

MENNONITE LIFE

JUNE 1989

Note: We have removed several images of Hopi ceremonial activities from this issue, because of Hopi objections to the viewing of such images.

In this Issue

This issue continues Marlin Adrian's analysis of the religious beliefs of native Americans by focusing on the reaction of the Mennonite missionaries to these beliefs (Part I appeared in the March 1989 issue). He examines the responses of Rodolphe Petter, who served among the Cheyenne in both Oklahoma and Montana, and H. R. Voth, who observed the Hopi in Arizona during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Adrian carefully probes some of the difficulties encountered by the early General Conference missionaries and interprets their discouragement at often "fruitless" work.

Rachel Pannabecker presents the results of a survey distributed to the participants in the Life Enrichment program at Bethel College to assess their impressions or memories of living room objects during the first third of the twentieth century. Everyday objects have a significance in historical research as Pannabecker discovered objects can reveal value changes. As a curator at the Kauffman Museum in North Newton, she will apply the information to exhibit design and authenticity questions.

Menno Duerksen visited North Newton last October and shared two new stories of his childhood experiences with a large audience in the Mennonite Library and Archives. This issue contains one of these stories complete with the introduction and postscript delivered at Bethel College. (An earlier story appeared in the December 1987 issue, and a more complete account of his upbringing is found in his book *Dear God, I'm Only a Boy*).

The final article is reprinted from the 1987 *Doopsgezind Jaarboekje* (Vol. 81). William Keeney has translated R. de Zeeuw's account of the Special Needs (*Bijzondere Noden*) program of the Mennonites in the Netherlands. During the last forty years the program has expanded beyond its original emphasis on relief for those facing hardships after World War II to include aid for the "Umsiedler" coming out of Russia and an adoption program supporting children in need.

David A. Haury

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These two photos by S. Matteson of the Hopi Flute Ceremony are dated 1901 and inscribed by the photographer to Miss Frieda Voth.

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General Conference Mennonite Missions and Native American Religions (Part II)

by Marlin Adrian

With the gradual decline of the Ghost Dance, peyote worship became the Mennonite missionaries' most powerful opponent among the Arapaho and the Cheyenne. Historian of religions Peter Williams sees a direct relationship between the end of the Ghost Dance and the meteoric rise of Peyotism.

In some tribes Peyotism filled a void that had been left in the wake of the failure of the Ghost Dance. Although its origins had been pacifistic, its militaristic transformations had left tribes like the Sioux with little except a sense of frustration and defeat. It was becoming increasingly clear not only that the whites were there to stay but also that they were the sole possessors of real worldly power. The only serious alternatives were withdrawal and in-turning or an effort at assimilation. Peyotism provided a combination of both of these responses, which appealed primarily to those who had already undergone some degree of acculturation but were reluctant or unable to carry the process of Americanization to its dubious conclusion.¹

The response of General Conference Mennonite missionaries to the burgeoning practice of the peyote ceremony among the Cheyenne and Arapaho dovetailed nicely into the already strong sentiment among Mennonites concerning the "temperance issue." Mennonite missionaries viewed peyote as a narcotic with little medicinal value and absolutely no religious significance. They regarded the use of peyote for religious purposes to be an insidious misrepresentation of the actual purpose for which Indians took peyote—intoxication. Missionaries further abhorred what they considered as a sacrilegious appropriation of Christian rites and symbols by the leaders of this form of worship.

But peyotism, like the traditional dances, flourished among the tribes of Plains Indians. No matter how sincerely Mennonite missionaries preached the

message of Christianity (in the native language now because of the linguistic work of Rodolphe Petter), the gospel failed to gain a significant foothold among the Cheyenne and Arapaho. In spite of the steady trickle of converts, the missionaries despaired as they watched Christianity fail to conquer in the battle with native religions. Of those Cheyenne and Arapaho who accepted Christianity and attended Mennonite services, many continued to attend the dances and peyote meetings with equal, if not superior enthusiasm.

It was especially discouraging to Rodolphe Petter that, in 1916, after nearly 25 years as a missionary among the Cheyenne, he faced the same Indian religions at his new assignment among the Northern Cheyenne in Montana that he had faced when he began in 1892. Initially, Petter took the more conciliatory approach in Montana. He taught that the Indian dances represented essentially cultural, and not religious affairs. In 1917, Petter wrote to a member of the Mission Board in defense of fellow missionary P. A. Kliewer's involvement in an Indian festival.

