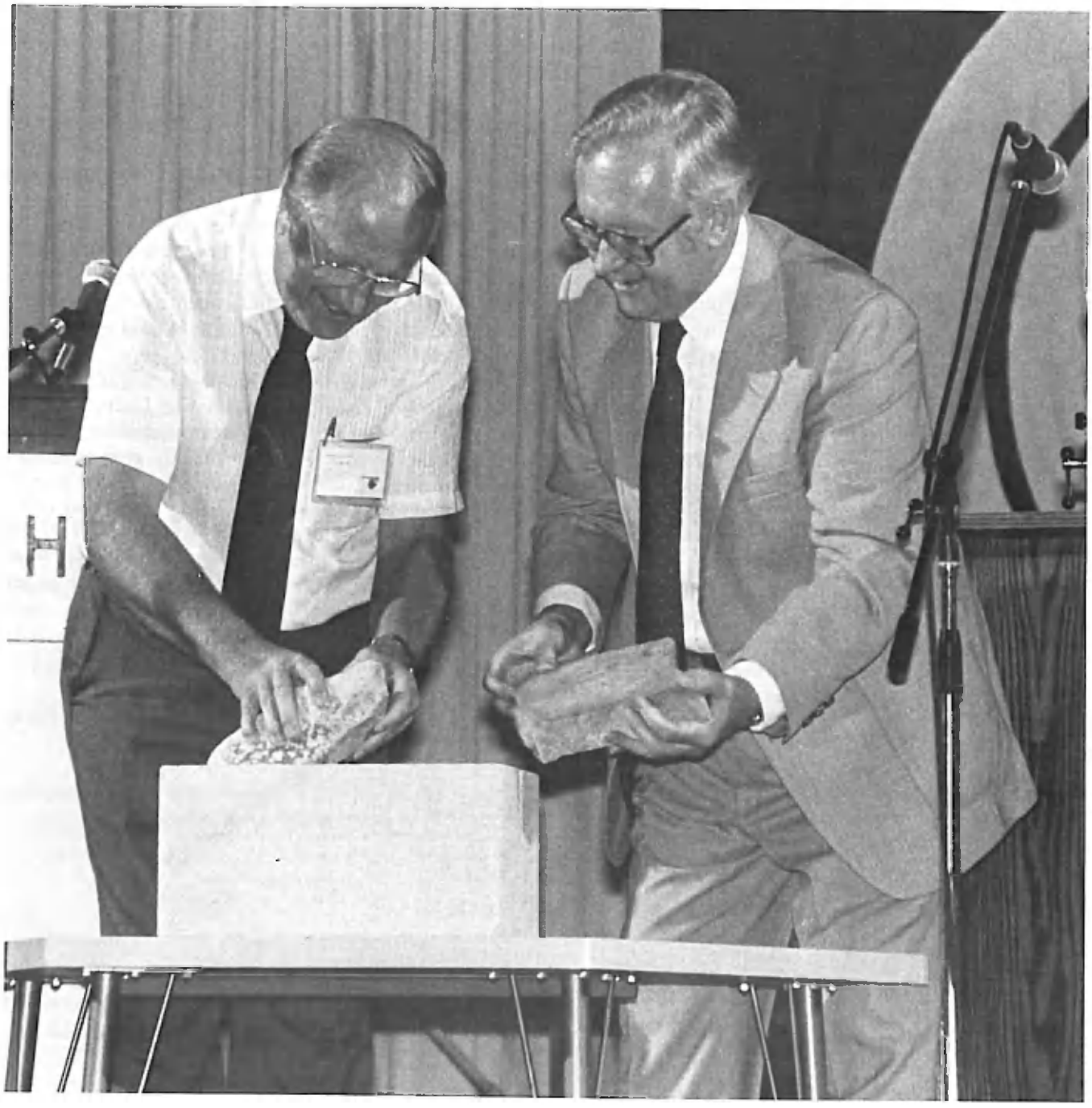
MENNONITE LIFE

MARCH 1984



In this Issue

The joint assembly of the Mennonite Church and the General Conference, meeting at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in August 1983, will probably be viewed in the future as a gathering of great significance. Therefore, it is seen as appropriate to publish in full the dialogue sermon of Jacob Tilitzky of Abbotsford, British Columbia, and Ross Bender of Denver, Colorado, President and past-Moderator, respectively, of the General Conference and the Mennonite Church. Historians have an eye for those pivotal moments in history. This dialogue sermon suggests such a turning point.

Keith Sprunger, Professor of History at Bethel College, presents here the second in a series on twentieth century Mennonite historians. In the December 1981 issue of *Mennonite Life* appeared the first of the series, "Cornelius H. Wedel and Oswald H. Wedel: Two Generations of Mennonite Historians." This article brings to remembrance both the pain and the exhilaration in the early years of Mennonite higher education. One of the intriguing dimensions of this story is the return of C. C. Regier toward the end of his career to the Mennonite community where he had spent his earliest years. Son Donald Regier adds a family vignette, which illuminates an aspect of the life of C. C. Regier.

Irene Klassen of Calgary, Alberta, recovers the history of a Mennonite community in Alberta which lives now only in memory. This is an insightful contribution to the Mennonite record of survival with grace under stress. It suggests that much more historical work is called for on the story of Mennonite families and communities in the prairie provinces and states seeking to cope with the Great Depression in the late twenties and the decade of the thirties.

Peter Pauls, member of the English faculty, the University of Winnipeg, brings to remembrance one of the earliest and most able of Mennonite novelists, Peter G. Epp. Peter Pauls is one of those who, in his translating and editing, are seeking to bring Peter Epp's novels on the Russian Mennonite communities to the attention of a generation which no longer reads the German.

Anthony R. Epp, member of the foreign languages faculty, Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln, Nebraska, describes and analyzes the writing of Pierre Bayle, French scholar of the late 17th century who stood up and spoke a good word for the much-castigated Anabaptists. Bayle was in the vanguard of those who helped to rehabilitate the image of Anabaptist dissenters.

The Editors

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Front Cover

General Conference President Jacob Tilitzky and out-going Mennonite Church Moderator Ross Bender at the opening session of Bethlehem '83. Having moved their two pulpits into closer proximity to symbolize a growing togetherness as conferences, they place two stones (representing their churches) together atop a common foundation stone.

Back Cover

An engraving of Pierre Bayle at age 28 reproduced from the posthumous edition of his *Dictionary*.

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Christ is Our Cornerstone

Ephesians 2:11-22
Dialogue Sermon —
Jacob Tilitzky and Ross T. Bender
August 1, 1983 Bethlehem '83

Ross—Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 1:2)

Jake—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. (Eph. 1:3)

Ross—Well, Jake, here we are in Pennsylvania for this historic occasion known as Bethlehem '83. I am very happy to be here and I am happy that you are here too. I would like on behalf of the Mennonite Church to welcome you and the members of the General Conference Mennonite Church who are here, but it is not entirely clear to me whether we should welcome you or you should welcome us. Whose turf is Pennsylvania? Perhaps we should welcome each other!

Jake—Well, since your forbears in North America have a slight edge of about 130 years you could welcome us. But since all of us arrived in Bethlehem via the modern Concord at about the same time, why not welcome each other!

Jake and **Ross** together—Welcome!

Jacob Tilitzky and Ross Bender listen to discussion on inter-Mennonite cooperation at Bethlehem '83.

Ross—We've been reading a great deal recently in the public media and in our own church papers about the good ship Concord which brought a group of 13 Mennonite families from Krefeld, now a city in the Federal Republic of Germany, to Philadelphia. They landed there on October 6, 1683 and made their way on foot some seven miles to found a settlement which they called Germantown. They were the first of seven million German immigrants who followed them through the years. Today there are approximately 60 million Americans and Canadians of German descent.

The U.S. Congress has designated 1983 as "The Tricentennial Anniversary Year of German Settlement in America." President Reagan issued a proclamation announcing it in which he made reference to these 13 Mennonite families. The United States and West Germany are celebrating it with visits by Vice President Bush to Krefeld and West German President Karl Carstens to Philadelphia where Mr. Reagan will give a banquet in his honor. On Saturday, August 6 there is to be a German beer fest. What do think our spiritual forebears would make of all this hoopla? Do you think they would be honored?

Jake—Hardly! Coming out of the discomforts of petty persecution and the struggle for existence in deep poverty they were much more concerned about enjoying the honest fruit of the land as "die Stillen im Lande" than the product of the "Still" in the land.

Ross—The Pilgrims came to New England in 1620 to establish the first permanent colony there. Their ship was called The Mayflower. I understand there is a "Mayflower Society" which consists of the lineal descendants of the passengers on The Mayflower. Apparently there is considerable snob appeal in being able to say, "My people came over on The Mayflower." By the way, Jake, did your people come over on the Concord?

Jake—No. At least not on the first one. The founding fathers of the General Conference were descendants of the South German and Swiss immigrants of the mid 1700's and also of the South German and Swiss immigrants of the mid 1800's. My own forebears from Russia came to America in the years 1873-83, approximately 10,000 settlers in Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas and approximately 8000 in Manitoba. The next great influx of Russian Mennonites came in the 1920's—and, believe it or not, I was one of those 21,000—carried in on my mother's arms in 1926. A significant wave of Mennonites escaping from the USSR during and after World War II swelled the ranks of the General Conference church. And another thing is significant here. We have two official delegates here from our South American General Conference churches. One is a representative of those Mennonites who were forced to go to South America because they couldn't enter Canada or the U.S. and the other is a representative of those Mennonites who left Canada in 1926-27 as the result of the threats to their religious freedom.

What about your kind of ethnical peoplehood? It seems to me you and I are representative of a goodly number in our respective conferences.

Ross—Recently I learned that one of my ancestors came to Reading, Pennsylvania from the canton of Bern, Switzerland in 1752. But my Bender ancestors came to Ontario, Canada in 1881 from Hesse, Germany. Their names were Jacob and Magdalena Bender. They had many descendants including a son Jacob, 4 grandsons named Jacob B., Jacob H., Jacob M., and Jacob S., and a great-grandson named Jacob R. I mention all these Jacobs because I wondered if we might be related. By the time we get to my generation, the boys were receiving English names or in my case a Scottish name so you can see that the process of being absorbed into a new culture, even taking on its names had begun. When I visited in Germany a few years ago, people told me that nobody should name their child, Ross, because in German that's the word for a horse.

Jake—You're right! "Ross" is not only a horse, it is a proud steed. With all those "Jacobs" either you got the wrong *first* name or I got the wrong *last* name!

But then we're not here to talk about our ethnical or cultural heritage. Our roots go much, much deeper than that. Our oneness is based on that solid rock, our common foundation, Jesus Christ.

Ross—Some of us tend to play the Mennonite game by checking our family trees to see if we have some kind of blood relationship. Or we compare our family stories as we have done in terms of where our European roots are and when our people migrated to Canada or the USA. But in recent years we have become aware of new brothers and sisters who are as truly Anabaptist (maybe more so) as people with names like Tilitzky and Bender. If you ask them when their people came over, they will tell you about the horrors of life below the decks in the slave ships and the dehumanizing effects of slavery on slave and slaveholder alike. Did you know, Jake, that one of the first petitions against slavery in America was drawn up and signed on the communion table of the Germantown Mennonite meetinghouse? On this issue the Mennonite record is clear. I know of no cases where Mennonites in good standing with the church owned slaves.

Jake—In the matter of relating to Native Americans, however, the record is not all that good. Not that Mennonites took up arms against the Indians—in fact, there are some instances where nonresistant Mennonite families were massacred. But the fact is that in every instance where Mennonites took up land for their homes in the new world and carved out farmland for themselves and their descendants, the land at one time had been occupied by Indians who had been "cleared out" by the governments on both sides of the border who either took the land by force or paid an inadequate amount for it to make way for white settlers. In spite of what was done to them on our behalf, some of the descendants of these people are now our brothers and sister in the faith and some, like Lawrence Hart, Joe Walksalong and Ted Risingsun, Spout Owen and Jeremiah Ross are Mennonite ministers.

Ross—And we have Hispanic brothers and sisters, and Chinese brothers and sisters and brothers and sisters of other non-Germanic backgrounds. We praise God for all of them. How our fellowship in Christ is enriched by the various accents of our tongues and the diversity of our cultural heritages. Surely this is part of the meaning of those phrases in Ephesians 2:

—he has made us both one
—that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two
—might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross
—for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father
—No longer strangers and sojourners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Granted, Paul here had in mind the age-old division and hostility between Jews and Gentiles but certainly the reconciling work of Christ breaks down all human barriers as we are reconciled to each other whatever our social, economic or ethnic background may be and reconciled to God as we become members of the body of Christ.

I think it would be appropriate to recognize that although some of us came to the new world to worship God and serve God with a free conscience, some of us came not freely but in chains, and some already here were not too thrilled to be cleared out of ancestral homes so the white man could have land. But today, we are members of one body, one people. Wouldn't that be startling to those first 13 Mennonite families if they could see us now?

Jake—Thirteen "Dutch-German Mennonite-Quaker" families have grown into thirteen and more racial families uniting into one family of God. That is beautiful! I think of my trip to the Canadian conference several weeks ago. At a stop-over in Calgary I was greeted with a loving embrace from a Vietnamese brother. In Winnipeg, a Chinese brother came to pick me up at the airport. At the residence we fellowshipped with Saulteaux brothers from the north. Just this week Laotian leaders from across the continent met in my home church to build each other up and to discern what it means to be the church with us here in North America. I just have to praise God for making us ONE in Jesus Christ.

At the same time we are aware of developments that do not give cause for rejoicing. Where the Spirit of God has broken down walls that separate we have been too busy erecting new ones that divide us again. Thirteen original nuclear families have divided into more than 17 denominational bodies. If these were only functional, organizational walls they could be justified. But they are too often of a different nature: attitudinal, creedal, theological, relational, philosophical--or even petty walls of differing forms and practices—these are walls that keep on dividing.

Ross—I believe those first Mennonite settlers would be thrilled—maybe a little astonished at first—by the diversity in ethnic background of their spiritual descendants. And yes, they would be distressed by our divisions. They would also be sad to learn that so many of their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren had left the Mennonite faith and would be asking why this happened. I believe they would rejoice that we recovered a missionary vision, that we set up schools to equip our youth for service, that we have great resources to nurture our people in the Word of God through Christian education materials, journals and books and that we even have our own printing press, several of them. I think they would be pleased to learn about MCC, MDS, VS, our commitment to the way of peace, and how we practice mutual aid. I think they would be baffled by our organizational structures and deeply concerned about our wealth as well as how comfortably we have settled into our North American home and how readily we have blended into the ways of our society. I am confident they would understand what we are talking about in our study about justice for those who are oppressed. They would probably be a little mystified, perhaps even embarrassed, by our study on human sexuality. And I wish so much we could have their counsel on the question of the non-payment of taxes used for military purposes. If they were to ask questions about nuclear weapons, Jake, I would look to you to explain it to them. I would be willing to try to explain what those things parked in the parking lot are all about if you would tell them about airplanes, bombs, and rockets.

Jake, you are president of the GCMC. Tell me something about the GC's.

Jake—O. K. With the wave of the magic wand I am now transformed into a conference. Hi. My name is General Conference Mennonite Church. I was born on the second day of Pentecost, 1860 at a place called West Point, Iowa. I hear say my birth gave occasion for 5 long sermons. (What do you call that, a "quintologue"? To facilitate my christening a committee was elected to draw up a plan for my *raison d'etre*. Those people must have been so excited about my prospects they worked through the night and next morning they had their six point plan ready. In reading the GC constitution today we find I have really not departed all that much from the original purpose.

