

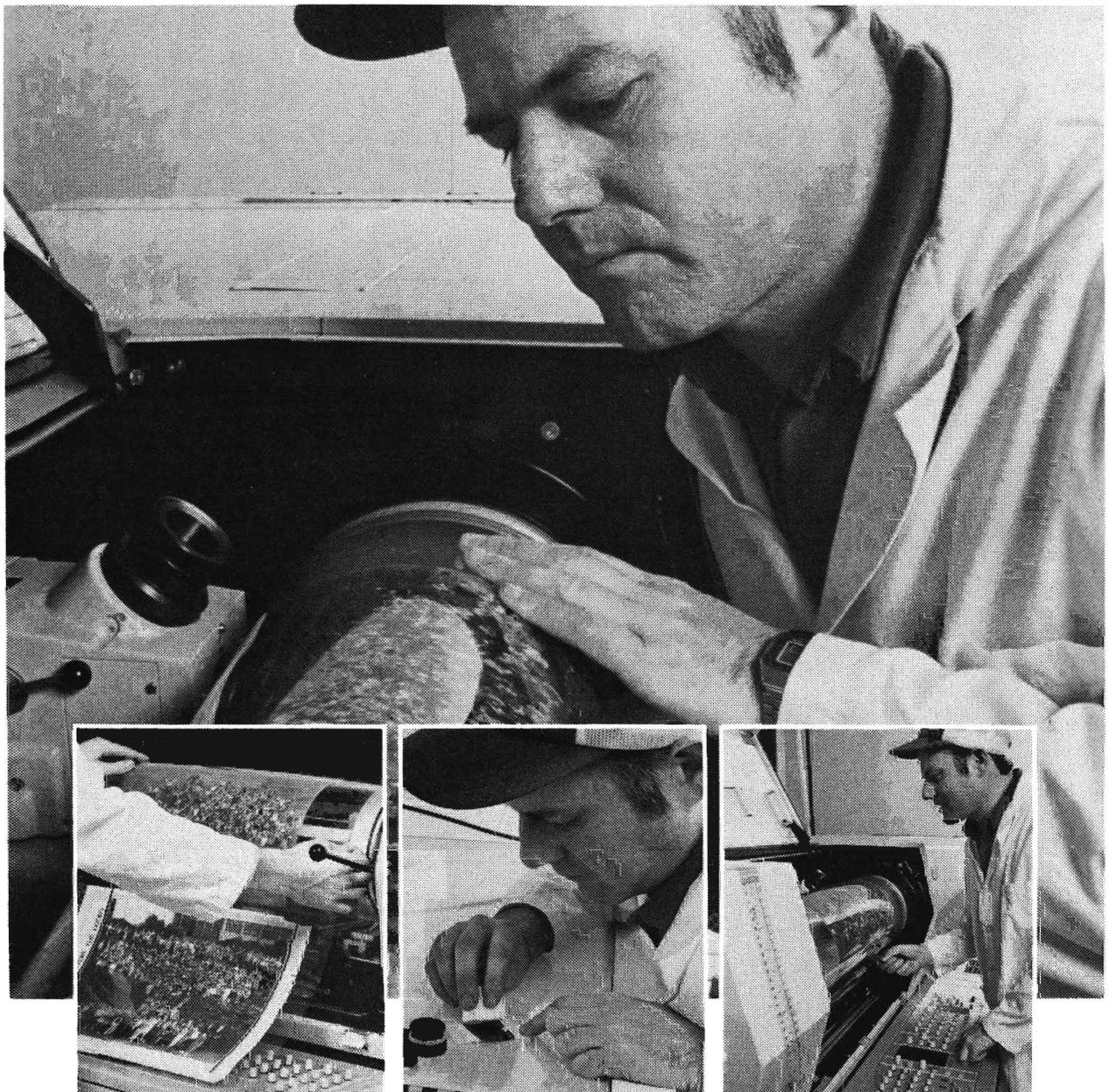
Mennonite Mirror

volume 16/number 1/september 1986

**Menno Simons:
reflections on his
1536 conversion**



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This year marks the 450th anniversary of the conversion of Menno Simons, the man who became a leader of a group of early Anabaptists and whose name eventually became incorporated into the name of the movement itself — Mennonite.

In this edition, the first of another publishing year, we commemorate Simons and the beginnings of the Mennonite movement. In his article, George K. Epp observes that Simons was truly an unusual convert in that as someone with a secure church appointment he chose to leave the Catholic church and provide outstanding leadership to a group of people who were hunted and usually executed for their faith. A following article presents us with a mere handful of quotations of Simons' writings. The volume of the complete writings is several inches thick.

Harry Loewen reflects on the question raised by the 1947 drama, *Brothers in Christ*, to explore the question: to what extent are Modern Mennonites obliged to believe and live by the principles of their "brothers in Christ" of 450 years ago?

A further article explores the role of Women among the Anabaptists. Hedy Martens says a study of the *Martyrs Mirror* reveals that women make up 30 per cent of the people whose deaths are chronicled therein, indicating a much greater degree of equality for women than is the case today.

Roy Vogt returns this issue with his 'observed' column, and also pays tribute to the late Ernst Hansch, who was a fine Lutheran friend of the Mennonites.

Those who paid attention to the news this past spring may recall the item describing the family with Tourette's syndrome, a condition which causes its victims to curse and swear, among other things. Paul Redekop explores the effects the condition has on the social fabric of the community that includes such a family.

Eine Friedensbotschaft von Johannes Harder erscheint in dieser Nummer, wie auch deutsche Beiträge von und über Menno Simons. Eine Textstelle aus einer Menno Schrift wird hier im Original vorabgedruckt (mit englischer Übersetzung) und in drei Gedichten äussert sich Fritz Senn zur Gestalt Mennos.

A very public 'thank you' is extended to the more than 250 senior citizen subscribers to the *Mirror* who cared enough about the magazine and the Mennonite Literary Society to send in a donation. More than \$6,000 was contributed, and we can honestly say that the gifts that were made in response to our appeal made a difference in our ability to maintain the quality of service you have come to expect from us.

The cover: A portrait of Menno Simons that was done in 1948 by Arend Hendriks, and the martyrdom of Anneken Heyndricks, an illustration from the *Martyrs Mirror*.

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FAITH STUDY TO PRECEDE WINNIPEG MEETING

TAIPEI, TAIWAN — Responding to worldwide calls for more attention to the question of what Mennonites believe, the Mennonite World Conference executive committee decided in its annual sessions to set in motion a process that will give faith discussions a global emphasis in the period between now and the 1990 XII MWC Assembly in Winnipeg.

The nine-member committee from six countries meets once a year to direct MWC activity in the period between triennial general council sessions. This year's executive committee meetings took place May 9-14 at the Golden China Hotel in Taipei, a setting which also enabled several participants to attend the III Asia Mennonite Conference at Taipei the following weekend.

MWC assemblies are "always a family gathering, getting to know each other," commented president Ross Bender of the United States. "Is that enough or can we also do more?" he asked, in endorsing the idea of a faith and life focus in the next few years.

Reporting on his extensive world travels the last few months, Executive Secretary Paul Kraybill highlighted a constantly recurring theme from the churches — "What do we believe? What is it that really brings us together and makes us one body?"

To launch such an international discussion, the committee approved the forming of an ad hoc study commission with a seven-step task: 1) prepare a study document based on the XII Assembly theme (to be chosen in 1987); 2) arrange for inter-Mennonite study groups among congregations throughout the world; 3) plan for coordinators in each continent to gather material and draft preliminary statements; 4) integrate these materials into a single document for discussion in a Faith and Life consultation just prior to the Winnipeg assembly; 5) give leadership to a study process that continues throughout the assembly; 6) prepare a statement for adoption by the Winnipeg assembly; and 7) edit a publication after the assembly to summarize the findings and results of the study process.

Supporting the idea of preparing a formal conference statement at Winnipeg — a message to the churches and the world — committee members noted that at the last two MWC assemblies in

Wichita and Strasbourg no statement has been made.

"We discussed critical issues, yet in the end we didn't say anything officially," commented Hiroshi Yanada of Japan. Added Louise Nussbaumer of France, "Winnipeg should not just be a touristic celebration. Celebrate yes, but also confer." She urged at the same time that the process not be so heavily theological that the average church member loses interest.

Choosing the eventual theme for Winnipeg will be a task for the 1987 general council meeting, planned for

July 14-19 at Filadelfia, Paraguay. The general council is the decision-making body with representation from every conference worldwide affiliated with MWC.

The executive committee decided to send three possible themes to council members and church conferences for their consideration: One would have a theological orientation — "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism;" another would take an outreach approach — "Witnessing to Christ in Today's World;" a third would emphasize discipleship — "Walking in the Resurrection."

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Menno Simons: founder of the peace church

Four hundred and fifty years have passed since a popular Catholic priest made the difficult decision to join a discredited Anabaptist movement. The movement which originated in the southern German lands in the 1520s had not lacked in significant personalities — Grebel, Hubmaier, Sattler, Denk, Marpeck, Hutter, Muentzer, Hoffmann — but they had never been able to unite the many and numerous groups into a mighty Reformation stream. Only the millennialists achieved a temporary unity, and that ended in the tragic events of Muenster. The outrageous excesses of Jan van Leyden and his followers (exaggerated of course by the opponents of the movement), and the bloodbath that followed when the “New Jerusalem” (Muenster) after a year of siege was finally overwhelmed, totally discredited the movement. It was accused of *Schwaermerei* (fanaticism) and violence. The millennialists had actually preached that the godless would be punished with the sword; and anybody who disagreed could be in danger of being declared “godless.”

It is in this context that we have to see Menno's decision. A popular cause always finds contenders for leadership, but when a despised and hunted movement finds an outstanding leader, one must ask: Why would he do it? Menno had for some time disagreed with the Catholic Church on the interpretation of communion (the Eucharist); he also had trouble with child baptism and he had started preaching in an “evangelical” style. Many saw in him the leader of a movement to reform the church from within; others, who had given up on the church, recognized Menno as the man who could provide leadership for a new

by George K. Epp

church — a church without blemishes. But Menno refused to become involved in the new movement. It would seem that he had too much common sense to become a follower of a movement that was extremely emotional and, in its extreme stage, violent. Reading Menno's *Opera Omnia* (Lebenswerk) one has to conclude that here a deeply religious person combined faith and reason in a most convincing way. This does not say that his logic will on every point be convincing today, or that his wisdom was unlimited. There is, however, a “Nuechternheit” (sobriety) in Menno's argument that is striking if seen in the over-heated context of the Reformation.

Menno refused to become a leader in the Anabaptist movement during the time when it was the most popular force in the Low Countries (Friesland, Holland, Brabant), but stepped in to salvage what was left of that movement after the debacle of Muenster. In 1536 he began to shape the concept of a Peace Church — a church that rejected any use of physical resistance to evil. This concept was so radical for Menno's time that one can only be amazed by his success. After all, in spite of cruel persecution, especially in the Low Countries, the Rhineland, Switzerland, and Austria, Menno's Anabaptist Peace Church survived with several hundred thousand members in the Netherlands, as well as several strong concentrations in the Rhineland, around Hamburg, in Prussia, Switzerland, Alsace and Bavaria. From these centres the church would be transplanted to Eastern Europe and to the New World.

Menno Simons was a realist in spite of his idealism. He never questioned the state's right to use the sword because evildoers had to be punished. He did not advocate a total rejection of power because evil had to be controlled by somebody. Therefore, Anabaptists should not be involved in politics (i.e., as magistrates) because that inevitably would create situations where they would have to use their political power. This of course created a dilemma — his church could survive as a totally “non-involved” Peace Church only as long as there was a state willing to protect that church. And that became Mennonite history. The State often exploited and abused Menno's Anabaptist church, but for its own reasons also gave protection to that church. When the abuses became greater than the advantages of the “protection,” the church, or parts of it, moved on to a new arrangement with another state.

From Menno's point of view this may not have been a bad idea at all, because the many moves reminded the church that this world is not the best and ultimate place. It would also seem that the many “new beginnings” preserved the vitality of the church. In any case, in the most recent century of the Anabaptist story the restless wing of the church has also been the expanding wing, while in the original homelands churches have been losing members. However, the time of “noninvolvement” is definitely over, and there are no longer any safe places available to groups claiming total nonresistance.

After 450 years we have come to the point where Menno's church has to accept responsibility for interpreting its peace position in the light of a new sit-

uation. Canadian Mennonites will stay in Canada. We have no desire to go anywhere else, but there is also no place where we could hope today to live in isolation. We will no longer be able to be passive bystanders; we will have to become involved if we really believe in peace and justice as Menno did. Today Menno would undoubtedly advise us to become involved, but he would also warn us not to repeat the emotional phase of early Anabaptism. He would certainly advise us to build the modern church on the unadulterated Gospel, and not on the trends and moods of the day. Menno was not one to jump on every bandwagon. I would also expect Menno to advise us to become realistic peace-makers. He would not trust any political peace: only when people's minds are changed is peace possible.