Indian dances are not always what we understand under the title "heathen dances." Very often they are harmless public performances, far more respectable even modest than many of the dances in which "white" Christians participate! As long as the Indian dances are only common public performances, free from superstitious and immoral practices or tone, the missionaries—especially here—should not condemn them all out of hand.²

Petter even angered several of the more conservative Mennonite missionaries in Oklahoma by admitting that peyote may have some legitimate medicinal purposes. Some missionaries believed that it was necessary to totally

denounce peyote by denying that any possible benefits could be derived from its use. Petter strongly opposed the religious use of peyote, which he considered both false and pretentious, but insisted that missionaries be discerning and not merely condemning in their attacks on native religious beliefs.

The peyote people that have been won for Christ and have totally given up peyote here were not won through aggressive polemic, but through simple, positive declaration of the exclusive salvation in Christ Jesus, the truth convinces. My belief is, that all discussion with the peyote leaders proves to be fruitless, because they are masters at twisting the truth. When Red Bird wrote me that he tried peyote as medicine for his epileptic son, I answered him that when peyote is used as merely a convention medicine, it is not sin, but that when his son partakes in participation in the peyote ceremony and prayer to peyote, he sins against God.³

In 1919, however, Petter took a decidedly more antagonistic and polemic approach, launching a series of Cheyenne sermons on the subject of "the Kingdom of Satan." Targeted at Peyotism and the revival of the Sun Dance among the northern Cheyenne, these sermons prompted several members of Petter's mission church to come forward and reveal native religious practices which had to this point been secret. In particular, they admitted the sexual role of the wife of the man pledging the Sun Dance. Historically, the medicine man in charge of the Sun Dance engaged in ritual sexual intercourse with the pledger's wife to ensure that the ritual would be successful.

This revelation inspired Petter to launch a new attack, aided by the government agent, to force the Indians to cease all Sun Dance activities in Montana. The support of native converts proved vital to this campaign.



Left. Rodolphe and Bertha Petter. Right. Cheyenne Feast showing mission house under construction in Lame Deer, Montana.

Just now the heathen rage and have councils after councils, trying to hire a lawyer to defend them at Washington. The gist of the matter is that the ancient Phallic worship is still rampant among the Cheyenne, just as it was among the Egyptians and Chaldeans, coupled with the same orgies under the cloak of religion. Revelations of this by anyone is punished by death or banishment from the tribe. I have known this for years past, but never could get an initiated priest to denounce the whole immoral ceremonial in presence of a Government official. At last however two Christian men, one of them who had been initiated priest, were given courage to reveal everything. Since then more have joined them, even some of the heathen are disgusted with the phallic worship and want it abolished, but at the first knowledge of these revelations a terrible commotion took place. One of our older Christian men came one day very burdened and said: "it will bring war, and I cannot help you!" Since then, he also took courage and now stands with the other Christian men, firmly against the raging enemy.⁴

But Petter's efforts met with little success, and traditional ceremonies and Peyotism thrived among the northern Cheyenne in the twentieth century. In fact, through the efforts of a Mormon missionary, James Bite, even the "messiah craze" associated with the Ghost Dance surfaced in 1919 among the Northern Cheyenne. Petter wrote to Richert that Bite came from Oklahoma and preached "that all the white people would soon be killed and that days of happiness would come for the In-

dians!" Petter again joined forces with the agent, who arrested Bite and banished him from the reservation. But, Petter reported, "the evil seed has been sowed and we have this new devil added to the others. They seem to come out of the underworld pretty fast, bent on leading the Indians astray. You see we are still involved in a serious fight...."⁵

No Mennonite missionary entered the "fight" with traditional religions with more enthusiasm than H. R. Voth. Although every Mennonite missionary at one time or another reported on Indian religious life, missionary H. R. Voth developed an intense lifelong interest in native religions which dominated his writings during his twenty years as a missionary among the American Indians (1882-1902). Voth is still known for his articles and photographs depicting Hopi life.

In Voth's mind, there existed no paradox between his interest in native ceremonies and artifacts, and his role as a missionary. The justification which Voth gave to the Board of Missions for the time he spent studying Hopi religion continued to be the same as it was when he was a missionary in Indian Territory. Voth claimed that he studied Hopi religious culture only in order to better destroy it. It is apparent that his interest in Hopi religion did not denote a sense of respect toward Hopi religious ceremonies or beliefs.