In these 123 years the GC family has grown to about 62,000 members grouped first of all into 326 congregations (by tomorrow it will be 352). It is these congregations that send their delegates to this *Familienfest*. The same congregations also make up other conferences, namely: five district conferences in the USA: Eastern, Central, Western, Northern and Pacific; five provincial conferences in Canada: and the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. Ross, where else but in the General Conference could a congregation survive such a multi-strata complex? Approximately one third of the members live north of the 49th parallel. (You know, those people that still haven't learned their diction properly and say "roof and root" instead "ruf and rut" or "zed" instead of "zee".

Ross—Or house instead of "HOOUUSE"

Jake—For the fulfillment of our purpose the GC is organized into three basic ministry units—

Commission on Overseas Mission COM
Commission on Education COE
Commission on Home Ministries CHM

There is a lot of excitement around as God blesses our church planting endeavors, especially in cross cultural settings. A lot of energy is spent in our search to be true to the calling of Christ in the area of peace and justice. What does it mean to be true nonresistant Christians in this mad world of nuclear arms and missile buildup? We agonize under the stress of family break-up and wonder how we can demonstrate the nature of Christian unity in our broken world when we are losing it in our basic unit. We have a lot more work to do in the areas of hermeneutics, biblical authority and leadership in the church. Ross, I believe if ever we have needed each other it is now at this crucial juncture in time.

But what about the Mennonite Church. If I recall correctly, there was an "Old" in your nomencla-

ture down the line. Have you been "rejuvenated" or have you changed your identity?

Ross—The Mennonite Church (sometimes called "Old Mennonites") is largely composed of people whose roots go back to Switzerland, South Germany and eastern France. J. C. Wenger in his book, *The Mennonite Church in America*, has an interesting paragraph on the use of the term "Old" Mennonites and how in modern times that name was dropped in favor of the term, the Mennonite Church. There was a meetinghouse in the Lancaster Conference built in 1775 on whose cornerstone the name Alt-Mennoniten (Old Mennonite) appeared. This term remained in popular usage until the time of Daniel Kauffman (early 20th century) who put the word (Old) in parentheses. After his time the word in parentheses was dropped. Wenger says, "This term is somewhat offensive to other Mennonite bodies, however, particularly to the General Conference Mennonite Church who also like to think of themselves as Mennonites—and who are puzzled when another group announces that it is the Mennonite Church!" So I'd like to say to you, Jake, that if you want us to consider you as Mennonites, we'll be happy to oblige. And if you want to call us Old, it is a term much honored in our history.

Jake—No offense taken as long as you don't then capitalize it as "THE" Mennonite Church.

Ross—The Mennonite Church of today is actually the result of the merger between OM's and AM's, i.e. Amish-Mennonites. I myself come from the AM side. At least half, and possibly more, have AM roots. This merger took place not on the denominational level but on the district conference levels. It began in 1916 when the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference and the I-M Amish-Mennonite Conference merged after studying the possibility for several years. The Goshen College Mennonite Church (of which I am a member) had a dual conference membership from the very beginning in 1903-04. In 1920 and 1921, the Western District AM Conference merged with four OM conferences in the West and formed these four conferences: Illinois, Missouri-Iowa, Kansas-Nebraska and Pacific Coast. In 1927 the Eastern AM and Ohio Mennonite Conferences merged into a joint conference. And then the mergers stopped.

The OM churches brought into the merger a tendency toward a synodical polity; the AM's had more of a congregational polity. This has created a tension for us and we have a tendency to move now in one direction and now in another. In our reorganization of 1971, we emphasized the centrality of the congregation; now we are moving back toward more of a conference emphasis.

We have a strong tradition of a lay, self-supported ministry but in the past 40 years or so, the pattern of a specially trained and salaried ministry has been gradually gaining ground so that both patterns are in existence today side by side. We have moved away in recent years from the pattern of bishops (though some of the eastern conferences retain it) to a pattern of a conference minister and area overseers. One conference is considering going from overseers to consultants for each congregation. We also have several conferences who recently have approved the ordination of women to serve as pastors.

Though leadership posts and decision-making processes are still largely filled and influenced by men (white, middle-aged men), more and more we are seeing women, Blacks and Hispanics moving into significant leadership roles. Two of our program boards are chaired by women and one district conference has just elected a black pastor to be its moderator.

We have about 1000 congregations organized into 22 district conferences. Our largest district conference is Lancaster with 16,700 members in 195 congregations; the smallest is the Gulf States with 455 members in 10 congregations. Our most southern congregation is the Southmost Mennonite Church in Florida City, FL; the most northerly one is in Anchorage, Alaska. Three of our district conferences with about 10 percent of our membership are in Canada: Western Ontario, Ontario and Quebec, and Northwest. We have 50 Hispanic congregations and 61 Black and integrated congregations. Our total membership is 96,000. If we add to this number those members in congregations and conferences which have not affiliated with the Mennonite Church General Assembly, there is a total number of Old Mennonites of 109,000 in over 1,200 congregations.

We have 2 seminaries (Goshen Biblical Seminary and Eastern Mennonite Seminary), Hesston College, Goshen College, Eastern Mennonite College and Conrad Grebel College, a joint venture with you. GBS has also for the past 25 years worked cooperatively with Mennonite Biblical Seminary in the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary at Elkhart, Indiana.

We have a General Board composed of representatives from the district conferences and five program boards in the areas of missions, congregational ministries, publication, education and mutual aid.

Last year we celebrated the 100th birthday of the Mennonite Board of Missions and its predecessors; this year we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of of the *Gospel Herald*.

We have a growing sense of belonging to each other in this sometimes fractious family. We have our quarrels about what are the distinctive marks of our identity (doctrine, tradition, history, culture and language—not the German-English language question which was resolved many years ago—but what language, which words best give expression to our distinctive faith). We have some differences about how the church relates to the state and whether our peace position is at the center of the gospel or whether there is first of all the gospel and then come its ethical consequences, including peace, justice and other social concerns. But these are, I think, *family* quarrels though I recognize that family quarrels can get out of hand and lead to violence, divorce and the breakup of families. What will hold us together in these times is not our ethnic bonds but

our commitment to Christ the cornerstone. I understand that the function of the cornerstone is that it is placed at the corner of two walls in order to hold them together. Jake, what do you think the theme, Christ is our cornerstone, has to say to our churches today?

Jake—That theme is just immensely rich in imagery from which we can draw application for all of life.

There is the *foundational* aspect: Christ the Cornerstone or Capstone: In Him it all comes together; in Him is the basis for all lasting value; in Him is the fulfillment of God's revelation and outside of Him we cannot comprehend God's will.

There is the *authority* aspect: in all our doctrine, faith and order, morality issues of our day (war tax, sexuality, justice) and in our ministry Christ is the final authority. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount the people were astonished at Christ's teaching for He taught as one with Authority. And Jesus himself compared obedience to that authority to the building on the rock.

There is the *oneness-wholeness* aspect: shalom: peace nothing lacking, Jerusalem (foundations of peace) with its temple the center of peace. And yet not all was Shalom in the temple—there was no complete oneness. The Holy of Holies, the different courts for priests and Levites, the courts of Gentiles and women. But in Christ the veil is torn, the walls removed, there is true wholeness.

And there is the *building* aspect: speaks about action, doing something, making the dwelling place of God visible in this world.

I think of a construction consortium back home. Plans were all drawn up for a condominium complex. The people went to work, excavating the land and then poured all the cement footings and foundations. But due to the recession and exorbitant interest rates they were unable to carry out the projevt. The whole foundation was just covered up with earth. Now there is nothing visible. They could say they were "fundamentally sound" but there is no dwelling place there.

But what kind of walls have we built? Walls that didn't belong? Shutting each other off? On the other hand, have torn down outside walls that were meant to shut the world and the evil out? I maintain that in our new found glory of what it means to accept persons we have also come to the point of accepting the standards of the world from which these persons come. J. R. Woodsworth's lament: "The world is too much with us" is our lament also. We will need to give greater attention to the aspect of discipline in the whole area of discipleship as we build upon the Cornerstone.

Ross—I am struck with the flexible and creative ways in which Paul uses figures of speech and mixes them together in a harmonious and pleasing manner. On the one hand are the *people images*:

—Gentiles in the flesh
—separated from Christ
—alienated from the commonwealth of Israel
—strangers to the covenants of promise
—you who once were far off have brought near in the blood of Christ

He describes the political transformation of those who were

—strangers
—sojourners
—alienated
—separated
—far off
—cut off
—without status among God's people; he describes their transformation into *fellow citizens* with the saints and *members* of the *household of God.*

The phrases echo and call to mind the experience of the slaves in Egypt, those who were *no people* but who by the call of God and by God's gracious act of deliverance became *God's own people.*

The other set of images we have here are the *building images*:

Eph. 2:10 "we are his workmanship"

Eph. 2:14 "broken down the dividing wall of hostility"—here the most vivid picture that comes to my mind is that ugly gray wall of concrete, broken glass and what not that separates East Berlin from West Berlin. What a joyful day it will be when the wrecker's ball and the bulldozers level it to the ground and by that act bring back into one people in place of the two the nation divided into east and west.

From a human point of view that is a little bit like the work that God has done in Christ. God in Christ has put up a bridge of reconciliation, a peace bridge, over the place where there had been a dividing wall of hostility and is bringing to an end the alienation that separates humanity from God,

Jews from Gentiles
women from men
rich from poor
slaves from free
east from west
north from south
Canadian Americans from U.S. Americans
GC's from MC's from MB's and BIC's.

But as you pointed out there is something that sticks in us that wants to keep building up that wall higher and thicker so God has to send out the bulldozers and the wrecker's ball again and again to knock it down. It's not that wanting to build something is wrong. It's just that we should be building up the household of God, not the dividing wall of hostility. This building is spoken of as a holy temple in the Lord and as a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Jake—In the end, the real purpose of the building is the "dwelling place of God in the Spirit." That is the church. What was it that made the tabernacle so attractive for the people or the temple? Just the outward material form of them? True, the temple was magnificent, but it wasn't that alone. It was the presence of God. The SHEKINAH, the glory of God's presence shining through. And it is that holy, glorious, awesome attractive presence of the Spirit in us, the church that really matters.

Ross, at AMBS you have a unique vantage point from which to address the building of our conferences. If we continue building as we are now, how do you think our building on the Cornerstone might look ten to twenty years farther?

Ross—It is so much easier to describe the past than to predict the future but I will hazard a few guesses about what our churches will be like by the year 2000 and I invite you to do the same.

We will have gotten over our hangups about evangelism and will have learned to share our faith freely and invite persons to faith in Jesus Christ. God will bless these efforts and enlarge our fellowship. Perhaps there will be as many as 300,000 Mennonites in our two groups.

I said in our two groups. By the year 2000, we won't be two groups but one. The oncoming generation cares little for our denominational walls and won't tolerate them. For a quarter of a century since 1958, many of our ministers in training have been in classes together at AMBS. They are ready for the new day. Perhaps the way to bring about the unity of our two groups is the way of the AM's and OM's who merged their district conferences starting already in 1916. Then there is little or nothing for our churchwide General Boards to do but to acknowledge the new reality.

Jake—Dateline August 7, 1999. Mennotown, New Mexico.

THE ASSOCIATED MENNONITE CONFERENCE meeting here elected its first woman moderator in the person of Albertina Giuseppe. This was AMC's first general assembly since the amalgamation of the Mennonite Church, the General Conference Mennonite Church, the Mennonite Brethren and the Brethren in Christ. It was noteworthy that 60 percent of the delegates were of non-European background.

Ross—By the year 2000, our mission boards and other church programs and agencies will be embarrassed, not by the lack of funds with which to carry out their programs and balance their budgets, but with finding appropriate answers to the question, "How can we find responsible ways to put all these dollars with which the church is flooding us to work for Christ so that his purposes for us and for the world may best be fulfilled. This embarrassment of riches will come about as a result of the church's growing convictions about Christian stewardship. Jake, I see you brought a stone with you. What is that all about?

Jake—This stone represents the General Conference Mennonite church. It was chosen from a field from the Far West; it isn't all that symmetrical;—neither square nor round. There is still some dirt on it; it seems to be a conglomeration of hard packed clay and loam but also of real hard granite; but for the careful observer there is an abundance of quartz crystals beautifully reflecting the rays from the light. I would like to place this stone on the CORNERSTONE.

Ross—I have a stone too. It is a piece of Indiana limestone which has been lying beside my driveway. Instead of commenting on how this piece of limestone symbolizes the Mennonite Church, I would simply like to read a few sentences I found in an encyclopedia in the article on Indiana limestone. "It is usually a grayish color but all colors of limestone from white to black have been found. . . . Ordinary limestone can be scratched by a knife but it is strong. It is a good stone for foundations and walls where a high polish is not needed. It makes an excellent building stone because it can be carved easily. Like sandstone it can be cut any way without splitting."

C. C. Regier: Progressive Mennonite Historian

by Keith L. Sprunger

C. C. Regier

Professor Cornelius C. Regier was one of Bethel's early reformers who plunged into the stream of twentieth-century American events.[1] Advanced education and a curious mind taught him to look at *his Mennonite people* and *his Mennonite community* from "a broader point of view, an American point of view."[2] The period from 1900 to World War I was the Progressive period, a time when prominent reformers, including many educators, attempted to use their skills and expertise to improve political, moral and social conditions in the United States.[3] Historian by profession, Regier began his teaching career at Bethel College in 1912-14 and returned again in 1918-19. He and his friends introduced their own version of a "progressive-style" reform program into Bethel College. In my personal library are several books which once belonged to C. C. Regier. When I was a young history professor at Bethel College, Mrs. C. C. Regier gave me several books from his library, which I value very much as links to Bethel's earlier historians.

C. C. Regier (1884-1950), born on a farm near Moundridge, Kansas, was the third child of Cornelius and Mary Wall Regier, both born in the Molotchna colony of the Ukraine. The older children were sister Margaret Regier Pankratz and brother Jake C. The Regiers were quite a remarkable family of hard-working, prosperous immigrants of the 1870s, and the children were energetic in many careers. When other sons, Jacob C. and John M., chose to become businessman and preacher, father Cornelius assumed that young Cornelius would carry on the family farm; but C. C. had small interest in farming. Farm life for him was too "lonely and monotonous" and central Kansas seemed so "utterly unromantic." As a boy, his thoughts often turned to history and other intellectual topics, and he grasped at a college education as his route away from the farm.[4]

Father Regier was disappointed, but mother Mary Wall Regier quietly sided with C. C. and his drive for knowledge. She always encouraged him in all of his college education and helped financially. Mary Wall Regier, from Altonau, Ukraine, had an "unbounded craving for knowledge," which was thwarted when her family withdrew her from school at age 13. C. C.'s educational quest, in a way, was her own.[5]

C. C. Regier began his college education by attending Bethel College for two years, earned the B.A. (1911) and M.A. (1912) at the University of Kansas, and took the Ph.D. at the University of Iowa (1922). Among the early twentieth-century Mennonite generation, he stood out in two regards: (1) as an intellectual and professionally trained historian, and (2) as a public-spirited professor who was committed to the political process and to social improvement through an educated and democratic populace. Woodrow Wilson was Regier's highest political hero. "I am a great admirer of him," wrote Regier.[6] His youngest brother, Alvin, regarded C. C. as perhaps the most remarkable of all the Regiers. Pioneer parents "gave birth to a true intellectual, one who was not satisfied to work with his hands and insisted on using his brain."[7]

Regier in 1915, while a student in Chicago, married Sara Balzer (1886-1943) of Mountain Lake, Minnesota. She was the daughter of Frank and Agatha Hiebert Balzer, both of Gnadenfeld in the Molotchna. Sara's brother was Jacob F. Balzer, a Bethel professor, later on the faculties at Carleton and Doane colleges, and dean of Doane. Regier respected him and valued the connection with the Balzers. The Regiers had three children, Donald, Virginia, and Frank.

While growing up, C. C. Regier dreamed of becoming a college-educated historian, and much of the day he talked about history to anyone who would listen. Finally, father Regier lost patience during the harvest and ordered him "to stop talking about history and go to work."