It has taken almost 450 years for Menno to earn recognition as one of the significant reformers of the early sixteenth century. The discredited Anabaptist movement in Europe, still frequently treated as the Schwaermer-movement of a sect, is gradually being recognized as a movement with an important concept — the Peace Church. One fears, however, that too many grab Menno's peace statements as slogans for a political cause without the slightest notion what Menno's peace position is all about. Menno was thinking in terms of changing people's minds (conversion); for him peace without conversion was unthinkable. Never would he have hoped to find a peace solution through political pressure, because he knew that political solutions are always temporary. After all, justice can only come through just people because for unjust people there is always a way around a "just" law. Yes, we will have to do our own thinking for our own time, but we can still think the Menno way: the Church of Christ is based on committed discipleship, and discipleship starts with a commitment to Christ, "for no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Menno Simons had a fascinating personality and was a significant Reformation thinker and doer. He is now widely known in North America and in many parts of Europe but in his homeland he seems to be less known and appreciated. At a recent colloquium in Amsterdam, a Dutch colleague said, perhaps with tongue in cheek, "You talk so much about Menno, maybe we have still to discover him." In view of this, I was especially pleased to see the performance of *Power in Weakness (Kraft in Schwachheit)*, a play by J. S. Postma,

at the celebrations in Witmarsum commemorating Menno's conversion. The three-house drama introduced the uninformed to the Menno we all should know.

The truth is, however, that even here in America we don't know all that much about Menno. Consider the fact that Menno Simons is the only reformer whose biography we know only partially. We know it after 1536, when he became the shepherd of the confused, lost, hunted Anabaptists. We also know about his experiences from 1536 and 1561, but we know next to nothing about the forty years preceding his conversion, and only recently have we started to dig for his roots. We have found some leads as to his past which eventually may give us a more complete picture of this founder of the Mennonite church. The churches of Pingium and Witmarsum belonged to the Premonstratensian Order and so did Bolsward. Therefore, we must assume that he had some ties to that order. Interestingly enough, that order had a peace tradition in its mission work. Where monasteries

in pagan lands would build walls around the mission house for protection, the Premonstratensian Order broke down walls whenever it took over an old castle for mission purposes. They signaled their peaceful intentions to the pagan world by living without the protection of men. "God will protect us," they would say, "He can do more than men."

Menno Simons' church has struggled for 450 years to be a witness in this world. Sometimes it has faltered and sometimes it has failed totally in its task. Many have left our church for one reason or another, but the church has grown and its witness even when it was weak has not been in vain. Today we are involved in 51 countries with some kind of mission work. Some of the ideas Menno had are almost forgotten and some we have had to adapt to our times. But even though we may be stumbling along at times, we will try to remember Menno's motto: "No other foundation can anyone lay . . ." mm

poet's word — by Clint Toews

Death of Felix Manz

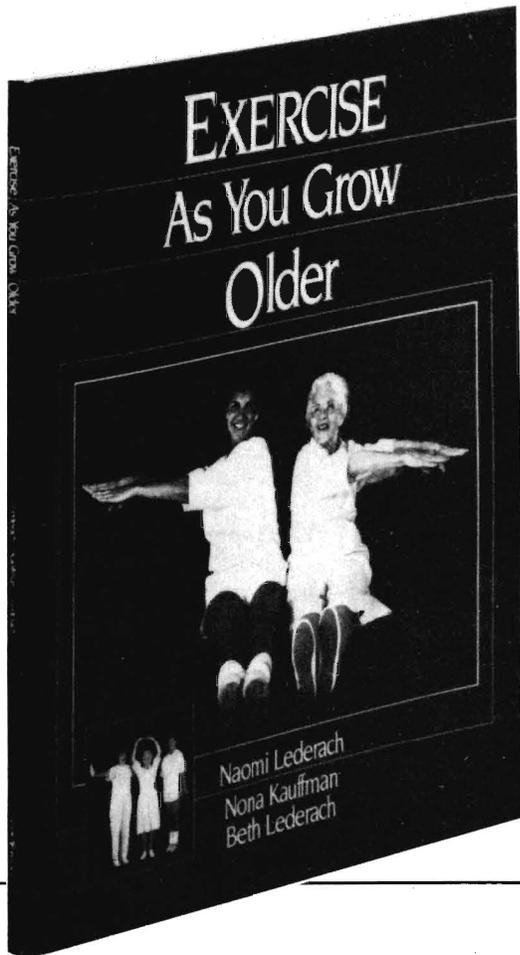
I will not turn against the one who gave himself for me
Whose river flows with endless might
Unresistable within my banks.

"And you have tied me tightly beloved enemy
It is sure to bring me freedom,
You cannot take my life from me
When it is not my own
Or tear me from my family
When I am going home."

"Die you filthy anabaptist, twisted heretic"
With singleminded piety they killed his body there . . .
None of them could see him meet his savior in the air
They held him underneath the waters calm
until his body moved no more
Victorious he led a million souls
Just another soldier in the war.



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Menno's Views on Important Issues: Excerpts from *Opera Omnia*

An issue devoted to Anabaptism and Menno Simons should include some quotations from his writings which can give readers a feeling for the man and his time. Menno was a forceful speaker and one can feel the punch of his argument even in his written words. We realize of course that quotations selected somewhat arbitrarily and out of context should be seen more as samples of Menno's style than of his argumentation. We hope, however, that readers will get a feeling for Menno from these excerpts and appreciate what this Reformation leader has to say on a number of the burning issues of his time. He addresses princes, colleagues (*die Gelehrten*) and the common people all in the same tone of the loving shepherd — loving, but with an incredible courage to speak as "the Spirit leads," regardless of the consequences.

On Faith:

We teach with Christ and say, Believe the Gospel. That Gospel is the blessed announcement of the favor and grace of God to us, and of forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus. Faith accepts this Gospel through the Holy Ghost, and does not consider former righteousness or unrighteousness, but hopes against hope (Rom. 4:18), and with the whole heart casts itself upon the grace, Word and promises of the Lord, since it knows that God is true, and that His promises cannot fail. In this the heart is renewed, converted, justified, becomes pious, peaceable, and joyous, is born a child of God, approaches with full confidence the throne of grace, and so becomes a joint heir of Christ and a possessor of eternal life.

On Repentance:

These are the noble fruits of repentance, acceptable to the Lord. Therefore, it was said to David, that the Lord had taken away his sins. To Peter it was announced that the Lord was risen from the dead. Matthew was accepted as an

apostle. Zacchaeus was told that he had become a son of Abraham, and Mary Magdalene, that she had chosen that good part which would not be taken away from her. To the adulterous woman Jesus said, Go and sin no more.

Such a repentance we teach and no other, namely, that no one can or may piously glory in the grace of God, the forgiveness of sins, the merit of Christ, unless he has truly repented. It is not enough that we say, we are Abraham's children, that is, that we are known as Christians. We must do the works of Abraham, that is, we must walk as all true children of God are commanded by His Word, as John writes: If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sins.

On Communion:

Oh, delightful assembly and Christian marriage feast, commanded and ordained by the Lord Himself! Here no carnal pleasures, the flesh, and appetites, but the glorious and holy mysteries, by means of the visible signs of bread and wine, are represented to and sought by true believers.

Oh, delightful assembly and Christian marriage feast, where take place no improper and shameful mockery, and no senseless songs; but the pious Christian life, peace, and unity among all the brethren. The joyous word of divine grace moreover, His glorious benefits, favor, love, service, tears, prayers, His cross and death, are set forth, and urged with delightful thanksgiving and devout joy.

Oh, delightful assembly and Christian marriage feast to which the impenitent and proud despisers are, according to Scripture, not invited: the harlots, rogues, adulterers, seducers, robbers, liars, defrauders, tyrants, shedders of blood, idolaters, slanderers, etc., for such are not the people of the Lord. But

they are invited who are born of God, true Christians who have buried their sins, and who walk with Christ in a new and godly life. They are invited who crucify the flesh and are driven by the Holy Spirit; who sincerely believe in God, seek, fear, and love Him, and in their weakness willingly serve and obey Him, for they are members of His body, flesh of His flesh, bone of His bone.

On Baptism:

Christ, after His resurrection, commanded His apostles saying, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Here we have the Lord's commandment concerning baptism, as to when according to the ordinance of God it shall be administered and received; namely, that the Gospel must first be preached, and then those baptized who believe it, as Christ says: Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned. Thus has the Lord commanded and ordained; therefore, no other baptism may be taught or practiced forever. The Word of God abideth forever.

To the People:

You say, we are inexpert, unlearned, and know not the Scriptures. I reply: The Word is plain and needs no interpretation: namely, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. Matt. 22:37, 39. Again, You shall give bread to the hungry and entertain the needy. Isa. 58:7. If you live according to the flesh you shall die, for to be carnally minded is death. The avaricious, drunkards, and the proud shall not inherit the kingdom of God. God will condemn adulterers and

fornicators. Rom. 8; I Cor. 6, and many like passages. All who do not understand such passages are more like irrational creatures than men, more like clods than Christians.

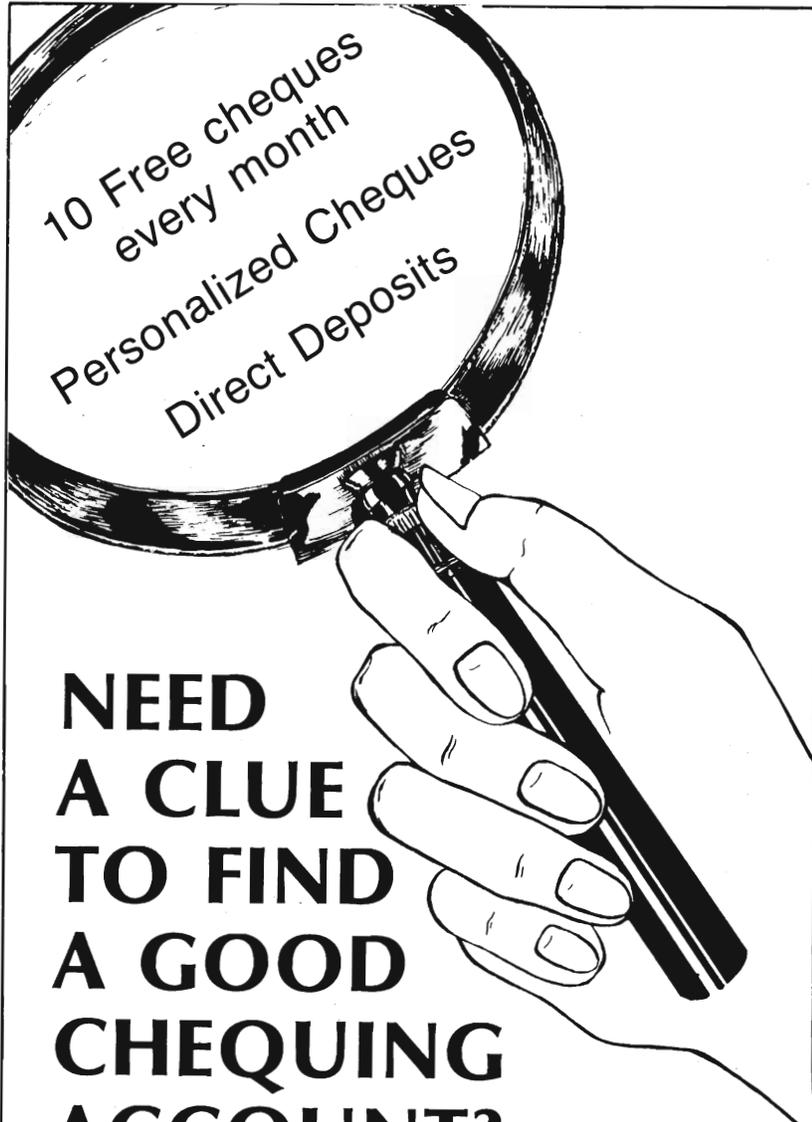
On the Ministry:

Behold, dearest friends, thus the ministers should be minded who serve the Lord's church, that they may not hear from the obstinate and obdurate, Why do you teach others and not yourselves? Nor can they teach otherwise to the glory of God, for the service of the New Testament is a service of the Spirit and not of the letter. II Cor. 3:6. Therefore Christ never chooses as laborers in His vineyard, as servants and builders, such as are avaricious and drunkards; in order that His servants might teach the kingdom of God, which is spiritual, in purity of heart, shepherding the sheep of Christ, not by force, but gently, not seeking filthy lucre, but with a kindly disposition, not as those who seek dominion of others, but as examples to the flock of Christ, not serving for a certain benefice, pension, or salary as do your teachers, but solely for the gain of the souls which Christ Jesus has so dearly bought with His precious blood.

They look wholly to God (who by His grace, created, delivered, regenerated, and sent them to His service) for their daily needs, diligently supporting themselves as much as is possible by the grace of the Lord, from their own or their rented farm, or from working at their trade; lest they be found selling the free Word of God which was given them without price.

To the Rulers (whom Menno sees as God-appointed):

O illustrious lords and princes, it is against Him that you in this manner contend with your counsel and sword and weapon. Remember what the great prophet of the Lord, Zechariah, said concerning the children of God in this world always suffering: he that touches you touches the apple of mine eye. It is a frightful abomination and raging terror thus miserably to garrote, to kill, and wipe out those who with such ardent hearts seek the Lord and eternal life, and who would not touch a hair of anyone upon the earth. Precious in the sight of the Lord, David says, is the death of His saints. It is Jesus of Nazareth whom ye persecute and not us. Therefore awake, desist, fear God and His Word. For you and we shall all be called to appear before one Judge, before whom neither power, rank, splendor, fine speech, nor



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talents will count. For righteous sentence will there be passed upon all flesh impartially, and without respect of persons. Then the miserable will have justice, and the Christ put to death in His elect will come out of the power of death and the hands of tyrants, into His promised inheritance, kingdom, and glory.

