pankew. Harvey met with the local Ukrainian landowners and village officials and obtained permission.

The memorial service was held in the Mennonite cemetery in Ebenfeld (Uljanowka), Borosenko Colony, on October 5, 2002. The memorial stone was set up beside the mass grave.



Borosenko Memorial dedication, Ebenfeld, Ukraine. October 5, 2002.



L.-R.: Peggy and Al Hiebert, directors of Mennonite Friendship Centre, Molochansk, Harvey Dyck, Natalya Vladimirovna, Chair of Sholokhovo village Council, Margaret Bergen, Zinaida Slavinskaya, owner of cemetery land. The bread offered to the guests is a Ukrainian custom of welcome.

The service was well attended by local Ukrainians who stood reverently in a semi-circle. It was attended by two bus loads from the Mennonite Heritage Cruise, and two bus loads from the Zaporzhye Mennonite Church.

The memorial stone is circular, representing the continuity of the past and the future, and the linked relationship between them. The inscription is in German and in Ukrainian. To read it, mourning viewers must walk around it in a circle, thereby participating in the gesture of continuity and its message of hope. The incisions on the stone are similar to those of a millstone. This humble artifact represents the simple agrarian life of the people. The anchor at the center of the memorial is the historical Czarist and Russian Mennonite symbol of Christian Faith and Hope.

The inscription reads:

“In trauernder Erinnerung an Mennonitische Opfer des Massenmordes in der Nikolaithaler/Nowosofiewkaer Wolost wahrend des Burgerkrieges 1919.

“Ebenfeld/Uljanowka 4 Dezember, 67 Manner, Frauen und Kinder im nahestehender Grab bestattet

“Steinbach/Kuzmizkoje 5 Dezember, 54 Manner, Frauen und Kinder im gewesenen Dorf bestattet.

“Anderswo in der Wolost, 17 Manner, Frauen und Kinder, Darum lasset uns dem nachstreben was zum Frieden dient, Romer 14,19.”

“Im Geiste der Versohnung von der Verwandten der Opfer und der Internationalen Mennonitischen Memorial Gesellschaft in Jahre 2002 errichtet.”

Greetings were delivered by Chormaya

Natalya Vladimirovna, chair of the Sholokhova Village Council.

In his opening remarks, Harvey Dyck gave a brief history of that violent time. “....we are gathered here to lament the violent deaths of the villagers.”

Margaret Bergen spoke briefly as her uncle Johann Bergen lies in this mass grave. “Through this service of memorial,....[we give] them the funeral denied them long ago in 1919,....”

Then Zinaida Slavinskaya from Ebenfeld/Uljanowka and Margaret Bergen from Winnipeg unveiled and dedicated the memorial stone to the loving memory of the 138 victims.

John Bergen prayed for forgiveness for the perpetrators....for reconciliation,

and for God’s blessing on those who now reside in these villages...

The hymn “Bless the Lord o My Soul” followed.

Svetlana Bolyeva, Director, Institute of Ukrainian and German Studies, Dnepropetrovsk National University, spoke on “Those Evil Days”. The fratricidal Civil War which followed the 1917 Russian Revolution, caused the collapse of law and order, resulting in the deaths of 100,000s of people...This included the Mennonites who sought to remain aloof and apart from the deadly conflicts. This was also the case for the Mennonites of Ebenfeld and Steinbach who were mercilessly cut down by the Machnovites. The memories of those unspeakable crimes linger in the hearts of the relatives. So let us Ukrainian Mennonites preserve these memories.

Pupils from the local school then sang “A Gift of Life”.

Helmut Epp, pastor of the Petershagen-Molochansk Mennonite Church, spoke on the topic: “Let us Keep Peace,” where he emphasized that one should not meet evil with evil,....

This was followed by a minute of silence, a prayer, and the laying of flowers on the memorial stone on behalf of the relatives, on behalf of the Ukrainian villagers, by village children and by local and foreign guests.

We came in a spirit of reconciliation. The memorial service was to honour the dead, who had suffered a horrific death, but also to reconcile with the living.

References: For previous reports on the Steinbach/Ebenfeld massacres see, *Pres.*, No. 16, pages 88-91; No. 11, 41-42; No. 8, Pt. II, 5-7.

Evangelical Apologizes - Jerry Falwell

Jerry Falwell, well-known leader of the Christian right in the US, appeared on the CBS television program *60 Minutes* on Oct. 6 [2002] and said that in his opinion Mohammed was "a terrorist...a violent man, a man of war" in contrast to Jesus, who set an example of love.

Earlier, on Fox television's *Hannity & Colmes* program, Pat Robertson, another leader of the Christian right, had called Mohammed "an absolute wild-eyed fanatic...a robber and a brigand...a killer"; Robertson also said that Islam is "a monumental scam" and that the *Quran*, the Muslim holy book, "is strictly a theft of Jewish theology".

Evangelist Franklin Graham had called Islam "a very evil and wicked religion".

Falwell's remarks aroused widespread protests by Muslim groups around the world, the National Council of Churches in the US, British foreign secretary Jack Straw, the Jewish Anti-Defamation League, Christian groups in India and the Middle East, and a variety of columnists and editorial writers in the US. Falwell was called "hate-filled", a "fool", "dumb", "dangerous", "bordering on the criminal", "bigoted", "irresponsible", "sacrilegious", "ignorant", "paranoid", "intolerant", "an idiot", "a terrorist", "scary", "hysterical", "destructive", "offensive", "dangerous", "factually untrue", "duplicitous", "conniving", "repulsive", "incredible", "obsessed", "narrow-minded", "mean", "insulting" and similar to the Ku Klux Klan, with some of the strongest language coming from the US opinion and editorial writers.

Muslim advocacy groups in the US called on US president Bush to repudiate Falwell's remarks and to cut off government funding to one of Pat Robertson's charitable organizations. Some Muslim politicians in Pakistan demanded that Falwell be put on trial for his comments. A Muslim protest against Falwell's remarks in Solapur, India Oct. 11-12 led to mobs of Muslims and Hindus attacking each

other with knives and stones and then being fired on by police, leaving 8 dead and over 90 injured.

On Oct. 12 Falwell issued a statement saying he "sincerely apologized" for his comments which "were hurtful to the feelings of many Muslims. I intended no disrespect to any sincere, law abiding Muslim." Noting that he had never preached or written against Islam, he added, "I have always shown respect for other religions, faiths and denominations. Unfortunately, I answered one controversial and loaded question...That was a mistake."

From "Council on American-Islamic Relations" as quoted in *M. B. Herald*, Nov 15, 2002, page 21.

Jimmy Swaggart.

Televangelist Jimmy Swaggart in a Nov. 10 broadcast, called Muhammad a "Sex deviant" and "pervert", called for the expulsion of foreign Muslim university students from the U.S., called for profiling airline passengers "with a diaper on their head and a fan-belt around their waist" and said, "We ought to tell every other Moslem living in this nation that if you say one word, you're gone." Since the broadcast was also carried on CFMT (OMNI) television stations in Toronto, the Canadian office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations has filed an official complaint with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. CFMT has apologized unconditionally for Swaggart's comments; it has promised to monitor future Swaggart broadcasts and refuse to air any broadcasts it finds objectionable. - Council on American-Islamic Relations/*M.B. Herald*, March 21/03, page 24.

Roman Catholic Church.

Roman Catholic officials recently told Muslim leaders they do not share fundamentalist Christians' harsh views on Islam or literal interpretations of the end times. They made their comments during an April 8-9 meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Dialogue of Catholics and Muslims. Muslim representative Naeem Baig said Muslims continue to be troubled by comments by Franklin Graham, who called Islam an "evil and wicked" religion, and Pat Robertson, who called Muhammad, the founder of Islam, "an absolute wild-eyed fanatic."

The Catholics also distanced themselves from a literal interpretation of the Book of Revelations, which some Christians believe lays out the end times through a series of apocalyptic events. "We certainly don't interpret the Book of Revelations by looking for who is the AntiChrist in the contemporary world and how the battle of Armageddon might play out," said Catholic representative John Borelli (RNS). From *Men. Weekly Review*, April 28/03, page 24.

Europe, Ghent.

He may be their most famous son, but the historical capital of Flanders still has mixed feelings about the ruler on whose empire, it was said, the sun never set. Charles V (1500-58) extended his rule over much of Europe and Spanish America, but in 1540 he returned to his rebellious native city to revoke its medieval privileges, have its leaders executed and force its inhabitants to kneel before him with ropes around their neck - an event still commemorated with a *stropdragers* (rope weavers') parade. Until June 30, Ghent and other Belgian cities are holding a myriad of cultural, historical and sporting events to mark the 500th anniversary of Charles' birth. See www.charlesv2000.org.en. - *Time*, March 13/00, page 11.

Cleric Demands Armed Guard.

An Ontario minister convicted of wilful promotion of hatred against Islam has been ordered by the Supreme Court of Canada to fulfil his sentence of 340 hours of community service to the Islamic community.

But Mark Harding says his supervisor, the Islamic Society of North America wants to use the sentence to indoctrinate him with Islamic ideas. As a result, Harding tells *ChristianWeek*, he's demanding an armed guard accompany him during any visits to the society's offices in Mississauga, Ontario....

The Chesley, Ontario Church of Exhortation cleric was convicted after the court was told he'd distributed pamphlets outside Weston Collegiate Institute in Toronto that accused Muslims of being "terrorists" and "anti-Christ" and protested the "torturing, maiming, starving and killing" of Christians in Islamic nations.

"The Muslims who commit these crimes are no different than the Muslim believers living here in Toronto," Harding's literature claimed. "Their beliefs are based on the *Qur'an*. They sound peaceful, but underneath their false sheep's clothing are raging wolves seeking whom they may devour. And Toronto is definitely on their hit list."

Free for the first time from a bail condition that prohibited him from discussing his views on Islam, he seemed anxious to make up for lost time....

From a report by David Helwig, *ChristianWeek*, Nov. 26/02, pages 1 and 7.

Editor's Note: It is evident that much hatred is being spread against Muslims and other communities by some so-called Evangelists. Such hatred is presumably also taught in their private Bible Schools. Although Canadians value freedom of speech, it is good to have laws to safeguard victims of racial hatred whether Muslims, Jews, Natives or any other vulnerable group within society.



"War-lusting neo-cons like Jerry Falwell are the mirror image of Osama bin Laden," Eric Margolis, *Winnipeg Sun*, Oct. 13/03, page 22.

Matthew Coon Come - Third Wave Catcher

The chief of the Assembly of First Nations is helping plant a new Ottawa church. Matthew Coon Come and his wife Mary Anne are associate ministers of Harvest Glory, a congregation meeting in the southern suburbs of the national capital.

The church was established by followers of Ruth Ward Heflin, who before her 2002 death was best known for popularizing gold dust and gold tooth filling "miracles" that are part of the "third wave" charismatic worship.

Well known for their evangelical-charismatic stance, the Coon Comes are past members of Woodvale Church, a large Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada congregation on the west side of Ottawa.....Chief Coon Come downplays the significance of his Harvest Glory role. "You can say I am just exercising the gift of 'helps,'" he noted, following a recent 150 minute service.

Indeed, Mary Ann Coon Come was much more verbally active in the service. She gave a testimony about receiving the "fire of God" in that morning's church service. And throughout the service she laughed quietly, sometimes almost weepingly, well within the accepted traditions of the "third wave" charismatic movement.

("Third wave" charismatics, so defined by one of their key leaders, Rodney Howard-Browne, are variously estimated to make up one to five percent of Canada's three million evangelicals. The best-known church in this orbit is Toronto's Airport Christian Fellowship, home of the "Toronto Blessing").

For his part, Chief Coon Come exercised a helping role....He acted as a "catcher", an activity that involves catching worshippers who have been prayed over by the minister and fall back in a trace-like condition believed by the Harvest Glory people to be part of the spirit's flow....

Senior minister Lemmert....allows that Ruth Ward Heflin's writings - on prominent display at the back of the church - are inspiration for a number of distinctives. They include watching for manifestations of what they believe to be the falling of gold dust on the skins of some worshippers, and listening for the fluttering of angel wings at certain points in the service....

They need space and time to "soak up Jesus." Harvest Glory services are long and need to be held often because it takes time to move from the "harvest" to the "glory" the senior pastor maintains.

The congregation also hopes to start a Bible institute that would expound Heflin's writings and practices, including such topics as unifying glory, revivals, the blood covenant, river glory, the helps ministry and flowing in the Holy Ghost.

From a report by Lloyd Mackay, *ChristianWeek*, Nov. 26/02, page 16.



Matthew Coon Come, chief of the Assembly of First Nations in Canada, is also an associate pastor of Harvest Glory, a charismatic church-plant in Ottawa. Photo - *ChristianWeek*, Nov. 26/02, page 16.

Editor's Note: "They shout and spring with great outcry, as if salvation were to be got thereby." The heathen practice of tongue worshipping was only barely tolerated by the Apostle Paul when it was adopted by some of the Corinthians. James, the brother of the Lord, and the most prominent leader after the death and resurrection of Jesus (*Maclean's*, April 21/03, page 48), does not mention it, although he does make a point of repeating three times that "faith without works is dead;" and that we are "saved by works not by faith alone."

There were many things which Jesus taught and commanded his disciples, but tongue worshipping was not among them. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the light, no one cometh to the Father but by me." Those that teach other ways of salvation are propagating falsehood. Pentecostals and many other Evangelicals make the great mistake of believing that if only they can jump high enough and/or shout loudly enough they can storm the gates of heaven by their own force, thereby negating the power and work of the Holy Spirit. With all their noise and tumult, Pentecostals apparently leave no room for the working of the Holy Spirit as they seek to do it themselves with their theatrics and gymnastics. The reality is that the Holy Spirit is much more real and present in any sober and reverent Old Colony worship house in the jungles of Bolivia, working its healing and transforming power in the hearts and bodies of those genuinely committed to following Christ and living the narrative of His life and teachings.

Even some of Mennonite heritage have become deluded and fallen victim to the "Third Wave" movement. In 1999 Winnipeg televangelist Willard

Low German Coordinator

Winnipeg, Man. - Mennonite Central Committee Canada has hired Mary Friesen as program coordinator for MCC's outreach to Low German Mennonites. Her appointment follows the resignation of Abe and Anne Peters, who retired in November.

Friesen, born in Menno Colony, and daughter of a former Oberschulz, has extensive experience as a teacher and educator. In addition to her work as an instructor at the University of Winnipeg, she spent 12 years as a teacher and vice principal at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate in Winnipeg. She is married to Gerhard Friesen, originally from Fernheim Colony and a speaker on Low German radio for M.B. Communications.

Before joining MCC, Friesen worked on the development of an MCC "hemispheric vision" for the Low German program, an approach that streamlines the ways MCC provides service to Low German Mennonites.

Friesen's other duties will include managing the Low German program in Mexico and promoting the development of educational materials. She will also work with the Low German publications *Mennonitische Post* and *Das Blatt* which are distributed in Canada, the United States, Mexico and South America.

Thiessen proudly announced he had been blessed with a "miracle gold tooth" only to be exposed by his dentist brother who had installed the tooth years earlier (see *Pres.*, No. 14, page 32). Pentecostal religious culture has led astray many earnest seekers (and even more trill seekers) ever since the heathen "tongue worshipping" practice was adopted and misused by errant worshippers in Corinth almost 2000 ago.

I regret to inform those attracted to the dead traditions and heathen culture of this religion that any activity where one first has to stop and ask whether one has stumbled into a WWF wrestling match, a teamster beerhall-union meeting, a nightclub rock concert, or a Voodoo ritual, probably has little to do with the lowly Jesus born in a stable. For an examination of the unbiblical foundations of Pentecostal religious culture and its great spiritual impoverishment, see *Preservings*, No. 17, pages 57-60. Check it out on our website: www.hshs.mb.ca

Brandon Peacenik to Baghdad.

Brandon peace activist Lisa Martens is back in Baghdad. Martens as well as two other members of the Christian Peacemaker Teams, arrived in the Iraqi capital yesterday. They joined the two other CPT members who had returned to Baghdad on Wednesday.

Forced out. Martens, 25, first arrived in the city on Feb. 1 with the hopes of acting as a human rights observer. Heavy fighting and an inability to contact the outside world forced Martens out two weeks ago. They had been in Jordan since that time collecting more supplies and securing a satellite telephone.

The activists are now staying in an apartment in downtown Baghdad, not far from a local hospital and orphanage. The group plans to stay in the city for at least the next month, assessing the damage caused by the war while monitoring food and essential supplies, the CPT web site reported yesterday.

While food convoys have started arriving in the city, the web site reports power is still out throughout much of Baghdad. Water plants and hospitals are relying "on the intermittent use of generators." The web site also accuses coalition soldiers of being "arrogant, rude and disrespectful" toward Iraqi citizens."

Winnipeg Sun, April 19/03.



Lisa Martens, Christian peace activist. Photo - *Wpg Sun*, April 19/03. Lisa is the daughter of Herman and Barb of Brandon, and the granddaughter of Jacob and Esther Martens, Grunthal, of Chortitzer background. Mennonites

can be proud that there are still a few within their midst prepared to place their all on the altar for the Gospel.

H. E. Plett Awards



Winners of the Henry E. Plett Memorial Award (see Pres., No. 21, page 63) for Family History research and writing: Dustin Braun (above) first place prize winner (\$250.00), and Adam Braun (below), second place prize winner (\$100.00) - awarded in June 2002. Both Dustin and Adam were students at W.C. Miller Collegiate, Altona. From Men. Historian, No. 39, page 4. The awards are made annually by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Inc., Winnipeg, Manitoba.



The Teachings of Jesus

“We believe the teachings of Jesus are prophetic in that they challenge the socially accepted norms of righteousness. I know a local rabbi who associates freely with Christians. From his faith this rabbi embraces the elements of Jesus’ teachings that set him apart as a prophet. This stands in contrast to Christians who seem to have the Sermon on the Mount deleted from the Bible,” writes Moses Mast in the November issue of *Joy Mennonite Church Newsletter* of Oklahoma City. Mast, pastor of Joy Mennonite Church, says, **“When we separate Jesus’ teachings for living from accepting him as Saviour** we are also returning to an ancient religious practice of ritual and sacrifice to appease the anger of God for my sin and guarantee eternal life without affecting the way I live. This kind of religion has great appeal because it develops into a civil religion, shaped by circumstances that surround us, and addresses the sins that hurt me, my friends and family and my country, but approves eliminating those who threaten me, my friends and family and my country.”

From *Mennonite Weekly Review*, Nov. 18, 2002, page 2.

CGCM Evangelist Dies at 91

MOUNDRIDGE, Kan. – Harry D. Wenger, evangelist and mission leader in the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, died Nov. 29 at Moundridge Manor. He was 91.

Ordained in 1935 at the age of 24, Wenger travelled widely as an evangelist, leading revival meetings at many CGCM (Holdeman) congregations. He spent considerable time in the Kidron, Ohio, and Belleville, Pa., areas, where churches were being started. Many were converted through his gifts of preaching.

Wenger spent 18 years in the CGCM General Mission Board, much of that as chair. He was instrumental in starting CGCM missions in Nigeria and in India.

He served as a minister at the Meridian CGCM congregation at Hesston and also spent some time in the Abbotsford, B.C., congregation and then four years at both Hydro, Okla., and Versailles, Mo.

He was born Jan. 25, 1911, in Moundridge, to Frank H. and Anna (Dyck) Wenger. He married Gladys Koehn on Aug. 9, 1936. She survives.

Other survivors include four sons, Franklin and Carl, both of Moundridge, Weldon of Wichita and Lee of Sylvia; a daughter, Grace Wenger of Texhoma, Okla.; 17 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased in death by a son, Galen; and two sisters.

The funeral service was held at the Meridian church. Burial was in the Meridian cemetery.

Courtesy of *Men. Weekly Review*, December 9, 2002, page 12

Canadian Mennonite University - President

One President to Lead the University. Canadian Mennonite University has announced the appointment of Gerald Gerbrandt as president, effective next summer. Since Canadian Mennonite University, Concord College and Menno Simons College came together as a Federation to form CMU, each college has maintained its own presidency. Gerbrandt’s appointment represents the final transition from three presidents to one (see *Pres.*, No. 14, page 64/No. 17, page 78).

Gerbrandt joined the CMBC faculty 30 years ago, serving since 1997 as president. He was interim president of AMBS (Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary) in 1995-96. From *Men. Weekly Review*, Dec. 16, 2002

In 2002 CMU had 209 students and 72 part-time students at the main campus on Shaftesbury Blvd. 70 percent are of Mennonite background. In addition Menno Simons College had 963 students enrolled in the University of Winnipeg downtown location (355 full-time equivalent (see *Pres.*, No. 18, page 61, No. 19, page 65).



G e r a l d Gerbrandt, president of Canadian Mennonite University. Photo - *Men. Weekly Review*, Dec. 16/02, page 16.

Announcement and Call For Papers:

“Molochna ’04: Mennonites and their Neighbours, 1804-2004,” an International Conference commemorating the bicentennial of Mennonite settlement in the Molochna region of Ukraine.

Date: 3-5 June 2004

Host institution: Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Ukraine.

The Conference organizers welcome presentation proposals from across the humanities and social sciences that address all aspects of the history of the Molochna Mennonites and the region in which they settled as well as their interactions with their larger environment and their Molochna neighbours.

Mennonites played a unique role in the Molochna as engines of change and modernization, keen observers, who recorded fundamental developments in both their own communities and those surrounding them, and a litmus test for the Soviet system, challenging its all-engrossing principles. They are, today, searching for ways to create sustainable, locally led, development programs.

Conference Convenors and Organizers: Svetlana Bobyleva (Ukraine), Harvey Dyck (Canada), Alfred Eisfeld (Germany), Nikolai Krylov (Ukraine), Peter Letkemann (Canada), John Staples (USA), Peter Klassen (USA), Petr Wiebe (Russia).

Deadline: Proposals for original individual papers, panels, or roundtables, including a brief (2-3 page) abstract must be submitted no later than 1 December 2003. For information and the submission of proposals contact:

N.V. Krylov - krylov@mpu.melitopol.net OR

John Staples - Staples@fredonia.edu

The Conference will seek to cover the costs of tourist-class travel, accommodation and maintenance for participants from the CIS.

Amos Hoover and the *Martyrs Mirror*

“Amos Hoover and the Martyrs Mirror: Mennonite farmer’s artifact collection among Anabaptism’s best,”

By Robert Rhodes, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, December 2, 2002, pages 1-2.

DENVER, Pa. - Even a casual talk with Amos Hoover can seem noteworthy.

Tucked in his plain gray coat is a palm-sized notebook in which Hoover scribbles whatever information his companion might share. It might be some obscure point of Anabaptist history, or directions to a remote Hutterite colony.

Hoover, an Old Order historian and archivist, has accumulated a treasure house of Anabaptist lore, sought out by fellow believers and researchers from around the world. Hoover’s Muddy Creek Farm Library, founded in 1956, has one of the finest collections of Anabaptist books and artifacts this side of the Atlantic.

Not bad for a “black-bumper” Mennonite hog farmer.

Though Hoover housed the library on his rural Denver farm for many years, it is now in a new, specially-built facility 12 miles away. The two-story repository is on the grounds of Fairmount Homes, an Ephrata retirement community with ties to the Weaverland Conference of Old Order Mennonites, in which Hoover is a deacon.

About 150 people attended the dedication of the new library Nov. 9. Though Hoover’s collection spans much of the Anabaptist spectrum, the groups who still pursue a simple, rural life appeal to him the most - in part because they don’t always maintain archives of their own.

“We feel especially a responsibility to the Old Order groups, the horse-and-buggy groups,” Hoover said. “We’re best remembered for the Old Order material.”

This includes a wealth of books and periodicals - as many as 25,000 volumes by one count - as well as other artifacts, such as an 1832 quilt from Lancaster County. Just recently, Hoover said, a 1557 German Bible was donated to the library, so the collection continues to grow.

“There’s always things out there,” Hoover said of the Bible. “A neighboring man just wanted to donate it.”

One of the library’s crowning achievements, however, is Hoover’s collection devoted to the Anabaptist classic *Martyrs Mirror*, the 17th-century Dutch compendium of Christian martyr stories written by Thieleman J. van Braht. The collection includes a copy of every edition of the 1,200-page book, from its earliest Dutch versions, circa 1660, to the English editions produced by Mennonite Publishing House.

Hoover also found one pre-Van Braht version of the martyr book, dated 1631.

Hoover also has devoted much time and effort to finding copies of the 16th-century *Ausbund*, a collection of Anabaptist hymns still used by the Old Order Amish.

“We think we have all the American edi-

tions, but that gets a little foggy,” Hoover said.

Over the years, the Amish have printed 45 American editions of the *Ausbund*, the latest in August. Hoover said about 10,000 new copies are printed each year, so just keeping up can be a challenge.

But his efforts to secure the original copper plates of Jan Luyken’s 1685 illustrations for *Martyrs Mirror* spanned 20 years and required a rare finesse.

Though the fate of all 104 plates is not known, at least 90 were discovered in Europe in the 1920s.

In 1930, Harold S. Bender and Christian Neff saw the 90 plates in south Germany, but could not afford the \$2,000 price tag because of the Depression.

During World War II, the owner of the plates hid them in his firm’s quarters in Grünstadt, Germany, later occupied by American soldiers. After the war, only 30 plates were uncovered.

After searching for the plates since 1969, Hoover bought seven of the 30 engravings in 1977. The other 23 went to a collector in Cologne.

After the collector’s death, and with the help of Mennonite historians Robert S. Kreider, John S. Oyer and others, Hoover in 1989 was able to secure the rest of the surviving plates, with the help of various Mennonite collectors and patrons.

Securing the plates took years of searching, waiting and careful negotiation, a feat Kreider and Oyer wrote about in their 1990 book *Mirror of the Martyrs*, which details a travelling exhibit featuring the plates.

Kreider said the exhibit has been seen by nearly 70,000 people in 65 venues. It will be at the new library through March, along with a display featuring vintage copies of *Martyrs Mirror* from the Muddy Creek collection.

“Though Hoover’s collection spans much of the Anabaptist spectrum, the groups who still pursue a simple, rural life appeal to him the most.”



In a detail from a *Martyrs Mirror* etching, a Mennonite woman, Anneken Jans, gives up her son before being executed at Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in 1539. Historian Amos Hoover played a key role in the acquisition by Mennonites of 30 “lost” *Martyrs Mirror* plates.

Kreider, of North Newton, Kan., spoke at the dedication. By establishing this new library, he said, Hoover is entrusting the collection to Anabaptists everywhere.

“Through the generosity of Amos and his wife, Nora, this library is no longer ‘his’ library, but has become the library of the Old Order Mennonites, and beyond to all of us,” Kreider said. “‘His’ has become ‘ours.’”

Hoover admits the collection has been quite an undertaking, but modesty prevents him from saying much more, other than to credit the many people who have donated to the library over the years.

“I attribute everything to the one above,” Hoover said. “I really think the finger of God was in it.”

Courtesy of *Mennonite Weekly Review*, Newton, Kansas.

Young Companion.

What children read is often what they will become. This is scary for many families considering all the garbage that bombards people everywhere they turn.

Most conservative Mennonite parents realize the importance of providing wholesome and edifying reading material for their children.

It is a difficult assignment for parents since most denominations lack the resources to produce and publish material for their members. Much material is available from various Evangelical publishers but because of its deficient theology and misplaced cultural emphasis much of this material does more harm than good.

There is a solution. The Amish have a successful publishing venture, “Pathway Publishers” with several high quality devotional magazines including the monthly *Family Life* (previously mentioned in *Preservings* No. 19, page 25), the largest Mennonite magazine with a circulation of 20,000.

Pathway Publications also publishes “Young Companion”, which comes out 11 times annually, especially written for youth. The Amish have the same core theology as Conservative and traditionalist Mennonites, although certain aspects of daily faith and practice may vary somewhat. “Young Companion” will build up your children in genuine Christo-centric faith and nurture their intellectual development and normal curiosity with edifying stories and interesting articles based on wholesome Christian discipleship and growing in the Lord.

I would recommend *Young Companion* heartily, and *Family Life*, for that matter.... The annual subscription rate is \$6.00.

Order from: Pathway Publishers
Route 4, Aylmer
Ontario, Canada, N5H 2R3.

Theologian scolds Dutch church

“Theologian Sjouke Voolstra scolds Dutch church for lack of vision,”

by Andreas Havinga, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

A prominent academic in the Mennonite Church in the Netherlands has dismissed its leadership’s talk of church renewal as mere “window-dressing.” Sjouke Voolstra, a professor in the Mennonite seminary here, is calling for the church’s leadership council to face the need for a Christian witness in a secular society.

The council is in the grip of “nostalgic nationalism,” he told this reporter, invoking a phrase he used in an interview with the Dutch Mennonite weekly ADW (*Algemeen Doopsgezind Weekblad*). This mindset involves a “feeling of superiority” that views Dutch Mennonite liberalism as “the pinnacle of all Mennonite tradition.”

What is needed is a concept of mission that asks, “What do we want as a minority church in an utterly secularized society?” Voolstra said he

would like to see the Dutch church make more contact with Mennonite churches in the Third World. “That would be a splendid means of better formulating one’s own identity, one’s own task in the world.”...

Voolstra, who is retiring in November, acknowledged that few Dutch Mennonites share his point of view. Criticism of the current leadership is not tolerated, he said, because most Mennonites are “scared stiff” that the council may meet the same fate as its predecessor. The previous council resigned en masse in 1999, triggering a leadership crisis.

The chair of the national council, Anne de Jong, flatly rejected Voolstra’s criticisms. “This tone no longer finds resonance,” she said. De Jong, a management consultant, said that Voolstra is not up-to-date on developments and that he is soon to retire anyway.

De Jong defended the advisory council on spiritual issues. “What is new is that a denomination of autonomous congregations can now speak

[publicly] in a coordinated fashion,” she said. Previously it had been “very difficult” for the denomination to make public statements on issues such as peace, relations with Muslims and the position of women. “More reflection is needed...and we can do that now.”

Since 1950, membership in the Dutch Mennonite Church (Doopsgezind) has dropped from 40,000 to under 12,000; 60 percent are over 60 years of age.

In September, general secretary Henk Stenvers said that the Dutch Mennonites are slowly losing their mood of dejection. The turnaround is noticeable in congregations, although not yet expressed in membership figures. The national council recently decided on nine goals. There is also to be a new logo.

From Andreas Havinga, freelance journalist, Akersingel 73, NL-1060 NJ Amsterdam, The Netherlands. E-mail: dcn2xs4all.nl

Reprinted with permission from *Cdn. Mennonite*, Nov. 4/02, page 24.

Piet Visser Appointed.

Piet Visser has been appointed as Sjouke Voolstra’s successor as Professor of the Mennonite Seminary of the University of Amsterdam. The formal appointment took place November 2, 2002. At the time of the announcement in early October, Visser was both head curator of the University of Amsterdam’s (UvA) library and ‘Professor of books and manuscripts’ at the University of Amsterdam Arts Faculty. He also chairs the editorial board responsible for the *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* (“Mennonite Contributions”), the annual journal of the Mennonite Historical Society of the Netherlands. Adriaan Plak has been appointed Curator of the Mennonite Church Historical Collections the position held by Visser until 1997. Thereafter Visser became Head Curator of Special Collections of the University of Amsterdam. Sjouke Voolstra is now retired.



Historian Piet Visser, appointed as Professor at the Mennonite Seminary, University of Amsterdam. Photo courtesy Adriaan Plak, Amsterdam.

Samme Zijlstra 1953-2001

Historian Samme Zijlstra died in an drowning mishap in Leeuwarden, Netherlands, November 10, 2001. Zijlstra completed his PhD at the University of Groningen on 1983. In a memoriam in the *Men. Quarterly Review* (Jan. 2002, pages 3-4), Professor Gary K. Waite, University of New Brunswick, described Zijlstra’s dissertation, “Nicolaas Meyndertsz can Blesdijk. Een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het Davidjorisme” (Assen, 1983), as “a masterpiece of research that reappraised the reputation not only of Blesdijk, but also Blesdijk’s father-in-law and teacher, the Anabaptist/spiritualist David Joris....Through several influential articles on Joris, Anabaptism, Menno Simons, Mennonites and religious tolerance, Zijlstra enjoyed a growing repute as an important and productive historian of the Dutch Reformation, epitomized most recently by his position as editor-in-chief of the *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen*, the major Dutch journal for studies of Anabaptist and Mennonite history.... A suitable tribute to his tragically shortened scholarly career is his last major work, a history of the Anabaptist and Mennonite movements in the Netherlands from 1531 to 1675, *Om de ware gemeente ende oude gronden* (Hilversum, 2000). Quickly supplanting the older studies by W. J. Kuhler (1932) and N. van der Zijpp (1952), Zijlstra’s book interweaves recent interpretations of the “doperse” tradition in the Netherlands with his own impressive research. In this *magnum opus* Zijlstra tackles all the big questions neatly tracing the developments, ideas and confessional conflicts on the Anabaptist/Mennonite movement both before and after the Münster debacle of 1535. Unlike previous studies, Zijlstra’s study gives equal treatment to both conservative and liberal Mennonite wings and examines the influence of both undogmatical spiritualism and Calvinism on the Mennonites. Although its readership is restricted to a Dutch-reading audience, Zijlstra’s tome will have major impact on the historiography of religious history for years to come. Unfortunately, hopes for a successive volume on later Mennonite history have died with him.”



Samme Zijlstra. Photo - Doopsgezinde Bijdragen, Issue 27 (2001), page 9.

James M. Stayer concluded his review of *Om de ware gemeente* as follows: “This large book is a major contribution to the historiography of the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition in the Netherlands, entirely worthy of its great predecessors like J. G. de Hoop Scheffer, W. J. Kühler and A. F. Mellink. It builds upon and corrects the classic works of those scholars, draws upon the research of the second half of the 20th century, including the author’s own publications and produces an overview that will not need serious revision for a long time,” *MQR*, Oct. 2001, pages 524-6.

Professor Gary Waite paid Samme Zijlstra the following tribute: “Zijlstra was a generous scholar who gladly shared his research findings with others....He was also a fair and thorough editor and critic. He has left behind many who will miss him greatly, both as friend and a scholar.”

Mennonite Cemetery Restoration in Poland-Prussia

“The 10 year Restoration Project of the Mennonite Cemeteries in the Vistula Area of West Prussia, now Poland (1991-2001),”
by Maarten 't Hart, Klif 45, 1797 AK Den Hoorn, Texel, The Netherlands, Europe.

Introduction.

The beginnings of the restoration project of Mennonite cemeteries in West Prussia, now Poland, go back to 1991. After my early retirement, as an editor of the Research station of Floriculture, caused by a reorganization, I moved to the Isle of Texel, Netherlands, and joined the Mennonite congregation of Texel.

In 1992 I was a member of the church council of the Mennonite congregation of Aalsmeer, Netherlands. The Minister Margreet Stubbe, appealed to the members of this congregation to help with the restoration of a Mennonite cemetery in Poland, called Heubuden (Stogi Malborski). As a matter of course the congregation looked to me. Was I not one of the founders of the historical foundation ‘Old Aalsmeer’ and also with experience in the remounting of tombstones developed by the restoration of a small graveyard in the neighbourhood?

The appeal was not in vain. On the contrary, I liked the idea to express my faith in another way, not only spiritual, but also physical. I wrote in the church paper of our congregation about the possible restoration and the idea of starting a work-camp. Fortunately, there were enough men and women who wanted to participate. We organized an informational evening. Rev. Margreet Stubbe showed us slides taken in the prior year 1991, when a Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) camp had been held at Heubuden, Poland. These youngsters had already made a beginning.

They had removed, trimmed and cut the shrubs and trees and painted the fence around the cemetery. This fence was placed there thanks to the financial support of Helmut Reimer, a former occupier of a farm near the cemetery, and the Mennonite-Polish Friendship Association, under President Professor Peter J. Klassen of Fresno, USA.

These youngsters were mostly Dutch, led by Minister Arno Thimm, who had been born in the Vistula area of Poland and Minister Margreet Stubbe. They had no experience with restoring cemeteries and were only able to remove the bush. In 1992 Minister Margreet Stubbe came again to Heubuden with some friends and continued removing shrubs and trees. She realized that this was not enough and



Maarten 't Hart and Henk Maarse restoring a broken tombstone in Heubuden cemetery.

decided to ask the Mennonite congregation of Aalsmeer for help. Aalsmeer has many professional gardeners and flower growers, amongst them many Mennonites.

Planning.

We the “working group Aalsmeer” wanted to do the project thoroughly and decided in our preparation meeting to pursue the following goals:

- Cleaning, raising and remounting of the fallen and broken tombstones;
- Cleaning and placing horizontal again, in German language called “Grab-umfassungen,” flower boxes in which nowadays the Polish people cultivate perennials on the graves. We called them graveboxes;
- Digging out some earth from these boxes, laying in it a piece of plastic and filling it up with gravel instead of flowers, to reduce future maintenance labour;



Filling a gravebox with gravel in the Ellerwald cemetery, July 3, 1999. Maarten 't Hart holding wheelbarrow, assisted by Tony Kooy and Nely Maarse.

nance labour;

- Removing shrubs and cutting the lower branches of big trees;
- Mapping the cemetery and recording all the inscriptions (except the poems on the back side) of the tombstones;
- Making a report of the restoration including map and inscriptions.

In the first years we had to deal with a lot of paper money. In our purses were many banknotes, but you were not rich. Once I drove too quickly with the mini-bus. The police ordered a fine and while they did not speak English or German, they wrote the fine on a paper: ZL. 300.000. I was frightened to death, until I realised that it was only 15 U.S. dollars! Luckily in the third year, the Polish government changed the currency -1,000 old zloty's became one new zloty.

Work Day.

We decided that, as some of our workers still had jobs and had to take holiday time for this work-camp, we would rent a mini-bus to take with us the tools like shovels, axes, saws and a jack-screw (the last item in the second year). The travel time to Poland would take a long day. We would leave

on Friday from Aalsmeer at 3 a.m. arriving at our ‘headquarters’ in Stare Pole (Altfelde) Poland around 8 p.m. A driving distance of 1225 km (765 miles). Saturday would be our first working day at the cemetery. Sunday: in the morning, worship services, often held outside at the cemetery we were restoring. In the afternoon a tourist trip, mostly to a city like Gdansk (Danzig), or Frombork (Frauenburg), or Elblag (Elbing), Thorun (Thorn), Tczew (Dirschau), or Malbork (Marienburg), etc.

Monday and Tuesday: working at the cemetery. Wednesday: in the morning, a meeting with the historical Klub Nowodworski in the city of Nowy Dwor Gdanski (Tiegenhof) in their museum. There we discussed everything concerning the restoration of the cemetery, developing new plans for other cemeteries and asking for help. For instance, in some cases we offered money to the Klub Nowodworski and their Mr. Boleslaw Klein who took care of making a fence around the cemetery we had restored. The next year we inspected the fence.

In the afternoon, guided by the board of the Klub Nowodworski, we would take a trip, for instance to the East Sea or to some places like a Mennonite farm or a Dutch mill. After the trip we were often hosted to a barbecue held in the garden of the President of this historical society, Marek Opitz, who was also a noted professional photographer. Thursday and Friday-morning: working at the cemetery. Friday afternoon, the majority went shopping in Malbork but three men stayed at the cemetery to make a map, write down the inscriptions on the tombstones and to take pictures. Saturday: departure at 3 a.m. with arrival in Holland about 7 p.m.



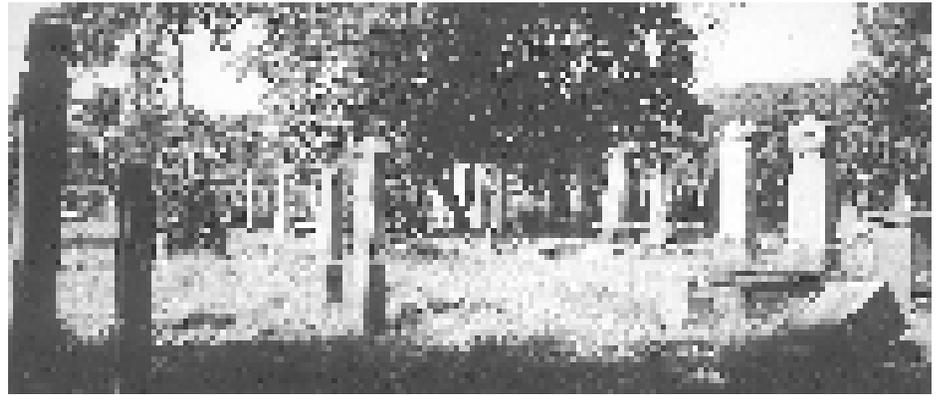
The writer, Maarten 't Hart (age 58), member of the Mennonite congregation of Aalsmeer, Netherlands. During the period 1993-1999 he was the leader of the Mennonite cemetery restoration project, Poland.

Arkadiusz Rybak.

The first cemetery we restored was Heubuden. This cemetery was about 15 km (9.5 miles) west from our base in Stare Pole. Here contact had already been made in previous years with Mr. Arkadiusz Rybak, who knew very much about the history of this region, the Vistula delta, and its former inhabitants, among them the Mennonites (see *Pres.*, No. 19, page 74). He was a retired Director of the Agricultural Experimental Station in Stare Pole and admired the Mennonite knowledge in making the Delta land dry and fertile by developing dikes, ditches and controlling the water height in the ditches by windmills.

Funeral culture.

Everywhere in the Vistula delta and in the neighbourhood you can recognize the typical burial culture of the Mennonites. There were probably more than a hundred Mennonite cemeteries. This culture is unique in the world and is noted by their remarkably big and heavy tombstones. These tombstones consist mostly of four parts: the first element is 80 percent in the earth, with a foundation around it in the soil consisting of a lot of big bricks masoned to prevent future leaning. A heavy middle-



Heubuden cemetery tombstones looking like tall guards are watching.

part, consisting of inscriptions in Gothic and Italic style (names and poems) and upon that the head in the form of a tympan.

Sometimes it is made from one piece of stone and is then about three meters high, 10 cm thick and 50 cm wide. From these undoubtedly expensive tombstones we can understand that the Mennonites, as gentleman-farmers, were well-to-do. On the tombstones you often find, with a certain pride

in German language: 'Hofbesitzer' (owner of a farmstead).

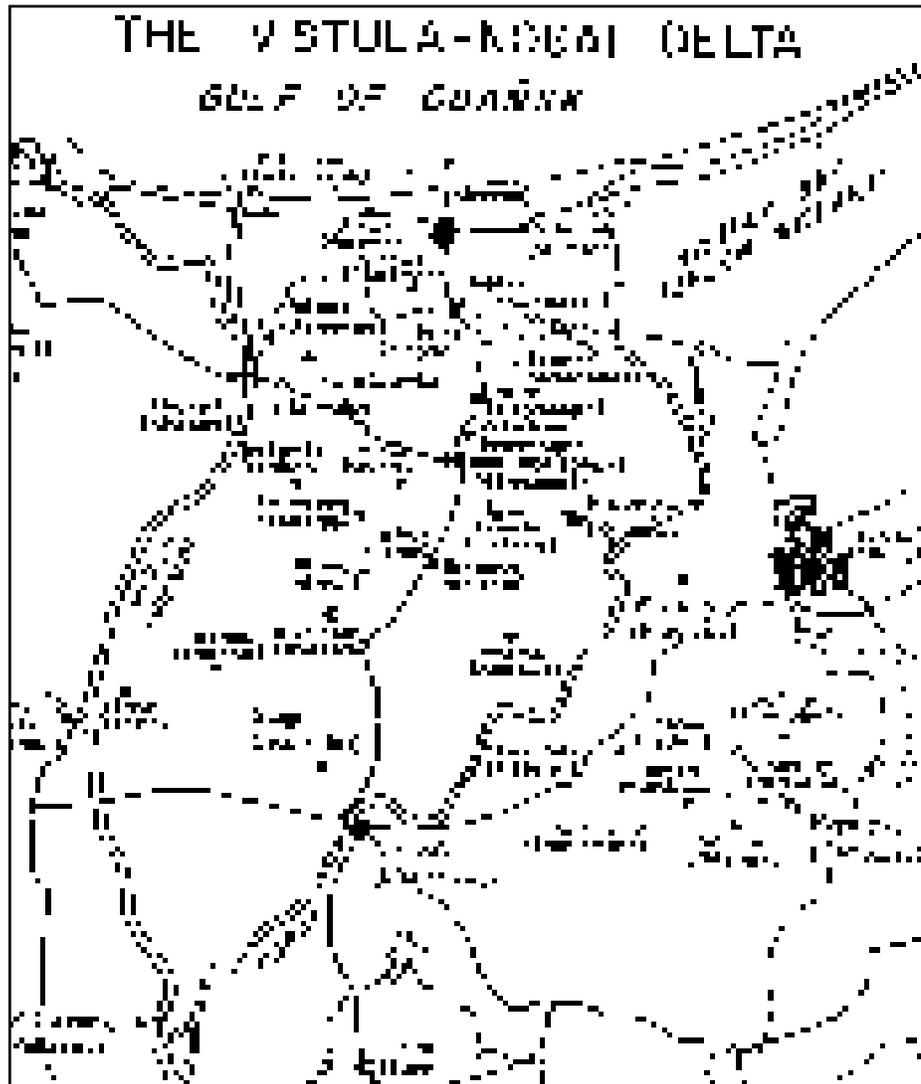
Readily noticeable on these large tombstones (they look like a field of tall guards of the King of Prussia, Frederick the Great) are the commonly seen symbols such as: the butterfly, the snake biting its tail, two torches upside down, going out, the sinking sun, the almighty eye of God, anchor, cross and heart (belief, hope and love), etc. The backside of the tombstones consists mostly of long poems, describing the deceased and the expectation for the future "once we shall meet again in heaven" and the warning for the relatives left behind "do not build here an eternal city, but build the future, heavenly city." In other words worship God.

First Impressions.

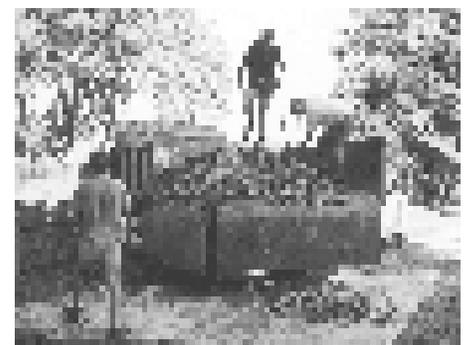
At the start of our first year Aalsmeer workgroup in 1993, the Mennonite cemetery of Heubuden looked terrible. Nobody had been there for some 45 years. The tombstones were wilfully damaged by Russian soldiers and probably Polish people as well. Where were we to start? Our group of 13 men and women decided to start with a quarter of this cemetery and pretended not to see the rest. As it was a very warm week we decided to start at 8 a.m. and finish early at 4 p.m. The soil was very dry and hard and we terribly missed a jack-screw to level the graveboxes.

That first year we had hardly any contact with other Polish people other than Mr. Rybak. But their eyes widened, including Mr. Rybak's, when they saw every day more tombstones being righted and cemented together. At the end of the week we felt their admiration. The Polish people felt that the rightful heirs were now looking after their ancestors!

Gravel was very hard to obtain in Poland. It



Map of the greater part of the Vistula-Nogat delta. Courtesy of Peter J. Klassen, A Homeland For Strangers: An Introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia (Fresno, 1989), page 24.



Digging out the gravel by hand from the truck at Heubuden cemetery, 1995.

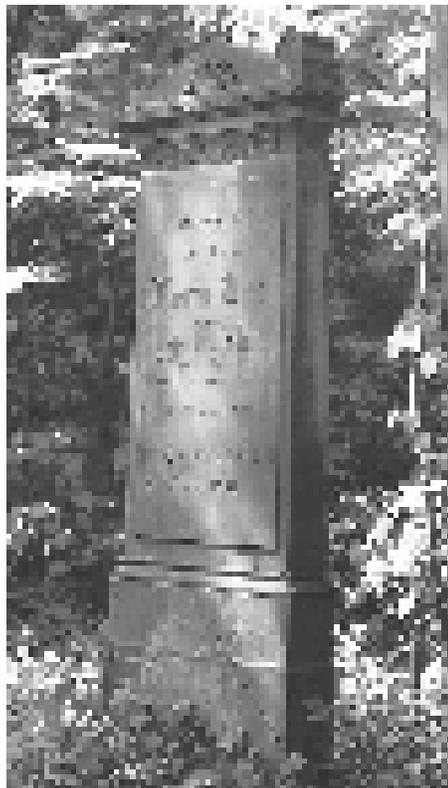
was a by-product found in a sandpit in Dziergon, 30 km (20 miles) south. At last on Thursday, a tractor-trailer brought three meters of gravel. We were very happy to fill up about 40 graveboxes, on top of a layer of plastic. We left Poland that first year with a little bit of pride.

Next Years.

Heubuden was not finished so in 1994 we went again and restored another quarter of this graveyard. That year we also visited nine other neglected Mennonite cemeteries which, when you approached, were hard to tell they were a cemetery. It was a forest and you had to look very sharp to find fallen tombstones. It was a drama and we realised that there was work here for years and years.

We had restored, in two years, only half of Heubuden. While we felt ready to carry on, we found the second half of the cemetery not as interesting as there were hardly any big tombstones left to be cemented and set up again, however, there were more graveboxes. In the years 1993 and 1994 the Mennonite Volunteer Service organised working-camps to Heubuden that continued where we had left off.

In 1995, we tackled Markushof (Marcusy) restoring about 75% that year. The contacts with Polish people, like Mr. Boleslaw Klein of Klub Nowodworski and others were deepened. Dorota Popowska, who visited the first camp and worked with us in the second camp, had such an interest in the Mennonites and their belief, that she was baptised in the Mennonite church of Amsterdam by the Rev. Margreet Stubbe. Our first contact with a Polish Mennonite remaining from the Second World War, was Mrs. Weilandt-Wiehler, who as a child grew



Tombstone of Maria Enss, nee Wiebe, Ladekopp cemetery (born 3 January 1780, died 20 April 1863).

up in Markushof. She was picked up from Elblag (Elbing) and brought to the cemetery of Markushof and told us a lot of her memories. Though now a Catholic she said she still felt a Mennonite inside.