By then, age 15 or 16, C. C. had already completely read *Characterbilder aus der Geschichle* by August W. Grube (1816-84), and he always esteemed this book as his first historical inspiration.[8]

As he advanced through his education, he studied with some of the great American historians of the early twentieth century. At the University of Kansas he was a student of Carl L. Becker and Frank H. Hodder. In 1914-16 he took graduate classes, but no degree, at the University of Chicago, where his professors included James Westfall Thompson (historical method), J. H. Breasted (ancient Orient), and William E. Dodd (the American South). Dodd, who became a noted scholar of Woodrow Wilson, later was named ambassador to Germany, 1933-37. Regier took classes at the University of Wisconsin, studying under George Clarke Sellery and Dana C. Munro. Finally, he settled at the University of Iowa for the Ph.D., where he wrote a dissertation under Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., "The Era of Muck-rakers" (1922). Fred A. Shannon, another of Schlesinger's Ph.D. students, became a life-long friend at Iowa. The Ph.D. degree was a dream come true. After passing his final doctoral examination, C. C. wrote, "In a way I feel like flapping my wings and crowing, and in another way I feel exceedingly humble."[9]

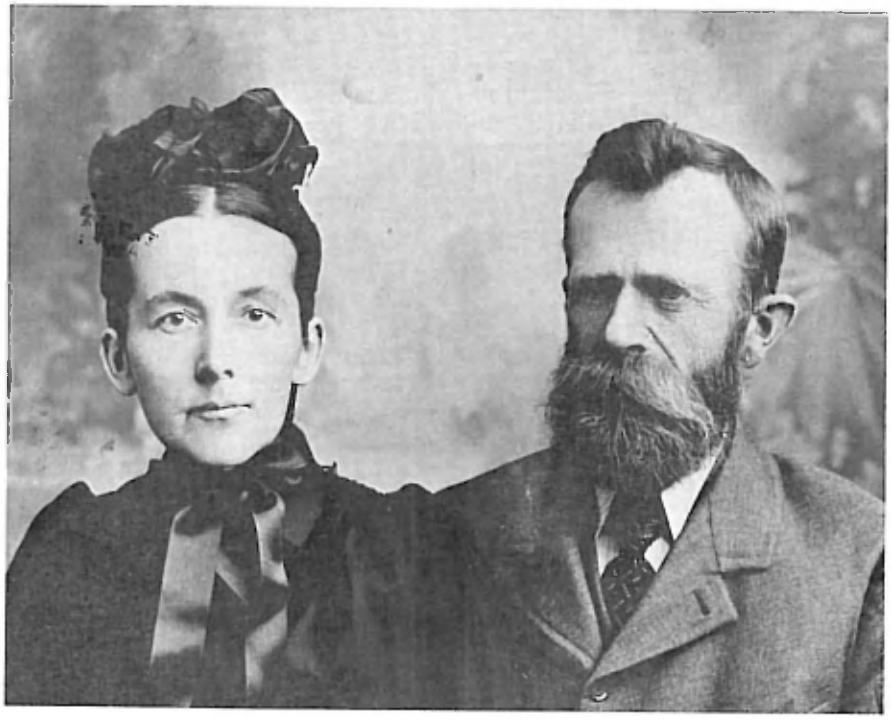
The intellectual development of C. C. Regier drew from many streams, ancient and modern. The Ph.D. training taught him the Rankean social science approach. "Go to primary sources," he would always say, "Go to the original versions." The belief that problems could be identified and solved rationally was an accepted intellectual tenet of the day that Regier subscribed to. In the Wilsonian spirit, he held that the world was improving and progressing, and that mankind was learning wisdom. Progress was not absolute, he realized, especially after World War I. He read and pondered Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, a statement against progress. He read the classical historians, especially Herodotus, Tacitus, Polybius, and Procopius. From the liberal arts tradition he learned from men as varied as Erasmus, Voltaire, and De Tocqueville.[10]

Of recent historians Regier greatly admired many of his teachers, but most significant were Arthur M. Schlesinger (his graduate adviser), Carl Becker, J. H. Randall, and Harry Elmer Barnes. Schlesinger and Barnes were personal friends and important in the development of his progressive view of history. Barnes worked at revising the history of World War I, especially the German War guilt doctrine, a position known as Revisionism. Becker and Randall demonstrated the art of cultural and intellectual history. Becker was the author of elegant, witty books, especially *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (1932) and *Everyman His Own Historian* (1935). Randall wrote *The Making of the Modern Mind* (1926). Becker and Randall in similar fashion interpreted history as the progression from religiosity to secularity, from certainty to tolerant relativity.

Randall's *Making of the Modern Mind* seems to be "the best one-volume summary of C. C. Regier's intellectual position and political philosophy." Regier once gave the book as a gift to his son Donald, and particularly called attention to this passage:

> A ramble through the mind of the modern man would reveal the same juxtaposition of beliefs that have endured unchanged for centuries, with ideas gleaned from the morning paper, all put together in a structure with a shaky enough foundation. . . . A man to-day will believe that the mercury atom can be changed into an atom of gold, and that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead and now sits at the right hand of God, that it is glorious to die on the field of battle for one's country, and that all disputes between nations should be settled in a world court. . . .[11]

C. C. Regier revealed his emotions by naming the Regier sons in honor of his mentors. The eldest son in 1918 was named Donald Wilson Regier in honor of Woodrow Wilson (Regier's brother, Jacob C. Regier, named his son Herbert Hoover Regier). The parents named the younger son Frank Arthur Regier (1928), this time after Dr. Arthur M. Schlesinger. C. C. Regier learned much more than American history from Professor Schlesinger. The defense of the Ph.D. dissertation oc-



Cornelius and Mary Wall Regier

curred on August 23, 1922, with Schlesinger presiding. Having successfully weathered the Ph.D. storm, professor and student relaxed. Schlesinger congratulated Regier but added: "Regier, there is one thing wrong with you." "What is that?" "You don't smoke." Whereupon Regier replied: "Well then, give me a cigar." Thus began a life-long habit —another Schlesinger legacy.[12]

Regier's identification with the reforms of the progressive era showed forth clearly in Regier's 1922 Iowa dissertation, "The Era of Muck-rakers" (published in 1932). He sympathetically handled the actions of the muckraking journalists and their critique of laissez-faire capitalism. Regier's thesis centered on "the fear of the great concentration of wealth . . . the growth of a new social conscience." For him this was no topic of dead, remote history. He himself grew up in the muckracking period and admired their campaigns. Lincoln Steffens, Ida M. Tarbell, Ray Stannard Baker, S. S. McClure, and B. O. Flower were nearly his contemporaries. Through the years he had a long correspondence with several of the Muckrakers. Personally autographed pictures of the Muckrakers hung on the walls of the Regier home.[13]

A liberal education made C. C. Regier broad-minded and critical of tradition. His most bitter criticisms were for people or policies which were "narrow-minded" or "medieval." For Mennonite this provided a tension. He came from a conservative family and church, the Hebron Mennonite Church near Buhler; and many of Regier's friends assumed that he would drift away from his Mennonite heritage. This was only partly true. Although iconoclastic of tradition, he retained an appreciation for the humanitarian aspects of Mennonitism. While a student at the University of Chicago in 1915, he wrote a paper on the Mennonites, in which he stressed the libertarian, undogmatic legacy of Mennonitism. C. Henry Smith, J. H. Langenwalter, and C. H. Wedel were his sources. Service must come before dogma, he believed. "Anabaptists laid emphasis on life, rather than doctrine." One of their most fundamental characteristics was "personal freedom."[14] Regier's personal library had the books of Smith, Harold S. Bender and P. C. Hiebert, and he often quoted from them.

After moving from the farm and away from Newton, Regier took his membership out of the Hebron Church and, like J. F. Balzer, joined the Congregational church; later, as he moved from place to place, he attended various liberal Protestant churches. He was impatient with the lethargic pace of Mennonites, and conservative leaders like H. P. Krehbiel repelled him. In older years he published a few articles in church papers on Mennonite service and relief. Regier was pleased that old Hebron Church stood out among Mennonites as extremely generous in donations for relief. "It gives me a proud feeling that our little church is so active" (1949).[15]

Teaching Career At Bethel College

Regier first came to Bethel College as teacher of history and social science in 1912, fresh from his M. A. studies at the University of Kansas. Imbued with the ideals of progress and change, at Bethel he found a group of other like-minded young professors pushing for innovation in the "post Wedel era." When President C. H. Wedel died in 1910, he was replaced by J. W. Kliewer, opening the way for a more Americanized education at Bethel College. The Bethel Mennonite progressive professors (active in the decade of 1910 to 1920), in addition to Regier, included J. F. Balzer, soon to become Regier's brother-in-law, Andrew B. Schmidt, David H. Richert, Samuel Burkhard, Emil R. Riesen, and others. The goals of the "Young Turks" were to upgrade intellectual standards and to broaden the vision of young Mennonite students. "That small German Mennonite group in Central Kansas . . . surrounded on every hand by American influences, is rapidly losing its peculiarities."[16] Regier and his friends did not regret the loss of Mennonite cultural peculiarity. Their desire was to bring Bethel College into the fullness of modern American life, where many of the differences in language and ethnic background would eventually be obliterated for the common good.

Innovations of all kinds connected Bethel irresistibly to the wider world. Lecture series brought musicians and prominent speakers to Bethel College. In 1914 Bethel faculty and students were thrilled with the mind-stirring speeches of Charles M. Sheldon of Topeka and Shailer Matthews of the University of Chicago. In the physical realm, the electricity lines and city water mains from Newton reached the college in 1912. Work began the same year on the Ark Valley Interurban train, linking Bethel with Newton and even Wichita. Change abounded.

Regier's teaching was in the modern style which combined history and social science. He taught a formidable array of courses at both the academy and college level. One semester's teaching load (1918) called for medieval and modern history, American history (academy), American history (college), church history, and modern European history. He also taught economics and other social sciences. His teaching borrowed from the New History movement of James H. Robinson, who used a broad cultural and intellectual approach. Professor Regier explained his philosophy of history in an article on "History" in the *Bethel College Monthly* of 1914, his earliest publication. What is history? "History, in the broadest sense of the word, is all that we know about everything that man has ever done, or thought, or hoped, or felt" (quoting from Robinson). Regier went on to expound three values of history: (1) It gives a great deal of valuable information, (2) It trains the intellect, (3) It has great ethical value. He believed that history must have a moral, useful purpose for making students aware of present concerns. History should lead the citizen toward greater cooperation and social responsibility. "Historical knowledge is moral knowledge," Regier taught.[17]

Regier was known as an excellent teacher. His method of teaching was an inspirational change from the old-fashioned "generals-and-wars" history previously drilled into Bethel students. For student Henry A. Fast (B.A. 1917), it was a first encounter with history as "people, issues, and movements—topics vital to people." Another student was Oswald

H. Wedel, son of former President C. H. Wedel. Oswald, later a history Ph.D. at Stanford, commended C. C. Regier "as the best history teacher he ever had."[18] Regier took the lead in organizing a student-faculty Social Science Club, whose goal was "to keep abreast of the progress of these fields." The club subscribed to several social science and current events journals and reviewed the articles at their meetings. At the charter meeting, in 1918, Regier read a paper on American Unitarianism. The "Social Science Club" idea became a feature of his teaching at other colleges as well. History and the social sciences moved ahead aggressively at Bethel under Regier's leadership.[19]

The theme of progress—past and future—was seldom absent from Regier's teachings. One waggish student, over-saturated with talk of progress, proposed a sample question for an upcoming Regier history examination: "Describe the progress of the world."[20] In those days "progress" flowed easily from the tongue. Regier's classes were challenging, in fact, too challenging for some Bethelites. One student in Regier's economics class became a campus celebrity by publicly shooting his textbook through with a rifle. Regier "probably made the class a little easier after that."[21] The *Bethel College Monthly* (Nov. 1913) carried this sophomoric, but barbed humor:

> First girl: "What if they kidnap Prof. Regier in Topeka?"
>
> Second girl: "Well, never mind, he has given us enough reference reading for the rest of the semester." (The semester was about half over).[22]

Above, the seven sons: from left to right, Samuel, Emil, Cornelius, Alvin, John M., Herman, and Jacob C., c. 1912.

Middle, Elizabeth Lohrentz (Mrs. John M. Regier), Mary (Mrs. John Moyer), Anna Buhler (Mrs. Jacob C. Regier), Justina (Mrs. John P. Claassen).

Below, the C. C. Regier family c. 1920: Donald, Sara Balzer Regier, Frank, Virginia and C. C.

After two years, Regier, M.A., took leave to pursue further graduate work at the University of Chicago (1914-16), followed by a year of teaching at Grinnell College (1916-17) and some farming in Montana. Next he taught for one semester in the high school at Pana, Illinois. Throughout this interval, his name remained on the faculty list in the college catalog. In 1918 President J. W. Kliewer invited Regier to return to the college. However, the situation had changed in the last three years at Bethel and in the United States. America had entered World War I, causing many problems for Mennonites. Also, the Progressive drive at Bethel had sparked a strong counter-movement among traditional Mennonites. Regier was bound to be controversial on both points. Although Kliewer urged Regier to return to Bethel, he warned him of questions being raised of "suspicion, orthodoxy, and Mountain Lake gossip."[23] Some Mountain Lake Mennonites, apparently, questioned the desirability of re-hiring Regier.

On returning, Regier once again aligned himself on the great issues of the day with the young faculty "insurgents." Whereas many Mennonites were too politically naive or Germanic to catch America's crusading vision of the war, Bethel faculty and students read liberal magazines like the *New Republic* and discussed the policies of Wilson. Their support of Wilson carried some of them along into war enthusiasm. C. C. Regier supported the war. He saw the war as the righteous crusade to "hurl the Hohenzollern gang headlong into the bottomless pit." When his brother Emil was drafted, C. C. encouraged him to take officer training if given the opportunity. As for himself, "if the government wants me, I'll go without a kick—and I'll go *straight*." Fortunately, he was judged medically exempt. Flat feet troubled him throughout his life.[24]

Regier was only one of several Bethel faculty who rallied to the war with Wilsonian enthusiasm. They believed that a war against Prussian militarism was right and necessary. Professor Samuel Burkhard gave a speech before the Hesston Red Cross that "was hot enough to please all of them," even the Liberty League extremists. The Bethel insurgents "were pretty much sold on making the world safe for democracy." The Bethel library served as the campus headquarters for selling war and thrift stamps. Regier and his circle hoped that war would shake Mennonites out of their isolationism and stolid Germanism. Under pressure from Newton patriots, the college dropped its entire German department for the duration of the war. Now, wrote Regier to J. F. Balzer, obviously pleased, "we have an entirely English (or rather American) institution."[25]

Victory in 1918 made all the wartime sacrifices seem worth while. "The last few weeks and months have been moments for the Gods," Regier wrote excitedly to Balzer. "1918 strikes me as the most dramatic year in history."[26] Rallying support to the "war to end all wars" was only one progressive step. The young Mennonite intellectuals, enthusiastic from graduate training at Harvard, Chicago, Columbia, Yale, and Kansas Universities—although none had yet achieved the Ph.D.—intended to energize Bethel and put it on an intellectual par with other good liberal arts colleges. Regier and his "Young Turk" friends (Burkhard, Balzer, Riesen, Richert, and Schmidt) believed the momentum was with them.

