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**out of the way. They must have been made without any sense of direction. They will**

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**how many times in the Gospels Jesus referred to us as sheep.**

**Cas Paulsen, pastor in Transkei, a South African homeland**

**Learning from those with whom we work.**



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# A Return to Africa, to Kenya This Time

William and Ingrid Reimer are planning to live in Africa, again. In the fall of 1986 they will be moving to Nairobi, Kenya. On two previous occasions they lived in Akwanga and Jos, cities in Nigeria. Both Ingrid and William have a strong interest in development issues. By now "Africa is in our blood", William says as he comments on their reasons for going to Africa for a third term.

When he and Ingrid decided to work for MCC in 1973 he was a recent graduate of the University of Winnipeg. He had an interest in teaching and she had an interest in third-world issues. Before their marriage she had said to him that she wanted to work overseas, possibly with MCC. The three-year teaching term at the English private school in Akwanga, Nigeria was a natural development of their individual dreams. Having applied to serve overseas, they were sent by MCC to Nigeria to work under the auspices of the Sudan United Mission.

William recalls some of his initial feelings and responses to Africa. He remembers buying an expensive new tropical suit in Winnipeg for their trip abroad. He wore it, including the tie, on the plane and also upon arrival in Kano, Nigeria, at four in the morning, even though the temperature was a cool eighty-four degrees Fahrenheit. "I kept the suit on, religiously". His wife laughed at him then. Now he can laugh at himself, as well.

Another incident involved his fear of snakes and scorpions. He and Ingrid were on their way to their location at Akwanga, travelling in a Volkswagon with two others, one being a British teacher also travelling to the school there to teach. Enroute the engine malfunctioned and he and the British lady took his new motorcycle to ride for help. He had just purchased this vehicle in the city of Jos. Ten minutes later it ceased to work. They began walking. He waved to the men on the side of the road to establish friendly contact. But he was quite worried when he saw the machetes each

one carried. Upon arrival at Akwanga the MCC coordinator drove them back the 60 miles and towed the broken Volkswagon home. All would have been well, except that this man kept telling them stories of the snakes and scorpions that found their way into homes at night. William recalls that it took him some three months to overcome the fear of these creatures. Once he had to kill a snake that had come inside. After that he was able to sleep.

Because most of Nigeria is Muslim, an English Christian teacher had to be especially sensitive and understanding in order to bridge the cultural and religious barriers. For the Reimers this was their challenge and their hope. At the same time, their Christian presence was greatly appreciated by the small group of Nigerian Christians. The first three years, from 1973 to 1976, were learning years; learning that God loves Nigerians and Canadians equally. It meant expanding their own understanding of Christian beliefs and Christian practises.

The Reimer family returned to Canada in 1976. It meant another acculturation process, this time back into Canadian society. One January day in 1981 he remembers receiving a wad of mail from MCC. The request was to be the country representative or coordinator for MCC in Nigeria. "I hit the roof," he recalls. With three children now, Anna, Jason and Maria, the decision to apply was more difficult than the first time. But they did apply and were accepted. There were many details to look after before they could leave. Immunizations and medical checkups had to be arranged. Government documents needed processing and household belongings had to be sold or stored. All this kept them busy right until the time of departure.

Upon arrival in Nigeria, they were stationed in Jos. William was responsible for the development of the program. He worked in cooperation with Nancy Heisey, who was MCC's African secretary from Akron. He also developed support systems among the MCCers to

provide them with opportunities to share and learn together. One important connection with the Nigerian people was the advisory board to whom he and his group were directly responsible. The board would determine the needs in which to become involved. It was a vital link with the indigenous people, who were 90 percent Muslim. The board members helped the MCCers to understand the culture and its customs. They also provided legal advice. This type of structure is unique to MCC Nigeria. And William Reimer believes it is because of this arrangement that MCC has been allowed to remain in the country, even after other Christian organizations have been asked to leave.

The Reimers became close friends of Drs. Musa and Lami Gotom. Dr. Gotom was chair of the board. He had the opportunity to visit some of the Mennonite churches in Canada in 1984. William Reimer remembers the concerns Dr. Gotom shared. On one occasion some elderly ladies were knitting blankets for distribution to refugees. They presented Dr. Gotom with a blanket. He appreciated the gift, but expressed his concern that many of the younger workers with MCC have forgotten the refugee history of our own Mennonite people. This recognition is an important link with the Nigerian people, many of whom have been refugees. Back in Nigeria Dr. Gotom challenged William and Ingrid Reimer and the other MCCers to remember that they were in a partnership with the local people. The Reimers came to see themselves and MCC as guests of the Nigerian people. When the Reimers' term was over in 1984, they found it difficult to leave. They had established strong relationships with their Nigerian friends. It was painful to leave their fellow workers. The experience of commitment and dedication within their group had been enriching. Jos had been their home.

Breaking ties with Nigeria and MCC was not easy. Edgar Stoess's comment, "Let the future pull you," was meaningful to the Reimers. It helped ease the

sadness of their leaving. It also helped them accept the move and look forward to the future. Western society, with its emphasis on materialism and individuality, was far removed from their Nigerian life style. They realized that re-assimilation into the Mennonite community would present concerns for each of the family members. But Ingrid and William were also concerned about their children's dreams. They wanted to provide opportunities for them, so they returned to Winnipeg where he accepted a teaching position with the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate.

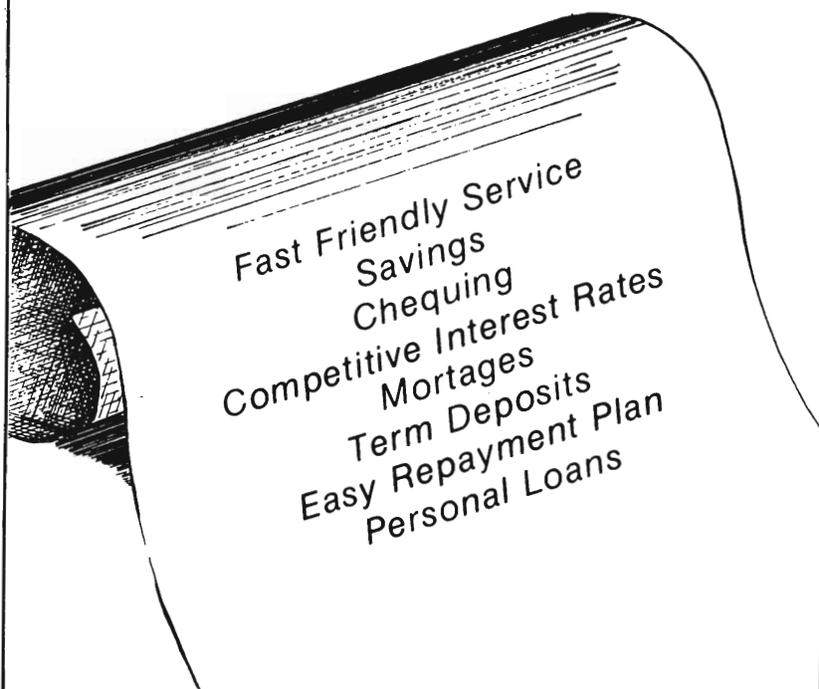
About a year ago MCC again asked them to be country coordinator abroad. Because William had already agreed to teach that year, the move was delayed till 1986. The extra year has given them time to read and prepare for their new assignment. William will be responsible for MCC work in the southern Sudan. This will involve refugee assistance and more of a "grass roots" approach than the teaching team he had been part of in Nigeria. For the next five years they will be under the auspices of the Sudan Council of Churches, which is also a different arrangement than previously. Their home base will be Nairobi, Kenya.

Some real soul-searching went into the Reimers' decision this time. Now 35 years old, William wants the remaining years of his career to be spent in worthwhile and enriching activity. His mental and spiritual preparation for this assignment focussed on his concern that in the time left to him he wanted to be useful and live a fulfilling life.

William Reimer does not only have a perception of his own life changing. He is aware that Africa and its people are changing too. His awareness of this will be expressed in a more flexible and open-minded approach towards his African hosts and co-workers. He does not want to perpetuate a "Christian multi-national" concept which is based on white, middle-class North-American society. William believes there is a strong need for a holistic approach. Both Africans and the North Americans can and need to learn from each other. This is only possible, in a Christian context, if there is sharing and tolerance. Our acceptance there, he says, depends on how we are viewed by the African person. If we are willing to work in partnership, then acceptance will be offered. Then the opening for mutual growth and friendship may be realized. These are some of the hopes and reservations with which the Reimer family will leave for "home" in Africa again.

**Peter Petkau**

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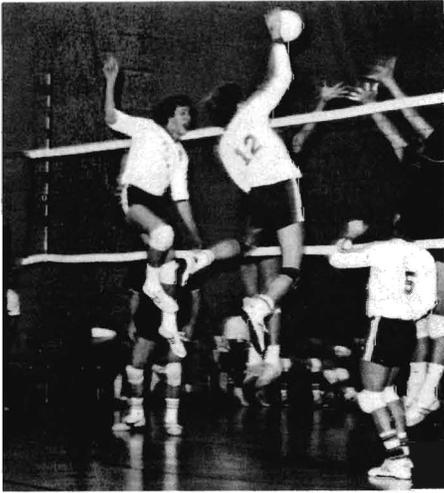
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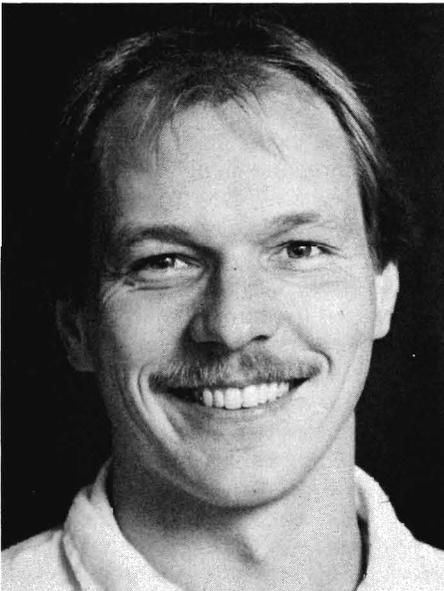
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by Ruth Vogt

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Ruth Burchuk



Dave Unruh

## **Volleyball stars Ruth Burchuk and Dave Unruh prove Mennonites don't "choke" when it comes to the finals**

If the universe is unfolding as it should, how is it that two young Mennonites from Winnipeg are leading figures in Canadian volleyball?

On Wednesday, March 12, in Moncton, N.B., the awards for Canada's top university volleyball players and coaches were handed out. Ruth (Klassen) Burchuk was named, for the second straight year, as the top female player. David Unruh received the coach-of-the-year award. Both are from the University of Winnipeg, and they are also closely related: David is married to Ruth's sister, Susan.

While Dave and Ruth were delighted with the honors, they had their minds set on another goal, and on the following Saturday, they both achieved that goal. The University of Winnipeg Wesmen and Lady Wesmen won the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union Volleyball (CIAU) championships. This was only the second time in Canadian college volleyball that the same university has swept both titles in a single year. The Lady Wesmen, coached by Ruth's husband, Mike Burchuk, set a Canadian university record in winning its fourth straight national title. The men's team had come into the final tournament ranked third, and the victory was a sweet reward for four years of patient coaching and team development on David's part. The tournament might well have been played right here in Winnipeg as both finals involved the two Manitoba cross-

town rivals, the University of Manitoba Bisons and the Wesmen.

For both Ruth and Dave, their achievements are something of a David and Goliath story; and, talking to these two quietly modest but confident individuals about their success, one begins to see why they have accomplished so much in their chosen field of endeavor.

For a volleyball player, Ruth is small at 5'8" and she does not have the husky frame that one often associates with successful female athletes; furthermore, she does not have the flexibility generally considered necessary for a power hitter. But she has power. She has an unprecedented career total of 4,500 "kills" in five years of playing. According to Dave, she is the only female player in Canada who hits like a guy. One could be deceived by her somewhat slight appearance. Last summer, treadmill and other endurance tests revealed that she had the best efficiency of any of the prospective national team members.

One does not achieve such a level of fitness by accident. Ruth is a professional in her disciplined approach to the game. And she has developed incredible mental strength with regard to pain. Last fall, she had orthodontic surgery on her jaw, and two weeks later she was playing with her jaw wired shut. "I only got hit in the face once," she laughs. She has suffered all year from a pinched nerve in her neck which has affected her hitting arm, and for years has suffered

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from tendonitis in her shoulder. In discussing these injuries she simply says that all elite athletes must learn to live with them; they are an inevitable result of the over-use of some parts of the body.