Where the leaders belong to the friendly elements I have always been permitted to enter the *Kiva* and witness everything. I have thus been able to gather during this quarter a great deal of information concerning the religion of these people, make notes, sketches and drafts of sacred vessels, altars and other paraphernalia etc. And these studies, which I have made without an interpreter have afforded me especially good opportunities for the study of the language, but they have also shown me how much these people are enthralled in the chains of superstition and religious poverty, and how far they have strayed away from their fathers house. And yet with them these ceremonies, which to us seem childish are serious affairs.⁶

Here Voth demonstrated two attitudes which characterized how Mennonite missionaries viewed Native Americans and their religions. First, although Voth showed an interest in native religions, he regarded no aspect of these religions as "sacred." To Voth, the ceremonies and objects which the Indians revered existed merely as objects of curiosity, useful as tools to further the mission work, but of no intrinsic religious value in and of themselves. Voth therefore thought nothing of invading Hopi rites and gathering sacred objects to collect and sell.

Secondly, Voth clearly, even after a decade on the mission field, regarded Indians as children, regardless of an individual's age or position within Indian society. This opinion endured well into the twentieth century, and still

plagues missionary relationships with American Indians. Perhaps according natives the adult status they deserved gave to their beliefs a legitimacy which missionaries were unwilling to bestow.

Voth came under criticism from his Mennonite constituency for his activities directed at investigating native religious practices. Therefore Voth needed to place his study of native culture within the matrix of the suffering life of the missionary. He had to make clear that his activities were not merely the result of his intellectual curiosity or his desire to acquire valuable artifacts. To this end, Voth reminded his readers of the sacrifices missionaries made in order to do their work.

These are a few of the shadows of missionary life, and oh, how many more could I picture to you. But we have not come here to find comforts of life, and I only mention these facts in order to show you the necessity to pray for the missionaries that they may not grow weary of the constant self-sacrifices and self-denials. No, missionary life is *not* a romance. Our Christian love has to stoop down very deeply and faith has to cling to the Saviour very closely in order not to get tired.⁷

Voth made a point to inform the Mennonites back home that his observation of Hopi ceremonies in the kivas was not a pleasurable experience. In fact, he felt that he suffered in order to gain knowledge of the religious language of the natives. It is obvious from the tone of this report, that after two years among the Hopi in Arizona, Voth's ethnological studies had raised enough questions in the minds of his Mennonite constituency that Voth felt the need to defend his efforts.

It is in no sense a pleasure to remain in a Kiva a half or a whole night, writing and making drawings, in which 40-50 persons are assembled, where much smoking and burning of incense is going on, and which has but a solitary opening from which the smoke and the foul air can escape. But it is not for the sake of pleasure and recreation that I make these investigations. My object is to make myself more fully acquainted with the inner life and the ideas of these people, whom I am to lead to the Lord, in order to know how to proceed to dislodge them from their heathen strongholds.⁸

The Hopi were very different from the Indians which Voth had encountered in Indian Territory. Because they had such a well-developed religious system, the Hopi treated the missionaries as full equals, and were less inclined to accept

the missionaries' message at face value.

During our meetings the Mokis act quite differently from what I was accustomed to experience with other tribes. While others remained quiet, unless they were directly questioned, these are more open, frequently asking questions, making objections, expressing doubts, making comparisons, and sometimes offering contradictions. I permit them to do so, as thereby I learn whether they have understood me or not, and an opportunity is offered me to give more full explanations where they have not fully understood what I said.⁹

Although Voth expressed satisfaction that he was able to engage in an intellectual discussion with one Hopi man who expressed disbelief concerning the rotation of the earth and the resurrection of the dead, he freely admitted that the Indians generally were far from receptive to his message.

A deeper interest is in general lacking among these people, much less is there an earnest seeking and asking after something better. They are satisfied with their own religion and they do not care for another. They are inquisitive, but mostly out of curiosity. Occasionally one is quiet and attentive, but in general they regard the truth of the Gospel as "idle tales."¹⁰

Voth took his battle with native religion very seriously, and his reports often reflected a conspiratorial attitude with his excursions into the kivas representing attempts at espionage and subterfuge.

During the past quarter, I again attended a number of heathen ceremonies. These visits generally give me an opportunity to speak to them of the Christian religion, and to show them the vanity of their idolatrous worship. I endeavor to do this in a manner as to avoid giving offense to their priests so not to induce them to conceal things from me which I ought to know. I perceive however that they are beginning to become alarmed on account of my increased knowledge of the hidden mysteries of their religion.¹¹

Voth acquired tangible power through his increasing knowledge of Hopi religious ceremonies, and was able to refute one of the shamans who often responded to the teaching of Voth with the assertion, "our traditions teach us the same." Because different religious societies within Hopi religious life often kept their ceremonies secret from each other, it was possible for Voth to possess greater knowledge of a wider spectrum of Hopi ceremonies than some Hopi leaders. Voth used his knowledge to assert that comparisons between Indian religion and Christianity were

absurd and far-fetched.