Seeing then that you carry on unjustly and tyrannically, according to the evil purpose of your heart, without Scripture and without mercy against the helpless and God-fearing, how can you look for any grace and mercy in the day of the Lord when we shall all have to stand before the impartial judgment seat where everyone will be rewarded according to his deeds?

On Armaments:

No, my beloved sirs, it will not deliver you in the day of the righteousness of God. I tell you the truth in Christ, the rightly baptized disciples of Christ, note well, they who are baptized inwardly with Spirit and fire, and externally with water, according to the Word of the Lord, have no weapons except patience, hope, silence, and God's Word. The weapons of our warfare, says Paul, are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. II Cor. 10:4, 5.

Our weapons are not weapons with which cities and countries may be destroyed, walls and gates broken down, and human blood shed in torrents like water. But they are weapons with which the spiritual kingdom of the devil is destroyed and the wicked principle in man's soul is broken down, flinty hearts broken, hearts that have never been sprinkled with the heavenly dew of the Holy Word. We have and know no other weapons besides this, the Lord knows, even if we should be torn into a thousand pieces, and if as many false witnesses rose up against us as there are spears of grass in the fields, and grains of sand upon the seashore.

Once more, Christ is our fortress; patience our weapon of defense; the Word of God our sword; and our victory a courageous, firm, unfeigned faith in Jesus Christ. mm

PEACEFUL NON-VIOLENCE STILL THE ONLY WAY

This is in response to Roy Vogt's May editorial on Mennonite answers to world problems. In his article, he suggests that we should be willing to consider "appropriate" violent as well as non-violent solutions to world problems. I can't help but wonder who will decide what is "appropriate."

Maybe I'm not being fair, but I get the impression that Mr. Vogt's arguments are informed by an affluent western, world view. For example, do governments which, he suggests, God instituted to check evil, necessarily use their power for the good of the people? In countries such as South Africa, force seems instead to be a tool used to keep a minority of people in power at the expense of a large poverty-stricken majority. Do we then, as newly enlightened Mennonites, join the Africa National Congress (in a sense, the people's "real" government) and start bombing shopping centers in order to set things right? And, if so, is this different from dropping bombs on Libyan children?

In the ten years I have spent in Central and Southern Africa I have often questioned my pacifist convictions. During that time, it became increasingly clear to me that when people are starving, being shot at and tortured, not doing anything to help them is also a form of violence. However, it is also in the context of South Africa and Mozambique, that I became more convinced than ever that violent solutions are not long-lasting solutions. For, in both countries, children are growing up experiencing hunger, racial violence and terrorism as part of everyday life. This is bound to have an effect on their development and I shudder to think of the consequences for the future.

It seems to me that only the radical non-violence of the cross can bring any sanity and peace into such a situation, for it is the cross, not fallen governments, which are God's ultimate answer to human conflict. There are already so many voices calling for violent solutions that the last thing we need is for Mennonites to add their voices to this clamour.

Instead, we need to recognize that we are already responsible for much of the

violence and suffering being experienced by the poor in Latin America, Africa and elsewhere. We need to be called, not to violence, but to a change in lifestyle, to a recognition that the poor are our brothers and sisters, and that our affluence, protected by our police and military, is part of the violence problem.

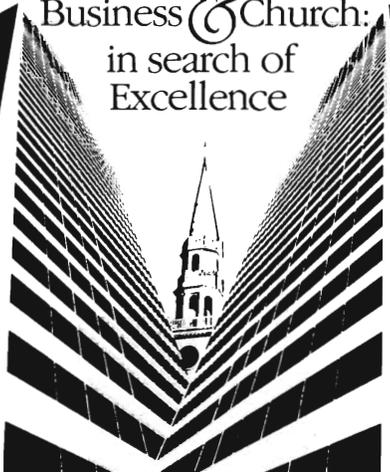
To conclude, as Mr. Vogt suggests, by all means, let us get rid of pretences. Let us repent of participating in the violence of our world while pretending to be non-violent in our isolated communities. However, let us also repent of almost accepting the pretence that violent means can bring lasting solutions to the world's problems. Because, contrary to what Mr. Vogt writes, the God whom we follow, is *not* able to *live* with the violence. Instead, he *died* to show us a different way.

Perhaps if we had been as committed to the way of peace throughout our Mennonite history as he was, we might already have found an answer to some of the world's problems.

Sincerely,
Peter Penner
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The "Brothers in Christ" 450 Years Later

by Harry Loewen

I am sitting in the Central Library of Solothurn, Switzerland, pouring over contemporary reviews of Cäsar von Arx's historical drama *Brothers in Christ* (1947). The drama deals with the Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli and the Anabaptists who broke away from him and sought to establish a church according to the Sermon on the Mount. According to the drama — and history — Zwingli began as a religious reformer, stressing a return to the faith and way of life of the New Testament. At first he preached against soldiering and war but changed his message later in the interest of national and political considerations. He even went so far as to banish, persecute and authorize the killing of those of his former followers who lived according to his earlier teaching.

When the drama *Brothers in Christ* first appeared on the Swiss stage in 1947 it received mixed reviews. There were those who had high praise for the honesty and the dramatic skill with which the author presented the great issues of the Reformation. There were also those who were offended at what they believed was a "Catholic bias" on the part of the dramatist against Zwingli and Protestantism. One reviewer called the drama a "caricature of Zwingli." The reviewer believed that the Catholic von Arx had no right to criticize the Swiss religious and national reformer who is venerated by most Swiss citizens. In any case, most reviewers agreed that the issues with which the drama deals would be discussed for a long time to come.

The drama *Brothers in Christ* and its initial reception raise questions concerning historical events and their influence on subsequent generations. With reference to the Anabaptist movement and its impact on the society of the 16th century, our question must be to what extent the issues raised at that time still apply to us Mennonites who trace our spiritual origins to the Anabaptists, the

"Brothers in Christ." In other words, to what extent, if any, are today's Mennonites obliged to believe and live by the principles of a group of Christians who lived some 450 years ago?

For Cäsar von Arx the Anabaptist "Brothers in Christ" were models of New Testament Christianity, but Zwingli represented political, social and economic realities which made him deny those principles of discipleship which he had preached and advocated earlier. The Anabaptists followed Zwingli's original message of love and the cross and in so doing found that their ideals clashed with the demands of citizenship and generally the world around them — in short with reality. Zwingli, on the other hand, found that if he wished to further the cause of the Reformation in his time and country, he could not conduct his affairs and life according to the Sermon on the Mount and many other teachings of Jesus. He felt that he had to compromise the Gospel to suit the circumstances (the reality) around him. In the end he even went to war against the Catholic provinces in Switzerland and in that action lost his life.

There is no doubt that the Anabaptists were right in obeying and following the radical demands of Christ and the Gospel. They, like the first Christians before them, have become our examples of what it means to be followers of Christ in an imperfect and sometimes hostile world. But was Zwingli — add Luther and Calvin — all that wrong in insisting that times had changed since the early Christian era and that changed times and circumstances demanded new approaches to the Christian faith and way of life? In his interpretation and application of the Gospel message Zwingli may not have been strictly biblical, but he was nevertheless sincere in his belief that his way of applying Christ's teach-

ing in 16th-century Switzerland was most appropriate under the then prevailing circumstances. The conflict between Zwingli's early followers and the Swiss reformer was thus inevitable, intense and most tragic. Zwingli became a persecutor of those who like Cornelius in the drama *Brothers in Christ* opposed but still loved him.

For Mennonites today the Anabaptists continue to be a challenge in matters of faith and way of living. But the question is, how does the old Anabaptist message of love and following Jesus apply today? It is not enough, even if it were possible, to know what the Anabaptists believed and practised, and then simply apply those beliefs and practices to our time and circumstances. The times of the Anabaptists were different from ours and their struggles with issues, persons and institutions cannot be duplicated today. For example, adult or believer's baptism is no longer a problem for us or something that the rest of society fears or objects to. However, in the 16th century the Anabaptists were exiled and killed for insisting that babies should not be baptized and that mature persons should join the church voluntarily. Today everyone is free to live according to the dictates of his conscience or not to believe at all if he so chooses. We are no longer persecuted for our Mennonite faith. In fact, Mennonites as a religious group and as people enjoy the respect and admiration of their neighbors and society.

In the 16th century many Anabaptists shunned the "world," including politics and most governmental and social institutions. Today, on the other hand, Mennonites are found in practically all professions and occupations. The Anabaptists and early Mennonites in Europe worked as craftsmen in towns and cities and as tenants and farmers in the country. Today they are successful businessmen, bankers, lawyers, nurses and doctors, builders, teachers and pro-

fessors, and members of parliament and the legislatures. Whereas the Anabaptists encountered opposition and hostility and had to pay money for the little toleration they were granted here and there, Mennonites of today are free to contribute their knowledge, skills and expertise in all aspects of living. But with their changed social status the descendants of the Anabaptists have also encountered new problems with regard to their religious faith and life. How can Mennonites today, in a world of which they have become an integral part, live according to the principles of the Gospel and their Anabaptist forebears? Even though circumstances and times have changed, the world is still the world and Mennonites will have to find new ways of witnessing to that world. In other words, Mennonites who claim to have inherited the Anabaptist tradition will have to seek to live as Anabaptist Christians within a society that is no longer that of the 16th century.

While 16th-century Anabaptism is not to be regarded as prescriptive and normative for Mennonites today, it can and should be regarded as a model, an example, to be followed. Even if specific ways of Anabaptist living cannot be normative for Mennonites today, the spirit of Anabaptism and the direction which it provides can help Mennonites

to live the Gospel in their time. The direction and goals of Anabaptism and Mennonites today will be the same, but the specific ways of reaching the goals may be different. For example, like their Anabaptist fathers and mothers, modern-day Mennonites will side with all those in our society who suffer persecution, oppression and injustice; they will witness to peace where there is the threat of and preparation for war and work toward resolving conflicts between neighbors, institutions and nations; they will be examples of simpler ways of living and sacrificial giving to aid the poor and disadvantaged everywhere; and they will model for others a faith and way of life which will impel men and women to receive the Gospel and build communities of people who follow Jesus in life. Exactly *how* the Mennonites will walk in the way of their spiritual forebears is theirs to discover and implement. The important thing is that they find themselves on the way to their mutual goals.

If the heirs of Anabaptism will walk in the ways of their spiritual forebears they will often be misunderstood and sometimes even suffer deprivations for their convictions and ways of doing things. Sometimes fellow-church members — especially those who wish to maintain their comfortable material and social position — will ascribe bad motives to

those who seek to live by Anabaptist-Christian principles in a modern society. Like Zwingli, the so-called "realistic" Christians will be most happy with a church which follows the path of least resistance and will accommodate themselves to the institutions, society and spirit of the time. The "Brothers in Christ," on the other hand, will be a thorn in the flesh not only of the world, but also of nominal Christianity. Neither the world nor established Christianity will thank them for being true witnesses to the radical Christian tradition.

It is now more than 450 years since the Anabaptists, including Menno Simons (who left his old church in 1536), began a movement which is "neither Catholic nor Protestant" but which from its inception sought to witness to both Catholics and Protestants, believing that the Spirit of God would continue the work of the Gospel in succeeding generations. How the Gospel message is to be applied by each generation, the 16th century Anabaptists cannot tell us. But they have shown the direction in which many answers to the problems of each time and place can be found. The Anabaptists were faithful to the vision they had discovered in their time. Mennonites today are asked to be faithful to the vision which they are trying to discover and then live by in their time. **mm**

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Women Among the Anabaptists

by Hedy Leonora Martens

ZENOBIUS AND HIS SISTER ZENOBIA, BEHEADED FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST, AT AEGEA IN CILICIA, A.D. 285

IRENE AND HER TWO SISTERS, BURNED ALIVE FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST, A.D. 309

GALAUDUCH, A CHRISTIAN WOMAN OF PERSIA, MUCH TORTURED AND PUT TO DEATH FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST, ABOUT A.D. 598

EUGENIA, AN UPRIGHT CHRISTIAN WOMAN, BEHEADED FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST NEAR THE CITY OF CORDOVA, A.D. 923

CATHERINE OF THOU, IN LORRAINE, BURNT FOR THE FAITH, AT MONTPELLIER, IN FRANCE A.D. 1417

CATHERINE BURNED AT THE STAKE, A.D. 1551

"There was also a young maiden named Janneken, apprehended for her faith, at Antwerp; who, when she appeared before the Lords, freely confessed her faith. The Margrave said: 'Janneken, if you will renounce, . . . I will give you your life.' But she replied: 'The life that you would give me I desire not; for your promise is vain . . . And though you are now a bailiff in your glory, you will deplore it in the judgment of God, and wish you had rather been a herdsman in the fear of God.' Thereupon she was sentenced to death, and having commended her spirit into the hands of God, was drowned . . ." (*Martyrs Mirror*).

Whether we came from another background, as did most of these, or whether our parents were Mennonite before us, we Mennonites are heirs to this tragic and noble and glorious continuum of Christian witness, which once culminated in the radical wing of the Reformation known as Anabaptism, but which still continues wherever Christians choose to give their lives rather than to destroy the lives of others.