This attitude to injuries and to playing with pain is part of the secret of Ruth's success. In addition to these attributes, she obviously has great natural athletic ability. As a child, she was always a part of the gang on the block playing football, baseball and basketball. The boys usually called on her first, and would agree to change from football to baseball if it meant that she would come and play. She started playing volleyball in Grade VI, and played for six years on the volleyball teams of Mennonite Brethren Collegiate, coached by her sister Susan and future brother-in-law, David Unruh. In Grade VII she worked to improve her skills by training with the varsity boys team!

In senior high she was playing with club teams in addition to the school varsity team, and in the fall of 1980 she enrolled at the University of Winnipeg so that she could play on the Wesmen team, where Mike Burchuk was starting his first year of coaching. Why did she choose this university rather than Manitoba? A smile flits across her face as she answers this question. She had played for Mike on the club teams, and wanted to continue to play for him. Perhaps there was already some romantic interest! Mike and Ruth were married two years ago.

But more than natural athletic ability is needed to achieve the level of success that Ruth has achieved. She feels that the "Mennonite" discipline she received at home and during her six years at MBCI was invaluable training for her present career. "You learn," she says, "to work hard, to do your best at everything, because that is what one should do. You learn not to work for immediate rewards. You learn to be as good as you can be at whatever you are doing. I have learned to put my best effort into schoolwork as well as sports, and that is gratifying for the coaches, who lose athletes who do not complete their academic requirements. Another thing I learned is respect; for elders, for teachers and those from whom I have something to learn, including the coach. I respect the coach's authority, am prepared to work for him, and this way we both achieve our goals."

Part of the discipline that Mike expects of his team is mental discipline. He is tough, expects a great deal of his players and trains them not to make

mistakes. He never lets his players make excuses for their mistakes. The Japanese say that it takes 10,000 hours of training to get rid of mental errors. The players must hone their skills, be in top physical shape, and play as a team.

It is the team aspect that Ruth finds attractive in the sport. She says that the players must develop trust and belief in each other. She likes the fact that volleyball is a non-contact sport, a game of finesse in which strategy plays an important part. While her college volleyball career is now over — she graduates this year with a BA degree in philosophy — she is obviously not quite ready to retire completely from the sport. She plans to take off a year to recover from her injuries, and might then be interested in some action with the National Team. Her brother-in-law Dave has no doubt that she is a player with international ability, who still has much to contribute to volleyball.

When Dave was hired as coach four years ago, the mandate was clear and unequivocal: to win and to recruit. In addition to his coaching duties, he was given two courses to teach, but his job was primarily to win; in fact, because he is hired one year at a time, his job depends on winning. His success is remarkable considering the fact that the University of Manitoba has always been a powerhouse in the sport, with a coach like Garth Pischke who has years of success as a university and national team player and coach; and with the natural advantage of superior size and a greater range of courses to attract students. But David took on a "Goliath," and this year, he won!

Four years ago, he began with four high school players on his starting lineup, and ended up the year ranked fourth in the country. "I think I should have been coach of the year that year," he says with a grin. "But I guess I didn't know what to be afraid of then. There was less pressure then." The pressure is certainly on now. "It's tough to win, but it's much tougher to stay ahead," he said.

Like Ruth, David attributes much of his success to the work ethic he learned at home. In many years of working on construction jobs with his father, he learned to do a good job, and not to expect compliments for doing so. His home training taught him that you don't put a foot forward unless it's your best foot. This work ethic, and the strong Christian faith about which he talks freely and openly, have evidently affected his development as a person, and his philosophy as a coach.

He, like Ruth, started playing volleyball at MBCI — in Grade VII he didn't make the team — and feels that his career really took off in Grade X, under the direction of coach Rusty Rischuk, then captain of the Wesmen. Rischuk stressed fundamentals very much, the importance of hard work and belief in their ability to win. David graduated from MBCI in 1974. He recalls that on awards day he left Winnipeg for tryouts with the Canadian National Team. On that day he received the Citizenship Award from his school, for qualities that are still much in evidence today, but not an athletic award; that particular one had always somehow eluded him although, he says "I knew in my heart that I was the best athlete." Now, finally he is receiving the honors that he deserves, and it is this quiet confidence in his own ability plus a pursuit of excellence that have brought him success.

He spent one summer training with the National Team, and at the end of the summer he decided to leave the team and return to Winnipeg. He explains that after six years in a relatively sheltered environment at MBCI he was not sure that his faith would survive if he remained with the team. The other players appeared not to share his values; he felt alone and out-of-place in the city of Montreal. The six hours of rigorous training each day did not worry

him, but these other factors did. He has not regretted this decision, which had such consequences as not having the opportunity to participate in the Montreal Olympics in 1976.

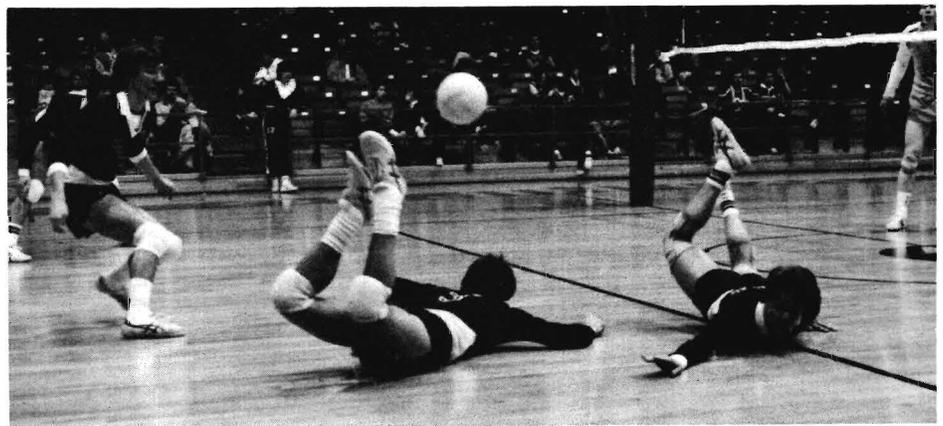
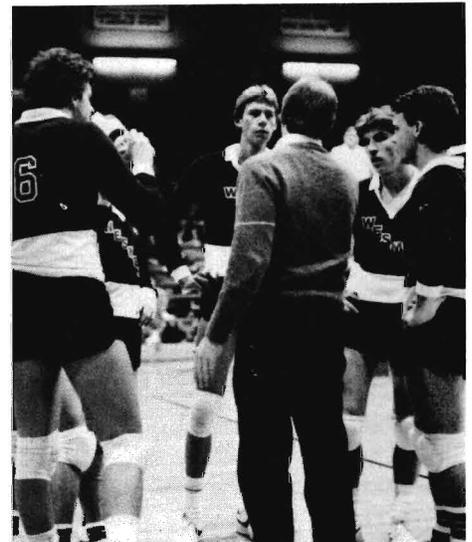
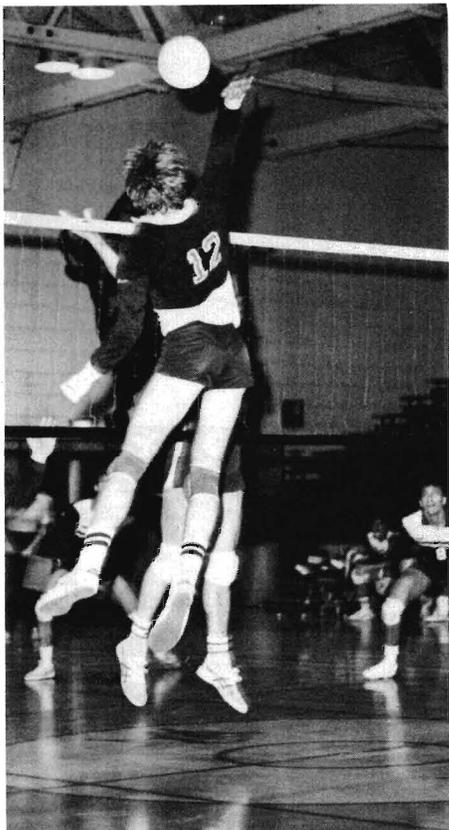
While he attributes much of his success as a player and coach to the training and discipline he received at home, at school and from his coaches, others warned him that his background was a handicap. "You can't win," they said, "You're a Mennonite. And you have too many Mennonites on your team." This year, four of his starters and the first off the bench, Ted Geddert, are indeed Mennonites. Mennonites have the reputation of "choking." When David was in Grade XII his team won the division title, was ranked first in the province, but "choked" and ended up in second place in the Manitoba finals. Mennonites seemed to lack the necessary mental toughness to win; were afraid to take risks. Dave's job was to change that attitude. "I proved," he says with quiet satisfaction, "that Mennonites don't choke."

There is no question that one key to David's success as coach is the personal interest that he takes in each of his players. He wants each one of his players to feel that he has become a better person as a result of his team participation; to look back on these playing years as a positive experience. He cares about his players as people and makes sure that he develops a personal relationship with each one. As Henry Pauls, this year's captain said, "One thing about Dave; he cares first about the person, second about the player." The natural response to this kind of caring is a belief in self, and a willingness to give the best effort at all times. Dave points out that as coach, he has to decide when to be the father, and when to be "devil's advocate." Understanding his players, he knows when they will respond to sympathy, and when some chastisement is

necessary. A measure of his caring for the players can be seen on one shelf of his office. Here he has a collection of scrapbooks, one for each player, with pictures and press clippings documenting their successes. This is his gift to the players when they leave. "They cost about \$100 each," David says, a little ruefully. To the players, they are probably priceless.

In order to ensure that his players didn't "choke," David had to train them to deal with pressure. They had to learn to stop worrying about mistakes. "Water off a duck's back" became the motto for the team. They also had to learn to stop making mistakes, and risk everything. The team that does not make mistakes forces the other team to play the ball at all times. This is essential for success. David's philosophy is to be "aggressively patient," or "patiently aggressive." He studies tapes of his opponents, and trains his team to work on their weaknesses.

This year, in order to prepare his team for the final challenge and their ultimate goal, the CIAU championships, David chose to play the tough teams as often as possible. The "tough" teams at the



Action on the volleyball court.

beginning of this year were Saskatchewan and UBC (ranked first and second in Canada), Manitoba, Calgary and Dalhousie. At first, these teams always played better than the Wesmen. Dave's team was relatively inexperienced, with two fourth-year players, two second-year players and one first-year player in the starting line-up. They had to develop confidence in themselves and skill as a team. Because of the decision to seek out the better teams for competition, "My record as a coach was not illustrious," David says drily. Slowly, things turned around. Despite the calamity of starter Michael Stephens breaking a finger and an epidemic of flu and bronchitis, the team started to win. After Christmas, they won their own Invitational Tournament, then the Dalhousie Classic, and then made history by being the first Canadian team to reach the finals of the top U.S. university tournament held in Santa Barbara. They beat the top-ranked UCLA team in the round robin, but lost to them in an exciting final game. Then, for the first time in nine years they beat the Bisons in the GPAC finals, in the Bisons' own gym. This gave them an undoubted psychological advantage when they met them again in the final of the Canadian championships.

One of the problems of working in a smaller university is the difficulty of recruiting and keeping the best high school players. The University of Manitoba is more likely to attract the players because of the wide variety of courses available there. David fears that he may lose his top recruit this year because he wants to study dentistry. Other fine athletes tend to opt for the University of Manitoba because they can obtain a physical education degree there. But David has obviously done a good job of recruiting. He believes that he attends more high school games than most high school coaches! He watches the top players carefully, both in the high school and the club system that exists for the better players. No doubt his recruiting task will become easier with his present record as a winning coach. He finds that even his own philosophy of coaching works against him at times. He counsels his players to consider their long-range goals as priorities; some do, and this year he temporarily lost an experienced player in Hans Regier, who decided to concentrate on his studies so that he could graduate. David was pleased that Hans decided to return to the team for the last few months, and was able to enjoy the thrill of being on a

championship team after several years of falling short of the goal.

In addition to coaching the Wesmen team, Dave is coach of the University of Winnipeg Junior Wesmen Team, a part of the "farm" system that gives extra playing experience to promising athletes not quite ready for the varsity teams. Dave has been coaching in this system for thirteen years, but this will be his last. Coaching this team means frequent evening practices, and leaves too little time for wife Susan and their two sons, Chris and Mark, three and one year old.

It is clear that this cannot be a "9 to 5" job, and David appreciates the understanding he gets at home from Susan. She is herself a gifted athlete, has coached volleyball teams, and knows some of the frustrations that David experiences in his work. He feels that he can talk to her about problems and receive her advice and help in evaluating difficult situations. He appreciates the fact that at times he can lean on her, "his assistant coach." She was able to accompany the team to Moncton, and David was delighted that she had the opportunity to see the team play so well, and could share in their moment of victory.