In the fourth year (1996) Markushof was finished. We paid for a fence that the Mayor of Marcusy had placed with our advice and we paid for half of an entrance-gate, made by the local blacksmith. In this year we also restored a little cemetery, Thörichthof (Szaleniec). That year we were joined among others, by Sol Yoder, an American Mennonite with roots in Switzerland.

Motor Truck.

In the second year we hired a motor-truck to transport again three meters of gravel to Heubuden to fill up other graveboxes. It was an old motor-truck. I sat beside the driver to guide the way. We went downhill. Suddenly it was quiet, the driver had shut off the motor. We rolled down. Then he started up the motor again. He had saved some petrol! That happened twice again. I tried to ask with my hands, as he did not speak any other language, if the truck could dump the gravel either to the right or left side of the truck, or out the backside. He did not understand me. When we arrived at the cemetery and the gravel had to be dumped I understand why. The truck could not dump at all. We had to shovel out the gravel by hand.

In 1997 we decided to restore the last half of the cemetery of Heubuden. We had in mind to stop as we had finished three cemeteries. Mr. Klein, of Klub Nowodworski, who in the last years took care that we had enough gravel for the graveboxes, asked us to restore Ladekopp (Stawiec). This we could not refuse. For the first time we left our base at Stare Pole and laid out our bivouac in a school in Nowy Dwor Gdanski. Ladekopp was about 10 km (6 miles) southwest from this point.

The year 1998 was physically very heavy work



The old Dutch windmill at Wicrowo (Ellerwald) which unfortunately burned on June 14, 2002.



Presentation of a hand inscribed charter to Mr. Boleslaw Klein, former Mayor of Nowy Dwor Gdanski (Tiegenhof), and Dr. Arkadiusz Rybak (right), by Maarten 't Hart (in the background), commemorating their immense assistance to the working group Aalsmeer. The presentation was made July 7, 1999, at a special community meeting with the Klub Nowodorski at Nowy Dwor Gdanski (Tiegenhof).

due to a lot of stonework requiring replacement. The Polish people had in the past put together about 15 heavy tombstones. We placed them again in a row. Here we found evidence of wilful demolition as some stones had suffered severely from machine-gun fire.

Then Mr. Rybak made his request. Wicrowo (Ellerwald) still had a Dutch sawing-mill. He suggested the Dutch connection would be stronger if we restored the Mennonite cemetery in the neighbourhood of this mill. So, in 1999 we went for the last time to Poland as working group



Wicrowo (Ellerwald) cemetery almost entirely restored (1999).

Aalsmeer. The Mayor of Elblag (Elbing) helped by loaning us two municipal workers who did the heavy work of filling the wheelbarrows with gravel and bringing it to the graveboxes.

This year we were joined by the Canadian, Erwin Wieler, who, as you can see by the family name, is a descendant of one of the Mennonite families from the Vistula delta. Thanks to Erwin, a lot of information gathered by the working-group Aalsmeer, was spread to Canada and the U.S.A. to various Mennonite libraries and Historical Societies.

The working-group Aalsmeer said goodbye to Poland. They had restored five Mennonite cemeteries. They were able to delegate the future maintenance to the nearby communities who committed themselves by a formal document signed by all the parties: Heubuden to Malbork; Markushof to Marcusy; Thörichthof to Stare Pole; Ladekopp to Nowy Dwor Gdanski and Wicrowo to Elblag.



The oldest tombstone found at Heubuden: Elder Abraham Regehr 1731-1802.

Birthday Present.

Maria Keessen, born Regier, married a Mennonite from Aalsmeer. He found her while he was a trainee in Canada. She is a daughter of a Mennonite family who fled from Russia. She was born in Paraguay and lived a part of her youth in Bolivia and then emigrated to Canada. The roots of this family are of course the Netherlands and afterwards the Vistula-delta. She joined the working-group Aalsmeer for several years. On her birthday, the Friday before returning to Holland, she went for a last view to the end of the Heubuden cemetery. There she read the inscriptions of the nine tombstones, brought over from the cemetery of Great and Small-Lesewitz. Suddenly she gave out a cry. What a strange birthday gift, for there was her name on a tombstone: Maria Regier, born Regier!

Haarlemmermeer Carries On.

Matthijs de Vries, then a theological student and now minister of a Mennonite congregation in Northern Holland, had previously joined the Mennonite Volunteer Service camp of 1991. Subsequently, in his training period in the congregation of Aalsmeer, he came in contact with members of the working-group Aalsmeer. He organised in 2000 an MVS-camp to Poland. Two members of the former working-group Aalsmeer joined as experts.

For a new project I suggested they take on the cemetery at Campenau (Kepniewo) which I had seen in 1994 and thought would take one year to restore. But I had only discovered about a quarter of this cemetery so the 2000 year MVS camp was not able to finish the job. The experts Albert Bolt and Nico Kooy were of the opinion that Campenau had to be properly finished.

Accordingly, in 2001 a new group, now under the name 'working-group Haarlemmermeer' undertook to go to Campenau. It consisted

mostly of members from the Mennonite congregation of Haarlemmermeer, situated just beside Aalsmeer. Although confronted with the disaster of having their mini-bus and tools stolen in the first night they were in Poland, they succeeded in finishing Campenau. This brought the number of restored cemeteries to six.

Sentimental journey.

The board of the 'Foundation For Maintenance And Development Of The Dutch-Mennonite Relations In Poland', is often called in the Netherlands 'The Foundation with the long name'. They decided in 2002 to make a sentimental journey to the Vistula-delta and to participate in the Third Mennonite Congress, organised by Mr. Boleslaw Klein and his Klub Nowodworski in Stegna (Steege).

From 11 Mennonite congregations in the Netherlands, 34 members joined this trip. We were able to see all the restored cemeteries again. We noticed that all the graveyards were well maintained except Heubuden. The Foundation with the long name, wrote a letter to the mayor of Malbork to request



Pollards along a ditch: a typical Dutch landscape in the Vistula-delta.

that they look after the maintenance to fulfil the agreement made in 1999.

Community Education.

In the course of the years, our work has become well known in Poland by congresses and interviews with newspapers, radio and television. As a result Polish people themselves have started restoration programs. The Mennonite cemeteries of Bärwalde (Niedzwiedzica), Rosenort (Rozewo) and Falkenau (Walinochwy) are now restored. In the last years we also tried to influence the youth in this area by telling them in the schools about the history of the region and the particular place of the Mennonites in the past and their significance for the Vistula delta.

More and more Germans, Americans and Canadians with the so typical Dutch names, originally from this region, as Claasen, Janzen, Durcsen, Epp, Wieler, Wiebe, Wiens, Martens, Pauls, Dijk, Dueck, Löwen, Töws, Friese, Fröse etc. are coming to visit these restored cemeteries, trying to find the places where their ancestors lived, died and were buried. In our final 1999 year report of the Aalsmeer workcamp, some 250 inscriptions were published and the report has been distributed to the Mennonite libraries and Historical Societies in the U.S.A. and Canada. In it they may often find the names of their ancestors.

Conclusion.

For the Dutch Mennonites the motivation to do this work was the fact that these are graves of descendants of Dutch Mennonite refugees, who from the 1540s went to Gdansk and the Vistula-delta via Emden mostly by ship. Their hope was to start a new life with liberty for their religion and exemption from military service. We all felt ties with these ancestors in a spiritual way and have the opinion that the present inhabitants should know how the land they inhabit was developed by the hard labour of Mennonites, who impoldered (Dutch word!) their land and made it fertile.

We thus always immediately told the Polish people that we are Dutch, who are restoring the graves of originally Dutch Mennonites. Never were we held up or told to leave. The Polish accepted us as the legitimate descendants and we acted so. Everywhere we told the Polish people, concerning the buried Mennonites, that they were a peaceful people



T.V. camera crew and reporter filming on July 9, 1999, the last day of work at the Heuboden cemetery. Photo - E. O. Wieler.



The 1999 working-group Aalsmeer, Heubuden cemetery, on their final working day, July 9, 1999. The names of the team members are: Front (l.-r.): Maarten 't Hart, Mirelle Verheijen, Bas Middel Koop, Albert Bolt, Erwin Wieler; Middle: Jan Broere, Tony Kooy, Nely Maarse, Leny de'n Hollander; Rear: Pieter Bolhuis, Nico Kooy, Henk Maarse, Arno Thimm. Photo - E. O. Wieler.

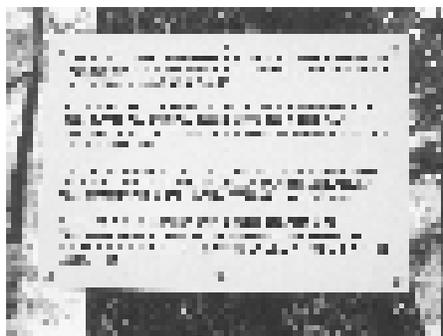
and that they were not Germans. (This wasn't always the case, as the first group of MVS-youngsters spent a whole afternoon deliberating whether to continue the work when they found the grave of a soldier with a helmet and swords inscribed on the headstone! But let us not forget that the Mennonites under Hitler had little choice.)

In the 10 years of the restoration (1991-2001) about 65 people have joined these working-camps. Among them were two Americans, one Canadian, one Brazilian, and one from Russian-Mennonite origin. Some went once, one, Nico Kooy, went every year of the 10. To give an idea of the hours and money our work represented would equal one man four-and-a-half years of work and cost close to U.S. \$ 135,000.

But more important: we have often felt, in all those weeks of togetherness, in conversations, in singing and praying, but also in working on the graveyards, of God's closeness and sometimes it seemed to be that we were His tools and that He watched us and nodded approbation. O, Lord, may our work not be in vain.

Further Reading:

Gerald Wright, "Heros of the faith," in



Official plague erected at the Ellerwald cemetery. 1999. Photo - E. O. Wieler.

Preservings, No. 12, pages 46-49.

Peter Letkeman, "A Tale of Two Gesangbucher," in *Preservings*, No. 18, pages 120-130.

Ron and Wendy Dueck, "Our Prussian Roots," in *Preservings*, No. 9, Parto Two, pages 57-61.

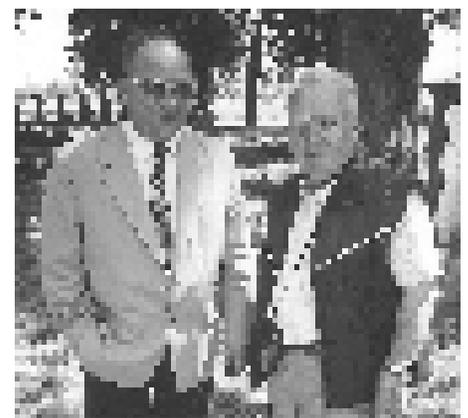
"Of Markers and Dedications: Honouring 10 years of the MPMA," in *California Mennonite Historical Society Bulletin*, No. 37, December 1999, pages 10-11.

Information:

Anyone interested in further information regarding the Mennonite cemetery restoration project in West Prussia-Poland, may contact: 1) Erwin Wieler, 2251 140 A St., Surrey, B.C., V4A 9R6. Phone 1-604-535-2406.

email: eowieler@pacificcoast.net

Or, 2) contact the new leader of the Mennonite Cemetery Restoration Project, Poland: Albert J.J. Bolt, Rijshornplein 1, 1435 HB Rijsenhout, The Netherlands. Tel: 0031-297-340525 Email: A.Bolt@voetbal.nl



The Mayor of Malbork (Marienburg) and Dr. Arkadiusz Rybak (right) at the Heubuden cemetery, July 9, 1999. Photo - E. O. Wieler.

Stegna Conference, Poland, June 14-16, 2002

Stegna Conference.

The conference in Stegna (Stegen), Gdansk, Poland, June 14-16, 2002, was a remarkable event. Reports in the local press indicated that more than 100 persons attended. This included a bus load of participants from Germany, led by Pastor Peter Foth, Hamburg Mennonite Church, as well as a busload from the Netherlands, led by Pastor Arno Thimm, Aalsmeer Mennonite Church, and by Albert Bolt, chair of the Foundation for the Preservation and Development of Dutch Mennonite Connections in Poland.

The conference, held in the resort town of Stegna, within walking distance of the Baltic Sea, was organized by a group of interested Polish friends and officials. Bolek Klein, chair of the Klub Nowodworski and Tomek Kwoczek, head of the Gymnazium Nowy Dwór, were the chief organizers of the conference. Significantly, several mayors of local towns and villages also gave their support, as did a number of museums and other organizations. Parts of the conference and related visits to historic sites were reported on television and in newspapers. A number of participants were interviewed by Warsaw television; later we received reports about the remarkable coverage given this event.

Several research papers were presented: "Building Bridges Between Holland and the Vistula Delta, 1530s-1772" by Peter Klassen; "Mennonites in Danzig and the Werder Region, XVI-XVIII Centuries," Professor Edmund Kizik, University of Gdansk; "Mennonites in Science and Culture in Old Danzig," by Professor Andrzej Januszajtis, Gdansk Polytechnical University.

For those of us who have been involved in Polish-Mennonite studies for some time, it was especially rewarding to see two graduate students receive rewards for their research on themes related to the Mennonite-Polish story. Gabriela Strug reported briefly on her studies of arcaded timbered houses in the region and Anna Marzalek on the coming of the early Mennonites and their impact on agriculture in the delta, especially with the introduction of new drainage techniques. Both received stipends from the Mennonite-Polish Friendship Association. The judging committee was chaired by Professor Kizik.

A delightful dinner in the conference center followed the formal presentation of papers and awards. Then, in the evening the priest of the local Catholic Church in Stegna, Stanislaw Knapik, together with his congregation, welcomed the conference guests to a service where he spoke enthusiastically about the spiritual and historical connection that Mennonites have to this region. A local instrumental group presented a delightful concert.

Touring Sites.

Saturday, June 15, was devoted to visiting historic sites. A choir composed of school chil-

dren and a local women's choir greeted the visitors at the Mennonite cemetery at Rozewo (Rosenort). This site had long been overgrown with bushes and many of the gravestones broken or taken away. In a remarkable new development, the mayor of Nowy Dwór, Zbigniew Piorowski, assumed responsibility for restoring the cemetery. He, together with the local priest, Leszek Wojtas, welcomed the conference participants. The choirs, each with perhaps twenty members, set a tone for warm fellowship, and made us feel like friends, not strangers.

Several other cemeteries were also visited: Niedzwiedzówka (in the former village of Bärwalde) also reflects a strong local interest. Here the owner of the land on which the cemetery is located has placed the remaining grave markers in a neat row, removed the rubble from the fire that destroyed the former church in 1990, and made a very attractive park-like setting. Here the group was welcomed by the Stegna mayor, Roman Pawlowski, and the village priest, Tomasz Btelicki. Following these visits to cemeteries, the group continued on to Nowy Dwór [Tiegenhof] for lunch. This was served in a restaurant housed in a complex formerly owned by the Stobbe family. A son of the former owner, now resident in Germany, was a member of the tour group. This was followed by a visit to the Zulawy (Werder) Museum, where a number of artifacts depict life in the Vistula-Nogat Delta. Bolek Klein has been the leader in fostering development of this record of the past.

When the group visited the Mennonite cemetery in Stogi (Heubuden), the mayor of Malbork (Marienburg), Pani Danuta Zalewska, not only enthusiastically hosted the gathering, but also urged us to use the now-empty schoolhouse to create a local museum. It was a gracious gesture, but most members felt that this was not a realistic possibility. A similar invitation was extended when the group visited the former Mennonite church in Thiensdorf (Jeziorko). That building, a former storage facility, now stands empty.

The village of Marvnowy (Marienau) has one of the largest arcaded timbered houses in the delta. Here the present owner held a reception for the group, and Professor Henryk Ratajczak, University of Toruń, presented a historical analysis of similar houses in the region. He noted that, in the latter stages of the last war, this area was flooded by the German army as it tried to stop the advancing Soviet forces. As a result, many of the houses remained standing in water for approximately two years. In addition, there was uncertainty as to the political future of the region, and so little was done to preserve these historic structures. Now they have been placed under historical preservation protection, but are costly to preserve and maintain. The owners hope to offer bed-and-breakfast accommodations in the Marvnowy house in the near future.

This day of visiting a variety of fascinating places ended with a delightful dinner and social evening at the conference resort. In recognition of their efforts on behalf of mutual support and understanding between Poles and Mennonites, Bolek Klein presented plaques to Foth, Thimm and Klassen.

On the following day, the group from Germany left for home; others continued visits to more historic sites, including Zwierzno (Thiergart), where the Director of Historical Preservation in Elblag, Jerz Domino, discussed the challenges confronting those who seek to preserve historical artifacts. A visit to Marcusy (Markushof) concluded the visits to former centers of Mennonite life.

News:

1. Many readers of this newsletter will recall that in 1990 the former Mennonite church of the Fürstenwerder congregation was destroyed by fire. As the conference in Stegna began, participants were informed that the oft-photographed windmill in Wikrowo, one of the last remaining in the delta, had just burned and was essentially destroyed.

2. During the past year, Aleksandra Borodin, a tour guide from Warsaw who has excellent English and historical training, has translated Peter Klassen's *A Homeland for Strangers*, into Polish. Some copies have been sold, and about 200 copies have been distributed to schools in the delta.

3. The conference in Stegna was covered by TV and newspapers. Copies of the latter are available in Polish or in English translation. Send requests to Peter Klassen.

4. A tour of Mennonite historical sites, as well as selected Polish cultural centers, was planned for May 12-21, 2003. For details on future tours, contact Marina Unger, Conference World Tours, 4141 Yonge Street, Suite 402, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. M2P 2A8. Phone: 800-387-1488, ext. 324 Email: walterunger@ica.net

Memberships.

Anyone wishing to join the Mennonite-Polish Friendship Association can contact Peter J. Klassen, Fresno, at the address below.

Membership fees (\$20.00 per annum) and donations for Polish projects should be sent to the Mennonite-Polish Friendship Association, Fresno Pacific University, 1717 S. Chestnut Ave., Box 2204, Fresno, California, U.S.A., 93702; or Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Canada R3P 0M4.

For information contact: Peter J. Klassen, 1838 S. Bundv, Fresno, California, U.S.A., 93727. Telephone: 559-255-6335 or e-mail: peterk@csufresno.edu

Acknowledgement.

Reprinted from the Newsletter of the The Mennonite-Polish Friendship Association, December 2002 issue.

A Dream Fulfilled - Archives Dedicated

A Dream Fulfilled - Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan Dedicates Archives in Saskatoon, October 19, 2002," reprinted from the *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian*, No. 3, Dec. 2002, pages 1 and 6.

Dedication.

Leonard Doell, President of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, was jubilant as he addressed the 175 members and friends at the Official Opening of the Archives at Bethany Manor on October 19, 2002. "Today," Leonard said, "is a day of fruition."

Over 20 years ago a start was made at establishing an Archives in Rosthern Junior College where a small windowless storeroom was available. Dreams were to obtain the Town Hall in

tions, businesses and individuals to preserve their records, histories and stories for future generations.

It was with gratitude that Leonard thanked the many members and friends for their generous donations of funds and materials. Of course, to keep the Archives viable will require money and creative workers and volunteers. The Society still needs to purchase equipment such as a photo copier, computer, archival storage material, and microfilming equipment, etc. For this,

of this Archive is to collect material about Saskatchewan Mennonite people and their past. Archives are not libraries but research places where information about the contribution of our people can be found. Archives do not, as a rule, collect objects such as sewing machines, old plows, or such objects since these belong in a museum.

Some of the items the Archives has received were mentioned by Wiebe in order to give people an idea what we are collecting and what is valuable. He cited Jacob Friesen's scrapbook collec-



Passing the key. L-r., Bob Sawatzky, Chairman, Elmer Ginter, Past-Chairman, and Peter Schroeder, Past-Manager, representing the Bethany Manor board, pass on the official key to representatives of the MHSS, Leonard Doell, President, Dick Braun, Vice-President, and Dora and Reg Krahn, active volunteers on the Archives Project. Photo - Sask. Men. Historian, Dec. 2002, page 1.

Rosthern but it was torn down because of faulty structure so the dream continued. However, a few years ago two rooms were rented to the MHSS by Bethany Manor. Last year an agreement was made with the Bethany Manor Board for the Archives to move into a new area with better access. Dick Braun, Vice President, acting as Project Manager, recruited many volunteers. There was excellent work and co-operation from all the contractors. Amazingly, the project was completed under its \$30,000 budget.

Leonard went on to express our thanks to the Bethany Manor Board for the co-operation in assisting the MHSS in getting the Archives fully established. He went on to say that being in Bethany Manor the Archives has inherited "a wealth of wisdom from the residents, many of whom will also be part of our Archives volunteer base. The Archives is a fountain and we hope that the material in it will be a source of wisdom for all."

Unfortunately, much valuable historical material has been destroyed in the past and is not available for future generations. This facility, will attempt to assure that this will not happen anymore, and the MHSS can now offer a place for these very important records. The Archives is open to all Mennonite based churches, institu-

the Saskatchewan organization will have to find more donors willing to share in preserving our people's history, heritage and faith.

Archivist Information.

For Victor G. Wiebe, Archivist for the MHSS Archives, this milestone of the opening of the archives was a feeling of achievement. Much work remains to be done and will continue as long as the Archives exists.

In speaking to the gathering at the Official Opening, Victor told the audience how important it was to bring their materials to the Archives for safe keeping. There are still many areas in which the Archives needs material. Wiebe said that one such area is information about Saskatchewan Mennonite businesses. We need to learn more about the success of Mennonite entrepreneurs. Sometimes people bring in materials and do not realize how valuable these items are for the Archives. Recently the Archives had received a Cheyenne Grammar book that is very rare yet very important to people working with native communities. Old hymnaries are interesting although many have already been donated, but once in a while a rare edition with a lot of the user's comments in the margins make them more valuable.

Wiebe reminded the audience that the purpose

tion of memorabilia of John G. Diefenbaker, a past prime minister of Canada. Old *Henderson Directories* are useful because researchers can read what professions or jobs Mennonites had in certain periods of history. Even old post cards are valuable to bring to the Archives. Of course, photos of leaders, churches, schools and pictures from Prussia and Russia are always of great interest. Hopefully, people have names and dates which makes a photo useful and more valuable. Church Bulletins are very valuable when students of Mennonite history want to learn what was being stressed in churches during certain periods of history.

By Archivist Victor G. Wiebe, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.



Leonard Doell, President of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan. Photo - Sask. Men. Historian, Dec. 2002, page 1.

Christian Aid Ministries Inc., Berlin, Ohio

By Robert Rhodes, Mennonite Weekly Review, Newton, Kansas (316-283-3670).

BERLIN, Ohio - When the Amish and other conservative Anabaptists want to help the victims of wars or natural disasters, they often turn to an Ohio-based ministry that is now preparing relief supplies bound for post-invasion Iraq.

Christian Aid Ministries, headquartered in Berlin, Ohio, has begun raising funds and gathering material resources to send to Iraq, joining hundreds of other agencies responding to the humanitarian crisis there.

At CAM's warehouse in Ephrata, Pa., an overseas container filled with food parcels, clothing, comforters and footwear is being prepared for shipment the first week of May - launching what organizers say could turn into a yearlong effort in the war-ravaged country.

CAM's Phil Troyer said the ministry would like to raise between \$500,000 and \$750,000 for the Iraq project. Though fund-raising has just begun, he said response has been positive among the ministry's donors - most of them Old Order Amish and conservative Mennonites.

CAM, founded in 1981, has established ministries in Rumania, Haiti, Nicaragua, Ukraine, Moldova and Liberia, where it supports an orphanage.

In these countries, CAM provides a number of resources, including food, medicine and clothing.

The ministry also provides Bibles and other Christian literature translated into local languages. Among these are the ministry's *Seed of Truth* magazine, which circulates 100,000 copies each month in Haitian Creole, Rumanian, English and Russian. A German newsletter also is published, going mostly to about 400 Mennonite readers in Latin America.

For the effort in Iraq, Troyer said the ministry's book, *101 Favorite Stories from the Bible*, is being translated into Arabic in hopes of reaching readers in the Arab world. The book is already available in 10 languages.

Troyer said CAM is still researching what is needed in Iraq, and developing contacts to help get the material distributed once it arrives. He said CAM will not have its own staff on the ground in Iraq but would rely on local representatives to carry out the ministry's distribution work.

Later, he said, CAM staff will make occasional visits to Iraq to check on the ministry's progress.

According to MinistryWatch, an online stewardship monitor, Christian Aid Ministries received nearly \$134 million in donations and other revenue in 2001, part of a steady trend of growth for the ministry in the past five years. This puts CAM in close company with ministries such as Samaritans Purse (\$150 million) and Christian Children's Fund (\$133 million), according to MinistryWatch.

Also on the monitor's list, Mennonite Central Committee received about \$48 million in donations and other revenues in 2002.

MCC resource generation director Dave Worth said the financial gap between the agencies is in part a reflection of their different ac-

counting and operating procedures.

While CAM relies heavily on unpaid volunteers and sustains only nominal overhead, MCC has more paid staff and property and partners with local agencies in the 60 countries it serves. Worth said the two agencies, whose Pennsylvania warehouses are close together, often cooperate on various projects.

Troyer said that CAM has some paid staff but that about 1,000 volunteers each month keep the ministry running, especially the busy Ephrata warehouse, where shipments to other countries

are packed and loaded.

Though Iraq is not one of CAM's regular ministry fields, Troyer said the agency could continue sending aid there for a year or more, depending on the needs they encounter.

He said CAM undertook similar short-term projects in Kosovo in 1999, and more recently in drought-stricken Ethiopia and southern Africa. In 1998, CAM also responded in Honduras and Nicaragua in the wake of Hurricane Mitch.

By Robert Rhodes, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, April 28/03, pages 1-2.

Christian Aid Ministries was founded in 1981 by David Troyer of the Beachy Amish. David Troyer is the son of Noah Troyer, an Amish lumberyard owner in Millerburg, near Berlin, Ohio. David was working for his father but had a burden for helping the needy. The interest was kindled when David and a group of men went to hear Richard Wurmbrand, a former prisoner in Rumania because of his faith. The Amish started a group to assist Christians in the former Soviet Bloc in various countries, including Rumania. Shortly thereafter David started Christian Aid for Rumania. As more countries opened up and other projects were undertaken the name was changed to Christian Aid Ministries.

The vision of CAM was to create a mission outreach and charitable ministry which Old Order and Amish Mennonites could comfortably support. MCC, by comparison, is more influenced and controlled by Mennonites of an "Evangelical" persuasion, often hindering its understanding of and relationship with Conservative, Amish and "Old Order" Mennonites, with some board and committee members such as Harold Jantz, who see them as targets for "conversion" to their religious culture rather than as the backbone of the Christian church and as the only component of the Mennonite community experiencing consistent solid growth.

The majority of the CAM staff are Mennonite and Amish. CAM also has a big warehouse in Ephrata, Pa. where all the food parcels are packaged. They also have a big meat canner in Ephrata.

CAM provides annual reports. Its overhead costs for wages and staff are around one percent of donations. According to a *World Magazine* report, CAM was rated in the top 20 charitable relief organizations.

CAM does work all over the world. They have ongoing work in Rumania, including a large farm with a pasteurization plant. The milk is given away to orphanages, poor people and used in their own orphanages. Grain is raised on the farm and donated to the needy. They do harvesting for others. They operate a number of orphanages in Rumania. CAM has a food distribution work and warehouse in Liberia feeding 10,000 children daily. They feed 10,000 children and more in Haiti as well as other food distribution. They have a warehouse in Moldova, near Rumania, distributing food parcels. They operate medical clinics in Nicaragua, Haiti, Moldova, Rumania, Liberia.

CAM does international emergency projects. They have been involved in emergency food relief in Ethiopia, North Korea, Afghanistan. They have already sent some food parcels for Iraq.

CAM has an extensive literature work translating and distributing both wholesome fictional reading material as well as doctrinal books. They have 12 translations of *101 Favourite Stories from the Bible* and are working on six more. The German edition of this book was widely distributed among the Mennonites in Mexico by Mexican Mennonite Aid, the Amish organization working in partnership with Old Colony Mennonites on various fronts. 133,000 copies of *Seed of Truth*, a Christian family magazine are produced and distributed monthly in four languages.

At home CAM provides disaster response services. It will probably get involved in several areas devastated by the recent tornados in the American mid-west. They have been involved in supporting relief and rebuilding work in Central America. In 1998 CAM partnered with the Kleine Gemeinde in Belize providing funds for emergency relief and longterm rebuilding efforts in Honduras (see *Pres.*, No. 13, pages 51-52).

A special project was the CD project after September 11. The Antrim Mennonite Choir from Antrim, Ohio, recorded a CD and 220,000 copies were produced. By the end of November, 2001, they had 45 buses and groups who went to New York City to distribute the CDs. After the anniversary of Sept. 11 the Antrim Mennonite Choir actually went to New York City singing on the streets, in subway stations, nursing homes and churches. They also sang for the police and firefighters. Some of the men went to ground zero and actually personally handed a CD to President Bush. They distributed another 15-20,000 copies of the CD. The Editor.

Readers interested in more information about CAM may call Alvin Mast in the Berlin, Ohio, offices at 330-893-2428 (E-mail: amast@camoh.org).

Mailing address: Christian Aid Ministries, Box 360, Berlin, Ohio, 44610-0360.

News from the Gemeinden

News of interest to Old Colony, Sommerfelder, Kleine Gemeinde and Reinländer Mennonites in North and South America. Satan is working zealously to slander, libel and denigrate the conservative Mennonites, steadfast descendants of the Flemish Anabaptist martyrs, who are seeking valiantly to remain faithful to the tradition of following Jesus. All Gemeinden and denominations have their calling from God and have made important contributions to the Kingdom of Christ and to the wider Mennonite community deserving of acknowledgment and celebration.

“Die Brücke”

Nuevo Ideal, Durango, Mexico. About a year ago, Jakob Wall, Nuevo Ideal, began with the production of their own colony newspaper. At that time it consisted mainly of news from “Kurze Nachrichten”, a weekly information and news magazine from Jorge Reimer, Cuauhtemoc.

Today the *Brücke* has evolved further and provides much news from the Colony Nuevo Ideal and also other news from the entire world. The newspaper is also interesting, since Wall and his two daughters, take turns working through the large number of photos.

Although they are still working with losses and are only printing 500 copies per issue in a colony with over 8,000 residents, Wall gazes optimistically into the future. Working together with other newspapers like the “*Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*” or “*Die Mennonitische Post*” could support and assist the work of Jakob Wall.

From *Men. Post*, Sept. 20/02, page 4.

Land Prices.

The land prices in the [Manitoba] Colony, where the elements are unsuitable for agriculture (e.g. little rain, little well-water for irrigation), have fallen significantly in many cases from 10 years ago. On locations, which are favourable for businesses (along the highways and public roads), the prices have risen drastically. At Neustädt, Col. Vianna, for example, a single acre was actually sold for \$30,000 [U.S.] (calculated in milk, this equals some 132,000 liters!) A new, quickly growing business center is developing there - by far the largest in the Swift Colony. This last transaction demonstrates how vitally important businesses are among the Mennonites and

in which direction the economic developments are heading among the Mennonites in the Cuauhtemoc region.

Along the highway near Cuauhtemoc one site with three acres and simple buildings without particular value were sold for \$140,000 [U.S.]. This is also somewhere around \$30,000 per acre, perhaps a little less. A few years ago, the price was only half as high, which people were hardly able to comprehend. Along the highway, also along the westerly road to La Junta, the Mexicans have already purchased a significant section of Mennonite land, especially for businesses, even though they may shield themselves behind Mennonite names. The landowners in the Manitoba Colony have no land title, and therefore, cannot legally sell their land. They are only entered in the colony registry. It has always been accepted as the law, that only Mennonites can own land in the colony but with the proliferation of businesses it will not be possible to continue in this manner. One Mennonite was astounded when there were more Mexicans present than Mennonites at a program regarding water distribution west of Cuauhtemoc. Evidently, they had more to say about the colony's land than anyone had thought.

In many colonies there is a “Zentrum” for business. One example is the village 305 in Los Jagueyes, where the businesses are always concentrating more and more and as confirmation, the street was asphalted last year. Another example, is the intersection in village 72, where many asphalted streets meet, and business people recognize the opportunities and always take more advantage of them. As a result the land there is rising in value.



Jakob Wall and daughter Tina in their office in the small city of Nuevo Ideal. Photo - Kennert Giesbrecht- Men. Post, Sept. 20/02, page 4.

Mar. 7/03/*Die Post*, Mar. 21/03, pages 16-17.

Land in Coahuila.

Too good to be true? The Manitoba Colony was offered a 5000 hectare parcel of land in Coahuila State, which seems to be a good opportunity for the Mennonites. One drives 68 km. from Camargo along the highway to Ojinaga, turns and drives 90 km along a gravelled road up to the land. According to reports, the water table is only 40 feet down. An examination of the soil reveals that it is suitable for at least a dozen crops including, cotton, sorgo, watermelons, oats, wheat, melons, etc. The state government is so anxious to induce the Mennonites to come, they have already promised financial assistance for the irrigation and also with bringing hydro to the site, pipes for irrigation, etc. At the same time the land is relatively cheap. According to reports, the water is not scarce in the region, for there is a mine only 12 km distant, and the earth (stone with mineral) is pumped with water 300 km. to Monclova through a thick pipe.

Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*, Mar. 14/03/*Die Post*, Mar. 21/03, pages 16-17.

Senior's Home, Nord Colony.

Progress on the expansion of the Senior's Home in No. 38 (see *Pres.*, No. 18, page 66). The Gemeinde in the Nord Colony is building a new wing onto the north side of the Old Folk's Home in No. 38, 30 by 90 feet, which will be reserved for intensive care residents. The roof, the doors and windows are finished, but much work is still needed inside. There are to be four rooms for nursing patients, as well as fully equipped living quarters for workers and home parents.

The expenses are being mainly covered by free will offerings. The support in an auction the previous year was good as well as the response to a solicitation. Envelopes were dis-



Tina Wall works on her computer to prepare the latest edition of *Die Brücke*. Photo - *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*, Sept. 2, 2002.

Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*,

tributed to all the neighbours where everyone could place their gift for this work.

Jakob Friesen, No. 38, and Herman Neufeld, No. 38 1/2, are in charge of the accounting for the project and Gerhard Loewens, Santa Clara, are the house parents.

Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*, Apr. 25/03/*Die Post*, May. 2/03, page 20.

Two Hills, Alberta.

Almost every week new families from Ontario, Manitoba, Mexico, Belize and Tabor, come to this region to make their homes here (Two Hills - *Pres.*, No. 18, page 69). Three are already over 100 Mennonite students in the school. Two Mennonite teachers are being paid by the Government.

In order to hold worship services a building has been rented. There are plans for building a church a half mile west of Two Hills on Highway 45.

There are many houses to be purchased in the Two Hills region, although they are presently a little more expensive than a year ago. A house in the neighbourhood can cost from \$100,000 to \$130,000. If located more distantly, they are cheaper. Purchasers required 25 percent downpayment with the balance payable on terms through the bank.

The Vorsteher for the Two Hills region are



Maria babysits her sister Agatha, while her parents are working on the field. Photo - *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*, Jan. 7/02, front cover.

Abram Berg and Abram Wall, both from Mexico.

During the past winter it was not as cold as earlier but nonetheless with a foot of snow. Since it was dryer than normal the previous summer and there was not so much feed, some have sold off some of the livestock.

The women are happy for the very fine gardens, they can make. The fields should soon be prepared for planting out. Some of the Mennonites work out on the farms and in the winter they are drivers on the logging trucks, hauling wood.

The Double A Trailer Company, which made one trailer per day in the beginning, is now producing four and can sell all of them. The work is increasing and they are planning to build a large factory, two miles south of Two Hills.

Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*, Apr. 4/03/*Die Post*, Apr. 17/03, page 18.

Farming Center.

Over only a few years, Mennonites have purchased over 50,000 hectares in the Las Bombas/Los Juncos/Oasis/Neuva Holanda region south of Ojinaga, and the interest is still continuing. As of yet, not nearly all the land has been cleared of mesquite, but it is only a matter of a short time when they will be farming more land there than in the Manitoba Colony.

More families are moving there, more wells are being made (registered later, wherever possible), and a great variety of crops raised, and indeed, many harvests in the same year. With a little luck they can actually raise two crops of beans in one year, if they take the chance to plant them very early. This year many took the chance and the beans froze. They planted for the second time, and for this reason the seed beans became scarce, so that the N. Casas Grandes Mennonites only barely got enough "chase" seed.

Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*, May 9/03/*Die Post*, May 16/03, page 20.

Earning a Gift.

The Mennonites earned a huge gift! The juice factory and apple garden owner, the Langer Corporation, wanted to get rid of a large apple garden, and decided to give it to the Mennonites. The Cornelius Letkeman family, Quinta Lupita, bought it for \$255,000 dollars. For reasons of accounting and income tax, the money had to be given to a Mennonite organization in the USA. It was, however, not quite that simple. As the property was in Mexico, a Mexican organization had to be legally established. The

complicated details have not all been worked out yet.

The reason why the firm wanted to benefit the Mennonites is of special interest for the Mennonites in Mexico. The corporation was so impressed with the honesty, work ethic, and virtuous characteristics of the Mennonites, that they mentioned, that they had earned the giant gift. *J. Reimer: Because the Langer Corporation is an international firm, it was impossible to them to simply make the gift direct to the Mennonites here [Mexico]. There are continuing negotiations.*

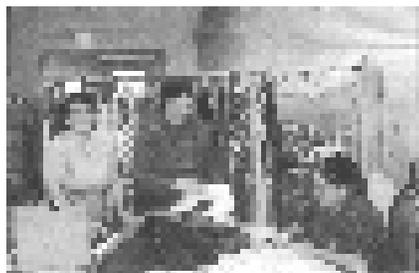
Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*, May 9/03/*Die Post*, May 16/03, page 20.

School Closings.

Closing the school year is a time for happy memories. It goes without saying in many villages that the teacher with the children drive into the mountains or elsewhere for a picnic. Usually the location is the mountain Sainapichic, a wonderful, scenic local place in the mountains. Some of the teachers, however, are of the view, that perhaps it is better and cheaper to make something, which would serve as a remembrance in the long term. Klaas Friesen, Los Jaguayes, is an example, who made a CD with his children singing, of which every student received a copy. J.Reimer from *K.N.*, Apr. 4/03/*Die Post*, Apr. 17/03, page 18.

Winnipeg, Canada: MCC reports sales of \$5,000,000.00 in 54 "Thrift Stores" across Canada, an increase of 20 percent over the previous year. The Thrift Stores sell mainly used items donated by Mennonites and others. Over 3000 volunteers operated the stores. From a report in *Men. Post*, Nov. 15/02, page 4.

Editor's Note: The MCC Thrift Stores are actively supported by conservative Mennonites and it is good to see MCC also reinvest some of these funds through *Die Post* and other services benefiting the community.



L.-r.: Anni Rempel (Bernardo), Aylmer, widow Susanna Enns, Aylmer, and Anna Neufeld (Peter), Mount Salem, volunteer in the Thrift Store in Aylmer, Ontario, every Thursday morning. Photo - *Men. Post*, Nov. 15/02, page 4.

"Doing the best we can"

"Doing the best we can," by Sarah Kessinger, from *Hutchison News, Hutchison, Kansas*, October 14, 2001.

A few years ago, Anna Wall's family left behind their tight-knit farming berg.

Like their ancestors who left Germany, Prussia and Canada, the Walls packed up and said goodbye to family and friends in their Mexican colony to move north where men could find work.

Many in Wall's generation, known as Old Colony German Mennonites, lack enough farmland or a sustainable living off the fields of Mexico. Today many are finding jobs in Texas, Oklahoma and southwest Kansas.

"We could not feed our family. Not enough," Wall said, gently rocking baby John to sleep at a clinic in Garden City.

An estimated 2,500 Mennonites from Mexico now reside in Kansas.

Their numbers continue to swell as family members join colonies recently established in Haskell County and the homes, and occasional churches and German schools in nearby communities.

Wall tells in halting English of her seven children. Most now attend the "English schools," or local public schools.

As she talked, Wall occasionally consulted in German with her sister, Tina. Tina and her family joined them last May.

The women speak a language native to the lowlands of Germany a century ago. It is rarely heard outside their group today.

"It'd be like finding someone who speaks old English from 200 years ago," said Chris Johnson, a University of Kansas specialist in Volga German, a separate dialect long spoken in central Kansas.

Johnson is part of a team funded by the Kansas Humanities Council that is documenting the Mexican Mennonites' language.

"Economic necessity has drawn them here," Johnson said. "They've had a very hard life."

New world Mexico's poor rural economy, coupled with drought in northern states, has led to emigration.

"There's not much money there and the drought was bad....If people work here for somebody, they can get enough to eat and send their kids to school," said one Mennonite father.

He hires out for fieldwork when it's available. The father - who asked that their names not be used - and his wife and five children settled in a Garden City trailer park in 1994 and have since learned some English, using German at home.

Life is good here, he said, but taxes are high and he misses his family and the slower lifestyle of their century-old colony in Chihuahua, Mexico.

"I was born and raised there. I have my own farm there. I'd go back in the morning if I could," he said.

Others echoed his sentiments. At a Garden City park one Sunday, a young man seated in a picnic shelter with several of his brethren spoke reservedly of their migrations.

"We've had some years of not so much rain, so I had to come up and work," said Jacob Wolfe, a native of Ciudad Cuauhtemoc in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua.

"I like the work," he said of laboring in a farm machine shop. "It's a little hard sometimes to find work. We ask around at farms."

Many German Mennonites mention the old colonies near Cuauhtemoc as their southern home. But fewer return there in the winter now.

Wolfe, long-legged and blond, resembled those seated around him beardless and clothed in well-worn work shirts and jeans. After spending early Sunday in their Sublette church, the group and their wives came to the park.

The women, wearing kerchiefs and homemade dresses, talked nearby at a swing set. They push their youngsters - tow-headed boys and girls who play among the darker-complected children of Latino immigrants.

They're Farmers.

While both Latinos and Mennonites arrive from Mexico, they are distinct cultures in their home countries.

In general, foreigners come for work in the meatpacking plants of Liberal, Dodge City and Finney County. But not the new Mennonites.

"They're farmers," said Jose Flores, southwest manager of the state's Farmworker Program, a health-care outreach effort. "A few will work in the feedlots or larger dairies, but most are farm hands."

Flores grew up in north-central Mexico, where Mennonite colonies nestled into the sierra are considered outsiders but are admired for their production.

"They're famous for their cheese they make," Flores said. "They're famous for their farms. The land they had, they made it produce."

They worked it; they were not waiting for God to do it."

But Mexicans and Mennonites rarely intermingle. Old Colony Mennonites build their cluster of homes and their lives around the belief that they're separate from other, more worldly cultures.

Mennonites have established colonies throughout the Americas over the past century. An informal, word-of-mouth network binds them and brings new families to Kansas from thousands of miles south.

The colonies originated from the Anabaptists of 16th century Europe. The families now moving to southwest Kansas are among a variety of Mennonite churches and communities worldwide that are very loosely associated.

Longtime Mennonites in Kansas are not closely related to the new arrivals, although some established congregations are lending a hand to the new families.

While the men often find jobs on farms, they often lack permits for legal work.

"It is hard to get papers," Wolfe admitted.

Many hold Canadian passports or visas due to their ties to Mennonite colonies in Canada. They gain permission to pass through the United States and have had little trouble remaining to work here, said Flores.

Culture Clash.

For Anna Wall's family, farming was the backbone of her Mexican colony where she grew up without motor-powered cars. She believes farming will be the future.

"I always tell the children they'll work on the farm like their dad."

But moving north into a society that highly values formal education, culture clash is inevitable.

Greeley County schools, for example, have wrestled with absenteeism among the German Mennonite students. Their parents, who work in local dairies or fields, expect their children to conform to a traditional lifestyle.

"Often they'll stay home to help when an animal is being butchered or there's a new baby in the family and the mother needs them to help watch the other children," said Cindy Smith, migrant education coordinator in Greeley County. "They feel that's more important than being at school, so we kind of have a difficulty with that. We continue to learn to encourage them but also to be aware of their cultural differences."

Indeed, communities and schools throughout southwest Kansas boast a variety of cultures. Garden City officials dedicated a month this summer to educating residents about diversity among them. That included a video on the public cable channel about the area's new Mennonites.

Garden City schools enrolled 20 to 30 Mennonite students from the old colonies in recent years. Several not only arrive from Mexico, but also from Bolivia and Canada.

Local school officials lament the large turnover in what remains a very migrant community. Some families, however, are opting to stay put if they can find year-round jobs.

A colony has sprung up in Sublette, where families have gathered trailers and small homes. A church and school complete the community.

But challenges such as adequate health care remain, particularly with language barriers.

"We have Spanish interpreters, but we don't have German," said Ruthanna Ray, public relations director at Stevens County Hospital in Hugoton. "We are seeing a lot more German Mennonites, but normally they're not comfortable coming to a doctor of another culture."

State health official Vada Winger said lack of health insurance is a great concern for the new families. But as more arrive, they are able to help each other in finding low-cost care.

"My experience with them has been very good," Winger said. "They're very interested in their children, very family-oriented."

For Wall, her children have been the bridge to her new home. She learned English from them after they attended local school. As they feel more comfortable, she does, too.

"I always feel at home here," she said. "I think we're doing the best we can."

From *Hutchison News, Hutchison, Kansas, USA, October 14, 2001. Used by permission.*

Education

Sept. 11 inhibits Education.

Sept. 11 inhibits education in the Colonies. After September 11 of the preceding year, the U.S.A. has become more strict. The U.S.A. no longer allows anyone in so easily which may be the reason why Mennonites are often experiencing difficulties in obtaining a visa.

At the beginning of October (2002), a group of Old Colony school teachers and representatives of the school committee were planning to travel to the Amish in the U.S.A. [Ohio] in order to learn more about the education of children. But some of the members of the group were unable to obtain visas, making it too expensive for the smaller group to travel. As a result none were able to go, even though the Amish had already made all the preparations.

A number of Amish are shortly again expected to arrive in Mexico in order to help in several schools.

Two additional members have been voted into the school committee: Heinrich Hamm and Bernhard Wiebe, both from No. 6 1/2.

Report by Jorge Reimer from *Kurze Nachrichten*, Oct. 31, 2002, published in *Die Post*, Nov. 15/02, page 18.

Evening Schools.

Among the many topics at the annual meeting of the Manitoba Colony on Jan. 11, support was given, as never before, to hold gatherings like evening schools for the youths. The church and colony leaders voiced the necessity, to offer evening schools for all, so that what has been learned is not forgotten. The village mayors were encouraged to support and uplift the schools, and that only High German should be spoken in the schools and during recess. This is being attempted in always more schools, but it takes much effort. The school committee and others recognize the necessity of learning another language beside Plautdietsch, and that the High German is being lost, even if it remains the main language in the church, school and for letter writing and other communications. The importance of understanding High German in the worship services was emphasized.

It is being planned that the ministers in the worship services will regularly remind the youth regarding the time and place of the gatherings; for which they will receive a list, so that the announcements are certain and orderly.

The expectations from the school teachers are always becoming greater while the help, upon which they can depend remains only modest.

Report by J.Reimer, from *K.N.*, Jan. 17/03/*Die Post*, Feb. 7/03, page 17.

Youth Sing.

As reported in the last KN, the Old-Colony youths are being encouraged to be involved on more edifying gatherings such as evening classes, which are being offered by many members of the Gemeinde. Bernhard Loewens conduct evening classes in Kronsgart (No. 27), where 100 youths meet weekly. On January 19, this group pre-

sented a program with singing in a large granary in Blumenort. The building was fully occupied with interested neighbours from various villages. They had brought Faspas along which contributed to a pleasant atmosphere.

Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*, Jan. 24/03/*Die Post*, Feb. 7/03, page 18.

Education, Man. Colony.

The Gemeinde in the Manitoba Colony is undertaking various measures to raise the education in the colony. The school committee, with the support of the Gemeinde leadership planned an evening for all 13 worship houses in the colony in order to offer the youths additional instruction. The attendance in this first round ranged everywhere from 60 to 160. Mostly there was someone from the Ohms in attendance. The plan is to begin immediately with second round. The other weekly evening schools also appear to have had a great influence. The school committee is working towards the goal of implementing the evening schools in all villages. A reform is also being implemented in the day schools. In always more locals the children are being bused together, where they are being instructed with other text books, such as those from the *CEE*.

Gerhard Hamm, a member of the committee from Lowe Farm, has arranged that the teachers can obtain all the necessary text books from him. *CEE* is a publishing venture, which provides Christian German instructional material for use in Mennonite schools, regardless of which



Education: Helen Berg, daughter of Jakob and Maria Berg from Mount Salem, Ontario. Helen is in the fourth class (grade) in the Old Colony Christian School. Twelve teachers, two teachers' assistants and the principal work in the school. Approximately 288 students are attending this school this year. Part of the instruction is held in the basement classrooms of the Old Colony church in Aylmer. The largest part of the instruction - some 90 percent - is English. Photo Men. Post, Nov. 15, 2002, page 4. For more information in the Old Colony School System in Ontario, see Pres., No. 18, pages 131-133.

church-persuasion they might be (see *Pres.*, No. 19, pages 116-20).

Eddy Plett, from *Nachrichten aus dem Schulzentrum*, Feb.-March, 2003, page 1.

Auction for Schools.

An auction took place in January at Cerro de la Estancia in No. 102, which was organized to support the schools of the Reinländer Gemeinde. From the food, the draws and donated items, the auction brought over 100,000 pesos. This was more than had been anticipated. 500 tickets were sold for a trailer and a set of tires for a pickup. The expenses for the auction were 24,000 pesos.

School Bibles, New Testaments, and other books, as well as two vans are to be bought from the money. In addition, the tuition fees for poor children are to be paid therefrom.