Though the original Anabaptists were not perfect, a study of our Anabaptist roots will uncover much to be proud of — much to emulate. Mennonite women, however, will find themselves doubly fortunate in the heritage they have entered. Because Anabaptists practiced the priesthood of all believers, because they were convinced that individuals must obey God above all human institutions, and because their pacifist position posited human weakness as the ideal vehicle for divine power, women were deeply involved at the formation stages of the Anabaptist (Mennonite) church.

According to Wayne Plenert's analysis in "The *Martyrs Mirror* and Anabaptist Women" (*Mennonite Life*, June, 1975), 270 women were included in its documentation. This was about 30 per cent of the total, which was far higher than that of any other Protestant group. Moving well beyond the prejudices of their time, early Anabaptist authors steadily acknowledged that the faith displayed by women equalled that of men, and steadily recorded the evidence to prove that this was so. Clearly some congregations responded accordingly. The positions of a number of women were directly mentioned. Digna Pieters was said to have confessed to

holding worship services. A document was signed by the minister Ruth Kunstel, and the elder, Ruth Hagen (Plenert).

More generally, the *Martyrs Mirror* indicated that Anabaptist women were viewed with respect. Catherine of Thou, was referred to as "an upright and God-fearing woman," who "steadfastly fought through death." Anna and Ursula Maler, drowned in 1529, were described as "manful and valiant in God." Christina Haring was spoken of as "this courageous, heroic woman or sister in Christ." Digna Pieters was referred to as "a valiant heroine of Jesus."

In a time when illiteracy was common, many Anabaptist women knew their scriptures and were extremely capable in debating theological issues. Their boldness in the face of interrogation and torture was often astounding. For example, Weynken, a widow burned to death in the Hague, confounded the enemy by a clever use of both Old and New Testament scriptures. When threatened with death, her answer was, "If power is given you from above, I am ready to suffer." And when asked to venerate a wooden crucifix, her response was, "This is a wooden God; throw him into the fire, and warm yourselves with him."

Records of men and women facing a martyr's death together reveal a moving quality of mutual support. Standing at the scaffold, Gillis addressed Elizabeth, "Dear sister, be patient in your suffering, and comfort yourself in God; He will not forsake you." She replied, "O dear brother . . . I will never depart from Him."

This sense of spiritual equality was not restricted to the ecclesiastical arena. Mutuality in marriage is intimated in the letters exchanged between husbands

and wives while in prison. Adriaenken, for example, referred to her husband as "my dearest and beloved husband and brother in the Lord," and he called her his "much beloved wife and sister in the Lord." Lijsken Dirks, who was tortured while pregnant, wrote a farewell letter to her husband who was also in prison, reminding him that their love was eternal. He wrote back an encouraging letter, urging her to "keep her soul in patience" and closing with "your dear husband and weak brother in the Lord, who am not worthy of the name; but by the grace of God we can do all things" (Plenert).

Anabaptist strength has always been predicted on human weakness. In this lies the liberating aspect of Anabaptist theology. Women, or men who cannot boast physical strength or positions of influence and authority, find themselves on equal footing with those the world sees as powerful. This theology, then, does not need to strive for equality by negating Biblical passages on submission. Rather, it makes the submission mutual and almost miraculously changes the structure of relationships from hierarchical to cooperative or circular.

Anabaptist women themselves seem to have had a strong sense of their

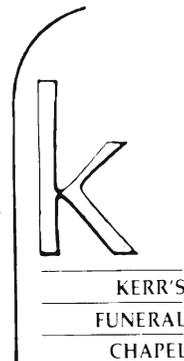
resulting equality before God. "Behold, I go the way of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and drink the cup of which they all have drunk." Anna of Rotterdam wrote to her son. "I go the way which Christ Jesus, the eternal Word of the Father . . . Himself went, . . . This way was traveled by the royal priests who came from the rising of the sun, as we read in revelation, and entered into the ages of eternity. . . ."

May her spiritual descendents live up to the name they have inherited! mm

WMT AUDITION

The Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre will be holding voice and acting auditions for its May, 1987 production of the comic opera *der Wildschütz* by Albert Lortzing on September 16 and 17 at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College at 7 p.m. Roles to be determined involve two sopranos, one mezzo, one contralto, one tenor, one baritone, and three basses. Singers interested either in lead roles or chorus parts are asked to contact: William Baerg at 669-1076, or David Riesen at 237-6268.

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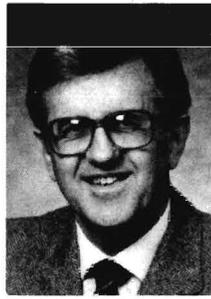
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observed along the way



by Roy Vogt

Late Summer, 1986

• Another summer has gone by all too quickly. For us it started in June with a very refreshing visit to England. As often happens on such trips, some of our most interesting experiences were ones that we hadn't planned for.

We decided to be mobile for this journey, which meant renting a car. On strange British roads, with even stranger British drivers coming at you on the wrong side of the road, this, of course, opened up all kinds of horrendous possibilities.

When we arrive at the car rental agency, just outside Heathrow Airport, I try to appear as confident as possible. No one is to know that I haven't driven a car with manual gears for years, and especially gears that are on the left side of the driver. Do I believe that I can handle British road conditions? Of course! Am I aware that the hills of Cornwall, to which we are heading, sometimes have 20° inclines, on which no passing is possible? That holds no terror for me! Having answered all questions in the affirmative I take the satchel of documents in my hand and march bravely out to the car. I note that the agent is watching warily as my wife and I take our seats and I begin to play around with the gears. With confidence intact I ease the car gently out of the lot, only to have the agent come tearing out of the office after me. "Sir, sir," he shouts frantically. "Your documents are on top of the car!" Well yes, of course.

How is one to think of everything? Sheepishly I bring the car to a grinding halt and retrieve the documents from their precarious perch. Then we are on our way . . . backwards. Why, I ask hotly under my breath, is the reverse gear so close to the first gear on these infernal British cars? Nervously I throw the car into third gear, and with a few hops and hesitations we jump out of the lot onto the road, with a very anxious agent shaking his head behind us.

I still don't know how we find our way to Oxford that morning, except that I have a very patient navigator beside me who generally points the car in the right direction and calms me when the tremors begin. We see many cars on the road with a woman in the passenger seat holding a map, and a male behind the wheel with almost hysterical eyes glued intently on the road. Why don't I just have my wife drive? Well, she conveniently left her driver's licence at home. She's not stupid.

• Once we are on the right road and on the right (I mean left) side of that road, we find that our first destination, Oxford, is only about an hour's drive from London. Our son is at his college, ready to greet us and to accompany us on a few days of exciting activities. We will never forget these days: the open-air student production of *Macbeth* at Christ Church College, the strolls through the beautiful inner courtyards of the numerous Oxford colleges and

along the banks of the small rivers that bisect the city, the lunches and dinners in small student cafes and 16th century pubs, the hours spent with our son's friends who have come from all over the world to study at Oxford, the trips to neighboring Blenheim Palace (Churchill's birthplace) and to quaint Cotswold villages, and finally, the graduation ceremonies in the old, circular Sheldonian Theatre. We join hundreds of other proud parents and onlookers for this impressive occasion. Though there are about 500 graduating students, each is presented to the chancellor by a professor, and every word is spoken in Latin. We note that a number of the professors have their short Latin speeches written inside their hats, which they hold at such an angle that they can read every word without seeming to do so. It occurs to me that when Menno Simons College has its first graduating class, every word should be spoken in Low German. I am sure that some of the professors will also have to read from hats. After the ceremony we gather outside for pictures, and together with a few of our son's friends we celebrate further at dinner. It is a moving conclusion to an exciting chapter in the life of one of our children.

• From Oxford we proceed southwest to the town of Dorchester, the home of the late British novelist Thomas Hardy. We have no desire to follow all the footsteps of this great writer but we do enjoy our visits to his childhood home and to some of the scenes which he re-created in his novels. The Bed-and-Breakfast farm where we stay for the night turns out to be the dairy farm where Tess of the Durbervilles had her early employment. One lovely evening as we are driving through the countryside around Dorchester we hit upon a narrow road which is banked on both sides, for over a mile, with an incredible profusion of rhododendrons. The fragrance is overwhelming. We discover later that the road is famous for that, but we are glad that it caught us by surprise.

• As we travel further west to Cornwall we are astonished again and again at the beauty of the English countryside. Almost every few miles I am inclined to stop the car just to gaze. It seems that the British don't want you to enjoy their scenery from the car, because they grow hedges which are precisely the height of a car. You have to get out and stand on top of the car for a good view.

Cornwall has a rugged grandeur all its own. Barbara Hepworth, whose sculptures we admire in the artist colony at St.

Ives, fell in love with what she called the "pagan beauty" of the landscape. We can see why. We spend several days along the coastline, from Falmouth in the south to Tintagel in the north (the supposed site of King Arthur's castle). Our favorite spot is again a surprise: the quiet fishing village of Port Isaac along the northern coast, where the only available room in the Old School House Inn turns out to be the bridal suite. While it is pricey, this is after all our fifth honeymoon and we are not too old to do something young and foolish. If ever we desperately need some peace and quiet we will return there.

- On our way back to London for the return journey home we stop at another scenic spot, the famous Cheddar Gorge. I am disappointed to discover that this is indeed the home of cheddar cheese. I always thought that cheddar cheese had been discovered in New Bothwell, Manitoba. Well, we can still say that New Bothwell took the original British recipe and improved on it.

- We arrive at Heathrow Airport several hours before departure and though the airport is crowded we experience no difficulty in boarding. As we cross the Atlantic and move on from Toronto to Winnipeg we remind each other several times of how fortunate we are. The trip has been a fantastic experience. However, shortly before landing in Winnipeg someone hands me a copy of the Winnipeg Sun and asks if I want to catch up on the local news. I page idly through this fourth-rate paper until my eye catches a picture of our friend Ernst Hansch. I wonder what the paper is reporting about his activities. As I read, it suddenly hits me that this is not a news report that I am reading but an obituary. Our good friend Ernst Hansch has just died! We can't believe it. Few people seemed more alive to us than this friend (see article elsewhere in this paper). With this sad news our trip certainly comes to a jolting end.

Shortly after our return we hear of the death of another friend. It is ironical to say this, but that clearly is life.

- Fortunately, this summer does turn out to be unusually beautiful in Manitoba. Our children from Edmonton, with their two boys, join us at the lake for several weeks, and our youngest daughter returns from a year of voluntary service in Vancouver. We have many good times at the lake with friends. Sitting around a dinner table, gazing over trees at the blue lake beyond is soothing indeed to the soul.

- Our last great celebration for the summer occurs at the end of July, with

the wedding of our son. It is a privilege to participate in the service with a female Anglican minister. It is one of those rites of passage that we will never forget.

Now another season of school, work, and preparation for winter has arrived. If the coming season is as good as the last summer, despite the sadness that accompanied it, then we will indeed have reason to be grateful. mm

DUTCH CELEBRATE SIMONS ANNIVERSARY

MIDDELBURG, NETHERLANDS — With the presentation of a new book on Menno Simons to a representative of the Dutch queen, Mennonites of the Netherlands marked the 450th anniversary of Menno Simons' January 1536 conversion to Anabaptism. The celebration at Middelburg was one in a series of commemorative observances in Menno's homeland.

More than 150 people, including non-Mennonites and visitors from Belgium, came to the program this past January at the Zeeland Library, which also hosted an exhibit on Menno Simons this spring.

M. C. Postema, pastor of Central Zeeland Mennonite churches, wrote the new book, *Tracks Left by Menno's Thoughts*. In accepting a copy, the queen's deputy, P. Boersma, highlighted the emancipatory qualities of the early Anabaptists.

He also opened the Menno Simons exhibit, centered around an "Exodus" theme. The exhibit includes slides depicting Mennonites of Indonesia, the Soviet Union and South America, and of Mennonite World Conference sessions at Strasbourg, France.

Reformed historian W. Bergsma of Leeuwarden addressed the audience on "The Time of Menno Simons," offering an overview of the place of the Anabaptists among other reforming movements of the 16th century. S. Voolstra, professor at the Mennonite seminary in Amsterdam, spoke on "The Person of Menno Simons," reflecting on such topics as the circumstances leading to Menno's conversion, his life after that event, and how Mennonites reflect his life today.

"Could Menno recognize himself in the Mennonite life of today?" Voolstra wondered. "He would probably turn in his grave sometimes," the professor noted, quipping, "I hope this happens. Then we'll know exactly where he's buried."

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Manitoba news

Jessie Kehler was ordained as minister in the Charleswood Mennonite Church on June 22. She is a graduate of the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, and was recently appointed a pastoral associate in the department of psychiatry at St. Boniface Hospital. Since 1982 she has been in a chaplaincy training program, and received her certification as a specialist in institutional ministry in January. From October 1982 to February 1983 she was the full-time coordinator of pastoral services in the Charleswood Church.

Henry F. Wiebe of Winkler was appointed national manager of the **Mennonite Foundation of Canada**. Mr. Wiebe has served as manager of the Winkler Credit Union since 1950 and has been mayor of Winkler since 1967. He is a member of the Winkler Bergthaler Church.

Rudy P. Friesen, architect, was inducted into the College of Fellows of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada as its annual assembly in Vancouver. The fellowship is given to those who have rendered distinctive service to the profession and to the community. Friesen has been an architect in Winnipeg for the past 20 years. He is currently president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada.