This summer, Dave will be coaching the Junior National Team at a camp working at the University of Winnipeg. Brother-in-law Mike Burchuk will be training the Women's Junior National Team. The summer will culminate in the NORSECA Championships — a contest including all North and Central American junior national teams. Then, he will return to his Wesmen team, and attempt to prove that this year's win wasn't a "one-shot deal." Clearly he will do all in his power to succeed once more. As he himself said, "I don't like second place." mm

## Mennonite Studies in "Secular" Institutions

Elsewhere in this issue a writer has responded to my editorial in the March 1986 issue of the *Mirror*. My reply to this "Letter to the Editor" follows there.

Since some readers have asked me personally about some statements in that editorial, I thought there might be others who would welcome a further clarification of some points that were open to misunderstanding.

My point about teaching Mennonite studies in "secular" institutions was in effect a plea for acceptance by those who sometimes harbour suspicions about Mennonite academics in universities. I know that scholars in Mennonite colleges and seminaries are doing excellent work in teaching and research. Those of us who are working in universities also want to be recognized for our contributions by our church community.

My point about some Mennonite businessmen contributing large sums of money to Mennonite studies in "secular" institutions was both an appreciation of what they were doing and a comment on their recognition that such studies can benefit greatly in places where there is no church or conference control. I of course know and appreciate the fact that many individuals are contributing sacrificially to conference institutions and projects.

Harry Loewen

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# Quebec MBs Take Their Conference Back To Anabaptist Beginnings

by Ken Reddig

The missionary activity of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Quebec has enjoyed the fruits of unparalleled success. Unlike previous attempts at church-planting in Canada, where success came by way of an influx of more Mennonites, the Quebec churches have grown by attracting French Canadians. Only a handful of the 626 members (1985 yearbook) are of Mennonite extraction. Yet these French Canadian MBs are in every sense Anabaptist-Mennonites. They may eat pea-soup instead of borscht, but they are Christians who radiate new life and a new fervor for following Jesus in Discipleship.

Numerous factors contributed to the success of the Quebec mission. One cannot overlook the fact that God has

truly had a hand in what occurred. And it is true that a fine dedicated couple spent years working to promote the MB Church in Quebec. But some socio-political factors must also be recognized.

The beginning of Mennonite Brethren work in Quebec was to follow the expulsion of MB missionaries from the Belgian Congo in 1960. The nationalism that was sweeping across Africa made it difficult for missionaries to work safely in the Congo.

The removal of these missionaries meant for many of them reassignment. One such couple, Ernest and Lydia Dyck, were reassigned to explore mission possibilities in Quebec.

The coming of the Dycks to Quebec was fortuitous. Their timing could not

have been better. The province was at one of its most historic turning points, and more open than ever before to new ideas and to the Gospel.

The turning point came on June 22, 1960, when the Liberals surged into power with the election of Jean Lesage. Lesage implemented changes which were to change the very fabric of French Canadian society.

Lesage had caught the tenor of the times. Quebecers were tired of the antiquated "religious" politics that had dominated Quebec since 1534. While still maintaining a positive face towards the Roman Catholic Church, Lesage worked towards eliminating or reducing the church's broad influence. The church was conservative and traditional and was keeping Quebec society from a liberal-democratic progressivism, so Lesage thought.

Lesage's contribution was to bring about a fundamental change in the way the Quebec government operated. He changed it from a Roman Catholic "theocracy" into a "secular" institution. By 1964, for example, he had wrested control of the educational system from the church. Where once the emphasis had been on religion, classics and the humanities, now math, science and technology dominated. Colleges became more democratic and there was a renewal movement within the traditional universities.

The biggest change came in the fact that politics, instead of the church, now led society. Intellectuals who had studied in Europe, such as Pierre Trudeau, now involved themselves in politics and expressed new perspectives. Where once the church had taken the lead to protect the "French Fact" in Canada, now political movements took leadership. Lesage had lit a nationalistic flame which was to make itself felt



Quebec locations of Mennonite Brethren churches and schools.

across Canada. Catholicism was diminished to the state of being a powerful and prominent religion within a now "secular" society. "Secularization" now meant a new openness to religious pluralism, extended even to the protestant camp. Where once Quebecers had been Catholic, rural and homogeneous, they were now becoming Catholic in name only, heterogeneous and urbanized.

It was into this transitional setting that the Dycks began church-planting in Quebec. Their method was to conduct a Sunday morning service and a mid-week Bible study. They visited Protestant patients in the local hospital and inmates in the local prison. Home visitation, distribution of French literature, home bible studies and a radio program (*Parole de vie*) became the means by which they encouraged people to come to a new faith in Christ Jesus. These activities, conducted in the midst of Quebec's social and political upheaval, were crucial to the successfulness of this mission.

By 1962 the MB Conference had purchased a residence for the Dycks and lots on which to build a church in the St. Jerome and St. Thérèse area. The small congregation by this time had an average of 60-70 people attending each Sunday.

The next few years were to witness steady growth, not without many frustrations and set-backs. Additional workers were sent to Quebec. New programs were instituted, new congregations organized as the MB Church in Quebec grew.

Among the innovative and highly successful programs of the mission was the yearly summer employment of French-Canadian students who aided in evangelistic activities. The efforts of these students, native to the culture, enhanced the Mennonite Brethren witness in the community. It also provided an opportunity for new believers to exercise and discover their gifts for ministry.

Another important program was the formation of a Bible school in 1976, Institut Biblique Laval. Meeting the need for sound biblical and theological training, the Bible school enabled many French-Canadian Christians to engage in study preparing them for leadership in Quebec congregations. As a result most of the pastors of the eleven MB congregations in Quebec have at one time or another attended this Bible Institute.

In fact, the Bible Institute is one of the major reasons why *l'Association*

*Québécoise des Frères Mennonites* (Quebec Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches) is self-governing and almost completely self-supporting. It has produced an indigenous leadership capable of guiding its own affairs. Today only two congregations have pastors of Russian-Mennonite origin, and as of this summer neither of them will be teaching at the Bible Institute or have a major role in conference leadership.

Confidence in their young leadership is shown by the fact that they were encouraged to form their own provincial conference and have been formally accepted into the Canadian Conference of MB Churches on July 7, 1984. They also have been assisted in developing their own monthly conference paper, *Le lien*, with its own editor.

But what of the Mennonites themselves, these 600 and more French Canadian Mennonites, who are they? How do they fit into the Mennonite Brethren scene in Canada?

Assessing a group this large is hazardous. Not everyone fits into a general pattern. However, some generalizations are in order. First of all it must be noted that Quebec Mennonites are predomi-

nantly French-Canadian Mennonites (there is one English-speaking congregation of 17 members). Because of their unique background and history they never will be Russian-Mennonites and they vigorously resist being fitted into a "German cultural mold."

In fact, some of them consider themselves more Anabaptist than Mennonite. As one French Canadian Mennonite put it, "We are re-living the 16th century in Quebec. We can relate to the problems of the early Anabaptists with the state church. Felix Mantz, Conrad Grebel that's our story. It is often difficult to identify with Russian-Mennonite historical concerns."

Defining their socio-economic background is somewhat difficult. But it can be noted that a large number of them come not from the professional ranks of Quebec society, but from, as one French Canadian MB describes it, "the proletariat." Many of them come from the social-welfare and blue collar ranks of Quebec society. Interestingly, however, once they become Christians, they usually are able to put their life into order and most soon move out of the social-welfare system. Becoming a Christian,



*A youth group meeting in a St. Jerome, Quebec, basement.*

joining the Church, begins a pattern of upward mobility.

Joining the MB Church and upward mobility, while certainly good western Canadian Mennonite values, does not mean that they endorse western-Canadian Mennonite thinking, particularly "political thinking." Many are still solidly Parti Quebecois, and if not that, certainly Liberal. When asked about language, they staunchly defend French, even more vigorously than Mennonites defended German only a few decades ago. It is fortunate that the province of Ontario was between Manitoba congregations and the Quebec congregations, some 20 months ago, when Manitoba was struggling with the French language issue.

But with regard to their view of "English Canadians," the past 25 years of contact with mission workers has changed their perspective. The large amounts of money expended in initial support of congregations and the Bible institute have made many of them realize that "English Canadians are not all out to get us." Growing up in a French Catholic milieu they were taught to think that English is Protestant and Protestant is "false doctrine." These conceptions are hard for them to shake and the coming of Mennonite Brethren mission workers has done much to mollify these misconceptions.

But this does not mean that they do not have apprehensions of western Canadian Mennonites. In one word, western Canadian Mennonites to them are all "rich!" They have an awe of the "rich MBs." As one French Canadian Mennonite said, "I'm scared of western Mennonite Brethren. For me your wealth is a stumbling block. We have some businessmen, in our congregations who are seriously thinking of selling their businesses in order to give more time to the church. Your businessmen don't seem to be doing that."

One matter which bothers them considerably is the western Canadian Mennonite view of the Catholic church. Coming out of an archaic and traditional catholicism, they cannot see how Mennonites in the west can possibly say good things about catholicism and the pope. It confuses them. That's what they have put behind them.

They admit that once they become Christian they go through years of radicalism. They tend to apply the Bible too literally and become legalistic. This is manifested precisely in their reaction to things Catholic. An example of which is to refuse to hold Christmas Eve services in their congregations because it is too "Catholic."

Even more sobering is what some of them think about our theological positions. Those who have been exposed to Anabaptist-Mennonite theology, in the Bible institute, understand that Mennonites are people who take peace seriously. They have come to think that all western Canadian Mennonites believe in "Biblical Non-resistance," and are united on the "peace issue." As one French Canadian Mennonite told me, "We are blown away when we come west and see that the peace position is not strong among western Mennonites. What's happening?"

The growth of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Quebec is not a singular story. In fact it is overshadowed by the growth of other Protestant denominations. The Baptists, for example, have experienced outstanding growth for the same reasons as have the MB's. And the Quebec MB's have no difficulty working together with other evangelical groups, such as the Baptists, in evangelism crusades and other corporate ventures.

If anything is clear from observing these good brothers and sisters in Quebec it is that new life in Christ has radically changed them. The changes are immediately apparent and often make life difficult for the young Mennonites as their Catholic friends and relatives cannot understand what has happened to them.

But another factor is also clear. Russian-Mennonite brothers and sisters must give these new Mennonite

Brethren freedom to grow and develop. They are not "Mennonite" in the way that we are prone to define as being "Mennonite". As has already been noted, they are probably closer to being "Anabaptist." Perhaps the renewal they have experienced can only begin with the "Anabaptist Vision," i.e. a theological break with a state-church tradition. Therefore, they must develop their own Biblical approach to discipleship, just as the early 16th century Anabaptists did. Perhaps they need not filter it through 450 years of "Mennonitism" as we know it today.

This means, of course, that there is an obvious risk that they might not stay within what we might define as being the "Mennonite fold." Or, they might be the beginning of another "Mennonite denomination." Certainly, in keeping with past Mennonite patterns, the multitude of Mennonite groupings do nothing to persuade them to stay closely attached to the "mother conference."

But perhaps that is all right as well. Perhaps the freedom to be followers of Jesus, disciples in the Anabaptist tradition, means that they now need to develop for themselves a theological and existential position which fits their milieu, just as we in our Russian-Mennonite milieu have done. Rather than being critical we should praise God that He does work in various ways, through many different secular and political movements, to call his people to faithful discipleship.



*A view of the first provincial conference in Quebec.*

# The Question of Suffering

book notices by Harry Loewen

*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, written by Rabbi Harold S. Kushner, deals with the timeless problem of human suffering. This book is not just another justification of God's ways with humans, but a serious attempt to grapple with this age-old question in a realistic and compassionate manner.

Kushner does not believe that God is responsible for the suffering and tragedies in human lives. The "bad things" that happen to people, including believers and godly individuals, are not God's will, but happen because of circumstances, diseases, accidents, and human nature with its desires, inclinations, and love of freedom.

Some readers will no doubt raise their eyebrows when they read Kushner's interpretation of chapter 40, verses 9-14 of the Book of Job. The author suggests that even God finds it difficult at times to control or curb the forces of evil in the world. With reference to the passage in Job, Kushner writes: "I take these lines to mean 'if you think that it is so easy to keep the world straight and true, to keep unfair things from happening to people, you try it'" (p. 43). Job of course can't do any better than God, but he realizes in the end that God is there at his side, suffering with him and helping him in his distress.

And that, according to Kushner, is of great comfort and strength to the sufferer — more so than thinking that the suffering person is somehow responsible for his or her tragedy, or that God has willed or allowed the tragedy to happen for some mysterious purpose.

Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Avon Books, 1981); Paperback; 150 pages; \$4.95 (Can.).