The school committee of the Reinländer Gemeinde in the Swift Colony has only recently been established and the following are the members: Johan Peters (No. 103), Cornelius Krahn (No. 104), Jakob Heinrichs (No. 118), Jakob Teichroeb (No. 117), Franz Rempel (No. 112), and Heinrich Rempel (No. 101).

Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*, Feb. 21/03/*Die Post*, Mar. 7/03, page 17.

Officials Visit.

On February 7, a big meeting was held in a large granary in the village of Kronsthal (No. 27), with evening students, parents, Gemeinde and Colony leaders, as well as invited officials from the government. The officials had earlier expressed the wish to be invited to attend such a gathering. Spiritual and social orientation were given to the youths, songs were sung (including Christian Spanish songs), and finally also coffee and cookies. The officials in attendance (the mayor of Cusi, the secretary of the City Council of Cuauhtemec, the police commandant and other law administrators, a doctor, etc.) were very positively impressed by the wholesome demeanour of the youths and the positive outlook of the entire endeavour by the leaders. They praised the evening schools and such meetings and gave encouragement to continue working further in this manner and method. In Kronsthal, 100 youths meet every Tuesday for evening school.

A special reason for the invitation of the officials in part was the concern which these people often express regarding the poor driving and disorder of the Mennonite youths [If they would compare their youth with those in Steinbach, Winkler, and Winnipeg, the leaders in Mexico would have much to be proud of. The Editor]. The event appeared to bring results, for it demonstrated an entirely different story to the officials than what they usually hear. Their commentary manifested a new understanding.

A similar meeting took place in the evening of the 27th in the Gemeinde house in Lowe Farm, this time without the officials, for they had only wanted to take part in one such meeting.

Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*, Feb. 21/03/*Die Post*, Mar. 7/03, page 18.

Support for Campeche, Mexico

Hurricane Isadore.

From September 21-26, 2002, the Mennonite Colonies in Campeche, Mexico, were severely damaged by Hurricane Isadore. Through the forbearance of God, not a single Mennonite fatality resulted from the storm. The following letter dated October 13, 2002, by Heinrich and Helena Wall, Yalnon Colony, Campeche, describes what took place. The Editor.

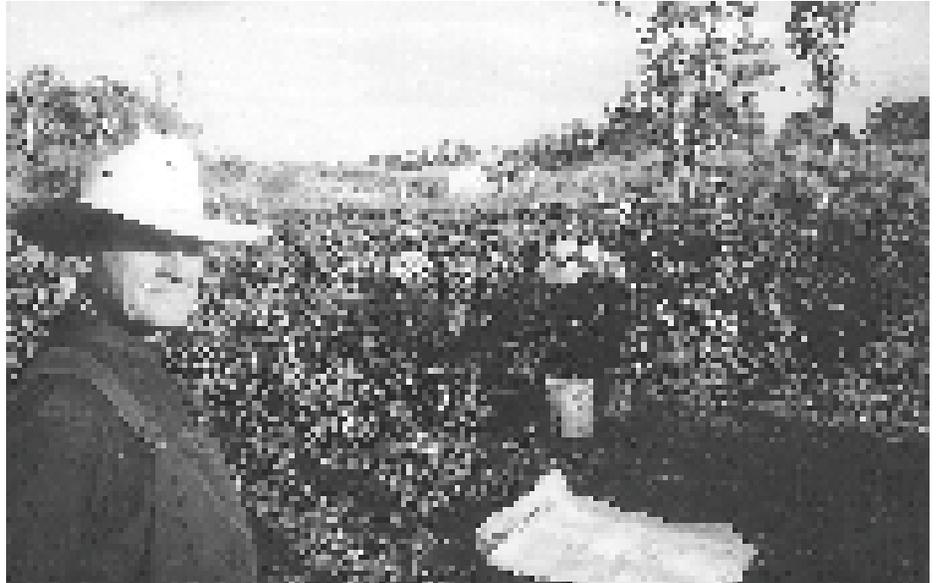
It was Saturday evening, September 21, 2002, that the clouds had such an unusual appearance, as if there might be extremely bad weather somewhere. It also rained intermittently until Sunday evening the 22nd. Then it became very windy, with a strong wind and rain during the entire night. Many trees fell over in the woods, and in village No. 3, the roof of a large dwelling house was ripped off. Monday, the 23rd, the weather was much calmer. We were glad at the time that the bad weather was over. But then the water from far and wide ran together in the low areas (valleys). Here in Yalnon, the two villages, Schöndorf (No. 5) and Grünfeld (No. 6), in particular, were severely flooded. Soon it started raining anew together with wind until finally it ceased on Wednesday the 25th. The weather changed, but the water continued to rise in the mentioned villages, until it stood 1 1/2 and 2 meters deep. All the residents of the two mentioned villages had to leave. By the time the last ones left, the horses pulling the buggy were almost under water. In the Chavi Colony most of the villages were also under water.

When I went through our village on September 26, I met two men in Hochfeld, Chavi, who had managed to make it through the water with great exertion. They came seeking for help. Fortunately, they had met the soldiers from the Marines who were also willing to help them. After the soldiers had picked up the people from the village Monte Bello, a number from here drove with wagons to the point up to which the soldiers were able to bring the Mennonites from Chavi. They had to stop and reboard a number of times. During the night from Sept. 25-25, 108 souls stayed in the two-storey house in Hochfeld.

Many people had to abandon their homes and stay with other people and they had to worry regarding how their furniture, fallen over closets, books, important papers and whatever other goods in their houses were swimming around in the dirty water.

During the time of the bad weather resulting from Hurricane Isadore, it rained from 22 to 25 inches here in Colony Yalnon. By now the water is already gone from most of the houses, the houses have been cleaned, and the contents which were not ruined have been restored. It has resulted in much damage. It was also announced that there was much destruction in Merida, Yucaton. The electrical wires were torn down, many roofs were torn off or damaged, and thousands of pigs and poultry destroyed.

President Fox and the entire Mexican government has already been very good and thanks to the indigenous people, much help has been promised to us.....Heinrich D. and Helena Wall, Apdo. 13,



Picking peppers on the farm of Ohm Isaak Fehr, Neuendorf, No. 4, El Temporal, Campeche. Ohm Isaak is also a school teacher. The Colonies are blessed with consecrated and spirit-filled Christian leaders in the tradition of our Flemish Anabaptist forebears. Photo - Feb., 2003, without Ohm Isaak's consent.

C.P. 24800, Hecelchakan, Campeche, Mexico.

Damage.

The situation is made difficult not only by the amount of water, but by the quality of water. It was drawn by force from the sea and contained damaging characteristics. Some people got wounds on the feet from the water and could only walk with great pain. The cows, which were standing in water, were emaciated in a very short time and in very poor condition. The neighbours usually drank well water, but which now was not safe to drink. They were dependant on purchased water, but it was hard to obtain since the traffic was disrupted for days at a time and at places is still difficult. All plants - the corn as well as trees, because sick and rust brown. The leaves all fell off the trees. Only the future will tell whether the salt water will be harmful to the ground. Presently where the water level is falling, it is falling everywhere.

In winter, when it gets colder, some colonies are planning to plant potatoes. And also beans, as soon as it gets dry enough. One colony severely hit was La Nueva Trinidad. The colony, with some 70 families, has not lost hope. The harvest there was not too bad and just before the hurricane someone had brought home beautiful ears of corn, even though they were already a little hard. Only few days later it was all destroyed and they are completely dependant on the help from others....

Report by Jorge Reimer from *Kurze Nachrichten*, Oct. 4/02, published in *Die Post*, Oct. 18/02, page 1-2.

Aftermath.

Oct. 4. Immediately after the hurricane the weather was extremely nice. Soon it again rained hard. The other hurricane (Lilly), which had also been on its way here, apparently turned away, and caused us no damage as of yet.

It is fall. The birds are singing and whistling so beautifully. First in summer the cattle and the plants thirsted for water, but what the drought had not killed was now devastated in the flood. But praise and thanks to God that nothing physically happened to us humans. We hope - as it says in the song: Der Wolken, Luft und Winden gibt Wege, lauf und Bahn. Der wird auch Wege finden, da dein Fuß gehen kann.

Oct. 8. In the morning it is often foggy, in the afternoon - warm sunshine, and by late afternoon sometimes rain or drizzle. This is what we wished for when the corn was still small. Presently the ground is still full of water and with every rain, everything is immediately standing in water.

The helicopters are criss-crossing almost everyday over this region and are inspecting the status of the water. On Oct. 8 a helicopter brought 40 double packs with nourishment and a rubber mattress to village No. 5 in order to assist the victims. Eleven families out of the village had to leave their homes, and as of yet, not nearly all have been able to return, because the travelling between this and the other villages had been disrupted. But they were able to drive to the small city of Dzibalchen. There were a number of new houses under construction in this village but the families were not yet living in them.

On Oct. 5 a strong wind again blew before the rain. This time it came from the southeast instead of the west. The neighbouring haymow (Scheune) from village No. 2, which had been blown over from the wind, now rolled back over and stood upright. Regarding the question, whether one should ask for help, the Vorsteher (Heinrich Klassen) of the Colony, answered yes, but did not know from whom.

By Johann Neufeld, *Men. Post*, Oct. 18/03, page 18.

Support.

One of the positive results arising in the aftermath of the hurricane was the magnificent relief effort mounted by the Mennonites in Chihuahua to help their brothers and sisters in Campeche. Some of this activity is described in the following reports by Jorge Reimer, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico. The Editor.

On October 29, 2002, beans were being loaded in the village of Reinland, Manitoba Colony, for Campeche. They are to arrive in Hopelchen by the weekend where they are to be divided among the various colonies. The semi-trailer carried 30 ton - 28 tons of beans were loaded, and in addition, hundreds of copies of *Diese Steine* [A history of the Russian Mennonites]. The bean crop around Cuauhtemoc was only small and most of the beans there had to be purchased.

The driver stated that it was about 3000 km. from here [Cuauhtemoc] to Hopelchen. The transport company "Tres Guerras" is charging 24,000 pesos for the trip. Along the way there are 18 checkpoints ("casetas"), if one detours two. They charge between 45 and 300 pesos each; most of them between 100 and 200 pesos.

More money, beans and other goods are still being collected in most of the colonies (Swift, Nord, Las Virginias, Buenos Aires, El Cuervo, etc.). Collections are being held in some [Old Colony] churches and otherwise the goods are brought to a particular location. Another load is to be taken to Campeche later.

Many people have the concern about how all the assistance will be distributed. This requirement is made much easier in this instance. The representatives of the Mennonite "Hilfskomitee" (Johan Fehr and Peter Rempel), from the Amish, from MCC (Corny Froese and Klaas King), and from the local Mennonites, found that a good beginning had already been made. With the help of an engineer, each colony had already made a detailed list of the damage suffered by every family. The families will receive assistance according to this information. The purpose of the list was to request assistance from the government.

The second advantage is that there are trustworthy people and organizations there who will take responsibility for the distribution upon themselves. Many representatives of the colonies [Vorsteher] and the Amish with see to a fair distribution and if some goods are distributed among the indigenous people, they will be assisted by a local civil organization....

Goods for Campeche are being gathered in a granary in Reinland [Manitoba Colony]. The granaries here are like arenas in Canada.] On the 29th some was already sent on the journey including dishes, clothes, large rolls of material (cloth), curtains, food items, books, etc. More is still needed as some families have lost almost their entire household contents. One example: a family which was in the U.S.A. at the time, had eight new *Gesangbücher* - one for each child - carefully stored in the bottom shelf of a chest for later use. They were ruined completely together with other items. Some *Gesangbücher* are being sent and used ones are also much appreciated.

Many tomatoes were planted immediately after the hurricane. When hurricane Isidore brought so much water to the Mennonite colonies and region



Johann Neufeld, No. 3, Grünfeld, El Temporal, Campeche, one of the well-known Old Colony writers in southern Mexico. I am indebted to Johan and Mrs. Neufeld for their gracious hospitality during my visit. Photo - Feb., 2003.

in Campeche, resulting in much flooding, the tomato plants were still standing in the green houses in Santa Rosa, a small Sommerfelder Colony. As soon as the water had receded and the fields had dried they planted them. After three weeks they were about a foot high and looked good. Tomatoes are a good income and create work for the entire family. Only few have the facilities for raising tomatoes, watermelons, chilies, etc. It is expected that there will be many opportunities for fruit and vegetable farming once the necessary appurtenances have been completed. Observers report that there are many opportunities which the colonies also recognize, but they are not yet in a position to take advantage of them.

Latest reports from El Temporal, Campeche. Most of the families in Campo 5, El Temporal, had moved back into their homes. Other houses will first have to be repaired. They have beautiful fall weather - cool mornings and nice sunshine during the day. Occasionally there are clouds, but they are dispersed by the wind before there is actual rain.

Many of the coal pits have become unusable because of the over abundant water. Some have dug new ones, others are still able to use the old ones. And thus the former everyday life has started again. Since there has been no crop, other than a few corn plants, and some grass which quickly grew yet in fall, the only income apparently will be the small quantity of milk from the cows and the coals.

Nor will any combine drive on the large leased parcel which had been seeded by the colony. Quite a bit of grass has grown there which will be mowed and baled. Perhaps it will allow the people to feed their livestock through the winter. The milk price is 1.40 per litre.....

Report by Jorge Reimer from *Kurze Nachrichten*, Oct. 31, 2002, published in *Die Post*, Nov. 15/02, page 5.

Wells in Campeche.

When a well in Campeche has been drilled up to 100 feet deep, there is a layer where air streams up. Mennonites have observed that a fairly strong cur-

rent of air comes to the top when it rains. The airstream from the depths is so strong that an orange will not easily fall in. When it is not raining the airstream is downwards. Before hurricane Isidore came to land, one Mennonite said, that air was pressing upwards from their well and that apparently a hurricane was about to hit.

In the El Temporal Colony, villages No. 2 and No. 4 have a village well which are approximately 300 feet deep. It is not possible for everyone to make themselves a well. Together with the pump, [power] plant, PVC distribution pipes, cistern, and water pipes, the costs can reach 13,000 peso per well which they have borrowed from the Amish in Hopelchen. They have not sought help from the government. The neighbours pay 1.00 peso per ton. In this manner a reserve is established for the necessary repairs.

Report by Jorge Reimer from *Kurze Nachrichten*, Oct. 31, 2002, published in *Die Post*, Nov. 15/02, page 5.

Additional Aid.

Further aid for Campeche was promised at a sitting of the "Hilfskomitees" together with the Vorsteher of the Manitoba, Swift, Nord, and Santa Rita Colonies, and plans were developed based on the information gathered there by Galen Nissley of the Amish, and shared with the Mennonites in Cuauhtemoc. The nine colonies in Campeche (Santa Rosa, Las Flores, Las Palmas, El Temporal, Nuevo Progreso, Nuevo Durango, Yalnon, Chave, and Nuevo Trinidad, with a total of 833 families and 5374 persons have asked for 7000 Kg seed potatoes and 14,500 Kg table potatoes, as well as for 54 chainsaws used for making coals. These cost around 1700 pesos apiece and should be of the Stihl brand, for which parts and repairs are available in Campeche.

El Temporal, Neuvo Progreso and Yalnon have asked for money in order to buy fuel and oil, etc., for road building equipment, because the streets need to be repaired. Neuvo Progreso received 30,000 pesos on November 18, with which they are purchasing oil and fuel for the earth scraper which the government is lending them and with which they want to reconstruct the eight kilometers of damaged road. The road passes through the ranch and is the best connection to Nuevo Durango as well as Hopelchen and is heavily used. Benjamin Klassen, for example, picks up 80 indigenous workers every day to pick tomatoes; he has 25 acres. The work opportunities for the Mennonites are scarce on the colonies and some drive elsewhere to find work, for which the road is needed.

El Temporal has also received 50,000 pesos already from the Mennonites in Cuauhtemoc, and are expected to receive another such amount shortly. They are busily working on the road which is very encouraging for the ranch. Later hard "caliche" is to be spread on the road with the help of the ranch.

The Hilfskomitee has announced that used sewing machines can be donated in this region in order that they will be sent to Campeche. The wood on some of the sewing machines has swollen because of the high waters.

The next load shall include 28 tonnes of beans for the local Mayas (living close to the Mennonite

colonies), which are to be distributed under the oversight of a private organization and Spanish-speaking Mennonites from Mexico City and Puebla. Also to be sent on the load are Pressdraht, clothes, cloth, 25 motor saws, books, etc.

170,000 pesos have been paid into the designated account at the Credit Union. Large sums of money have also been left with the Vorsteher. They are also waiting for a request from the Yalton Colony for the grader work and the two destroyed roofs.

It was discussed at the meeting whether the Mennonites and the Maya should be offered money for poultry. Through such a project the families would quickly have meat and eggs for their own use. The question remains, what are the best ways to help so that the colonies again attain self-sufficiency?

Report by Jorge Reimer from *Kurze Nachrichten*, Nov. 22, 2002, published in *Die Post*, Dec. 6/02, page 24.

Campeche Report.

In March, 2003, Mennonite leaders from Northern Mexico chartered a bus and went on a tour to the Campeche Colonies in Southern Mexico. They experienced many important things (without mentioning the many songs and all the singing in the bus and the manifold gracious hospitality), including the following. Jorge Reimer, *Strassburgo Plaza, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico*.

The heat in Campeche was enveloping - how do the neighbours have energy to burn coals when it is so humid? This is only one example of the work ethic which is everywhere in evidence. In a store in one village in El Temporal, many plastic bags of coals were stockpiled. Whoever has no money to purchase nourishment - among other things - brings their coals to the store. Coals can be made from all species of trees in the forest, only one tree - which has only light wood - is not suitable as it merely burns into ash.

New approvals are continually being worked out, so that coals can be made and sold. Some of the chimneys of the coal pits were also smoking on Sunday, others were waiting to be filled.

How do the Mennonites earn their livelihood? There are many fields and gardens where the very hot *Habanera* chiles are raised. Children and adults pick the produce, which are sold to the Mayas (civilized Indians living in the region). Mennonite eat them only seldom.

People were proud of the wonderful tasting watermelons, which the visitors were also allowed to test. They came either from the gardens or the fields and could be seen in various colonies. In Chavi, Ohm Jakob Dycken had a wonderful field of watermelons, from which they will soon be able to pick. They were two kinds which they seeded for the seeds. Two rows produced watermelons without seeds and the next two rows were with seeds.

One of the watermelon fields belonged to Peter

Hiebert from Colony Nuevo Progreso. They were being harvested, loaded on semi-trailers and sold. From 16 hectares they had loaded 16 semi-trailers full. One trailed can carry up to 30 tons of watermelons.

They had much work and also success with tomatoes. In the villages and also in the more distant fields one saw large parcels planted with tomatoes. They were the oblong, fleshy kind, which withstand the transportation better. The results were very good although the price was not always equally good. On some days, three semi's full of tomatoes were picked up from Hieberts and hauled to Merida.

It is much work to support the tomato plants. A 5 cm. thick stick, 1.5 meters high, is stuck into the ground every third meter and many bands are tied from post to post in order to support the plants. The work pays. One Mennonite from another colony



The farmyard of Ohm Jakob Wall, No. 2, Hamberg, El Temporal, Campeche, a solid farmer. He is the son of Ältester Franz Wall. The girls are just coming home from school. The colony is only six years old and exudes a genuine sense of Christian brotherhood and sisterhood, in the spirit of our Flemish Mennonite ancestors. It is always a victory for Satan when the spirit of love, humility and deference among the brethren and sisters is destroyed by outside predators spreading sectarianism and heresy. Photo - Feb. 2003.

had not taken these measures but later said he would never omit to do so again. In the future he would provide supports for the plants.

Also Mennonite workers, who pick the tomatoes, can earn up to 200 pesos a day. They receive 5 pesos for each case full they pick. It was noteworthy among the Mennonites how hard a certain woman from Los Flores Colony could work. In the morning she washed her family's wash, and somewhat later, after the morning thaw had dried off the tomato plants, she picked 60 cases (25 kg) full of tomatoes by nightfall.

One tomato farmer from the Colony Las Flores, whose half hectare field of tomatoes had stood under water for two weeks after the flood, nurtured them, which revived and still brought very good fruit. For the first 1000 cases he received 280 pesos per case, for the next 1000, around 230, and for the third 1000, 150 and less. The family was not well-off but this result brought them much encouragement. Presently they receive between 70 and 100 pesos per case upon sale. Most of the Mennonites purchase the plants in the city of Hopelchen.

After the flood in many colonies, various goods from Cuauhtemoc were shipped to Campeche. The visitors from Cuauhtemoc saw and heard regarding these donations and what had been done with them. One family still had some of the *Cabra* beans which they preferred over the black beans which are most common in southern Mexico.

Most of the planted potatoes had been harvested and the results were excellent. Additional but smaller quantities of potatoes in the gardens were still waiting to be dug out. Potatoes in the market cost from 8 to 10 pesos per kilo.

Another assistance from Cuauhtemoc was with the baby chicks which were bought in Cuauhtemoc and distributed among the Mennonites in Campeche. In some homes they already had fried-chicken. Unfortunately the chicks had been transported in the heat, so that many hundreds died.

They were promised replacements [by the transport company] but nothing ever came. Some families received only hens and others also some roosters.

Sickness and pests. Tomatoes and *Habaneras* need to be sprayed frequently against bugs. In addition, the watermelons also have to be sprayed after a rain, since they do not favour rain. The leaves curl up and the plants do not grow any more. The livestock must punctually be sprayed against diseases which is more work than providing feed for them.

Rain in March! "There is no point in praying for rain in March for it never rains during that time," a Mayan man from the region had said to a Mennonite. Sunday night and morning the region was surprised by a pleasant rain. In various colonies it had rained from 1 to 2 inches. The dark low hanging clouds and the lively storm reminded many Mennonites of the flood which had occurred only half-a-year earlier. It was so dark in the morning that some family put on their lanterns. Since the Mennonites have lived in Campeche

the forest has not looked quite as dry and grey. It was very warm and there was much dust, particularly on the red and white roads.

What are the Mayas saying about the Mennonites. Already earlier we have read in the *Kurze Nachrichten* that the Mayas were dissatisfied that the Mennonites had settled in the region. Since the government has noticed that not all land is unproductive, and that it can bring in a livelihood, the government [subsidy] cheques for the Mayas have become smaller. One Mennonite asked around in this regard and discovered that 90 percent of the Mayas still think differently in this regard.

One Maya said that earlier he had only owned a machete. Through the fact that he had learned from the Mennonites and had taken their advice and assistance, he now owned a tractor and was able to work a parcel of land, sell the crop, and was able to borrow money in order to purchase more equipment. He is thankful for neighbours such as the Mennonites.

Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*, Mar. 21/03/*Die Post*, Apr. 4/03, page 17-18.

Business

Paris, Texas.

The main occupation of the Mennonites living in this region is to work in the seven trailer factories. Only one of these does not belong to the Mennonites. The various kinds of trailers are distributed throughout the States and some to Canada.

The owners of the factories all started with Peter Thiessen, who was the first to establish a trailer factory. He is continually expanding his factory. Several hundred trailers are being manufactured daily. When spring comes more trailers are ordered, but presently the business is slower. A Mennonite is building the platforms for the freight semi-trailers.

A Old Colony fellowship with some 30 families gather monthly in a building to conduct worship services which are led by the Ohms from Canada.

Report by Jorge Reimer from *Kurze Nachrichten*, Oct. 31, 2002, published in *Die Post*, Nov. 15/02, page 18.

Land Prices.

What is the real worth of land? The prices of land in the Cuauhtemoc colonies is mostly higher than what the value of the land's production can pay for. Prosperous farmers and businesses are buying unirrigated land for over \$1,000.00 U.S. per acre and irrigated land with wells for two and three times that much. Along the highway [between Cuauhtemoc and Rubio] up to \$15,000.00 per acre is being paid. In the small village of Strassburg (km. 14), two lots,

only big enough for a dwelling house, were sold this week for \$8,000.00 U.S. According to this, the assessments of the land are not too high, and, yet, perhaps the land is not really worth what it is being sold for. On the

otherhand, people have thought for many years that the prices are in a "bubble."

Report by Jorge Reimer from *Kurze Nachrichten*, Jan. 3, 2003, published in *Die Post*, Jan. 17/03, page 16.



Increasing taxes.

"A study in faces." Jan. 7, 2002. Seventy hard working farmers attend at the council chambers in Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, making representations regarding tax hikes (Predial-tax). Abram Fehr (middle), Campo 110, has the floor. Photo - Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau, Dec. 16/02, front cover.

Lanosa.

The Lanosa facility is making rapid progress and is saving money (see *Pres.*, No. 21, page 76). The construction is proceeding and the hundreds of investors who have purchased shares have many reasons to be optimistic. They are serving over 500 stores with over 4000 litres of fresh milk daily and have a steady stream of new customers for their cheese, even though it is definitely more expensive than cheese from other factories.

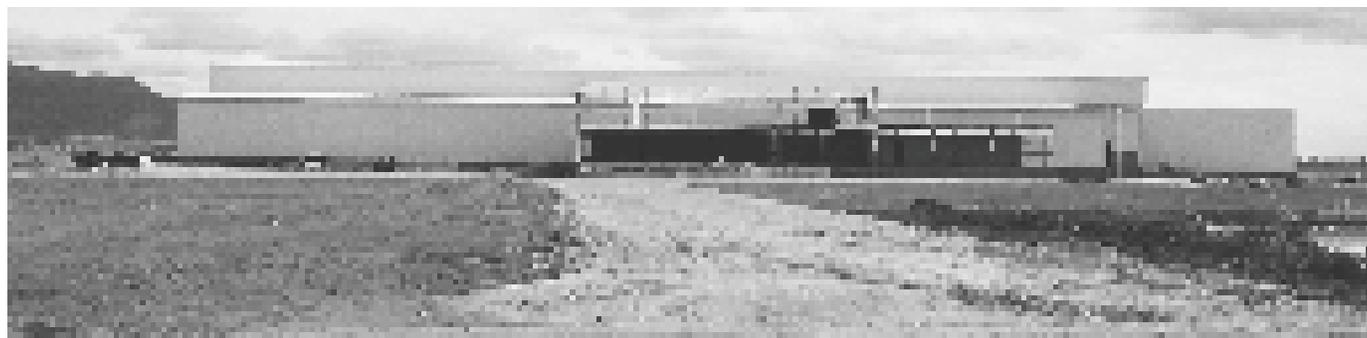
They have had to learn much in order to produce a "Queso menonite" from pasteurized milk, but have attained this goal, when the cheese is sold not completely fresh. Soon they are expecting answers from large chain stores, which have demonstrated interest in their products.

Fabulous luck in purchasing the equipment. The original plan was to manufacture the cheese using the same methods by which the cheese factories are presently making it as they did not want to invest so heavily in modern equipment. This all changed completely when they were able to purchase exactly the wished for equipment in England for cheap, namely, less than 10 percent of the price. Including the freight from England (\$5,200.00) to El Paso for the two towers, automatic washers, and everything to manufacture butter, shall altogether not cost more than \$60,000.00. The equipment is like new and in preparation for later exporting these products to the USA, they have been certified as acceptable by the American authorities.

With the towers, which can each produce 400 kg cheese per hour, both of the new cheese factories have similar capacities, but the other plant at Km.70 is making much larger expenditures for their new equipment.

Lanosa has found two boilers in Arizona for \$5000.00. All the equipment is expected to arrive in the next several weeks. The milk facilities are expected to be in production by the middle of next year.

Report by Jorge Reimer from *Kurze Nachrichten*, Oct. 31, 2002, published in *Die Post*, Nov. 15/02, page 18.



The new cheesefactory at km. 26, between Cuauhtemoc and Rubio expected to be in operation this summer. Photo - Men. Post, page 4.

Ältester Jakob G. Doerksen (1919-2003)

Jakob G. Doerksen was born to Abram and Agatha Doerksen in Blumenthal, Manitoba, in 1919. He was the grandson of Ältester Abraham Doerksen (1852-1929), who led his people to Mexico in 1922 (see *Diese Steine*, pages 881-6). Jakob G. Doerksen died in Blumenthal, Santa Clara Colony, Mexico, on April 2, 2003.

Jakob G. Doerksen married Sara Voth in 1940. She died in 1998. They had 13 children.

Jakob G. Doerksen was elected deacon of the Gemeinde in 1948, and in 1950 as minister. Like so many leaders among the conservative Mennonites he also served as a school teacher. In 1972 he was elected as Ältester of the Sommerfelder Gemeinde at Santa Clara, replacing Ältester Abram Friesen who had moved to Paraguay to found a new colony there. During his years in the ministry, Ältester Doerksen brought 1290 souls to Christ through baptism and served communion to 19,896 souls. He preached 976 times, married 133 couples, and conducted 121 funerals. Daniel 12:3. From the *Men. Post*, May 16/03.



Ält. Jakob G. Doerksen (1919-2003), Blumenthal, Santa Clara, Mexico. Photo - Men. Post, May 16/03.

Elections in Paraguay, April 27, 2003.

Paraguay held elections on April 27, 2003. Nicanor Duarte of the Colorado Party, which has ruled for 27 years, was elected President. David Sawatzky of the Menno Colony was elected as Governor of Boqueron Province, the third Mennonite Governor, following Orlando Penner and Cornelius Sawatzky. Most of the Menno Colony pioneers came from the Hanover Steinbach area in Canada in 1926-7. Hans Thielmann, from Fernheim, is the newly elected Federal Deputy. Most voters are Indians and Mennonites, but also many Paraguayans. In general, the Indians have more trust in the Mennonites as government officials, and therefore, the candidates are also mostly Mennonites.

From *Deutsche Mexicanische Rundschau*, May 5/03, page 32 (see rear cover for photo).

Greenhouses.

The greenhouse in Burwalde also brings forth fruit in winter. For three months already they have been picking cucumbers off these plants. One owner, Klaas Friesen, commented there are already plans to build more and bigger greenhouses. Great care must be taken to maintain the proper temperature and to guard against bugs.

Anna Penner, Kleinstadt, with the cucumber plants at the greenhouse in Burwalde, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico. Photo - Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau, Feb. 3/03, page 7.



Ältester Cornelius Enns (1938-2003), Aylmer, Ontario, Passes February 24, 2003.

Cornelius Enns was the son of Anna Rempel (1902-92) and Jakob A. Enns (1900-62), Rosenthal, Mexico, printer, dentist and general store owner (see *Pres.*, No. 20, page 103). Later the family moved to the Ojo de la Yegua (Nord) Colony (George Rempel, *Rempel Family Book*, page 452).

Cornelius Enns married Susanna Fast and they lived and worked in the Nord Colony, Mexico. In Mexico Cornelius served as school teacher for three years. For eight years they owned and operated a general store. In 1977 the Enns family moved to Aylmer, Ontario, together with their 15 children. In 1986 Cornelius Enns was elected as the Vorsteher (business manager) of the Old Colony Church in Ontario. After serving in this position for two years, he was elected and ordained as a minister of the Holy Gospel in January 1988. In November of 1989, he was elected as Ältester (Bishop) of his denomination. *Rempel Family Book*, page 467.

Cornelius Enns had been ailing for the past years. He passed away February 24, 2003. The funeral was held on March 1, 2003. He will be sadly missed by family and his congregation. A memorial service was also held the following Sunday, where the worship house was again full. For the funeral the church was not nearly big enough, the basement was full and also the portables. Five Ältesten, three deacons and 24 ministers were in attendance. 3500 places had been prepared for mourners and they were all full.

Cornelius Enns served His Lord and Master as a faithful steward of his flock. No exertion nor work was too great for him if it served the Church of Jesus Christ. He was a worthy leader and model to us all. Even his foes remembered him as a true man of God. Jesus will reward His saints.

May God be with the family and Gemeinde and provide comfort and solace in this time of grieving and sorrow.



Ältester Cornelius Enns and Mrs. Enns, nee Susanna Fast. Photo - Men. Post, March 21/03, page 1.



Ältester Cornelius Enns (1938-2003), Leamington, Ont. Photo - courtesy Men. Post.

Articles

Last Days of Steinbach and Ebenfeld, Dec. 5-6, 1919

“The Last Days of Steinbach and Ebenfeld, Borosenko, Imperial Russia, December 5-6, 1919,”

by Franz A. Warkentin, in the *Steinbach Post*, December 5 and 12, 1923.

It was in the month of December of 1919 that we had to comprehend the terrible news that Steinbach and Ebenfeld had been massacred. In the beginning we did not believe it, for certainly it was impossible that such a picturesque village could have completely fallen victim to such a fate. But it always rang clearer and louder, and it had the appearance as if it was actually fact, and no one knew, who had actually brought such news. But things became calmer and we did come to the conclusion that something had apparently taken place, but not that serious.

But soon things again became more restless, and people actually started to assert it. It was dangerous to drive from one village to another, the bandits had the entire region at their mercy. Indeed, one was afraid when the night fall came, the lights in the houses were so weak that one did not really know, were the people sleeping, or did they not have any light, or were they still alive; almost all the windows were covered so as not thereby to invite bandits in the night, who were roaming around all over, individually and also in bands, for their incivility was no longer bearable by us.

In the meantime the Christmas holidays came upon us, and much had already taken place. We had visitors almost every day. One time they demanded horses, oats, hay, and the next time clothes, food, produce and money, and always they threatened with shooting in the event we would not be able to meet their requisitions. For we had so far been able to fulfil the demands. Finally one day, several men drove to Steinbach in order to investigate the matter there for they had their parents and siblings living there. Upon their arrival there they had to realize to their great horror that the entire rumour was indeed fact, and even much worse and terrible than had been told.

They found the houses empty, no cattle, nor furniture was any longer to be found. Indeed, several houses were already dismantled. On the 6th of January I received a letter from the brother with the tragic news that our siblings in Steinbach had been murdered and also his in-laws together with siblings - 17 souls in total - had been overtaken by the tragedy, and at the same time the invitation to the funeral and burial which was to take place in the parental home in Grünfeld.

We drove to the worship service, and together with us were many others who wanted to attend the event. Many relatives of the murder victims and mourners were already gathered around the house. Here there was among other things an eyewitness by the name of Katherina Loewen, the sister of my brother-in-law Abraham Loewen, who had come from the scene of the impending tragedy. She had survived, thanks to the fact, that without her having any hint of the tragedy, she had driven to Felsenbach to her siblings, and had stayed

there overnight, thereby escaping the horrible massacre.

She related as follows: I hurried to my home village as soon as we heard the terrible news in Felsenbach in order to see what had happened to my parents and siblings. Upon my arrival there, I had to witness everything, how the Russians gathered all the corpses from the houses in the village, and threw them on the wagons to haul them to the grave in order to bury them there in a mass grave.

My parents and all my siblings were also among the dead. They had been slaughtered in gruesome ways. One woman was shot and the others were all butchered with the sabre. Oh, how horrible! The heart almost wanted to tear apart from shock and pain.

She was asked how she could relate all this without tears. She replied, “I have cried myself empty and dry; there were no more tears anymore!”

On December 5 in the evening a band came into the village of Ebenfeld and spread out among the houses, the way they usually did, and demanded something to eat which was also given to them. The band leader, whose conscience must have been plagued on account of what was to take place and who could no longer hold back his helper's helpers, had told the village watchmen - who were Mennonite youths - that they should hurry to Steinbach and warn the people there as to what was to take place, and that without delay they should flee, if they wanted to escape the universal massacre. But the boys were scared of the danger for the village of Ebenfeld was completely surrounded. They were scared that they themselves might be headed toward their deaths as spies and did not go.

And thus the Ebenfelders were all executed without mercy that night. In the morning the robbers all headed towards Steinbach in order to carry out the same thing there, which also took place. In this manner with their blood-stained hands the beasts had also raised their weapons over Steinbach, and without mercy also laid so many of their fellow human beings prone in the sand.

And so the innocent people were bedded in the earth without song or ceremony, altogether from the two villages there were 126 souls. Now the funeral began. The pen fails in communicating it all. For the closing the song was sung: “Naher Mein Gott zu dir!” Why, alas God? Why allow such a group of innocent people to fall by the hands of murderers? Where are now the many joys and expectations? They have all disappeared. Indeed, one might concur with the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapter 3:23, “Ah, if only I had water enough in my body, and if my eyes had wells of tears, that I might grieve day and night, for the slain among my people.” For had not the loving

heavenly Father been our comfort, we would have succumbed. But nothing here on earth takes place that is merely coincidental, and that all things shall serve us for the best.

Shortly thereafter the robbers also rode to Felsenbach in order to also put their sabres to use against the people there. Immediately upon their arrival there they had all the grindstones brought together in order to sharpen their weapons which had become dull and informed the people that they would all die by the sword. Thereupon all the residents of the village gathered on the street, in order to once more - and in fact for the last time - hold a worship service to prepare themselves for their soon to be impending death, and to comfort each other. There was singing and admonishment, and prayers for deliverance were poured forth unto heaven.

Then the bloodthirsty stormed into position, but it was not to be. For the Lord says, thus far and no further! A number of riders came charging into the end of the village, waving a white flag and commanded the beasts to terminate all shedding of blood. But some had nonetheless been somewhat wounded. And thus, they departed therefrom without having carried out their evil intentions.

The robber band originated from the Russian village of Scholochowo, which lay close to both of the unfortunate villages. The judgement of God was fulfilled for them also during the famine of 1922 in accordance with Psalm 37 and Jeremiah 9: 8-9. An epidemic sickness broke out there, and in addition thereto also the famine so that within a short time almost the entire population of the Russian village had died out and only a small part of it had survived. People had found many stolen possessions there from both villages.

I thought to myself, this is also how the last days in the future will be, of which Matthew 23 prophesies.

Die Zeit ist kurz, o Mensch sie weiße,
Und wuchre mit dem Augenblick!
Nur einmal machst du diese Reise!
Laß eine gute Spur zurück

Sieh, wie dem Tor die entrinnet
Mit Essen, Trinken, Scherzen, Ruhn
Der Kluge wirket und gewinnet
Erfüllt die Zeit mit Gutes tun.

Du kannst nich eine Stunde halten,
Eh' du es merkst, ist sie enflöh'n,
Die Weisheit rät die treu zu walten,
Der Treue winket hoher Lohn.

Drum Heiland lehr mich meine Jahre
Zu deinem Dienste einig weih'n,
Von heute an bus zu der Bahre,
Für jenes Leben Samen streu'n.

By Franz A. Warkentin. Submitted for publication, courtesy of Ralph Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Ältester Abram J. Buhler 1903-1982

“Walking worthy of the Vocation” - Abram J. Buhler (1903-82): Farmer, Family Man and Bishop of the Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church,” by son Abram Buhler, Box 1074, Warman, Saskatchewan, S0K 4S0.

Introduction.

Abram J. Buhler was elected as Ältester (Bishop) of the Bergthaler church of Saskatchewan on February 19, 1949, two years after the passing of the former Bishop Cornelius Hamm.

He assumed this position, having served only nine months as a minister. I, his son Abram, will endeavour to relate in this article for *Preservings*, the story of our parents, Abram and Aganeta Buhler. While the purpose is to preserve the memory of his role as a spiritual leader, I want to portray him also as an ordinary man, husband, father, neighbour and farmer.

Even though he was mostly known and respected as a sincere church leader, very conscious of how he presented himself, he had a keen wit and a sense of humour.

Family Background.

Abram was born March 5, 1903 the second last of 11 children of Jacob and Anna (Klassen) Buhler.

Jacob and Anna migrated to Canada from the Chortitza Colony in Russia as teenagers with their parents in 1876. Jacob and his father Johann Buhler (1826-1902) and step-mother (RGB 105-1) arrived on the S.S. Sardinian and hit an iceberg in the Atlantic, gashing the hull of the ship. Jacob was enthralled to watch the crew drop a line repeatedly into the hole and shout “no water”. Thus Jacob picked up his first English words never to be forgotten, “No Water”.

Anna’s father, Peter Klassen (1834-1919) and step-mother (RGB 99-2) arrived four days later, June 23 on the S.S. Quebec. Both families settled in Kronsthal, West Reserve (BGB 366-66 and 366-80).

Anna was only 17 when she married Peter Buhler (1853-83)(RGB 97-2 and BGB 366-82). Peter died three years later, leaving a young widow with no children. A month later, the neighbour boy, Jacob Buhler, entered the picture and after only 40 days of widowhood, Anna was married again.

They set up farming a few miles southwest of Plum Coulee, just east of the Kleefeld cemetery as it is today. The row of trees that are still there were planted by Jacob.

On Feb. 12, 1884 their first child was born, daughter Aganetha. The second daughter, Anna was born Jan. 27, 1886, but died in November of the same year. In 1887 on Dec. 3 their first son Jacob was born.

A son that took on responsibility at an early age and of whom they often spoke with great pride. Johan was born Jan. 1890, and heartbroken, they buried him April 4th.

Helena came into their lives March 12, 1891



Aganeta and Bishop Abram J. Buhler in the mid-50s.

and Maria on April 17, 1894. In 1896 another son, Peter joined the family.

The Jacob and Anna Buhler family now consisted of five children, three girls and two boys. Then in the year 1898 one tragedy after another struck. A diphtheria epidemic raged through the settlement and four year-old Maria died on Aug. 10th, her mother’s birthday. Eleven year-old



Bishop Abram J. Buhler with close friend, Abram Dyck.

Jacob was already too sick to go to Maria’s funeral. Before his death, Aug. 16th he had a vision of heaven and saw recently departed friends. As if this was not enough, two year-old Peter accidentally fell into hot lye and died a hor-

rible death a few days later. Imagine the heartache of these parents and the two remaining daughters. During this time Anna was pregnant with another son who was born Jan. 29, 1899. They named him Jacob and he died three months later.

Reality was harsh, four children gone in eight months and only two daughters left. Aganetha would later become Mrs Heinrich Dyck, future deacon of the Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church. Helena later married Jacob Peters and she became a renowned masseur and bonesetter.

Anna and Jacob took their loss hard but their faith in God held firm. God blessed them with more children. Elizabeth (Mrs Diedrich Rempel) was born May 23, 1900 and Abram on March 5, 1903. The Buhlers then took up a homestead at Aberdeen, Sask. in 1905. Here their last child Anna (Mrs Henry Braun) was born on Nov. 21, 1906.

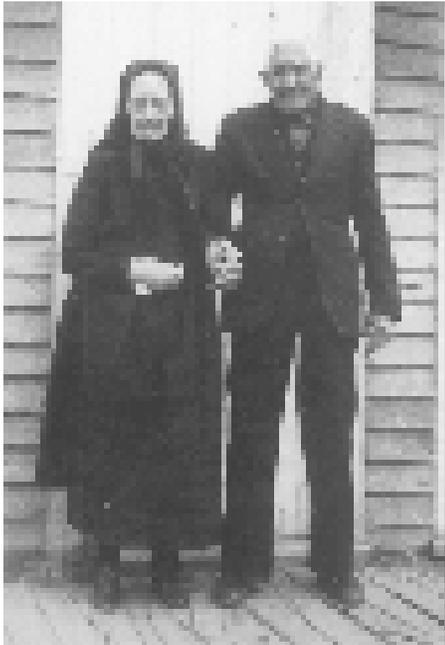
Many stories of Jacob and Anna live on in our memories. Of Jacob unhitching the horses from the binder in the midst of harvest, returning to the yard and explaining to his wife that he felt an urgent need to visit a certain household. Leaving all tasks behind they obeyed the Spirit’s call and found a man in great spiritual despair. Listening, counselling and praying together they left the man with new found hope.

Childhood and Youth.

This then is part of the history of the family into which Abram J. Buhler was born. He went to the typical Mennonite church school as a child, learning to read and write German, the basic math and progressing through the Fibel, New Testament and Bible classes. As a teenager he was fortunate to have two winters of English schooling, attaining grade three reading and writing skills. Even though he learned to converse in English, he never lost the heavy German accent.

As he grew up special skills and interests were developed. He loved the sport of boxing and became quite proficient at it. I remember as a child we would listen to the boxing matches on radio which father really enjoyed. He related the classic bouts of Max Schmeling, Jack Dempsey, Gene Tuney and of course Joe Louis. He had seen some of these in the theatre in Saskatoon. In his 70s his eyes would still sparkle at the mention of a heavy-weight match.

Dad was a tremendous shot with a .22 rifle and great with a shotgun. Years later brother Jacob tried to copy him and met up with a near disaster. Dad would lay a loaded, uncocked double-barrelled shotgun on the ground, throw



Grandparents, Jakob and Anna Buhler at their 65th wedding anniversary. They lived past their 70th anniversary.

a tin can into the air, pick up the gun, cock, aim and fire, very seldom missing his target. Jacob tried it too but had not reckoned on the loose snow. As he picked up the gun the barrels plugged with snow and when he pulled the trigger the barrel blew up, ruining the gun.

As a youth, dad said he loved to show off his marksmanship by sticking a cigarette paper on a post or wall, pace off a hundred yards and hit it with his .22 Remington. He did this free hand, using no type of rest. He said he had been very confident and consistent in this feat and had won many a bet doing it.

From his own accounts and stories told by others we know that he loved practical jokes. Flying a kite on a dark night with a lighted lantern tied to its tail greatly alarmed one couple when they were lured outside and saw this light gently swaying in the sky.

I have learned only now as I researched for this article that he was involved in a "Brom top" group shivareeing newlyweds with the hideous noise of a drum-like contraption, called a "Brom top".

Courtship and Marriage.

A certain Aganeta Peters caught his eye and fancy. This interest was duly pursued, travelling three miles on horseback to woo her. Aganeta received him well and, on Dec. 27, 1925 they were married by Cornelius Hamm in the Sunday morning worship service.

We now enter the lives of the newlywed Buhlers. As with most young couples they started married life at his parents, farming together. This was intimidating for 18 year-old

Aganeta, who would have loved a private life. Abram's parents had recently built a large two-story house which was a local landmark on the Aberdeen north road. She felt herself under the watchful eye of her mother-in-law. But it was not to be for long as they soon had a chance to live in someone's empty house.

Here, as the lady of the house she felt better. In Oct. of 1926 their first born, Jacob, came into this world, a baby that cried a lot. Being a new mother, Aganeta did not realize he was hungry and her milk was insufficient. When Nettie was born Oct. 26, 1929 things were better. Being the first two in the family they quickly found out that to be disobedient or naughty brought quick justice from dad, usually to the seat of the problem. David was born July 14, 1933 and I, Abram on Dec 20, 1937.

David and Elizabeth Peters.

We need to look into the lives of Aganeta's parents. David Peters was born in the immigration house at Emerson, Man, on July 7, 1876. He married Elizabeth Giesbrecht and they moved into the Aberdeen area in about 1905, settling first at Schanzenfeld and later on the river bank northwest of Aberdeen. Grandpa Peters was a great storyteller and especially liked to excite children before Christmas with Santa Claus stories. And the children dutifully set out feed for the reindeer and cookies for Santa. David and Elizabeth were always pulling pranks on each other and David usually came out second best.

Once in haying time they were unloading hay from the hayrack into the barn, using the hay sling with Elizabeth driving the horses. On one sling full, David was clowning around on the sling and Grandma quickly started the horses. Poor grandpa was caught between the

under the feed in the barn feeling very secure that this year she would not find it. One day when he went away on business she started her annual hunt, quite sure that he would have bought it by now. After quite a search she found it, took it into the house and sewed a dress from it and returned it to the original hiding place. Christmas morning Grandpa came into the house all smiles, at last he had pulled one over on her. Grandma opened the parcel, held the dress in front of her and exclaimed, "How nice, and it fits?" Poor grandpa!

At Easter grandma would take the grandchildren to the ravine beside the house, give them each a stick to chase the Easter bunny and they would find some hidden eggs.

Farming and Public Life.

In 1940 dad purchased a half-section with a house and barn from his father. This land was located half a mile north on the east side of the road. The land had been rented to at least two of dad's brothers-in-law. The Heinrich Dycks were living and farming on 240 acres of land they had rented from her parents, Jacob and Anna Buhler. Mr. Dyck had served as deacon since their return from Paraguay in 1929. Having come through the depression years, Dad and Mother now started to prosper. Betty joined us March 14, 1942. Being four-and-a-half years old, I remember being taken to grandparents Buhler for the night.

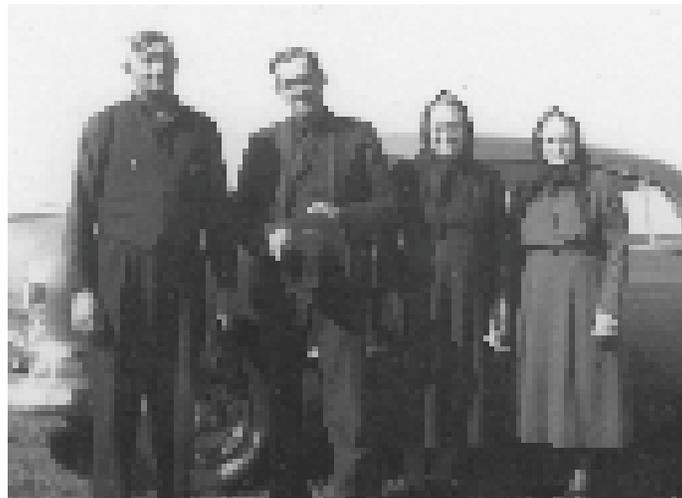
Up to this time dad had farmed with horses but in the early 40s he bought a new Ford-Ferguson tractor.

At the age of 30 in 1933, Dad had been elected into the Waisenamt, a co-operative that acted as guardians for orphans, handled the estates, investing the money until the heirs were of legal age. Similar to Credit Unions, loans were made to farmers and the interest accumulated to make it a successful venture for all concerned. Until the depression hit and some people could not repay their loans. Others refused when they saw the ship was sinking.

With outstanding loans and no capital in reserves many heirs did not receive their full allotment. This was a very difficult time for dad and the other administrators, trying their best to please everyone. Dad remained involved until the Waisenamt was dissolved in 1952. During his tenure he had travelled throughout the Bergthal areas of Aberdeen, Rosthern, Hague, Osler, Warman and beyond and was well known by the Bergthaler members.