Two students from Manitoba were among ten Canadians graduating from the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in May. **Rick Janzen**, Altona, who graduated with an M.A. in Peace Studies, will become co-director of service programs for Mennonite Central Committee, Saskatchewan. **John Blatz**, of Lowe Farm, graduating with a Master of Divinity degree, plans to continue studies.

D. W. Friesen and Sons Ltd. in Altona is constructing a new 16,000-square foot head office building. A ceremonial sod-turning took place on June 17, with D. K. Friesen, founder of the printing division and honorary lifetime member of the board of directors, turning the sod. Chairing the proceedings was company president and general manager, David Friesen Jr.

A group of Ontario firms have begun a \$36,000 planning study of the **Mennonite Village Museum** in Steinbach. They expect to have a long-range development plan ready by mid-November.

Town of Steinbach acting mayor, **Ernie Friesen**, has announced his intention to run for mayor in the October municipal election. Friesen was assistant superintendent of Hanover School Division for 13 years and has been a member of the town council since 1980. He also served on the Bethesda Hospital Board for 25 years and is currently chairman of the board of the Eden Mental Health Centre in Winkler.

Winnipeg artist **Aganetha Dyck** has been awarded \$13,500 to complete a sculpture for the lobby of Artspace, a new studio building for Winnipeg visual artists and writers, located on Arthur St. The building is to be opened in October.

A sod-turning ceremony for a new **Community Self-Help Centre** was held in Brandon on May 2. The thrift and crafts store will be at ground level and will feature large display windows, good lighting and ventilation.

Prof. William Klassen was appointed visiting professor of peace and conflict studies and director of special projects funding at University College, University of Toronto. He assumes responsibility for raising a \$1.5 million endowment to establish a chair in peace studies; he will also teach and do research in the areas of peace and religious studies. For the past two years Klassen was academic dean of the Ecumenical Institute of Jerusalem, and its Interfaith Academy of Peace. His wife, **Dona Harvey**, was managing editor of *The Province* newspaper in Vancouver and former editor of the *Winnipeg Tribune*. She currently is writing a book on the Middle East conflict.

At the provincial music and speech finals held on May 23 to 24, **Andrew Klassen** (saxophone) from Winnipeg, and the **Quiring/Toews/Cole** trio (ensemble) from Brandon were among a small group of artists chosen to represent Manitoba at the National Competitive Festival of Music held in Vancouver, August 23-28. They also qualified for Manitoba Arts Council and Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce Scholarships.

Henry Dueck of Winnipeg has been named first executive secretary of the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference.

mirror mix-up

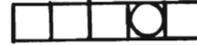
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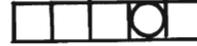
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BACK TO SCHOOL - IN PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is power.
Power tends to corrupt.
Does this mean that
ignorance is a



This edition we announce the winner of the May puzzle and from among the 42 entries, Ida Penner of Winnipeg was selected winner.

Answers to the May puzzle are moist, tepid, rainy, water, shower, wheat.

Also in this edition, we announce the winner of the June Mix-Up Contest: Mrs. M. Funk of Winnipeg.

Answers to the June contest are sure, race, leap, glare, shore, and clouds.

The letters are to be re-arranged and written in the squares to form words. Letters which fall into the squares with circles are to be arranged to complete the answer at the bottom of the puzzle; the drawing to the right provides a clue.

A winner will be drawn from among the contest entries and the prize awarded.

Entries must be sent to the Mirror office by October 7, 1986.

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Doreen Klassen, music teacher at Steinbach Bible College, spent July and August in Kenya, observing church music and teaching in the Africa Inland Church School of Music summer workshops.

Connie Loeppy of Springstein has been appointed to the inter-Mennonite editorial council of curriculum for children's clubs. This will be a new resource material for grades three to eight and is targeted for first use in the fall of 1988.

Weatherman **Jake Fehr** of Plum Coulee, has received the Environment Canada Award of Excellence in recognition of the high quality of his work as a volunteer weather observer — a service he has performed since 1961.



Ann Schmidt of Altona, is beginning a two-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment as a social worker in Port Hardy, B.C. Schmidt was last employed as a nurse's assistant in Altona. She is a member of the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church in Altona. Her mother is Mary Schmidt of Altona.



Helen and Jake Loewen of Altona, have begun three-month Mennonite Central Committee assignments with SelfHelp Crafts in Ephrata, Pa. The Loewens previously served with Mennonite Disaster Service in Rosenort. The Loewens were last employed in manufacturing in Altona. They are members of the Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

The **Red River Valley Echo** placed second in the general excellence section of the 1986 Canada-wide Better Newspapers Competition.



Brenda Tiessen of Crystal City, most recently of Winnipeg, is beginning a two-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Winnipeg. She will be working as a secretary with Personnel Services at MCC Canada. Tiessen previously served with MCC in Markham, Ont. She is a member of the Crystal City Mennonite Church. Her parents are Elfrieda and Jake Tiessen of Crystal City.



Diana Werner of Winkler, is beginning a two-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Winkler. She will be working as assistant to the director of MCC Family Services. Werner attended the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. She is a member of the Grace Mennonite Church in Winkler. Werner's parents are Frank and Helen Suderman of Winkler. She and her husband, Hans, are the parents of Julia, Melissa and Christopher.

Dr. Jake Dyck of Winnipeg became the president of the Canadian Medical Association in August. Dyck has been associated with the Westbrook Medical Centre in Winnipeg since 1960. He was president of the Manitoba Medical Association in 1980-81 and served as chairman of the board of Westgate Mennonite Collegiate for a number of years.

Jake Letkeman of Winnipeg, executive director of MCC (Manitoba) was one of a group of 12 North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ leaders who visited El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras from June 2 to 20. MCC workers in Central America invited the group to visit the region in the hope that their work and concerns might be shared more broadly. The group found the experience intense and heart-breaking, experiencing poverty, stories of displaced persons, political prisoners, and seeing the pressure which pastors experience.

EDITORS NAMED FOR THIRD VOLUME

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada has announced the appointment of Dr. Ted Regehr as writer and Marlene Epp as writer/researcher for Volume III of the series, *Mennonites in Canada*.

This series was abruptly halted in January of this year by the untimely death of the writer, Dr. Frank H. Epp. Dr. Epp had served the Society as historian for this project and had completed the first two volumes of the series; *Mennonites in Canada: The History of a Separate People 1786-1920*, published in 1974, and *Mennonites in Canada: A People's Struggle for Survival, 1920-1940*, published in 1982. Dr. Epp was working on the third volume of the series, covering the years 1940-1965, at the time of his death.

It has been no small concern for the society to fill the void left by Dr. Epp. Several executive meetings have been held where this matter has comprised a

major portion of the agenda. However, the society has been unanimous in its choice of Dr. Ted Regehr of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and Marlene Epp of Waterloo, Ontario to carry on with the completion of Volume three of the series.

Dr. Ted Regehr comes as no stranger to this project. He chaired the editorial committees of the first two volumes of the series and has served the society as its president for six years. Dr. Regehr is professor of History at the University of Saskatchewan where he also served as head of the department. His major area of expertise has been Canadian business history. He is perhaps best known as the author of *The Canadian Northern Railway: Pioneer Road of the Northern Prairies, 1895-1918*, published in 1976.

Working together with him will be Marlene Epp. Marlene has been heavily involved with volume three of *Mennonites in Canada*. Over the past three years she assisted her father, Dr. Frank Epp, as researcher/writer of this project. She has also completed a variety of writing projects, most recently co-authoring with her father a chapter in *Looking into My Sister's Eyes: an Exploration in Women's History*, published by the Multicultural History Society of Ontario.

MEMORIAL VOLUME TO HONOR EPP

The late Frank Epp's contribution to Mennonite thought and the work of the Christian church in general will long be remembered, especially by those who worked closely with him during his many years of service to Mennonite Central Committee.

At its May 30-31 meeting, the executive committee of MCC Canada decided

to remember that contribution in a tangible way through the production of a Frank Epp Memorial publication. The book, to be published during the next year, is to include a selection of Epp's writings projecting his vision for the faithful church, and MCC's role in that mission. One example: the essay entitled "MCC with the Millennium on the Mind." MCC (binational) and MCC Peace Section have been invited to be partners with MCC Canada in producing the publication.

Epp served on the board of MCC Canada since its beginning in 1964, and was its representative to MCC Peace Section as well as the Canadian Foodgrains Bank until the onset of his long struggle with heart disease last year. A professor at Conrad Grebel College since 1971, he was the author of several books on such topics as Mennonite history, the Middle East and Christian pacifism. He helped found the interchurch peace education group, Project Ploughshares, and served as inspiration and chairman for the Mennonite Bicentennial Commission. Epp died Jan. 22, at the age of 56.

A suggested list of writings to be included in the memorial book will be compiled and presented to the committee at its next meeting in September.



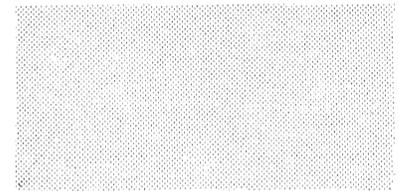
Ted Regehr



Marlene Epp

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Some 90 exchange visitors, aged 19 to 30, plan to come to Canada and the United States in August for a year through the **Mennonite Central Committee International Visitors Exchange Program (IVEP)**. The young people will come from about 25 countries in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa. MCC is looking for people who are willing to provide a home and/or work assignment for these young people. They usually live and work in one location for the first six months and then live and work in a second location for the second six months. They come with a variety of vocational interests and skills. Many seek placement in child care or kindergartens, nursing, homemaking, shops, greenhouses, libraries, farming, mechanics, computer operation, office work or retirement homes. Individuals, families, institutions and businesses who want to sponsor or host one of these international visitors, should contact MCC before June 15 at: MCC Canada, 201-1483 Pembina Hwy., Winnipeg, Man. R3T 2C8, phone (204) 475-3550.

A student cultural exchange initiated by the Bilingual Schools Committee of the Manitoba Association for the Promotion of Ancestral languages. (M.A.P.A.L.) This committee encom-

passes the Hebrew, Ukrainian, and German programs. The grade four students of each program are participating. The Hebrew children hosted the Ukrainian and German children in March to celebrate "Purim;" the Ukrainian students were hosts on April 15, and they demonstrated the celebration of Easter, while the German students from Princess Margaret school will be hosts on May 22. Organizers hope that this exchange will encourage a process of acceptance and support of other cultures.

Two Hanover school district school bands were invited to play at Expo '86. The **Steinbach Junior High Stage Band** represented the Province at the Canadian National Stage Band Festival to be held in Vancouver in conjunction with Expo. The 19 member group competes in the junior class, 15 years and under. This band won the honor after beating out provincial competition at a competition held in Brandon in March. Director of the board is Murray Lawrence. The Niverville collegiate senior concert band received an invitation to perform after submitting an audition tape which was accepted. However, after the invitation was received it was decided that the venture was too costly, and the band did not make the trip.

TOUR TO VISIT SELFHYP SOURCES

SelfHelp Crafts is sponsoring a three-week trip to India and Bangladesh, February 1 to 22, 1987. The tour is open to interested store volunteers, shop managers, board members and others affiliated with SelfHelp Crafts.

SelfHelp Crafts, a non-profit marketing program of Mennonite Central Committee, sells handcrafted items made by producers in developing nations to North American customers.

The itinerary includes visits to the Mirpur Wheatstraw Center, the Jute Works, Action Bag handicrafts, villages in India where shesham wood and brass products are made and the places where other SelfHelp Crafts handicrafts producers work.

The tour will be limited to about 15 participants. If the trip is oversubscribed, preference will be given to applicants who have a strong affiliation with SelfHelp Crafts and who are willing to do trip reports with church and community groups when they return. Spouses of SelfHelp volunteers and workers are welcome.

The estimated cost of the trip will be about \$2,400 per person, based on round-trip airfare from New York City.

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We have lost a good friend

by Roy Vogt

With the sudden, and much-too-early death of Ernst Hansch in June, the Mennonite community of Manitoba lost one of its best friends. Though Ernst was a devout member of the Lutheran Church, his interests and concerns extended far beyond his own denomination and reached, at several points, into the Mennonite community. One of the reasons for this was historical. He grew up in the Russian-German village of Weinau, just across the Molochnaya River from such Mennonite centres as Petershagen and Halbstadt. He seems to have formed positive impressions of Mennonites in his youth. A more important reason for his interest in communities like the Mennonites, however, was his strong, life-long devotion to what in German would be called *Gemeinschaft* (fellowship, or community spirit). He sensed very deeply that human beings were meant to work together for worthwhile goals, and he was attracted to groups where he felt that such a spirit was alive.

In some ways the story of Ernst Hansch reads like that of many other people who, having come to this country after the Second World War with virtually nothing, managed to build very successful lives for themselves. He did come here with very little in 1952, except a sound training in mechanics, a willingness to work hard, and the promise of a young woman from Germany to join him as soon as possible (which she did, a few months later). This, combined with a strong and very genuine faith, was enough to propel him to business success within two decades. By the mid 1980s he had become an unusually successful and respected businessman in Winnipeg, with his hand in more than half a dozen companies, mostly related to the building industry. His is a shining

example of the poor immigrant who made good.