Those Progressive years were Bethel's "best time," thought Regier. Certainly, they were Bethel's most exciting time. The Bethel insurgents rallied in support of Woodrow Wilson and campaigned hard for the Democratic ticket in 1918. Regier, in fact, wrote a campaign article, distributed by the hundreds as a pamphlet, comparing Wilson favorably to Lincoln. "Our first duty today as loyal Americans and friends of democracy is to support our incomparable President." The Democrats did not fare very well in state and national elections, but in Newton's congressional district, the Democrat carried the day.[27]

While the Bethel professors dreamed and worked to make Bethel into a liberal, progressive community in matters of religion, politics, and social concerns, members of the board of directors and church constituency pushed in the opposite direction. The conservative leaders were H. P. Krehbiel and P. H. Richert from the board of directors. The conservatives had fewer academic and professional qualifications, except for Krehbiel with degrees from Oberlin. Their vision was not to break new ground but to preserve the traditional orthodoxy. The doctrine of academic freedom did not appeal to them. The anti-Progressives expressed alarm at the inroads being made by higher criticism, modernism, and even "free thought." The faculty had also aroused hard feelings by petitions for better salaries and working conditions. H. P. Krehbiel let it be known that "there must be some changes made" at Bethel. He drew up a new set of rules and regulations for the faculty which included examination of textbooks and tests of religious orthodoxy. These were ominous signs. President Kliewer tried to mediate between the factions, but the division was too deep. Regier feared that Bethel might soon be turned into a "full-fledged Moody Bible Institute."[28]

The dispute escalated into a severe crisis in the winter and spring of 1919. Splits in the faculty and board turned Bethel into "liberals vs. conservatives"—the future vs. the past—the fight against "old fogies." Regier and his friends found it incredible that such narrowness would dare rear its head in modern America. A. B. Schmidt bitterly scolded the board of directors for "intolerance, narrowmindedness, and medieval dogmatism." He despaired: "Such wicked and medieval principles prevail." A middle ground which would have drawn upon the best liberalism and traditionalism could not be found at Bethel. C. C. Regier, considered to be the faculty ringleader and an extreme liberal, felt the entire fate of Bethel hanging in the balance. "The conflict between conservatism and liberalism has come to a head."[29]

In a rather beligerent statement to the directors (January 27, 1919), Regier lumped the conservatives of the board in with the Dark Ages, the Jesuits, and the Pharisees. He appealed to common sense, to Jesus' liberal spirit, to "the God of hosts." No compromise with academic freedom could be tolerated. "As long as there is a just God in heaven He

will expect me to teach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth— and the truth as *I* see it."[30] The directors apparently sensed a different message of truth and fired C. C. Regier. He might have saved his professorship by an appeal, but he refused to grovel or beg for his job. Samuel Burkhard, who taught Bible, education, and manual training, was also charged with unorthodoxy, and suspended from teaching any courses in Bible. The directors restricted him to his safer areas of pedagogy and woodworking. Rather than accept this insult, Burkhard resigned.[31] By the end of 1919, the Progressive ranks were drastically thinned down with the firing of Regier and the resignations of Burkhard, Schmidt, and Riesen. Balzer was already on leave and never returned (which the directors thought was for the best). Thus ended, or nearly so, the Progressive Era at Bethel College.

Regier did not receive a written reason for his dismissal, although the reasons seemed obvious. Dismissal had to do with being a *Friedensstörer* (a troublemaker) and nearly a heretic. The directors tried to smooth over all troubles without publicity. Even the written minutes of the directors merely hint at the issues and imply that Regier resigned voluntarily. Rev. P. H. Richert preferred euphemism: "The board did not so much "fire" you as fail to reemploy you."[32] Such exquisite subtlety did not appeal to Regier.

Sara and C. C. Regier were deeply hurt by the commotion of 1918-19. Sara blamed H. P. Krehbiel personally for their misfortunes. She was ready to shake the dust of Bethel from their feet forever. "If we leave Bethel now we leave for good." C. C. Regier bitterly urged that Krehbiel be removed from his Bethel director's office "to get rid of a nuisance that stands in the way of progress."[33] Regier's reputation undoubtedly suffered in the Mennonite communities. Mary Wall Regier, his mother, heard women at Moundridge complaining about her son as a "free thinker." She defended his intellectual honesty. "Anyway, my son thinks, and their sons never have a thought in their empty heads."[34]

With the loss of C. C. Regier in 1919, the field of history at Bethel College received a serious setback professionally. Throughout the 1920s others taught the history classes competently; C. Henry Smith was visiting professor for one year. But, not for well over a decade, until the coming of E. L. Harshbarger in 1933, did Bethel again attract on a permanent basis a historian of such professional excellence. Other departments and the college as a whole also were weakened academically by the purging of the progressives. The Mennonite traditionalists (such as Krehbiel and Richert) assumed that their motives were worthy. They were concerned that Bethel College, through the impact of liberal Progressivism, would drift away from its distinctive peace concerns and Mennonite character. Some Mennonites, including Krehbiel, had suffered because of pacifism during World War I; they hardly could condone non-pacifism at Bethel College. H. P. Krehbiel "heard" second-hand that C. C. Regier was advocating "that Bethel College should long ago have ceased to be a Mennonite school."[35]

The Later Career of C. C. Regier

For the next thirty years Regier taught history and related subjects at a great variety of small colleges and universities: Simpson College (1919-21); then the Ph.D. at the University of Iowa (1921-22); Whitworth College (1922-23); Muskingum College (1923-25); Evansville College (1925-27); New River State College (1927-36); West Liberty State College (1936-49). He stood ready to teach classes in American and European cultural, political and intellectual history; economic history; Renaissance and Reformation; constitutional and legal history; diplomatic history and government; history of social and political thought; and history of science. His preference always was United States history, and within this field, the westward movement.

Time and space will not permit giving details about Regier's career at each of these colleges. His historical and teaching qualifications were excellent, but like at Bethel, he was always outspoken and conspicuously liberal in politics and religion. Consequently, few of these college positions went smoothly. Regier summarized: "Since I was a teacher with ambitions to improve our fortunes we were called to move repeatedly. Sometimes I lost my position, for one reason or another, and then we worried until I found another. At other times we moved because we wanted to."

Regier admired the "broad-minded" person or institution, but he encountered many which were quite the opposite. At Muskingum College, a United Presbyterian school, the president harassed him on issues of religion and academic freedom. The Regiers complained about the narrowness and conservatism of Muskingum; "We do not feel safe."[36] The position at Evansville College never developed into a permanent professorship.

Family picture c. 1945: back row, Donald, C. C. Elizabeth Linscheid Regier and Frank; below, Walter Paczesniak and Virginia Regier Paczesniak and daughter Penelope.

When Regier moved to New River State College, Montgomery, West Virginia, it was not a place to his liking. The state college was in the heart of coal mining country, wretchedly poor during the Depression, and the community leaders were very conservative—"typical provincial Bourgeois West Virginia." The college had a strong technological bent (since 1941, West Virginia Institute of Technology) and no tradition of history and humanities. Regier tried to preserve his life-long liberal convictions, not hiding them under a bushel, but "our liberalism here is built on a very narrow base."[37] The Ku Klux Klan threatened his life and, then teaching remote extension classes, he sometimes found it prudent to come home by a different road than the one taken earlier in the day. For Regier "it was the wrong kind of college and the wrong kind of coal-town environment."[38]

In an essay written in 1939, "What Democracy Means to Me," C. C. Regier paid tribute to the democratic way of life which had given him many opportunities. But, "my liberalism and my endeavor to promote causes and measures outside of classes which, in my humble opinion, seem democratic and socially useful, have caused me to lose one, and perhaps two college positions, and it has subjected me to an inquisitorial interview with a state board of education."[39] This 1939 statement very well catches the liberal spirit of C. C. Regier: To be democratic and socially useful. He did not name the two colleges where his opinions cost him a job, but one certainly was Bethel. His inquisitorial experience, perhaps, came at the hands of the West Virginia State Board of Education.

From 1936 to 1949 Regier taught and was chairman of social sciences at West Liberty State College at West Liberty, West Virginia. This was a much happier experience for the Regiers, and he made a strong contribution to the college and town. West Liberty was a small town of about 600 persons in the northern part of the state near Wheeling. Here he published his second book. He was editor and principal writer of the centennial history of the college, *West Liberty Yesterday and Today* (The College, 1939). There were also sorrows. Sara, his wife, died in 1943. In 1945 he married Elizabeth Linscheid (1891-1968).

Although he was still the campus liberal, his style became less strident, and the environment was tolerant. President Paul N. Elbin of West Liberty recalls Regier as a respected and admired professor, "a kind of Mr. Chips." They once had a small argument about a required faculty rehearsal for commencement. Regier told the president: "We both believe in democracy and order. I believe a little more in the first and you believe a little more in the second."[40]

Historical Writings

In spite of heavy teaching loads, Regier managed to be an active researcher and writer. His most important book was the dissertation, published as *The Era of the Muckrakers* (University of North Carolina Press, 1932). This was a straight-forward descriptive study of the journalistic muckrakers (approximately 1900-1910). He read the major muckraking journals and analyzed the articles according to the subject matter: city government, state politics, federal politics, big business, religion, the press, pure food and drugs, and so on. An interpretive thread runs throughout the book about the malevolent influence of big business and finance. Has capitalism failed? His conclusions called for a new era of muckraking exposure in the 1930s. Although most reviewers were fairly positive, they pointed out that the book was more a "compilation and organization" than an original interpretation. The book was reviewed in the *American Historical Review* in July, 1933, the same issue that carried reviews of new books by A. M. Schlesinger and Oswald Wedel. Regier's book for many years was a standard reference book in bibliographies, although the *Era of the Muckrakers* has since been superseded by newer, more analytic approaches. For anyone needing a systematic summary of the muckraking articles, the book still is useful.

Getting the book published was a difficult task. By 1926, Regier had revised his dissertation into what looked like a publishable book, and he sent it to Scribner's for a decision. Scribner's rejected it. The editors told him he had "a basis for a book rather than a book on the subject." Regier went to Schlesinger and Harry Elmer Barnes for help in finding a publisher, which eventually led to North Carolina. Barnes' main suggestion was for Regier to take on a co-author "of superior literary capacity." Granville Hicks was recommended. Hicks and Regier worked together to rewrite and dress up the book.[41] Hicks' magazine, *New Masses*, was often in the Regier home in the early 1930s.

After publishing the book, Regier's other writings of the 1930s centered on topics of citizenship and current affairs. He took a social science approach to history, and he saw the history teacher's responsibility as one of preparing students to cope with national and world problems. In a speech to the West Liberty faculty, he expounded on the necessity of studying recent history (such as the Muckrakers and World War I) rather than ancient, lifeless events. "Today we emphasize the last period of history the most."[42]

Two articles especially illustrate his convictions during the interwar period. The first of these, "Teaching for Peace in College" (1929) was an idealistic statement about how he tried to embue his students with the moral values of world citizenship and peace. The greatest problem facing the world is "the elimination of war and the promotion of world peace" and for this "nobody, it seems to me, has a greater obligation and a greater opportunity than the history teacher." Regier did not stress the anti-war topic in his classes on early history, but after reaching the era of World War I, the "world peace" theme became a topic of several class periods.[43] By now he took the Revisionist, liberal interpretation, popularized in books by Harry Elmer Barnes and Sidney Fay, that war arose from the evils of imperialism, nationalism, militarism, alliances, and war guilt treaties. The enthusiasm for world peace had not turned him into an absolute pacifist, however, as his support of World War II was to show. He did believe that most wars,

but not all, could be eliminated.

A second article, "What Every American Citizen Should Know" (1935) was also a credo of Regier's convictions. In the 1930s, Regier, the Wilsonian of World War I, had become a supporter of the Roosevelt New Deal, and the people were once again on the march. The struggle was world-wide between national states controlled by capitalists on one side, and on the other side, the "common people—the proletariat everywhere are struggling to obtain control not only of the political states but also of the economic systems." He asked that communism and socialism should not be dismissed out of hand but studied for their "promise."[44] A copy reached Bethel College. President E. G. Kaufman, who reprinted it in the *Bethel College Bulletin* (1935), along with a note by "Uncle Davy" Richert that C. C. was remembered as one "who spoke fearlessly the truth as he saw it."

Professor Regier's politics and history teaching during the 1930s moved considerably leftward in seeking economic and political solutions. He advocated: "The government must be made to represent the people truly by abolishing the profit system and by taking over all the basic industries. . . ." (1936).[45] Still his hopes were on democracy and the regeneration of America under the leadership of F. D. R. More muckraking, more reform was needed. Some of his old Muckraking heroes like Lincoln Steffens sought drastic solutions in communism. Regier told his family: "Toward the end of his life Lincoln Steffens seems to have lost his faith in democratic institutions. What a shame."[46]

Another group of Regier's writings fall into the area of Mennonite history. In his younger years, Regier seemed only occasionally interested in the history of Mennonites—not surprising after his misfortunes at Bethel College—but his interest deepened as he grew older. He published articles in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (1941), *The Mennonite* (1947), *Mennonite Life* (1949), and *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1949). Mostly these stressed the peace and humanitarian principles of Mennonites. He also wrote a series of biographical articles on his parents and other members of the Regier family. These are an outstanding collection of small Mennonite biographies (articles on Mary Wall Regier, Cornelius Regier, the Regier family as a whole—"An Immigrant Family of 1876"—and other biographical material on other family members as yet unpublished.[47]

His dream of writing an extensive Regier family history was severely hampered when the old Regier family home in Kansas burned and irreplaceable papers were lost. This experience of fire troubled C. C. Regier and he often spoke of it as a great historical loss. He gave instructions to his own immediate family about how to proceed if their house should catch fire. First they must give attention to save a few bundles of papers, then rescue household goods.[48]

The infrequent attention to Mennonite history gave the impression that he regarded it as low priority. Without question, he dreaded narrow denominationalism, Mennonite or otherwise. He did not want to be known as strictly a scholar of Mennonite history. Rather than writing, for example, a "history of Mennonites in Newton," he favored a "history of Newton" in which the Santa Fe Railroad and the Mennonites both would play a unique part. His plans for retirement included such a project on the history of Newton, Kansas. "My interest is not so much in purely Mennonite affairs as in American affairs in which the Mennonites have had a part." After his 1949 articles in *Mennonite Life*, E. G. Kaufman told him, "I think many people here were surprised at the evident interest indicated in it."[49]

In spite of his bemused, questioning manner, the Mennonite heritage was meaningful to him. Mennonite topics were often discussed at home. As Regier moved away from the absolute pacifism of the Mennonites, Mrs. Regier was a force in the home to reaffirm Mennonite piety and values. Sara Regier never deviated from her pacifistic upbringing. Like his wife's, C. C. Regier's long-term historical concern for humanitarianism and anti-war history owed much to his religious heritage. Although living far from Mennonite communities and churches, it was important to him to keep himself in the perspective of Mennonite history. After a lecture to the West Liberty College faculty club on Mennonite history, he said, "those who heard me will understand the Regiers a little better now."[50] Retelling the Mennonite story helped Regier to understand himself better.

Last Years

World War II caused disruptions and for West Liberty State College and its faculty. Full-time enrollment on the main campus dropped to 90 students by 1945 (82 women and 8 men) and then rebounded and grew after the war.[51] Although a strong proponent of world peace during the 1920s and 1930s, Regier supported the new war as necessary for rooting out the Nazi evil. "We all want peace. The question is only how best to achieve it" was his philosophy.[52] On this issue the Regier family had different convictions. Son Donald, a pacifist, entered a Quaker C.P.S. camp; his wife Sara, who died in 1943, consistently opposed all wars. Regier's views on World War II were consistent with his earlier views of World War I twenty-five years before. An evil must be cleansed from the earth, Prussian militarism in 1917, Nazism in 1941.

In late 1942 Regier began working on an article about the war. American idealism needed to have a clear focus, he believed, and so far no one statement clearly presented the democratic ideals of the war—as Regier viewed it. His article, entitled "A Thousand Years," was inspirational rather than scholarly. It analyzed the crisis from the viewpoint of "world brotherhood" rather than American nationalism. The war against fascism must be a people's revolution of the entire human race against the selfish interests of nationalism and capitalism. The twentieth century was becoming the "people's century" (echoing Henry Wallace). "Pray God that we may not sabotage the 'people's revolution.' "[53] Regier considered this one of his most important articles. However, he could not get it published in any magazine. After World War II, Regier sensed that the war's promise had not been ful-

filled. He became worried about the Cold War and the aggression of the Soviet Union.