They had a circle of friends in the neighbourhood in which they had a gift exchange at Christmas. In Fall during butchering season they helped at 15 to 20 places.

Mom and dad were involved in the local Jugendverein and mother joined an interdenominational Naehverein or sewing circle. We also had a Sunday School in our home where mother taught the youngsters and dad the older chil-



Abram J. Buhler and wife Aganeta on each side. Nephew Rev. Heinrich and Margaret Dyck in the center.

ground and the peak of the barn. Here grandma took advantage by reminding him of some misdeeds, and he had to repent before she let him back down.

She would always look for and find his Christmas presents for her. One year Grandpa Peters bought material for a dress and hid it

dren. Dad was also elected to the school board and later became the chairman of our local Lilly School Board.

Fishers of Men.

During these years God had quietly been preparing them for a greater ministry, one reaching far beyond their social boundaries and affecting their complacent home life. In January of 1947 bishop Cornelius Hamm passed away and left the church under the care of five ministers: Heinrich Martens, Jacob Guenther, John M. Reddekopp, Cornelius Neufeld and Franz Peters. Seventy year old Heinrich Dyck was still the deacon.

Notice went out that there would be an election for two ministers and a deacon on June 25, 1948. This was a time of deep soul searching for dad and mother. Theoretically, any married male was eligible to be voted for. This method of electing ministers, whether willing, or unwilling, all with very limited education, was the way new ministers were obtained in the conservative churches. The lot fell on Abram J. Buhler and his nephew, Henry A. Dyck, who was three years younger, and Henry H. Siemens as deacon. They were ordained by Bishop David Wall of Swift Current on September 30th of that year.

While it may seem a poor system to vote for any man in the membership, it was always done with earnestly calling on the members to pray that God would reveal His choice in the matter and it has served the church well.

When dad brought the news of what had happened at the election he was downcast, feeling the heavy responsibility that God was laying on him. You may wonder now--as people wondered then, with his past, and with his lifestyle--how could and would he minister to the people. Dad frequently had a beer with a Scottish neighbour and other friends in the tavern and I remember in a message years later



Abram J. Buhler with sisters: l.-r., Anna, Helena, Aganetha and Elisabeth, at their parents' 65th anniversary.

how he related his feelings when he was elected. He had yielded to God's call but what would his answer be when invited for a beer? "They never asked me again," he explained.

I believe it was that same fall that dad purchased grandfather's land, 240 acres, and arranged for us to move in with them like the Heinrich Dycks had. The Dycks moved to Edenburg to retire. Grandparents, at age 86 would have their bedroom upstairs as before and the full use of the living room for their personal use. We built an addition to the house for a kitchen and used the old kitchen for our living room and we all ate together.

As we settled into our new routine, dad struggled to overcome his tobacco addiction and it was some time till God graciously gave him victory over this habit.

Call as Bishop.

We had a Model A Ford and this was his means of going to preach and make visitations. The area we lived in was only a small part of the Rosthern, Hague, Osler, Warman Reserve of Mennonites. We were divided by the South Saskatchewan River from the main Bergthaler population. There was only one church on our side and Rosthern, Reinfeld Schönwiese, Grünthal and later, Warman and Martensville on the other side. They also served at Sonningdale and Mullingar. These itinerant preachers received no salary or travelling allowances and many times in severe weather they had only a handful of listeners. Many times, because of poor roads they took the train, making it a three-day affair.

Rev. Dyck and dad settled in and were well received by the ministers and members, getting to know what was expected and required of them.

In February, 1949 after again calling for prayer, the Bergthaler church elected a bishop from the ministers to serve and lead the people. Just nine months after entering the ministry dad went to the election and upon returning home, the look on his face prompted no inquiries. He was sitting by the table and grandfather came to him and asked "Wem haft daut getroffen?" (Who was selected?) "Daut sen ech" (It is I).

I still see that moment with his head bowed, that grandfather placed his hand on dad's shoulder and encouraged him. He was ordained as bishop by Bishop David Wall on Feb. 22 in our local church.

Changes.

With the responsibility now placed upon him as spiritual leader we saw a lot of changes. Where before dad had been outgoing at school picnics and social activities he now held back. When the field day, at which all the schools of the area came to Aberdeen to compete was approaching, we wondered if we would be able to attend. We did not dare ask dad, so we approached mother.

She tried to explain how it was to be: "If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not soon angry, not given

to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre. But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate. Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers," Titus 1:6-9.

Since we were now the bishop's children, it was expected of us to be an exemplary family and a lot of our people had reservations about sports, so we could not go. This was not dad's personal conviction, but to maintain respect and authority, we would have to sacrifice. It did not seem fair, since this was a special event for us. I was not athletic enough to win, but brother David consistently took first in all five events and went on to the larger meets. This must have been devastating to him, but fortunately it was his last year of school. In time we learned to accept this new way of life.

Grandfather had a rigid routine, even at his age. The first years we lived together he took care of the heating boiler in the basement. At 6:30 a.m. we would expect to hear a ringing noise as he pulled the long poker rod off the water pipes to attend the furnace. Next the shaker lever to shake down the ashes and there were usually enough live coals so he put in a few chunks of coal, opened the draft and drew out the ashes. He would have been offended if this job was denied him. By breakfast time he was washed up and had read their daily Bible portion aloud to grandma. During the day he spent his time at the woodpile, and reading aloud.

In summer they both spent time in their own garden. The produce was picked and often taken along as they drove their horse and buggy to town or visiting. Many a pail of gooseberries, plums and vegetables was sold or given away.

This old couple was a common sight on the rural roads with people speculating where the Buhlers were off to now.

Grandmother kept her rooms neat and liked to help dry dishes.

Home and Church.

It was a trying time for dad now as he assumed his responsibilities as bishop and making a living running the farm. Nettie married in 1950 and Jacob in 1951 leaving a little more room in the house, which was good because the family was now complete. George was born April 24, 1949, Anna on July 17, 1950 and William on Feb. 13, 1952. As if the responsibility of three small children was not enough, soon after becoming bishop the visitations began. People came from far and near, ministers, friends, relatives and of course the grandparents' visitors.

Dad had many cousins in Manitoba and it was nothing unusual for a car to arrive with two couples for supper and the night. Mother took this all in stride and made sure they were well fed. Betty learned to pitch in at an early age, even though we periodically had a maid. Dad and mother would serenely visit, not letting on that they had a busy schedule and work was piling up.

Most of the farm work now fell on David because dad was gone a lot or he was sitting in

his study. For a man-of-action to sit, study and prepare messages took a lot of discipline. His messages were all written out in the old German style writing. He quickly adjusted to public speaking and often deviated from his written text. He was an emotional speaker and could easily have been an evangelist like his uncle Gerhard Buhler.

Some people expected dad to implement dramatic change and reforms. Under different circumstances he might have but in order to keep the respect of some ministers and the majority of the members he chose diplomacy and concentrated on preaching the true word. Sunday schools were started in all the churches and mother helped to organize a ladies aid in Warman which quickly caught on. Bible studies and prayer meetings were unheard of so they started a weekly singing evening and slowly integrated the Bible study into it.

Church Conferences.

Dad established relationships with the Sommerfeld church in Manitoba, Swift Current and at Vanderhoof, B.C., also the Reinland church of Manitoba and in 1952 he invited the bishops, ministers and deacons of like-minded conservative churches to a conference at Aberdeen to discuss issues of mutual concern. Thirty-four men were present for the July 1st meeting. The response was so good that a second conference was held at Swift Current in 1955.

Among other discussions was a call for help from LaCrete, Alberta. People had started to settle there in the 30s due to the prairie drought and now many more were making the move. A resolution was passed that Bishop Buhler was to go serve communion to them. He used this opportunity to gain their trust and he returned to organize a Bergthaler church there. This church quickly grew and he went there often to serve them in baptism, and communion. Ministers were elected and Jakob Dyck from Swift Current, Sask., served as their first bishop (Note One).

One more conference was hosted by the Sommerfeld church of Manitoba in 1957 and it was resolved to continue on a biannual basis but due to conflicts and church splits no more of these conferences were held in Bishop Buhler's lifetime. At the funeral in 1982, son David, who was by this time a minister, made an impassioned plea to the many ministers and bishops, whether fences could not be repaired and unity restored to continue again. The Sommerfeld church of Manitoba responded by hosting a meeting in the fall of 1982.

Ministry.

I remember one baptism service in our local church; dad had finished baptizing the young men and had walked over to the first girl. He placed his hand on her head as she was kneeling and then stood there perplexed. His mind had gone blank. Rev. Franz Peters was sitting directly above him and he gently prompted, "Auf das bekenntnis eures glauben _____." Dad picked it up from there.

He baptized Jacob and Nettie at his first baptismal service in 1949 and subsequently baptized all his other children, the last two in 1972.

In the first years of his ministry, winter travel

was with horses because the roads were blocked. It was only half-a-mile to our church across the field but to go to Reinfeld was about 12 miles. Very often dad would take the train at Aberdeen on Saturday and go to Warman where he would be picked up and taken to whichever church was on his list. It was about nine miles north to Schönwiese from Warman, so it was frequently a three day affair. On one occasion the ferry was not operating, so I took dad to the train by car and I dropped him off at the station. On arriving home, I noticed he had left his attache case in the car. In it were his minister's frock and his sermon. I speeded back to Aberdeen but the train was just getting rolling. I pulled up to the crossing with the intention of tossing the case through the top half of a door that was open, hoping that the conductor would get it to



Bishop Abram J. Buhler, passport photograph.

the right person. By this time the train was going 10 miles an hour and I missed the door. So he ended up preaching without any notes or the important coat; but he always had a Testament in his jacket pocket and he did not say that he had missed either one.

Mother tried to go with him whenever possible, but with three small children it was not always practical. Since there were three other ministers on our side of the river he often took one or two along on his many calls. Henry Dyck was usually his first choice because he had a telephone. Many were the times they were called to a sick bed, to the North Battleford psychiatric hospital, or often as not, some petty disputes, leaving their work undone at home. Busy as he was and unable to pay full attention to the farm, the Lord blessed us with good crops and somehow we managed, season after season.

David married in 1955 to Tina Schellenberg, the sister to Jacob's wife and they took jobs in Saskatoon. Jacob and Edna lived in Winnipeg and Nettie with Pete Neufeld, her husband, lived in Warman. I assumed the farm work responsi-

bilities and many times I have seen my father at his office window preparing a Sunday sermon or funeral message, when he would gladly have worked outside.

His messages were personal, often using illustrations of everyday life to emphasize a point. He spoke dramatically, bringing the Bible stories right before your eyes and making them meaningful. He had an extensive collection of reference books, concordance and the Jakob Denner book of sermons. While these were referred to for deeper insight, the sermons were his original thoughts, presented in a forthright manner that touched the heart. It was not uncommon to hear sniffing sounds and to see handkerchiefs to be discreetly used. Today, many people can still see him behind the pulpit, forelock of hair hanging over his right eye, gazing earnestly as if into each person's heart, pleading on Jesus Christ's behalf.

He felt the need for personal salvation for his members very keenly and that he would be held responsible if the people were not taught and warned. Many times he referred to John 1:16, "And of His fullness have we all received and grace for grace". The passion in his voice was evidence of his concern for his flock and their eternal destiny.

After his death many ministers requested his sermons and mom gave a lot away and that is fine. I even gave one to a Hutterite leader and he had read it in their church. Dad's messages were in his voice and came from his heart and not from his written text. Just to read them by a stranger could leave a completely different impression.

One time in the late 50s dad invited Dr. Mikelson, a Christian Jew from California, to speak in our local church, something unheard of before.

As the years progressed dad spoke mainly Low German as did Rev. Dyck and it was adopted by the newer ministers coming on stream. Some became very adapt at reading from the High German and translating it instantly into the Low German language. This remained the norm until English was introduced in the 80s.

Grandfather had died in July of 1953 suffering through the previous winter and spring from cancer of the bladder. They had celebrated their 70th anniversary April 1st. and his 91st birthday April 22nd. Many an evening my sister Betty and myself had listened to grandmother tell stories of their life in Russia and growing up and marrying in Manitoba.

After grandfather's death, we moved grandmother's bed downstairs into her living room and mother and dad took their bedroom. Grandmother lived to be 94, dying at home from cancer of the liver. She was cared for by mother and in her final days by her daughters.

We had received an addition to the family in 1954, mother's oldest sister and her husband had died within four months of each other and 20 year-old Nettie was left with no home. Our parents offered our home to her which she accepted until her marriage in 1956. She has been a family member ever since.

At Ease.

Although dad retained his sense of humour he was very careful to present himself publicly as was expected of him. And we still hear people from far and wide expressing their love for him and remembering his messages. They remember him as dignified and cheerful yet sober. It was very seldom we saw him different at home except that coming home tired and under strain left him irritable and impatient. I am saddened that George, Anna, and William did not have a father that could develop a close relationship with them in their childhood. Too often they were neglected due to his public office.

I was very surprised one day to see dad come in at noon with a big grin and two-step his way to mom with his arms outstretched. Mom's look of amazement was something to see as she stepped into his arms and they danced in the kitchen to their own music. And then the moment was over, they became their respectable selves again.

Upon discussing it with brothers and sisters, we think that dad really was himself only when his cousins from Manitoba, came to visit. All anxiety, cares and burdens were temporarily lifted and he received an emotional revitalizing each time they came.

Sometimes he was hard to figure out, like the time he was in Saskatoon in front of a store with his daughter Nettie and she was looking at a dress in the store window. "Do you like it?" "Yes". "If you give me a kiss here, I'll buy it for you". Our shy sister would never display herself in public that way and did not get it. He would never have gotten off so cheaply with Betty or Anna.

Leadership.

During his term as bishop he ordained 12 ministers in our churches including his son David and three deacons. Myself, George and William were elected and ordained after his death. He also ordained six bishops, 12 ministers and one deacon outside our district. He was even called to Bolivia to conduct elections and ordain a bishop, minister and deacon.

Looking back on dad's ministry some things stand out. The things that he encountered in his dealing with church members was never discussed in the presence of his children, this was in strictest confidence. On one occasion I remember him being asked to come to a local home and upon returning told us that Mr. had become a child of God. Other than that private matters were not for our ears.

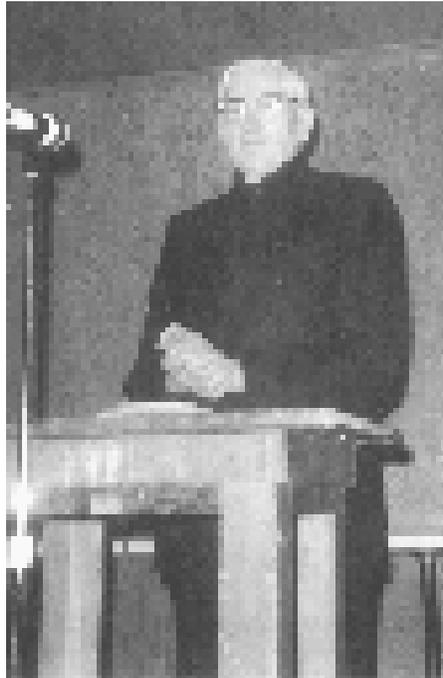
He was not easily manipulated. In 1958 a group of members from Reinfeld brought him the keys for a new Pontiac sedan. Fearing that this might imply favour seeking, he refused the gift. Upon their entreating him, that it was done in respect and sincerity with no strings attached, he nevertheless consulted a minister from another conference for advice. Dad was advised that if these people were sincere in their offer he had no right to refuse. Putting a damper on his pride, dad accepted with two conditions: it would be used as a family car and accepting it would not stop his mouth. The delegation had no prob-

lem accepting this and the car served very well for many years. Through this dad learned to be gracious in receiving gifts that came from the heart.

Because of the dwindling availability of land, our younger men were forced to enter the work force for a livelihood. Fearing that it might lead to worldliness, the church at various times sought to find suitable parcels of land for young farmers. Some of the options were the Peace River country, Carrot River, Hudson Bay, Sask. southern Alberta and even Bolivia. Delegates were sent out but nothing was finalized and slowly the church changed from a farm-orientated background to tradesmen and labourers in all fields of industry as well as agriculture

Getting qualified male Sunday school teachers was always a problem and today female teachers are readily accepted.

In 1969 our parents decided to sell the farm



Bishop Abram J. Buhler at Buhler reunion in 1980.

and move to Warman, thus being located in a more central part of the church community. The land was bought by their children Henry and Betty Fehr and an auction sale was held to disperse their possessions. Anna and William were still at home at this time.

Warman Altenheim.

In 1968 a joint venture of the Bergthaler and Old Colony churches to build a retirement home for their seniors was realized in the "Warman Mennoniten Altenheim". This was a vision of Old Colony bishop Herman Friesen and feeling that it was too much for them alone, he came and asked dad's support. Once dad caught that same vision it was presented to the churches and they worked in unity to complete the project. Over the years it has become home to hundreds of seniors in need of special care.

There is one aspect of my father that I still do not understand. As an 18 year-old until I left

home at 23, whenever I was sent to town for repairs or groceries dad would hand me his wallet. He did not check to see what was in it and sometimes there was only sufficient for the needs, while at other times it held a few hundred dollars and usually a few dollars in change. He did not check it when I handed it back; at least not in my presence. Grandma told me that grandfather had done the same to him. I remember the relief I felt when it was safely back in his hands. Sometimes it contained checks of large amounts. I would never have even dreamed of taking a quarter for some treats, so great was the trust bestowed on me.

Leadership.

One of the special talents God gave him was that of arbitrator. From petty grievances among members to disagreements in churches. Dad was called to various places in Saskatchewan and also in Manitoba and Alberta to restore peace. Even though he had a sympathetic ear to all, he was not afraid to confront obvious guilt.

In our local brotherhood meetings he expected an orderly meeting. Items on the agenda were explained and then the floor was asked for advice. After various ideas were tossed out, invariably someone would ask, "What do you think we should do?" After sharing his opinion, it usually was adopted. But he would not give his views until the membership had a voice.

With failing health dad asked the ministerial and the members to consider a bishop election thus easing the transfer to the new bishop. Dad would retain the position as bishop but give up the leadership and responsibility. Rev John D Reddekopp was elected and ordained by dad on Nov. 22, 1975. They worked well together until his death.

Going Home.

Quoting from father's obituary as prepared by son David. "Dad had a long record of heart trouble. His first attack came October 9, 1969 when he spent 10 days in the Rosthern hospital. Sept. 26, 1973, the second attack came and kept him in the same hospital 28 days. October 9, 1974, he was taken to St. Paul's hospital with his third attack, this time for 12 days. December 14, 1976 he was struck down for the fourth time. November 22, 1977 he was again taken to St. Paul's with a very severe heart attack and had to stay 28 days. Even though the doctors advised him to give up the ministry, whenever he possibly could, dad was taking his place behind the pulpit. On Sunday, June 13, 1982, with the intention of going to church and helping to serve communion, he got up out of bed, went to the washroom, turned on the water tap and without a last word or goodbye, he passed away into eternity. He reached the age of 79 years 3 months and 8 days. We will miss him greatly, but he desired to depart and to be with the Lord, which is far better. Even though we weep, yet we are not sad. We rejoice in our hearts, for we have the assurance through Christ Jesus that it will not be long till we meet again."

He preached a total of 1751 sermons, the

last one on June 6th in the Reinfeld church at Hague. Of these sermons 130 were baptism sermons with 1016 baptized, 498 communion services where 38,165 people were served, he officiated at 107 weddings and 223 funerals. He conducted 82 brotherhood meetings, ordained 6 bishops, 24 ministers and 4 deacons.

Our dad did not want to be praised or have memorials erected in his honour, all praise should go to God. He lived to see the church starting English services which he was in favour of and he expressed a desire to speak in English but being limited in the language he refrained. His position on the transfer to English cost him many former friends who would no longer visit or failed to recognize him on meeting. Although this hurt both dad and mother deeply they were convicted in their hearts that it was the right move in our area.

His prime concern was not of decorum but that the true gospel of Jesus Christ be preached, the need for personal salvation and a lifestyle conforming to Biblical teaching. God chose to use this simple farmer to further His kingdom with rippling effects still in evidence 20 years after his passing.

Mother moved into a senior's unit where she enjoyed the friendship of her neighbours. In the spring of 1991 she dispersed her possessions in a family auction and moved into the Warman Mennoniten Altenheim and died peacefully in her chair one week later at the age of 84 years.

As a family we have been blessed to have had the experience and privilege afforded us in this home.

May this glimpse of his personal life not be a hindrance to his memory but affirm that God can use anyone in His service if they are willing to let Him be Lord of their life.

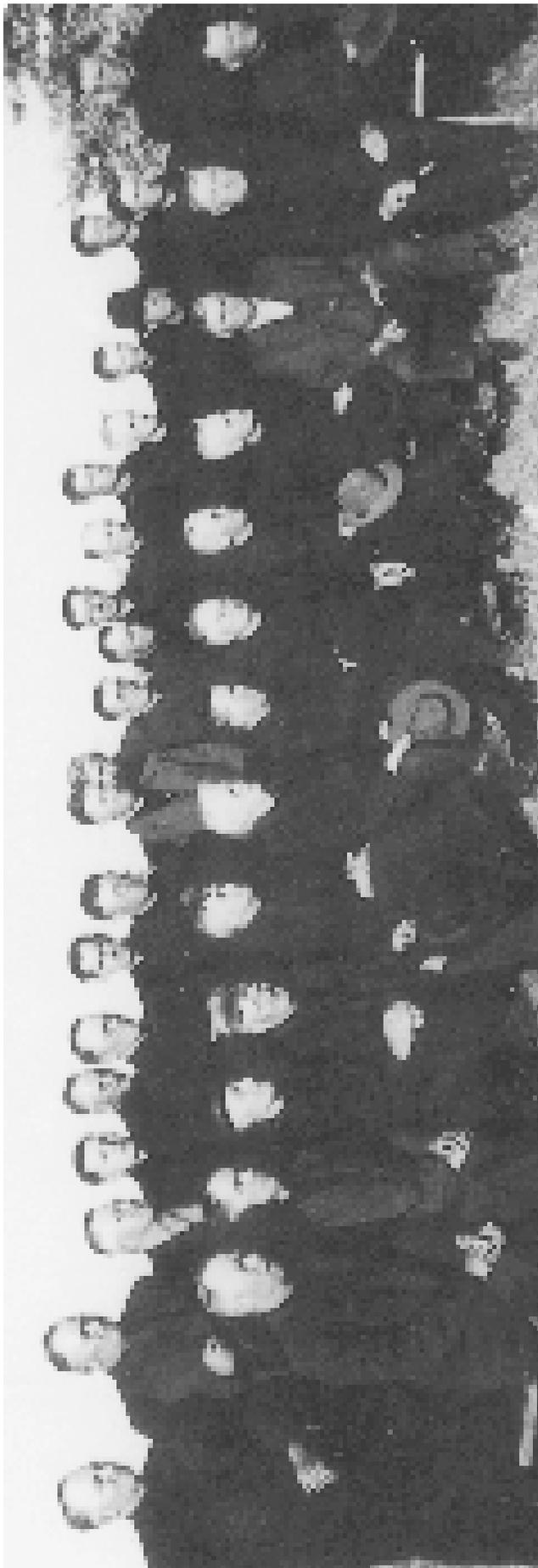
The apostle Paul writes in Eph. 4:1-3, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherein ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". That was Abram J. Buhler's aim in life.

Further Reading.

Cornelius Buhler, "The Jakob Buhler Family of Russia," in *Men. Family History*, January 1987, pages 26-27.

Endnote:

Note One: Jakob Dyck was ordained by Bishop Abraham Buhler as first Bishop of the Bergthaler Gemeinde in La Crete. But after a number of Sommerfelder ministers moved there and were accepted in the ministerial a conflict developed, with the result that Dyck and some sympathizers started a new church keeping the Bergthaler name. Johann Neudorf was the later the Bishop for many years. Those remaining adopted the Sommerfelder name keeping the buildings and treasury with David Wall as the first Bishop. In 1993 the Old-Bergthaler Gemeinde started in the Hague area in Saskatchewan with some 200 members today under Bishop Peter Peters, Warman. The Old-Bergthaler Gemeinde also has a congregation in Carrot River with some 50 members.



1955 Conference of Bergthaler, Chortitzer and Sommerfelder leaders at Swift Current, Saskatchewan, hosted by the Sommerfelder Gemeinde. Rear: l.-r. Rev. Jakob Fehr; Rev. Franz Thiessen, Som., Vanderhoof, B.C., later Bishop; deacon Peter Martens, Bergthaler, Sask.; Rev. David Froese, Som., Swift Current, Sask.; Rev. Jacob K. Doerksen, Berg., Carrot River, Sask.; Rev. Abr. Leiding, Som., Swift Current; Rev. Henry A. Dyck, Berg, Sask., Heinrich Wiens, Bergthaler, Carrot River; Peter Loepky; Rev. Jacob Buhler, Berg, Sask., cousin to Bishop Abr. Buhler; Bernhard Rempel, Rev. Heinrich H. Siemens, Berg, Sask.; Rev. Jacob D. Peters, Berg, Sask.; Franz Dyck, Som.; Main Centre, Sask.; Johann A. Friesen, current retired Bishop, Man. Som.; deacon Heinrich H. Dyck, Berg, Sask.; Rev. Franz K. Peters, Berg, Sask.; Rev. John M. Reddekopp, Berg, Sask.; Rev. Peter Schlamp, Swift Current, Som.; Rev. Gerhard Klassen, Swift Current, Som.; later Bishop?; Front: l.-r., Rev. Jakob Kroeker, Swift Current, Som., B.C.; Bishop David F. Wall, Swift Current, Som.; Bishop Johan B. Epp, Carrot River, Berg.; Rev. Heinrich Schultz, Som., Main Centre, Sask.; Rev. Cornelius W. Friesen, Chortitzer, Bishop Abram Peters, Som., B.C.; Bishop Peter S. Kehler, Chortitzer, Steinbach, Man.; Wilhelm Friesen; and unidentified. Identification is courtesy of Bishop Abram J. Buhler, who had written the names of all the ministers on the back of the photo. The photo is also published in Doelt, Bergthaler Men. Church of Sask, page 72, and identified as the conference of Bergthaler, Chortitzer and Sommerfelder leaders at Aberdeen in 1952. But this can not be the case as Franz Thiessen was only elected as a minister in 1953. I acknowledge Wm. B. Kehler, Steinbach, for assisting with identification of the Chortitzer Ohms.

Ältester Peter Plett Reimer (1877-1949)

“Ältester Peter Plett Reimer (1877-1949), Blumenort, Manitoba, Canada,” compiled by Delbert Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Introduction.

Peter Plett Reimer (1877-1949) was born in Blumenort, Manitoba, in 1877, son of minister Peter R. Reimer (see *Historical Sketches*, pages 338-77, for a biography). Peter was the son of Abraham “Fula” Reimer and Elisabeth Rempel Reimer (see *Pres.*, No. 21, pages 116-8).

In 1898 Peter P. Reimer married Elisabeth, daughter of minister Jakob L. Dueck of Grünfeld, Manitoba. Son Ben P. D. Reimer has written: “Although ... [Peter P. Reimer] was not a big man physically, he had big ambitions for farming, especially after he was married.”

“At the time when he wished to get married, he gathered his courage, and asked his father to go to a certain household to ask for permission to marry the daughter. If the girl would not have consented, then father would have needed to summon even more courage for a second try. Was he ever glad when his father came and said the girl, Elizabeth Dueck, was willing to marry him...” (Note One).

His third wife, Margaretha Fast Reimer has described some of Peter P. Reimer’s earlier experiences: “Since he was the oldest son in the family, he also shared with his parents a good deal of the difficulties of the pioneer years. As a 9-year-old boy he was struck by a hard blow from a horse’s hoof in his lower body, which occasioned severe pain, so that on one occasion his father united with him in an earnest prayer since his suffering threatened to overwhelm him. Through the declining suffering he heard - for the first time - a definite answer to prayer.”

“In his 16th or 17th year, he went through a great soul anguish (Seelenangst), which lasted for several months, during which time his father frequently comforted him, and often prayed for him. In later years he frequently reiterated that such anxiety was probably the greatest suffering which a

person could experience in this life.”

“In his 20th year... [Peter P. Reimer] received the Holy Baptism, upon the confession of his sins and his faith in Jesus Christ, which was officiated on July 12, 1896, by Ältester Abraham Dueck.”

“In the year 1898 he found in sister Elisabeth Dueck, Kleefeld, a life’s companion, with whom he appeared before the altar of matrimony on February 27, and where Rev. Johann K. Friesen then served them with the betrothal in Steinbach. Twelve children were born to them of this marriage, of whom one pair of twins

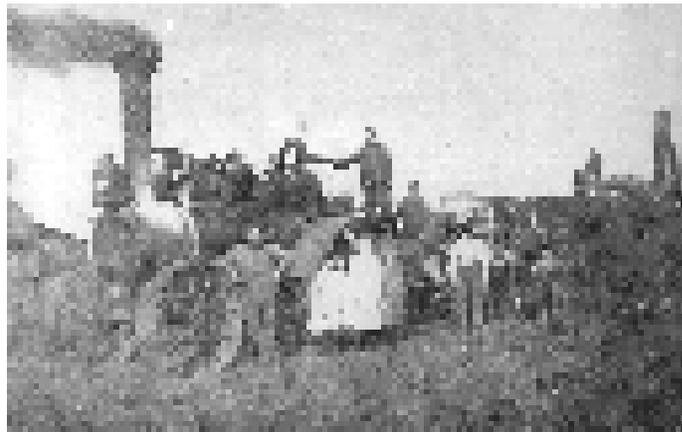
died shortly after birth. Daughter Maria (who was married for the first time to Bro. Peter K. Klassen, who died on June 21, 1921, and in the second marriage with Bro. Jakob U. Kornelsen) predeceased him on December 1, 1947.”

Farming.

Peter P. Reimer and Elisabeth R. Dueck farmed in the old Blumenort village for six years. In 1904 they purchased the north half of Section 9-7-6E, one mile northwest of Steinbach, together with the brothers-in-law Peter B. Kroeker and Heinrich R. Reimer, where they farmed. Peter’s wife and the wives of Reimer and Kroeker were cousins. The 320 acres was divided into three 120 acre parcels a mile deep, of which Peter P. Reimer had the middle. In the school year of 1904 to 1905, son Peter P. D. Reimer boarded at his grandparents, Peter R. Reimers, in Blumenort to attend school there. He remembered attending school with uncle David P. Reimer who was only four years older. After this year, Neuanlage had its own school and he finished his education there.

In 1908 Peter P. Reimer bought the NE17-7-6E in Neuanlage, or Twin creek as it came to be known, from the Peter B. Koops who were moving to Herbert, Saskatchewan. At much the same time they bought 37 acres on NW8-8-6E, originally Hudsons Bay land. Later they also bought the NW28-7-6E from a Winnipeg real estate company. Many years earlier this land had been owned by “Grote” Toews. In 1936 son Ben and Peter P. D. Reimer each bought 40 acres of this land and established their own farms. Son-in-law Henry P. Brandt later bought the south half of NW28-7-6E.

In addition they had 80 acres of land in Chortitz purchased at the time of the emigration in 1926 and broken up for cultivation. They had a mixed farm



Plett and Reimer two cylinder Watrous 15/30 steam engine threshing at Jakob P. Penners in Greenland in 1908. Standing on the steam engine is co-owner and engineer Peter P. Reimer. Behind him is fireman, John P. Reimer. Corn. T. Toews is looking out of the straw blower and Isaac Toews, his cousin, is sitting on the straw blower. To the front left is Jakob P. Penner. The man with the hat in front of the straw wagon is Heinrich Giesbrecht. To his left are: Jakob Is. Dueck, John N. Koop, Jakob R. Schellenberg. The girls are daughters of Jakob P. Penner with the exception of one who is the daughter of Heinrich Giesbrecht. Photo - Steinbach Post/Front cover Plett Picture Book.

with an average dairy milking 10 cows.

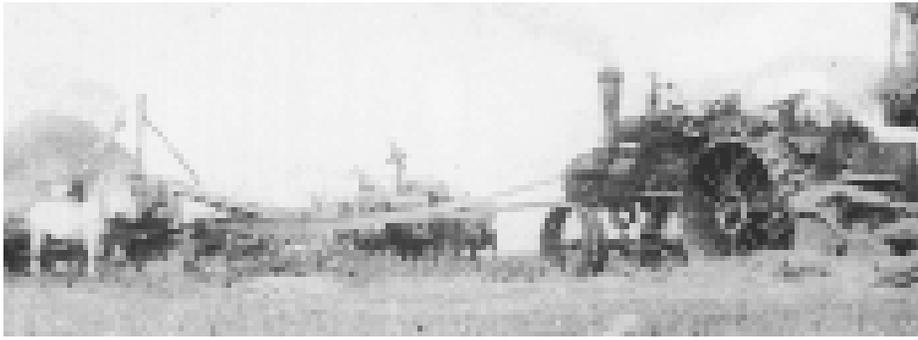
From 1900 to 1926 Peter P. Reimer was involved with the partnership “Plett and Reimer” with brother-in-law Heinrich E. Plett, operating a steam engine threshing company. Their first steam engine was a two-cylinder Watrous 15/30 acquired in about 1904. After the dissolution of the Blumenort village in 1910, the Plett and Reimer steam shed was relocated to the Peter P. Reimer farm in Neuanlage, just to the north of the yard.

In 1915 they purchased a new Case 25/75 and for some time the partnership operated both machines custom plowing and threshing in Blumenort, Neuanlage, Greenland and other districts. In addition one of their specialities was the moving of houses and their biggest job was moving the Blumenort village buildings to the individual farmsteads in 1910. Son Peter P. D. Reimer believed that the Watrous was later purchased by Joh. F. Unger and Jak. U. Kornelsen for their private use (Note Three). Plett and Reimer continued operating the Case on a bigger scale doing custom threshing from harvest until the end of November. Son Peter P. D. Reimer remembered that in 1918 they threshed into the beginning of December. They finished around Blumenort first, then moved to Greenland and then the people from Lorette came and pleaded for them to help them finish their harvest. One year, when he was fireman, they threshed for 60 days not counting Sundays and rainy days. The last customer, uncle Johann P. Reimer, was finished on October 31, a beautiful day although there were thunderstorms to the south.

Peter P. Reimer “...was the boss of the Plett and Reimer Co.” (Note Four). He very much enjoyed the steam engine business. He also had a blacksmith shop and did a lot of blacksmith work.



Ältester Peter P. Reimer, 1948 passport picture. Photo Plett Picture Book, page 65.



Plett & Reimer Case 25/75 steam engine and threshing outfit at Johann F. Ungers', Blumenhof, 1922. Photo - John R. Unger/Plett Picture Book, page 150.

Elisabeth Dueck Reimer, 1898.

For 37 years Elisabeth Dueck Reimer stood by her husband's side in the operation and management of the farm and in his role as minister and pastor (Ältester). In her last months she developed a severe shaking in her right hand from which she became very tired. Elizabeth passed away on February 8, 1935, at the age of 58.

The following obituary of Elisabeth Dueck Reimer's was written by daughter Elisabeth, Mrs. Henry P. Brandt: "The life of my mother: By nature, mother was a quiet and industrious woman. In her youth, she was somewhat plump and generally healthy. Her life was not without difficulties, so that she would likely have said, 'If there was a pleasant moment, then it also came with much hard work.' While there were no particular illnesses in the family, there were, of course, a few mishaps. One of the worst involved the oldest daughter, Maria, who at the age of 15 had a bad fall on the ice. This meant that she had to be cared for the rest of the winter (instead of her helping mother). This was a hard winter for the parents."

"It was a difficult winter for mother. Grandmother (on mother's side) died at our house. Then on the morning of Jan. 14, 1926, we got a phone call telling us that a daughter-in-law, Mrs. Jacob P. D. Reimer had passed away. On this same day in the afternoon, dad was elected as a bishop. For mother this was almost too much, in any case she was a sensitive woman who felt the burden of these pains very keenly."

"In earlier years, when the children were small, father spent much of his time away from home. During winter he often was away working in the woods, and in summer or fall he led a threshing crew, at which time they often worked late into the nights."

"In the last years mother was not well and as a result she lost a lot of weight. During this time she also came into periods of heavy coughing and a little later she developed a severe shaking of the right hand. However, during this period of illness she always remained patient and loving."

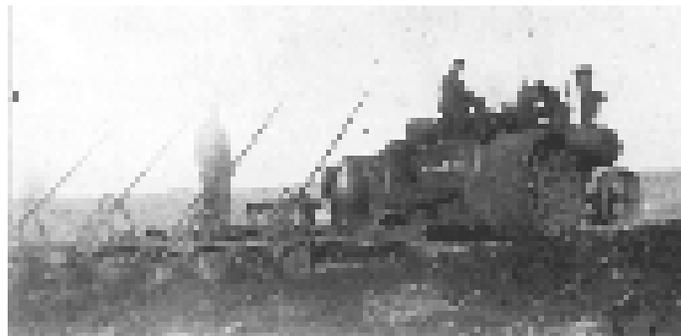
"Although she kept getting weaker all the time, in one of her last days she went to the barn and indicated the pleasure that the farm was for her. Yet, when she did pass away, it seemed to us to be very quickly. But to her the last hours seemed very long, so that at one point she said, 'Wann schlaegt die

Stunde, Ach wann darf ich gehn?' (When will the hour come, when can I go home?)"

"Toward the end she mentioned that she had worried so much about the children, but it was getting easier for her, for she was looking to Jesus. She then fell asleep peacefully. She is now resting, awaiting the day of resurrection," (Note Five).

Third wife, Margaretha Fast Reimer added some details of the first marriage: "Firstly, that grandmother Jakob L. Dueck was being cared for by her daughter (Peter P. Reimers), where she also died on March 17, 1917. She suffered of a sore foot for 15 years and was completely confined to bed during the last [days]."

"In Dec. 1916, daughter Maria experienced a



Case 25/75 Plett & Reimer steam engine and eight-bottom gang plow. Plowing stubble two miles west of Twin creek (Neuanlage) in 1919. Engineer is John P. Reimer and fireman (bent over) is Cornelius R. Plett. Photo - Peter P. D. Reimer who worked for Plett & Reimer for many years/Plett Picture Book, page 150.

severe accident in that she fell down very hard while playing on the ice, so that she was incapable of any work for the entire winter, and remained weak. Then father brought Aganetha Klassen (D. K.'s daughter) here as company for Maria and also to be helpful in the work. But it turned out differently. During the night Aganetha came down from upstairs to drink water, fell down and was a corpse. This occurred in January, 1917."

"It is so good that the difficult hours, days, and years, come to an end."

There is no picture available of Elisabeth, Mrs. Peter P. Reimer.

Anna Dueck Reimer, 1935.

"On May 12, 1935, Peter P. Reimer extended his hand in wedded life to the widow of Jakob K. L. Friesen of Rosenort, born Anna Dueck, the daughter of Ältester Abraham L. Dueck of Grünfeld,



Margaret Fast Reimer, 1948 passport photo. Photo - Plett Picture Book, page 65.

Manitoba (Note Six). The wedding vows were conducted in Blumenort by Ältester Jakob B. Kroeker. This marriage only lasted for three years, eight months and 21 days, until she also was taken from his side by her death on February 2, 1939. Through his marriage her 10 children and his 10 children were brought together as one family. Through his death, their 20 children, together with spouses, were transported into deep sorrow.

Second husband, Peter P. Reimer, wrote her obituary noting the two families had much in common already even before their marriage, since "At the death of her daughter Maria, we already shared parental sorrow, she in her marriage, and I in mine, for this their daughter was our daughter-in-law. The news of her death came on the same day that I was chosen by the Gemeinde as leader; so this day remains indelibly in our memory."

Peter P. Reimer referred to Anna's first marriage and her suffering by virtue of the loss of six of her 16 children and the premature death and suffering of her first husband: "Thereafter she lived for four years and eight months in widowhood, until she extended her hand to me, after I was a widower, and Ältester Jakob B. Kroeker pronounced the wedding vows for us, whereby we brought together a family of 22 souls in addition to spouses, in that we each had 10 children. We were allowed three years, eight months and 27 days in this blessed time, to mutually share our joys and sorrows. But God, however, be thanked for this time, which we were allowed to live together with the children in such abundant trust and mutual love. In full participation she also constantly helped me carry my anxiety and worry regarding the spiritual well-being of the Gemeinde. Even upon her final deathbed, though she already gladly wanted to depart from here, she was still concerned about me and leaving me alone in my pressing concerns as spiritual caregiver and my ministry in the Gemeinde. Oh, how deeply it

struck my heart, when she - in spite of her great physical pain - with clear words instructed the beloved children standing around the bed, to continually seek to lighten the work of their father in his difficult office and to be helpful to him in secular matters.”

“She had been bothered by various physical infirmities for years, and these continued during our marriage as well. Last fall her health seemed to improve, but on the evening of October 22, she became gravely sick, so that we had to call the doctor. He said that she was suffering from gallstone. After this date she was never again able to leave the house although she was able to quit her bed. On Nov. 26 the attack repeated itself, and again on Dec. 28. Each time the illness was different, and each time she recovered. As she took part in the work of a family gathering on Jan. 28, she expressed her happiness and thankfulness for her recovery. The heavenly Father, however, had other plans. The following morning she became critically ill, and this time she did not rally. In these last nine days she had much to suffer. She suffered from internal inflammation, which caused her extreme physical pains, and sometimes also difficulty in breathing, so that she was afraid that she might have to sink into despair. Soon, however, she was again able to say, ‘O come, Lord Jesus! Come and take me home!’ And when her voice gave out, she motioned with her hands: ‘Take me Home!’”

“On the final evening she begged me to let her go. On this point I was able, in faith to God, and out of sympathy for her, to reassure her, though it was with deeply saddened heart.”

“Her heart was too weak to withstand the severe illness, and on Thursday at 8 o’clock in the morning she could take her leave, for which she had such a yearning.”

“In her spiritual battles and physical pain, she found comfort in singing songs, of which the following became especially precious: ‘Bleibe bei Jesu, meine seele, Nimm dein Heil bestaendig wahr; Denn in dieser Leibeshoele, Schwebst du immer in Gefahr.’ And also, ‘So nimm denn meine Haende.’ When her misery grew severe, she would find solace in comforting Bible verses,” (Note Seven).

The funeral service was performed by ministers P. D. Friesen, B. R. Dueck, and Jakob L. Kroeker, and brother D. P. Reimer read the obituary.

On April 30, 1939, Peter P. Reimer married for the third time to Margaretha Fast, daughter of school teacher Cornelius W. Fast of Steinbach, Manitoba (Note Eight). The wedding service was performed by brother David P. Reimer in Blumenort.

Ministry.

Ben P. D. Reimer has written about his father’s ministry: “In 1920 he was elected as a minister [with 67 votes]; he was ordained on December 14 of the same year. On January 14, 1926 he was elected bishop of the East Reserve Kleine Gemeinde churches, and on June 1 of that year he was ordained bishop by Jacob F. Isaak of Meade, Kansas. Father took up the work with a deep concern and tried to follow as God would direct. After 23 years he moved with a group of believers to Mexico. After almost half a year he passed away, on account of stomach cancer, on April 8, 1949. During his ministry he baptized 807 people, officiated at 56 weddings, ordained 12 ministers, six deacons and



Margaret Fast Reimer in her younger years. Photo - Pres., No. 16, page 134.

one bishop,” (Note Nine).

In 1926 Peter P. Reimer, age 49, was chosen as the Ältester of the East Reserve Kleine Gemeinde. His third wife, Margaretha Fast Reimer, described how he assumed his new responsibility: “January 14, 1926, came for him the tragic news from Morris, that his daughter-in-law Mrs. Jacob P. D. Reimer, had died there. Since an Ältester election had also been called for the same day, the vote fell upon him. It remained for him, therefore, an unforgettable day. On June 1 of this year (1926), he was ordained as Ältester by the Meade, Kansas Ältester, J.F. Isaac. With deep earnestness he entered upon his calling, and in which he faithfully persevered. The Words of Paul found in Acts 20:31 rightly apply to him: ‘Therefore, watch and remember for, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.’ The words of David in Psalm 63:7 are especially applicable to him: ‘When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee; and when I awake I speak about you.’ For daily this represented his disposition...” (Note Ten).

Although committed to the faith of the fathers and the Christo-centric faith tradition, a number of important innovations were made by the Kleine Gemeinde under Peter P. Reimer’s faithful stewardship. The first Sunday Schools and Young Peoples’ programs were started in the 1920s and a church paper, the *Christlicher Familienfreund*, under the editorship of brother David, was founded. The Steinbach Bible School was also started during Ältester Reimer’s leadership but it is certain that he would not have supported the dispensationalism, ritualistic conversionism, and other alien teachings originally promoted by the school under Rev. Ben D. Reimer.

Presumably Ältester Reimer felt it was better to operate and control such organizational entities, rather than to have them used by outside predators targeting the youths or by those opposed to the vision of the church. An all-congregational ministerial conference held at Meade, Kansas, October 23-28, 1937, completed an important review of church



Peter P. Reimer, 1948. Photo - Plett Picture Book, page 66.

teachings, again making certain carefully measured strategic accommodations designed to preserve the integrity of the Gemeinde.

Epistle to the Gemeinden in Kansas, 1926.

The document collection of uncle Cornelius L. Plett, Satanta, Kansas, contains letters from all the children of Maria and Peter R. Reimer. It includes three letters by Ältester Peter P. Reimer. The first letter dated June 16, 1926, only short months after his election as Ältester, was clearly written not only to his uncle Cornelius, but also as a ministerial epistle to the congregations at Satanta and Meade, Kansas. The epistle of 1926 provides an intimate view of Peter P. Reimer’s faith and spirituality as well as his vision for the church.

Peter P. Reimer begins by affirming the power of the “Holy Spirit to keep us steadfast in the faith once confessed.” He “...appreciates the empathy [of his uncle] and I feel I should allow myself to be counselled and admonished by such experienced servants.” Nor “...am I possessed of human wisdom or precocious talents that I can put something together from the Word of God and extemporaneously present it to the assembly the way some can.” But “...I will trust that it was His Holy will [that the Ältestership] fell exactly upon me, for - after all - I too am His own work.”

Unlike the fear-driven teachings of Evangelical Fundamentalism, the Mennonite faith is essentially positive, a disposition frequently exuded in Reimer’s letter: “...but we have the assurance of the One Who cannot lie, that He will cast no one away.” He compares the contemporary circumstances to the people of ancient Israel, and “...that when times were good they yearned for the world....which has the consequences that they soon also serve its gods.”

“Are things any different today?” he asks rhetorically. “Firstly, so much room is given to have everything so advanced and city-like, and the most desirable vehicles are acquired. And then it is also to be understood from many that our venerable worship of God is no longer deemed sufficient. We are supposed to pray loudly and openly before the assembly, and for some, to make the spirituality more alive. This, however, I - in my insignificance - can-

not find to be so, for since the days of my youth I have been counselled and cautioned against the like, and nor does it accord with the Word of God, according to my knowledge nor that of many beloved Geschwister."

Peter P. Reimer reiterates a theme foundational to traditional Mennonite faith and teaching: "But I must confess from my own experience that the right inwardly spiritual life associated with a genuine fear of God, must be had and nurtured ever more. It is too little and needs constant encouragement and admonition but should it not also be evidenced and demonstrated by a measured walk? and whereby it can be read from us that we have also become willing to take upon ourselves the yoke of Christ?"

Again the undying optimism of Reimer's faith shines forth: "But may our ever faithful Father, who does not desire the death of any sinner, grant that such right thinking cannot be completely vanquished and trod underfoot. It is my innermost prayer that we have reconstituted ourselves [converted] to gladly wander the [pilgrim's] path, so that at the end of our lives, we can greet our great God with joy and not have to experience the great deception that we believe to have served Him here with much outwardly good-appearing demonstration and physically appealing things, only to receive the answer from Him, 'I know you not,' that we have been unprofitable servants who have not worked at all for Christendom."

Toward that end, Reimer encouraged the reader, "...upon consideration of this, the thought comes to mind, that we can admonish and greet each other with more love and earnestness, and that we should not take things too lightly." But it is important to maintain a spirit of Christlikeness and meekness: "...[as in] all counselling and admonition we should come as the very least, for it is said, in any struggle, love conquers all in victory." He concludes with the admonition, "not to be vanquished in the battle,....[for] He Who has prescribed our remuneration is true and remains so regardless...[of our setbacks and reverses] and He will not forsake us....Those who look upon Jesus will be healed. Only in this way and none other can we be healed of our sins."

Reimer reveals the focus of his faith with a closing quote of scripture: "Indeed, the statement is still valid, 'come unto me, all (note that it says 'all') ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.'"

Letters, 1932 and 1934.

In contrast to the 1926 epistle, Peter P. Reimer's letter of February 9, 1932 is more in the nature of a private communication between him and his uncle. He demonstrates compassion for his elderly uncle noting "how lonesome and forsaken you must feel, particularly in view of your already weak eyesight and of your hearing being quite weak. And on top of that, [being] a widower, which particularly seems difficult as I see it, for someone like you accustomed to a married life since from your youth."

Peter P. Reimer is considerate and writes larger to make reading easier for his uncle Cornelius, whose eyesight is failing badly. "It is important," he encourages, "for so long as we have life, that we live right in the spirit. And that in the spirit we direct ourselves unto the work of the Spirit seeking strength, understanding and knowledge in accor-

dance with the Word of God."

Peter P. Reimer posed some interesting questions. "Now beloved uncle," he queries, "I do want to ask you: Why did our forebears not already in earlier times accept associations ('Vereinen') other than our traditional worship services where the ministers elected thereto presented the Word of God according to the talents they had received? Especially as they are deemed so good and actually necessary by many. And apparently for the reason that anyone present may speak regarding a scripture or present questions?"

Ältester Peter Reimer is referring to the par-church organizations that were becoming popular in the East Reserve in the 1930s, and which were often being used to bring unbiblical teachings into the church. Because the growth of these "Verein" proved unstoppable the church finally realized they would have to take control of these new ways of communication in order that they serve the church's own faith paradigm.