In the end, Voth's reputation as an ethnologist surpassed his activities as a missionary. A recent Hopi evaluation of Voth's activities indicates the ambiguity and controversy which characterized his position as an advocate of one religious perspective and the student of another.

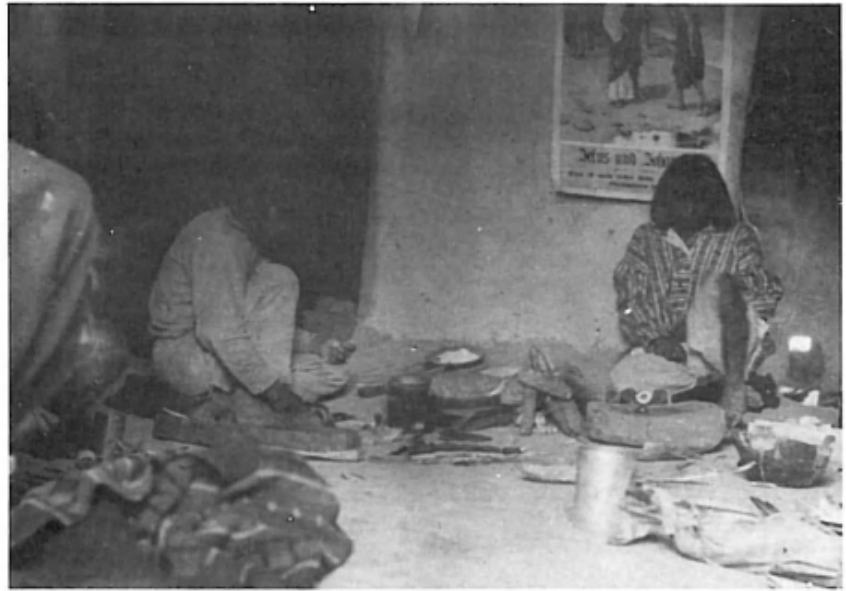
The Reverend Mr. Voth was a psychological puzzle, an enigmatic paradox to Hopis and whites alike. Nominally a Christian zealot consecrated to the task of winning savage converts to his church, he seems to have devoted his whole efforts to ferreting out the secrets of Hopi ceremonialism Although Voth was never told the esoteric meaning of the rituals, his exoteric descriptions comprise the first and best ethnological studies of Third Mesa ceremonialism. Yet the results of Voth's achievement were disastrous to the Hopis and far-reaching.¹²

Voth was the first Russian Mennonite to enter the mission field in America. He was a member of the Alexanderwohl Mennonite church near Goessel, Kansas, and had immigrated to America as a young boy in the company of this entire congregation. Voth's later reflection on the moment when he gave up a promising career as a storekeeper in Newton, Kansas, to accept the "calling" to become a missionary, echoed the themes of sacrifice and denial which were central to the paradigms of the martyr and the pilgrim. He wrote, "it had cost me dear to crucify the 'merchant' in me, and more struggle and prayer to come to the positive conviction: The Lord of the missions field is calling you to his work and you must follow!"¹³

Voth's activities among the Hopi in Arizona raised the question as to whether he had sufficiently "crucified the merchant" in himself. Voth provoked severe criticism when he sold his collection of Hopi artifacts to the Field Museum in Chicago for the considerable sum of \$5000 in 1900, but was allowed to remain on the field two more years in order to train his replacement in the Hopi language.¹⁴

This sale of artifacts represented the most sizeable transaction carried on by Voth during his years as a missionary, but was by no means his only sale. As early as 1888, he sent lists of items from the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes which he offered to sell to both the Smithsonian Institution and to private collectors as far away as Niagara Falls, New York. The sale of Indian materials

Top. Members of Flute Society preparing Offering (Note: poster in German of Jesus and John the Baptist: "This is my beloved son . . .")
Bottom. Altar in Kiva of Two-Horn Society. (H. R. Voth Collection, Photos 1627 and 1449)



helped finance Voth's trip to Europe, the Middle East, and Russia during a 6-month hiatus from missionary work in 1892.¹⁵