*My Father Franz C. Thiessen*, written by Kaethe Thiessen-Klassen, is the story of an educator, spiritual leader, and pioneer in choral music in Russia and in Canada. Born in 1881 in southern Russia and died in 1950 in British Columbia, Franz C. Thiessen is remembered in this booklet by his daughter, colleagues and students as a man who worked tirelessly and was devoted to his church and young people. Included is also "A sketch of the life of my mother Margaritha Wieler Thiessen," prepared and delivered on the special occasion of

her 90th birthday (1978).

The booklet, which contains many photographs, was translated from the German by Mary M. Enns. It can be ordered from: Mrs. Catherine (H. F.) Klassen, 54 Noble Ave., WINNIPEG, MB, R2L 0J4.

Those who are interested in an illustrated and detailed description of a Mennonite village in Russia, will find Franz Thiessen's *Neuendorf in Bild und Wort: Chortitzaer Bezirk, Ukraine 1789-1943* (1984) most fascinating. The author who himself experienced arrest, exile, and many difficult years in the Soviet Union, is now living, like many other "resettlers," in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The value and significance of this 409-page book consists in the numerous photographs — many of them quite rare — eye witness accounts of Mennonite suffering, and the author's reflections on Mennonite history and identity.

The book may be ordered from: Gary J. Waltner, Mennonitischer Buchversand, 6719 WEIERHOF, Post Marnheim, West Germany. Price: DM 66,00, including postage.

*Beyond Those Mountains: In Search of Freedom* (1985), by Dick Thiessen, is the story of Isaac and Liese Wiens whose wanderings led them out of Russia through China and Paraguay to the

western plains of Canada. The book, published in an attractive format by Kindred Press, can be obtained from: Kindred Press, WINNIPEG, MB, R2L 2E5.

Winnipeggers especially will be interested in *The Story of the Home Street Mennonite Church 1957-1982: Response to the Urban Environment* (1985), written by Dennis Stoesz and published by the Home Street Mennonite Church. In a letter to me the author writes: "While [the book] does focus on one particular church, I have tried to set the story against the backdrop of the Anabaptist vision and theology." In this the author has succeeded well and the Home Street Mennonite Church can be justly proud of its record.

The book contains numerous photographs, charts, graphs and maps. It can be ordered from: Home Street Mennonite Church, 318 Home Street, WINNIPEG, MB, R3G 1X4.

The second edition (the first appeared in 1975) of *Henderson Mennonites: From Holland to Henderson* (1981), edited by Stanley E. Voth and published by the Henderson Centennial Committee, is a tribute to the Russian Mennonites who in the 19th century made Henderson, Nebraska, their new home.

The book is available from: Henderson Centennial Committee, HENDERSON, NEBRASKA.

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Susanna Vogt

# A Mother For All Seasons

by Al Reimer

She was one of those special people who remains forever active in one's memory. I knew her best in the 30s and 40s when I was growing up in Steinbach. She was the mother of my pal "Dip," and during my early and mid teens I spent more time in that friendly home on Main Street than I did in my own. At least that's what my parents always said.

She became for the members of our gang — "Woody" and "Drone" and "Boob McNutt" and myself, and later Abe and Harry and Cliff and Tony and Bert — a familiar presence, warm, personal, irresistibly hospitable, a kind of second mother always there when we needed her, especially at *Faspa* time on Sunday afternoons. She never failed to play her part in an unvarying social ritual with us: she would invite us to stay for *Faspa*, we would pretend politely that we couldn't; she would press us to stay and volunteer to call our mothers for permission if we wanted her to.

Of course we always stayed, and rarely did she have to call a mother for permission. Only a death in the family or a Sunday afternoon hockey game would have kept us away. It was far and away the best *Faspa* in town in those frugal times. Where else could you get delicious home-baked brown bread with real butter (as much as you liked), cheese (always, to our wonder, plenty of cheese), freshly baked *Tweeback* with two kinds of jam (at least), and a heav-

enly dessert that varied from *Kringelbrot* to chocolate layer cake or even a sumptuous German torte. Politely, deferentially, with shy greed we made pigs of ourselves every time. My pal Woody next door had the brilliant idea of switching to suspenders on Sundays from the belt he wore the rest of the time. Soon we all wore suspenders on Sundays so we could eat even more and feel less post-*Faspa* discomfort.

Then in her prime, my friend's mother radiated warmth and vitality as naturally as the summer sun. Having a row of lads of her own she understood boy psychology perfectly, made allowances for our individual differences, overlooked our awkward manners, treated us with amiable frankness and a touch of maternal affection we accepted without reflection as our due. Not that she ever talked down to or lectured us boys, so mild almost obsequious downstairs in her presence, so outspoken and boisterous at play by ourselves upstairs.

For me there was in her voice and manner a refinement that struck a cultural resonance. Although she was a Canadian-born Mennonite like myself (we were in fact distantly related), she seemed to belong more properly to that richer, more knowing Russian-Mennonite cultural world she understood and shared with her Russian-born husband. Theirs was a home in which opera was not considered a hideous cacophony and literary classics (especially

German and Russian ones) were referred to with a matter-of-factness that thrilled me.

Had she merely tolerated us we would have been content. She did much more by treating us as though we mattered to her, as though we weren't just trespassing rowdies whom she had to endure because we were her sons' playmates. She treated us always with dignity as individuals in our own right and as members of families whose parents she knew and cared for as well. At the *Faspa* table she deftly elicited family news from us which — with our mouths full — we were happy to provide.

We also respected this rare lady for something else. She never interfered with our often noisy war or table or card games upstairs, but when a quarrel erupted with accusations and threats and even scuffles violating the Sunday decorum she would suddenly be there at the head of the stairs. She never raised her voice or lost her air of calm reasonableness. But she would not tolerate injustice or bullying or ganging up. And she played absolutely no favorites. She treated everybody with the same even-handed justice, including her own sons. She allowed us to be as competitive as our boyish natures demanded, but not by unfair guile or outright cheating.

As we grew into war-time youths on the brink of manhood, her manner towards us changed to match our changes. She treated us as we wished to

be treated, as young adults trying hard to discard the casual and unselfconscious ways of boyhood. We were interested in girls, beer, cardplaying for money, sports and the war. She teased us gently about girls, tolerantly closed her eyes when we smuggled a small box of contraband beer upstairs on Sunday afternoons, and worried at the *Faspa* table about the hard decisions we faced when we reached military age. How she must have smiled to herself when she saw us forget momentarily that we were now grown men and revert, a bit furtively, to the boyish table games and competitions that had held us spellbound only a few years before.

Then we began to disperse — to university, into the armed services or the routine of local and city jobs. We still came back whenever we could, and found the magic was still there. She would greet us with her broad smile and low gentle voice that was as intimate as an embrace. Even the *Faspas* were the same, as plentiful and satisfying as always. There was more gray in her hair now and her manner grew more serene with each passing year. Best of all she was always there, a palpable, caring presence with the same vital interest in all of us she had shown when we were boys. She seemed unchanging in a post-war world that was swirling with changes for all of us.

In the end she was one of the changes too. Now this wonderful, gracious woman is gone at last, and the world for at least one member of that little gang has dimmed a little. And I suspect that is true for the others too, wherever they are. Most of us are now professional men and middle-aged: we are professors, publishers, pharmacists, scientists and businessmen. But we will always keep hearing that warm voice, taste those lovely *Faspas* and feel the strength and delicate touch of that wise lady who helped civilize us by gentling us through our rough-and-tumble adolescence. We knew then that we liked and respected her. What we didn't know then was that the magic ingredient in those *Faspas* was love, and that it would remain with us for the rest of our lives.

Her name was Susanna Vogt (Mrs. Peter Vogt) and she was the mother of our publisher Roy Vogt. mm



*Henry Willms, right, received a citation paying tribute to his 25 years as a member of the Concordia Hospital Board of Directors. Holding the citation is Sig Enns, executive director of Concordia Hospital; Peter Falk, left, president of the Concordia Hospital Foundation, extends congratulations. Mr. Willms joined the board in 1961, following in the footsteps of his late father, Henry Willms, Sr., who had served (along with Rev. J. J. Schulz) as secretary-treasurer to the Mennonite Hospital Society Concordia and as its comptroller. Concordia is celebrating its 58th anniversary this year and for 51 of its 58 years, Willms father or son have played a role in its growth and development.*

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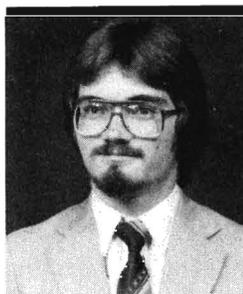
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six sail beams of the European windmill were taken down in October because they were badly deteriorated. A recent addition to the museum is a pioneer log house built 110 years ago at Hochfeld, south of Winkler. The house will be restored over a period of time as part of the Museum's overall goal of recreating an early village settlement on the grounds. The house was built in the second year after Mennonite settlers first arrived in the West Reserve. It was built by the grandparents of the Jacob Thiessens who still live in Winkler.



**Peter David Wiebe**, cellist, recently won \$2250 as finalist in a musical competition sponsored by the London foundation of Ontario. He was also awarded a further scholarship of \$7500 for academic excellence, for which graduate students of Ontario universities competed. Peter, who is pursuing a Master's degree in cello performance at the University of Western Ontario, is the son of George and Esther Wiebe.

A number of Southern Manitoba municipalities are uniting with their counterparts and other interest groups in Minnesota to oppose the United States government's **proposal to bury radioactive waste** in Northern Minnesota. The U.S. government has targetted eight sites in Minnesota as potential nuclear waste dumps. Four of these are in the Red River drainage basin. Minnesota State Senator Roger Moe, at a meeting held to discuss the issue, said that the U.S. government was leaving Canada vulnerable because the Red River basin would carry dangerous radioactive waste if a dump site leaked. Representatives from Altona, Rhineland, Emerson and Montcalm were present at the meeting.

Two persons have been appointed to the Practical Theology department of Canadian Mennonite Bible College. **Sig Polle**, who is currently working on his doctoral dissertation in communication, and **Lois Edmund**, who holds a doctorate in Clinical Psychology, have both been appointed as assistant professors, effective July 1, 1986. **Werner and Mar-**

**ilyn Peters Kliewer** have been appointed jointly to the position of Admissions Counsellor. They replace **Clayton Loewen** who has resigned after three years to pursue other options.

A retirement dinner was held in April in honor of **John Dyck**, retiring from the position of assistant deputy minister in the Manitoba Department of Education. He began his teaching career in 1950 in a one-room country school at Kronsargart; has served as school inspector in the Duck Mountain area.

**Traugott and Katie Quiring**, who emigrated from the Soviet Union to West Germany in 1985, are visiting churches in Canada and the United States this spring to talk about the experiences of Russian Mennonites and learn about Mennonite life in North America. In the Soviet Union, Traugott was the Mennonite representative to the All Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists, and was senior presbyter for the union in Central Asia. They will be visiting Mennonite churches in Winnipeg and in Vancouver.

The 44th annual conference of **Manitoba Women in Mission** was held in Steinbach on May 4. Guest speaker was **Anne Garber**, missionary to Burkina Faso, and presently studying in the U.S.; and **Esther Horch** gave a meditation on the theme of the conference: "Grow as you go."

**Douglas Reimer**, son of Howard and Brigitte Reimer of Kelowna, B.C. formerly of Steinbach and Winnipeg, has won the coach of the year award for Canadian university women's volleyball. Douglas is coach of the University of Victoria ladies volleyball team. He is the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Jac. F. Reimer of Steinbach.

**Albert Driedger**, MLA for Emerson, has been appointed party whip for the Conservative opposition. He has been involved in provincial politics since 1977.

**Nina Thiessen**, daughter of Randy and Linda Thiessen, won two gold medals at the Winnipeg School Division #1 Science Fair, held at the Tec. Voc. school on April 12. She, together with partner Charissa McIntosh, won a gold medal for communication in the Junior High category, and a gold medal for best Grade VII Science Project. Nina is a French immersion student at River Heights school. Her project, in French, was on the right and left hemispheres of the brain.

# Plautdietsch: Language or Dialect?

By Reuben Epp

Plautdietsch is the tongue spoken by those Mennonites, mostly of Netherlandish extraction, whose forefathers lived in the Vistula delta of West Prussia after about 1550 AD and who subsequently resettled into southern Russia (Ukraine) several years before and after 1800 AD. This tongue was adopted by the Mennonites after they settled in West Prussia where it was in common use among working class people and farmers as their day-to-day language.

It should be noted however, that although the common man in the delta spoke Plautdietsch, the official language was High German, albeit spoken with distinctively Prussian pronunciations (See Jack Thiessen's *Predicht fier haite*) which is still evident among older Mennonites in Canada and elsewhere when they speak High German.