"Second question," Peter Reimer continued. "What was the reason why also our Gemeinde advised and testified against the choir singing and the harmony singing?" Realizing his uncle will be wondering where all this is going, he stops to explain and suggests personal involvement in the "work in the Gemeinde and the brotherhood meetings before judging." The comment highlights the heroic struggle of the Ältester of the Church of God in joining battle for the integrity of the Gemeinde against those who would lead it away from Jesus Christ, its cornerstone.

To clarify the nature of this struggle, Peter Reimer cites 1 Corinthians 1:10, referring to divisions and for members of the Gemeinde to cling to each other, as well as 1 Peter 5:5, referring to humility and being submitted unto the Ältesten, "with which is also meant, those that have served before us and who have been older than we. Yes, beloved uncle, what 'resisting' means, you also will have come to know."

"But," he adds, "Things are still bearable, with the difference that I do not want to complain, but help is badly needed...."

After referring to the experiences of the people of Israel, Peter P. Reimer laments: "Oh, how can it be any different for us today. We have been far too easy in too many things and have accommodated ourselves to how things are in our surroundings." He refers to "success in the secular and trade, with many businesses, and the large farms, over what is necessary, and always, something more is done for the eye, the ear and to the flesh."

Peter P. Reimer's solution is to "pay heed to the teachings of the Gospels. Indeed, to continue steadfast with pleading and sighing in the spirit, in order to clearly understand what His will is for us."

In closing, he expressed his wish that "all might live in such a manner that we would all again be eternally united in the fully holy heaven....[and] That to strive for such glory is only possible through Jesus Christ, by virtue of what He has done for us, arisen, he is our reconciliation with God, and only thereby are we to seek our salvation and otherwise in no works of our own or by outward appearances."

Peter P. Reimer adds some news from home. Abr. P. Reimer's Elizabeth had a severe operation on her leg at St. Boniface Hospital. Mrs. Joh.

Barkman has been irrational, and "She had spoken a lot." There was "...too much snow to drive car, except from Steinbach to St. Anne, which is being kept open."

The third letter is dated April 2, 1934, only months before the deaths of both Peter P. Reimer's own wife, Elisabeth, his mother and uncles Cornelius and Abraham, the latter of a tragic auto accident. Again he encourages his uncle with a prayer, "May God grant that you in your last days of earthly life, may always be truly yielded to the will and leading of our great God. The main body of the letter is a wonderful encouragement and uplifting for the elderly, well worthy of being translated and published.

Peter Reimer closes by inquiring about his uncle's health. "By us," he adds, "we are improving." His wife has some rheumatism but has recently been up and darning and helping with food preparation. Regarding his mother, she was "quite a bit better for a time with her hearing, otherwise she says she is getting weaker."

Challenges.

Among the major challenges faced by Ältester Peter P. Reimer was the advent of World War Two, and the resulting anti-Pacifist, anti-Mennonite hysteria in the land. Historian Royden Loewen has written that "[He]...was one who strongly felt that the church should be prepared to suffer rather than to serve in any military-related service. Shortly after the war broke out in September Ältester Reimer asked David Toews, the chairman of the Winkler meeting to speak in Blumenort. Toews outlined the threat which the war was posing to the non-resistant Mennonites. He opposed the position taken by the more liberal Russlander Mennonites that conscientious objectors should be willing to render non-combatant military service....[As a result], the conservative Manitoba Mennonite churches organized an *Ältestenkomitee* to ensure military exemption. Rev. David P. Reimer, who had a command of the English language and was a natural diplomat, was chosen to represent the Kleine Gemeinde on this four-man committee....In November 1940, the Kleine Gemeinde summoned together all young men between 21 and 25....The first court session came on December 4. Both Peter P. Reimer and David P. Reimer attended as witnesses and the first group of Blumenort boys were interrogated." (Note Eleven).

Historian Royden Loewen has also written about the ministry of Ältester Peter P. Reimer generally and assessed its impact upon the denomination and beyond: "As preacher he was well respected. It is said that Peter Reimer was one of those men to whom people started listening the moment he stood up and confidently strode to the pulpit. His sermons stressed unity of faith, togetherness and consensus, and the need to live simply, following a Christ-like lifestyle and turning one's back on evil pleasures and hedonistic pursuits. He is also remembered as a man who knew the Scriptures very well. While the church of his time did not have a vision for missions, he spoke openly of his salvation experience and allowed missionaries to speak in church."

"It is said that Elder Reimer keenly felt the responsibility of his new office. This responsibility entailed leading a church which was becoming increasingly diverse. The effect of the more liberal

Russian and American Mennonites on the Kleine Gemeinde in the East Reserve was strong during the '20s. In Steinbach the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Brethren churches practised oral prayer, held Sunday School, used musical instruments and stressed pietistic themes such as the assurance of salvation. Some of the Kleine Gemeinde members were attracted to this approach to church life. Others began to be open to government pensions, sports and photography. These changes were of concern to Elder Reimer, who saw them as contrary to Christian humility and separation from the world. To deal with some of these issues, he wrote at least two pamphlets: 'Christianity and the Vote: The Reasons I Do Not Vote in Worldly Elections' and 'A Booklet Concerning the Practice of Praying Aloud.' Elder Reimer also took an active part in the Kansas Ministerial Conference of 1937 which dealt with some of the tensions the Kleine Gemeinde were experiencing."

"Perhaps Peter Reimer's greatest achievement was the reorganization of the Kleine Gemeinde into a conference of autonomous churches. It is said that Elder Reimer realized that each of the districts should have its own church organization, but he found it difficult to lead them decisively to that point. On one hand he seemed to feel the burden of being the sole leader of the church, and, on the other hand, he felt a responsibility to keep the liberals of the church in check."

"The talk of forming separate church districts began in earnest during the years of World War II. By the fall of 1938 district brotherhood meetings were being held, and by next spring the practice of organizing worship services at a local level had also begun. In February, 1941, Prairie Rose needed another minister to assist. Rev. Henry R. Reimer and Peter A. Plett were the first minister and deacon to be thus elected."

"By 1945 full autonomy had been granted to each of the four East Reserve churches. In a special letter sent to each church, Peter P. Reimer placed the leadership of each church in the hands of the oldest minister. Elder Reimer now became the leader solely of the Blumenort church. Three years later he resigned and lead the exodus to Mexico, where he died on April 18, 1949," (Note Twelve).

Third wife Margaretha Fast Reimer added an interesting anecdote that "In 1942, Peter P. Reimer counted all the Gemeinde members on this side of the Red River, down the row and where they lived. This was something he could do from home, and only two were left out."

According to son Peter P. D. Reimer, his father already knew he was dying before moving to Mexico, but he kept it from the family and church so as not to discourage them (Note Thirteen).

Sermon, 1926.

The following are excerpts from a sermon preached by Peter P. Reimer in Blumenort on October 31, 1926, shortly after election as Ältester of the East Reserve Kleine Gemeinde. The sermon is based on Matthew 5:

"I greet the beloved church by wishing you much peace and grace from God... I, your humble servant, would like to speak to all those dearly beloved people that have gathered here today. From the oldest to the youngest who can already understand what is being said here, to you I address

myself. What better thing do we have in life than to gather and meditate on God's Holy Word. It teaches us and strengthens us in our faith as we are reminded about the comforting hope which we have in His Word. We want to seek to follow this teaching with His help so that after this life, through His grace, we shall understand and rejoice. O Beloved listeners! What could really be better for us in life than to reject all the foolish, worldly things and leave them with courage as the Spirit directs... We read about our dear Lord and Saviour as He walked on this earth. He did not even have a pillow. Yes, he walked before us as one having nothing but really having all.... This does not mean that we should not own possessions or make use of them. But it means that we should not misuse them."

"The Word says 'Love Your neighbour as yourself.' I must consider this. If, for example, I want to trade in my car to have one more to my taste and I know that there are some of my neighbours who do not have sufficient food for their needs, should not I ask myself if I am using what the Lord has given me, rightly? It would be good if we would remind ourselves of what we read in Acts 2:44-45. Especially a person who has debts, has reason to be careful not to purchase things which he does not really need."

"Our text is Matt. 5:1-19. Here Jesus says that those people who are blessed are poor and weak. It is only a person who feels his weakness and sickness who needs a doctor. Does this not imply that a person who claims to be healed will forget that God's strength can be real only in the weak, according to II Cor. 12? Oh how great will be the disappointment on that day for those whom we read about in Matt. 7:22."

"The Word of God teaches us to be awake so as not to deviate from the narrow way, either to the right or to the left. Oh, that God would be merciful and open our eyes! Yes, may He give us a humble heart and mind that we may look out for ourselves. The enemy of our souls is very sly and would like very much to stifle us by making us sure of things and lulling us to sleep."

"Oh, let us be united in mind as we have been taught. Even if we do not receive much recognition from people for the (simple) way in which we conduct our church services, we can receive an eternal blessing if we worship God with a quiet, faithful heart. We do not prove that we have come to a real faith by making our services very fancy and beautiful... Saul was told that god was much more pleased with obedience than with many nice, fat sacrifices... of what good is it if we know how to sing beautiful praises to God after much practice but do not have the true humility needed for obedience to God's Word?"

"We can comfort ourselves with the beautiful words of the song which describes how the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sin and frees us from eternal guilt and pain. But there is no salvation for us if we do not first rightly accept it. We need ransom money which we are not capable of supplying... (Yet) seeking eternal life depends completely on the denial of ourselves for Christ's sake, according to Mark 8:34-35."

"Pray that true love will increase and that the love for the world will become cold. Yes, what better could we wish for than that we could really strengthen each other in the faith with good works

and an honest walk before God?"

"Therefore, because we have been granted life even this day, let us move forward and not stop... We must even now be patient; if we have done the best we know, then we want to put our trust in the Lord that He might continue to give us strength and assistance. Let us faithfully follow the good and rightly walk in the road that is dear to us towards the end that we, together with our children, might attain eternal life through His boundless grace for Christ's sake. Amen," (Note Fourteen).

Mexico, 1948.

In the 22 years of Ältester Peter P. Reimer's leadership he was a steadfast, and yet, patient and loving spiritual caregiver. His major accomplishment was to keep the various factions in the Kleine Gemeinde united and focused on the teachings of Jesus Christ, discipleship and the ethic of New Testament love. His was a moderate leadership but in the tradition of the blessed faith of the fathers, with Christ as the cornerstone. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit he was able to stay the course in the face of great opposition and even the promotion of Evangelical Fundamentalism and Dispensationalism by zealous sectarians in the denomination itself. At the close of his ministry he completed the transition of the East Reserve Kleine Gemeinde into four districts or congregations each with their own ministerial.

Leading the conservative wing of the Kleine Gemeinde to Mexico in 1948 was a major achievement. Even though he was already ill before moving south, he made the heroic effort for the sake of the preservation of Christo-centric faith within the beloved Gemeinde. Presumably he came to the conclusion that the inroads of Evangelical Fundamentalist apostasy in the Gemeinde was unstoppable and that only by the drastic strategy of retreat and retrenchment would a remnant of the faithful survive.

Historian Royden Loewen has written that "It was the second group, comprised of the more moderate brethren and led by Ältester Peter P. Reimer, which spearheaded the move to Mexico.....Some of them had been leading businessmen and church innovators. They shared the fear of the government's policy toward the education and military conscientious objection."

The fears are evident in a statement written by Ältester Peter P. Reimer on August 5, 1946, explaining his conclusion that such a move was necessary: "Concerning the desire for a move to Mexico. The reason for this, in my opinion, is that, according to government laws, certain educational freedoms have been taken from us. We are compelled to



The second Mrs. Peter P. Reimer, nee Anna Dueck, widow of Jakob K. Friesen. Photo - Descendants of Jakob and Maria L. Dueck, page 206.

hire only those teachers in our schools who have become legally qualified with a Normal School Certificate. The school year has been extended to 10 months, during which our beloved children, from 7 to 14 years old, are instructed according to government regulations."

"Instead, we want our previously allowed *Privilegium* under which we had full control of our education. Also we feel that school should be held for only five months a year with students 7-12 years old. This gives us enough time to teach them to write, read, and do arithmetic and to instill the teachings of the gospel into our beloved children in order to establish them in the old ways."

"Also we want no requests for our youth to render government service in C.O. camps and elsewhere, or to pay a substantial sum to help cover war costs."

"In the case that the Mexican government grants us these freedoms as it has promised them to the Old Colonists and Sommerfelders in writing, then I attest to this that I, too, am for moving to Mexico, for the sake of our children and grandchildren in order to continue protecting and living out our faith. I trust that God will bless this undertaking," (Note Fifteen).

Tribute.

The following tribute to Ältester Peter P. Reimer was written by son-in-law Peter P. Friesen, also a minister of the Gospel:

"Before marriage I knew father only as a bishop of four church districts known as the East Reserve Kleingemeinde, over which he presided in all spiritual affairs and brethren meetings. He carried out his responsibilities with dignity. He was well respected and accepted."

"After Margaret and I were married in November, 1939, I got to know and appreciate father when we lived with our parents for several months, and also later when we moved in to live with them, upon their invitation and our convenience. Father helped us get started at farming, and with their machinery and buildings at our disposal for a few years, we had the privilege of farming somewhat in partnership with them. While father was away on ministerial duty I quite often had the opportunity to prove that we appreciated this privilege. He was easy to get along with, which also made it easy to go to him for advice."

"When our parents moved to Mexico, father saw to it that we had the privilege to continue on the family farm which they sold to us on terms that we could handle at that time. On the day of their departure to Mexico we talked together in private when he related to me that working together had been appreciated beyond expectation."

"During the time of his ministry he quite often shared his concern as to how things were going in the church, which helped me greatly in preparing for the ministry that we were to embark upon in the then near future. Often when we came into crises later on, we had good memories to draw from as to how father handled tight situations and coped with problems. Many were the decisions he had to make, and whether material or spiritual, he had a relaxed attitude and the welfare of all concerned in mind. From experience and some of his writings we found he was no complainer. When at one time he helped saw wood at the neighbours and got one finger

almost completely sawed off, he had it fixed up by a doctor before mother got to know about it, quite likely to spare her the grief of seeing him in that state. He was not overly worried when he married the second time, which also meant adopting ten children, five of them still at home with their mother, and bringing two families together, each family consisting of ten children. This went relatively smooth."

"When changing times brought demands for changes in the churches, and he could not please all around, he sought autonomy for individual local churches, with each having its own leadership. This lightened his load considerably. The migration to Mexico was already in progress at that time. Father felt it his duty and privilege to spearhead the spiritual aspect of the migration, a great undertaking, which all transpired without hard feelings in the family, even for those who stayed back."

"After six months in Mexico, cancer terminated his work there. As we were arriving there to visit him on his deathbed, we were wondering what we would meet. Instead of us comforting him, he set us at ease and expressed joy at seeing our family. He passed away peacefully after a few days."

Death, 1949.

The obituary of Ältester Peter P. Reimer, as written by widow Margaretha Fast Reimer, provides a glimpse at Ältester Peter P. Reimer's last period of ministry in Mexico: "It has pleased the Lord of life and death, to take from our side, our beloved spouse and father, Friday, April 8, 1949, at 8 o'clock and 45 minutes in the evening, through a peaceful death....He was born in Blumenort, Manitoba, where he passed his time until our departure from there and move to Mexico....There are nine children still alive."

"On April 30, 1939, he entered into his third marriage with me, Margaretha Fast. We were blessed into this wedded state by his brother David P. Reimer in Blumenort. For 10 years, less three weeks and one day, we were privileged to have shared joy and sorrow with each other."

"Already for a year before his death he had some pain in his back which slowly increased. When we arrived here in Mexico, a heart condition was added thereto, possibly as a consequence of the change in climate. This suffering persisted for around a month. This was followed by a burning pain in his stomach after eating so that he often had to vomit. And yet, for the short time that we lived here in Mexico (and for which we were very thankful that the Lord had led in that manner), he always earnestly exerted himself to order and establish the Gemeinde here upon the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, in so far as the Lord through His Spirit granted him wisdom and strength. Since his suffering was always increasing, we finally submitted ourselves to the hospital in Chihuahua on March 11, where after medical examination it was established that he already had an advanced cancer condition. Since the doctor hoped to achieve an improvement in his condition and an extension of his days through an operation, he - in firm trust in God - decided immediately for the difficult operation, which was then carried out in the hospital on March 19, after medical preparations. It was also established here, however, that his liver was severely attacked by the cancer condition."

"On April 1, he was again released from the

hospital, and so we allowed ourselves to be driven home the somewhat over 100 miles by taxi, for which he was almost too weak. Although it also appeared quite positive at home, his condition deteriorated rapidly. He was still able to discuss various things with his children Peter P. D. Reimers, Corn. P. D. Reimers, Rev. Peter P. Friesens, and his brother, Ältester David P. Reimer, who arrived here from Manitoba last Sunday. These, together with his children living here, were also all present at his deathbed, when he - though in flustered tone - often expressed his thanks and firm hope that he would be raised up and saved and calmly expelled his last breath."

"...We grieve his death not as those without hope, rather we hope to see him again with the Lord. We thank-you for the heartfelt participation in his suffering and in our grief. The burial took place on April 10, with a large participation."

By 1965, there were 32 children, 165 grandchildren, 105 great-grandchildren, and 7 great-great-grandchildren. Seven pair of twins were born in the family.

Endnotes:

Note One: Ben P. D. Reimer, "Biography of Peter P. Reimer," in Abr. C. Reimer, editor, *Peter R. Reimer 1845-1915 Family Book*, page 92.

Note Two: Margaret Fast Reimer, *Familien Register von Witwe Peter P. Reimer geb. Margaretha Fast* (Steinbach, 1963), page 4.

Note Three: Joh. K. Klassen was possibly also involved. Interview, P.P.D. Reimer March 6, 1981.

Note Four: Royden Loewen, *Blumenort* (Blumenort, 1983), page 113.

Note Five: John R. Dueck, editor, *Descendants of Jacob and Maria L. Dueck 1839 1986* (Steinbach, 1986), pages 205-206, translated from the original published in Ben P. D. Reimer, et al., *Stammbuch der Voreltern Jakob und Maria L. Dueck* (Steinbach, 19560), pages 41-42.

Note Six: For a listing of the Friesen family, see Levi Dueck, editor, *The Henry L. & Anna Friesen Family Then & Now* (Rosenort, 2001), pages 238-300.

Note Seven: Peter H. Dueck, *Abraham L. and Elizabeth Dueck and their Descendants* (Steinbach, 1965), pages 64-67.

Note Eight: *Dynasties*, pages 172-182.

Note Nine: Ben P. D. Reimer, "Biography of Peter P. Reimer," page 92.

Note Ten: Margaret Fast Reimer, *Familien Register*, pages 4-5.

Note Eleven: Loewen, *Blumenort*, page 432.

Note Twelve: Loewen, *Blumenort*, pages 421-423.

Note Thirteen: Peter P. D. Reimer, interview Feb. 25, 1981.

Note Fourteen: As quoted in Loewen, *Blumenort*, pages 426-427.

Note Fifteen: Jakob U. Kornelsen, *Fünfundzwanzig Jahre in Mexiko: Beschreibung Von der Quellenkolonie 1948-1973* (Jagueyes, 1973), page 8.

Acknowledgement:

This biography of Ältester Peter P. Reimer (1877-1949), Blumenort, Manitoba, is an excerpt from a new book by Delbert Plett, *Johann Plett, Ellerwald: A Mennonite Family Saga*, pages 540-55, publication pending.

Neu-Samara - A Life of Light and Shadow

“The story of Neu-Samara - Under the theme of the words of the poet,
`Just like the summer day, life is rich in light and shadow,’” compiled

by Daniel Janzen, former Ältester of the Brüdergemeinde in Neu-Samara, presently Dresdener Str. 6, 48231 Warendorf, Germany.

Background.

The first Mennonite migration from the Vistula Delta in Royal Poland/Prussia to Russia consisted of 228 families who settled at Chortitza on the Dnjepr River in 1789, a settlement which eventually grew to 18 villages. The second major migration commenced in 1803 and resulted in the founding of the Molotschna Colony in 1804 which grew in time to 57 villages.

Thus began a new life on the, until then, undisturbed reaches. The small clay huts with straw roofs, built in the beginning, were soon exchanged for sound dwellings. Brick kilns were quickly constructed, producing the best building material, with which the villages were built. The first century was very productive for the Mennonites in Russia. They developed very quickly. They were given 10 tax free years, so as to be able to become established. But it did not take 10 years. Already earlier they produced much grain for the Russian Government, and Russia had its own bread.

The villages were built according to the Prussian architecture: they had a planned order - one street with dwellings on both sides. In the middle of the village, on one side was the house of prayer and on a nearby property always the cemetery. The school was located on the other side of the street. Teachers, ministers and choir directors, were elected according to the talents found in the Gemeinde, later there were also Bible Schools in which they were instructed. At the end of the village was always the so-called “industrial section” - blacksmith, cabinet shop, etc.

However, two more colonies were founded by settlers coming direct from Prussia, namely, “Am Trakt” established in 1853 on the Volga River near the city of Saratov (10 villages) and “Alt-Samara” established in 1861 also in the Volga region, located near the city of Samara (10 villages).

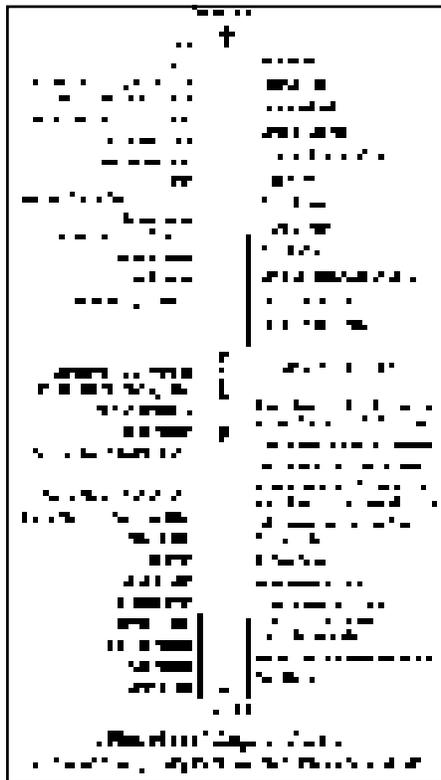
A new life with mighty strength arose in these four mother colonies. The unused steppe soon turned into blooming gardens and fields. Rich fruit and vegetable gardens enriched the view as well as their lives. In addition to bible conferences, prediger seminars and songfests were organized in the houses of prayer. The children were instructed in the Sunday schools. In the larger villages, hospitals, orphanages and schools for handicapped children were established.

Through a high birthrate and continuing immigration, the number of settlers always increased. The first century ended with the problem, there was no longer enough land for the forthcoming generation. The two mother colonies were soon short of land. To solve the problem of landlessness, daughter colonies were established in various parts of the Empire, starting with Bergthal in 1836. At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, new Mennonite villages arose in the Crimea, Caucasus, the Ural district, in Orenburg, Ufa, Neu-Samara, Siberia, Altai, Omsk and Turkestan. New life also blossomed in these new daughter colonies. But they



Map of Neu-Samara Colony on the Tok River as drawn by Daniel Janzen, presently Warendorf, Germany and published in Brucks and Hooge, *Neu-Samara: A Mennonite Settlement East of the Volga* (Jackpine House Ltd., Edmonton, Alberta, 2002), page 10 (see Pres., No. 21, page 137). This map is more professionally reproduced by Wm. Schroeder, *Mennonite Atlas* (Winnipeg, 1996), page 54.

did not fully come into maturity before dark clouds appeared on the horizon of time, threatening the future with many difficulties.



Donskoje village map, as remembered by Margareta (Greta) Martens, June 2000 and published in *Neu-Samara*, page 185.

Some 10 years after the founding of “Alt-Samara”, the fourth mother colony on the Volga, the Russian Czar revoked the promised freedom of religion and non-resistance, and the Mennonites became obligated to military and civilian service. As a result many immigrated to America in the 1870s. This was the first immigration of Mennonites from Russia.

Settlement, 1892.

We, the Mennonites, have also experienced the words of the poet, “Just like a summer day, life is rich in light and shadow,” in our settlement - which consisted of 14 villages - Neu-Samara, sometimes referred to as the Orenburg District according to the old nomenclature. Through a mass resettlement, the colony was established in 1892 by poor grubbers, farm workers and labourers, who came from the District of Taurien, as it then was, and from the Crimea. A new life was begun in these 14 villages. The names of the villages (nine lay along the Tok River, one northerly and four southerly), Isckalak, Annenskoj, Bogomasowo, Dolinsk, Donskoje, Pleschanowo, Lugowsk, Podolsk, Krassikowo, Kuterlja, Kalten, Jugowka, Klinok, Kamenz. Presently there are only 12 villages as the villagers of “Annenskoje” and “Kamenez” were resettled into the other villages.

The Gemeinden.

Two houses of prayer were erected in these 14 villages: one in Lugowsk - the Brüdergemeinde, in which Abraham Martens served as Ältester, until he fell sick and died in 1928. The other house of prayer was in Pleschanowo - the Kirchengemeinde, in which Daniel Boschmann served as Ältester until

1930, when he was resettled. He only lived there for a short time - several months. A number of years after the erection of the first two houses of prayer - in the years 1907-8, a third house of prayer was built in the village of Donskoje, which served the Allianzgemeinde, but only for two or three years. In the year 1911 this house of prayer became affiliated with the Brüdergemeinde. The members of the Allianzgemeinde, according to their wish, were accepted into the Brüdergemeinde by immersion baptism according to their regulations, or they joined themselves to the Kirchengemeinde. The Ältester of the Gemeinde in Donskoje was Heinrich Janzen.

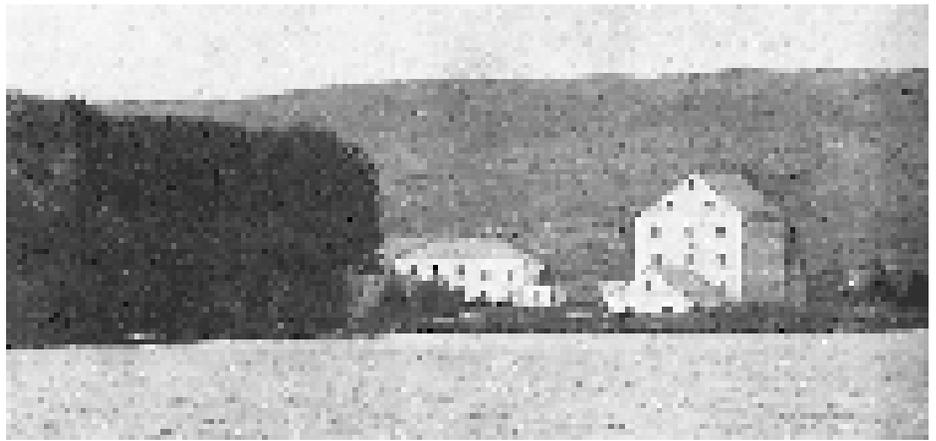
And thus, these three houses of prayer served for the blessing of the entire settlement. The Sunday worship services as well as the Christian holidays were accompanied by the singing of choirs. It is noteworthy, that in the Gemeinde in Lugowsk, the choir director Gerhard Reimer served in this work from the founding of the Gemeinde until the house of prayer was locked up. In the house of prayer in Donskoje and in the Kirchengemeinde, the choir direction was changed because of various grounds. Sängereften were held from time to time, which likewise served for a great blessing and benefit. The worship services in the Brüdergemeinde and also in the Kirchengemeinde were fulfilled by simple believing servants of the Word of God.

In the midst of all this unlearnedness, God awakened a simple man, Heinrich Sukkau, who was very weak in the Russian language, to serve in the vineyard of the Lord, namely, to serve among the surrounding Russian population. After the end of the First World War, he was able to expand his field of labour with the help of God, and where for as long as it was possible, and even though oftentimes it was encompassed by great danger, he was able to perform his labour in the vineyard of the Lord with blessing. His difficulties regarding the Russian language were overcome with God's help and support. But he also became a sacrifice to the violence and persecution of the 1930s.

Further, it should be added that in the year 1912, two brethren from the Mennonite Brüdergemeinde, namely, brother Peter Görtz and Bernhard Bergen, were educated abroad as servants of the Word of God in Germany, in the Berlin Bible School. Their service, however, was only of short duration, since World War One broke out and they were then conscripted like all other young men. After the termination of the war, these educated brethren Görtz and Bergen commenced their service in the Brüdergemeinde. The Brüdergemeinde was able to evidence a growth in members, in that new members were added annually by baptism. And so years past by during which the worship services in these houses of prayer were nurtured, according to the customs of our fathers.

Collectivization, 1929.

Yet, as is well-known, the epoch of the 20th century was coupled with many events. The First World War and the Revolution, which was carried



Watermill on the Tok. Photo - Neu-Samara, page 80.

out in our land, resulted in a completely new transformation of the State, namely, the socialization of the Empire. Through this process, religion was also constricted. Threatened by this dark shadow, many Mennonites in the 1920s decided to immigrate to Canada. In the years 1929 to 1930, the farms were collectivized. Land, farm equipment, and cattle were taken away from the farmers by force and without compensation and put into the Kolchose. The harvested grain as well as the cattle production, no longer belonged to the farmers, instead to the Government. The workers in the Kolchosen were only credited for the work days, and at the end of the year they received a very minimal wage. Each family was allowed to keep only one cow, one pig, and poultry as their private enterprise. They had to pay tax on their production, and one part of their private

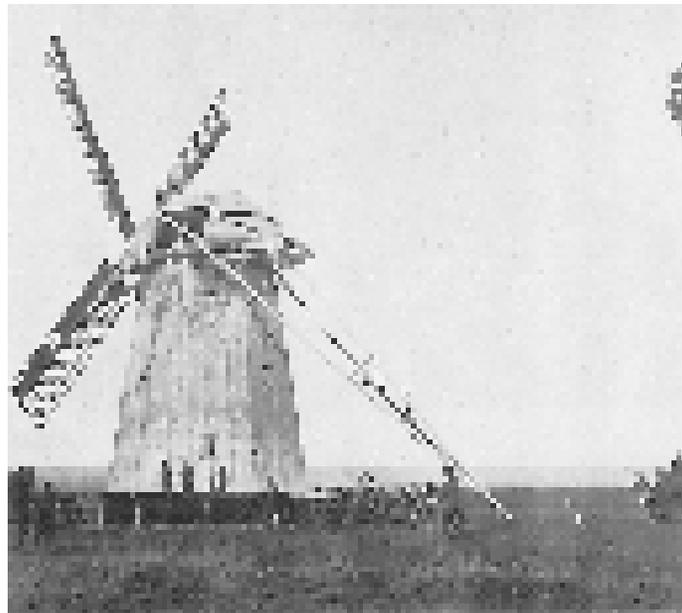
Donskoje was locked on January 6, 1931, and at the same time also the worship house of the Kirchengemeinde. And so in the entire settlement of 14 villages, there remained only the house of prayer in Lugowsk. Thereby the spiritual life was laid lame, although worship services were held in the private homes in the form of Bible studies, since the servants of the Word of God had been sentenced to compulsory labour and various imprisonments. In the remaining house of prayer in Lugowsk, worship services were continued for another two years. Attendance at the worship services in the remaining house of prayer, located at a distance of 6-10 km., was made more difficult by various means. The able-bodied were also burdened with work on Sundays and holidays. The other problem was the lack of transport. Although the young were able to traverse the distance there and back, it was not possible for the older believing brothers and sisters to attend the worship services. At the end of 1932 the last house of prayer in Lugowsk was also locked, and with this, the Bible studies were also no longer attended, mostly because of fear, according to 1 John 4:18, where it is stated, "There is no fear in love."

And thus a spiritual drought set in, and there where love grows cold, indifference takes its place, and brings the believer to an irresistible retreat in the spiritual life. The love among the believers decreased. The daily life involved various improprieties. Where love for neighbour does not exist, hate, jealously, squabbling and dissension set in.

The Worship Houses.

The house of prayer in Donskoje was turned into a club with worldly pleasures and cinema facilities. At the end of the 1940s it was renovated as a school, which is still today.

The house of prayer in Pleschanowo, which belonged to the Kirchengemeinde, was also reconstructed for a school. Later, after a new school was built in Pleschanowo at the end of the 1960s, a worldly club was established in the old house of prayer.



Windmill in Pleschanow. Photo - Neu-Samara, page 81.

production had to be surrendered to the Government in kind. In the year 1930 the entire Wirtschaft was taken away from many farmers and they themselves were exiled. The life of the Soviet population, and thereby also the Mennonites, came into an entirely different direction.

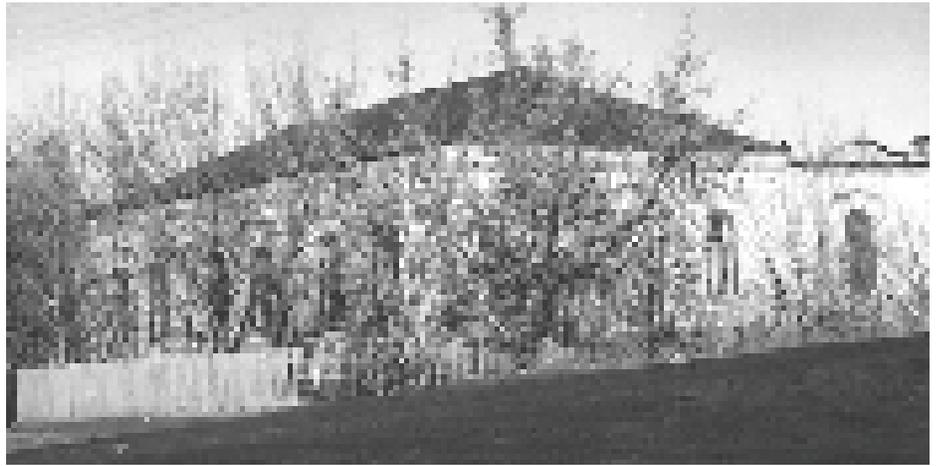
In this manner the religious and economic development was crippled. The worship house in

A high school (Zentralschule) was established in the house of prayer in Lugowsk. This was the only school with 10 grades for the entire settlement. In the year 1973, a new school was built between Lugowsk and Podolsk. The old house of prayer was utilized as a granary for the Kolchose. In the year 1995 the building was sold to the milk-cheese firm situated across the road on the condition that it be refurbished, as it had originally been built by the Brüdergemeinde. Consequently the second story was removed and it was totally renovated. Today the milk-cheese firm is using the building for offices and laboratory.

The funerals were carried out in a half-deaf spiritual manner. The Word of God was not preached at the funerals, and very few spiritual songs were sung. Likewise the weddings were celebrated in the mode of the world in most respects, without a betrothal, without God's word, and actually with the serving of alcohol. The houses of culture with their pleasures of the flesh and cinema presentations, were visited by many believers. In everyday life, as well as on Sundays, there were no differences noticeable from the outside. Only very few refrained from the worldly life. It was the time period during which most servants of the Word of God, including also those of the M. B. Gemeinde - Bernhard Bergen, Johan Stobbe, Tobias Voth, Heinrich Janzen, Jakob Martens, choir director Peter Fast, Jakob Warkentin, and from the Kirchengemeinde - Johann Warkentin, Peter and Johann Neufeld, were subjected to punishment, violence and imprisonment.

Br. Bernhard Bergen.

Something of the life of Br. Bernhard Bergen. He was resident in the village of Pleschanowo and raised in a Christian family. He worked on the Wirtschaft of his parents until his military service. When the time of his military service had come, he too—like all others, had to forsake his parental home, and serve the designated years. The absence from the house of his parents awakened in him a new life



The former Mennonite house of prayer in Donskoje. It was closed on January 6, 1931, by the Soviet government. Currently used as a school. All photos and captions for this article except as indicated are courtesy of Daniel Janzen, Warendorf, Germany.

and he become the property of the Lord, and Jesus Christ also became his personal Saviour. And thus he returned home, as a believing youth. As one at home who had completed his service, he joined himself to the believing youths.

His spiritual life was inspiring, where more youths came to faith in the assemblies. He was not satisfied by only examining the Word of God at home with his siblings. Instead, in his free time in winter, he drove among the Russian people in order to preach to them the joyful message of Jesus Christ. During the summer he worked at home on the Wirtschaft of his parents. He entered into wedlock and established his own Wirtschaft. Yet, not for long did he have the privilege of advancing his own household.

The First World War made a cross through his life. He and many others were conscripted by the Government. The Wirtschaft was left in the care of his wife, who managed according to the possibilities. After the three years of the war, he came home and attended to the Wirtschaft which had suffered

severely in the meantime. After a short while he was arrested and sent to Siberia, where he was subjected to heavy labour. During his detention he broke his leg and came into prison. From here he was released. With a hand-pulled sleigh and a cane, with which he steadied himself, he walked 300 km. in the open. The rest of the way, he made by train. Thus he returned home and found his family in great impoverishment. Yet, the time together with his children was not for long. He was arrested for the third time. From prison he wrote a letter home. His expression in the letter was, "God's ways are unknown, but I was able to show many people the way to the Lord Jesus."

This time period can be compared with 1 Kings 19:14. Namely, when Elias said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword." Here we also have a clear picture from nature. Regions located in the far north, become inert because of the cold and ice, because they are the farthest away from the sun. It was likewise with many Christians in the drought of this time period: cold and dead, because they were so far removed from the spiritual. Nevertheless, the true Church of Christ cannot be suppressed.

Oppression.

During the terror time of 1930, most ministers, as well as many others, were arrested, and they were then shot somewhat later. This was a fearful time, during which every family lived in terror. This was followed in the year 1941 by the Second World War, when all Germans in Russia were taken under custody. Many were exiled and the families torn asunder. Men from the ages of 15 to 55, and women from 16 to 50 were mobilized into the Trudarmee (civilian forced labour) where they were maintained under custody and observation with very limited nourishment in severe circumstances. Many died from hunger and cold.

The old men and women with children under the age of 15 remained in the villages, and they had to look after the entire farming operation in the Kolchose. Each family was obligated to pay high taxes as well as the so-called "Sajome". The mothers were not always able to set a table with food for



Baschkirs, painted by P. Kornelsen. Photo - Neu-Samara, page 79.



December 22, 1988. The 1000th anniversary since the first baptism in Kiev. Since there was no Orthodox Church in our district we were asked to serve this event with ministers, songs, poems and a report regarding baptism in the district house of culture in Pleschanowo. The Mens' choir of the village of Donskoje. Choir director Peter Fast. The event was chaired by Mr. Rajgusow. Standing at front right, l.-r., Rajgusow, Ältester Daniel Janzen Donskoje Brüdergemeinde, Viktor Serpenskiy, Samara, and P. Enns, Orenburg.

the children. The poverty and the heavy labour more and more darkened the future. In this manner, the once blooming settlement was brought into spiritual and material drought.

And yet, even in the tragic drought of our time period, we find traces of humble faith and Christian life. After an interruption of 14-15 years, when the Word of God was dear, as in Israel, a change came about in the spiritual life. In Ezekiel we read of the field of dead bones, which started to come to life. In 1946 assemblies were again organized. First, in the form of Bible studies, and then also by preaching with the Word of God. There were several, even if only few, workers for the Word of God, like Gerhard Voth, Wilhelm Fransen, Wilhelm Sawadzky (who had been in exile for a time) and Nikolaj Friesen. These mentioned servants--joined by others like Peter Friesen, Gerhard Doerksen and Isaak Janzen--started with serving the Word of God. The spiritual life enveloped them with warm flames.

As it was the order and practice to accompany the worship of God with the singing of choirs, a new choir was founded. In the year 1946 a choir was founded in our Gemeinde. One uses the expression, "all beginnings are difficult," which was also true here. Since there were no singers at hand--we lacked experienced voices and song leaders--the aged singers presented themselves in the row. They sang themselves and also taught the young singers like Helene Klassen, Katharina Dörksen and Maria Janzen. The singing was proficient and was a blessing. During this time of awakening, which encompassed both the old and young, youth ministries were organized.

Here in our village of Donskoje, where these times are written, there was a Russian brother, Nikolaj Nebogin, who was also converted. The same took upon himself the matter of the youths, whereupon a great blessing followed. But the worship services for the youths were subjected to great

persecution, with disturbances of various sorts, so that the youths at that time, grew up in the midst of storm and bad weather. And when we observe these youths today, we must say that they were placed in an environment where Jesus Christ was the cornerstone. Later a sister, Agatha Isaak, took on the work, also with many difficulties and disturbances, yet the spirit of God rested upon this work.

In this active movement, in the year 1950, the heart of a teacher by the name of Peter Engbrecht was seized and born again. After his conversion, he committed his life to the matters of God. Since no house of prayer was available, the assemblies were held in private homes. This time of renewed spiritual life, however, only lasted for some five years, and then shadow and darkness prevailed again.

In the year 1951, a group of many brethren, among whom were also those who were not Gemeinde members, were brought before the court

and sentenced to a long 25 year imprisonment. Among them were Gerhard Voth, Peter Friesen (who died in prison), Gerhard Dörksen, Isaak Janzen, Waldemar Janzen, Wilhelm Sawadzki (he was already old), Peter Nachtigal, Kornelius Dyck, Abram Funk, Ernst Hartwig, Peter Penner, Johann Peters and a sister, Katarina Görzen. With the absence of these brothers and sisters, the assemblies were laid lame until 1953. Since the born again teacher P. Engbrecht had laid down his teaching position--or better said, was forced to lay it down, he took the spiritual service upon himself and devoted himself fully to the work of the Lord. The choir singing was restored again. After five years, the group which had been arrested, was freed through an amnesty, and they again came into the ranks of the servants of God.

Episodes.

Several episodes from the experience of the Brüdergemeinde in Donskoje will follow. The question, as to where the worship services would be held was particularly difficult, since no assembly place existed at the time. But in this matter also the Lord found those willing, self-sacrificing servants. The couple, Gerhard and Lena Loewen, a family with eight children, offered their house for worship services. Brother G. Loewen had his own daily work in the Kolchosa. The oldest children were also at work from dawn to dusk. The mother was at home with the little ones. Through the course of six years (1953-58), the house of the Brother and Sister was the house of God. During this time, their ninth child was born to them. All worship services, on Sunday as well as during the week and on the holidays, were held in this house, until the year 1958, when the assemblies were again disturbed.

The song service received a new impetus in the year 1957 through brother Jakob Unruh, who had previously been the director, and who had now repented and renewed his faith. After a short time, however, in the year 1958, he fell sick and died.

In the year 1957 Brother P. Engbrecht was sentenced to many years of imprisonment as punishment for his service with the Word of God. Each and every arrest made the worship services and gathering together more difficult. Consequently, the assemblies were only held now and again during



The choir of the Donskoje Brüdergemeinde favoured the 1000th anniversary with jubilee songs. Choir director Jakob Janzen. All photo captions for this article are courtesy of Ältester Daniel Janzen.



Visit to Neu-Samara, by Dr. J. B. Toews (behind the pulpit), Fresno, California. Seated r.-l.: Daniel Janzen, Donskoje, and David Redekop, Winnipeg. Rear: Johann Kohn, Wadbrool, Germany. Text of the sermon was 1. Peter 1:3-5. Around 1000 attended to hear the Dr. Toews.

the years 1958 to 1965; for example, for funerals and birthdays. The Gemeinde as such dissipated.

In the year 1962, after the release of Brother P. Engbrecht from imprisonment, a number of believers were sentenced and sent into exile because of their spiritual work. Among these present were again, Brother P. Engbrecht, Hermann Görzen, Jakob Reimer, and two sisters - Anna Bergmann and Anna Penner. Again there were interruptions in the already only rare worship services.

In the year 1965, the assemblies in the religious realm were reactivated. Gemeinden were again established in a number of villages. The believing brothers and sisters in the nearby situated village of Dolinsk joined themselves to our Gemeinde in Donskoje, since there was no servant of the Word there. And thus the years of life in the Gemeinde passed by with various difficulties and punishments. The spirit of God was at work and the Gemeinde grew. The singing of the choir was again renewed. The youths also served with song, music and programs. In the year 1970 brethren were placed into the choir directors service and the song services gained new momentum.

In April 1972 a petition by our Gemeinde was filed with the local Government in order to register the Gemeinde. But, the petition was declined. With the growth in the Gemeinde a shortage of room for the worship services also became noticeable. During the summer a tent, which had enough room, was set up. During the winter, during the last years, partially completed houses were used which the brothers and sisters placed at the disposal of the Gemeinde. In the year 1976, notice was received from the Government--without a second petition having been submitted--that our Gemeinde in Donskoje was acknowledged and recognized.

Worship House.

We were given the permission to build a worship house. Thus the necessary building material was immediately purchased, which--with the help of God--was supplied for the necessary time. Just as all nobleness only arises from adversity, this was also the case here. There was no building lot in the village where it was possible to build the house. A parcel with eight to 10 hectares was not to be found. Finally an opportunity presented itself, to buy an old derelict house, on which location the house of prayer could be built.

The construction was commenced on April 15, 1978, and only with our own resources. The able-bodied members of the Gemeinde, as well as non-members, enthusiastically took part in the construc-



Wedding of Katja Penner and Heinrich Sawadske, Donskoje, June 10, 1979. The nuptials were performed by Ältester Daniel Janzen, Donskoje, Neu-Samara.

tion, and the house was completed in one summer. It needs to be added here, that most of the workers had their daily labours at their place of employment and took their place in the building of the church building only after they had completed their shift. The construction continued into the late evenings and sometimes also into the night.

With the help of God, the house was dedicated for worship services on October 15, 1978. It should also be added, that since the year 1965, the worship services had no longer been interrupted. There still were set-backs, punishments and sentences, but the Gemeinde had the opportunity to continue the worship services. The Gemeinde grew with the number of members until the year 1988 when the emigration to Germany started.

Dort, weit in Neu-Samara Tal
Dort liegt der Ort, der lieb mir war
In Russisch sagt man "Dom Rodnoj" [my house]
Und dieses Dorf das heißt "Donskoje"
Zehn Jahre sind jetzt schon verfloßen
Als flohn die ersten Dorfsgenossen
Dann, nach und nach, wenn auch mit einem "Oj!"
[Oh!]
Zogen weg wir von "Donskoje"
Was dort von Unsem noch geblieben
Das schätzt man ab mit ca. sieben,
Dazu der Ort, wo's heißt "Pokoj" [Ruhe]
Das ist der Friedhof in „Donskoje“.

Donskoje.

"Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask they father and he will shew thee; ask they elders, and they will tell thee," Deut. 32:7.

The establishment of the village of Donskoje and its geographical location. The land was purchased from the estate owner Pleschanow in the year 1890. The village Donskoje, as well as the other villages of the settlement of "Neu-Samara" were founded in the year 1892 by the small-farmers, handworkers and cattle breeders, who came from the Taurien government district, as it then was, and from the Crimea. A new life was started by these people in our home village of Donskoje.

A standard Wirtschaft consisted of 40 desjation of land, and in addition thereto, the appropriate farm machinery and cattle. In the middle of the village, on the north side, a worship house was built in the years 1907 to 1908. The cemetery was laid out somewhat to the rear of the worship house. The cemetery still remains the place of rest of many of our people to the present day. The school was built across from the house of prayer, on the south side of the street.

The ancient--and much loved by everyone--river "Tok" carried its water three miles north of the village. The run-off from the Ural Mountains came streaming in on the north side of the river. The winter is severe and rich in snow. The temperature falls to minus 30 and even lower. Children, youths and adults, have made many a retreat into the snow-covered mountains. Skiing and sleighing result in much joy in winter.

The spring is very interesting. When an intensive snow melt comes in April, the streets in the earlier days were almost under water. Since a highway has been built on the south side of the village, the water no longer comes into the village as formerly. The summer was often poor in rain and rich in heat. The harvest was variable, but the land

yielded its fruits as nourishment for man and beast. During the hot summer days, the beloved Tok is richly visited by young and old. Also for the Gemeinde, there was many a blessed baptism in the Tok. The water in the Tok was for many a burial place for their former lives. The fall is cool and rainy. For this reason, there were often grave difficulties while bringing in the harvest.

Village Development.

The political, economic and religious development of the village. Our parents and grandparents were good handworkers, farm labourers, and cattle breeders. During its time in bloom, the village had seemingly become a suitable home for the new settlers and their descendants.

Already in the beginning of the 20th century, the family Otto Eck founded a brick kiln, which produced bricks of good quality for the construction of the village, as well as for the entire settlement.

The family Jakob Wittenberg founded a technical firm where the farmers could purchase plows, mowers, binders, threshing machines, silage harvesters, and other equipment. Later the M.T.S. (Machine Tractor Station) was founded on this site.

The new settlers Franz Klassens built a two-story house with hot water on the south side of the village, near the school. On the main floor of the house, they established a store, where the farmers of the new village could buy their supplies. In this family, a son Kornelius was born as the oldest child. When he was grown up, he dedicated his life to the German people. Already before the Revolution, he became the representative of the Mennonite people in Moscow. He served in this high post until his departure for Canada in the year 1925. Resident in Canada, he became a co-worker for MCC. As the representative of MCC he came to Europe during World War Two, and in the name of MCC organized help for western Europe and also for the immigration of thousands of people to North and South America. For many MCC workers, his name stands at the flash point of the greatest need.

And thus the new life in Donskoje rolled forward in all quiet and peace in a good direction. The rich dark soil produced grain and other necessities of life for the people in the new Homeland. Nonetheless, the years of the 20th century are marked by storm and dark experiences. The First World War broke out in 1914, and somewhat later - 1917, the Revolution, and then the Civil War. All these occurrences constricted the development of the village. The implementation of Soviet power awakened an immigration fever among the people, and many immigrated to Canada during the 1920s, so that the residents of the village looked into the future with anxiety. This fear came to its peak at the end of the 1920s. This was the collectivization. The Soviet regime implemented the community of property. Land, cattle and equipment were taken away from the people. Each yard could retain one cow, one pig and some chickens and, in addition, a garden near the house.