However, that is not why this story is being written about him. What was unique about Ernst Hansch was not his ability to make money but the warm and generous spirit that pervaded everything he did. He never boasted about his success and his attitude toward people was not changed by it. I almost never saw him walk into a room without a broad grin on his face and his hand outstretched for a warm handshake. Some of us were privileged to exchange drinks and ideas with him several times a month, often after earlier evening meetings, and he always managed to enliven those late evenings with his special enthusiasm.

This generous, enthusiastic spirit carried over into some very useful projects. He was the main initiator behind such diverse social institutions as the Villa Heidelberg (a senior citizen's home), a new home for mentally handicapped adults, the local chapter of the Canadian German Congress, and many other cultural endeavours. Though he was a proud Canadian, he gave generously of his time and money to support German language instruction in this province. He really believed in the Canadian mosaic.

He was interested in the work of Mennonite Economic Development Associates, because of its concern for labor relations and third-world development. He made several trips to less-developed countries on behalf of Lutheran World Relief and extended considerable support there.

He quietly assisted the work of several writers in Winnipeg. He often marvelled at the fact that Mennonites from Russia, who formed a small part of the total German community in Russia, have

written about their Russian experience much more extensively than have the other Germans. At the same time he chided Mennonite writers for not showing a greater interest in their German neighbors in Russia. I kept this in mind when writing about our trip to the Soviet Union a few years ago. In describing our visit to the Halbstadt area I mentioned that we passed very close to the home village of Ernst Hansch. He was not appeased. "We need much more than a line, Vogt," he said, "and my name doesn't have to be in it." This didn't prevent him from expressing a keen interest in our own history. One of the last books that he read, and discussed with fulsome praise, was Al Reimer's novel.

One of the highlights of each year was the Sunday afternoon garden party to which he invited about a hundred people. His good wife Gerda always had the table spread with the most delicious meats and breads, and she and Ernst made everyone feel welcome.

I think it can be said that Ernst Hansch was the most highly and widely respected person in the German community of Winnipeg. The people who crowded the church and the sidewalks outside for his funeral service attest to this. To me he had become a very special friend, whose good advice and warm spirit will be missed tremendously.

People like that don't come our way very often. We will remember him with great affection — a man whose spirit was never dwarfed by material success. *Ruhe sanft, Ernst.* mm

**PAUL SHIH:
BLIND PASTOR
WITH VISION**

TAICHUNG, TAIWAN — You might call Paul Shih a pioneer. You might call him a man of unusual determination and courage. But this blind Taiwanese leader would prefer you simply call him "pastor."

Shih has served for eight years at the Mei Tsun ("Beautiful Village") Mennonite Church of Taichung, an agricultural and commercial hub of 600,000 close to the northwest coast of Taiwan.

"Basically my life is the normal life of a pastor," says Shih. "I do find it com-

plicated at times getting around. Probably I spend more time on the phone than most pastors do."

Shih gives his wife Leona a large share of the credit for helping him as he carries out his pastoral duties. At his pulpit, Shih uses a Braille Bible and hymnbook; he also prepares his sermon notes in Braille. (The Braille here is the international system based on a phonetic rendering of the Taiwanese language.)

The Mei Tsun congregation, about 13 years old, is located in a bustling commercial district of the city, where it is one of seven Mennonite congregations. Neighborhood people provide most of the membership. The church is growing slowly, with average attendance of 40-50 and a dynamic youth group, but Shih feels the narrow, cramped meeting facilities hamper outreach.

"Finances limit us very much," Shih concedes. Though the mostly middle-aged members are not impoverished, they aren't wealthy either. For a small congregation, located in an area with high land and construction costs, it is difficult to find the necessary resources for a better building.

But Shih has overcome obstacles before. For him the journey to Mei Tsun was a story of perseverance. Raised in a Christian home, from childhood he was encouraged by his mother to consider the ministry. That dream seemed to come to an abrupt halt, however, when at the age of 12 Shih lost his eyesight in a medication accident.

He entered a special school for blind children at Taichung. There he received constant encouragement from Ruth Chung, a local Mennonite who served as the school's director. The blind students attended a nearby Mennonite church, and it was here that Paul Shih was baptized.

Upon reaching high school age, Shih dedicated his life to the ministry. He

learned, however, that not many colleges were prepared to accept a blind student. Finally he was admitted into a Presbyterian college near Taipei, and later continued his training at the Presbyterian seminary there.

"My biggest problem was in reading reference books," recalls Shih. "Lectures were no problem. I took notes in Braille, and classmates helped me keep up with what was written on the blackboard." The blind children's school, which sponsored Shih in his seminary work, also helped by translating the most important reading materials into Braille.

When Shih finished seminary, the Mei Tsun church — at the suggestion of Ruth Chung — called him as its pastor.

For Shih one battle was now over, and he has found fulfillment in his ministry over the years. In addition to filling the role of pastor, he serves the congregation's music program as an accomplished singer and pianist. Not seeing the keyboard doesn't seem to matter as he adds his own creative flourishes to the worship hymns. More recently Paul and Leona Shih have had their lives enriched by two children, Sek Hui ("Full of Wisdom") and Sek Ham ("Very Good Person").

Beyond his local duties, Shih is active in the Taiwan church conference and has traveled internationally.

For Paul Shih, achievements haven't come easily, not since that day the young lad saw his life abruptly changed by blindness. But with his pioneer spirit, his courage and his confident faith, this pastor's vision remains intact and continues as an inspiration to his church and the Taiwanese Mennonite community.

by David Shelly

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Rare affliction causes victims to curse and swear

by Paul Redekop

A remarkable story appeared in a recent edition of the *Globe and Mail*, about members of a Mennonite community in northern Alberta afflicted with a rare disease that among other things causes its victims to curse and swear uncontrollably. The community is La Crete, Alberta, located approximately 635 kilometres northwest of Edmonton, with a population of about 600. The disease is Gille de la Tourette's syndrome, sometimes called the "cursing syndrome." In addition to the uncontrollable impulse to curse and swear, its symptoms include facial tics, migraine headaches, stuttering, barking and grunting.

The prevalence of the disease in this community was discovered three years ago, when David Janzen took it upon himself to travel to the medical centre at the University of Rochester for a diagnosis. He was seeking further opinion after Alberta doctors had diagnosed his condition as Huntington's disease. Mr. Janzen had suffered from the tendency toward uncontrollable outbursts since early childhood. It had caused him considerable grief. For example, he had had difficulty keeping a job for any length of time because of problems resulting from his tics and outbursts. The disease had also caused considerable embarrassment for himself and his family. His mother, two sisters, and one son are similarly afflicted.

At the University of Rochester, Mr. Janzen met Dr. Michael Kurlan, a specialist in disorders of this nature. Dr. Kurlan diagnosed the presence of "Tourette's." He was amazed to learn the extent to which this disease, previously thought to be extremely rare, existed among the members of David Janzen's family and community.

A team of researchers from Yale and Rochester was organized almost immediately and sent to La Crete. They found a total of 69 Tourette's sufferers: 34 men and 18 women. They set out immediately to trace the lines of descent among

these sufferers, and began to observe genetic patterns which had previously been unknown. They were soon able to establish that the disease was indeed inherited. Researchers had suspected this previously, but had been unable to prove it.

Once they had established the fact of genetic transmission, the researchers could then begin to search for the genetic characteristic which distinguished those who had this rare disease. They have since been analysing the DNA molecules of the sufferers in minute detail, to locate the unique genetic characteristics of those who have Tourette's. Related studies have indicated that victims may lack a naturally occurring chemical substance called dynorphin. It has been suggested that this substance acts on certain parts of the brain in which emotional language is stored. Says Prof. Suzanne Haber, a colleague of Dr. Kurlan, "There may be a part of the brain in which strictly emotional language is stored. One can imagine a raw emotional area with no formal language structure around it at all."

Several observations come to mind in response to this story. One has to do with the sheer ludicrousness of sober, God-fearing Mennonite men and women bursting out in uncontrollable fits of foul language. This is sure a classic "man-bites-dog" story of the unexpected. The fact that the story made the front page of the *Globe and Mail* suggests that its editors saw it as such.

This inconsistency of voluble cursing and swearing with the Mennonite tradition makes researchers' impressions of the response of the community to those with the disease all the more remarkable. One of the things that impressed Dr. Kurlan in his visits to La Crete was the calm acceptance by the community of its afflicted members: "Tourette's is surprisingly well-accepted in the community," he said. "It is a very close-knit community and they are very supportive, and what we see as strange they accept."

We have a tendency to characterize such traditional communities as overly rigid, and demanding of extremes of conformity from their members. Community members are portrayed as narrow-minded and intolerant of change or difference. This kind of stereotype ignores a very important feature of such communities. In a small, close-knit community, each member is known and accepted as a whole person, complete with flaws and imperfections as well as strengths.

By contrast, in modern urban society we exist as fragmented selves. We are known as one type of person at work, another with our family. Other variations of the self can be presented to the church, to friends, neighbors, etc. This freedom brings with it, though, an emphasis on performance, on the performed self, as sociologist Erving Goffman has described it. In our relationships with others we are expected to fit a narrow and rigid mold of social conformity. If we display any oddities of appearance or speech, like the symptoms of Tourette's, we become stigmatized, and are often shut away from ongoing social life.

The story of the occurrence of Tourette's syndrome in the community of La Crete also reveals the individualistic bias in the treatment of illness in modern society. Dr. Kurlan points out that the team of researchers he led to La Crete was the first to go out and study the extended families of sufferers. He said "In every other study, victims came to the physicians. We were seeing the real world where in the past doctors saw only the most severe end of the disease's spectrum." This field research was made possible by the existence of a traditional Mennonite community. Lines of descent could be traced because of the stability of the community, whose members had for the most part continued to marry amongst themselves. This in turn provided the basis for the proof of genetic transmission, which could not be accomplished through treatment of isolated cases.

Our sympathies go out to Mr. Janzen and the other Tourette's sufferers in the La Crete area. We hope that a cure will soon be found. In the meantime, they can perhaps take comfort in the knowledge that they will have contributed to its discovery. They have also provided us with a reminder of some of the strengths of the traditional Mennonite way of life.

mm

MWC DELEGATION JOINS ANNIVERSARY OF GENEVA REFORMATION

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND — On May 21, 1536, the city fathers (civil and religious) of Geneva officially declared Geneva to be a Reformed — no longer Roman Catholic — city-state. The fiery, passionate preacher, William Farel, had led the reformation to this point. But recognizing that he lacked the theological and organizational skills needed to give shape and direction to the new movement, he prevailed upon the young French scholar, John Calvin, to come to Geneva and provide the necessary leadership.

Calvin later reported that Farel had threatened "that God would curse my retirement and the tranquility of the studies which I sought, if I should withdraw and refuse assistance when the necessity was so urgent." So in August 1536 this rather severe, intense young scholar made his decision to stay in Geneva, and entered upon his life's work to transform Geneva into the city of God.

Had Calvin been able to return to Geneva on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the Reformation, he would have been dismayed to find a city with its Roman Catholic citizens once again in the majority (51 percent) and his own beloved Reformed Church in the minority (30 percent). And of that number, only one out of 20 are active in the church.

He would also have been dismayed to find four representatives of Mennonite World Conference (Charly Ummel of Switzerland, Louise Nussbaumer of France, and Ross and Ruth Bender of the United States) in the crowd of 5,000 gathered in front of the Reformation Wall during the act of commemoration that Wednesday evening. They were among the 200 guests representing a dozen or more world communions along with representatives of the member-churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Calvin once called Menno Simons an "arrogant and impudent donkey" and his followers "a nefarious herd of Anabaptists." But that didn't keep him from marrying the widow of an Anabaptist, Idelette de Bure, after having converted her, of course.

Perhaps even more disturbing to Calvin would have been to hear Allan A.

Boesak, South African pastor and president of WARC, declare the white Reformed Church of South Africa to be in heresy for its avid support of the government's policy of apartheid. Boesak declared himself to be a pacifist even though "The Reformed tradition is not a peace tradition."

He stated that his friends in South Africa consider him to be a "romantic idealist," given the present tensions in his native country. He insisted that "The gospel of Jesus Christ calls for peace, justice and reconciliation." The 300 years of Calvinist oppression of the non-white population are not a faithful reflection of Calvin's teaching, but a gross distortion, even a heresy, he reiterated.

While the shape of public life in Geneva has changed dramatically in four and one-half centuries, vestiges of Calvin's Geneva are still in evidence. For there, under the Reformation Wall, sat representatives of both church and state. On the one hand, the presence of the mayor and the president made this a public or political event. On the other hand, the meeting included prayers, Scripture, hymns and a short sermon — a service of worship.

A Mennonite mind would separate the two. A Calvinist mind saw no contradiction.

While the ceremony at the Reformation Wall was the crown jewel of the week's celebrations, it was not the only event. The week began with an ecumenical communion service at St. Peter's Cathedral on Pentecost Sunday. An international forum on the theme "The Reformed Faith Today" convened for five sessions during the week. The forum included a service of worship each morning.

The forum illustrated in a remarkable way the truth of the Reformed motto, "Reformed but always being reformed." The differences separating the Reformed from the Mennonites, for example, are not so wide today as they were 450 years ago.

On the other hand, some speakers seemed to be further removed from Calvin than Calvin and Menno ever were from each other. The Reformed Church today covers a wide range of theological opinion, with each group believing itself to be an authentic descendant of John Calvin.