In 1949 he retired from all teaching at West Liberty College. He and his second wife, Elizabeth Linscheid Regier, also a pacifist, decided to retire to Newton, Kansas. His immediate question was, could he get some part-time teaching at Bethel? He wrote to E. G. Kaufman expressing a desire to return to Bethel College. "My college-teaching career began at Bethel and I should not mind if it would end there. Thirty years in the Diaspora have made me a little homesick."[54] Although President Kaufman sent encouraging letters and offered several teaching possibilities, the negotiations never reached agreement.

Members of the Bethel board of directors raised a few questions, like thirty years before, concerning Regier's current religious views. They also had reports that he smoked cigars. Kaufman sent him a copy of the General Conference Mennonite statement of faith, but with the assurance that at Bethel they held to the *spirit* rather the *letter*. The religious issue proved to be no barrier to Kaufman and Regier. Professor Regier based his religion on Micah 6:8 (doing justice, loving mercy, walking humbly with God). To this he added the moral law, that we are all members one of another, and the brotherhood of man.[55]

On the other issue, however, there was more trouble. Regier greatly enjoyed smoking; and although he promised to keep his cigars away from the Bethel campus, President Kaufman implored him to give them up altogether. Finally at an impass, Kaufman withdrew the teaching offer, ostensibly because of college budget cuts, but both knew that tobacco was the fatal stumbling block. Bethel insisted that he totally abstain. "That I refused to do." Here was one more example of Regier's independence, or stubbornness, of mind. "I have no talent for parading under false feathers."[56]

C. C. and Elizabeth Regier moved to Newton in the summer of 1949. He died June 9, 1950. Regier was a talented historian and teacher. However, he was also a thorn in the side of status-quo institutions. "He did his own thinking and was free to express his opinions, often to his own harm."[57] His historical career began at Bethel, and although short, it added significantly to the development of scholarly historical studies at Bethel College. He gave Bethel College students a model of the discipline of history both democratic in spirit and socially useful. Had he continued at Bethel, he might well have led the way in the early development at the college of a more activist doctrine of political and social involvement than was long acceptable. As it was, his contribution was made in a wider community.

END NOTES

[1] This is the second of a series on 20th-century Mennonite historians (see *Mennonite Life*, Dec. 1981 for C. H. and Oswald H. Wedel). I wish to thank many people who provided historical information, especially Donald W. Regier, son of C. C. Regier, Raymond Regier, nephew, and Esther Pankratz, niece. Raymond Regier made available several items from his Regier Family Collection (hereafter referred to as the R. Regier Coll.), as did Esther Pankratz from her personal collection. I also wish to acknowledge suggestions from Allan Teichroew, James Juhnke and David Haury, and correspondence from Paul N. Elbin of West Liberty State College, William L. Fisk of Muskingum College, and Emmett D. Chisum of the University of Wyoming.

[2] C. C. Regier, "As Others See us" (c. 1929), in C. C. Regier Collection, II, folder 36 (M.L.A., Bethel College).

[3] On Progressivism and historians, see Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (Chicago, 1968).

[4] For biographical details, see the C. C. Regier Coll. Autobiographical items are also scattered in some of his family histories; see *Pioneer Experiences of Father, Mother and Grandfather* (Printed by the Family, 1963), p. 23.

[5] Donald W. Regier to the author, Dec. 11, 1982; "Childhood Reminiscences of a Russian Mennonite Mother." *Pioneer Experiences*.

[6] Regier to Ray Stannard Baker, Oct. 2, 1928 (Baker Papers, Library of Congress).

[7] Alvin Regier, "Family Memoirs" (MS), p. 49A (R. Regier Coll.).

[8] *Pioneer Experiences*, p. 28; Donald W. Regier letter, Dec. 11, 1982.

[9] Regier to Herman Regier, Aug. 24, 1922 (R. Regier Coll.).

[10] Donald W. Regier letter, Dec. 11, 1982.

[11] *Making of the Modern Mind* (1926), p. 4; Donald W. Regier letter, Jan. 14, 1983.

[12] Donald W. Regier letter, Dec. 11, 1982.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Regier Coll., I folder 21.

[15] Regier to Sam Regier, Mar. 6, 1949 (R. Regier Coll.).

[16] "As Others See Us" (Regier Coll., I, folder 36).

[17] Ibid., Jan. 1914, pp. 11-13. Robinson's ideas from *The New History* (1912).

[18] Regier to J. F. Balzer, Jan. 6, 1928 (Balzer Coll. II, folder 31), and H. A. Fast interview.

[19] Regier to Balzer, Oct. 9, 1918 (Ibid., II, folder 29).

[20] Interview with Marie Regier Janzen (Bethel Academy 1919, B. A. 1926).

[21] E. G. Kaufman to Regier, Dec. 29, 1948 (Kaufman Coll., Bethel Archive, Box 53, folder 325).

[22] p. 14.

[23] Regier to J. W. Kliewer, Mar. 6, 1918 (J. W. Kliewer, Coll., III, folder 19).

[24] Regier to Emil Regier, Aug. 9 and Oct. 30, 1918 (Emil Regier Coll., folder 4).

[25] Burkhard to J. F. Balzer, Dec. 22, 1918 (Balzer Coll., II, folder 29); Regier to Balzer, Sept. 6, 1918 (Ibid.); Burkhard interview, June 28, 1975 (Bethel Oral History Coll.); *Monthly*, (June 15, 1918), p. 13.

[26] Regier to J. F. Balzer, Nov. 9, 1918 (Balzer Coll., II, folder 29).

[27] "Bethel College Professor Endorses President Wilson," (Regier Coll., II, folder 36).

[28] Regier to Justina Regier, April 17, 1919 (J. W. Kliewer Coll., III, folder 19). The new regulations are in the Directors' Minutes Book, Feb. 3-5, 1919.

[29] Regier to his mother, April 13, 1919 (J. W. Kliewer Coll., III, folder 19); A. B. Schmidt letter, April 2, 1919 (H. P. Krehbiel Coll., box 37, folder 240).

[30] C. C. Regier Coll., I, folder 1.

[31] Directors' Minutes Book, April 14, 1919; Burkhard interview.

[32] Directors' Minutes Book, April 14, 1919; Regier to the Board, April 2, 1919; P. H. Richert to Regier, April 7, 1919 (Richert Coll., box 21, folder 154); Regier to his mother, April 13, 1919 (J. W. Kliewer Coll., III, folder 19).

[33] Sara Regier to J. F. Balzer, April 6, 1919 (Balzer Coll., II, folder 30); Regier to H. P. Krehbiel, July 27, 1919 (Krehbiel Coll., Box 37, folder 240).

[34] Alvin Regier, "Family Memoirs," p. 53.

[35] Krehbiel's notation on C. C. Regier letter of Jan. 27, 1919 (box 37, folder 240).

[36] Regier to J. F. Balzer, Feb. 15, 1925 (Balzer Coll., II, folder 31).

[37] Regier to J. F. Balzer, Oct. 28, 1929.

[38] Paul N. Elbin to the author, Dec. 21, 1982.

[39] Regier Coll., II, folder 36.

[40] Elbin letter, Dec. 21, 1982.

[41] Regier to J. F. Balzer, Aug. 24 and Dec. 26, 1926 (Balzer Coll., II, folder 31); Regier to Harry Elmer Barnes, June 23, 1927 (Barnes Coll., Univ. of Wyoming); also letters on publication in the Baker Papers.

[42] Regier Coll., II, folder 36.

[43] Published in *The Historical Outlook* (Feb. 1929), pp. 79-81.

[44] Published in *Proceedings* of the West Virginia Academy of Science (1935, published 1936), pp. 124-28.

[45] "Our Fundamental Social Problem," *Social Science*, XI (Winter 1936), p. 39.

[46] Donald W. Regier letter, Dec. 14, 1982.

[47] The article on Mary Wall Regier was published in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (Jan. 1941); The "Immigrant Family of 1876" in *Social Science* (July 1932). These two plus the article on Cornelius Regier were reprinted in *Pioneer Experiences of Father, Mother and Grandfather* (1963). Regier also worked for many years on an article on Mennonite history in Russia; a xeroxed edition, "Chronicle of Gnadenfeld: A Minority in Russia," was later edited by Donald W. Regier in 1976.

[48] Donald W. Regier letter, April 5, 1983.

[49] Regier to E. G. Kaufman, April 5, 1919; Kaufman to Regier, Dec. 11, 1948 (Kaufman Coll., box 53, folder 325).

[50] Regier to J. F. Balzer, Nov. 19, 1939 (Balzer, II, folder 33).

[51] Regier, "West Liberty State College in World War II," p. 6 (Regier Coll., IV, folder *7).

[52] Regier to Sam Regier, Mar. 6, 1949 (R. Regier Coll.).

[53] Regier to J. F. Balzer, Nov. 23, 1942; June 4, 1943 (Balzer Coll., II, folder 33); the article is in the Regier Coll., I, folder 24.

[54] Regier to E. G. Kaufman, July 16, 1948 (Kaufman Coll., box 53, folder 325).

[55] Ibid., letters of Regier and Kaufman, Dec. 11 and Dec. 24, 1948.

[56] Ibid., letters of Regier and Kaufman, April 5, April 16, and April 24, 1949 (Kaufman Coll. and Regier Coll.).

[57] Alvin Regier, "Family Memoirs," p. 49A.

Ward: A Fifty-Year Memory

by Donald W. Regier

During the depths of the Great depression, Dr. C. C. Regier was professor of history and government at New River State College. Its campus overlooked Montgomery, West Virginia, and the Kanawha river with thousand-foot hills pressing on all sides. One autumn day in the early 1930s, he and his wife gathered the family for a drive. Thus C. C. and Sara (born Balzer) took the children: Frank, Virginia and me (about 12 years old), to find out about Ward. "What is going on in Ward?" asked the letter from Uncle John Pryor, Congregational minister in Gilbertville, Mass., married to Aunt Suzie, Mother's sister. "We have sent two missionary barrels." It surprised us to learn of such hardship, so close by, in a town we had not heard of before.

We found it only 15 miles away, half way down to Charleston and up a hollow just off the Kanawha Valley, overcrowded with a creek, railroad tracks, and a tortuous gravel road. The valley opened a little and we drove by a field of tents, piles of mined coal, a silent coal mine, then past rows of run-down, boarded-up, empty houses, the town of Ward. "It must be the tents," thought Dad aloud. So we turned back, forded the creek, and drove into the camp. "Who is in charge here?" he asked after advancing a short distance into a lane between rows of tents. "Over there. Mr. Shifflet." I remember the answer. Dad and Shifflet introduced themselves, their families, and easily became friends. His wife, far advanced in pregnancy, soon bore a baby boy who was duly named Norman Thomas Shifflet, in honor of the perennial socialist candidate for president.

The United Mine Workers of America, we learned, had undertaken to organize Ward, and the UMWA local had called a strike to bring in the undecided. In the worst of the depression, profits from coal-mining were poor at best. The company answered by shutting down the mine, locking out the miners, and evicting their families from company housing. These were the empty houses we had seen. The miners thought the company had blacklisted them as well. For some of the younger men had been as far west as Iowa looking for jobs. Some had found work. All had been laid off with no explanation after a week or month or two. Most had come back. They thought they were fired when their new employers heard from their old ones. A New York Quaker lady, learning of the plight of the coalminers, had given nearly all of the tents. Mother and Dad were both impressed, Mother especially, with the timely importance of the tents, as a positive, non-violent contribution to a most difficult social problem. My consciousness of the Society of Friends as a social force dates from this experience.

Back home we easily saw that the coal-wood stove in a back room could be spared. So we loaded it in our old Buick, and took it to Ward. Shifflet named a family, up the hill just away from the tents, as most in need of the stove. There we found a habitation, contrived from boxes and packing crates, sheltering husband, wife, and five or six children. Newspaper inadequately covered the walls in a failing attempt to block the cold. With not enough tents to go around, this family had been left out. Constant pressures of an unemployed husband, children in their teens, young babies and another coming, eventually broke the frail little wife and mother. She lost her mind in the course of unrelieved strain. They did appreciate the stove. Through us other faculty members and students at the college learned of the camp. More help and missionary barrels were arranged. Virginia remembers Dad tracing the outline of a child's foot for ordering shoes.

Our association with the tent colony continued until we moved from Montgomery in 1936. A few years later I returned briefly. The community was as we had first discovered it, except that the tents were now much older. From the first, the camp was suspected by the business communities of the Kanawha Valley of housing a nest of radicals. The concerned faculty and friends of the miners were labeled communist by some local conservatives. These were times that tried one's loyalties. But there has never been any question in my mind that the naming of the Shifflet baby after socialist Norman Thomas reveals the true sentiments of Ward, its leaders, and its friends. With time it has given me pride that my parents could face being called communist for trying to help this martyred community.

The Neukircher Mennoniten Gemeinde Von Chinook-Sedalia

by Irene Klassen

"As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; (for) the wind passes over it and it is gone, and the place knows it no more." Ps. 103:15,16.

What drew those early settlers to the Naco-Sedalia area? Was it adventure? That eternal hope of prosperity? The railroads, both Canadian Pacific and Canadian National, encouraged and in fact urged development as they proceeded westward across the continent. Under Homestead provisions, land could be had for little more than a song. The prairie was flat, almost treeless; the soil light and easy to cultivate. The enticement was there.

This particular district was just within the illfated and infamous Palliser Triangle, that part of Western Canada which Captain John Palliser had condemned as completely unproductive when he had surveyed it in a dry season. However, as in the Biblical story of Joseph, the dry seasons alternated with the good seasons, and another surveyor, John Macoun, saw it at another time and declared it a veritable paradise.

So at the turn of the 20th century, hundreds of pioneers came to occupy the land. They came from Eastern Canada, from the United States (a large group of Norwegian Lutherans came from Minnesota), and from Europe. Eagerly every available acre was tilled, every sod was turned. Grains were planted and abundant crops were harvested. Modest homes were built—the lumber for which had to be hauled from a fair distance, by horse or even oxteam. Schools were established and an exciting new community was burgeoning.

By the mid-20's however, many of these settlers had become disillusioned by the vacillating temperament of the climate. Others may have made a modest fortune and were eager to move on. At any rate, much of this land again became available. This was also the time when the Mennonite Colonization Board was looking for farms on which to place the many immigrants of the 1923-25 influx, and word spread quickly.

It is no idle statement that Mennonites have been known as "Das wandernde Volk" or "A Wandering People." Many of their wanderings have been a flight for their faith and for their lives, as was also the flight from Russia. They had arrived in Canada leaving most, if not all, of their earthly possessions behind; their spiritual roots had been savagely torn out of a well-established and much-loved homeland. No doubt their early wanderings in Canada were as much a search for values to replace what they had lost, as they were a struggle for survival. Most of those who came to the Naco-Sedalia area had already lived in several locations in Canada. The Colonization Board was desperately trying to place and settle them, as well as to appease the CPR who had been so generous to them, and to whom they owed this vast debt, the *Reiseschuld.*

Home of David Epp for 17 years where many services were held. Still standing in 1980.

Some deals bypassed the Board. There were some cases where a farmer paid a dollar per acre to someone to place an immigrant on his farm. There were also many farmers who took advantage of these "green horns".

The terms—no down payment, then half-crop share for up to fifteen years, plus taxes, plus insurance, plus seed and any other expenses—seemed quite reasonable in those first good years. However these conditions proved disastrous and much of the land reverted back to the original owners, who had in the meantime enjoyed a bit of a holiday.