The fact that Plautdietsch was the tongue of the common people in the Vistula delta and in and around Danzig was again brought home to me on my last visit to Germany a number of years ago. On a bus trip from Bechterdissen to Bielefeld I was introduced to a man sitting beside the only seat available to me. Since his name sounded familiar, I began to speak to him in Plautdietsch as soon as I sat down. He responded in the same tongue, and after a lengthy conversation I asked him where he came from and whether he was perhaps a Mennonite from Russia. He disclaimed being a Mennonite but said that he had come directly to West Germany from Danzig after its fall in 1945. I then said that I thought it remarkable that, since my forefathers had left the Vistula delta area shortly after 1800 AD, he spoke exactly the same as I did. He quickly caught me up by saying, "Epp, I do not speak the way you do, but you speak the way I do. And I come from where Plautdietsch was at home and was spoken by the common people whether or not they were Mennonites."

Whether Plautdietsch is regarded as a language or as one dialect of a greater language depends on the point of view as to the definition of language or dialect. I have heard arguments from students of linguistics that Plautdietsch is a language by their definition. How-

ever, I shall deal with this subject from my lay point of view — which is that it is one dialect of Low German among many.

When one reads Ziesemer's *Die Ostpreussischen Mundarten* and Riemann's *Preussisches Wörterbuch* one discovers that in the provinces of East and West Prussia alone there existed seven distinct dialects of Nether-Prussian (Low German), not to mention sub-dialects or variations of dialect. The Plautdietsch dialect (*Mundart*) of the Vistula delta is one of the seven. It is also recorded historical fact that when the Mennonites arrived in the Vistula delta they were pleased to discover that they could understand the speech of the resident population, even though they spoke differently. That is, they spoke a different dialect of the same language.

The Low German language is spoken in different dialects across the north German lowlands, extending westward into northern Holland and into Flanders in Belgium. It was spoken as far east as East Prussia until 1945. Among various estimates as to the number of people who still speak Low German in Europe some range as high as six million.

Since the Low German language straddles several international borders, it does not always go by the same name. During the time that it was spoken in Prussia, it was there referred to as Nether-Prussian, and still is. In northern Germany it is variously referred to as Plattdütsch, Niederdeutsch or Niedersächsisch, whereas in Holland it is referred to as Groningsch or Neddersaksisch. In Flanders it is called Vlaamsch. When travelling in those areas it is wiser not to refer to their dialects as Low German for reasons that derive from events of the second World War.

That the language spoken by the common people in the areas aforementioned is Low German, is in my opinion not questionable. I have checked into a hotel in Gent (Flanders) using Plautdietsch. The hotel clerk answered me in easily understandable Vlaamsch. I have attended a Rotary meeting in Groningen North where the guest speaker spoke in the dialect of Groningen for my benefit — which I easily understood. I have attended Low German theatrical pro-

ductions in such diverse places as East Friesland, Oldenburg and Bevensen. Although I would find it difficult to accurately imitate their various dialects without much practise, I had no difficulty in understanding. The fact is that they spoke Low German of which I happen to speak the dialect known as Plautdietsch.

In some Mennonite periodicals, especially those printed in German, one finds occasional references to the mother-tongue — meaning, of course, High German. Other Mennonites refer to Plautdietsch as their mother-tongue.

If we think of mother-tongue as that form of speech most commonly used by our parents and grandparents, a number of languages and dialects in use today present themselves, including High German and Plautdietsch.

When our forefathers lived in Prussia they adopted the Plautdietsch dialect of their neighbours but continued to use Dutch as their language in church services, written records and in written communication for some two hundred years, after which Dutch was supplanted by High German.

Since the language of Prussian officials and aristocracy was High German, it is understandable that those with social ambitions, in business or in higher position would be the forerunners in the adoption of German in daily conversation in the home and in correspondence. Low German was, after all, the tongue of the common people — those of lesser social status. This trend among Mennonites was particularly noticeable among those in large cities such as Danzig, and is still evident among their descendants and others today. Since this has gone on for several centuries, one can understand that such families regard High German as mother-tongue.

At this point one should note that among the Mennonites who settled in Prussia were a good number of families who had left Switzerland and South Germany to join the Mennonites in the Netherlands to escape religious persecution. In such families High-(Upper-) German is of course the mother-tongue.

On the other hand, if we interpret mother-tongue as being the tongue

originally spoken by the Mennonites of the Netherlands, we face a different set of considerations. The original Mennonites in the Netherlands may have spoken Friesisch, Dutch or several dialects of Low German, but High German was relatively unknown in that region at that time except as aforementioned.

The Hanseatic League, which was the largest trading alliance of its time, and which operated in northern Germany, in Russia, Norway, Sweden, England and Belgium, conducted its business in the Low German language during its existence which lasted into the seven-teenth century. In the city of Krefeld (a former Mennonite industrial centre) High German was not heard among the common people or on the streets until some 80-100 years ago. The foregoing facts draw the conclusion that High German is not the mother-tongue of the Mennonites from the Netherlands even if we include the German province of East Friesland under that designation. East Friesland is geographically part of the Netherlands although separated from Holland by a political boundary. The fact that some of our forefathers probably came from East Friesland is strongly argued by the fact that several Mennonite churches exist there to this day.

If we then conclude that the mother-tongue of most of the Mennonites from

the Netherlands was Low German (which it must have been) it was not the Low German dialect known as Plautdietsch because that was not adopted until they moved to Prussia after about 1550 AD. Therefore the mother-tongue of those Mennonites must have been largely Friesisch, Groningsch, East Friesisch or Vlaamsch — all dialects that we have long since forgotten. And somewhat sadly so because one of the greatest Low German Mennonite authors of all time (perhaps the greatest), Wilhelmine Siefkes, wrote in the dialect of East Friesland, which most of us do not read because it is no longer easy for us.

When the first Mennonite colony at Chortitza (the Old Colony) in the province of Ekaterinoslav was founded in 1789, followed by the Molotschna colony in the province of Taurida in 1804-06, it was apparent that although the settlers of both colonies spoke Plautdietsch, there were differences between and within the colonies in the way that many words were pronounced.

Some people reason that since these two large colonies were separated by about 100 miles these pronunciation differences evolved in the Russian colonies due to the isolation from each other. Others reason that since the two settlements were separated by a time span of some 15 years, that the spoken word in Prussia had changed in various pronunciations in the interim.

Although each of the colonies must have been somewhat of a melting pot that would promote a homogeneity in the manner of speech in each colony, this does not explain why there should have been such a marked difference between the two. The time span between the establishment of the two colonies must be dismissed as a factor contributing to the difference because the spoken word does not change much in 15 years. This is shown in my conversation with the man on the bus near Bielefeld from whose forefathers mine had been isolated for about 175 years. It is further proven by conversations with Mennonites in the Soviet Union today, from whom we have been isolated since the 1920's but who still speak the same as we do except for the introduction of a few more Russian words.

The truth of the matter, and the deciding factor, seems to be that the colonists of the two settlements came from different parts of West Prussia. The Chortitza settlers came mainly from the area near Danzig and near the several outlets of the Vistula river. The Molotschna settlers, on the other hand, came mainly from the Grosswerder and surrounding

areas near the cities of Elbing and Marienburg.

When one considers that the combined area of the provinces of East and West Prussia was about 24,000 square miles (twice the size of Vancouver Island, one tenth the size of Manitoba) but contained seven distinct dialects of Low German (Nether-Prussian) it becomes understandable that within a few miles one might encounter numerous variations in words and in the way that they would be spoken. When one studies Riemann's *Preussisches Wörterbuch*, one finds that within a radius of some 15-20 miles centred on the delta the following pronunciation differences existed in the area populated by the Mennonites:

To chew — Kaue, kauen, keiwe, keiwen  
 To mow — Haue, hauen, heiwe, heiwen  
 To saw — Soge, soage, soagen, söagen  
 To cook — Koke, koake, koaken, köaken  
 To make — Moke, moake, moaken, möaken  
 You — Du, Dü

These differences are precisely those that existed in the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies, and continue to exist among their descendants to this day. Therefore, it appears to be clear that the differences in pronunciation in the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies did not develop there, but were brought in

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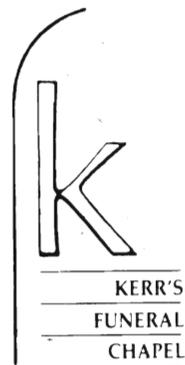
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by settlers from various geographical regions in West Prussia, even though separated by only a few miles.

Occasionally the question arises as to which subdialect is the more correct form of Plautdietsch — the Chortitza or the Molotschna mode of speech. Since the settlers of the Molotschna colony were wealthier upon arrival in Russia than those of Chortitza, and since the Molotschna colony showed greater material progress and wealth from the time of their arrival until about 1920, some consider the Molotschna sub-

dialect more worthy than the other. However, there appears to be no reasonable evidence that either subdialect is either inferior or superior to the other; they are simply somewhat different. The 'en' word endings, especially of verbs, among the Chortitza settlers, relate more closely to the dialects spoken in Groningen, East Friesland and Flanders where the verbs also end with 'en'. Perhaps the 'en' endings of the Old Colonists are holdovers from their original mother-tongues. The 'e' endings without the 'n' as spoken by the Molotschna

colonists appear to derive from a distinctly Prussian influence.

Therefore one must conclude that the Chortitza and Molotschna subdialects are equally valid components of the Plautdietsch dialect that was adopted by the Mennonites of the Netherlands after they settled in West Prussia. Plautdietsch is one of a great number of dialects of a greater Low German language that is spoken across northern mainland Europe in East Germany, West Germany, the Netherlands and in Belgium to this day. **mm**

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excitement. At least one never hears of musicians intimidating each other into submission.

• Again, sorrow mixes with joy. By telephone I learn that a former colleague, who moved on in economics and was recently the head of a major department in western Canada, has tragically ended his own life. He was always an intense person, though we had many very good moments together. I feel dreadfully sorry for all those who feel so enveloped by darkness that life becomes unbearable. It has always struck me as a black mark on the church that in times past, and in some places even today, such persons have been condemned in absentia, even to the point of segregating them in graveyards. Of all people they are the most to be pitied and to be treated with tenderness. No one who has never lived through a major depression can possibly understand it.

• Despite such tragic moments, life is meaningful and worth living. Spring has returned, our cottage beckons us once more, and a promising summer shimmer before us. Therefore, though clouds often cover the sky, let us move on with heads held high, and by all means, a twinkle in our eye! mm

## your word

mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

On almost every occasion that Dr. Harry Loewen editorializes, he finds occasion to chastize Mennonite church leadership and Mennonite institutions for their unwillingness to seek truth and for their capitulation to so-called North American evangelical-fundamentalist Christianity. He does so again in his March *Mirror* editorial.

With a good many of his concerns I find myself in sympathy. But I don't think he is being fair in his criticisms.

In the first place, if it is "often the university-educated individuals who are more interested in preserving and promoting Mennonite faith and values than the rank and file church members," should we be surprised? These often have by far the most access to the story of the church and of its spiritual history. Why should they not be more interested to preserve it? Dr. Loewen should remember that only a few generations ago, in Russia, much of that story was virtually lost. There was so little remembered and so much about the church that was assumed, that very few of the "rank and file" knew anything at all about the spiritual roots of their church communities. And if students now know more, a love for the church ought to encourage them to share their vision and concerns.

That's part of what troubles me about Dr. Loewen's editorial. It conveys to me an elitist attitude to the church. If there are those in academic circles who know more about the faith and values of Anabaptism, one should never assume that others who don't know as much might not be just as good in the practice. I would not be so quick to elevate students and academics at the expense of the rank and file. It has often happened that the ones high on theory have been every bit as lacking in the practice as those without. What I'm saying is that each needs the other. There is little to be gained by putting the "rank and file" down in this way.

I am not persuaded either by statements that "many Mennonites, including respected church leaders, have sold out to North American values and evangelical-fundamentalist Christianity." That's a kind of sloganeering. What if the church leaders came back and said the academics had "sold out" to liberal Protestantism, or to critical approaches to the Bible or to liberation theology or process theology or whatever? One

charge is intended to sow distrust as much as the other and does little to provide illumination.

It is misleading as well to suggest that Mennonite business people are "investing millions" in Mennonite studies at "secular" institutions "rather than in church-supported schools." I would challenge Dr. Loewen to do some calculations on the sums coming to our Mennonite schools and the amounts coming to programs such as his. On the other hand, it is unfortunate that he should even suggest such comparisons. Both kinds of programs have validity and can be applauded.

In any case, it is not accurate to suggest that scholarship at Mennonite schools does not seriously grapple with the meaning of Anabaptist Christian faith while scholarship in university setting does. I am convinced that in every one of our Mennonite schools in Canada there is a serious attempt being made to translate Anabaptism's spiritual story into the life and practice of our day. I would be happy if Dr. Loewen recognized his fellow churchmen in their pursuit of truth as much as he wishes them to recognize him. At the very least, he should acknowledge the deep commitment to the life of the church which exists in the schools, something not always found among the university scholars. And that commitment to the church is part of the essence of Anabaptism.