At the heart of Calvin's theology was his emphasis on the covenant between God and his people. It is a covenant in which God by his sovereign mercy and grace takes the initiative. That is a the-

ological conviction which Mennonites also can make, though Mennonites emphasize — more than their "twin sister" has — the necessity for human response to God's sovereign grace.

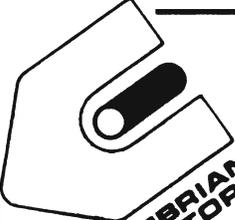
The Reformed motto, "Reformed but always being reformed," would be a good motto for Mennonites to adopt as well. It means that we and they continue to be open to the transforming, shaping, renewing Spirit of God.

NEW PROGRAM SET FOR CMBC

Decisions to expand program and building were the focus of the annual sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada held at the Wilfrid Laurier University, July 4-8. The 371 delegates from 154 churches across Canada accepted a proposal to implement a new four-year program at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, and to expand the urban outreach of the Native Ministries board. In addition, more than 90 per cent of the delegates approved in principle an expansion plan for the college and the CMC offices, both located on the same campus in Winnipeg.

The usual practise of hearing greetings from other Mennonite Conferences took an unusual turn on the second day of the sessions. John H. Redekop, moderator of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, took the opportunity to share a plea for forgiveness of the CMC for the excommunication of some Mennonite Brethren members upon their marriages to CMC Members.

CMC delegates and guests joined thousands of area Mennonites on Sunday, July 6 in two services celebrating the 200th anniversary of Mennonites coming to Canada.



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poet's word

Summer's Song

I stand barefoot at the cottage door.
The day has arrived, in perfect silence.
It has just rained, and small, sparkling pools
Have gathered, for the birds to bathe in.
Even the brown rabbit munching on a tender
Stalk, knows I'm no threat to him.
But there is a sound, and I hear it.
It comes from the wind in the poplars.
And though each leaf is hung separately,
Like the whirling Dervish, they dance together.
And the leaves making the sound of reeds blowing,
Whisper their summer's song to me.

— by Anne Martens

Scarcely a Prophet

Sun emerges —
 briefly prophetic;
escapes, quickly,
 into a bank of cloud,
leaving a derisive, red sky behind.
The smell of hot bacon,
strong from the local cafe,
 is another taste of life;
informal communion for mid-winter farmers,
on a Wednesday morning.
Out of town,
the wind chills my skin —
face as though thick
with rubbery jowls.
My body, briefly well-oiled
and efficient;
my mind and spirit crackling with
energy:
Exultation a scant space between
 responsibilities.
Then, rounding a corner into town
 the greasy spoon already busy;
I'm slowed to a walk by the day ahead.
My lenses cloud as I enter my world
preparing for other work;
wondering at the brevity
 of my insight.

— by Tim Wiebe

Snowflakes

quiet night
of snow settling
on the ground.
under a streetlight
I notice
the intricate perfection
of delicate stars
soon to be cursed
and mangled
or blown about
by wind.
even in my hand
they wilt
to tiny spots of dew.
at birth I too
was perfect.

— Walfried Jansen

Sunday fragments

I watch you chip away March ice
on the gray street
carve thin ditches
through frozen neighbourhoods.

As if you could bring us spring
by opening your winter jacket
to the wind. As if anyone could
cancel blizzard by thinking
daffodils and birdsong.

Or death by planting roses.

Nadine in rubber boots
and the white cat ankle-deep
in slush.

I flip the record. New York
voices fill the pale space
between winter and spring.

And though worms destroy this body . . .

Tomorrow this green crown of thorns
on my window
will open without fanfare
its first small petals
blood-red.

— by Sarah Klassen

SWISS MENNONITES FOCUS ON MISSIONS AT HOME

BIENENBERG, SWITZERLAND — An extraordinary assembly of the Swiss Mennonite Conference held at Bienenberg June 14 focused on the church's understanding of missions within Switzerland and the urgency of this task.

For many years the Swiss Mennonites had concentrated on missions solely in foreign settings. The task of missions at home has occurred to them only in more recent years.

The new outlook may have something to do with the crisis of foreign missions, but also with the fact that as the Swiss Mennonite churches open themselves toward society and the cities it becomes clear to them that their identity is to be a missionary one. This identity needs to be implemented in the life of the church members and the church itself in today's setting.

The calling of the extraordinary assembly had as an objective to explore the present understanding of missions and to evaluate the visions for missionary work and the identity of our churches.

The following points seemed to become clear: 1) post-Christian Switzerland needs missionary people; 2) being missionary means to meet the people and to be prophetic; 3) withdrawal and self-sufficiency are counter-missionary; and 4) missions are a matter of being, more than just doing.

Ätjenomes

fonn Olga Regier Rempel

Aus etj nich lengst enn Winnipeg weas, haud etj jeläjenheit mett fäl goode Frind too räden. Soo aus daut dann emma ess wann twee Menniste sitj fertalen, eena kjemt opp fäl Mensche too räden dee mett ons toop emm Darp jewont haben. Daut ess dann uck gaunss natierlich daut eena dee aula uck bie äre Ätjenomes jetjant haft.

Daut wort mie bie dissem Besuch sea wijchtich. Etj denk uck Jack Thiessen, dee emma waut opp plautdietsch schrift, woat sitj doafää interessiern. Etj hab sien plautdietschet Weadbuak uck, enn socht no däm Wuat "Ätjenome," oba daut weas doa nijch bennen.

Eenes Doages fetald mie eene Freilein App fonn dee fäle Appen dee enn Gortietz enn Roosendoal jewont haben. Omm dise feschiedene Sorten fonn Appen utenaunda too hoolen säd see mie uck äre Ätjenomes. Mie foll blooss opp daut waltje Lied äre Ätjenomes fonn ärem Beruf hää jetjraajen haude enn aundre wada wajen ärem Jedoo ooda no äre Jewanheite.

Fonn Roosendoal aunjefonge, doa weare "Solonsde" Appen. Etj hab dee Famielje goot jetjant. Etj dentj dee kaume fonn eenem Kuta bie daut Rus-sedarp Soljonoe. Dann weare dau "Krolik" Appe — etj docht wiels "Krolik" opp Rusch een Kanientje meent, daut dee Lied sejcha eene Kanientjtsucht haude. Oba eene oole Taunte hia emm Altenheim lacht mie ut enn säd: "Nä, nä, daut stemt nijch, dee Onkel App haud een Peat enn sien Peat daut haud dän Nomen 'Krolik.'" Doa wearen uck "Lauftje" Appen, dee haude eene Lauftje (Stua). "Steile" Appe, wuaromm dee soo heeten deeden, daut hab etj noch nijch utjefungen.

"Fuchtel" Appen — etj wea mie sejcha daut dee Appen Fuchtelma-chiene jebut hauden omm daut Jetjraajd too fuchteln. Oba dee App daut wea 'en Prädja, enn wann dee oppe Kaunsel stund dann fuchteld hee emma mett'e Henj. "Basoa" Appen, dee wonde biem

Basoa enn Gortietz. Dee Taunte Appsche wea Jaunses Dochta fonn dee oole Räj, enn see wea de rajchte Sesta aun "Roode" Peiwels (Pauls) siene Fru.

"Kontorschtchik" Appe, ooda Iwan Korneewitsch, soo säd wie emma. Dee oabeid emma emm Kontoa (Jeschaft). "Fäasenja" Appe, daut wea je Onkel Diedrijch Appe dee soo fäle Joaren dän *Boten* jedrekt haft. Oba hee wea uck Leara. Dee kunn sinjen, wann hee een Leet aunstemt enn onse oole Kjoatj, daut kunnen dee Lied oppen Roosendoal-schen onn uck opp däm Gortietschen Enj goot hearen.

"Tchitchikow" App, daut wea Leara H. H. App onn de Foda fonn daut Freilein App dee mie dee List mett dee Appen gauf. Heinrijch Heindrietjewich App sien Sän läft enn Saskatoon onn ess retired. Etj sie mie sejcha dee wudd noch fäles fonn dee Appelienje too fetalen haben.

Aus Latste fonn dee Appen well etj noch dee "Heena" Appen erwänen. Doa läft een Hauns App enn Espel-kaump enn Dietschlaund dee ess fonn dee Lienje. He wea bie ons enn Gortietz Birjameista enn uck Rayonscheff too dietscha Tiet. Mett Jasch App, sienem Brooda, hab etj atlijche Joare emm Kollektiew jeoarbeit. Uck noch een Doaft App, uck een Brooda fonn Hauns App. Däm Doaft siene Fru wea "Schwoate" Pweiwels Rita. Dee Oold Kolniea säde emma "bleiw" enn "greiw" enn uck "Peiwels" aunstaut "Pauls."

Soo kunn eena noch lang nofädmen, enn aul dee Lied dee doa mol jewont habe oppe oole Räj, oppe niee Räj enn Roosendoal, emm Kotok, enn oppem Prigorod, oppstalen. Fondoag senn see enn aule fea Winde festreit.

Toom Aufscheet säd daut Freilein App noch: "Doa wearen soo fäl Appen daut soogoa de wille Ente emma 'App, App, App' schräjen, wann se äwa daut Darp floagen.

Eenen Gruss aun aule Menniste mett Ätjenomes!

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Eine Friedensbotschaft

von Johannes Harder

Am 29. März, 1986, nahm Professor Johannes Harder an einem Ostermarsch in Schlüchtern, BRD, teil. Bei dieser Gelegenheit hielt er eine Rede, die wir hier mit seiner Genehmigung abdrucken. Wir sind Professor Harder für sein prophetisches Täuferwort in unserer Zeit dankbar.

Liebe Friedensfreunde! Alle reden vom Krieg — wir auch; alle reden vom Frieden — wir auch; nur meinen wir es anders. Zwei Weltkriege haben uns nicht genügt: wir steuern sehenden Auges auf einen dritten, der garnicht den Namen "Krieg" verdient, sondern ein Holocaust, ein Ausradieren unseres Globus, ist.

Nach allen Anmärschen, Durchmärschen, Aufmärschen, Abmärschen kommen wir jetzt: wir sind dran mit dem Friedensmarsch! 55 Millionen krepierender Leute, 50 Millionen Flüchtlinge waren nicht genug — wir sinnen auf weiteres. "Das ist der Fluch der bösen Tat, dass sie fortzeugend Böses muss gebären", das hat sogar ein Deutscher gesagt: Friedrich von Schiller.

"Die Väter haben saure Trauben gegessen und die Zähne der Kinder sind davon stumpf geworden", heisst es im Original des alttestamentlichen Textes. Das heisst, man muss jetzt immer schärfer zubeissen, um überhaupt noch etwas zwischen die Zähne zu kriegen. Aus dem alten Pfeil-Krieg sind Waffen-Kriege, daraus Raketen-Kriege geworden. Das Ziel waren früher Einzelne, dann Armeen — heute ist es die Menschheit. "Stumpf" für die Wirklichkeit, "stumpf" für die Wahrheit; das heisst, wir ersetzen sie durch Propaganda.

Jeder Krieg ist ein Wahnsinn. Verrückte haben ihn erdacht, Verrückte haben ihn geplant, Verrückte rüsten dafür und Verrückte wenden das alles an. Der Krieg ist kein politisches Problem, er ist auch kein strategisches Problem, auch kein technisches Problem — er ist ein medizinisches Problem!

Für uns sind Krieg und Frieden etwas anderes: Frieden ist mehr als *kein* Krieg, mehr als "Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht", mehr als diese endlosen, Millionen verschlingenden Konferenzen, in denen Frieden "verhandelt" wird. Frieden kann nicht "verhandelt" werden, er kann nicht gekauft und nicht verkauft werden. Krieg ist heute bereits überall; das ist nämlich unser Kriegesverständnis: überall da, wo Gewalt herrscht, wo die Erde zum Raubobjekt wird, wo Menschen kommandierte Totschläger werden, wo der Waffenhandel "Wirtschaft" heisst, wo Profit mehr ist als Mensch und Leben — da ist Krieg!

"Alle Macht mächt böse", hat der Geschichtsphilosoph Jacob Burckhardt schon vor hundert Jahren gesagt. Wir Reichen werden dabei immer reicher, die Armen aber immer noch ärmer; wir Reichen *haben* alles und *sind* immer weniger, von Tag zu Tag.

"Abgestumpft" habe ich gesagt; "saure Trauben gegessen" haben die Väter bis 1945, und jetzt sind *wir* abgestumpft. Wir waren einst ein Volk der Denker und Dichter, jetzt sind wir ein Volk der Händler, Schacherer, der Hetzer und Macher geworden. Wir leben nach der doppelten Moral: in der Gesellschaft, im Staat, in der Partei. Merkt euch den Satz und sagts euren Kindern und Kindeskindern weiter: Was menschlich falsch ist, kann politisch nicht richtig sein.

Wir wollen wieder Erde — Erde als Basis für unsere Ernährung, für das tägliche Brot — und nicht stattdessen Mannöverlandschaften!

Wir wollen, dass bei uns, in unserem eigenen Ort, an dem wir uns hier zusammgefunden haben, nicht diese Wosana-Probleme sind. Die Märchenlandschaft der Brüder Grimm wird jetzt von Grimmigen regiert, und damit haben wir, im Grunde genommen, die ganze Romantik zum Satan geschickt.