The fact that his Hopi collection contained so many religious objects may have been a result of the nature of Hopi culture, which contained a strong ceremonialism rich in symbols and artifacts, and not a result of any serious interest on Voth's part in Hopi religion. Whatever motives prompted Voth's interest in native religious practices, it is certain that he not only benefited materially from his investigations, but also acquired prestige among non-Mennonite European groups, and a dubious reputation among the Hopi. In his autobiography, Don C. Talayesva, a Hopi who renounced the Christianity of his youth to return to traditional religion, recalls that in 1912:

The land was very dry, the crops suffered, and even the Snake dance failed to bring much rain. We tried to discover the reason for our plight, and remembered the Rev. Voth who had stolen so many of our ceremonial secrets and had even carried off sacred images and altars to equip a museum and become a rich man. When he had worked here in my boyhood, the Hopi were afraid of him and dared not lay their hands on him or any other missionary, lest they be jailed by the Whites. During the ceremonies this wicked man would force his way into the kiva and write down everything that he saw. He wore shoes with solid heels, and when the Hopi tried to put him out of the kiva he would kick them.¹⁶

H. R. Voth's strong belief concerning the necessity of studying native religions in order to undermine them became the accepted view of many of the missionaries. In 1902, S. K. Mosiman, the superintendent of the Cantonment station, wrote, "it is necessary also to be acquainted with the religion of the people among whom we are to labor. The mind and the spirit of a race must be understood in order to do successful work."¹⁷ However, the seeming preoccupation of Voth with Hopi

religion produced a strong backlash within the Mennonite constituency. Some Mennonites, although they reluctantly accepted the need to study Indian religions, questioned the necessity of missionaries involving themselves too deeply in the study of "heathen" beliefs and practices. Above all, Mennonites vehemently rejected the possibility of any positive elements in aboriginal worship.

The importance of knowing in detail all the false religions may be over-emphasized, but it is profitable to know something about them and their evil tendencies in order to more effectively present Jesus Christ. The physician studies the disease he is called upon to treat not for the purpose of admiring it, but to destroy it and so it is with false

religions. Christianity is to supplant them and give to their devotees the all-important thing, salvation, which they cannot possibly get anywhere else.¹⁸

Major religious traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc.) earned limited respect from Mennonites because they contained "much error . . . sprinkled with a little truth," but the religions of native tribal peoples consistently appeared particularly abhorrent to Mennonites.

The religions of barbarious (sic) peoples are such a mixture of superstitions, rites and customs that involve cruelty, murder, cannibalism and immorality that the refined mind shrinks from the very idea of them as something too horrible to mention. They make beasts of their people and stand in the

way of their every advance. There can be no happiness or peace under such systems.¹⁹

In Arizona, as in Montana, missionaries increasingly relied on native converts to initiate confrontations with traditional religious leaders. The strength of native religions limited the missionaries' ability to challenge native practices directly. Further, conceptions of the interaction between Christianity and native religions as a "battle" prohibited the missionaries from making any concessions for native converts. Hopi Christians, for example, exhibited a fanatical rejection of traditional Hopi religious ceremonies. K. T. Johnson (Tuwaletstewa) epitomized this rejection when, in August of 1922, he publicly burned the sacred Hopi Bow Clan altar and other paraphernalia associated with it during the Snake Dance. Johnson had been the head of the Bow Clan, which controlled the influential One-Horn and Two-Horn societies. First, a fellow Hopi Christian, Otto Lomavitu, delivered a strong admonishment to the tourists who had gathered to watch the Snake Dance.

We, the aborigines, did not take to civilization by choice. In order that you might convert us to your ways of living, you are now paying taxes in order to have money to spend on our education for which we are very thankful. But by your presence in a barbarous ceremony, and especially like the interesting, writhing snake dance, you destroy what you have built just for the sake of a single pleasure. Some of us who have learned better through your benevolence are trying to pay our government our great debt, even though it be in a small degree, by trying to live out before our people what we have learned in school. Your presence in these occasions mean to an uneducated and a savage Indian that after all there must be something in his way of religion . . . so that he had better shun civilization and keep his children at home. Shame on you.²⁰

Johnson followed this speech with a longer meditation on his life and conversion to Christianity, which he compared to a blind boy having his sight restored. He compared the Snake Dance and its attraction of white tourists to a dead horse that draws buzzards. Otto Lomavitu described the actions which followed these words.

Quickly we piled the idols and the altar pieces. After pouring some gasoline on the pile Johnson lit it. Soon the smoke arose from these wretched prisoners and amidst their smoke we sang in Hopi, "When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder"

the words in Hopi being appropriate for the occasion. As the idols were reduced to ashes the storm also ceased, resulting in a particular calm as though God would have it thus.