Sincerely,  
Harold Jantz Winnipeg

### Response to Above Letter

Am I really too critical of Mennonite church leaders, or is Mr. Harold Jantz, an MB Church leader himself, perhaps somewhat sensitive to what may be justified criticism? Surely, Mr. Jantz would not suggest that church leaders, who themselves are often most critical of those who do not measure up to their standards, are above criticism.

It seems to me that Mr. Jantz either misunderstands or deliberately misrepresents my point about academic people working in the area of Mennonite studies. My point is that the serious work done by academics and students in so-called secular institutions is either not recognized for what it is and often ignored by leaders within church institutions, or perhaps feared because the "uncovered truth" is sometimes uncomfortable.

I don't think that I am being elitist in this nor do I put persons down who know little about Mennonite history. While it is true that many of our brothers and sisters knew and still know little

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about their historical past, many leaders in our churches and institutions could and should know our story much better and teach it to our members and young people.

My reference to "evangelical fundamentalism" is not sloganeering. I used that label advisedly. What I mean is that many of our leaders are more concerned about a literalist interpretation of the Bible, a merely subjective religious experience, and certain "fundamentals" to which all evangelicals can subscribe than an Anabaptist Christianity which takes following Christ in life and being a prophetic witness to our society most seriously.

When I mentioned that some businessmen are investing large sums of money in establishing Mennonite studies programmes at "secular" institutions, I did not mean to disparage in any way conference-supported institutions. Of course I agree that "both kinds of programmes have validity and can be applauded." If Mr. Jantz really believes this, then it comes as a surprise that he as editor of the *MB Herald* did not deem it sufficiently important to highlight the Mennonite studies program at the University of Winnipeg — when many other Mennonite papers carried articles and stories about the Chair in Mennonite

Studies.

Does Mr. Jantz really think that "every one in our Mennonite schools" seeks to translate *Anabaptist* faith and values into daily living? Certainly not in the past. Today there is *some* welcome change in this regard — and perhaps our academics and their students are in part responsible for this reawakening in Mennonite studies in our church and institutions.

Harry Loewen

#### REVIEW QUESTIONED

Who is Al Reimer and why is he writing such *Dumheit* about me?

Actually I am very pleased that a prominent scholar such as Al Reimer reviewed my book. His observations are astute and much of his critique is well-founded. I suppose at some point I will have to defend the thesis of the *Golden Years* in a major way.

But for now I am writing to point out an inaccuracy in this review, namely, Dr. Reimer's statement that the Kleine Gemeinde is "now known as the Evangelical Mennonite Conference." In 1910 P. M. Friesen proclaimed the "dissolution of the Kleine Gemeinde," and care should be taken not to repeat such generalizations.

In fact the Kleine Gemeinde under the leadership of Bishop Peter P. Reimer, moved to Quellen Colony, Mexico, in 1948. From here they have spread to Belize, Oklahoma, Nova Scotia, and also a fellowship group in Manitoba's Interlake. It has a total of some 1600 members and 3000 souls, a considerable growth considering that only 85 families went to Mexico in 1948 and that many subsequently returned to Manitoba.

The Kleine Gemeinde is very much alive today with an active outreach to Salvadorean refugees in Belize and to Old Colony Mennonites in Cuautemoc, Mexico. At the same time the denomination operates an extensive school system of elementary and secondary education in German, English and Spanish. The church is organized in some 10 districts under Bishops who still have names such as Dueck, Penner, Reimer and Friesen. But names such as Unger, Petkau, Fehr and Wall, are also common, indicating the new growth of the past 30 years.

The Evangelical Mennonites Conference on the other hand, was formed out of the remnants of the Kleine Gemeinde which stayed in Manitoba. When venerable leaders such as Bishop David P. Reimer, passed away or retired, the Conference fell heavily under

the influence of the proponents of America fundamentalism within the ranks. Recently there has been a renewed interest in Anabaptist-Mennonite history and theology in the E.M.C. and this is to be encouraged.

Nevertheless, it is inaccurate to say that the Kleine Gemeinde is now the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. For one thing the E.M.C. sent missionaries to Mexico to convert the Kleine Gemeinde to the American fundamentalist understanding of Christian truth during the 1950s, which caused considerable unhappiness. In this sense the Kleine Gemeinde/E.M.C. division of 1948 could well be compared to the Sommerfelder/Rudnerweide — E.M.M.C. division of 1936.

I do not want to belabor the point, nor do I wish to reflect negatively on the E.M.C. — whose members are all wonderful Christians — and yet feel it is important to point out this discrepancy. After years of struggle the Kleine Gemeinde is very much alive and I feel it is very unfair to dismiss and ignore this earnest Christian group in view of the sacrifices they have made, suffering murder, rape and plunder for their faith.

Two other minor points regarding the review. H. Balzer was a convert from the pietist Orloff Gemeinde and not the Grosse Gemeinde. Secondly, in 1824 the Rudnerweide Bishop Goertz (a born again Wuertemberg Separatist) accused Klaas Reimer to the Supervisory Committee for failing to partake in arresting and transporting of criminals. If successful, this attack would have resulted in a change of habitant for Klaas Reimer to a Siberian prison camp (p. 182). Whether this was better or worse than crucifixion, fortunately remained hypothetical.

In closing, I add that I enjoy the *Mennonite Mirror*, and thank the editor and his associates for the countless unpaid hours they contribute to keep it going.

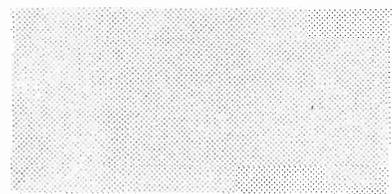
Yours truly  
Delbert F. Plett  
Steinbach

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

*An inaccuracy is an error is a mistake. Still, I find it a little strange that Delbert Plett would want to correct what he regards as an inaccuracy in my review of his book with a mistake of his own. He is right, of course, in pointing out that the Kleine Gemeinde is alive and well in such places as Mexico, Belize, etc. But his statement that "the Kleine Gemeinde . . . moved to . . . Mexico in 1948" is misleading. It was a remnant (15%) of the church that moved, not a "remnant"*

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that stayed in Manitoba, as he alleges. Whatever he may think of the *Kleine Gemeinde* church that remained in Manitoba, it is a fact that it retained that name until 1952, when it changed its name to *Evangelical Mennonite Church*. My mistake was that I did not differentiate between the *Kleine Gemeinde* church that stayed and the remnant that left. His is to make the differentiation in disproportionate and misleading terms.

As for the other "minor" inaccuracies he points out in my review, I plead guilty and can only echo Dr. Johnson's famous excuse: "Ignorance /Sir/, pure ignorance."

## SWAZI SERIES DEFENDED

Ms Leona Dueck Penner in her letter demonstrates a strong attachment to Swaziland and its people. She spent four years in that country, and no doubt contributed her share for the great respect that the Swazis have for Canadians.

When abroad we all perhaps at times suffer from a little Western arrogance. "We can leave any time we like," Ms Penner writes, implying that the unfortunate Swazis cannot. Many Swazis have told me that they would love to visit Canada, but I am sure they meant for a visit only. When I have some Swazis "grunt approval," I attach no derogative meaning to it. I have on occasion grunted approval, and sometimes disapproval.

As I wrote for a Swazi periodical, I found their country beautiful and was impressed with the friendliness and spontaneity of its people. This was as true for the women working on a sugar cane plantation near the Mocambique border as it was for Louis Ndlovu, Catholic Bishop of Manzini, whom I met and with whom I exchanged some rather lively stories.

Recently I received a letter from J. S. M. Matsebula, who wrote the first Swazi best-seller, *The King's Eye* (that was his Swazi title as the late king's advisor). In the letter Matsebula expressed his pleasure at my appreciation of traditional Swazi values. Matsebula and Ndlovu are black and native Swazis. To call them so is no more patronizing than labelling someone a native Canadian or native American.

Swaziland is not a Western-type democracy. Their government is a modified tribal hierarchy. All the government ministers are native Swazis (blacks), except Derek Von Wissel, the minister of commerce, industry, mines and tourism. Though born in Swaziland,

Von Wissel is white. To me this shows the remarkable confidence the Swazis have in their culture. They realize that in some areas, especially in the technological-commercial sector, they require the expertise of an outsider, and they are not afraid to make use of one.

My observations on Swaziland were presented in a light-hearted way. That was the nature of the series. I would not have used that tone if I had written on the social problems of the country, such as child abuse, the exploitation and treatment of the women, the poor dietary and health conditions. These are more acute in Swaziland than in Canada. They would be topics for a more serious treatment. However, they should not be presented in isolation, but against the background of the many positive culture patterns of Swazi society.

At this stage most of the people of Swaziland function as a pre-industrial society. I have admiration for many of the Swazis who attempt to blend their native culture with Western ways. I even hope that they may be more successful than we are in this process.

Victor Peters,  
Moorehead, Minnesota

## CO-OPS AND CAPITALISTS

The *Mennonite Mirror* is much appreciated and read with great interest in our home.

However, a statement in the February issue under the title "Observed along the way" prompts a response.

The editor finds it "somewhat ironical that in this strong private enterprise town (Steinbach) which has never had much use for co-operatives and other "socialist" enterprises, would have such a strong thriving credit union, which is actually a co-operative.

I am surprised that with over 40 per cent of the Canadian adult population holding memberships in co-ops, that co-ops are still perceived as being socialist in nature.

The largest consumer co-op in North America is located in the city of Calgary. The Calgary Co-op enjoyed sales of \$345 Million (30 per cent of the total Calgary food market) \$12.8 Million in savings, and 248,000 members in '84. One would hardly want to call Calgary a socialist city. The Co-Op Union of Canada, speaking for the major centrals, has consistently taken a non partisan stance. In our representations to provincial and federal governments we seek to be recognized as a distinct third sector in the economy, presenting a desirable

alternative to big government or big business control.

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Erdman Klassen  
Vice President  
Federated Co-operatives Ltd.

## TRUE FACTS?

In reference to Delbert Plett's book, *The Golden Years* and the subsequent review of it; I feel it is high time that an insider of the *Kleine Gemeinde* (thus called by our *Kleine Gemeinde* living in Mexico and Belize and their daughter churches) or the *Evangelical Mennonite Conference of Canada*, reveal the facts and details relating to its founding in 1812, its rise, and the controversy it has created, or the controversy created for it by other Mennonites in Russia at that time.

The historical issues surrounding the *Kleine Gemeinde* (please Mr. Reimer, is the use of the term "so-called" appropriate? It was the official name until 1952) has for the most part been treated with contempt and perhaps suspicion at best by historians of Mennonite persuasion — perhaps those of the *Grosse Gemeinde* persuasion to be specific. The *Kleine Gemeinde*, founded by the late Klass Reimer, a *Grosse Gemeinde* minister until 1812, did not arise to propagate erroneous, non-Biblical doctrines or seek to stir up irrelevant issues of the day. He was, along with an original group of 18-20 followers, dismayed at what he felt was a state of general apostasy in the larger Mennonite church in the Molotchna. To be specific, issues such as lax church discipline, the interwoven system of church-state colony system, a lack of appropriate teachings concerning repentance, non-resistance, non-conformity, the permissible use of alcohol, tobacco, boisterous activity (i.e. card playing or dancing) led him and his followers to leave the *Grosse Gemeinde* and attempt to return to what they felt was a more similar church as taught by Menno Simons — Realizing that to stay, would not be sufficient in carrying and living out what was taught, they started their own church, henceforth known as the *Kleine Gemeinde* until 1952. These actions incurred the hostile disapproval by the mother church; treated with hostility, regarded with suspicion they were only finally granted official recognition as a

separate church through the intercession of Johan Cornies in 1843.

This suspicion toward the Kleine Gemeinde increased its isolation and creation of invisible barriers which have only come down in the last 3 or so decades. This habit of suspicions, mistrust shown to the Kleine Gemeinde was passed on by the Kleine Gemeinde to the Holdemans when they left in 1881-82, when the EMB's left later (but to a lesser degree) and **much more noticeably** and more recently when some 20 or so families left the EM Conference in 1971-73 in the Interlake region to form two congregations which they felt would be more similar to Klass Reimer's original ideals. And thus goes the circle — with church treating its department members, perhaps not openly as heretics but with intolerance, suspicion and mistrust. Referring to the Mennonite community as a whole — is it not time to cease these habitual habits of treating those who leave, with suspicion and mistrust and perhaps learn to tolerate each other a little more? It's a crying shame to see how Mennonites treat each other especially when they leave to form a new church and when it is more conservative than the mother church. When will we as Mennonites simply grow up, tolerate each other without suspicion even if we can't agree, on each and every issue? Sometimes I doubt if we ever will.