One of the earliest Mennonites to arrive in the district must have been the Enns family, for the first birth recorded was that of Heinrich Enns, born April 17, 1925 at Sedalia, to Peter and Sara Enns.

In early 1926, David B. Wiens left his family with relatives in Herschel, Saskatchewan, took the train as far as it went, (to the Saskatchewan border at Loverna) and from there set out on foot to see this land for himself. Westward. At nightfall he spotted a light. Making his way toward it, he came upon a small shack—the home of a lonely bachelor. The surprised stranger offered Wiens supper, but the weary wanderer shook his head, and laying his hand to the side of it, closed his eyes indicating that all he wanted was to rest. Ah, that was simple; the bachelor went to his bed in the corner of the room, and turned up the covers as an invitation. Gratefully Wiens accepted and the two strangers shared bed and blanket that night. The following morning, Wiens headed west again and eventually came to the Pettinger farm south and west of New Brigden, the farm which he later bought. (It was one of the few land purchases that was actually completed.)

The Peter Martens family, an extended and intermarried family, came from Namaka, Alberta, to buy the Clark Fraser farm south and west of Naco. However, after a year or so, Fraser decided not to sell after all, so the family relocated in the Chinook area. Another large family was the Heinrich Neufelds, who would also have their story to tell. Other families came—many of them large and interrelated. There were the Baergens, the Regehrs, the Boeses, the Wedels, Duecks, Kroekers, Kroegers, Derksens, Enns, Ewerts, Schmidts, Janzens, Epps, Heidebrechts, and the list goes on. In all there were 50 names.

They settled in a fairly wide radius between the CPR line through Consort to the north, centrally at Naco, Sedalia, and New Brigden, and the CNR line through Chinook and Cereal to the south, and even further south, a span of over forty miles. For reasons already alluded to there was some moving from farm to farm.

The land was already broken, and farms established. The Mennonites eagerly applied their skills of farming, but found conditions quite different from their homeland. Even so those first years were good years. The mosquitoes were terrible, a clear indication of excellent moisture conditions. In the summer of 1926, the CNR built a spur-line from Loverna to Hemaruka through New Brigden, Sedalia, and Naco; and although the train went only once a week, it brought with it better communication with the outside world, but even more important, it meant opportunity for more expedient grain shipments. The situation was ideal.

In a few years a Mennonite community of over 300 persons had gathered. On March 14, 1928, the first brotherhood meeting was called, and the thirty-three men present organized the "Neukircher Mennoniten Gemeinde von Chinook-Sedalia". Some of the original members say that this name was chosen because of the large number of members who had come from the Neukirch Gemeinde in the Molotschna Colony in Russia. Others say that the name merely represented the new beginning in this new land. In faith and great expectations, a full-fledged, independent congregation was formed, independent except for the serivces of Elder J. B. Wiens, from Herschel, Saskatchewan. Rev. William Martens, who had been ordained in Russia, and who had been largely responsible for gathering the people together, was chosen to take on the leadership. Other ministers at the time were Heinrich Janzen and Cornelius Penner. Candidates were nominated for ministers and deacons, and the election took place a week later. Those elected at that time were George Harder, Heinrich Dueck, Peter Regehr, and David Boese. They were ordained in stages over the next few years as they themselves felt ready, but they were expected to preach immediately.

Cop Hill School where church services were occasionally held.

The deacons elected were Gerhard J. Baergen and Tobias Schmidt, (later Gerhard Schmidt); these were in charge of mission funds, and were expected to take care of the needy in their midst as well. *Vorsaenger* (song leaders) were an important part of the congregation, and those named were Gerhard Schmidt and Heinrich Voth, both of whom had served in that capacity in Russia. The *Kirchenrat* (Council) was to consist of the ministers, the deacons and three other members, Peter Martens, Gerhard H. Baergen, and Kornelius Heidebrecht.

A levy of $.25 per quarter section of land was decided upon. Wm. Martens was asked to investigate the possibility of establishing a Mennonite cemetery. This did not materialize.

The majority of the settlers were *Kirchliche*, General Conference, but there was a certain amount of working together with those of the Brethren and Alliance church members who were also a part of the group. George Huebert, a Mennonite Brethren, was given full preaching privileges and later, when the annual *Bibelbesprechungen* (Bible Studies) were organized, both Mennonite Brethren and General Conference ministers came to instruct and expound the scripture. At one point, the minutes record that a missions offering was divided among the various conference, and that the collections of every third Sunday should go to the Mennonite Brethren conference. Later there was also a baptism service for those who wanted to join the M.B. church. This was carried out in the slough or pond on Gerhard Baergen's farm.

An idealistic set of Rules and Regulations was set up, using the Constitutions of other congregations as their guide (primarily Dundurn, Sask.) and based on Scripture, choosing 1 Cor. 14:40 as their motto, "Let all things be done decently and in order." Rules were strictly enforced. Failure to attend worship services, or an unrepented misdemeanor meant automatic loss of membership, as did marriage with a non-Mennonite.

Widows and orphans were cared for. At the death of Frank Penner, his two brothers were held responsible to look after the widow and her children. In a slightly different case, at Heinrich Voth's death, since he had no male relatives, arrangement was made for certain members of the church to take care of the widow and her teenage son. This arrangement lasted only until the widow married G. J. Baergen who needed a mother for his recently orphaned children.

A rather interesting item in the Rules and Regulations of the newly formed congregation was the proclamation of church holidays. No work was to be done on any Sunday, Epiphany, Good Friday, Easter (first and second), Ascension, Pentecost (first and second), Christmas (first, second, and third). However, a certain tolerance should be shown such members who had to work on the third day of Christmas. It may have been an oversight, but New Years Day was not mentioned. Of course, no work meant no school, so the Mennonite children had a few extra holidays. One public school teacher, noticing the absence of several Mennonite students remarked, "Have those Russians got another church holiday?" and this time, it wasn't even the case. Mennonites were often referred to as "Russians."

Because of the widely scattered membership, there were two major divisions, North and South. Services were held in several smaller areas—one or two in Chinook, one at Naco, one at Sedalia, and one at New Brigden. The homes designated were centrally located and usually the larger ones, which were quite adequate for the average Sunday service. For larger functions, such as baptisms, funerals, weddings, or a visit by a missionary, a hall or school was rented.

On Sunday mornings it meant that all excess furniture such as beds and cupboards were moved out of the living room to make room for benches, usually just planks on apple boxes. A table was placed at the front, carefully polished and covered with the best cloth, to be used for the pulpit. The hosting families had to rise early to get ready, but the rest of the congregation also had to rise equally early, to get to church on time.

Offerings were taken and much of the money went to Russia, for many of the people had starving relatives back there. The deacons were in charge of these funds and were allowed to use their discretion as to administering some of them locally as well. It seems there were some needy cases and clothing was also distributed.

However, there were expenses that had to be dealt with, gas, telephone, postage, and wine for communion. It was decided to levy an additional $.25 per baptized member, and to hold back 25 percent of the levies for congregational use. Several times the records show the need to purchase communion utensils, but this was never accomplished—a pitcher and an ordinary water glass were all that were ever used.

Until 1931, Elder J. B. Wiens was called from Herschel to perform those duties designated only to elders, that is baptism and communion. He travelled the distance of about eighty miles at least once a year, and occasionally was offered a dollar to cover expenses, which he graciously accepted as doing his duty for the Lord. His wife, who was more realistic and down-to-earth, was once heard to mutter behind his back, (Wiens was hard of hearing, and no doubt would have been embarrassed), "*Komt ye uck amoal han ver een Dola*" (Why don't you come over sometime for a dollar?).

Because of travel and inconvenience, it was decided to have their own elder, and William Martens was elected and ordained by Rev. D. Toews in 1931. Other ministers were also elected, Abram Epp and Peter Penner in January, 1931, and William Pauls and Jacob Neufeld in November of that year. By now there were twelve ministers to serve the Neukircher congregation. All adults were encouraged to attend the catechism instruction along with the baptism candidates. The Articles of the Mennonite Faith were read to all members to familiarize everyone with its teachings.

There was always a small rivalry between the North (Sedalia) and the South (Chinook). There was a certain amount of struggle for power. Members had brought with them their ideas and ideals from Russia; these varied from place to place, and were not always in harmony. At times the differences with

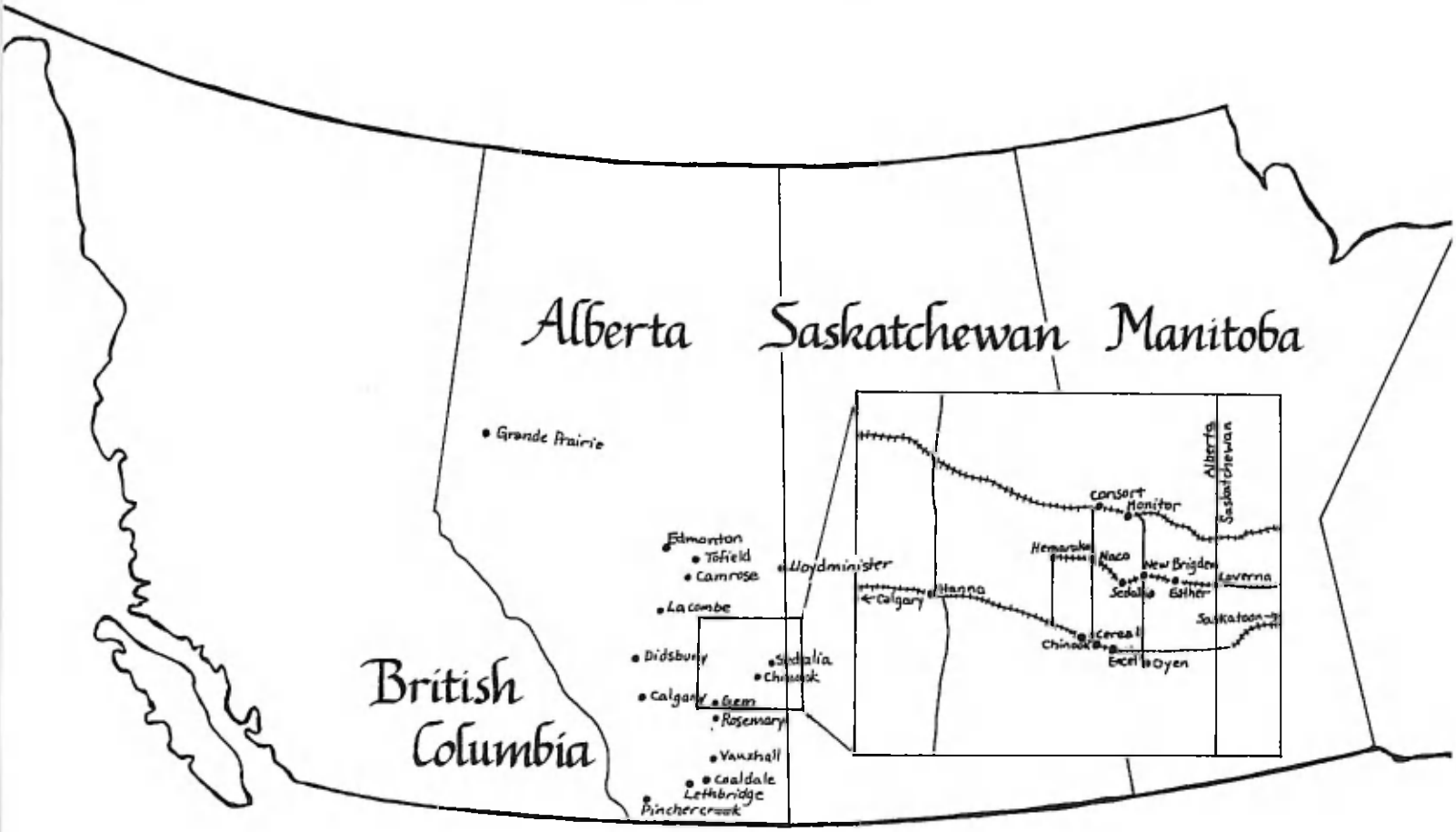
the MB members threatened to create problems. There were also some charismatic idealists, and there was some conflict with the Pentecostal people who worked up a tremendous enthusiasm every year at their convention at Veteran and were successful in drawing temporary followers each time. However, a concerted effort was made to work together in spite of differences and distances.

Some families had brought their *Gesangbuch* from Russia, others had the *Dreiband—Heimatklaenge, Glaubens stimme,* and *Frohe Botschaft.* Although the brotherhood encouraged the use of the chorales in the *Gesangbuch,* the minister who led the service probably made his own choices. He would then read the words line by line, or two lines at a time, and then the *Vorsaenger* would start the singing and the congregation joined in. In the absence of a *Vorsaenger,* the minister himself would have to 'stimm an'. Even without instrumental accompaniment or written music, most of the congregational singing was in four-part harmony. They sang well and soon acquired an outstanding reputation.

Choirs were organized—the music they used was mostly out of the *Liederperlen,* a series of books written for choirs in what to most of us would have been hieroglyphics (*Ziffern*). The choir director, Jacob Neufeld at Chinook, and Peter Derksen at Sedalia used a tuning fork as the only instrument. Although some homes had organs, autoharps, guitars, and accordians, these were not used for worship services. They were, however, used and enjoyed when young people got together for social gatherings. There was, in fact, a very active young people's group in both the North and the South.

Needless to say, the women too, were busy. During the summer they had the gardens and other chores, and usually had to help their husbands in the field as well. But in the winter, they got together, often weekly, to work for missions. Those who couldn't attend meetings, worked at home. Many of them saved their egg and/or butter money to buy skeins of embroidery cotton, crochet cotton, and wool. Flour sacks were bleached a snowy white, fashioned into pillow cases, aprons, or teatowels and lavishly embroidered. Doilies were crocheted, and socks were knit. Once a year a sale was held, usually in connection with another major event such as baptism or Thanksgiving. The diary of Mrs. Bernhard Peters, Chinook, tells of the sale in 1933 bringing $74.00. Pillow cases sold for $5.00. The proceeds all went to Russia except for $5.00 which was to help the William Pauls family who had a child in the Red Cross hospital in Calgary.

There was also a natural rivalry between farmers. The Baergens always managed to get their crops



Mennonite Settlements in Alberta

seeded first in spring. The Wienses probably had the biggest garden. The Matthies' grew luscious raspberries. Mrs. Kornelius Ewert was said to be an immaculate housekeeper. There was a constant struggling and striving, but the future looked bright. Those were the good years.

The "Seven Good Years" came to an end soon after the collapse of the economy in 1929. Rainfall became less and less. The soil which was light and sandy and which had been plowed so diligently, was whipped up by hot searing winds. It was not unusual to have the sky darkened for two to three days by "black blizzards". Russian thistles and tumbling mustard managed to thrive and rolled and bounced across the scorched prairie to be caught in a fence. In time the wind picked up the fence with the thistles and carried it into the neighbour's field, to be subsequently buried there. Perhaps some day, an archeologist will dig up those crooked fences and wonder at the strange method of farming in that era.

Seeds sown hopefully in spring were either blown away, or shrivelled after germination, or if they survived, were finished off by grasshoppers that descended in hordes and devoured everything edible. Little or no crop was harvested. No seed was left for next year.

How they prayed for rain!

Some cattle had to be kept alive. A few stalks of grain in a basic Russian thistle fodder was all that was available, but cream and butter were a source of income. A few chickens were kept for eggs. At one point, the congregation bought a 60 doz. egg crate, which was filled by voluntary donations of eggs, then sold and the income of $3.00 went into the church budget.

Somehow the Lord has always provided for His people, and sometimes in strange ways. One winter He provided the area with an abundance of rabbits. Not everyone was able or willing to take advantage of this. A story is told of the Baergen boys visiting at the Wienses, and later telling their mother that Mrs. Wiens must have killed a lot of chickens to serve so many drumsticks. They had not realized that what they had enjoyed was rabbit.