Die uns als "Grüne" beschimpfen, geben nicht zu — und das ist typisch für diese Leute —, dass sie unser Programm längst bestohlen und beklaut haben. In allen Parteiprogrammen tauchen plötzlich Umweltschutz und tausend andere Probleme auf, die sie uns geraubt haben. Wir wollen *grün* — nicht Tannengrün als Tarnung auf den Kanonen. Wir wollen eine Bürgergesellschaft und keine Militärgesellschaft. Wir wollen keine Verwaltungen, die uns vergewaltigen. Wir wollen keine Apparatschiks, die uns numerieren, kasernieren, uniformieren usw. Wir wollen Gespräche — und nicht Kommandos und Befehle. Ja, wir wollen alles anders: ein bisschen menschlicher, ein bisschen freundlicher.

Da lese ich in den *Kinzigal Nachrichten* von einem Parteioberen, wir seien "Utopisten"; aber die Utopien von gestern sind die Realitäten von heute.

Vor hundert Jahren wurde jeder beschimpft, der sich einen Demokraten nannte; und heute wollen sie auf einmal alle Demokraten sein. Die Utopien von gestern sind die Wirklichkeiten von heute, und die Utopien von heute werden die Wirklichkeiten von morgen sein.

Wenn wir doch nur eines täten: das verdammte, in alle Ewigkeit verfluchte Freund-Feind-Denken aus unseren Köpfen ausjäten, es in den Schulen verbieten, es niemand mehr erlauben, mit Gegenstimmung und Verdächtigungen umherzukriechen. Für uns beginnt der Krieg im Denken; für uns beginnt der Krieg in der Gesinnung. Nicht auf dem Schlachtfeld fängt er an, sondern in uns selbst, in unserem Lebensgefühl. Unser Verhalten schafft andere *Verhältnisse*. Mit dem Menschen fängt alles an. Lernen wir aus der Geschichte!

Ich schliesse mit einem Bild, das uns allen sehr lebendig ist: Wir wimmern und jaulen und jammern — nicht nur die Landsmannschaften, sondern auch wir, die wir nicht dazugehören —, dass Berlin eine zweigeteilte Stadt ist. Sie ist

zweigeteilt, weil unser Volk zweigeteilt ist. Unser Volk ist zweigeteilt, weil Europa zweigeteilt ist. Europa ist zweigeteilt, weil die Welt zweigeteilt ist in zwei Machtblöcke. Der Mensch mit seinem Denken, mit seiner Gesinnung, ist der Schauplatz für Krieg und Frieden. Ein Einziger — ein Wahnsinniger — hat den zweiten Weltkrieg vom Zaun gebrochen; ein einziger Wahnsinniger hat Hiroshima und Nagasaki gemacht. Freunde, ich bin dort gewesen; ich habe gesehen, was das bedeutet!

Der Ostermarsch hat seinen letzten Sinn darin — lassen Sie mich das auch noch am Schluss sagen —, dass diese Friedensgesinnung durch einen Einzigen in diese Welt gekommen ist: durch den Bergprediger, der angekündigt wurde mit dem Manifest "Friede auf Erden"! Nicht im *Himmel!* Hier wollen wir Frieden haben, hier auf dieser unserer Erde!

Dieser Bergprediger hat nichts verboten als die Feindseligkeit. Die ganzen Armeen der Welt mitsamt ihren Generalfeldmarschällen, Kasernen und Raketen sind nicht wert das Tränlein eines einzigen Kindes am Rande der Welt.

Der grosse Frieden-Bringer fand Nachfolger: Schämen wir uns, christliche Abendländer! Ein Heide, Mahatma

Gandhi, hat mit seiner Friedensbotschaft einen ganzen Kontinent von der Kolonialherrschaft befreit! Ein Einziger, ein "Schwarzer", Martin Luther King — "nur" ein Schwarzer — hat das Rassenprinzip in Amerika gebrochen. Der Einzelne kann viel! Die Wahrheit hat kein Verhältnis zur Zahl. Die Wahrheit beginnt immer mit *einem*, steckt an und geht dann weiter und wächst. Es gibt nicht mehr Frieden als es Friedensstifter gibt! Wo sind wir Christen, die wir uns nach dem Friedensstifter so nennen, nur geblieben?

Wir haben aus "Christus" ein "christlich" gemacht, ein Adjektiv. Dieses Adjektiv "christlich" hat der Teufel handgestrickt, und zwar in seiner langweiligsten Stunde. Es gibt in der ganzen Bibel nicht ein einziges Mal dieses Wort "christlich". Von *Christus* ist da die Rede, dem Friedensbotschafter, nicht aber von "christlich". Bei uns ist alles "christlich": vom Minister bis zum Lakaien; demnächst haben wir "christliche" Bäckereien, "christliche" Metzgereien, eine "christliche" Müllabfuhr — alles wird "christlich" bei uns. Und je "christlicher", umso bedrohlicher und gefährlicher für den Menschen.

Die Botschaft, die ich hier ausrufe, heisst: ihr seid, ja, wir sind *alle* zur

Mobilmachung für den Frieden aufrufen. Wir können sein, wer wir wollen: glaubt keinem einzigen Christen oder keinem einzigen Theologen, der euch sagt, Christentum sei nur am Sonntag von 10–11, wenn wir die Daumen Drehen und Choräle singen. Und danach ziehen wir uns Uniformen an und morden Menschen; denn draussen herrscht das Gesetz der Welt und drinnen in der Kirche das Gesetz Gottes. Ich pfeife auf ein solches Christentum. Mir ist der Atheismus eine blanke, saubere Sache gegen solch eine religiöse Säuerei! Geht hin in Frieden!

Ich rufe jetzt die jungen Leute besonders auf — ihr seid meine letzte Hoffnung: Nein, schlaft nicht, während die Ordner der Welt geschäftig sind. Seid misstrauisch gegen ihre Macht, die sie vorgeben, für euch erworben zu haben. Wacht, dass eure Herzen nicht leer sind, wenn mit der Leere eurer Herzen gerechnet wird. Tut das Unnütze, singt Lieder, die man aus eurem Mund nicht erwartet. Seid unbequem; seid *Sand*, nicht Öl im Getriebe dieser unserer Welt.

Und den Mitchristen gebe ich als Begleitspruch für den Gottesdienst morgen mit: Reden und hören wir nicht nur von der Auferstehung, sondern werden wir Auferstandene! Amen. **mm**

Menno Simons

I

Krieger und Henker nicht werden die Erde gewinnen.
Reiche und Städte versinken, zu Tand wird der Raub.
Von den Friedfertigen muss die Versöhnung beginnen,
Predigt den Frieden — scheint auch die Welt noch taub.

Predigt den Frieden — das ewge Versöhnen,
Wie es als Sehnsucht die Erde bewohnt —
Um den ewigen Frieden zu frönen
Ist ja das Eine — um das es sich lohnt.

II

Frommer Gott des Friedens, komm zu Gast
Unsrem oberflächlichen Geschlecht;
Einz'ge Hürde du in aller Hast
Mach uns deiner würdig und gerecht.
Bleib bei uns, die wirre Zeit ist lang.
Gib, dass wir sie innerlich bestehn;
Wehr der Welt, die tobt, sie macht uns bang,
Lass uns fest in Bruderaugen sehen;
Sei im Druck der warmen Bruderhand
Wenn sie herzlich in der andern ruht —
Nimm von uns die letzte Scheidewand,
Die uns heimlich trennt und wehe tut. —

III

Jahrhundertlang auf Wanderzügen,
Als suchten wir von Land zu Land
Die Insel mit den goldenen Pflügen
Von Vancouver bis Samarkand!

Dazu ein unbegrenzt Gefilde
Mit Saaten rein und Früchten schwer,
Des lieben Gottes fleissige Gilde,
Ein festgefügtes Bauernheer.

Und immer Menno in der Mitte,
Mit Bibelbuch und Mosesbart,
Gerüstet noch nach alter Sitte
Mit Hut und Stab zur Weiterfahrt.

Wann wird die Odyssee wohl enden,
Und wann erreichen wir den Port?
Und wann entgürten wir unsere Lenden
Zum letzten Mal für immerfort?

An einem Tag da wird's geschehen,
Ein Tag, der kein Ende hat,
Wenn unsere Augen erspähen
Die Zinnen der ewigen Stadt!

— von Fritz Senn

our word



WHY BE A MENNONITE?

Would you find it easy to love Menno Simons if you met him in the flesh? Would you be inclined to follow him, or join a church bearing his name?

These are some of the questions I asked myself as I re-read a selection of Menno Simons' writing this past summer. I thought this was the least I could do in memory of the decision Menno Simons made 450 years ago to join a new Christian brotherhood, which eventually took his name and which, much later, I chose to join as well.

I have never been particularly bothered by the fact that our church, together with hundreds of others around the world, bears the name of this man from the 16th century. To be the "Mennonite" branch of the Christian Church means simply that we choose to interpret the Christian faith according to the spirit and the principles of a particular 16th century religious community, among whom was this man Menno Simons.

It would be much neater, and less confusing, if all Christians could belong to one denomination called simply "The Christian Church." But this apparently was not to be. The Christian message seems to lend itself too easily to various interpretations, and we human beings are too diverse in our own understanding of things, to allow this to happen. Let us assume that we did indeed agree, tomorrow, to re-name each of our churches "The Christian Church." Before too long you would have people saying the following: "I am a member of the Christian Church on the corner of Portage and Main, which is more evangelical than many other Christian churches." Or, "So and so belongs to the Christian Church on Furby and Ellice which practices 'holiness,'" or "The Christian Church on Carter and Stafford is the one that emphasizes the peace position." In a short time you would have people referring to the "Evangelical Christian Church" or the "Holiness Christian Church" or the "Peace Christian Church" — in other words, you would have the situation that we have now.

Charles DeGaulle once said that it was difficult ruling a nation that insisted on having 97 different brands of coffee — but he would not waste his time trying to change the coffee habits of millions of Frenchmen. So I feel quite comfortable in belonging to a branch of the Christian Church which is only one brand name among hundreds of others. And I like the fact that there is something quite specific about our name: it is linked to a **person**, a man of flesh and blood with ideas and spirit, not to something so vague or bland as "community" or "fellowship."

But there is, of course, a danger in this. Since our name is linked so closely to a particular movement, and to a specific person, we are compelled to ask ourselves periodically whether we actually hold to the things that this person stands for. Do we really share his understanding of the Christian faith? Is there something attractive about his spirit? Asking such questions, and pursuing them, may prove to be disillusioning, or it may be rejuvenating. In any case, there is something there to be tested.

This is what I attempted to do this summer. To immerse myself, though all too briefly, in the writings of Menno Simons. To test the ideas and the spirit of this man and to ask myself again whether I really want to identify with his interpretation of the Christian faith.

This quest for "the essence of Menno" proved to be quite unsettling — as I actually had suspected it might be. Let me be blunt: Menno Simons was not a very loveable person. He was cantankerous, judgmental, and sometimes just plain silly. There is no room in his church for women who wear silk or velvet, or "curiously adorned shirts, shawls, collars, veils, aprons, velvet shoes, slippers, and such like foolish finery." Women who sing are to be avoided; they are much too dangerous to poor, unsuspecting men! Like many medieval men he seems to have thought that evil slinks into the hearts of men most easily and often through the wiles of women. Perhaps he was right, but I choose not to think so. It makes us men look much too foolish, and women much too evil.

All that (and much more like it) is not as disturbing as his bitter attacks on other religious groups. He suffered much at the hands of "papists" and other Protestant reformers, but though he refused to take the sword against them he did all in his power to condemn them to hell. If God consigned to hell all the people that Menno Simons hoped would land there, heaven would need to be only a very small place.

If that were all there was to Menno Simons, or if such outbursts formed a central part of his work, it would be embarrassing to belong to a church named after him. But something very different comes through his writing as well. He was a man who wanted desperately to be as perfect as Jesus was. He didn't want to live an easy life as a clergyman and pretend to follow someone whose life had not been easy. He hated hypocrisy, and the many excuses that people make for admiring Jesus but not following Him. In many respects he had a deeper understanding of the grace and love of God than other Christian leaders of the time. "Although infants have neither faith nor baptism, think not that they are therefore damned. Oh no! they are saved; for they have the Lord's own promise of the kingdom of God." He is often extremely humble and contrite, and very tender to those who are suffering. At the same time he is courageous, lashing out at rulers who try to dominate a church without understanding its spiritual nature.

In brief, Menno Simons, like many other Christian leaders (including Luther, and even Paul) was an extremely complex and contradictory person. And like them, he was a trailblazer. It took his smoldering anger, and love, to cut through centuries of false accretions to the Christian faith and to produce a purer vision. Dull, smooth instruments do not cut. He laid down principles which *are* vital to the Christian faith: a church without a deadening hierarchy and without connections to the state, a love which reaches out to the enemy as well as to the friend, a simple style of life where things are not allowed to become ends in themselves but remain means to an end. All these things, and more, he stood for more clearly and boldly than most Christians of his time or since.

Menno Simons was not a kind uncle on whose lap you would like to sit for long. But he was the kind of man who has the power and vision to remind us, even from a distance, of what it is that we actually ought to believe. If his own ideals exceeded his grasp, well, then, so be it — but the fact that many of those ideals will always remain beyond our grasp is no reason for discarding them. Indeed, our lives can only be richer if we honor them.

Roy Vogt

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