Sincerely,  
R. K. Loewen,  
Blumenort.

#### A NOTE FROM B.C.

Greetings from B.C.! As assistant pastor of the Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church here in Clearbrook, B.C., I get to read your publication (lately) and I do so with great interest. The recent article about "Tjast" I found rather entertaining and the article about Henriette Schellenberg was "aus dem Herzen gesprochen." Though I'm not gifted musically (I only have an average voice), I do appreciate good music, especially singing, leaning rather towards the classics, including opera (but, oh, is that expensive!). I wholeheartedly agree with Mrs. Schellenberg's statement, when she expresses her concern that the young (our church youth included) sing mostly in unison with guitar accompaniment. It seems the easy way out with very little discipline (musical and otherwise) required. The danger herein lies in it being habit-forming.

With best wishes for a good year.  
Jakob Friesen,  
Clearbrook, B.C.

#### AN DEN MIRROR

Werter Editor:

Ihren Bericht ueber den Schweizer Schriftsteller, Caesar von Arx, welcher neulich im *Mennonite Mirror* erschien, fand ich hoechst interessant und zutreffend.

Das Buehnenstueck „Brueder in Christo“ ist mir wohlbekannt, da es im Jahre 1963 vom Jugendverein der Ersten Mennonitenkirche zu Winnipeg, von meinem verstorbenen Vater empfohlen und unter meiner Regie, aufgefuehrt wurde.

Wenn auch die Mitwirkenden und ein Teil der Zuschauer das Stueck hoch schaezteten, fanden die Auffuehrungen damals leider nur maessigen Anklang.

Seitdem ist aber eine neue Interessenwelle fuer Mennonitengeschichte, durch gute historische Werke, tuechtige Lehrkraefte, usw., entstanden. Aus diesem Grunde stimme ich Ihnen bei, dass so ein Stueck jetzt in unserer Mitte mit Erfolg aufgefuehrt werden koennte.

Da ich leider nicht mehr im Direktorium des Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre bin, kann ich es der Gruppe nur vorschlagen — was ich auch vorhabe. Ihr eben veroeffentlichter Bericht wird meinen Vorschlag bestimmt unterstuetzen.

Ich danke nochmals fuer den interessanten Bericht ueber einen wichtigen Schriftsteller unserer Zeit, der leider fast vergessen ist.

Mit freundlichen Gruessen,  
John J. Enns, Winnipeg

#### JIEADA SHREFTLEIDA

Praidja Johoun Niefelt, aiva vaim ec fadaohm zie, aivazat dout Niei Tastament ent Ploutdietschi. Ec bizocht am eeni mohnat trigj, en ec bimoict dout hee een uitjiteacenda Shreffforsha es, uk aivazata doabie! Ec koun zienen Shrefftbijref en aivazatunskunst nich huech jinuech acht! Hee es jizaejent en zieni goevi.

Oeba vout mie shvoamoht en bizornjisi moict es dout fohencnisfoli outhabet dout zieni roetjaiva dee aivazatunk ouncleedi dohni. Mie noum dout fon onjifae tvalf joa dee Huechdietschi shpoek toh leari, en ec viea, noe mieni meenunk, ceen blotkop! Wuarom dout zoh lang noum lach een grohtet deel doaroun dout dee shproek nich fonetish viea. Ec laiz nui aiva tvintich shproeki, en dee meisti veari leicht toh leari viens dee fonetish veari. Eenji fon dee shproeki noumi veinja ous eeni mohnat!

Dee froejg es dizi: Vuarom vel vie dee clieni cinga tvalf joa cvaili om eeni shproek toh leari van zee dout eni houlvi tiet kuni van dee shproek

fonetish viea? Van vie ons noe dout "International" outhabet rechte, en dan clieni endrungi mueki, vua dout needich viea, dan viea onzi shproek fail leichta toh leari, beides foh clieni oeda grohti!

Loet mie een poa bieshpeli jaiva vuarom onzi P.D. shproek zoh fohencnisfol es:

1. Noe Hermoun Rampel zien vuatbuek (eeni zeea achtungsfoli en groht-oatiji oabeitskonst!) drect eena dee eefachi buecshtoev "s" op dree foshiedeni vaej uit: a. oppsate; b. oppstale; c. oppreitse. Vuarom???

2. Em Tietusbreef, noe johoun Niefelt, (dit es nich zieni shult) om dain luit "sh" toh shrievi, zen doa dree foshiedeni uitgoevi: a. stemt 2:1; b. *schwautsa* 1:10; c. *nusscht* 1:6. Vout es dee uiazoek??

3. Uk vada em Tietusbreef, voat dee lata "o" op dree foshiedeni vae uitjishproeki: a. *oba* 2:1; b. *to* 2:2; c. *worden* 3:3. Vout es dee grunt, oeda zen doabie? Moect dout kluekheit?

Doa zen noch op veinichsti noch *naejen* meea onraegelmalsichceiten em Tietusbreef. Vae fon ons voat ohlt jinuech dout hee koun outhabie uut dee uitdrecsraejeli uitvendich leari dee doa zeii, tohm bieshpel: "Feram 't' es 's' -sh; noem 't' es 's' -ts, en em meden em vuat es dout eemoel zoh, oeba oundatmoel oundash!" Eena fobiestat zic blohs zeea fex!

Dout N.T. es toh een veatiolet en vichtijet Buek om dout en onshelichi, oeda fohencnisfoli latari en raejeli toh bishtroefi! *Dout eefachsti es dout basti!* Wycliffe es ema opit eefachi en fonetishit jivast: vuarom nich nui? Vearen dee P.D. schreffshtala, dee doa een poa joa trigj eeni konferens hildi, toh zeea bienflust met dout Huechdietschi (tohm bieshpel, 'au' enshtaid 'ou' zoh ous Webster en de meisti oundari dohni; 'sch' enshtaid 'sh'; en dee umluidi 'ä', 'ü', 'w' enshtaid 'v', 's' enshtaid 'z', e.z.v.). Vearen zee fileicht meea biduet bie dout ohli toh blievi ous dee shproek leichta toh moeki fo dee cinga? Ohlt es nich ema goht, blohs van dout baita es! Dout es baite eemoel eeni foruksunk han em ounfank, en dout rajcht dohni, ous ounfenklich dout leichta toh moeki, oeba dan fo faili tohkinftiji jeneratsjohnen schwoamoht toh moeki!

En, vuarom moten dee outhabie dingvead met grohti ounfanksbuekshtovi jieat voari? Vout han dee meea fodeent ous dee tietvead, oeda bishrievunksvead? Mien Ohm Geat Buila, fon Rosthern, dee viet en breet bikount viea ous reizipraidja, daim zien praidichbuek ec jiorvi hab, viea zic nich ema

zecha op hee en wuat met eeni grohti lata ounfangi zul! Vel vie dout fon onzi clieni cinga folangi? Dee meisti shproeki fon aivarem 'pudel' (uitnoem: Dietsch) haben dee groti ounfankclata blos fo hauptvead, en fo Got, oeda zieni faevead.

Voh cen vie eeni niei shproek fo zecha brukboa moeki, en em gank hohli? Ec zie mie aivaseicht dout vie uk ons moti metbeaca uitjaivi: laizibeaca, jidichtbeaca, jishpraecbeaca, en bizon-dash, LEEDABEACA! Nusht es leichta toh leari ous van dout met jizank bijleitet voat. Tohm bieshpel, "Mien leeva Got shrift oules op"; "Een baitji toh loet es fail toh loet"; oeda, "Van vie vieva veli viti vingli voushi, vel vie vieva veacet woata veeti." Gous eefach, joe?

Ec zie zoh een houlva shproek-enkenstla, en uk Biebelforsha fo meist feftich joa. Ec hab oul fieatien fon dee cartsti N.T. beaca en mien eajenet oulfabet aivazat, oeba viens ec mou ouleen oabeid hab ec nich jinuech shvunk dout oundri uk noch foadich toh bringi. Een poa metoabeida vudi fail veat, en zeea needich zeni! (Ec laiz, unja oundarem, Griechish, Rush, Shvedish, ezv.)

Ec zie mie aivaseicht dout een fohenknisfolet bueck nich voat em shvunk koemi. Dee mensh es fon natuia fuil, en, van eeni zach toh fail oabeit brukt, voat dee unjaloeti voari fon dee meisti menshi! Ec veet! Ec hab uk eeni vankelmietijt natuia! Vel vie oeba dout leichta fo onzi cinga moeki ous vie dout houdi!

Mien oulfabet haft blohs feftich latari, oeda luidi, en vae dee feftich uitvendich koun, koun fuat vajchlaizi! Jieda luit voat ema aivareen uitjishproeki. *Dout eefachsti es dout basti*, van dout shproekenleari ounbitrafft!

Dee Biebel op P.D. kun een grohta zaejen zeni fo dee tien duizendi Menonieten dee nich aeren Gotesdeenst en Engelsh oeda Spounish oufhohli veli. Mucht Got Zienen zaejen toh Zieni oabeit shenki, en mucht Zienen velen, en dizem bitracht, folkoemen uitjifeat voari. Naecsten Zoma raecen ec en Manitoba een poa vaec toh zeni.

En Zienen deenst,  
Cnals Buila  
Cornelius Buhler,  
Sarasota, Florida

*Leewe Läsasch:*

*Hia ess noch eene aundre plautdietsche Buakstabierinj. Woone ess bāta — onse ooda disem Kjnals Bula siene? Dann kjenn jie ons mol een Breef schriewe onn ons saje woone yunt bāta jefelt.*

Dee Edita

# Unter Uns

von Jack Thiessen

Was uns Mennoniten weltweit verbindet ist der Glaube und unser ethnisches bzw. voelkisches Wesen; der Glaube bzw. die kirchlichen Richtungen des Glaubens schlagen recht viele Wege ein, hingegen, das voelkische Moment meines Verstaendnis des Mennonitentums nur eine, naemlich unsere plautdietsche Sprache. Wir haben es in unseren Kreisen weitgehend vernachlaessigt, diese Sprache zu pflegen, und somit ist die Zeit nicht mehr lange, bis wir unseren mennonitischen Geschwistern in der BRD, in der Sowjetunion, in Suedamerika und in Mexiko sprachlos, bzw. sprachenlos gegeneinander stehen werden.

Dieses Thema anzuschneiden gilt als heisses Eisen, und man macht es gewoehnlich, wenn ueberhaupt, unter vier Augen. Das kommt daher weil die Kirche oder die Gemeinde in den USA und in Kanada diesbezuglich entweder sich stark defensiv verhaelt, oder ein schlechtes Gewissen hat, weil sie hierzulande auf ein monolinguales Christentum im Sinne der Weg des geringsten Widerstandes besteht und es versteht Kritiker, ja sogar Fragende, schnell und endgueltig mundtot zu machen. Ob diese Gemeinden noch ein Recht haben, sich bei und nach der kritiklosen Einverleibung amerikanischen

Fundamentalismus noch mennonitisch zu nennen, ist ein Frage fuer sich. Feststeht, dass bei der Auseinandersetzung Glaube-Ethnisches Wesen, das Letztere wesentlich mehr Toleranz und innige Liebe aufgebracht hat als die kirchliche Instanz. Fest steht auch, dass es der Kirche hierzulande schlechthin wohl ziemlich egal war, dass plattdeutsche Glaubensgeschwister vor allem in Mexico und in Suedamerika sich mittlerweile restlos von uns abgenabelt haben und ihre kulturelle und sprachliche Nahrung aus und in der BRD suchen und finden. Das ist eine bedenkliche Bilanz, die vielleicht noch korregiert oder sogar rueckgaengig gemacht werden koennte. Aber man hat Grund solche Korrektur anzuzweifeln.

Wenn es so etwas wie eine Unterlassungssuende dermaleinst bei der Oeffnung des Ewigen Buches geben wird, dann wird diese bewusste Vernachlaessigung unseres ethnischen Wesens, ganz explizit, die Muttersprache unserer mennonitischen Familie, PLAUTDIETSCH also, den Verantwortlichen hoffentlich schwer zu schaffen machen. Ich waere bei dem Urteilsspruch in der Ewigkeit als Expert Witness oberster Fachverstaendiger eigentlich gerne dabei!

mm

# Onkel Albrecht

by Victor Peters

Aus etj aunfonk no School to goanen donn docht etj aule Menschen oppe Welt heeten Panna, Friesen, Jiesbrajcht ooda Rampel, en aule groote ooda erwossne Lied wearen fonn Oom Isaak jedeepet. Etj docht uck Oom Isaak (daut wea Eltesta Isaak Dyck fonn Chortitz, en Russlaund) wea emma Eltesta jewasst so lang aus de Welt bestunt.