Thus passed away the most important Hopi religious ceremony.²¹

Mennonites, like most of their contemporaries, entered the mission enterprise among the Indians with preconceived notions concerning the needs of the Indians. They based this assessment of Indian need on a belief that a vast gulf separated Euro-American cultures from Indian cultures. Native culture, they contended, differed from Mennonite culture not in kind, but in development. Missionaries joined Christian notions of sin and salvation with contemporary ideas about the gradual progression of civilization. Largely because of this "evolutionary" hypothesis, missionaries failed to identify the points at which native religions actually differed from Mennonite religion. They also missed those essential and vital characteristics which native and Mennonite religions shared. Euro-Americans saw natives and native cultures as primitive, simple, and childlike, and sought in their "enlightened" benevolence to guide natives into adulthood.

In their patronizing mission, missionaries exhibited an appalling lack of self-understanding. Mennonite missionaries saw native religious ceremonies as ill-conceived attempts by Indians to obtain spiritual power. The missionaries believed that Indians should rather seek forgiveness of their sins through a contrite attitude of meekness and submission. Clearly, Mennonites and their missionaries did not understand the role of religion within Mennonite culture. Mennonites failed to see that religious belief operated, "functioned," within Mennonite culture in much the same manner that traditional Indian religions functioned within Indian cultures. The missionaries' decisions to dedicate their lives to the missionary enterprise represented the Mennonite equivalent of the "vision quest" of the Plains Indians. Missionaries also sought to obtain spiritual power, and often, in their position of authority over the Indians, exhibited a profound lack of contriteness, meekness, and submission.

All missionaries sought to replace Indian religions with Christianity. Most missionaries believed that it was in the best interest of the Indians to forsake their own cultures entirely and accept

Euro-American culture. Mennonite missionaries agreed with their contemporaries concerning the inevitability of the disappearance of native cultures. The persistence of native cultures, however, surprised and irritated missionaries. Part of the missionary intention became therefore the destruction of native cultures and the replacement of them with a "Christian" culture. Attacking the core of Indian cultures, the religious symbols and rituals, missionaries were at times very effective in executing their intentions. However, if we judge the success or failure of missionaries on the basis of this aspect of their programs, they were ultimately unsuccessful. Indian religion and culture have survived in various forms to this day.

Ironically, even where missionaries achieved a degree of destruction of native ways, the missionaries felt that they had failed. The destruction of native culture represented only the first stage of the missionaries' plan. The second stage included the Indian acceptance of Christianity and Euro-American culture. To the dismay of missionaries, even when the Indians were brought down to the lowest level of degradation and poverty, both materially and culturally, they did not respond to Christianity with the expected enthusiasm. The missionaries' attempts to destroy native culture did more to swell the ranks of new native religions such as peyotism than it did for Christian missions. More discouraging for the missionaries, those Indians who did adopt Christianity often exhibited the same, in the missionaries' opinion, lack of spirituality evident in the American society at large. Mennonite missionaries were not content to simply present the message of Christianity and allow the Indians to accept that message on their own terms. Missionaries held very specific notions of how natives should respond to Christianity and how a truly converted Indian should look and act.

The response of the Indians disappointed the Mennonites, but success in other areas associated with the mission were evident. The mission spearheaded Mennonite expansion into Indian territory, where several congregations soon appeared. Furthermore, the Mennonites experienced an acceptance and recognition for their efforts by the greater American community. Finally, as James Juhnke notes, for the General Conference Mennonites, missions among the

H. R. Voth observing a Snake Dance. (Frieda Voth Regier Entz Collection)

Indians "became a focus of fervent activity for a Mennonite people awakened from rural isolation to an expanded awareness of service, mission and education."²²

Along with this "expanded awareness" came an abundance of dynamic structures which propelled the Mennonites into mission fields in India and China. Indeed, one answer to the special difficulties encountered among the Indians, was to seek more distant and exotic fields of mission. Foreign missionaries became the inheritors of the power of the paradigms of the martyr and the pilgrim at the turn of the century. Mennonites had tamed the rigors of Indian Territory, but India, Africa, and China still produced martyrs through exotic diseases, persecution by heathen governments, and the perils of long-distance travel. Although Rodolphe Petter believed this outward

movement of Mennonite missions was as natural as a rain-swollen stream leaving its banks and promoted unity through common purpose, he openly voiced his concern that perhaps it was also "the backlash from a fruitless and meaningless work" among the Indians.²³

ENDNOTES

¹Peter W. Williams, *Popular Religion in America, Symbolic Change and the Modernization Process in Historical Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), p. 35.