And thus the experiences of the 1920s were only the seedlings of suffering, the fruits came in the 1930s and later. At the end of the year 1930, the Donskojer Gemeinde was informed that the house of prayer no longer belonged to the Gemeinde, rather

to the state (some of our older members might possibly still remember this). Further the 1930s were enveloped in the grey fog of the time of terror and many men and fathers were taken away from their families and the mothers with children were dis-

persed all over the world. Most of them have disappeared and have found an unknown grave somewhere in the distance lands.

The blooming life came to a impoverished spiritual drought. The 1940s were marked by World



August 9, 1973. The funeral of Maria Fast, mother of Liese, Mrs. Daniel Janzen. At the coffin are the children of the deceased: l.-r., Peter (b. 1927), Jakob (b. 1928), Liese (b. 1930), Gerhard (b. 1932), Hermann (b. 1934).



Harvest thanksgiving celebrations in the Brüdergemeinde worship house in Donskoje. 1980s. The house of prayer was not only decorated from the inside, but even outside to the road.



October 12, 1986. The Brüdergemeinde church in Donskoje. Completed on October 15, 1978. L.-r., Jakob Redekop, Canada, Ältester Daniel Janzen, Donskoje, Paul Kreibyl, U.S.A., G. Klassen, Donskoje, and Abram Enns, Germany.



Heinrich and Marichen Loewen celebrate their Golden Anniversary in Donskoje, Russia. They are now living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The worship service was in Donskoje in the Brüdergemeinde church. The festivity itself was held on the yard of Daniel Janzen.



My wife Elisabeth Janzen at the grave of her mother in the cemetery in Donskoje, 1991.

War Two and many more arrests. In addition to this, there also came the Trudarmee (forced civilian labour), and then the discrimination against the German people [including Mennonites], which did not pass our village by. Mainly old people and children remained in the village. The few able-bodied men and women who were still in the village had to complete the entire farm work.

The terror time stretched itself to the year 1953. After Stalin's death, under the power of the new head of state, there was a change in direction. But as Germans, we remained under the watch of the Kommandatur [the forced labour and gulag regime] until 1956. The list of those who died in the times of terror is as follows:

Political Prisoners:

1. Foth, Tobias (Prediger), 2. Martens, Jakob (Prediger), 3. Redekop, David (Prediger), 4. Friesen, Peter (Prediger), 5. Fast, Peter, 6. Nickel, Kornelius, 7. Nickel, Johann v. Kornelius, 8. Nickel, Heinrich v. Kornelius, 9. Unruh, Abram, 10. Wittenberg, Peter, 11. Wittenberg, Peter, 11. Wittenberg, Alexander, 12. Thiessen, Jakob, 13. Walde, Jakob, 14. Martens, Jakob v. Peter, 15. Braun, Aron, 16. Friesen, Johann, 17. Unruh' Peter, 18. Schmidt, Gerhard.

In the Trudarmee;

1. Kliewer, Peter, 2. Giesbrecht, Heinrich, 3. Giesbrecht, Johann, 4. Neufeld, Kathe, 5. Neufeld, Aron, 6. Nickel Kornelius v. Abrain, 7. Voth, Jakob, 8. Hein, Peter, 9. Hein, Jakob, 10. Wiens, Gerhard, 11. Krocker, Jakob, 12. Friesen, Jakob, 13. Klassen, Abram, 14. Schmidt, Kornelius, 15. Klassen, Heinrich (Susanowo), 16. Klassen, Gerhard.

In the Army and lost:

1. Giesbrecht, Jakob, 2. Wiens, Johann.

Betterment.

After the end of the Second World War people breathed a little easier in the hope that life might perhaps become a little less hard now. But in spite of the fact that there was a change in the material as well as the spiritual life, life in the 1940s was and remained very hard.

In 1945, assemblies were started—even though in secret. In the beginning it was only the elderly sisters under the guise of doing group handiwork

coming together in order to pray, behind curtained windows. God had acknowledged these prayers, and in 1946 these gatherings turned into bible studies. These were the first doves after a 14 to 15 year drought, which awakened the spiritual life. In fall of 1945, God granted an awakening and many converted themselves to God, among them also many youths. The bible studies were held on Sundays. Somewhat later there were already worship services with choir singing. During the time of spiritual drought the weddings and funerals were held either according to the worldly practice or quietly. The first funeral (Johann Janzen) with a worship service was held on March 4, 1946. The first Christian wedding was celebrated by Peter and Elisabeth Kliewer on June 22, 1946.

The material life remained hard until the end of the 1940s, since there was a great crop failure in the years 1948-1949. In spite of this, there was much joy in many families as some of their love ones returned from the Trudarmee.

In the year 1950 there was a rich harvest and the material life became easier. But this did not occur in the spiritual life, since there were more arrests. In the summer of 1951, Gerhard Dörksen, Peter Friesen, Ernst Hardwig and Waldemar Janzen were arrested.

The worship services did not take place regularly during the 1950s. But always again, God

granted light and new servants.

Nor was there any stability in the spiritual life in the first half of the 1960s. Only in 1955 was the Gemeinde established again, but from then on it remained in existence—even though with many difficulties.

Yet, we must say, that the first half of the 1960s also evidenced of a better time for our village Donskoje. Many residents built themselves good homes. In the year 1967 a new Rayon [District] „Kasnogwardejskij” was founded and the villages Pleschanowo and Donskoje were named as the administrative centre. This resulted in many construction firms locating here, such as PMK, ChRU, Dorotde, Kommunalnaja Kontora, SMU, and in addition, also the previously founded Selhostechnika and Transselhostechnika.

In the same year 1967, a water line was laid along Sowjetskaja Street. People were now able to merely turn the tap, and out came fresh, cold, soft water. This was already a great help and convenience for the housewives.

In the year 1982 the central heating was completed, and with this also came the hot water in the homes. This made possible the furnishing of bathtubs, washrooms and toilets. Also every family had an auto or motorbike.

In 1988 a new school was built for 640 students. The Sowjetskaja Street and Bürger Street



Hog slaughtering. My brother Johann Janzen in Donskoje. L.-r., Johann Janzen, his wife Raissa, and Elisabeth Janzen. Here the wonderful Mennonite liverwurst is being “en geschoept”.



The main street of Donskoje, our home village. The houses are all hidden by the rapid growth of the trees. On the horse at the rear is the herdsman. He is bringing the cows in from the pasture. Photo 2000.

were asphalted. Donskoje was becoming always nicer. During the last years the cemetery was brought into order, the graves were furnished with grave-stones and flowers.

Donskoje was also becoming larger. If the vil-lage earlier only had one street, now it already had seven. If at the time of collectivization (1930) there were 43 Wirtschaften in Donskoje, by 1989 there were 642 families living there with 2428 residents in total (This was the high point for the number of residents).

In the year 1978 the Gemeinde in Donskoje was allowed to build a house of prayer which was completed in six months, including furnishings. This was like a wonder before our eyes. There were now enough seats for those attending the worship services. From then on weddings and funerals were held in this house.

Emigration, 1988.

The 1970s and after were marked by a strong stream of resettlement to Germany. These waves of immigration always came closer to our village. On June 10, 1988 the first family from Donskoje departed for Germany. They were Daniel and Lillie Nachtigal with their children. They were followed on June 18, 1988, by three more families. They were Jakob and Lillie Giesbrecht, Johann and Katharina Giesbrecht and Kornelius and Katharina Giesbrecht. On October 14, 1988, Johann and Katharina Peters left for Germany. So that in the year 1988 a total of five families and 30 persons had immigrated from Donskoje.

Emigration Statistics:

Families - Individuals: 1988 5 39, 1989 68 292, 1990 99 411, 1991 64 254, 1992 56 786, 1993 25 75, 1994 10 42, 1995 11 39, 1996 11 28, 1997 5 18, Insgesamt: 354 1384.

Those who are currently (2002) over 80 years-old:

1. Bergen, Ernst (Waldbrol), 2. Enns, Susanna (Brakel), 3. Enns, Johann (Blomberg), 4. Enns, Berta (Blomberg), 5. Fast, Kornelius (Lemgo), 6. Friesen, Kathe (Bebra), 7. Giesbrecht, Eva (Hoxter), 8. Giesbrecht, Peter (Hamm), 9. Tanzen, Jakob (Fulda), 10. Isaak, Martha (Espelkamp), 11. Klassen, Bernhard (Warendorf), 12. Klassen, Agatha (Warendorf), 13. Schmidt, Maria (Warendorf), 14. Schellenberg, Aganeta (Dierdorf), 15. Thiessen,

Peter (Bad Oyenhausen), 16. Unruh, Anna (Fulda), 17. Walde, Susanna (Lage).

List of those who have died in Germany:

1. Barg Lidia, (Lemgo), 2. Bergen, Peter (Beelen), 3. Boschmann, Eugen (Altenkirchen), 4. Duck, Maria, (Fuchtorf), 5. Duck, Johann (Lemgo), 6. Duck, Kornelius (Warendorf), 7. Enns, Johann v. Abram, (Elkenrot), 8. Fast, Katharina (Lemgo), 9. Fast, Ludmila (Warendorf), 10. Giesbrecht, Maria (Warendorf), 11. Hauf, Hermann (Hoxter), 12. Hauf, Katharina (Hoxter), 13. Heinrichs, Rosa (Warendorf), 14. Hinz, Eugen (Euskirchen), 15. Isaak Eva (Warendorf), 16. Isaak, Peter (Lemgo),

17. Isaak, Anna (Lemgo), 18. Isaak, Justina (Neuwied), 19. Isaak, Katharina (Neuwied), 20. Isaak, Heinrich (Warendorf), 21. Janzen, Maria (Warendorf), 22. Janzen, Waldemar (Warendorf), 23. Kehler, Margaretha (Porta-Westfalica), 24. Krocker, Elisabeth (Hoxter), 25. Krocker, Fraz (Everswinkel), 26. Klassen, Marina (Enniger), 27. Lowen, Gerhard (Elkenrot), 28. Martens, Justina (Warendorf), 29. Martens, Kornelius (Waldbrol), 30. Nickel, Kornelius (Warendorf), 31. Nachtigall, Sergej (Battenberg), 32. Penner, Johann (Kalletal), 33. Penner, David (Waldbrol), 34. Peters, Johann (Hoxter), 35. Richert, Elisabeth (Espelkamp), 36. Sawadski, Tabea (Warendorf), 37. Scharfner, Susanna (Fulda), 38. Thiessen, Elisabeth (Stadtallendorf), 39. Unrau, Kornelius (Warendorf), 40. Unruh, Katharina (Lemgo), 41. Unruh, Viktor (Frankenau), 42. Voth, Sara (Rinteln), 43. Warkentin, Viktor (Warendorf), 44. Warkentin, Maria (Porta-Westfalica), 45. Wiebe, Gerhard (Dresden).

Reunions.

Today, 10 years after the first immigrated, we are celebrating the second reunion in Germany of former Donskojer under the motto: "Wir haben noch nicht vergessen."

Acknowledgement:

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Ältester Daniel Janzen

Daniel Janzen was born in 1929 as the second oldest of his parents Johann and Maria Janzen in Donskoje, Orenburg District, Russia. My beloved wife Maria was born in 1930 as the third child of Gerhard and Maria Fast in the same village.

Our parents were both simple farm labourers. Both of our fathers died young - Daniel's father at age 42 and Liese's at 37. We were raised by our mothers. Neither of us received much schooling - Daniel seven years and Liese six. It was difficult during the war years, since we both had to work in order to help our mothers as much as possible. Both of us were saved in our youth and we were both baptised on June 20, 1948. Our life in the church past by under difficult challenges but in blessing. Philippians 3:13-14.

Our service in the church was as singers in the choir, and as ministers of the word. On July 23, 1969, I was ordained as minister. On August 26, 1974, I was elected as Ältester of the Gemeinde. My wife and I fulfilled this service until our departure to Germany in the summer of 1989. In Germany we settled in the city of Warendorf (between Bielefeld and Münster), where we founded a Brüdergemeinde. I served for another six years as Ältester. At present, we are both over 70. We sing in the choir and I am still active as minister.

In reflection, it is only grace that has carried us thus far. And we wish to commit ourselves unto this grace until the end. Isaiah 54:10.

"Daniel and Elisabeth Janzen"



Daniel Janzen (b. 1929), and Elisabeth Janzen (b. 1930), married 1950 in Donskoje. Emigrated to Germany on August 30, 1989. Photo - April 1988.

Material Culture

The History of Plautdietsch

The History of Plautdietsch: The Origins, Development and Status of Mennonite Low German,

by Reuben Epp, Thornloe Road, Kelowna, British Columbia, V1W 4P6,

first published in *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 1987, Volume 5, pages 61-72, revised and updated June 2002.

Introduction.

This article describes the origins of *Plautdietsch*, how it became the mother tongue of the Netherlandic/Prussian/Russian Mennonites, where it fits into the mosaic of the Low German family of dialects, and where its literary development stands in relation to that of other dialects of Low German.

Some claim *Plautdietsch* to be a language in its own right. But, language scholars have conclusively determined that it is a dialect (or dialect group) of the language we commonly know as Low German, more properly but less commonly known as Low Saxon. Where the name Low German appears in this article, it can also be taken to mean Low Saxon.

To understand the origins and place of *Plautdietsch* within the Low German language, it helps to briefly explore its history and development. The history of the language falls into three time periods: the Old Saxon (Old Low German) period, the Middle Low German period and the New (Modern) Low German period.

Old Saxon (*Altsächsisch*) or Old Low German (*Altniederdeutsch*) describes Low German from before the time of the fifth century Anglo-Saxon occupation of the British Isles until about A.D. 1050. The Middle Low German (*Mittelniederdeutsch*) period is considered to have begun in the early 1200s, ending with the decline and failure of the Hanseatic League in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The New Low German (*Neuniederdeutsch*) period began with a new era in Low German literature set in motion in the 1850s by writers Groth, Reuter and Brinckmann (Note 1).

Old Saxon/Old Low German.

Old Saxon/Old Low German, together with German, English and the Nordic languages, was a member of the Germanic lan-

guage group (Note 2). Low German and English evolved more particularly from North Sea Germanic, which did not undergo the shifting of consonants that took place in High German. Old Saxon appears to have developed among Angles, Jutes and Saxons in the northern part of central Europe. The Saxons at that time were centred in the area currently known as Holstein, from whence they spread southward and westward on the continent past the lower Rhine, through Flanders and into Normandy, eventually crossing the English Channel to the British Isles.

The occupation of Britain by Angles and Saxons in the fifth century accounts for common roots and similarities between Low German and English that continue to be apparent. Scholar J.F. Bense wrote: "As English is itself a Low German dialect, we prefer to use the term Low Dutch in reference to the sister dialects" (Note Three).

Although the Old Low German period continued until about A.D. 1050, remnants of literature of that period are fragmentary. One of the works retained is a poem written by an unknown author in about A.D. 850, entitled *Heliand* (*Saviour*). Another poem entitled *Genesis* was also written by an unknown author about the same time, but is no longer complete. Thereafter, there seems to have been a lull in Low German writing for about two centuries.

Middle Low German.

During the Hanseatic League's most active period, beginning slowly in the thirteen century, the earlier two centuries saw a steady stream of settlers moving eastward from north central Europe, colonizing Slavic territories and the shores of the Baltic Sea with people who spoke Low German. In the century of commercial development in northern Europe before A.D. 1350, Hanseatic merchants abroad led the way.

The Hanseatic League, a commercial union of northern continental European cities with Lübeck, Germany, as its centre, established trading offices in the countries in which they conducted trade. Subsequently, there were large Hanse offices in Novgorod, Russia, in Bergen, Norway, in London, England and in Brügge, Flanders. All Hanse offices were in continuous written communication with the central office in Lübeck as well as with each other. Since staff, officers and representatives of the League were Low German, their business and correspondence was conducted in

Low German of Lübeck orientation (Note 4). Even in Stockholm, Sweden, much Low German was spoken well into the sixteenth century. The Low German of the Hanse had in fact largely displaced Latin as the business and official language in northern Europe.

Resulting from the business activities of the Hanseatic League, coupled with the territorial expansions of the Teutonic Order of Knights, Low German peoples had spread across northern Europe to the extent that Low German was spoken in the highest circles from Brügge to Memel and from Bergen to Novgorod. Low German had become the language of authority, of administration, of business, of recorded history and of religious devotion.

In the century between the years 1325 and 1425, the language of business and correspondence in Denmark and Sweden very nearly totally accepted Low German. In 1366 the kings of Denmark and Sweden signed a Low German treaty concerning jurisdiction over the Island of Gotland. The Peace of Stralsund, signed by the Danish Privy Council and the Hanseatic League in 1370 was written in Low German. This treaty brought the Hanseatic League to the peak of its power and influence. A famous code of Maritime Law, first printed in Visby on the Island of Gotland in 1505, was written in Low German. The language had attained function and rank as an international written and business language long before that of High German.

Of particular interest to Mennonites is the fact that Menno Simons began writing in local dialects of Low German after leaving the Roman Catholic Church and departing from Witmarsum in West Friesland in about 1536. His writings during the years 1537-41, apparently in the province of Groningen, were termed by the Dutch as "eastern-coloured" (*Oosters gekleurd*) (Note 5) because they showed influences of language to the east of Holland. As he moved farther east into what is now northern Germany, his written language underwent further transition and was then termed to be "eastern" (*Oosters*). When he finally settled near Oldesloe in Holstein in about 1554 his subsequent writings and revisions of earlier works were undertaken in the local Schleswig-Holstein dialect of Low German until his death in 1561.

Decline of Low German.

Since the Low German language had grown to international importance as the lan-



Reuben Epp.
Photo - Frind,
Issue Seven, page
22.

guage of the Hanseatic League, its future was tied to that of the League. Changing business conditions of the sixteenth century doomed the League to eventual failure because it did not adapt to changing conditions. As fortunes of the Hanse declined, the status of Low German also declined under increased economic competition from business firms based in other countries and other language areas. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Hanseatic world together with its business, political and cultural influences had deteriorated to such extent that it disappeared entirely in the seventeenth century. Along with it went writing in Low German; it lost its significance as a written language for about two centuries.

The Reformation.

The Reformation certainly did not cause the downfall of Low German as a written language (Note 6). But, when a people experiences deterioration of its culture and language, it becomes increasingly receptive to the language and culture of more successful people. Low German gradually ceased being the written language in the north and yielded to the High German of the economically more successful south. Low German continued to be used for some time in written form, but only as a disdained second-rate language to be used in jest, ridicule and for amusement.

At the time of the Reformation, too few northern universities taught theology to offset the flow of High German theologians and pastors trained in southern universities. Schleswig-Holstein and all of northwestern Germany had not a single theological training centre. Consequently, the number of theological trainees from the south far exceeded those from the north, with the result that northern teaching and ministerial vacancies, frequently leading positions, were filled with men who had trained only in High German.

This set the northern Lutheran church in motion toward a language conversion to High German (*Verhochdeutschung*), with an accompanying dogmatic approach toward matters of language, church and faith. The result was that northern congregations came to regard their High German, black-clothed pastor as "the black gendarme." Toward this change, northern Low German congregations assumed the attitude: "Let those-up-there talk and write. We can't understand it in any event." The voice of the people and their language was no longer heard. The High German language came to be regarded as a holy creation of Luther, and use of any other language in church services came to be regarded as a sin against the spirit of Luther.

Martin Luther, who grew up in a Low German neighbourhood, gave weight to the Reformation concept that the New Gospel should be spread in the language of the local people. Luther's Bible and other works were translated into Low German for the people of the north. The Bible translation was undertaken by Johannes Bugenhagen, apparently with a

staff of students at the University of Wittenburg. This particularly un-Low German translation was simply a copy of Luther's High German Bible in which every High German word was replaced by one in Low German. That was of course not the way that Low German could be written – then or now. The Bugenhagen Bible was an affront to the Low German language which determined its failure.

As recently as 1924 Walther Ziesemer wrote, "There exists in widespread circles, even among the educated, the prevailing attitude that the language spoken by the common people has a lower rank; it is only the degraded speech of the ordinary people, from which one must keep one's distance." Some considered it to be beneficial and possible to eradicate the Low German language altogether.

The prevalence of such attitudes contributed to the eighteenth century becoming the century of discrimination against dialects in Germany. Despite this, and unoppressed by such machinations, a Dutch congregation on the Island of Amack near Copenhagen, preserved and reprinted their Lutheran hymnals, catechisms and prayer books in Low German until 1788.

Spoken Low German.

As the economy and influence of the Hanseatic League faltered in the sixteenth century and finally died in the seventeenth, it brought about the disappearance of Low German from the written page and its near-end as a written language. The last Low German play of literary rank to be written during those times was in 1584.

Although Low German was no longer written, it continued through the centuries to be the spoken language of millions of people from Brügge in Flanders to Memel in East Prussia, assuming Low Franconian dialects (such as Flemish) to be part of the Low German family (Note 7).

Low German does not always go by the same name. In Flanders the Flemish dialect is called *Vlaams* or *Vlaamsch*; in the Dutch province of Groningen the dialect is called *Groningsch*, *Grunnegers* or *Nedersaksisch*. In Prussia Low German was called *Niederpreußisch*, whereas in Germany it may be called *Plattdüütsch* in LG, *Plattddeutsch*, *Niederdeutsch* or *Niedersächsisch* in German. The foregoing terms apply to the same language in various dialects in different places.

Low German does not exist in a standardized form, but in numerous dialects, *Plautdietsch* being one of them. Fritz Specht has stated that all speakers of Low German speak dialect because the language exists in theory only. The term *Platt* in *Plattddeutsch* does not appear to relate as much to the flat, low-lying countryside where most of its speakers are found, than to its implied connotation of clarity or understandability. When a Low German person is confronted with words he cannot grasp, he might well respond,

"*Kannst mi dat nich platt seggen?*"

Among the various estimates of the number of people who understand and speak Low German in Europe and America today, some run to ten million or more. Accuracy is hard to come by in such estimates in view of those who understand and speak, those who understand but do not speak, and those who do some of either or both.

In the mid-1980s Radio station NDR of Hamburg, recorded a regular radio audience of one million listeners tuned to their Low German broadcasts, occasionally rising to 1.9 to 2.1 million. When those numbers are combined with listening audiences for Low German broadcasts from Radio Bremen, from WDR in Münster and from Radio Kiel, the magnitude of Low German radio listening audiences becomes appreciable.

Migration to the Vistula.

At the time of the Mennonite migration from the Netherlands to the Vistula river delta, beginning shortly before A.D. 1550, the Friesian language in the provinces of Gröningen, Netherlands and East Friesland, Germany, had been substantially supplanted by Low German/Low Saxon. However, the language of church services and written communications remained Dutch, even in East Friesland. The only High German heard among Mennonites there at that time was that of travellers or religious refugees from southern Germany or Switzerland seeking haven among Anabaptists in the more tolerant Netherlands. Consequently, Mennonites in the northern provinces of the Netherlands at that time spoke mainly Low German with variations in dialect between Friesian, Flemish and other ethnic groups. There were of course families among them who spoke Dutch, Friesian or High German.

When in the 1550s Mennonites migrated from the northern provinces of the Netherlands to the delta of the Vistula river in what later became known as West Prussia, they settled into an area that already had a resident Low German population since the thirteenth century. Understandably, the Vistula dialects differed from those in the Netherlands, but they were understandable Low German nevertheless. The Mennonite settlers assimilated the *Plautdietsch* of the people already living there, but introduced into it more than 60 words from the Netherlands (Note 8).

They continued to use this Low German in day-to-day discourse but used Dutch as their language of worship, of record keeping and for written communication until the second half of the eighteenth century, when Dutch gave way to High German. Their more recently acquired Prussian dialect of Low German continued to be the language of the home and among friends as it does among Mennonites in many places to this day. *Plautdietsch* is of course also used by those of other persuasions whose forefathers lived in the same areas of West Prussia.

Migration to Russia.

The first Mennonites to settle in New Russia (later Ukraine) founded the Chortitza Colony in 1789 on and near the Island of Chortitza (near the present city of Zaporozhje) in the province of Ekaterinoslav of New Russia (Ukraine). These first Mennonite settlers from Prussia were mainly from the artisans and tradesmen in the Danzig (Gdansk) district and Werders, and mostly from the Flemish branch of the church (Note 9). They were followed by groups from Tiegenhagen, Rosenort, Orlofffelder, Ladekopp, Heubuden, Elbing/Ellerwald and Gumbinnen in East Prussia. The preponderance of the tradesmen and artisans among early migrants to New Russia stemmed largely from legal regulations in Prussia at that time which prevented property owners from obtaining the necessary emigration passports needed for the desired move to Russia. That restriction was thereafter eased to permit those with property to acquire passports, but retained the existing requirement that all applicants pay a 10% emigration tax levied against their assets.

Subsequently, during the years 1803-06 a second major contingent of Mennonites left Prussia to settle in the Molotschna area of the province of Taurida in New Russia about 60-65 miles (about 100 km) southeast of the Chortitza Colony, immediately east of the

Molotschna river and north of the Sea of Asov. These later colonists came from a more prosperous segment of the Mennonite population in Prussia, mainly from lands of the Tiegenhagen Gemeinde in the Werders and under the administration of the cities of Marienburg (Malbork) and Elbing (Elblag).

Since most Mennonites were farmers or would-be farmers in Prussia where most cities, except Elbing, excluded Mennonites from their citizenry, many migrants to New Russia came from rural areas around those cities. The Danzig area included the city and the Danzig Lowlands (*Danziger Niederung*) on the lower reaches of the Vistula river delta. Marienburg included the Marienburg Polders (*Großes Marienburger Werder und Kleines Marienburger Werder*), and Elbing included the *Elbinger Niederung*, the lower reaches of the delta to the right of the Nogat river and the *Frisches Haff*. These combined areas represent almost the entire Vistula delta, which was the major area of Mennonite settlement in Prussia.

Dialectical Variations.

Students of Mennonite Low German have noted marked differences in speech between Chortitza (Old Colony) and Molotschna (New Colony) colonists. Less attention seems to have been paid to dialectical variances within

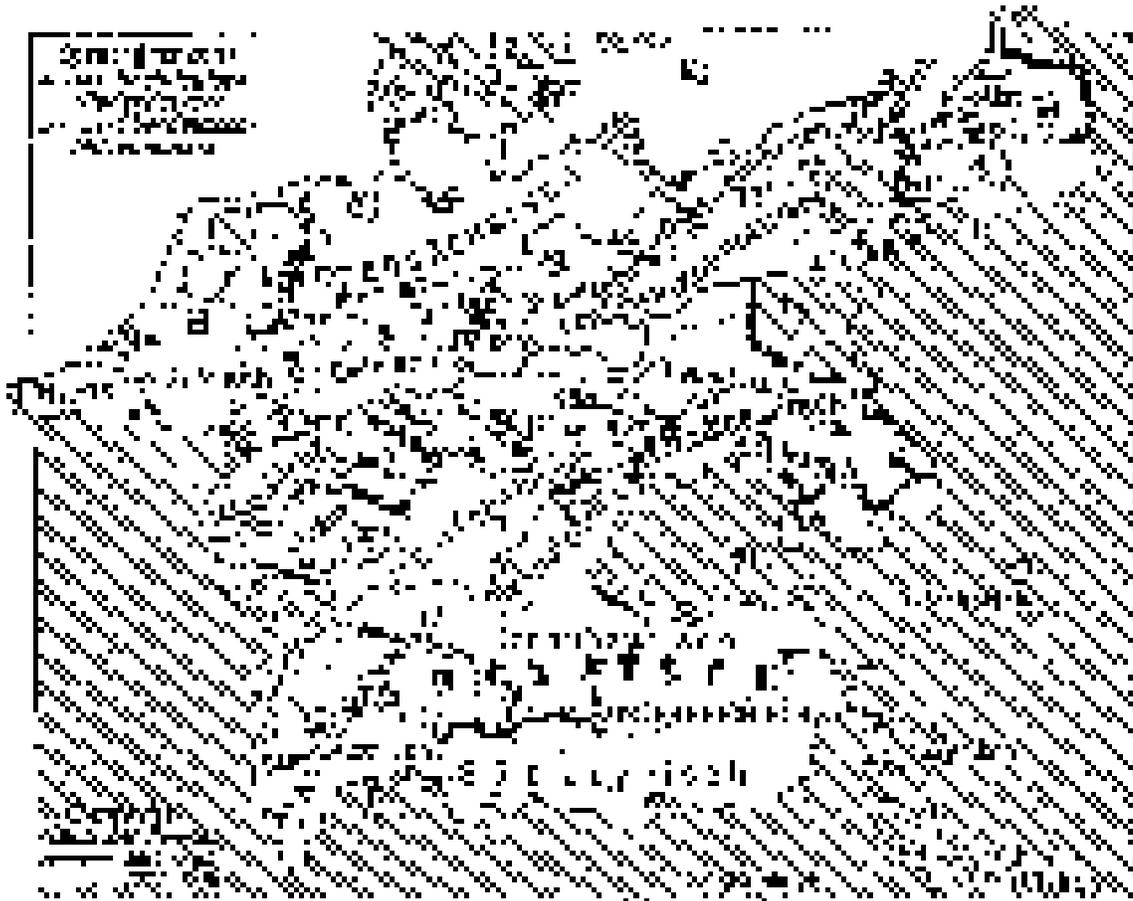
each of these colonies. When one considers that the combined area of West Prussia and East Prussia was some 24,000 square miles (less than half the size of Florida or one tenth the size of Manitoba), it is difficult to imagine how such a small area could be home to nine different dialects of Low German (Low Prussian) (*Niederpreußisch*), of which *Plautdietsch* was one. In addition to Low German there were two dialects of High Prussian plus one of *Schwäbisch* (Note 10). One then realizes that sometimes people in the Vistula delta may have spoken quite differently from each other even if they lived only a few miles apart.

Consequently, speech differences existed among settlers from Danzig, Marienburg and Elbing. Danzig lies about 30 miles west of the other two cities and on opposite sides of both the Vistula and Nogat rivers. It has been suggested that the Chortitza settlers, therefore, spoke a mixture of Plautdietsch variants due to their various places of origin in Prussia at the time of their resettlement into New Russia. The Molotschna settlers, on the other hand, spoke other variants with probably even greater variations among them because of speech differences between settlers from Marienburg and Elbing administrative areas in Prussia from whence they came. Such differences in speech between these two major colonies in New Russia are still quite apparent among their descendants to this day. Differences in speech within Chortitza and Molotschna colonies are also still apparent, but perhaps to lesser degree due to the melting pot effect of colony life upon speech within the colonies. The problem with this theory is that it is well documented that the Chortitza and Molotschna pioneers originated from the same villages and areas in the Vistula delta.

Following are a few speech differences that were commonplace among Mennonites in West Prussia, later observed to exist between and within the colonies in Russia:

to chew v. - kaue,
kauen, keiwe, keiwen
to cook v. - koke,
koake, koaken, köaken
church n. - Kjoakj,
Tjoatj
relative n. -
F r i n d s c h a u f t ,
Frindschoft
against p. - jääjen,

to chew v. - kaue,
kauen, keiwe, keiwen
to cook v. - koke,
koake, koaken, köaken
church n. - Kjoakj,
Tjoatj
relative n. -
F r i n d s c h a u f t ,
Frindschoft
against p. - jääjen,



Map of linguistical areas in northern Europe, reflecting the borders of Germany as they existed after the Treaty of Versailles ending World War One. Photo - Hildebrandt's Zeittafel, page 68.

jäjen
 am v. - si, senn
 sheet n. - Loke, Loake, Loaken, Löaken
 to buy v. - kjeepe, kjeepen, koope, tjeepe, tjeepen
 gave v. - gauf, jeef
 to mow, to strike v. - haue, heiwe, heiwien
 mowed, struck v. - jehaue, jehaut, jeheiw
 small adj. - kjleen, tjleen, kjlien, tjlien
 cow n. - Kooh, Kjlemp, Tjlemp, Kjres, Tjres
 residence n. - Wohninj, Wohnung

Speech differences.

Although dialectical variations in different geographical regions of Prussia where Mennonites settled, had their influences upon the speech of Mennonites living among people who spoke differently, Jacob (Walter) Quiring suggests that the strongest factors determining subsequent differences between the Chortitza Colony and the Molotschna Colony in Russia were their affiliations with either the Flemish or Friesian branches of the Mennonite church. B. H. Unruh states, "The oldest Mennonite settlement in the Black Sea region, the Chortitza settlement, where the majority were speakers of the Chortitza Flemish dialect, also held a Friesian minority. However, during subsequent evolution of the dialect among younger generations, the Friesian dialectal variant gradually yielded to the dominant Chortitza dialect.

The first settlers in the Molotschna Colony were also of the Flemish branch of the Mennonites, but a higher percentage were land owning farmers than the first settlers in Chortitza. Then, in 1819 an entire Friesian community made their way into New Russia where they founded the Molotschna villages of Rudnerweide, Großweide, Franztal, Pastwa, Conteniusfeld and Sparrau," (Note 11). These later immigrants were typically poorer tenant farmers. Unruh indicates that the aforementioned Friesian villages were able to withstand encroachment of the then-existent Molotschna dialect (Note 12).

Some language scholars, including Walther Mitzka and Jack Thiessen, contend that dialectical variations between Chortitza and Molotschna settlers may have been brought about by a language shift that took place in Prussia after the Chortitza settlers had left and before and during founding of the Molotschna Colony. The historical fact that such a language shift took place is probably beyond dispute. However, such substantial change to a language within a time span of less than one generation seems truly remarkable (Note 13).

So we have five possible explanations for the origin of dialectical differences between speakers of Plautdietsch in the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies:

1. Dialectical differences existing in various geographical areas in Prussia;
2. Dialectical differences between Flemish and Friesian branches of the church;
3. Language differences between trades-

men and artisans and land owning farmers in Prussia;

4. Language shift that took place in the Vistula delta of Prussia during the intervening time between establishment of the first and second major colonies in New Russia;

5. A general Germanization of Mennonites in West Prussia.

It seems logical to attribute the origin of the aforementioned dialectical differences to a combination of all five of these established contributing factors.

Plautdietsch Worldwide.

The various countries where Plautdietsch is spoken do not produce official tallies of the numbers of such speakers. Consequently the following figures are drawn from unsubstantiated estimates obtained from various sources and persons. Those estimates deviated considerably from each other, therefore the numbers shown here must be considered as approximations only:

Belize	10,000
Bolivia	35,000
Brazil	9,000
Canada	50,000
Germany (Note 14)	150,000
Mexico	50,000
Paraguay	38,000
Russian Federation	5,000
USA	20,000

The figures for the aforementioned countries add up to a worldwide total of 367,000 speakers of Plautdietsch. Allowing for a probable margin of error, this figure could approach or exceed 400,000. Of these speakers, approximately one half of them speak Plautdietsch habitually and daily, except in Latin America, where it is spoken quite consistently by most all.

Renaissance in Low German.

A new age for Low German literature was set in motion by Klaus Groth in 1852 with his publication of *Quickborn* in his dialect of Schleswig-Holstein. This was followed by Fritz Reuter in 1853 with his publication of *Läuschen un Riemels* in the dialect of Mecklenburg. In 1859 John Brinckmann released for publication his *Vagel Grip*, also in the Mecklenburg dialect. Since then there have been hundreds of Low German publications in Germany and elsewhere. The 1991 catalogue *Plattddeutsch im Buchhandel* published by *Institut für Niederdeutsche Sprache* listed 1400 titles in and about Low German. This list did not include the hundreds of magazines, calendars, almanacs and yearbooks in Low German plus numerous theatrical plays, radio plays, records and tape recordings also published. Most all of the foregoing were in dialects other than Mennonite *Plautdietsch*.

There have also been a number of Low German translations of the New Testament, among them *Dat nie Testament* in the dialect of Mecklenburg by Ernst Voß in 1960. Rudolf Muuß published *Dat niee Testament* in a dia-

lect of Holstein in 1975.

Four universities in Germany and one in the Netherlands have Chairs of Low German/Low Saxon studies. A major work of higher studies *Handbuch zur Niederdeutschen Sprach- und literaturwissenschaft*, authored by Gerhard Cordes and Dieter Möhn, was published by Erich Schmidt Verlag in 1983. A dictionary encompassing various Low German/Low Saxon dialects was published by Wolfgang Lindow under auspices of *Institut für Niederdeutsche Sprache* in 1984.

A major Prussian language dictionary, including Plautdietsch, was started by Walther Ziesemer in 1935 and was published in installments from *A* to *Fingernagel*. Then all records were lost to enemy action in World War II. This work was again taken up by Erhard Riemann at the University of Kiel in 1974. Several men have chaired this project and died before its completion. The current editor is Reinhard Goltz who has completed from *Fingernagel* to *Z*, and is now updating *A* to *Fingernagel* as prepared by Ziesemer before World War II.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century Low German writers have produced a more continuous and greater flow of dialect literature than has been done in any other language.

Plautdietsch Publications.

Among first authors of *Plautdietsch* in Canada was J.H. Janzen whose plays: *Utwaundre* 1931, 95 pages, and *De Bildung* 1945, 20 pages, were published in Waterloo, Ontario.

Arnold Dyck of Steinbach, Manitoba, became an admired and prolific author of *Plautdietsch* in the 1940s and 1950s. A collection of his numerous works were later gathered and republished as "Works of Arnold Dyck" in four volumes by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society in 1986. His Low German (*Plautdietsch*) works appear in Volume II of 506 pages.

In 1972 Derksen Printers of Steinbach, Manitoba published the first *Plautdietsch* book by Reuben Epp of Kelowna, B.C., under the title *Plautdietsche Schrefsteeckja*, 116 pages. His later publications were *The Story of Low German and Plautdietsch*, 1993, 133 pages, *The Spelling of Low German and Plautdietsch*, 1996, 167 pages, both written mainly in English, published by Reader's Press of Hillsboro, Kansas. These were followed in 1997 by a collection of stories and

Flemish and Dutch.

"...Dutch and Flemish are more or less the same language (as British English and North American English would be considered the same) and certainly in the 16th century differences in language are rather local as there is no unified general Dutch language as yet until the 'Statenvertaling' of the Scriptures in the 17th century," Marjan Blok, e-mail to the editor, May 7, 2003.

verse in Low German entitled *Dit un Jant opp Plautdietsch*, 64 pages, also published by Reader's Press.

In 1987 Kindred Press of Winnipeg published the first New Testament in *Plautdietsch* under the title *DAUT NIEHE TASTAMENT*, 483 pages, as translated by J.J. Neufeld of Winnipeg. Its wording leans toward that of Old Colony Mennonites. In 1990 *Elwert Verlag* in Marburg, Germany, published a book of *Plautdietsch* stories and interviews by Jack Thiessen and Victor Peters of Manitoba under the title *Plautdietsche Jeschichten*, 319 pages. In 1997 Jacob Loewen of Abbotsford, B.C., published *Onze iashte Missjounstreiz*, 220 pages; a book in which he describes in *Plautdietsch* their experiences as missionaries among natives in South America, with an addendum of his suggested guidelines for writing *Plautdietsch*. In 1995 PrairieView Press printed the second revised edition of a *Plautdietsch* to English and English to *Plautdietsch* dictionary, entitled *Kjenn Jie noch Plautdietsch?*, 365 pages, by Herman Rempel of Morden, Manitoba. In 1999 a *Plautdietsch* dictionary by Jack Thiessen of New Bothwell, Manitoba, entitled *Mennonitisch-Plautdeutsches Wörterbuch*, 518 pages, was published under auspices of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society.

In southern Manitoba, active theatre groups organized by playwrights Wilmer Penner and Anne Funk, present frequent *Plautdietsch* drama productions to enthusiastic audiences.

An interesting initiative was undertaken by the society of *Plautdietsch-Freunde e. V.*, Mennonite immigrants from Russia in recent decades, who live in the Bielefeld region of northwestern Germany. With Peter Wiens as editor, this society began in June of 2001 to publish a glossy quality quarterly informational journal named *Plautdietsch FRIND*, 16-28 pages, to encourage and promote interest and activity in further *Plautdietsch* literary and cultural growth (see *Pres.*, No. 20, page 73). Space does not permit a complete listing of *Plautdietsch* printed publications nor other publications such as numerous voice recordings by various authors in latter decades of the twentieth century.

Conclusion.

The *Plautdietsch* dialect of Netherlandic Mennonites in and from Russia was adopted by them from their neighbours in the Vistula river delta of West Prussia during their sojourn there of more than two centuries. It fits into the eastern end of the Low German mosaic of dialects that once stretched across northern Europe from the Netherlands to East Prussia until 1945, when German and Low German speaking people were forced out of Prussia.

Since *Plautdietsch* embodies words and influences from dialects in the Netherlands, its relationship to other dialects is that of spanning the Low German language zone. It shares

the history of Low German/Low Saxon, including the centuries-long period of literary silence and subsequent resurgence of its literature.

Acknowledgement:

This is a slightly updated version of an article published in *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, No. 5, pages 61-72. Reprinted with permission. For the Plaut-Dietsch version of this article, see *Friend*, Issues 6-8.

For a more complete history of "Plautdietsch," see *The Story of Low German and Plautdietsch: Tracing a Language Across the Globe* by Reuben Epp, (The Reader's Press, Hillsboro, Kansas, 1993), 133 pages.

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Endnotes:

Note One: Gerhard Cordes and Dieter Möhn in *Handbuch zur niederdeutschen Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft*, (Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1983, pp. 78, 113-116, 237, 423, 608-609 (NSL).

Note Two: Encyclopaedia Britannica states, "From Low German are descended the Plattdeutsch dialects of the North Sea coast, Dutch, Frisian and English ..." NSL states, p. 661, (English and Low German have common origins in North Sea Germanic).

Note Three: NSL, p. 660.

Note Four: NSL, p. 112 states, "Written Middle Low German of Lübeck orientation was spread throughout the entire Hanseatic region."

Note Five: *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, p. 70.

Note Six: NSL, P. 116: (The Reformation certainly did not cause the downfall of the Middle Low German language, it did not initiate the blow, but it certainly contributed to the results....)

Note Seven: B. H, Unruh in *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen*, 1955, p. 16, states, "Low Saxon: We usually call it Low German, *Plattdeutsch*, (actually Low Franconian also belongs to Low German, from a linguistic point of view)."

Note Eight: Jacob (Walter) Quiring in *Die Mundart von Chortitza in Süd-Rußland*, 1928, p. 43, and B.H. Unruh in *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der*

mennonitischen Ostwanderungen, 1955, pp. 153-4 confirms that the Friesian and Flemish branches of the Mennonite church in Prussia, and later in Russia, spoke their adopted Prussian (Plautdietsch) dialect with their own Flemish and Friesian variances.

Note Nine: The first Chortitza settlers of 1789 were joined in ensuing years by a continuing flow from Prussia, including considerable numbers from the Elbing region, many of whom were also of the Flemish denomination. Note Ten: Walther Ziesemer in *Die Ostpreussischen Mundarten*, 1924, lists 12 different dialects spoken in Prussia. Two were High Prussian: Breslausch and Oberländisch, one was Schwäbisch (South-West German) and nine different dialects of Low German/Low Prussian, namely: Ostgebiet, Ostsamland, Westsamland, Natangen, Ostkäslausch, Westkäslausch, Haffgebiet, Elbinger Höhe and the Nehrung-Werder dialect.

Note Eleven: Jack Thiessen in *Low German (Plautdietsch) in Manitoba*, states that the Molotschna settlers predominantly included members of a higher social class, and even though they followed the first group by less than one generation, they had adopted the newer forms of the Low German dialect of trade and commerce.

Note Twelve: Cornelius Krahn in *Plattdeutsch (Plautdietsch)*, Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. IV, p. 187, says, "The difference between Chortitza and Molotschna Low German is still discernible in North and South America. There was, however, a tendency in Russia to accept this "more cultured" (Molotschna) form of Low German in areas where Mennonites from both settlements were mixed...."

Note Thirteen: Jack Thiessen in *A New Look at an Old Problem: Origins of the Variations in Mennonite Plautdietsch*, Mennonite Quarterly Review, July 1988: Since the dialect used in this (the Great Delta) region in recent times is no longer similar to the Russian Mennonite Plautdietsch, we can only conclude that there has been a linguistic change to the north.... It is important to note that the Mennonites who settled in the Molotschnaya area took with them from their Vistula home a form of the dialect different from that of their Old Colony predecessors.

Note Fourteen: Peter Wiens, chairman of *Plautdietsch-Freunde e. V.* and editor of *Plautdietsch FRIND*, both of Oerlinghausen, Germany, suggests that there are well over 100,000 current speakers of Plautdietsch in Germany, probably approaching 200,000 or more. Peter projects these figures on the basis of information found in Horst Gerlach's *Die Russlandmennoniten - Ein Volk Unterwegs* and the fact that there are now about 300 Mennonite/Baptist churches in Germany with average memberships of 300 "Mennonite" immigrants from Russia in the last three to four decades, not including many thousands of speakers who are not church members.

Kamennaya Mogila

“Kamennaya Mogila: The Battle of the River Kalka, 1223 A.D.,”
by William Schroeder, 434 Sutton Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 0T3.

Introduction.

Visitors through the ages who crossed the remote part of the Ukraine a few kilometres north of the Sea of Azov, have been pleasantly surprised when they came upon a miniature mountain range which stands in sharp contrast to the monotonous steppe from which it protrudes.

This granite formation is an outlier of the Donetsk Ridge some distance to the north. It is a form of volcanism known as an eroded structural dome. In other words, it is a volcano that almost made it. The exposed intrusions reach a height of more than one hundred metres above the surrounding countryside. The formation consists of two parallel ranges that run in a southeast to northwest direction, and cover an area of 456 hectares.

Ship Hills.

These beautiful and fabled rocks are known as Kamennaya Mogila, literally stone graves, because of their resemblance to the Scythian burial mounds called kurgany found all over the Ukraine. The Greeks who settled along the Kalmius River and on the shore of the Sea of Azov called them Gami Oba, ship hills, because the profile of the four main peaks in this formation when viewed from a certain angle, resembles a sail ship.

Similarly, the German colonists and the Mennonites who settled in that area during the first half of the 19th century called them Schiffhügel. This fascinating rock formation is located on the west side of the Karatish River a tributary of the Berda River, seven kilometres south of Rosovka and 45 kilometres northwest of Zhdanov (Mariupol).

Nature Preserve.

Kamennaya Mogila is an ideal habitat for a large range of plants and animals. Botanists have identified about 470 different types of plants in this area, which is now a nature preserve. Sixty



Current road map (2000) of the Bergthal Colony, Imperial Russia, today Respublica, Ukraine, showing current locations of the five Bergthal villages and the Kamennaya Mogila mountain range. Although the name Bergthal was known to the Old Colony Mennonites being the name of the colony sheep land (Pres., No. 8, Part One, page 59), it was suggested by the Old Colony Oberschulz Bartsch as it aptly described the physical setting of the Mariupol area with its picturesque river valleys, fertile plateaus and miniature mountain range to the north (see Pres., No. 19, page 92). Map - Diese Steine, page 345.



Panoramic view of the Kamennaya Mogila, near the former Mennonite Bergthal Colony, north of Mariupol, Imperial Russia. View to the northwest. The tranquil scene of sunflowers growing in the cleft of the so-called “ship-hills” was the site of the Battle of the River Kalka in 1223. In 1779 the city of Mariupol was founded on the Sea of Azov at the mouth of the Kalmius River. Earlier it had been known as “Domacha” and since 1734 a center of Cossack activity. In 1798 Mariupol was connected with Alexandrowsk with a post-road. The area north of Mariupol was included in the Imperial land reserves for Jewish resettlement but was not utilized. March 30, 1833 it was released by Imperial Ukas (Hildebrandt’s Zeittafel, page 186). The area was promptly reserved for Mennonite settlement by the astute Chortitza Colony Oberschulze Jakob Bartsch, obviously recognizing the immense potential of the fertile lands in the picturesque region with its unmatched access via the Mariupol seaport to the burgeoning European grain markets. Photo by Wm. Schroeder, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1980.

varieties of lichens and twenty types of mosses as well as a great variety of flowering plants flourish there. Several of the plant varieties are believed to be rare remnants of earlier geological ages. During the winter months and during the dry seasons lichens give the entire area a grey-brown colour, but as soon as moisture is received the rocky surface is rapidly transformed into a mosaic of colours.

This transformation begins towards the end of March. From the middle of May to the middle of June, the entire park is covered with its richest floral growth and the air is saturated with the sweet aroma emanating from the blossoms of the thousands of wild rose bushes scattered over the entire area. By the middle of June the life cycle of most of the flowering plants has been completed and the region begins to turn brown again.

Kamennaya Mogila serves as an ideal nesting place for a great number and variety of birds. The natural crevices and small caves among the rocks make excellent homes for foxes, for whom numerous rabbits, hedgehogs and mice serve as food. There are also many lizards, frogs and two types of snakes that feed on insects and thereby control their number.

Legend.

The shapes and arrangement of the exposed rocks are intriguing. With the help of the imagination they may resemble any number of familiar objects. When viewed from a certain angle, one of the large boulders at the top of one of the peaks reminds the observer of a frog that is just on the verge of leaping from its lofty perch. Another rock resembles a cap. A series of partly submerged rocks remind some observers of the links in a chain and others of a dragon.

It comes as no surprise that these rocks fashioned in such exotic shapes, along with their "magic" transformation of colours, have evoked legends and superstitions in the minds of the people who lived near them. One of these leg-

ends, whose origin can be attributed to the fact that these mounds of stone resemble ancient ruins, is as follows:

Many years ago Kamennaya Mogila was the site of a beautiful city with several magnificent palaces. A beautiful princess lived in the largest palace. For reasons now unknown, the city was suddenly transformed into a pile of rocks.

There was, however, one way of bringing back the lost city. Once a year, on the Feast of St. John, June 23rd, between the hour of 11 and 12 midnight, the princess would sit on the highest granite peak, the ruins of her former palace, and near her would be a very beautiful flower. If a worthy young man came and picked the flower and carried it back to his village, the city would be restored.

This was a very difficult task to accomplish, for as soon as the young man had picked the flower he would be pursued by a roaring dragon and other indescribable beasts that threatened to devour him at any moment. If he showed the least sign of fear, the flower and the beautiful princess would vanish in the twinkling of an eye. A man of that calibre, according to the legend, has never been found and the city is therefore forever lost.