Woo bekaunt Oom Isaak wea wort etj fäl spoada en, aus etj en Mexiko wea. Dort troff etj uck eenen Ältesta Isaak Dyck, äwajens en gauns muckaja Maun, oba sest au reit. He wea Eltesta fonne Mexasche Mennonieten en säd, aus hee lang tridj toom Eltesta jewält wort, haud hee fonn Oom Isaak üt Russlaund eenen Breef jetjrajen. He wees mie dän Breef en etj sach, denn Oom Isaak haud eene feine Haundschrift. Aus etj säd, daut etj Oom Isaak enn Russlaund jeseenen haud aus etj Kjind wea, donn moak diss Mexscha Oom Isaak siene Uage too en dreid sien Jesejcht enopp aus wann et Himmelfoat wea. He säd, komm no ons, wie mutten ons mea fetallen. Etj deed daut uck, bleef oba nijch lang wiels siene Mame wea sea schaubijch.

Jenoach, bie ons heeten de Lied soo aus etj aul säd, Wieben, Reimasch ooda Thiesses. Daut wea eeja de Lutherauna en de Katholike noam Darp trokken. Oba wie hauden aul ferhäja eene Äwarauschung erläft. Miene Mutta wea de elste, en see haud noch dree junge Sestren. Dee wullen no Amerikau tratjen, säden oba to sitj selwst: "Es ist nicht gut dass der Mensch allein sei," en so kaum daut daut aule dree sitj mett eenem Rucks befrieden.

Leena en Neeta (etj nannd an oba emma "Taunte") befriede sitj mett Manna mett Nomes soo aus wie dee kjanden: Ditj en Peetasch. Oba Sara befried sitj mett eenen Albrecht. Lied nannden am Aulbrajcht. Soonen Nomen haud etj en mien Läwen noch nie jeheat. Oba hee wea en dietscha Mensch, groot jedeepet enn aules.

Aundre Onkels woont etj haud nannd etj Onkel Peta ooda Onkel Frauns, oba dissem nannd etj Onkel Albrecht. Vielleijch wear et wiels hee üte Kjrim kaum, fielleijch wiels hee Wätmaun jewasst wea, fielleijch uck wiels hee aul twee gauns junge Dajchta haud, soo enn mienem ella, etj weet nijch, oba hee wea bie mie Onkel Albrecht. He heet uck noch Heinriich. Soont kjannd wie uck nijch. Wie wudden Hendritj sajen, oba bie soonem üte Kjrim pausst daut wada uck nijch.

Wie wonden aula toop bie miene Grootmutta. Dee Onkels wearen Fljuchtlinge enn hauden kjeen Tüs; miene Mutta wea no Hüs jekomen wiels see enne Revolution äre Wohnung aunjestejt hauden, en Onkel Albrecht haude se enne Kjrim de Mäl wajchjehipst. Enn wiels se aula (büta miene Grootmutta enn miene Mutta) soowiesoo no Amerikau tratjen wullen, dochte se daut loond sitj nijch ne Woninj too seatjen. Boolt wudde se aula en Amerikau sennen, Jelt fedeenen, Wittbrot äten en Botta schmären so ditj daut et njare Näs toopschoof. Büta daut wie nijch fäl too äten hauden jintj et gauns lostijch too.

Seowens haud wie emma fäl Spos. Onkel Albrecht haud fäl Tricks. Wann Johnnie Carson donn aul siene Talkshow jehaud haud, haud hee bestemmt uck Onkel Albrecht ejiloaden. Eamoal läd hee fe onse Uage 20 Eia. Onkel Peeta holp an dee ütem Mül too nämen. Daut jintj so feks daut en 5 Minuten de Mets woont oppm Desch lach, foll wea. Miene Frind säden etj kunn jlecklijch sennen soonen Onkel to habn, wanna uck Aulbrajcht heet.

Onkel Albrecht kunn uck Jetoa spälen. En woo. Dann säd hee too siene twee Mätjes see sullen sitj hanstalen en sinjen. Daut deeden dee dann uck, dee wearen soo ontlijch. Onkel Albrecht späld de Jetoa, de Mätjes sunnen, en dann jazzde seen poa Leeda han

daut ons seenen en hearen fejintj. Daut wearen feschiedne Leeda woont wie nijch kjanden, ne Oat Evangeliumsleeda. Dee motte se enne Kjrim jeleat habn, fielleijch fonn de Breedajameenta, bie ons gauf daut dee nijch. Bie ons worden Sindach Jesangbuaksleeda jesungen, en sest soone aus se dann biem Schlüsselbund sungen, "Hab oft im Kreise der Lieben," ooda "Im schönsten Wiesengrunde." Oba uck de Foltjsleeda worde bie ons nijch soo hot-sijch jesungen.

Nü wea daut bie ons soo, wann irjent wäa em Darp krank wea en Grootmutta daut enwort, dann musst etj doa too Meddach Supp handroagen. Daut jintj mie wattasche schljacht. Eamol head se daut de Taunte Rampelsche krank wea, en too mien Jletj haud Grootmutta tjeene Supp reed. De Hon rannd noch lostijch oppm Hoff eromm. Onkel Albrecht säd, dann schetj etj miene Mätjes han en see kjennen dee Taunte waut fäasinjen. Soo wort daut uck.

En waut jleew jie? Dee Taunte wort schwinda jesunt aus wann se Heenasupp jehaut haud. See fetald uck em gaunsen Darp daut dee Mätjstjes jesungen hauden daut see jedocht haud see wea em Himmel.

De oole Taunte Jintasche, woont aul lang krank wea, jo opp Stoawes lach en säd, wann se wenijchstens soo lang läwd bat de Maitjoaschen riep wearen, säd nü see wull uck dee Mätjes sinjen hearen. Dee Mätjes mussten han en sinjen, en dee Taunte Jintasche läwd opp en läwd lang jenoach daut se nijch bloos Maitjoaschen, nä uck em Hoawst noch Plümen en Aprikosen ütem Goaden eet eeja se gauns toofrad mett sitj storf.

En soo jintj daut wieda mett'm sinjen bat Albrechts no Amerikau trokken. "Wäa haud daut jedocht," säd Oole Thiesse, "daut soone kjlleene Dinja soone scheene Stemmtjes hauden."

mm

# Im Wonnemonat Mai: Ein Verbesserter Heinrich Heine?

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,  
Als Alle Knospen sprangen,  
Da ist in meinem Herzen  
Die Liebe aufgegangen.

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,  
Als alle Vögel sangen,  
Da hab ich ihr gestanden  
Mein Sehnen und Verlangen.

Der Name Heinrich Heine ist uns aus der Schule bekannt. Viele der schönsten Liedertexte und Gedichte stammen von ihm. Es mag uns auch bekannt sein, dass Heine kein harmlos 'romantischer' Dichter war — er hat sich über solche Harmlosigkeit lustig gemacht — sondern, daß er ein ironischer Geist war, der mit Ideen und Menschen sehr unsanft umgehen konnte. Man hat ihn schon zu Lebzeiten einen Gotteslästerer genannt und seither ist er oft genug in einem negativen Licht beschrieben worden.

Dazu kommt aber auch die Tatsache, dass Heine irgendwann gegen Ende seines Lebens doch eine 'Bekehrung' erlebt haben soll. Darüber liest man ab und zu etwas in der religiösen Presse, und es ist nicht immer leicht zu wissen, ob das was man da zu lesen bekommt, tatsächlich von Heine stammt oder nicht.

Vor einiger Zeit erhielt ich einen Aufsatz genannt: "Die Quelle des Heils, Heinrich Heine, Dichter und Philosoph". Darin stehen Sätze die sicher von Heines Feder rühren, Teile seines Vorworts zu einem längeren Werk, Geschichte der Religion and Philosophie in Deutschland, in dem er seine "Umwandlung" beschreibt. Darin steht: "Ich verdanke meine Erleuchtung ganz einfach der Lektüre eines Buches. Eines Buches? Ja, und dieses Buch heisst: Die Bibel. Mit Fug und Recht heisst man dieses auch die 'Heilige Schrift'. Wer seinen Gott verloren hat, der kann ihn in diesem Buch wiederfinden, und wer ihn nie gekannt, dem weht hier der Odem des göttlichen Wortes entgegen."

In demselben Aufsatz stehen aber

auch vermeintliche Zitate und sogar ein Gedicht, die meines Wissens garnicht von Heine stammen und somit eine Fälschung wären. Was dabei besonders auffällt ist, dass in den 'Nachdichtungen' der Wortschatz ein pietistisch-evangelischer ist. So zum Beispiel in den Versen:

Zerschlagen ist die alte Leier  
Am Felsen, welcher Christus heisst!  
Die Leier, die zur bösen Feier  
Bewegt ward von dem bösen Geist,  
Die Leier, die zum Aufruhr klang,  
Die Zweifel, Spott und Abfall sang,  
O Herr, o Herr, ich knie nieder,  
Vergib, vergib mir meine Lieder!

(Angeblich zitiert aus: Gedichte von Heinrich Heine am Ende seines Lebens.)

Das traurige daran, ist, dass man bei solchen Umbildungen den wirklichen Heine und seine wirkliche Umkehr aus den Augen verliert. Denn Heine hat in der Tat in seinen letzten Jahren — nach seinen Auseinandersetzungen mit den führenden Geistern seiner Zeit, Hegel, Marx und andere — 'seinen Gott' wieder gefunden. Er wurde dabei aber nicht zu einem zerknirschten Pietisten, sondern er behielt die Gaben, die Gott ihm von Anfang an geschenkt hatte: seinen Witz z.B. und seinen unerschrockenen Geist. Dafür steht in dem erwähnten Vorwort ein gutes Beispiel:

... ich stand im Zenith meines Fettes, und war so übermütig wie der König Nebukadnezar vor seinem Sturz. Ach! einige Jahre später ist eine leibliche und geistige Veränderung eingetreten. Wie oft seitdem denke ich an die Geschichte dieses babylonischen Königs, der sich selbst für den lieben Gott hielt, aber von der Höhe seines Dünkels erbärmlich herabstürzte, wie ein Tier am Boden kroch und Grass ass — (es wird wohl Salat gewesen sein). In dem prachtvoll grandiosen Buch Daniel steht diese Legende, die ich nicht bloss dem guten Ruge, sondern auch meinem noch viel verstocktern Freunde Marx, ja auch den Herren Feuerbach, Daumer, Bruno Bauer, Hengstenberg und wie sie sonst heissen mögen, diese gottlosen

Selbstgötter, zur erbaulichen Beherrigung empfehle. Es stehen überhaupt noch viel schöne und merkwürdige Erzählungen in der Bibel, die ihrer Beachtung wert wären, z.B. gleich im Anfang die Geschichte von dem verbotenen Baume im Paradiese und von der Schlange, der kleinen Privatdozentin, die schon sechstausend Jahre vor Hegels Geburt die ganze Hegelsche Philosophie vortrug. Dieser Blaustumpf ohne Füße zeigt sehr scharfsinnig, wie das Absolute in der Identität von Sein und Wissen besteht, wie der Mensch zum Gotte werde durch die Erkenntnis, oder was dasselbe ist, wie Gott im Menschen zum Bewusstsein seiner selbst gelange — Diese Formel ist nicht so klar wie die ursprünglichen Worte: Wenn ihr vom Baume der Erkenntnis genossen, werdet ihr wie Gott sein! Frau Eva verstand von der Demonstration nur das Eine, dass die Frucht verboten sei, und weil sie verboten, ass sie davon, die gute Frau. Aber kaum hatte sie von dem lockenden Apfel gegessen, so verlor sie ihre Unschuld, ihre naive Unmittelbarkeit, sie fand, dass sie viel zu nackt sei für eine Person von ihrem Stande, die Stammutter so vieler künftigen Kaiser und Könige, und sie verlangte ein Kleid. Freilich nur ein Kleid von Feigenblättern, weil damals noch keine Lyoner Seidenfabrikanten geboren waren, und weil es auch im Paradiese noch keine Putzmacherinnen und Modehändlerinnen gab — o Paradies! Sonderbar, so wie das Weib zum denkenden Selbstbewusstsein kommt, ist ihr erster Gedanke ein neues Kleid! Auch diese biblische Geschichte, zumal die Rede der Schlange, kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn, und ich möchte sie als Motto diesem Buche voransetzen, in derselben Weise, wie man oft vor fürstlichen Gärten eine Tafel sieht mit der warnenden Aufschrift: Hier liegen Fussangeln und Selbstschüsse.

Nein, dieser Heine is unverbesserlich, Gott sei dank!

Victor Doerksen



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