²Letter dated Feb. 22, 1917, MLA-I-1c, box 1, folder 8.

³Letter from Rodolphe Petter to P. H. Richert dated Feb. 19, 1918, MLA-I-1c, box 1, folder 8.

⁴Letter from R. Petter to J. W. Kliewer dated Feb. 25, 1919, MLA-I-1c, box 1, folder 8. See also Powell, pp. 338-355.

⁵Letter dated May 29, 1919, MLA-I-1c, box 1, folder 8.

⁶*The Mennonite*, Apr. 1894, p. 54.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*The Mennonite*, Apr. 1896, p. 54.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*The Mennonite*, Jan. 1898, p. 31.

¹²Frank Waters, *Book of the Hopi* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), pp. 291-292.

¹³*Mennonite Quarterly Review*, July 1966, p. 224.

¹⁴Barrett, p. 41. See also accusations by J. M. Russell, a teacher at the government school in Arizona, and the response of Voth, MLA-I-1, General Conference Board of Missions/COM, box 8, file 46, and Barton Wright, *Hopi Material Culture: Artifacts Gathered by H. R. Voth in the Fred Harvey Collection* (Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Press, 1979).

¹⁵MLA-MS-21-15, The H. R. Voth Collection, General Correspondence, 1891-1895, vol. 9, pp. 14-15, 42-43.

¹⁶Leo W. Simmons (ed.), *Sun Chief: The Autobiography of a Hopi Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1942), p. 252.

¹⁷*The Mennonite*, 19 June 1902, p. 1.

¹⁸*The Mennonite*, 14 Sept. 1916, p. 6.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰John P. Suderman, "A Hopi Indian Finds Christ: The Experience of Mr. K. T. Johnson and His Judgment on Idolatry" (pamphlet at MLA, publisher and date unknown), p. 12.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 16.

²²Juhnke, p. 117.

²³"Mennonitische Mission in Indien," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 14 April 1898, p. 5.

Mennonite Parlors and Living Rooms: Objects, Memories, and Meanings

by Rachel K. Pannabecker

The objects in our homes have been purchased, inherited, received as gifts, hand-crafted, or perhaps they came with the house. We use and maintain these objects, adding new items and discarding others. The everyday objects with which we surround ourselves reveal a part of who we are through the choices we have made and through the associations we hold for them.¹

Memories of childhood contain the objects with which we were surrounded as well as the people with whom we interacted. With the passage of time, the physical structure of our childhood environments has changed. The objects of our childhood homes are discarded as fashions evolve or are dispersed through inheritance. Our perceptions of those objects also have changed with time. Our memories sift and select what is significant and to be retained. These memories of the objects from our childhood homes reveal a part of who we were, or who we like to think we were.

Memories of objects from the past are often triggered by artifacts on exhibit in a museum. While the original household environments of these artifacts no longer exist, the objects can evoke associations and meanings for visitors who used those types of objects in the past. For younger museum visitors, artifacts in an exhibit can help them to learn about everyday objects from the past and to reconstruct the environments in which they were used.

The Kauffman Museum Living Room Study

Recognizing the ability of objects to evoke memories and to symbolize the past, the staff of the Kauffman Museum seeks to collect and interpret objects which authentically reflect the history of everyday life in Mennonite homes in

the North American Plains states. Several home environments are exhibited at the Kauffman Museum.² In order to evaluate the authenticity of the living rooms on display and to create a fund of impressions and stories about living room objects, a one-page questionnaire³ was developed and given to participants in the 1987 Life Enrichment program, and educational series sponsored by Bethel College for senior citizens.⁴ Of the approximately 100 Life Enrichment participants, sixty-one persons voluntarily filled out and returned the questionnaire. Their ages ranged from 66 to 92, with the average age being 77.6 years. Two-thirds of the respondents were women, and one-third were men.

The objects and living rooms recalled by the survey participants varied in terms of the time period and physical location of the remembered house (see table 1). The majority of the respondents (91.2%) pictured a room from the years of economic expansion of the early twentieth century, prior to the Depression. True to the stereotype of Mennonites of the Plains, the rooms recalled were largely from rural homes (75.4%). While the respondents could select any house they knew during childhood, no one chose a house outside of the family circle. The majority chose the house belonging to their own family ("my house," "the folks'"), while the remainder selected a house belonging to someone in the extended family ("grandfather's," "my aunt's").