Scythians, 800 B.C.

There is evidence that earlier civilizations in this area were also attracted to Kamennaya Mogila. A nomadic tribe known as Scythians occupied the steppes from 800 BC to 300 BC. They made crude life-size stone sculptures resembling human figures. Several of these man-made figures called *baba* can still be found on or near these rocks.

Kamennaya Mogila has also been the scene of much violence and bloodshed. During the Russian Revolution the area was occupied alternately by the Red Army, the White Army and the forces of the anarchist Nestor Makhno. German artillery units took advantage of this elevated

position during World War II.

Mongol Invasion, 1223.

But the military activities that transpired there during the Revolution and during World War II are dwarfed by the great struggle that occurred there in the year 1223, when Kamennaya Mogila was the site of the Battle of the River Kalka. This was the decisive battle during the Mongolian invasion of Russia.

The story of the Mongolian conquest of Russia is one of the most phenomenal events in the history of that country. Mongolian tribes had for centuries lived in the area of present-day Mongolia. In 1206 the various Mongol factions were united into a powerful force by one of their tribal chiefs who assumed the title Genghis Khan (1167–1227), a leader who was destined to become an enigma in history.

From his youth Genghis Khan harboured within himself the unshakable conviction that he should conquer the world and establish justice among men. Ironically enough, he set about to do this with the help of 200,000 highly skilled mounted troops commanded by two of the most competent generals in military history, Subotai and Jebe. He and his followers nearly succeeded in conquering the 13th century world. By 1294, the Mongolian Empire stretched from the Pacific to the Danube and included China and Persia.

The Mongols entered Russia in 1223 by forcing their way through the Caucasian passes,



The stone formation on Kamennaya Mogila known as the frog. The camera is facing north-northwest. (Photo courtesy of Ella Federau, July 2000).



Monument for victims of the 1919 Makhnov massacres located in the former Mennonite village of Bergthal, today Respublica. Photos courtesy of Ella Federau.

crossing the Don and making a temporary halt in the valley of the Kalka River (now called Kalchik) and its tributaries. From this location, a short distance north of the Sea of Azov, they planned their subsequent conquest of Russia.

Battle of River Kalka.

The Mongolians sent out a small expeditionary force to reconnoitre the lands to the west. At the same time several leaders of the local tribes, known as the Cumans, sent an urgent request for help to Kiev, then the capital of Russia. The princes, Mstislav the Daring also known as Mstislav Romanovich, Mstislav III of Kiev, Mstislav of Chernigov and Daniel of Volynia, held a war council in Kiev and agreed to intercept the Mongolians before they could reach Kiev.

The troops under the leadership of Mstislav the Daring encountered the small Mongolian force on the island of Chortitza, near the present city of Zaporozhye, and easily routed them. This victory gave them a false conception of their ability to halt the formidable enemy. For eight days they pursued the retreating Mongolian expeditionary force in a southeasterly direction for a distance of about 200 kilometres, until they encountered the main Mongol forces in the valley of the Kalka.

Mstislav made his camp near Kamennaya Mogila on the west side of the Karatish River. Details about the sequence of events during this battle are conflicting, however, a generalized picture can be reconstructed.

There was no uniformity of command in the Russian army. Mstislav regrouped his army and on Wednesday May 31, 1223, attacked the Mongols before the other princes were ready for battle. The result was disastrous. The Cuman and Russian formations were utterly smashed. The Russian forces retreated to Kamennaya Mogila and hastily fortified their camps. The Mongolians besieged the miniature mountain range and continued the slaughter for three further days. Finally, the Mongols made an agreement with the Russians. As recompense for surrendering their weapons, they would be allowed to flee back to the Dnieper.

Defeat.

However, as soon as the Russians had disposed of their weapons, the Mongols broke the truce and proceeded with the carnage. Only Mstislav the Daring and Daniel, together with a few soldiers, managed to break through the enemy ranks and to escape to the Dnieper. The rest of the army except for three remaining princes were killed in the battle.

In keeping with Mongolian military practice,

royal blood should not be shed in conventional battlefield style. Therefore the Mongol officers laid planks over the Kievan princes and sat on them during their victory banquet. When the banquet was over the princes were dead.



There are numerous kamennaya baba, stone women, in the vicinity of the Kamennaya Mogila. These life-size stone figures were carved by the Scythians 800 to 300 B. C. Standing next to the baba is Ella Federau. Her Buhr ancestors owned a large estate near Bergthal. (Photo courtesy of Ella Federau, July 2000).

In spite of their victory, the Mongols retreated but these dreadful invaders appeared again about 12 years later. They caused tremendous destruction of life and property during their invasion. Entire cities such as Kiev were destroyed. Large parts of the country were invaded during the winter season. The equestrian invaders swept along the frozen rivers and destroyed city after city. This has in fact been the only successful winter invasion of Russia in history. It is possible that they used gunpowder for some of their major sieges since they had learnt its use from the Chinese. When the conquest was completed, the Mongols set up their capital in the city of Sarai on the lower Volga and from there ruled Russia for 240 years.

The victors collected taxes from the vanquished with an iron hand. The Russians were compelled to surrender large quantities of lumber, wax, furs, grain and leather to the Mongolians. A small park

in Moscow known as Tsarina's Meadows, serves as a grim reminder of the Mongolian oppression. It was there that perhaps the most humiliating and painful ritual was transacted. Annually at that site Russians were compelled to deliver quotas of maidens to their conquerors.

The Battle of the River Kalka had inaugurated the darkest epoch in the history of Russia. While Russia was groaning under the Mongol yoke, the countries in Western Europe experienced the first glimpses of the Age of Enlightenment. A proverb taken from Russian folklore sums up their feeling towards the Mongolian period, "It is disgraceful to stand by the Kalka."

Bergthal Colony, 1836.

The land around these rocks was first used commercially by the Mennonite entrepreneur, Johann Cornies (1789–1848) from the Molotschna Colony. Cornies rented the land from the crown and used it to graze huge flocks of sheep. In 1822 German immigrants from the Danzig area settled in villages north and west of these hills. They too made their living by raising sheep. In that same year a seaport was built in Mariupol which made it possible to grow and market grain commercially in that area.

Mennonites from the Chortitza Colony near the present city of Zaporozhye established their first daughter colony, Bergthal, along the Vodnea River just south of Kamennaya Mogila in 1836. The Mennonites from Bergthal emigrated to Manitoba during the 1870s. The German colonists were all deported to labour camps in Siberia in 1939.

A few years after World War II Kamennaya Mogila was made into a state park. Visitors to the park are treated to a scene of beauty and tranquillity. A lush carpet of grass and brilliant flowers accent the chain of

pink granite. The wonderful stillness is interrupted only by the singing of birds and the gentle rustling of leaves.

Sources:

Malinowsky, Josef. *Die Planerkolonien am Asowschen Meere*. Stuttgart: Ausland und Heimat Verlag, 1928.

Panova, Lydia C. *Kamennaya Mogila*. Donetsk, 1974.

Vernadsky, G. *The Mongols and Russia*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1953.

Russian Translations:

Kammen - stone
Kamennaya - stony hills
Mogila - grave

Jakob Hiebert Threshing Outfit, Schantzenfeld

“Jakob Hiebert Threshing Outfit, Schantzenfeld, East Reserve, Manitoba,”

by grandson Andy Hiebert, Box 954, Niverville, Manitoba, R0A 1E0.

Background.

My father Peter H. Hiebert was born on May 2, 1881, eldest son of Jacob Hiebert (1833-1906) and Katherina Hiebert (1875-1916). His mother was the renown midwife (see *Pres.*, No. 10, Part Two, pages 14-16/ *Diese Steine*, pages 579-80). Peter grew up on the family farm at Niverville on the NW18-7-4E. The early years as with all of the Mennonite settlers were difficult times. Farming tools were primitive and the task of breaking the land to seed crops was back-breaking work.

Father told me a story about the time his younger brother David and he did some ploughing with a walk-behind plough, pulled by one horse and one ox. As the sun climbed in the sky and the temperature rose, the ox decided that it was time to cool off, and proceeded to pull horse, plough and the two boys into a nearby slough or water puddle.

All the boys could do was follow the procession into to the pond. There the ox stood, had a drink of water and cooled his feet. Try as they might the ox refused to move. As eight and nine year old boys, they desperately tried to get this ox back to the job at hand. Finally knowing no other way, my father took the ox's tail and bit down as hard as he could. This brought the reaction he wanted and the horse and ox moved out of the pond and the boys then proceeded to finish ploughing the plot of land.

Threshing Outfit.

Issue 20 of *Preservings* (page 127) carried the 1909 photograph “Bound for Home” of David A. Hiebert, Waldheim, Saskatchewan, with his powerful Northwest Thresher Co. steam engine, fuel wagon, separator, caboose and horse-drawn water wagon.

Because of land shortages and intensive livestock operations, the Eastern Mennonite Reserve was typically at the forefront of mecha-

nization. Many farmers acquired binders and steam engines and threshing outfits. One of these families was the sister and brother-in-law of D.A. Hiebert, Jacob and Katherina Hiebert of Niverville who acquired a Case steam engine and Red River special threshing machine around 1904.

Peter H. Hiebert eldest son of Jacob and Katherina, operated this threshing outfit for the next few years.

Most of the threshing machines of that era were equipped with a straw ladder as is illustrated in the picture. The straw was then moved away with a team of horses. This was a very labour intensified operation. Not long after, the threshers were all equipped with straw blowers.

This required additional horse power. Peter H. Hiebert decided to contact his uncle D. A. Hiebert to see if he had any ideas in this regard. D.A. forwarded drawings to illustrate how the valve could be modified and the relief

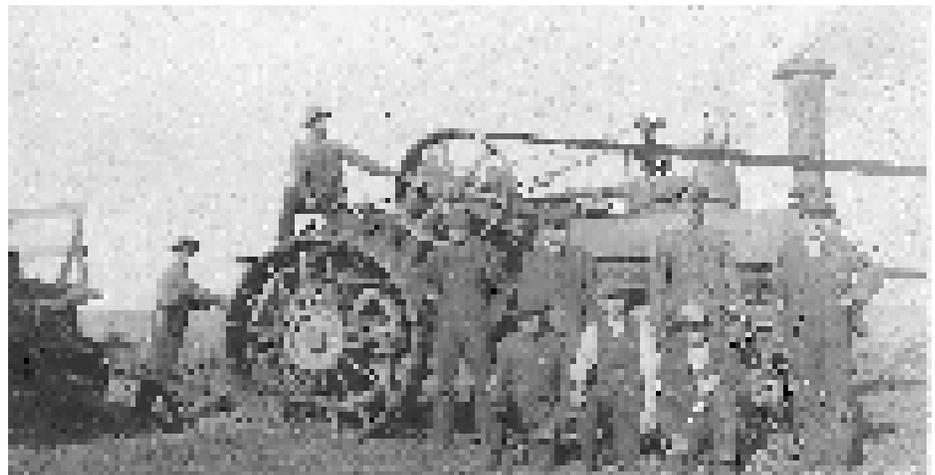
valve pressure could be changed to accomplish this increase in power.

That winter modifications were made and the following fall threshing resumed, but now with a straw blower on the thresher. This made for a much more efficient operation.

Keeping the fire going in the steam engine especially as the weather got colder was a full time job. My father related how they were threshing on the Wittick farm (a two mile ride) and he would ride over at four a.m. to ensure that the steam would be up for an early morning threshing start. He also had to ensure that the water in the boiler wouldn't freeze.

Accident, 1906.

An unfortunate accident in late October or early November, 1906, ended Dad's career as a steam engine threshing machine engineer. It was the final threshing day in the season and the crew was cleaning up the threshing site just east of Wm. Dyck & Sons' lumber yard.



The Jakob Hiebert steam engine and threshing crew 1905. L.-r.: J. H. Hiebert, P. H. Hiebert (on the engine), Johann L. Hiebert, hired man, P. Leppky, Jake L. Hiebert, and three hired men kneeling.



The picture shows this threshing outfit in operation in 1904 on the original Hiebert homestead, NW18-7-4E. The picture is taken just northwest of the yard which is still there to-day. The yard belongs to the Betty Wiebe family, granddaughter to Jacob and Katherina Hiebert.

One of the crew asked Peter H. Hiebert if he could back up the steam engine to attach the tender. Peter was standing by the tender, waiting to attach the hitch to the steamer. The crew member instead of moving the valve to neutral moved it to full reverse pinning Peter against the tender.

When they moved the steam engine forward Peter fell to the ground with both legs crushed and broken. My father related this to me when I was a young man looking after the farm. I would come in late from the field and he would be waiting with a cup of tea and a snack. We would sit and talk. At first only a few details were told and as I became more interested and asked more questions the whole incident became much clearer to me.

I will try to relate the accident to the best of my ability. If some persons do not agree with the details, I'm sure that it is because of different memories and recollections.

Peter H. Hiebert never lost consciousness after the accident and when they laid him down his legs were folded to his chest and his feet were beside his face. Needless to say this must have been a terrible scene to the men around him. What to do? A rider was sent to tell his mother of the accident. Another rider was soon sent to Grunthal where Dr. Johann Peters, a bonesetter lived, to bring him to the Hiebert farm to set the bones as best he could. Meanwhile a decision was made to place Peter on a bench lid so that his legs could be stabilized. A bed of straw was placed on the wagon to soften the ride home. Then the two miles of what must have been a very painful journey home began. Once they reached the farm yard Peter's mother, Katharina, very quickly took charge. She had already decided to place him in an upstairs bedroom at the east end of the house. This is where Peter spend the next five months in bed while his legs healed.

Dr. Johann Peters.

Dr. Peters arrived sometime around 11 p.m. that evening and immediately went up stairs to see his patient.

It must have been a trying time for his mother, who had herself looked after many ill people, to assist Dr. Peters in the painful exercise of straitening the legs of her son. Dr. Peters was known as something of an eccentric. Amongst other things, my father recalled, his first act, when he opened this satchel, was to place two bottles of Magarich (likely whisky) on the table. He then informed his patient that it was the medicine for the procedure: one bottle for the doctor and one for the patient. By this time, however, the patient's stomach was so upset from the trauma of the accident and the broken bones that there wasn't any way that he could even take a sip.

After a couple hours the broken bones were finally set and the legs splinted as best as possible and the patient made as comfortable and the healing process began. There was no simple way to prevent gangrene or blood poisoning to set in, so every day the patient's legs had to be massaged and washed with wine or other forms of alcohol. In this manner any form of infection was avoided.

On Good Friday in 1907 his two brothers-in-law Peter T. Loeppky and Erdman Penner



1913 wedding picture - Peter H. Hiebert (1881-1974) and wife Maria, nee Heinrichs, (1891-1937). Photo - Hiebert Heritage 1833-1993 (Steinbach, 1993), page 82.

came over to help Peter get out of bed and stand up for the first time in five months. As he said so often the most impressive thing about standing up was the feeling that he was 10 feet tall. A sensation that is not difficult to imagine considering that he had been laying in bed for five months.

Grandmother.

Like all mothers, Katharina Hiebert had nurtured and cared for her children very well. There always was a very close bond between my father and his mother.

After having nursed him during the winter of 1906 to 1907 this only increased, and father felt a strong responsibility to care for his mother in the latter years of her life. For a while I believe it was in 1908 to 1910 my father lived with his sister Katherina (Peter Loeppky Family).

Then in the summer of 1910 Grandmother summoned him home to help run the farm. This he did till Grandmother passed away in 1916. The spring of 1916 was very stressful as father had to come to the house many times

a way to help Grandmother for by then she was totally bedridden and had to be turned in bed to make her more comfortable amongst other care that had to be given to her.

In listening to Dad talk about this period in his life I never heard him tell about it with any complaint. I believe that he looked at it as repaying in true measure what had been given to him.

My father wasn't generally upset about the hand life had dealt him. He had a positive philosophy and was a person that you enjoyed having around. For all the hardships that he endured he was not a complaining person.

This is not to say that when he spoke of the past or things that had happened in his life, that he didn't get emotional, He did. However in my mind that runs in the Hiebert family where tears of happiness, tears of sorrow, and yes at times tears of remorse, were quickly shed.

In later life he enjoying visiting family, friends and neighbours. He was always willing to provide a ride for people if they needed transportation: it did not matter whether it was to family gatherings, a funeral, or a wedding, he was always there. I firmly believe this contributed to his long and fairly healthy life.

In 1937 he lost his wife when she was killed by lightning. This was a very difficult time for him and his 11 children. I am sure no matter that his family surrounded him with love there were many, many lonely hours that he spent by himself. Dad was very much a forgiving person. Even when people did him wrong, this was not something that he carried with him. He quickly put things behind him and get on with life.

Conclusion.

I believe that this is the philosophy that we need to take with us so that we can deal with the setbacks that life hands us. I believe that the big change in my father's life came about as a result of his accident. The trauma of this made him a much more philosophical person then he was prior to this.

Priorities in his life changed. Acquiring wealth was not high on his agenda the way it was when he was a young man. He went through life and did things that he needed to do and lived to a ripe old age of almost 93 years.

The Lord was his constant companion and guided him all the days of his life. I am thankful for the life that he had and the friendship, guidance, and leadership that he provided. I had many enjoyable talks with him and spent many quiet evenings with him as well.

Further Reading:

Andy Hiebert, "Bound for Home, 1909: The D. A. Hiebert Threshing Outfit," in *Pres.*, No. 20, page 127.

Books

Hermann Heidebrecht, *Fürchte Dich Nicht, Du Kleine Herde: Mennoniten in Russland und der Sowjetunion* ("Do not be afraid, little flock: Mennonites in Russia and the Soviet Union") (Christlicher Missionsverlag, August Behel Str. 51, 33602 Bielefeld, Germany), 144 pages.

While reading this book I was reminded of the song, "We are a people, washed by the stream of the time, into the earth's misery; full of restlessness and deep affliction, till our Saviour gathers us home." It was sung again and again in the troubled times by the German-speaking Mennonites in the 20th century. We, the Anabaptist-Mennonites, are a people, who always were persecuted since our beginnings in the 16th century - hunted and harassed in their migrations.

Even though this book covers mainly the scattered Mennonites in Russia, the writer starts with their beginnings on January 21, 1525, in Zurich, Switzerland. And what has this little people not endured in their almost 500-year history full of blood and tears.

The Mennonites have remained a tiny group of people, without any might and glory, but Luke 12:32 is rightly applied here. Often comparisons were made to the people of Israel. God stuck to the people of the Anabaptist-Mennonites in all afflictions and distress and carried them, even when they turned their backs and went looking for greener pastures. The Lord stood with them, through the deepest values of suffering: that is what this little book wants to tell us.

The writer starts with the beginning of the Anabaptist (baptism-minded) movement and goes on to present their story, making stops at important stations along the way and highlighting these happenings. Heidebrecht takes the reader with him, to show how God took care of them. Our people are traced from Switzerland, through south Germany, Holland, west and north Germany to west and east Prussia (Poland) and to Russia (Ukraine) and back westward to modern-day Germany. He makes his observations and reflections throughout these migrations and flights and shows how God used them to His honour and service.

Heidebrecht takes particular aim at the period from 1789 to the present, how these people settled in Russia, building up their livelihood in their Mennonite settlements (Colonies) till 1914, how they got prosperous in this relatively calm period. Then with the start of the First World War all of this ended and affliction and misery started, lasting almost to the end of the 20th century. It is impossible to write down what people in the Soviet Union had to endure in persecution, flight, banishment, displacement, tormenting, shooting, killing, labour camps and starvation. Men, women and children - none were spared. Only God in heaven alone is able to measure this suffering.

But the writer also tells us how God took care of His children in all this misery and helped them in their despair and abandonment of hope. He was really a Shepherd of His Flock. In this time

of need, He called up women to share the Word of God. He called men to serve as preachers and Bishops (Elders), and they served despite the imprisonments that invariably followed. In this time of spiritual famine, denominational fences disappeared, people were longing for the Word of God.

While reading this book, the reader will gain esteem for the faithfulness of these people. It challenges us to a deeper and firmer trust in God's action in this world. I wish this book widespread distribution, it is well worth the read;

Reviewed by Jakob Pries, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Norman Unrau, *Those were the Days and these are my people....* third edition (283 Boyd St., Prince George, B.C., V2M 4X1, 2002), 207 pages. \$19.50 plus \$2.50 postage and handling - order from the author email: nunrau@telus.net

A warm recollection of growing up in the Grunthal area in Manitoba more than 60 years ago is offered in the book....

Unrau's father Peter taught at Lister West School (located between Grunthal and St. Malo) for a number of years, starting in 1936. Included among his fond memories is a trip to Winnipeg in 1939 to see King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. The trip saw his class transported in the back of a truck along mostly unpaved roads.

Unrau touches almost every facet of life - from hunting and fishing to learning to smoke, to friends and neighbours, preachers and church missions - in a rural community in the depression in his series of fond recollections.

Reviewed by Tim Plett, *The Carillon*, Nov. 7/02, page 3A.

The second edition of Norman Unrau's *Those were the Days....* was reviewed for *Preservings* readers in Issue No. 16, page 139 (see our website: www.hshs.mb.ca)

Uwe Friesen, et al., *Unter der heissen Sonne des Südens - 75 Jahre Kolonie Menno, 1927-2002* ("Under the hot sun of the south - 75 Years of Menno Colony") (Loma Plata, Paraguay, 2002), 228 pages, hard cover.

In 1926 close to 2000 Mennonites left Canada for Paraguay located in the heart of the South American continent. Some 70 percent of these Mennonites came from the Chortitzer Church (Gemeinde) of the East Reserve in Manitoba, 20 percent from the Sommerfelder Church of the West Reserve in Manitoba and about 10 percent from the Bergthaler Church in Saskatchewan. In 1927, following a very sad and trying year staying at the river port of Puerto Casado where some 10 percent of the immigrants died due to tropical diseases, contracted under very poor sanitary and dietary conditions, and due to extreme climatic conditions no one was used to, these groups jointly established the Menno Colony in the Para-

guayan Chaco. It was the first group of Mennonites to settle in the Southern Hemisphere.

In preparation for the 75th Anniversary of the Menno Colony celebrated in June, 2002 (see *Pres.*, No. 21, pages 50-52), the leaders of the colony arranged to have a book published. This book, titled "Unter der heissen Sonne des Südens - 75 Jahre Kolonie Menno, 1927-2002", is a combination of a brief textual history and an extensive coffee table, picture book, illustrating the hardships of the pioneer years and the highly successful social, economic and spiritual development of a conservative community of believers; a developmental process all the more remarkable since the area in which the colony was to be established was known at the time as the Green Hell (Grüne Hölle) and considered by most everyone as uninhabitable by anyone other than the few indigenous tribes roaming the region.

The main reason why this group of Mennonites left Canada was the abolition of their school system by the provincial governments. In 1873 the Dominion government had guaranteed the Mennonites control over the education of their children. However, in light of the anti-German, anti-Pacifist prejudice in the aftermath of World War I, and using the loophole that jurisdiction for educational matters rested with the provincial governments, the Mennonite confessional schools were prohibited. Many Mennonites were deeply disturbed by this development and clearly viewed it as a betrayal by the Federal Government. Those who could not live with this critical change decided to emigrate in much the same way as their parents and grandparents had done when they left Russia barely 50 years earlier.

It is of interest, therefore, that the school question is afforded, appropriately I must add, the most detailed coverage in the book. Included in this coverage is a very detailed description of the progressive development of the educational system in the colony and how such an extensive change was achieved within a relatively short period of time. The wise leadership of both the Bishop, Ältester Martin C. Friesen, and the colony leader, Vorsteher (elected administrative head) Jacob B. Reimer, contributed greatly to this impressive development. Unfortunately, no mention is made of a significant exodus of Menno colonists to Bolivia in 1957 largely consisting of the more conservative believers unable to accept the "modernizing trends", as they saw it, in Menno Colony.

The colony consisted and to a lesser degree still consists of a relatively homogenous group of individuals with respect to religion and faith. The developments over the 75 years within the Church (Gemeinde) are therefore also of great importance. Here again the positive, wise and moderating leadership of Bishop Friesen is appropriately emphasized. Of particular interest to me is the way the Church handled the exemption of their young men from military service and the development of a missionary vision, particularly

for the native people living and working within their midst. Mennonite groups in Canada and the United States could take valuable lessons from how this group has dealt with these questions. The fact that from an initial group of well over 1000 people all belonging - after a short period of adjustments - to one congregation, has developed a community of close to 8000 people in which exist 14 separate congregations yet all working together within the framework of one "conference" is impressive indeed.

Of interest to those who have some idea what colony life is all about will be the rather detailed description of how the administrative structure has evolved and how it continues to be closely connected to the church and its centuries old religious beliefs and practices. Included is a rather interesting description of the taxation system within the colony but, unfortunately, leaves out a description of the inheritance system which has been firmly entrenched in conservative Mennonite groups for centuries and is likely still largely intact in Menno Colony. It is of interest though to note that in all the pictures of senior administrative groups not a single woman is to be seen. I cannot help but wonder when their valuable talents will be more fully utilized by the Colony.

The importance of the transportation system over the years is clearly demonstrated by the many pictures included within this chapter. The development of the health system and of care homes is described and pictured in some detail. However, other existing social support programs addressing problems of mental health, addictions, violence, dysfunctional families, etc. could have been given more extensive coverage. The relationship over the years of the Colony with its indigenous neighbors and the national government is touched on briefly, maybe more briefly than would be desirable. However, throughout the book there is at least some openness to acknowledge some negative aspects of these relationships and in other areas of colony life.

The colony in many ways functions as a small independent commonwealth within a country. Its wealth still comes largely from the land, including forest products, livestock, dairy and field crops such as cotton and peanuts. Possibly because of a long history of humility the editors of the book appear to have resisted emphasizing the progress which has been made in these vitally important economic areas. For example, it has been said that 75 percent of the dairy products in Paraguay are produced by the three Mennonite Colonies in the Chaco, where Menno Colony is located, and two smaller colonies in East Paraguay. It is known that milk taken from high producing dairy cows in Menno Colony in the morning is processed into yoghurt by two o'clock in the afternoon of the same day and is on the shelves of grocery stores throughout Paraguay, in some cases, 1000 kilometers away, the next morning. That is an impressive development and in my opinion needed more detailed coverage in the book.

This book will be a very useful resource to former, present and future members of the Colony as it will to others, such as myself, who have personal connections with this group of industrious and exemplary people. Unfortunately, as the



Unter der heissen Sonne des Südens - 75 Jahre Kolonie Menno, 1927-2002, an attractive hard cover book.

memories of those still living fade into the past, the lack of detailed captions, including dates and names, for many pictures will make the book less useful than it might otherwise have been. More maps with greater clarity would also have improved the overall quality of the book. More detailed statistical data would also make this a more valuable historical resource although this deficiency will not likely detract significantly from its readability. For those interested in the history of Menno Colony, the reading of this book along with the book by Martin W. Friesen, son of Bishop Friesen, entitled "Neue Heimat in der Chaco Wildnis" and published in 1987 by D. W. Friesen and Sons Ltd., will most certainly be an essential starting point.

John R. Peters, 580 Chalfont Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3R 3H6. John Peters is a former MCC Agriculturalist in Paraguay from 1964-1969 and Professor of Agriculture at the Universities of Manitoba and Saskatchewan from 1969 to 1994.

Edward R. Brandt, Ph.D. and Adalbert Goertz, Ph.D., *Genealogical Guide to East and West Prussia (ost- und Westpreussen): Records, Sources, Publications & Events* (Minneapolis, 2002), 8x11 spiral bound, 458 pages.

Drs. Edward Brandt and Adalbert Goertz have recently teamed up to write a book for those interested in the genealogical resources relative to East and West Prussia. Edward Brandt has written six earlier books about various aspects of Germanic and Polish genealogical research and is a well-known expert. Adalbert Goertz has published many articles related to various aspects of East and West Prussian Mennonite genealogical research and in my opinion is the world authority on this subject.

Their new book can be divided into essentially two primary divisions. The first division, forming the core of the book, includes Parts I

through X and was written principally by Edward Brandt, although Adalbert Goertz helped write Parts III and IX and wrote all of Part X. The first 10 parts of the book are: Part I: Lists of Repositories; Part II: Parish and Civil Registers; Part III: Land, Tax, Court, and Migration Records; Part IV: Lineage Books, Card Collections, and Indexes; Part V: Religious Refugees and Non-Germanic Natives or Settlers; Part VI: Other Useful Records and Publications; Part VII: Historical, Cartographic, and Surname Resources; Part VIII: Regional Names, Boundaries, and Genealogical Regions; Part IX: Historical Date-line of East and West Prussia; Part X: Frequently Asked Questions about East and West Prussia.

Part I discusses in detail the various archives and institutions located throughout the world which hold genealogical materials relative to East and West Prussia. This part includes several pages describing records pertaining to Mennonites in various North American archives. Part II includes a thorough discussion of the church records available for all the major religious groups in East and West Prussia, including lists of some of Adalbert Goertz' published extractions of selected Mennonite church records.

The discussion of land tax, court, and migration records found in Part III covers new ground by providing a detailed description of these records. Many of these records, particularly court records, contain information of genealogical value, but they have been utilized very little up to this point due to the fact that they are generally only available in Polish archives and are difficult to read in some cases. The highly important 1776 West Prussian Mennonite Census is discussed in this chapter in some detail. The 1772 West Prussian Land Register is also very important from a genealogical standpoint and while it is mentioned, it could have been discussed in greater detail.

Part V is a review of the major groups of settlers in East and West Prussia and includes several pages that describe how Mennonites came to settle in these regions. Descriptions of various lists of residents and landowners and as well as other types of records such as directories and almanacs available for East and West Prussia are found in Part VI. Included in this chapter is a summary of the various lists of Mennonite residents compiled in the 1700s that are still extant for various areas of West Prussia. Part VII discusses the published historical works concerning East and West Prussia. A helpful list of some of the major gazetteers, atlases, and maps that have been produced for these regions is also found here. In addition, this chapter contains a one-page summary of the major references available that discuss the origins of Mennonite surnames. In Part IX the authors have arranged a 34-page historical timeline that begins in 992 and continues through 1993 in which they discuss the most important events that have affected this region during the last millennium.

The second division in the book, comprised of 17 Appendices, 24 maps, and assorted indexes, is found in the last three parts of the book. The first five appendices were compiled by Adalbert Goertz and provide valuable informa-

tion about the localities in East and West Prussia for which the LDS Family History Library has microfilms, as well as a comprehensive list of his published works. The last 12 appendices were compiled by Ed Brandt and cover a wide variety of subjects. The 24 maps show the various changes in the region's boundaries over the centuries during the course of the political events that affected the area.

A helpful 23-page index compiled by Michele Zuber is included at the end of the book. The overall layout and treatment of the subject material is somewhat similar to that found in a major reference used by American genealogists known as *The Source*. Due to the enormous amount of material that is covered in this volume it would be wise for researchers to make ample use of the index and the table of contents.

Researchers interested in Mennonite genealogical materials may be disappointed that a greater

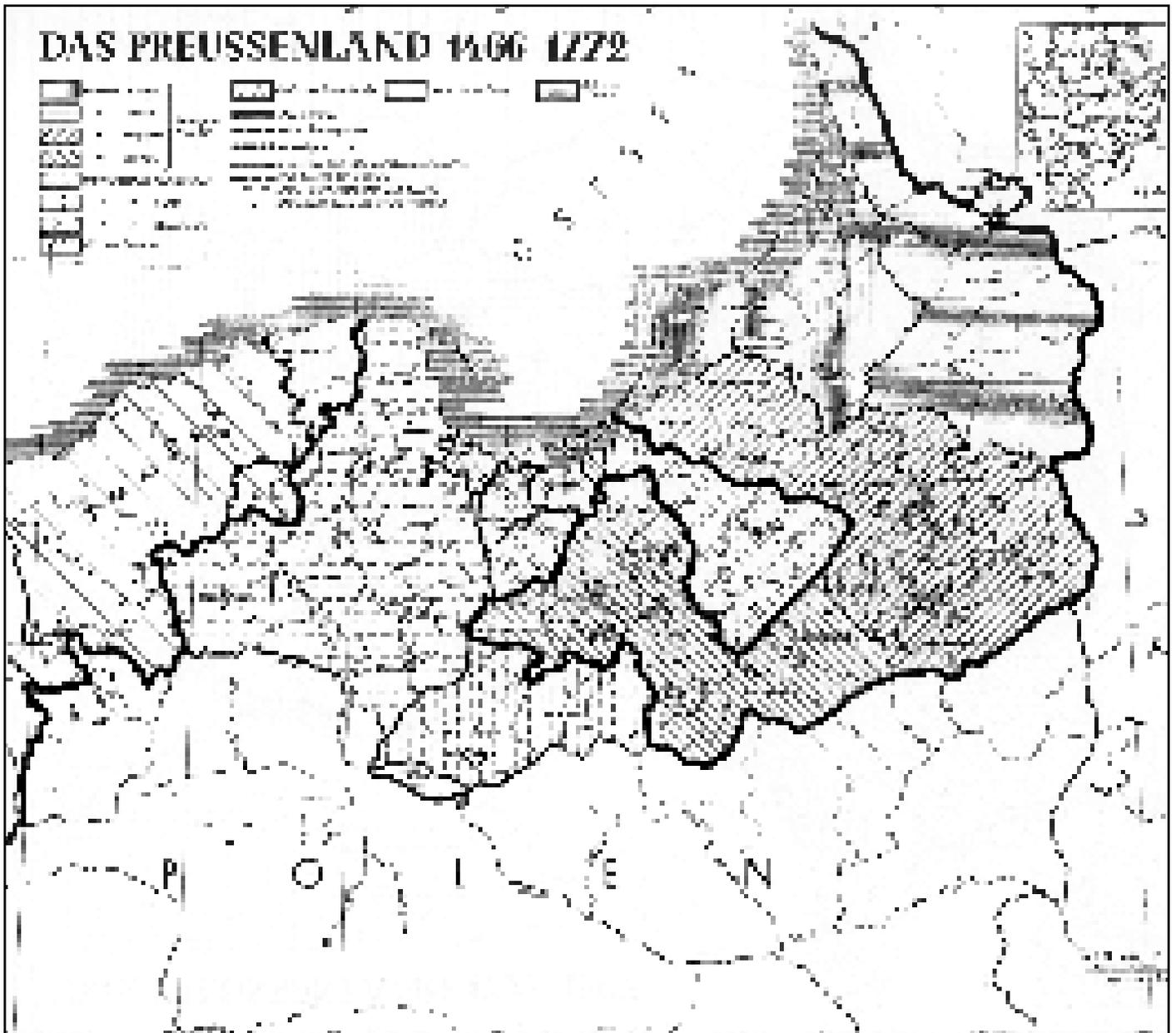
portion of the book is not devoted to these resources. While there is a lot of information about Mennonite genealogical sources in this book, the intent of the book is to be comprehensive about all types of genealogical records relative to this region. Adalbert Goertz's articles in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* (1981, p. 372-380) and the *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* (1981, p. 52-65) go into greater detail about the available Mennonite church records.

I found a number of things in the book that could be improved. One problem is that some maps are difficult to read due to the print being either quite faint or miniscule. Each part and appendix in the book has its own separate pagination which some may find confusing. After doing some spot-checking I also discovered that the index is unfortunately not comprehensive. For instance, Reuben Drefs, Warmia, and the Bydgoszcz State Archives are mentioned on p.

III-4, but this information is not found in the index. Inexplicably, West Prussia and East Prussia aren't included in the index at all, even though there are numerous references to these regions in the text.

Edward Brandt and Adalbert Goertz should be commended for their lifelong commitment to genealogical research and for sharing with us in this volume a wealth of information they have accumulated over the years. This book will serve as a valuable reference to the resources available for genealogical research in East and West Prussia. I would encourage researchers interested in having a general reference to the genealogical resources pertaining to this region to acquire a copy. Order from www.cyberspace.org/~goertz/new.html.

Reviewed by Dr. Tim Janzen, M.D., Portland, Oregon.



Map of West and East Prussia from 1466 to 1772, is an example of the resources available in *Genealogical Guide to East and West Prussia* by Goertz and Brandt, Map 3, page XII-10

Book Notes:

Heinrich J. Toews, *Das kurze leidvolle Leben des Heinrich J. Toews* (Menno Colony, 2001), 28 pages.

The life and writings of Sommerfelder delegate Bernard Toews (1863-1927), son-in-law to Berghaler Ältester Johann F. Funk, have become quite well known (see *Pres.*, No. 13, pages 133-4 and *Pres.*, No. 16, pages 30-37). But the family history also includes Bernhard's younger brother Heinrich (1863-1927), ill-fated school teacher in Altona. The story of his tragic end was recorded by Bernhard (see *Pres.*, No. 19, pages 98-100). Heinrich was also a talented writer and some of his writing has been preserved. *Das Kurze leidvolle Leben* consists of his letter to friend Jakob Braun of 1900 and the account of his death written by brother Bernhard. The booklet was edited and published by Heinrich Ratzlaff, Loma Plata, Paraguay. The Editor.

Lloyd Penner, editor, *Aron M. & Maria Penner Family Book 1887-2002* (Box 1658, Stettler, Alberta, T0C 2L0, 2002), 217 pages.

We cannot even begin to list all the family books published among the Russian Mennonites diaspora. This book is a good addition to the written material on the Kleine Gemeinde Penners and their descendants. Aron M. Penner (1887-1963) was a grandson to "five wives, two lives," Peter Penner (1816-84), of Ohrloff, later Margenau, and Blumenort, Manitoba. See *Pres.*, No. 3, pages 6-7 (provides the names of Peter Penner's parents and grandparents), No. 11, page 85; and No. 13, page 128. *Pres.*, No. 8, Pt. II, pages 33-36; No. 9, Pt. I, pages 26-29, provides information on the "Schönwieser" line of Kleine Gemeinde Penners from Prangenau, Molotschna, whose descendants later lived in Friedensfeld, Borosenko. The Editor.

Menno B. Dueck and Gerhard F. Kornelsen, editors, *Familienregister der Kleinen Gemeinde in Mexiko und Oklahoma* (Jagueyes, Mexiko, 2000), n.p.

This substantial volume lists all the families of the Kleinen Gemeinde with births, baptism and marriage dates. As the title suggests, the register is restricted to Mexico and Oklahoma, thereby omitting members of the denomination in Belize, Paraguay, Nova Scotia and Manitoba (where they are known as the Interlake Mennonite Fellowship). The book will be a helpful resource not only to members but also to others interested in researching the history of this growing denomination, with around 2000 members. A short history is included for each of the 12 congregations listed.

The Editor.

Calvin W. Redekopp, *The PAX Story: Service in the Name of Christ 1951 - 1976* (Telford, PA: Pandora US and Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), pb., 160 pp., 13.95 US, 20.95 CND.

The story of PAX remains a dramatic and living example of how some Mennonites have responded to war and disaster in the past and suggests similar efforts can be forthcoming in the future.

During the period covered by this book, i.e. spanning the period of the Korean and Vietnamese wars, more than 100 young American and some Canadian Mennonite young men set out to repair war damages of WWII and to perform other much needed services in other parts of the world. They were hoping to show that this was a priority Christian thing to do in times of need.

The author volunteered his service in MCC as early as 1949, and then became a co-ordinator and joint director of PAX work two years later. It is not surprising then that the book provides an excellent coverage of organizational details and administrative activity that went into creating and maintaining such a world-wide service enterprise.

Constructing 50 units of refugee housing at an old German munitions camp in Espelkamp and 14 more at Neuwied (both in Germany) kept the first groups of men busy for more than a year. Then came several projects in Greece and in 1953 a Trans Chaco road project in Paraguay, along with work in Jordan and Peru. By 1954 88 PAX men were busy in seven European countries, with one each also in Paris, Baghdad, Egypt and Jericho. All the major PAX projects undertaken are listed through to 1969 (p.71).

It was a challenging opportunity which became an unforgettable experience for those personally involved. The inclusion of memoirs and photos helps to introduce us to the main architects of the program, and also to the front-line participants in the field. A great deal more could be said, no doubt, about the impact of these men and their contributions, on the lives of people in the communities where they worked.

Redekopp's work is a good piece of service history which belongs to what is by now a much larger record of helping projects which have been the signature of MCC for eight decades. Meanwhile other service programs continue to be a world-wide frontier inhabited and served by many other thousands "in the name of Christ" in the war-torn world that remains today.

The book is well-written, with perhaps somewhat of an academic "edge", but still most readable for anyone who wishes to explore the PAX drama in greater depth. Dr. Redekopp has put his teaching experiences and writing skills to give us yet another in his series of service and other issue volumes that hopefully can serve a wide reading public well.

Lawrence Klippenstein, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Martin Amis, *Koba the Dread: Laughter and the Twenty Million* (Knopf, Toronto, 2002), 306 pages, \$37.00.

We, on this part of the globe, tend to associate famine with images of starving children in Africa. We don't associate starvation with Caucasians. In particular, we don't associate famine with a group like Manitoba's large and distinguished Ukrainian and Mennonite communities. We never picture our Ukrainian friends as having relatives who died by the millions from starvation scant decades ago.

It happened. Few people paid attention. More than five million Ukrainians starved to death in two years, 1922 and 1933. Which crop failure was that?

Which drought? Neither. There was just an overabundance of political ideology in those years.

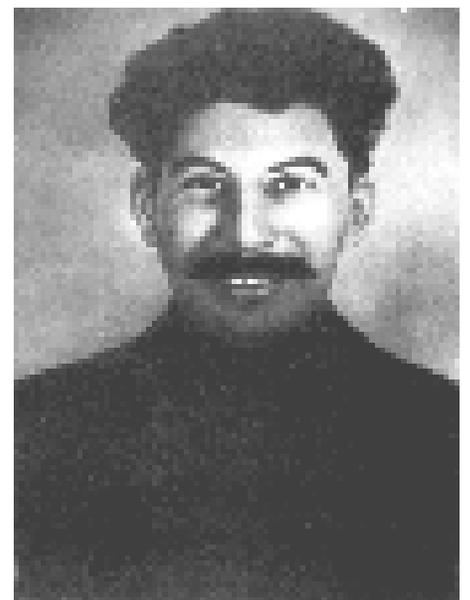
They were "enforced" famines directed by the Soviet Union leaders. The crime? The people of Ukraine were not considered good Communists. In total, at least 20 million people died, mostly Russian and Ukrainian but other nationalities and religions as well, in the enforced famines and political terror directed by Vladimir Lenin and his successor, Joseph Stalin.

In this brilliant new non-fiction book, English novelist Martin Amis maintains that much of the world, and particularly the political left, has largely overlooked it.

Lenin, who started using famines as a political weapon, was responsible for the deaths of five million people inside the Soviet Union. He also started the police state. Stalin, building on Lenin's work, killed 15 million. The Iron Curtain tried to hide the atrocities but they were abetted by the left intelligentsia's desire to believe in the Communist experiment as some kind of counterpoint to the West's capitalism.

George Bernard Shaw, writing for the New Statesman at the time, visited the Soviet Union at the height of the famine and announced that everyone looked well-fed to him. Some books are described as stunning. This one stuns on every page. Amis recounts the atrocities of the Communist regimes between 1917 and 1953. Having no mercy was deemed the highest virtue. People were expendable in the greater cause of ideology.

Amid these pages, Amis wonders: How much of this was the work of madmen, and how much was a logical outcome of Marxist theory? Amis's answer is abstruse but he does at least frame the debate. Ukraine was targeted because it was considered the most stubborn of the Soviet countries to convert to communism. The five million Ukrainians starved to death on the richest soil in the Soviet Union, which is about as apt a metaphor for the failure of Communism as there could be. In starvation, Amis writes, some people resorted to cannibalism.



Joseph Stalin, between arrests. Koba was his nickname. Photo -Koba the Dread, bookplates.



A scene all too familiar to many Mennonites. The Cheka prepares for a court trial. Photo -Koba the Dread, bookplates.

Meanwhile, both Lenin and Stalin (Koba was his nickname) continued to export grain. In Lenin's famine, he confiscated the Ukrainian farmers' grain first, then let them perish. Lenin believed famine would destroy the farmers' outdated economy. In one mass grave in Ukraine are an estimated 200,000 dead. Lenin wanted Communism to replace religion as the opiate of the people. In 1922 alone, Lenin ordered the executions of 2,691 priests, 1,962 monks, and 3,447 nuns.

Some reviewers of Amis's book have argued that what he says is nothing new. (His two main sources for research are Russian writer Alexandr Solzhenitsyn and British historian Robert Conquest.) They also challenge his contention that the murders and terror in the Soviet Union were and still are treated lightly. Here's an example that supports Amis. The Marxist-Leninist Party frequently runs candidates in elections in Manitoba and no one loses their lunch over it, even though the party's namesake masterminded mass graves. It's like calling a political party the Nietzsche-Hitlerites.

Yes, Amis draws comparisons between the Holocaust and the 20 Million, as the epoch of Lenin and Stalin is now called in modern-day Russia. Amis calls Hitler and Stalin "little moustache and big moustache." There are quirks in Amis's writing. He uses a first-person narrative, and a multitude of footnotes, to name two of his devices. However, the material overpowers any quibbling over style. It is easy to read, and brilliantly written by one of the world's best.

This book is a must read. Especially in this part of the world where so many of us trace our roots back to the Soviet empire or have friends who do. Amis writes: "We badly need to know the numbers of the dead. More than this, we need to know their names. And the dead, too, need us to know their names."

Reviewed by Bill Redekop, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Reprinted from *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 25, 2002, page D3.

Free Press reporter Bill Redekop's book *Crimes of the Century: Manitoba's Most Noto-*

rious True Crimes was published in fall of 2002 by Great Plains Publications.

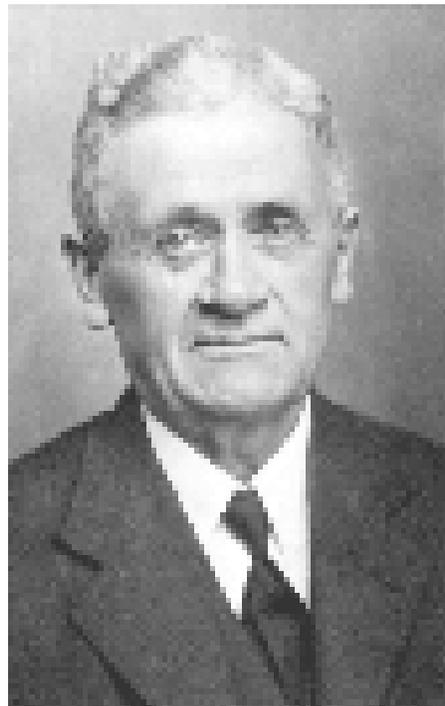
Helmut Harder, *David Toews was here 1870-1947* (Winnipeg, Manitoba; CMBC Publications, 2002), 347 pages.

This is the compelling story about a remarkable individual, a man who dined with the Prime Minister and met the King. A man of God who travelled North America and Europe and made deals with massive corporations and speculators for the benefit of people struggling under tyranny and oppression. A man, who from the unlikely place of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, changed the lives of a great many people for the better.

He did not do it alone of course, but leaders are sometimes given both the credit and the criticism for great events.

Midway through this book, I was struck by the significance of what this individual had accomplished and how it had directly affected me, someone a generation removed from the events of 1923-1930 (my parents were young children when they came to Canada).

Reading how diligently and tirelessly this man worked to enable more than 20,000 Mennonites from Russia to start a new life in this wonderful country impacted me strongly. I had always as-



David Toews 1870-1947. Photo - Men. in Can., Vol. Two, bookplates.

sumed that this immigration had been universally accepted and embraced by Mennonites both here and in the United States. This was apparently not the case. Harder's account about the criticism of the whole project by some churches and groups was an eye-opener. It showed how perilously close to failure the project was at times and were it not for the persistence and vision of people like David Toews it likely would have failed.

Biographers are sometimes guilty of over-emphasizing either the faults or the strengths of their subjects. Helmut Harder has not done that. His is a balanced and meticulously researched look at the life of a self-described "ordinary" man who, in the course of his long life of service to God, did great things. Harder has drawn from a wealth of material including articles, sermons, and personal letters written by David Toews as well as the minutes and reports of many meetings and conferences. In so doing, he is able to put together a work that is factual and yet replete with personal and often moving segments.

While he is totally justified in praising the work and life of David Toews, Harder is even-handed in his approach. There were many times when his detractors saw Toews as being power-hungry, egotistical, poor with finances, and self-serving. There is even an account of a court case involving a recent immigrant from Russia who was accused (and later convicted) of falsifying documentation in order to attain financial benefit. Toews was seen by many to be taking his side. His views on Hitler's Germany were also questioned and Harder kindly refers to those views as being "naïve". One wonders also whether his family life suffered because of his many responsibilities and time spent away from home. Harder deals openly with all these questions. He makes it clear that above all else Toews was a man whose outstanding contributions to the Mennonite people far out-weighed any failings or shortcomings.

Harder has detailed the many years of service given by David Toews and has accurately documented the tremendous impact he had on the lives of a great many people. His 45 years of work as minister and *Ältester* for the Rosenorter Gemeinde, his role as a teacher and contributions to the Rosthern Junior College, his 25 years as chairman of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, his efforts with The Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, and his involvement with the General Conference Home Mission Board – are all a testament to his life of service and are part of a remarkable legacy.

He was a determined man, one with a sense of vision and purpose, who often quoted a poem by Karl Gerok titled *Es reut mich nicht*. (I have no regrets). In every time, in every crisis, leaders are needed with that strength, endurance, optimism and drive. David Toews was such a leader. We should all be grateful that David Toews Was Here.

With this book, Helmut Harder has done a masterful job of describing both the man and his work and it is a most valuable contribution to the story of our people.

Book review by John H. Peters Steinbach,

Manitoba. Superintendent of Schools. Hanover School Division and President of the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum, Steinbach.

Marva Dawn, *Joy in Our Weakness: A Gift of Hope from the Book of Revelation* (Revised Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 220 pages.