Relief was sent in the form of seed and feed grain, as well as hay and straw, fruit and vegetables from the irrigation areas. Clothing arrived from some of the less affected areas, even from the United States. For some it was very humbling to accept charity again. Government assistance was also available, at $10-15 a month, which could be repaid by working on road-building or water reservoir projects in the summer.

Mennonites were cautioned against incurring debts at hospitals and with doctors, debts which they could not pay, and thus pass on to the Conference, which was in the end responsible to the government. When in 1933, the six-year-old son of David Epp died in hospital following a freak accident, his parents could not afford the $40.00 for the services of the undertaker and for the casket. A non-Mennonite neighbor, Bill Smith, who owned a car, brought the little body home from the Cereal Hospital. The body of the child lay in a storage room in the house until the funeral. Gerhard Baergen, his SS teacher, built a coffin and Teddy was laid to rest in the Cop Hill Cemetery, after the service in the Cop Hill School.

The economic collapse may have been surmountable, but the accompanying drought proved too much for the fledgeling Chinook-Sedalia congregation. Discouraged farmers were unable to pay their taxes, or their mortgages, not to mention the *Reiseschuld*, which kept accruing interest. Many packed their few belongings, and perhaps with a wistful backward glance, abandoned their hopes and dreams once more. Again the government gave some assistance in the form of railfares to a better district.

The church records show that families left in great numbers between 1934 and 1936. Membership transferred to Tofield, Rosemary, Peace River, Didsbury, and to British Columbia and Ontario. The depression story can be pictured by a look at the financial statement of those years:

1933	Income	$65.58		
1934	Income	36.11	Disburse	$31.64
1935	Income	23.82	Disburse	17.08
1936	Income	31.28	Disburse	30.50
1937	Income	11.94	Disburse	10.49

The balance at the end of 1937 was $1.45. From 1938 through to 1941, no records were kept except when a special offering was taken for visiting ministers. *Mission Fest* in 1938 netted $4.66 for missions. Occasionally the preachers were given a dollar to share.

Of course, the ministers, who were essentially farmers, left the district as well. Regehr, Boese, C. Penner, and P. Penner to Tofield, Dueck to British Colombia, Janzen to Rosemary, Huebert and Harder to a Mennonite Brethren church, Neufeld to Gem, and Pauls to Didsbury and Epp to Lacombe. Martens went to Coaldale but continued to serve as Elder for as long as the congregation existed. The last baptism was in 1944. The deacons also left and A. Epp was asked to carry on their duties until he too moved away. Leadership passed from one to another; from Martens to Boese to Abram Epp, Pauls, Wiens, and finally to David Epp. Brotherhood meetings became fewer and fewer as attendance dwindled. Ironically, the last minutes recorded were on March 14, 1937, exactly nine years after the first organizational meeting.

The ranks grew thinner until there were only a few families left, and these were widely scattered. There were the Schmidts at Chinook, Anna Huebert at Esther, the Wienses at New Brigden, the Peter Kroekers, Peter Matthies', Henry Unraus, Peter Derksens at Sedalia, and David Epps at Naco. This small number maintained and nurtured a close-knit fellowship for several years. These families had survived the depression and the drought. By 1940 the proverbial good years were coming back. Everyone had a car and distances were no longer so formidable. There were no ministers left, but church services continued. David Epp was asked to coordinate the group. A sermon was read either from the *Predigtbuch* by J. H. Janzen, or from *Die Bote*. Songs were sung out of the *Evangeliums-Lieder*. A prayer or two were spoken, and a very meaningful fellowship was maintained. After lunch, Sunday School was taught to the 10 to 12 children, who ranged in age from three to 15, while the adults sometimes had Bible study.

Vaspa was served by the hostess. There was closeness in that small group. Each visit from a minister and especially a missionary was a highlight.

One positive aspect of the isolated community was the ecumenical acceptance that evolved. None of the denominations had preachers so that if, for instance, a Lutheran person died, a Lutheran pastor was called to conduct the funeral service. Everyone attended the funeral since all were neighbors. The same held true of the United, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches. It became more and more difficult to remain a Mennonite. There were some marriages with non-Mennonites.

Eventually, the hunger for more spiritual nourishment within a Mennonite community led to the complete abandonment of the area. One family, the Kroekers, remained and have retired in Cereal. The once vibrant congregation, the Neukircher Mennoniten Gemeinde von Chinook-Sedalia is no more. No church building commemorates the place, for none was ever erected. The records show that there were 181 members plus children and non-members for a total of 347 persons at the peak. There were twelve ministers. There were 108 births, 51 baptisms, 20 marriages, and 11 burials recorded during that short lifespan. In 1950, the books were closed and handed over to the Conference of Mennonites in Alberta.

Where are all those people who were once a part of the Chinook-Sedalia family? Many, of course, are no longer living, and the rest dispersed in all directions: David Boese, long time minister at Tofield; William Pauls, teacher at Didsbury, now living in Calgary; Heinrich Dueck, retired minister at Chilliwack; the Baergen family scattered, Abe, minister at Tofield, Sara (Nachtigal) at Calgary, Agnes (Poettcker) at Elkhart; Marie, Liese, Anna Wiens, Coaldale; Rudy and Anne (Boese) Regehr, Winnipeg; Jessie (Neufeld) Kehler, Winnipeg; Fred Peters, MCC in Nepal; Henry Kroeger, Provincial Highways Minister, Edmonton. . . . Many more could be mentioned.

The memories of the struggles and of the fellowship will die as the grass dies in the wind, but the strengths and the triumphs, as well as the weaknesses have been carried to far places wherever its members have gone.

Upper left, funeral procession for Teddy Epp, April 4, 1943, from school, where funeral was held, to Cop Hill Cemetery.

Lower left, Sunday School picnic, July 19, 1932, G. G. Baergen, teacher.

Upper right, last marriage recorded in Chinook-Sedalia, performed by William Martens: Peter Duerksen and Margarete Dueck, children of his first marriage in the foreground.

Lower right, last baptism class in Chinook-Sedalia, June 25, 1944, Rev. William Martens in back, David and Katherine Epp (parents) on the ends, Gerhard and Irene Epp in the center.

God's Gift, the Land:

A Major Theme in Peter G. Epp's Novel *Eine Mutter*

by Peter Pauls

Peter G. Epp, c. 1925.

Peter G. Epp, 1888-1954, emigrated from Russia to the United States in 1924, when he was in his mid-thirties. He was a well educated man. He had attended a seminary in Russia, studied at the University of Heidelberg and had received his doctorate from the University of Basel, Switzerland, in 1912. Although the adjustment to the new North American culture must have been difficult, Peter Epp did very well in his new environment. He taught for ten years at Bluffton College and served another seventeen years at Ohio State University as Professor of Russian and German. Much of his spare time, it would seem, was spent writing.

All of Epp's published works deal with rural life in South Russia, the area in which he grew up. His novels *Eine Mutter* and *An der Molotschnaya*, as well as shorter pieces such as *Erlösung* and *Die Wolke*, provide detailed descriptions of life in the Russian Mennonite colonies before those flourishing settlements were destroyed by the collectivization which followed the Revolution of 1917. Epp's novels and short stories are not just ethnic curios; the author's insights into human nature and his vivid narrative style give his writings a universal appeal.

While Epp consciously strove for this universality in all his works,[1] he, at the same time, addressed a unique group of people, namely, those Mennonites who, after the Russian Revolution, suddenly found themselves dispossessed, deprived not only of their land but also of a way of life. It is clear, from a novel such as *Eine Mutter*, that Epp was keenly aware of the fact that he and many of his compatriots had been spiritually uprooted by the violent upheavals in his homeland. In *Eine Mutter*,[2] this dispossession is one of the major concerns of the narrator and central character, Agatha Epp, an old woman of eighty years. In relating the history of her father's descendants, Agatha tells a number of sad stories about those who looked upon the land with indifference, who came to regard the land as a commodity, and who gave up the land and the life associated with it long before it was forcibly taken from them. This alienation from the land and what it symbolizes—humility, simplicity, contentment—constitutes a major theme in the novel.

Especially tragic is the story of the Klassen family. Epp's narrator gives a lengthy account of her daughter Netchen's in-laws who moved from a prosperous farm to a large Russian village, Barvenkovo, where they, along with two Mennonite partners, set up a farm implement factory. Long before this displacement occurs, old Agatha, or "Agatchen" as she is affectionately called by everyone, expresses her deep concern over the Klassen boys' attitude toward the land:

> I had been aware for some time that my grandsons weren't in the least interested in becoming farmers. They had even set up a makeshift factory in their barn. Their father too seemed to spend more time there than he did in the fields. The contempt with which these boys spoke of farming hurt me very deeply. I have always believed that we should never speak irreverently of the land. It was created by God. It nourishes and clothes all of us. (266)

When old Agatha speaks of "the land" she is not speaking literally. To her the land is symbolic of a spiritual wholesomeness that is quite naturally the legacy of those who live close to the soil.

> Those who make their living on the land know how dependent we are on God's blessing. If He sends rain and sunshine at the right time, their labour is not in vain and their barren fields turn miraculously into flowering gardens. It is on the land that we see man working hand in hand with God. And now my grandsons were advising their father to leave farming altogether. (266)

Agatha expresses the following sentiments after Klassen makes public his plan to sell the farm and invest the proceeds from the sale in manufacturing:

> If you have ever worked for days or even weeks to fashion a gift for someone you love only to see the recipient discard it, callously, indifferently, then you know how painful ingratitude can be. I think God too is hurt when we reject his gifts. (268)

The Klassens' attitude toward the land is the very antithesis of Agatha's. When the irrevocable step is taken, the papers signed and the transaction completed, the old woman laments the loss in language that reveals her reverence for traditional ways:

> For these poor pieces of paper they had sold those beautiful fields, the fertile soil, those fields which would still be there at the end of time, which their children might have plowed and planted and harvested, fields which would continue to bring forth fruit as long as God's rain falls and His sun shines. Their garden too with its beautiful orchard, as bountiful as any in my home village, a little paradise in this barren steppe, given away for two or three little pieces of paper! (276)

This business undertaking ends just as the narrator had feared it would. Bankrupt and destitute, the Klassens are eventually forced to move into a house that resembles a factory, cold and forbidding. They are the first to feel the effects of the political and industrial revolutions of the twentieth century. Old Agatha obviously believes that those who continue to hold the land sacred are less vulnerable to these far-reaching changes than are those who break the traditional bond with Mother Earth.

The story of the narrator's daughter Agatchen, Mrs. Janzen, contrasts in every way with that of her daughter Netchen and the Klassens. The Janzens also venture into the unknown. Like so many of the Mennonites in South Russia, they decide to migrate, not to America, but to the East, to Ohrenburg. This enterprise is clearly blessed and the result is the very opposite of the Klassen's gamble. In her descriptions of the Janzen farm the narrator uses images that contrast sharply with those used to describe the Klassen factory. Following is the narrator's reaction to the factory:

> I had expected that it would be much like my father's smithy, that I would hear again the singing and the whistling of the apprentices. But all I heard here was the angry roar of the machines and the noisy rattle of pulleys and belts which ran over and under and between one another. I couldn't make any sense of that unbelievable clamour and confusion. (279)

The Janzen *Wirtschaft* (farm) in Ohrenburg is depicted very differently. The images are all taken from nature:

> When God blesses such an undertaking, a farm, and even a whole village, can become a flourishing garden in which everything is eager to bring forth its fruit. Almost every day something is born in such a place. Agatchen's letters always brought news of some newly sprouted plants or some recently born calves or pigs or lambs. Almost every letter spoke of some hope fulfilled—the hens with their young chicks, the milk-cows and mares with their offspring, the fresh vegetables in the garden, the flowering trees all around the house and the waving fields of wheat, barley, rye and oats. The corn which was scarce the first summer would multiply a hundredfold by the following year. The colt which played near its mother now would in two or three years' time take its place in the harness beside her, helping to pull the wagon or the plough. (464)

It is significant that Epp's narrator never actually visits the Ohrenburg settlement as she does the factory. Her descriptions of it are based on information gleaned from letters and her own vivid imagination. This means that "Ohrenburg" becomes in this novel an almost mythical place, a place that is highly idealized. It is new and fresh as a spring morning but it perpetuates all the best features of the old colony. In one of her letters, daughter Agatchen compares her new home to her old one. She concludes that she is no longer sure which one she is most attached to emotionally. The new one is, in fact, a replica of the old and, as such, represents a continuation of the past. (479-80)

In spite of the conscious attempt by the Janzens to carry on in the ways of their forefathers, they too cannot escape entirely the forces which militate against such an idyllic existence. Their son Hans, like so many of old Agatha's grandsons, nephews and nieces, exchanges this dream-like, innocent state for the hard-driving intellectual life of the academic. The result is a nervous breakdown and all the misery that this brings the family. (503-4)

There are other characters in the novel who serve to illustrate this contrast between the traditional, happy agricultural life and the new-fangled pursuit of wealth or fame. Old Agatha's sister Tienchen and her husband, Martens, are two such individuals. During the Great Migration of the 1870's they recklessly dispose not only of their land but also of the family heirlooms. (180-182) Their story ends very sadly with failure in America, a humiliating return to Russia and a lifetime of abject poverty, all because of a callous indifference to the sacredness of the land.

The narrator's stepson Simon, her grandsons Hans and Abram and her nephews Abram and Peter are others in the novel who fail to appreciate the timeless land-based values. Grandson Hans and nephew Abram join the army and die very young. Nephew Peter, a promising university student, eventually commits suicide. Grandson Abram returns home, like a prodigal son, after deserting home and family but returns again to Moscow with his Russian wife. (516) All have left the land and none has, in the opinion of the narrator, been blessed.

Stepson Simon's uprooting is dealt with at considerable length. He is the opposite of his brother Kornelius who eventually settles in America. Simon turns his back on the land early in life. He migrates to a new settlement but not to farm. He identifies with the merchant class and his only aim in life is to make money:

> Simon did often possess large sums of money, more money than our dear father and all his apprentices could earn in an entire year. But the methods he used to acquire all that wealth, I felt, were a bit suspect. After all, he never plowed, or sowed or made anything with his own hands the way my father and my brothers Gerhard and Abram did. Later, I'm told, he lost everything and declared bankruptcy. I felt very sorry for him then. (210)

This Simon is typical of the "landless" characters in the novel. Epp's

Peter G. Epp, c. 1950.

narrator can only pity him when she recalls the upheavals in Petersburg where he also met his death: "In my imagination I saw him suffering with those unfortunate homeless masses. I know he rests in his grave now, this restless child who was driven like a leaf in the autumn wind, all over the vast country of Russia." (215)

There is a general movement in Epp's *Eine Mutter* away from the parental home. By the end of the novel the dispersion is complete. Some of the descendants of the narrator's father move to new agricultural settlements in Prussia and America. Others move away from the land, to the cities, into professions and business. The first sort are generally blessed even though they experience temporary setbacks. Those who reject the land and what it represents do not prosper for long. Those who remain on the land may be evicted eventually but at least their dispossession is not of their own making. This is an important distinction as far as Epp's narrator is concerned:

> I think we can live more easily with such decisions when they are forced upon us. When we are left with no alternatives, with only one way out of a difficult situation, then we can rest assured that this way must be God's will. Maybe it's different in the big world out there, I can't say. . . . But I don't think such an arrogant attitude is appropriate for our people. I have never seen any family truly happy or come to a good end by being self-centered and willful. (259)

Old Agatha's values remain firmly rooted in the soil in spite of her removal, late in life, from a small village to Barvenkovo, a much larger Russian center. She returns frequently to Uncle Jacob's little house in Shostak, a place which is in many ways similar to her parental home. Agatha never falters in her commitment to the land, as can be seen in her desire to escape to Ohrenburg where the former way of life is less threatened, for the time being, than it is in the older colonies. (472-73)

It is important to remember that the narrator in this novel does not always express the author's point of view. Often she is subjective and provincial in her outlook. She tends to be suspicious of almost everything that is new, that does not conform to the customs observed in her father's household. The world at large remains very much foreign to her. Her grandchildren even laugh at her as they try to introduce her to the ways of the modern world. (264-65) Nevertheless, it is clear that the author understands her misgivings and fears. As an immigrant and a member of that generation of Russian Mennonites which knew what it meant to be dispossessed, uprooted and exiled, Epp was insecure enough, uncertain enough of the future, to give his matriarch a full and fair hearing.