The author, Marva J. Dawn, is an evangelical writer who now teaches at Regent College in Vancouver. She has written many books and now adds to that number this good book on the Book of Revelation for people who would not consult the commentaries written for specialists. It is not what is normally understood by a commentary, a verse by verse explanation of the text. Not only that, but it is written specifically for "weak" people, that is, people who are ill, disabled, people with no power, who are dependent on others. The book is an aid to Christian living.

Weakness and the strength which God supplies to live with it is a theme that runs through the book. The Revelation was written, after all, to weak people, a small, despised, sometimes persecuted minority in the first century whose life and witness depended altogether on the power of God. The Lamb, frequently referred to in the Revelation, is the prime symbol for the weakness she writes about. Christians have to learn to live with weakness. We don't know the day or the hour of God's salvation nor anything about what the final victory of God over evil will be like. She warns us never to buy into the world's stratagems of power and success because that is a denial of our dependence on God alone. Victory comes only through sacrifice.

But don't be surprised that the author is well able to deal with the biblical text in the Greek language in which it was first written. She writes that the word in 2 Corinthians 12:9, usually translated "my power is made perfect in weakness," should really read "for power is brought to its end in weakness" (119). Our human weakness needs to be acknowledged; only then can the power of God work.

This is not a verse by verse commentary, but rather a chapter by chapter discussion of the human-life-in-the-world issues that arise out of the book of Revelation. The text leads the author into reflections such as the importance of silence based on 8:1: "There was silence in heaven for about half an hour." Silence is essential to hearing God speak, for prayer, for meditation on God's word. Again and again she refers to her own physical suffering and uses her experience to encourage readers who may also be suffering. This is a book not for scholars but for believers. She expects her readers to use the text of the book of Revelation together with her reflections since the text is not reprinted. Sometimes her relating of her own experience becomes somewhat gushy and a slight irritant, but that may only be the reviewer's reaction.

All that said, this book can still be called a commentary on the book of Revelation. The text, the author cautions us, should be read literally, but not literalistically. Reading literally means to take Scripture seriously as God's word. To read literalistically means ignoring that the book makes

"inspired use of symbols and metaphors and other artistic devices to underscore its meanings and mysteries" (39). When we read in Revelation 19 about the rider on the white horse with a sword coming out of his mouth we know, not that the rider has a steel sword in his mouth for physical killing, but that he has in his mouth the Word of God "which is sharper than any two-edged sword," and that it is that sword which overcomes resistance to God. Another example is the dimensions of the New Jerusalem in chapter 21. The author tells us that it is a serious mistake to convert the dimensions given into modern lineal measurements because it destroys the symbolic value of 12,000, 144, etc., because the twelve in these figures represents the people of God throughout the Revelation. To read these literalistically is to destroy their literal meaning. Symbolic numbers are especially important in the Revelation. Again and again we meet with fours, sevens, twelves, thousands and their multiples. There are three laments for Babylon, and three songs of praise for the New Jerusalem. The author draws attention to the overlapping cycles of the seals, trumpets and vials of wrath in chapters 8 and 9. These are not to be read in terms of time sequence but emphasize that "as long as this world continues such cycles will continue to be a constant process....history repeats itself, human sin cycles around..." (136).

Dawn does not avoid dealing with the favourites of the prophecy experts. The locusts in chapter 9 are a symbol of the cruelty and ferocity, but also the limitations of the assault of evil on God. The life-span of a locust is only five months. They are not some modern army equipped with all the latest in technological weaponry. She discusses the number 666, the mark of the Beast. It is not something to wait for with fear; it has been in the world ever since Revelation was written. The number 6 is less than 7, the perfect number. It therefore suggests fallibility and evil. "Anything in our thoughts or life that elevates to the position of a god things that are merely human or actually evil is marked as the work of the Beast." It symbolizes all claims to authority that try to usurp God's place (160).

The dramatic image of the drying up of the Euphrates to allow the kings of the east to cross over is not a reference to a vast Chinese army on its way to Armageddon but is reminiscent of the drying of the Red Sea and the Jordan River to let God's people across (173). The kings of the earth are assembled at Armageddon, but there is no war. There is only the word: "It is done." God's victory has already been won on the Cross. The

"Too many Christians persist in using power," Dawn writes in *Joy in our Weakness*. "We try to force Christianity on others and make them buy our values. We try to win the success race with other churches. The Revelation will teach us another way. It will help us discover and understand the victory of weakness, a discipline of willingness to suffer. We can live out the gospel in peaceful, caring ways that manifest the alternative way of life of those who follow Jesus Christ."

end will come not in a final slaughter but by the power of God (174-5).

But there is also the rider on the white horse in chapter 19 leading the armies of heaven to combat against the kings of the earth, which, according to the prophecy experts is the Battle of Armageddon. But here too there is no battle, only the defeat of the powers of evil by God. The millennium, the 1000-year reign of Christ, is in fact a symbol of the Lordship of Christ, exercised ever since the Ascension. The New Jerusalem is the church, the bride of Christ. The author joins the many interpreters since the work of the church father Augustine in the 5th century who have approached the book of Revelation as a symbolic presentation of the power of evil and of the even greater power of God to save and bring everything to its God-appointed goal.

Dawn reminds us that in our own struggle with evil we must always remember the fallacy of the view that good ends justify evil means in their attainment. "We can't justify violence as a means to an end, for the character of the end must also determine the means" (185). As we wait for His coming, then, our time is not to be spent in useless speculation about how or when He will come or how to literalise the thousand-year reign and the tribulation. Rather, we are to be busy keeping the words of the book - following the warnings to the seven churches and still applicable to situations in our times; recognizing the presence of evil in this world, but praising God for His Lordship anyway; faithfully enduring with biblical patience the tribulations we must suffer in order that we might participate in the suffering work of the kingdom; and serving as priests for the world (205).

Book review by Walter Klaassen, 606 Victoria Ave., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 0Z1.

Lawrence Klippenstein and Jacob Dick, *Mennonite Alternative Service in Russia: The Story of Abram Dueck and His Colleagues, 1911-1917* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2002), 163 pages, and Gerlof D. Homan, *American Mennonites and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Scottsdale, Pa. and Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 1994), 237 pages.

Mennonite principles of non-resistance, and more generally their relationship to the societies in which they live, were tested in unique and difficult ways during the Great War of 1914-1918. Those tests were experienced, and Mennonites responded to them, in different ways in different countries. The two books under review offer fascinating insights into Mennonite wartime experiences in two very different countries.

The two authors follow very different approaches and methodologies. Jacob Dick's work is essentially a personal sojourn. Before the outbreak of World War I, Dick's father and several of his close friends subject to the military draft were called to serve in Russian forestry camps. These camps were administered and most of the costs paid by the Mennonites. A unique and colourful culture, described in the book, developed in the forestry camps. But when war broke out the majority of the forestry men transferred

to other services. The preferred and most widely publicized service units in which many Mennonite young men served were the medical or ambulance trains operated by the Red Cross. These took wounded soldiers, and sometimes civilian casualties, from the military battlefields to hospitals for treatment. Abram Dueck (Jacob's father) served in both the forestry camps and on medical service trains. He collected numerous photographs related to both, and several of his friends wrote long and detailed letters and reports on their experiences. Dick uses and supplements these photographs, letters and recollections with other relevant material obtained from friends or found at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg, to compile a documentary and photographic record of Mennonite Alternative Service in Russia. The work is further enhanced by observations and photographs taken by the author on a trip to Tbilisi, capital of Republic of Georgia in 2002, where his father had served. The photographs and written letters and recollections gathered by Dick do not document all aspects of Mennonite alternative service in Russia; nor are they entirely coherent. Those deficiencies are, however, corrected by a lengthy essay on Mennonites and Military Service in Russia, written by Lawrence Klippenstein, the former historian and archivist of the Mennonite Heritage Centre. The essay is based on Klippenstein's doctoral dissertation at the University of Minnesota.

Dick's work documents the considerable pride and satisfaction which Russian Mennonites derived from their alternative service work, and particularly from their wartime medical service. That work was fraught with considerable danger, but it allowed Mennonites to give practical and positive expression to their non-resistant theology. It involved much more than a dogmatic rejection of combatant military service. It was a legacy some of the Russian Mennonites who migrated to Canada in the 1920s hoped could be replicated when war broke out again in 1939. It was not, however, a legacy or a course of action shared by some of the Mennonites who had come to Canada earlier, or by many in the United States.

Gerloff D. Homan's book on the experiences of American Mennonites in the Great War is a scholarly work. Where Dick's work is personal and focuses on essentially positive wartime service experiences, Homan's work is more detached and impersonal. And it deals with the much more difficult experiences of Mennonite conscientious objectors in the United States.

The United States remained neutral during the first two and a half years of the war. Its citizens were encouraged by President Wilson to remain neutral "in thought and deed." After the American entry into the war, however, patriotic zealots and propagandists were given free reign. The war received particularly strong support from progressives, liberals and leading church leaders who were confident that it would usher in a new and better world. Gerloff carefully documents Mennonite peace and non-resistance doctrines and practices and their partial accommodation to American culture and soci-

ety before the outbreak of the war. Their initial responses to the war were cautious and somewhat fragmented. The situation became more difficult as the government initiated conscription policies which did not make accommodations satisfactory to most those who objected to combatant military service on grounds of conscience.

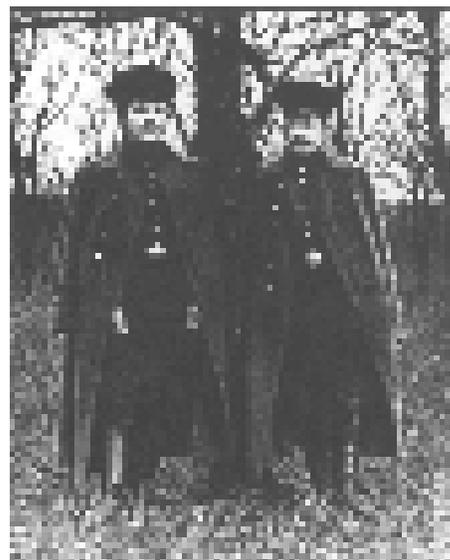
Failure of American Mennonites to respond to the war effort in a manner deemed appropriate by their neighbours resulted in incidents of harsh vigilante action which often went unpunished by the elected authorities. It confirmed, once again, the old Loyalist complaint that America had exchanged the tyranny of King George for the tyranny of King Mob. Then, as now, the prevailing American wartime sentiment seemed to be that "anyone who is not with us is against us." That provided license for zealous patriots to treat those who did not share their war-mongering enthusiasm as unpatriotic if not treasonous persons. American military leaders sometimes shared those sentiments. But their most irritating problems when dealing with conscientious objectors was rooted in the fact that such people did not fit into the system. There were provisions in the military for non-combatant service, mainly in the medical corps but also in ordinance, supply and other departments. Some Mennonite young men accepted this form of service.

It was, however, difficult to make clear distinctions between combatant and non-combatant training and service. Others, referred to in this book as "Absolutists," rejected any and all forms of service related to the military. That included some who refused to clean up their rooms, wash dishes or serve in the canteens and kitchens. Such men, when drafted, posed particular challenges for officers of the units to which they were assigned.

Homan has made good use of court martial and other related records to document the harsh treatment of the absolutists, and also of some Mennonite men who accepted non-combatant service but refused to participate in training with firearms and other measures designed to prepare them for combat duty.

The wartime experiences of American Mennonites left many bitter, disillusioned and emotionally as well as culturally scarred. Some seriously reassessed their acculturation into the American mainstream, making possible a conservative reaction in the Mennonite Church. Others, however, struggled with the challenges of the Gospel in times of great human need and suffering. They became more outward-looking, trying to respond to the pressing social and economic needs and suffering of the postwar years in positive, non-military ways. There was also a realization that many of the young men had not been given adequate or consistent advice by church leaders. As a result, congregations, conferences, and particularly leaders in the Mennonite Colleges, developed more systematic and coherent guidance and instruction.

James C. Juhnke, Professor of History at Bethel College and a well-known historian of the Mennonite wartime experience, has written



Nikolai Peters and Abram Dück. Photo - Mennonite Alternative Service in Russia, page 45.

the Foreword for Homan's book in which he examines, in a cogent and convincing way, the role of Mennonites in a World of Progress and War. The entire book is rich in footnotes and a detailed bibliography.

The contrasting experiences of Mennonite conscientious objectors in Russia and the United States, as documented in these two books, is striking. It raises some troublesome questions regarding respect for unpopular minority groups in wartime by autocratic and by democratic societies. At a more prosaic level, Jacob Dick's photographs illustrate another point of contrast. Most of the men in Dick's photographs are dressed and took obvious pride in their military-style uniforms. Most also have carefully styled mustaches. In the United States, by contrast, many Mennonites conscripts first got into serious trouble when they refused, in spite of stern orders from their commanding officers, to wear any military-style uniform. And, at least among the more conservative Old Order people who insisted that their men wear full beards, there was a prohibition against mustaches because they were thought to be military in their appearance.

These are two very different books, dealing with the same subject in two very different societies. It would be interesting to make further comparisons with the experiences of Mennonites in Germany, where the Mennonite churches had made non-resistance a matter of individual conscience, and in Canada where conscription was only introduced very late in the war and Mennonites were not required to render either military nor alternative service during the Great War.

Ted D. Regehr, Calgary, Alberta, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Saskatchewan.

Ronald Friesen, *Gruenfeld Chronicles* (Box 1186, Beausejour, Man., R0E 0C0, 2002), 335 pages.

This book according to the author is a "...light historical narrative in essay format...intended to give the reader some information about a community, but also a framework in which to receive such information." The project is a fine blend of scholarly research, social analysis and creative writing. Gathered from many sources and interwoven with a rich family oral history, the author brings to life the history of the Kleefeld community, centering many of the articles around the Gruenfeld School in the years 1920-1950.

Much of the historical reflection is enjoyable because of our nostalgic feelings of the "good old days". Three Christmas carols introduce us to the community and also connect the people of Gruenfeld to a bigger world around them. In the author's skilful writing, the chapter sets an inviting and always positive tone for the book. The carols serve as a vehicle for reflection and interpretation of the spiritual faith journeys of peoples from 16th century Europe to 20th century North America.

In the second chapter the author examines various factors which led to the rich choral and vocal traditions and to the emergence of a number of renown musicians in the community. In addition to sacred music, the book includes a wealth of information on the folk and popular songs of the day and the enthusiasm with which they were performed. In commenting on the introduction of the Southeast Music and Speech Arts Festival, the author's understated humour is revealed. One of the songs included in the festival in those early years, was "Grandfather's Snuffbox"; delightful to sing but culturally rather misfit. The author writes, "Our grandfathers had for a while abandoned the snuff habit in favour of sunflower seeds."

One of the challenges in writing a history still alive in the memory of people is that the memories tend to evolve differently over the years. While there may be a few factual inaccuracies, the thorough research done by the author ensures that the book rings true in both fact and analysis.

A major section of the chronicles is centered around the Gruenfeld School where the author goes beyond the main time frame of the book to establish the context. This part is well researched with frequent anecdotes of school life and its impact on students and the community. It is obvious from the sensitivity and appreciation for school life that these observations come from a student who was academically gifted. The author does indicate that others may have had less positive interpretations of their school years.

Some of the statements made do stretch beyond the point of credibility unless we appreciate a subtle tongue-in-cheek sense of humour, a technique often found in good story telling. An example of this are the connecting lines linking the Kleefeld Honey Festival, the visit of Governor General and Lady Dufferin to Gruenfeld in 1877, the career of a Mennonite farm boy, the history of horse racing in Winnipeg and the Red River voyageurs.

Two delightful anecdotes by the author's father are also included in the writing. One is a

trip report entitled "Alabama Bound"; an account of the annual pilgrimage of Gruenfeld bee keepers to southern USA for their supplies of bees, which made the area of Kleefeld famous. The other is an article printed in the *Steinbach Post* as a serialized three-part story in 1933 and is here printed as a translation. This article is an account of a late fall fishing trip to the Whitemouth River and the dangers of being caught in a blizzard.

The final chapters conclude with rich stories of agricultural development in the Gruenfeld area in the first half of the 20th century. Clearly the author's close connection to the land, earlier in his life, still bears the fruit of that cultivation.

This is a delightful, historical sketch of a bygone era in our community. It is highly recommended for anyone interested particularly in Gruenfeld but also for those with an interest in the wider community and how the events of the past shape the destiny of those living in the present.

Reviewed by Ron Dueck, Kleefeld, Manitoba, Chair MCC Manitoba.

Arden Thiessen, *The Biblical Case for Equality: An Appeal for Gender Justness in the Church* (Belleville: Guardian Books, 2002), 164 pages.

Arden Thiessen, a retired EMC pastor and educator, initially began writing *The Biblical Case for Equality* in response to family discussions around the table and in an attempt to clarify for himself what the Bible said about the theme of male/female equality. What transpires is a very personal reflection that maintains a strong commitment to the authority of God's Word, yet is willing to challenge traditional conceptions of "male supremacy". Thiessen suggests that the church's long-established adherence to Western culture's belief in the inequality of women, now creates a serious inconsistency when the church feels it must be different from a contemporary society that promotes the equality of men and women. The result, Thiessen claims, is that in the church women are "assigned a theoretical equality but forbidden to act as equals."

Thiessen reviews the relevant biblical passage touching on the relationship between men and women in an attempt to understand the overall scheme of God's revelation and message of redemption. He intentionally does not compare different interpretations, but simply invites readers "to consider a stream of thought which seems to do justice to all of Scripture." The passages in I Corinthians and I Timothy, which seem to challenge the full equality of men and women, are read in light of the overall picture emerging from Scripture. Thiessen concludes

Publication Notice:

Rollin Penner, formerly Kleefeld, has published a compilation of his humorous sketches based on a fictional community, *the Greenfield Chronicles* (Box 897, Teulon, Manitoba, R0C 3B0), 117 pages. His column, "The view from Greenfield" is heard weekly on CBC's 'Radio Noon' in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

that, "the Bible does not ask the question the way we do today." He calls on the church to seek out God's will in the principles that emerge from the total picture of the Bible rather than from a few selected texts.

Thiessen's personable style, uncluttered discussion of the biblical texts, and profound honesty are commendable. I would recommend Thiessen's book for all those "who have looked for a readable and accessible study on how the differing scriptural writings can be brought together." I would also recommend this book for those who, even though they may wrestle with Thiessen's conclusions, wish to interact with an articulate presentation for equality. Unfortunately the cartoon front cover creates a misleading first impression that does not do justice to the value of the pages within.

Book review by Doug Heidebrecht, Academic Dean, Bethany College in Hepburn, Sask. Reprinted from the *M.B. Herald*, Feb. 7, 2003, page 23.



Elizabeth Bartel at home, Sept. 2002.

Elizabeth Bartel, *Even Such Is Time* (Sardis, B.C., 2002), 193 pages.

Elizabeth Bartel's *Even Such Is Time*, as the title suggests, is a creative evocation of a specific period and setting. Like most first novels it is autobiographical, fictionalizing not only an actual social and cultural world but, even more importantly, some of the very people who inhabited that world: in this case the Mennonites of a village in southern Manitoba. Having grown up in this community during that time, I can vouch for the accuracy of background and the authenticity of the characters in this entertaining novel. Bartel's vivid descriptions and empathetic portrayal of her Mennonite characters during the Depression of the thirties, the tumultuous war years and the more prosperous times that followed will make more than one reader wonder why this writer has not been heard from before.

Even Such Is Time focuses on the Heppner family, Russian Mennonites (Russlender) who along with thousands of others survived the Russian Revolution and emigrated to Western Canada during the twenties. The family eventually settles down in Millbach, a village founded by the Mennonites who came to Canada in an earlier migration. The story is narrated by Anna (Heppner) Redekop, the oldest child in the Heppner family, in a series of diaries she reveals only in old age. The Heppners take over the printing and publishing business in Millbach and in their personal lives try to adapt to the religious fundamentalism and rigorously applied social rules that prevail in this isolated Mennonite society.

As a domestic novel, *Even Such Is Time* portrays the every-day lives of ordinary people, but with a passion and intensity that ensures a measure of suspense and emotional crisis. The climax, flowing naturally and inevitably from the earlier events, provides an arresting and satisfying ending to this family saga.

This is a novel that chronicles not only the unique subculture of a courageous sect that takes root in the New World with its faith and hope intact, but also embraces the redeeming human values cherished and preserved by the world at large. Readers will finish this novel knowing that they have visited a fictional world that is as real and true as it is resilient.

Book review by Al Reimer, Emeritus Professor of English, University of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Mary Blondina Barkman, *Contending for the Faith: A Biography of Archie Penner* (Plainsview Publishers, Regina, 2002), 113 pages.

Mary Blondina Barkman's *Contending for the Faith* is a short biography of her uncle Dr. Archie Penner, who, at 85 and with a new book title to his credit, is very much alive. The book began as an article for *Preservings* and grew into something bigger - not really a full-length biography, but a survey of key events in Dr. Penner's life, as well as his contribution to the church and theological discourse.

Biographies, especially of living subjects, are hazardous undertakings - if the writer takes a critical perspective, feelings will be hurt; if the writer attends only to the positive, the work will lack energy. Certainly Mary Barkman presents Dr. Penner and his work in a complimentary light, although she touches on controversy as well.

Ms. Barkman does not say that Dr. Penner was the first person of Kleine Gemeinde background to get his Ph.D. (from the University of Iowa, in 1971) while still remaining a church member, though I think this is probably the case. What set Dr. Penner apart from both his fellow ministers and most of his congregants was his ardent passion for formal education. As senior pastor of the Steinbach Evangelical Mennonite Church in the late 1950s, he was already easily the most educated leader that conference had ever had, with a Masters in Theology from Wheaton College, Illinois, 1951.

For over a century, the old church fathers

did not see the necessity of education beyond basic literacy and numeracy. It would be fascinating to learn more about the opposition Dr. Penner undoubtedly faced in his determined pursuit of higher education. Ms. Barkman does mention that his brother-in-law Ben D. Reimer, who had been his associate in many ventures, tried to discourage him from going after the Ph.D., apparently believing that he already had all the tools he needed for teaching and ministering.

Encouragement actually came from outside the Gemeinde. A mysterious Miss Watkins came across Dr. Penner's book, *The New Testament, The Christian and the State* at a Sunday School convention, and was so impressed that she became his financial benefactor, enabling him to go to the University of Iowa.

Ms. Barkman does not say much about Penner's crucial role, in the late 1950s, in leading the E.M.C. away from its traditional communitarian model toward a revivalist, individualist, conversion-experience form of faith. She mentions that he and Ben D. Reimer had complementary styles: "Ben was strong in promoting a call to Christian evangelicalism, while Archie...impart[ed] a solid basis of Biblical knowledge, with an emphasis on theology."

In the longer run, it appears that Dr. Penner's persistent devotion to theology has inevitably taken him to a point quite removed from the individualistic evangelism he helped promote five decades ago. As Ms. Barkman reports, "When Dr. Penner presented his concepts of consistent universalism (the belief that no one will ever be lost except those who consciously turn from Christ) and radical salvation at a meeting of Evangelical Mennonite Conference pastors, he was listened to with politeness but not with general acceptance."

This lack of acceptance in turn prompted Dr. Penner to ask whether the conference had perhaps drifted away from the moorings of Anabaptist theology. Dr. Penner is more clearly anchored in Anabaptism than is his conference in some other ways, notably in his radical anti-war position, and his dismissal of scientific creationism: "Neither creation nor Creator are scientific concepts or terms; rather they are purely religious or theological concepts and expressions."

At the time that Archie Penner was pastor of the Steinbach E.M.C., this reviewer was in the beginning stages of a fierce intellectual rebellion against the teachings of that same church. At Red Rock Lake Bible Camp (which Dr. Penner helped found), at revival meetings, in Sunday School, men with a conviction for lost souls often tried to move me from what must have seemed a strangely intransigent rejection of the great good they were offering.

They tried to appeal to fear - especially, the fear of Hell. They did not seem to know that I would have been more receptive if anyone had spoken on behalf of consistent universalism, or the Anabaptist teaching that small children are innocent, loved by God, and not subject to judgement.

If Dr. Penner understood Christianity in one



Archie and Elvira Penner, May 18, 1947. Photo - *Contending for the Faith*, page 34.

way 50 years ago and his understanding has developed and expanded over time, there is no shame in that. Rather, it is one of the remarkable things about him. To Ms. Barkman's credit, she offers the reader the opportunity to glimpse this development, and to assess it on its merits.

Details about Dr. Penner's family life, and his part in the growth of the Steinbach Bible Institute, are also documented in this book.

Reviewed by Ralph Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Ralph Friesen is President of the Flemish Mennonite Historical Society.

Rudy Wiebe, *Sweeter Than All The World* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001), 438 pages.

Rudy Wiebe is the most faithful contemporary chronicler of the Mennonite story in fiction. In his first novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962), he described life in a small Rusländer community in rural Saskatchewan during the years of World War II. *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970) traced Mennonite family connections through several continents and generations, set mainly in the first part of the 20th century.

Now, in his latest novel, *Sweeter Than All The World*, Wiebe attempts nothing less than a story that covers the whole spectrum, from early Anabaptist times to the present day. It is fiction, of course, but constructed with the bricks of history and even autobiography.

The protagonist is himself a Wiebe - Adam Peter Wiebe, an Edmonton physician in a shaky marriage, with a young adult daughter who seems to have disappeared. The story commences in 1942, Adam a young boy growing up in the northern Alberta bush "where everything spoke to him....and it spoke Lowgerman, like his mother."

In 1953, Adam graduates from high school in Coaldale, Alberta, just as Rudy Wiebe did.

Rudy Wiebe's parents, like those of his protagonist, were born in Russia and immigrated to Canada in the 1920s.

In freely crossing between history, autobiography and fiction, Wiebe works a certain mischief on the traditional Mennonite mind, which is suspicious of truths that are not factual. How is the *truehoatijch* Mennonite reader to deal with not being able to separate fact from fiction? Rudy Wiebe has a reputation for challenging even the most sophisticated of readers.

Aged 17, in grade 12, Adam begins to delve into his origins. He has heard about them all his life – his father born in 1889 in Russia, forced into the *Forstei*, marrying Katerina Loewen. The senior Wiebe and his family left Number Eight Romanovka in 1929, after the Revolution. They left behind other family members. The division and re-uniting of family, always a Rudy Wiebe preoccupation, is again an important theme in this book.

Adam's history teacher at Coaldale Mennonite High School directs him to a copy of the Mennonite Yearbook, 1951. Here he discovers an article on "Die Wiebes" by Horst Penner and learns that his paternal ancestors were Frisians, from the lowlands along the North Sea. His mother comes from a Loewen clan with Flemish roots.

One of his paternal ancestors was famous – Wybe Adams van Harlingen (Adam Wiebe), who left the Netherlands for Danzig in 1616 because the city needed a water engineer to drain its delta. Wiebe laid out water mains, provided the water for fountains, built dikes in the surrounding countryside to control drainage.

He also invented a system for moving earth. There was a place called Bishop's Hill in Danzig, with a bastion across from it. With Adam Wiebe's system, a double cable was strung from the hill to the bastion, with a circuit of moving buckets to carry earth and rocks. The system was so finely designed that it did not require any locomotive force other than itself: the weight of the filled buckets carried them across the valley up to the bastion, while returning empty buckets back to Bishops' Hill. Adam Wiebe invented the cable car. With all that, because he was a Mennonite, he was never made a citizen of Danzig.

Accomplish what you will, Rudy Wiebe seems to be saying, as a Mennonite you are a pilgrim on this earth. This theme of statelessness, or homelessness, is repeated throughout the novel.

Wiebe swings his narrative back to a girl named Trijntjen, daughter of the deceased Wybe Pieters, living on a farmstead in Friesland. The suggestion is that Wybe Pieters was an ancestor of Wybe Adams van Harlingen – and therefore of the fictional Dr. Adam Wiebe of Edmonton, and, by extension, of the real-life Rudy Wiebe, also of Edmonton.

Whether or not Rudy Wiebe can actually trace his ancestry through all the generations back to the narrative in the *Martyrs Mirror*, is not the point. Presumably, most Flemish and Frisian Mennonites are descended from the families mentioned in the *Martyrs Mirror*, even if we are unable to make the specific links. This is

our common family story.

According to the *Martyrs Mirror*, Trijntjen's mother Weynken was executed by burning in The Hague in 1527. Wiebe gives Trijntjen a voice, makes her a thinking, feeling being with whom we can identify. We share her admiration for her mother, whose powers of recollection are such that she can remember a great deal of the Bible, which she calmly quotes even to the fiercest of her interrogators.

Some time after the execution, Trijntjen is back at her mother's farm, watching the peat fire burning. She imagines her mother commanding her to listen, as she had often done while still alive. At first Trijntjen hears nothing, then she becomes aware of her own voice, screaming. She has unconsciously put her hand into the blazing coals.

The price of martyrdom, we see, was paid not only through the deaths of the martyrs themselves, but also through the trauma of the orphaned children they left behind – orphans who later became parents. Wiebe insists upon the story of our ancestral suffering, knowing that it is not the Mennonite way to allow ourselves too much grief; we fear that it will be seen as an excuse, or that we will be pulled down by it.

Repeatedly, Wiebe returns to the theme of suffering for one's faith. He selects another story from the *Martyrs Mirror*, in the time of the Spanish Inquisition, two generations after the death of Weynken. Once more, the narrator is the child of a woman who is executed, as if Wiebe wants to give voice, not to the martyrs themselves (who are often quoted in the *Martyrs Mirror*), but to their children. This child is Jan Adam Wens, born in Antwerp, Flanders, in 1570. Jan was only three when his mother, Maeyken Wens, was killed. Though he was a witness, he remembers nothing. What he knows comes mostly from his older brother.

Disturbed by the testifying of condemned heretics before execution, Cardinal Antoine Granvelle had ordered that there was to be no more singing, especially of martyr songs. Maeyken Wens is fitted with a tongue screw before being burned at the stake. Afterward, Jan's older brother led the little boy to the charred stubs of execution posts in the Grand Market, and began searching. Jan picks up something in the ashes – the tongue screw. The metal, still hot, burns his hands and he is scarred for life.

There are many other accounts of suffering, in Russia, particularly. "We are born to suffering as sparks fly upward," says another character in a later chapter of this "family history." The speaker is Alexander Wiebe, a portrait photographer who lost his right arm when he was shot during the Great War while trying to carry a Russian soldier to safety.

Rudy Wiebe does not shy away from also examining the suffering that Mennonites have known at the hands of their fellows. The painter Enoch Seeman the elder ran into the opposition of the cobbler George Hansen (1636-1703), again an actual historical figure who was elected a Flemish Mennonite minister in Danzig in 1665. Scholar Harvey Plett has documented the case of the excommunication of Erich (not Enoch) Seeman, a painter in the employ of the



Rudy Wiebe. Photo - Christian Living, June 2002, page 7.

City of Danzig. Hansen wanted Seeman to stop painting portraits, on the basis of the Second Commandment, which forbids the making of images. Seeman said that he would stop painting portraits if Mennonite merchants would take down their shop signs – also images. Hansen put Seeman under the ban and Seeman moved first to Warsaw and then to London in 1704.

The fictional Enoch Seeman declares that if he painted a mother suckling her child, "Hansen would call me a sex fiend." Seeman rails against the Mennonite emphasis of Paul laying down the law and "big Jesus pointing his finger, 'You sheep right, you goat left!' Judge, judge, no human feeling..." Seeman concludes by saying that Hansen had "drunk too much theological Calvinism." Seeman is a persecuted minority in Mennonite history, a passionate advocate for the beauty of God's creation, including the human body.

Many years later, ironically, "Bud Lyons" (father to Susannah, the wife of Dr. Adam Peter Wiebe of Edmonton, whose family name was actually Loewen) becomes an aircraft mechanic in World War II, helping launch the American planes that fire-bombed Dresden, destroying, among other artistic treasures, some of the paintings of Enoch Seeman.

And Dr. Adam Peter Wiebe comes to know the pain of separation from his wife and daughter, originating not from anyone's persecution, but rather from the folly of his own all-too-human heart. As a boy he had vowed in his childish naivete, that he would "never do like the first Adam and eat a snake's apple, he'd stick with God." As a grown man who has eaten the apple he finds that, even if he does not always stick with God, God sticks with him.

Suffering is not our only inheritance. Mennonite history according to Rudy Wiebe is also a marvellous, even miraculous, story of faith, courage and conviction. And of rebirth, even in ways which may not have occurred to us. When Wybe Adams van Harlingen tells his wife that "burned villages are easily rebuilt, but children killed cannot be reborn," she answers, "How do you know?"

Sweeter Than All The World calls the Mennonite reader back to the painful birth of our faith. The diligent reader will be rewarded with a new depth of understanding of the Gemeinde, from the way it was hundreds of years ago, to how it is today.

Reviewed by Ralph Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Paul Toews and Kevin Enns-Rempel, *For Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren in North America 1874-2002* (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2002), 188 pages. \$35.99.

“Brüdergemeinde Beginnings - Essay on the interpretation of John B. Toews,” by Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack St., New Westminster, B.C., V3L 4V5.

Salvation of the Elect.

As chapter one of “For everything a season”, John B. Toews has presented an account of the early history of Mennonite Brethren Church. Much that one would expect in a historical piece is lacking, and one wonders if this is really more of a theological than an historical account. To be sure, there is no lack of histories on the M.B. movement by Brüdergemeinde historians (including the comprehensive 800 page work of P.M. Friesen), and so perhaps what was required was a readable and simple (perhaps simplistic) narrative. Toews does however use historical material in his portrayal, so perhaps my commentary as a historian rather than as a theologian may not be inappropriate.

I would like to begin where Toews ends, with a - if not the - central premise of the Brüdergemeinde movement. This involves the two issues raised by Toews at the end of his account, which are, in a sense, really the same. To be more direct than Toews, I would reformulate these as the following questions: does the concept of the Christian community as envisioned by Mennonites for over 500 years have any validity? or is salvation only limited to a selected elite, chosen of God, and pre-destined if you will for salvation? Perhaps alternatively, can a person be absolutely certain of salvation?

The response of the Brüdergemeinde (and many other Protestant groups) is that salvation is indeed limited to those who have experienced a certain kind of conversion experience, generally a single event process, although sometimes also - or only - involving several identifiable lesser experiences. The occurrence of these events is the sign from God that they have been selected for salvation. Another way of formulating this is that a pre-requisite for salvation (and entry into the Kingdom of Heaven) is an absolute inner certainty of salvation. Thus one cannot gradually come to understand God and Christ and achieve a reasonable certainty of salvation, there must be the moment of absolute certainty. This is the moment when the light shines or the experience occurs.

With this response, the Brüdergemeinders have proposed nothing that St. Augustine did not formulate 1,500 years previously, or Martin Luther 1000 years later. The premise involves, in my view, the doctrine of pre-destination, in a modified and more palatable formulation. We are all sinners, but God has selected a few of the sinners, for unknown reasons, for salvation.

Membership in this elite is difficult to verify, and hence the extreme importance of the single event conversion experience. It needs to be proclaimed, talked about, analyzed and exalted. And indeed, much of Toews narrative contains conversion experience accounts. The conversion

experience of Jacob Becker described is remarkably similar to that of St. Augustine and Martin Luther. Age, experience, study of the scripture, may not be directly relevant. In a recent M.B. periodical, I read the story of a young lady whose conversion experience occurred at age 14. This same periodical contains the obituary of an MB (Mr X), where it is stated “Mr X went to heaven on July 18, 2002”.

Christian Community.

There are those however, and frankly I am one, who would agree with Jacob Becker’s neighbour, that “no man could be certain of his future salvation...such an assertion was presumptuous”. If we agree in this, I would argue that the Christian community, defined in terms of physical and spiritual proximity, is of vital importance. The purpose of such a community is not necessarily to bring the individual to God, but to bring him closer to God, to remove impediments in the search for God and salvation, and to focus the individual on the fundamentals of the Christian faith in using the life of Christ, the disciples, and the early martyrs as role models. Perhaps the greatest impediment in the quest for salvation, as is clear from the teaching of Christ, is worldly living. Both the Catholic monastery and the Mennonite Gemeinde arose from the desire to imitate in some degree the lives of the disciples and to avoid worldliness as an impediment in the search for salvation. The various rules developed within the community in respect to worldly behaviour have varied from one community to another, as well as over time. It is not the rules themselves which are necessarily of the highest importance, but the process by which the members of the community assist each other, in daily life, in the quest for salvation.

Confession of wrong-doing, error and sin is part of this process. Where error is not admitted, neither the individual himself nor the community can take action for improvement. Outsiders sometimes come to the conclusion that there is a great deal of sin in such a community, in view of the amount of error confessed.

That such communities, whether monastery or Gemeinde, do not always perfectly realize the founding ideals, in no way invalidates these institutions in themselves. Nor do the transgressions of individuals within the community, or the degree of severity with which community rules are enforced through penitences, banning, or shunning, reflect negatively on the community itself. It is the process itself which is important. The end - ultimate salvation - will be known only to God.

The search for God, truth and the meaning of life and death can be a terrifying experience. I would hesitate to have those who have found salvation with absolute certainty undergo that unsettling experience again. Nor would I deny that a dramatic conversion experience, or a series of such, can bring satisfaction and serenity to some, or bring them closer to God. But I do question the absolute certainty of salvation that is proclaimed by members of the elect.

To some, even the slightest doubt as to their ultimate salvation can be unsettling. For this rea-

son, it must be that God has selected them for salvation, and revealed this to them by His arbitrary will, either through an inner light or through a personal (conversion) experience. As stated by Martin Luther, living in the faith and according to the doctrine of Christ is not enough, something else is required, one must also have been selected by God.

Of course, one can be made aware of God’s intentions through the efforts of evangelists. If this were not so, there would be no employment possibility for crusaders. God has appointed or “called” the evangelist to His work; whether or not a person is on God’s list will be evident by the response to the evangelist.

Brüdergemeinde Thesis.

Having outlined what I believe are the issues central to the account presented by Toews, the narrative itself is quite simple. Within the Mennonite community, a number of individuals, unhappy with the sinful behaviour of their neighbours and sometimes unhappy with their own transgressions, began reading the Bible and other religious works from an entirely different perspective. They had conversion experiences and gathered together to form the Brüdergemeinde. That in essence is the story.

This account has two major deficiencies. The most obvious failing is that indeed, this is not the whole story. As a historian, I am not as satisfied with conversion experiences (miraculous or otherwise) as I am with cause and effect explanations. One possible cause in this account, is the alleged decadent nature of the Mennonite community circa 1840-1850. The second difficulty relates to the allegation of moral decline in the Mennonite community. Was there indeed a decline, and if so was the abandonment of the concept of the Mennonite Gemeinde (or Christian community) justified?

I have attempted to provide a partial answer to the last question in the above discussion. The existence of transgressions and errors within the Mennonite Community is not at issue. We are all sinners, and this is freely admitted by all. At issue is the set of rules governing behaviour within the community and their application. There has always been occasional disagreement with some of the rules, or the strictness or laxity with which they are applied. The scriptures themselves, except for major transgressions, do not provide direction on many aspects of daily life or on what exactly constitutes worldly behaviour. It is up to the individual and the community to determine both particular guidelines and the methods of enforcement.

Where sufficient disagreement exists, a group may separate and form a new Mennonite community, with additional or fewer rules, or with enforcement less severe or more severe, as required. A similar process often also occurs within monastic institutions. Mennonite history has many examples of disagreement resulting in the formation of new communities.

Why then did the Brüdergemeinders, dissatisfied with the rules, or their application, not form an alternative Mennonite community, as others before them had done? Many may have thought

that they were indeed doing just that. But in fact, in adopting an extreme conversion theology [ritualized pendulum conversion], they were denying the validity of any Mennonite community, however strictly the rules were enforced, or however many rules were added.

Moral Decay?

The Mennonites of the 1840s and 1850s who [converted themselves to Separatist Pietism and] formed the Brüdergemeinde presumably felt that no system of Mennonite community could work. Toews attributes this to the (elitist) theology of conversion and the general depravity of the Mennonite community.

Although I feel this question is not necessarily central (as explained above), we may ask, is there evidence of moral decline in the community during this period? There is certainly evidence of change. Russian government officials, assisted by some in the Mennonite community (notably Johann Cornies), were attempting to destroy the institution of the Gemeinde for economic and political reasons. A deliberate attempt was made to assimilate the Mennonites into the Russian community. It is a long and detailed story, with several Gemeinde Ältesters being removed from office, threatened with punishment or Lehrdienst members being punished for refusing to follow government decrees where conscience did not allow them to do so. These changes were more evident in the Molotschna Colony, for various reasons which I have outlined elsewhere. The historical evidence of the 1840s indicates that the Mennonites generally strongly supported the institution of the Gemeinde and resisted attempts at assimilation and government regulation.

Toews draws heavily on the David Epp diary for evidence of moral decline. We thus need to look at the factual evidence of the diary, as well as understanding David Epp himself. I have reviewed the diary and the translation elsewhere (*Preservings*, No. 21, pages 134-137), but it is useful to review some of the material again.

To summarize the evidence of transgressions in the Old Colony (and to a limited extent in the Bergthaler Colony), in the period 1837-1843, which the diary presents, we have, in order of seriousness, the following transgressions:

- One case of the murder of a newborn illegitimate child in the Bergthaler colony (and a subsequent cover-up);
- one case of sexual assault (not well reported by Epp, perhaps not handled the way modern readers would expect);
- one case of physical spousal abuse, one case of verbal spousal abuse;
- one case of planned seduction;
- some cases of alcoholism;
- some cases of theft or dishonesty;
- some cases of illicit sexual activity involving adults (although both parties are often not married);
- some cases of adult thoughtlessness involving quarrelling, gossiping anger or merrymaking;
- some cases involving juveniles (teenagers or very young adults).

Most of the cases reported involve the last

two categories.

We are unfortunately handicapped in our reading of the published David Epp diary by the translation and editing itself, and by the judgements and comments by David Epp. To give some examples: one case of sodomy is reported. Brockhaus Wahrig, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Wiesbaden, 1983) defines it as an act with an animal (here a sheep), whereas the Merriam *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines this as involving either an animal or a person. Now, the casual reader may be led, like Dr. Harvey Dyck, to conclude this refers to a homosexual act, whereas the context indicates the contrary. For in all the cases of illicit sex reported in the diary, an effort is always made to identify the other party, except in this one case, and for obvious reasons. Does this make a difference in our understanding? I think it does.

Similarly, when we read "G. Schreiber and Gerhard Penner" went somewhere instead of the correct "Gebietschreiber Gerhard Penner" went there, does this make a material difference? Again, I think so, for in the former case we have an unknown Mr. Schreiber and someone named Gerhard Penner, whereas in the latter we have the district secretary Gerhard Penner, a leading and important official.

David Epp makes several disparaging remarks in connection with some instances of drinking and dishonesty. Unfortunately, in some cases we do not know whether the person drank, or was an alcoholic. In some instances of theft and dishonesty, a careful reading fails to identify a guilty party, if in fact there was one. In some cases, Epp's judgement is at variance with that of Ältester Jacob Dyck, other Lehrdienst members, and perhaps ourselves. For example, Epp accuses Dyck of not being severe enough in cases of broken marriage engagements. To be sure, as Toews points out, perhaps Epp was jealous of Dyck.

What is clear from the diary is that Epp did not get along well with other members of the Lehrdienst or even with some members of his own family. Although he was undoubtedly very pious, there is evidence of narrow-mindedness and incapacity to deal with larger issues. In this, I think we had a right to question his judgments.

Turning to other evidence, the accounts of the Brüdergemeinders of this period mention the following sins: drinking, smoking, dancing at weddings, singing loud songs at weddings, playing cards, illicit sexual activity, quarrelling and fighting, and theft. The early Brüdergemeinders themselves may not have been in agreement as to what was a sin, since some at least engaged in "frenzied" dancing (accompanied however by hallelujahs) and illicit sexual activity.

A charge levied by Toews is that the Gemeinde was unconcerned over the gap between rich and poor. This was at a time when three Ältesters were being removed from office in the Molotschna, while Old Colony Lehrdienst members were being punished for refusing to paint their houses. It was indeed Cornies and his colleagues who were initiating a program of forcing less successful farmers to give up their land (they were labelled lazy or unskilled) to the more suc-

cessful. On the other hand, the David Epp diary documents the personal effort of Ältester Jacob Dyck to obtain more land for the colony.

We may be able to conclude that there were changing values in the Mennonite community, that the forces of assimilation were at work, but I don't think there is evidence of a "moral decline".

Separatist Pietism.

Rather than looking to "moral decline" as a catalyst in the formation of the MB movement, we need to look elsewhere. The most well-known of the Brüdergemeinde historians, P.M. Friesen, as well as most of the others, attribute a great and important role to the crusading Lutheran pietists of South Russia in the 1840s and 1850s (including Eduard Wüst). There is no mention of this in Toews narrative. Was this intentional, and will this be a new trend in Mennonite Brethren denominational historical writing?

Rather than ignoring the influence of Lutheran or Pietist crusaders, I believe we need to examine this topic even more thoroughly than has previously been done. I have outlined elsewhere some of the unfavourable changes in the Mennonite community brought about by the Lutherans and or Pietists.

Perhaps we need to go back even further in time to examine cause and effect relationships. Perhaps we should go back to the "great awakening" which occurred in plague devastated Prussian Lithuania circa 1710-1720. At that time, the newly founded Lithuanian Gemeinde was affected by this "great awakening" and accepted a significant number of Lutherans into the Gemeinde. As documented by Ältester H. Donner, this was of concern to the other Gemeinden in West Prussia, as well as to government authorities.

The majority of Lithuanians, expelled from Lithuania, established the Tragheimerweide (also known as the Schweingrube) Gemeinde in the Vistula valley. A small number of them later, under self-proclaimed Ältester Johann (Jan) Klassen created some dissension in West Prussia and later in the Old Colony, Russia. The teaching of this group, as reported in the Ältester Gerhard Wiebe diary, was rejected by the Flemish Gemeinden of both the Old Colony and West Prussia. A letter written by Franz Pauls, addressed to Ältester Peter Epp, outlining some of their ideas, was not deemed worthy of a response. Later, the Tragheimerweide Gemeinde became, in Russia, the Rudnerweide Gemeinde.

Elsewhere, the small Neumark Gemeinde, a filial of the Przechowka Gemeinde, isolated by distance, like the Lithuanians, from other Mennonite Gemeinden, also accepted a number of Lutheran families. The Gemeinde moved to Russia in 1834, and formed the Gnadenfeld Gemeinde.

Members from both Rudnerweide and Gnadenfeld Gemeinde were key members of the Brüdergemeinde movement. Can its roots, therefore, be found in the great "Pietist" awakening of 1710-1720 in Lithuania? Perhaps this idea is not as improbable as it seems. It is certainly worthy of more research.

Review Essay by Henry Schapansky, New Westminster, B.C.

A Floral Accolade - Menno Simons Tulip!

“A Floral Accolade - Menno Simons Tulip,”

by Pieter de Hart, Scheepjeserf 5, NL-1843 JE, Grosstschermer, The Netherlands. tulip@mennosimons.nl.

Floral Accolade.

On February 23, 1996, Mrs. Annemarie Jorritsma-Lebbink (Dutch Transport Minister at that time) officially gave the name to the Menno Simons tulip (bulb growers call it “baptizing”). A Dutch floral accolade to the revered Mennonite leader in the year of his 500th anniversary (1496-1996) has been cel-



23 februari 1996 - Met de woorden “Ik doop u Menno Simons” gaf (Netherlands Transport) Minister Jorritsma-Lebbink de tulp van kweker Jan Lighthart (rechts) zijn naam. Links de heer J.W. Haanstra, toen burgemeester van de gemeente Stede Broec. Foto: Jan Verlaat (c). Please see website: www.mennosimons.nl

brated. Using water *), in accordance with the normal method of baptism, Mrs. Jorritsma-Lebbink (herself a Mennonite!) gave a seedling bred by grower Jan Lighthart his name with the words: “Ik doop u Menno Simons” (“I baptise you Menno Simons”).



David Sawatzky, elected Governor of Boqueron Province, Paraguay, April 27, 2003. From Deut. Mex. Rundschau, May 5/03, page 32 (see page 96 for story).

*) tulips are normally “baptised” using champagne!

The floral accolade has been a private initiative of Br. Pieter de Hart, member of the Dutch Doopsgezinde Gemeente Beemster-Oosthuizen, and, officially approved by the Menno 500 Committee, as the representative of the Dutch Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit (ADS).

Deep Red.

The deep red tulip has developed over the last 19 years before the year of baptism into a wonderful and mature flower. The colour red symbolises the warmth of the Mennonite religion. Three exceptionally formed petals “embrace” the heart of the tulip giving this variety, in spite of its simplicity, a character all of its own.

It is very possible that Menno

Simons (1496-1561), during his life-time, had already seen the first illustrations of tulips. Around the year 1100 tulips were incorporated into the initials found in an Italian bible. This is the earliest appearance of a tulip, as far as we know. It was not until 1593, however, that the first tulip bulbs arrived in the Hortus Botanicus in Holland.

Just as Menno Simons pioneered the development of the Mennonites, which is now a world-wide community, so the tulip has become synonymous the world over with the image of Holland. Both notable reputations are now irrevocably bound to each other.

Availability.

Bulbs will be available for international supply from August. At the latest May 31 you can order through tulip@mennosimons.nl or by faxing the completed order form you find on this site <http://mennosimons.nl> (click Order form -in pdf file) through fax# 31-299-672291. The tulip bulbs will be delivered by the end of September at the latest.

The Mennonite spring begins with the Menno Simons-tulip!

Greetings.

With regards from Netherlands, yours truly,
“Pieter de Hart”

MENNO SiMONS-tulip. Phone 011-31-299-672290, and Fax: 011-31-299-672290.



An arrangement of Menno Simons tulips (the flowers) frame the traditional Dutch windmill and neighbouring house-barn. Photo J. the P. (c). Please see website: www.mennosimons.nl The windmill, also, has become a powerful symbol of the Russian Mennonites, descendants of the persecuted Flemish followers of Menno Simons of the 16th century.