ENDNOTES

[1] MS. No. 104, Peter G. Epp, Folder No. 5, Bethel College Archives, records the author's personal views on art with specific reference to his unpublished work, *De Homine*: "Whoever knows how to read my writings correctly will find these people everywhere—in every land, at all times, even in the year 2100! What I say in my work *De Homine* about the real nature of human beings was true 2000 years ago and will always remain true."

[2] Peter G. Epp, *Eine Mutter* (Bluffton, Ohio: Libertas Verlag, 1932). All passages quoted are taken from the author's recently completed translation. The page numbers, however, refer to the original German text.

A Late Seventeenth Century Rehabilitation of the Anabaptists

by Anthony R. Epp

There is no prescription against truth; errors no matter how old are not the better for it.

Motto of Pierre Bayle

In 1593, after converting to Catholicism and thus diffusing opposition from Catholic factions in France to his claim to the French throne, Henri de Bourbon, King of Navarre, pacified all but the most fanatical of his Catholic opponents and eventually brought an end to the religious wars which had been raging between French Protestants and Catholics. His conversion kept the monarchy in Catholic hands but did not turn him against the French Protestant movement. The religious toleration which he practiced with respect to them became law with the *Edit de Nantes*, 1598. During the reign of his successors, largely under the immense influence of Cardinal Richelieu, the politicial powers or rivals among the aristocracy steadily eroded, thus benefiting the concentration of power in the king's hands. During the minority of King Louis XIV, 1643-1660, Cardinal Mazarin continued the steady, brutal taming of the aristocracy, so that during the phenomenally long reign of Louis XIV, 1660-1715, the king was dealing with a thoroughly domesticated nobility. Political absolutism reached its zenith during these years, with the French monarch ruling more absolutely than any other European monarch. Yet this grasping for power had neglected one glaring weakness: it had continued to tolerate the Reform movement. In 1685, in an effort to bring in uniformity in religion as had been done in government, Louis XIV revoked the *Edit de Nantes*, a revocation destined to cause a full century of religious intolerance. Not until 1787 were Protestants again to be officially tolerated in France.

It was near the beginning of those one hundred years of intolerance that Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), whose writings were to exert a profound influence upon the philosophical thinkers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, published the works which eventually brought him acclaim in all of Europe, though largely posthumously in his native France. He set forth his major theses in two early works, *Thoughts on the Comet* (1682) and *Philosophical Commentary on the Words of Jesus Christ: "Compel Them to Enter"* (1686): a battle against superstition, a view that morality can exist independently of religion and a plea for tolerance. Current French literature textbooks place Bayle among the formative spirits who created the atmosphere of the critical and questioning mind so characteristic of the eighteenth century. First published in 1697 and enlarged in 1702, Bayle's major work, his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, which continued the themes of his early works, particularly that of tolerance, had seen eleven editions by 1740. Bayle had his *Dictionnaire* published in Rotterdam where he, along with many other Huguenots, was living in self-imposed exile (*le Refuge*). To escape the stifling atmosphere in France, he had first taught philosophy at Sedan (1675-1681) and then moved to Rotterdam (1681-1706) where he obtained a chair in philosophy and where he remained until his death. During the exile Bayle's own brother, who had remained in France, was thrown into prison where he died, thus making the Huguenot persecution by the Catholics an intensely personal experience for him and contributing to the bitter atmosphere in which the *Dictionnaire* was born. Huguenots remaining in France risked having their children kidnapped, with government approval, to be raised as Catholics; they were obliged to quarter dragoons charged with converting the unwilling hosts. This reigning spirit of intolerance contributes to Bayle's attempt to ridicule orthodoxy.

In the *Dictionnaire* Bayle gave European society access to a summary of the Protestant theses and of the theological controversies which had separated Catholics and Protestants since the sixteenth century. He had initially conceived the work as an antidote to the errors committed in previous compendiums, such as that compiled by Morieri, but he enlarged the scope to include those aspects of theological and philosophical movements omitted from previous compilations. The *Dictionnaire* by Bayle, especially after it became controversial, developed into one of the best sellers of the eighteenth century, but during the early years after its publication it sparked no cries of scandal. Although soon well known in the rest of Europe, it could not officially be sold in France until the somewhat freer period ushered in by the death of Louis XIV. By 1720 the work was well known in Bayle's homeland and controversy over it had begun to emerge, for the increased freedom of thought made possible with the passing of Louis XIV brought the *Dictionnaire* to its controversial fruition. Because he often took issue with the then accepted views of various "heresies," including Anabaptism, eighteenth century philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Voltaire and Diderot hailed Bayle, somewhat wrongly according to present criticism, as their master. In point of fact, Bayle considered himself to be defending the Reform movement, not to be undermining faith, even though he himself did eventually espouse a Pyrrhonian stance in religion.

> In no way was Bayle the confirmed libertine, the unscrupulous unbeliever that his enemies and posterity have often tried to see in him. A defender of Calvinism against the Papists, determined to underscore the weakness of human reason, devoted above all to fideism and to toleration, he wanted first of all to react in his entire work against the excessive power of dogmas and of priests. . . .[1]

Bayle scholar Pierre Retat explains the ambiguous treatment which Bayle received posthumously in the eighteenth century by pointing out that at the very time when believers were finally becoming aware of the danger posed by the critical mind set of the *Dictionnaire*, the *philosophes* had latched onto Bayle as their master. Thus "Bayle's philosophical fortune was made at the same time that the scandal broke out."[2] Whereas nineteenth century scholars saw Bayle as a direct link between the Reformation and the French Revolution, recent criticism has shown that the *philosophes* used Bayle as a symbol, but interpreted his work, in which he had espoused some of the same causes that they were championing, such as tolerance, in the light of their own prejudices.

> Bayle's influence on the eighteenth century highlights the workings of a general rule concerning precursors and their disciples. The disciples are highly selective in their choice of themes from their master's works, transpose them to a new context, and in the process make them into something very different.[3]

Thus twentieth century scholars have shown the posthumous destiny of Pierre Bayle to exemplify the gap between an author's ideas and the influence which they eventually exert, for as Labrousse later points out in the same volume, the critical, questioning stance adopted by Bayle later became "an instrument so sharp that it destroyed the mental universe to which he himself still very much belonged."[4]

In a negative sense, he was reacting against the "religious absolutism" which had set in since 1685. In a positive sense he was making available information on religious controversies with a view to having that information advance the cause of religious toleration. By making available the various theological controversies surrounding the Reformation, Bayle had indeed given a powerful weapon to those opposed to religious absolutism. In the case of the Anabaptists, he contributed to the historical rehabilitation of a movement which, in the propagandistic press of the time, had long been identified with and limited to the religious fanaticism and excesses of the Münsterites.

Bayle divided his *Dictionnaire* into two parts, the articles and then the notes pertaining to each article. According to his own testimony, Bayle played two roles in compiling the work:

> . . . it became necessary, in this mass of all sorts of material, for me to take on two roles, that of historian and that of commentator . . . he [the author] must say not only what the heretics have done but also what are the strengths and weakness of their opinions.[5]

The articles themselves contain the generally accepted notions on the subject at hand. The notes, however, which are invariably longer than the article itself, constitute Bayle's commentary in which he adds his own observations and reflections. In the notes he will sometimes refer readers to other articles with material pertaining to a particular question. Although readers and critics alike have sometimes yielded to the temptation of interpreting Bayle's method as an attempt to foil official censorship, Labrousse, among others, points out that in Rotterdam where the work was published no censorship existed.[6] What he states in his commentary to the article on Luther demonstrates his desire to sift through all that had been said and written in search of truth, or at least of a bias favorable to the Protestants.

> It is important to Lutherans, and to Protestants in general, that the fabulous impertinences that their adversaries published against the Reformers in the sixteenth century be brought to light again.[7]

The Anabaptists also benefited from this bringing of light.

Bayle's treatment of the Anabaptists is contained in seven separate articles, the longest being "Anabaptistes." The others include "Gymosophistes," "Hofman (Melchior)," "Mamillaires," "Picards," "Borrhaus (Martin)," and "Regius."

The article "Anabaptistes" begins with a treatment of the fanatical Münsterites. Yet given that beginning, in the course of this and other articles Bayle makes strides in presenting a favorable picture of the movement. While acknowledging Anabaptist qualities which many of their Mennonite descendants still espouse: believer's baptism, refusal to bear arms, refusal to serve as magistrates, strict morality and simple dress, Bayle also mentions two practices unknown among Mennonites today: fasts and mortification of the flesh. Nevertheless he does not totally relieve the Anabaptists of the Münsterite burden even though he presents their good qualities.

Bayle traces this reputation for religious fanaticism to the Anabaptist emphasis on complete freedom. He attributes the excesses at Münster to the Anabaptists' having read and interpreted in their own peculiar way Luther's *De Libertate Christiana* in which the reformer states that "the Christian is the master of all things and is subject to no one."[8] That attempt to exercise complete freedom causes them to be cited in three articles for promiscuity and public nudity. But in the commentary following two of the three articles, Bayle defends the morals of the Anabaptists. Following the article on the supposed Anabaptists sect, "les Mamillaires," a sect which had developed through its support for a young man in Harlem, Netherlands, accused of touching his fiancee's breasts, Bayle states:

> Thus the Anabaptists are the most rigid of all Christian moralists since they excommunicate the man who touches the breast of the woman he wants to marry and shun those who do not want to excommunicate such a gallant.[9]

In responding to the charge of rampant promiscuity among the Anabaptists, according to which accusation any man had to satisfy any woman upon demand and vice versa, Bayle suggests that their accusers either out of ignorance or with malice had created this charge by distorting the Anabaptist teaching of the equality of persons.

> It is certain that in the beginning the Anabaptists taught this equality: from which it followed that the daughter of a well-to-do family was not to refuse the marriage petition of a peasant's son and that a gentleman ought not to refuse marriage with a peasant woman. If our compilers of (heresy) catalogs have built on this foundation the absurd doctrine which they have attributed to the Anabaptists, are they less impertinent than the doctrine itself?[10]

Whereas in the above commentary the author defends the Anabaptists, Bayle himself in an earlier note to the same article relates the story of a young Anabaptist, Thomas Strucker, who, acting on orders from God, decapitated his own brother. For the excess Bayle offers no excuse or attenuating explanation.

Bayle's historical knowledge of Anabaptism, while not flawless, does extend beyond Münster. He also mentions Anabaptists in the Netherlands, Switzerland, France and Moravia. According to his interpretation, splits among the Anabaptists, especially in Moravia, contributed to slowing down what had been a rapid expansion. His commentaries give Anabaptist expansion a threefold cause: the learnedness of its preachers swayed the crowds by their impressive knowledge and handling of the Bible; their saintly appearance; and their constancy in the fact of suffering and death. Whereas he acknowledges the Anabaptist origins at Zurich and speaks of the disputation with Zwingli and the subsequent banishment of Balthasar Hubmeier, he erroneously refers to the Swiss Anabaptists as a Münsterite remnant. He refers to the Dutch Anabaptist movement, which he may probably have known personally during his years of exile in Rotterdam, as having been "cured of its weaknesses."

The defense which Bayle affords the Anabaptists occurs not only through outright justification but occasionally through irony. Although in places he refers to the Anabaptists as a growing movement, a growth which he attributes partially to the witness of martyrs, he does condemn such persecutions. In one such condemnation he uses his piercing irony:

> What has been said about artillery, that it is the last resort of kings. *Ratio ultima regum,* can also be applied to penal laws; they are the last resort of theologians, their most powerful argument, their Achilles, etc.[11]

By using sarcasm regarding the persecution of Anabaptists in Switzerland, Bayle clearly places himself on the side of the persecuted group:

> It is important to their [Swiss] rulers that all subjects bear arms and love war. That is why the Anabaptists do not suit them, people who want neither to wound nor to kill, and who, as far as it is in them, intimidate the most bellicose; for they inspire scruples of conscience concerning the shedding of human blood and the passions which are inseparable from the military profession.[12]

More than once he mentions public debates in which the Anabaptists were defeated. However, in relating the case of an unidentified Anabaptist woman who was, as he put it, to debate with a minister of "the dominant religion" and who thought she could win, Bayle puts a helpful perspective on such defeats. He asks how a humbly dressed woman in chains, speaking from a lower level to an elegantly dressed minister in an elevated position could ever hope to convince any judge that right were on her side. "To promise oneself that," he states, "it does not suffice to be right; you also have to hope for extraordinary assistance from the spirit of God. . . ."[13]

Bayle does not go so far as to embrace Anabaptism. In fact his own religious pilgrimage, during which he had gone from Protestant to Catholic and back to Protestant, eventually left him in doubt, doubt which certainly related to his observations on the bloody battles and persecutions in which Europeans had been engaging in the name of "truth." Nevertheless, comparisons of Bayle with his disciples among the *philosophes* show him to be writing out of a Christian context. A few hours before he died, a letter which Bayle wrote placed him firmly in the Christian camp. " 'I die a Christian philosopher, convinced of and filled with God's goodness and mercy.' "[14] The Deists and atheists among his "disciples" did not use that language.

Bayle did not limit himself to a retrospective, historical defense of the Anabaptists of the preceding 150 years, for in at last one instance, as the following quotation, dealing with Anabaptist contemporaries of Bayle in Switzerland, found in his *Supplement to the Philosophical Commentary on the Words of Jesus Christ: "Compel Them to Enter"* (1687), shows so eloquently, he defends the movement in his own day.

> There are Swiss cantons which permit only Reformed [Calvinist] congregations and which have in our times employed formidable violence against the Anabaptists, the people in the world who deserve the most to be tolerated, for having renounced the bearing of arms and positions as magistrates, for reasons of religion, it is not necessary to fear a rebellion on their part, nor that they follow in the traces of those who solicit power; and as for the refusal to submit to loyalty oaths, it is not a sign that they intend to be less submissive to the sovereign than other subjects, rather they take literally the passage where Jesus forbids swearing; they believe that they are bound simply by giving their word while others take oaths.[15]

If Bayle's religious stance suited neither Catholic nor Protestant orthodoxy, he crusaded valiantly for the cause of religious tolerance. In prompting the cause, the Anabaptists served him admirably as one vehicle through which to make his plea. And in using them, he also began the rehabilitation of the Anabaptist image among the reading public of his day. Voltaire and other eighteenth century philosophers, all ardent readers of Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, continued that rehabilitation.

FOOTNOTES

1 Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, edited by Alain Niderst (Paris, 1974), p. 7. (All quotations in this paper, unless otherwise acknowledged, have been translated from French by the author of the present paper.)
2 Pierre Retat, *Le Dictionnaire de Bayle et le lutte philosophique au XVIII siecle* (Paris, 1971), p. 141.
3 Elizabeth Labrousse, *Bayle*, translated by Denys Potts (New York, 1983), p. 12.
4 Labrousse, *Bayle*, p. 88.
5 Labrousse, *Bayle*, p. 41.
6 Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, XV. (Paris, 1820), p. 270.
7 *Bayle, Dictionnaire*, IX, p. 577.
8 Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, II, p. 1.
9 Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, X, p. 180.
10 Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, II, p. 13.
11 Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, II, p. 5.
12 Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, II, p. 12.
13 Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, XII, p. 484.
14 Labrousse, *Bayle*, p. 47.
15 Bayle, *Oeuvres diverses*, II (Hildersheim, 1965), 554.