A Room for Living

To an open-ended question soliciting the name for the "living room," the survey participants supplied a variety of labels (see table 2). While no one indicated that "living" took place in a

bedroom, a few named a kitchen or the dining room as serving as their living room. For the large majority, "living" was done in a public room whose function was not for eating or for sleeping.

A room set apart for receiving guests and Sunday or holiday celebrations became common in American homes during the Victorian period. While one person wrote specifically about a "guest" room, the descriptions for the living rooms sometimes distinguished between rooms used for daily living and those set apart for special occasions. A general-purpose family area was called variously a living room, front room, or dining room. The living room was described as: "Where the action was: meals, family gatherings, morning and evening devotions, the warmest place in winter and a place where we studied our school lessons We felt as though we belonged there and were a part of this room." Respondents characterized this type of living room as cozy, comfortable, livable, or informal.

In contrast, the term "parlor" was often used to indicate a formal room for guests and celebrations: "The parlor (or the 'Holy of Holies'): no-one could go into it (especially the grandchildren) without permission." The parlor was usually characterized as formal, respected, or exclusive (in terms of being used only when visitors were present). However, other respondents called the set-aside room a living room, a front room, or a sitting room. No one used the term "drawing room," a term used more on the east coast to indicate a room used for receiving guests in upper-class homes.

Almost 88% of the respondents listed English words for the living room. Six persons used low German terms with two others adding low German terms in parentheses after the English word, and

Table 1
The Living Room Recalled

Time Period of Room being Recalled	N	%
	1900 - 1909	10
1910 - 1919	26	45.6%
1920 - 1929	16	28.1%
1930 - 1934	5	8.8%
Total	57	
Location of House		
Rural	46	75.4%
Small Town	12	19.7%
Large Town or City	3	4.9%
Total	61	
Ownership of House		
Nuclear Family	42	75.0%
Extended Family	14	25.0%
Total	56	

one person used a high German term (see footnote in table 2 for the idiosyncratic spellings of the low German terms). The nuances of meaning in the German terms paralleled the English forms. The high German *Grosse Stube* and the low German *Grotta Schtov* are considered to be the equivalent of parlor; *Wohnstüb* literally means living room and *Shtube* is usually translated as living room; *zet shtove* indicates a sitting room; and *feh stove* is translated as front room.

However, the use of German words to label the living room did not always serve to distinguish the daily or special nature of the room. A *Grote* 'Shtauv or parlor was described as follows: "During the weekday coming into the living room at wintertime was a joyful thing! Everyone of the folks was busy doing something: the father reading a book; the mother sewing a dress; the girls playing with dolls; the boys with blocks all over the room. Imagine the place? Well, wait till Saturday when all things are placed in order for Sunday to welcome guests with a smile." In contrast, a woman remembering *Die grosse Stube* of 1909-1922 described it as a set-aside room which was "respected, used

Table 2
Names for the "Living Room"

	N	%
Parlor	18	31.0%
Living Room	14	24.1%
Front Room	12	20.7%
Low German terms ^a	7	12.1%
Kitchen or Dining Room	4	6.9%
Sitting Room	2	3.5%
Guest Room	1	1.7%
High German term ^b	1	1.7%
Total	58	

^a*Grotta Schtov/Grota stauve/Grote* 'Shtauv/Groata shtove, zet shtove, Wohnstüb', Shtube, feh stove.

^b*Grosse Stube*.

mostly to entertain guests."

The specialization of household space was a trend that developed in Europe and North America through the nineteenth century. Many Mennonite immigrants began their home life on the Plains in one-room houses, or in houses where rooms had to serve multiple functions. Indeed, one person wrote that his family's one-room house had no living room. All of the other responses to the questionnaire indicate that by the early twentieth century, the specialization of household space was common in Mennonite homes. This specialization is exemplified by the prevalence of the set-aside room, most commonly called the parlor.

Plain and Fancy

Many participants responded to the request for descriptions by listing the objects in the living room as if they were physically present and the writers were completing an inventory. A *Zet shtove* was described as: "Modern early 1900s: floral rug on floor, leather davenport, one rocker, straight back chairs (dining room type), center table (square) with a decorative cover on it." A front room from the 1920s was re-

called as containing: "an old-fashioned divan with pillows (not very comfortable as a sofa—hard), straight chairs, organ, an old-fashioned square table with glass balls on bottom of legs, carpeting."

The descriptions of the style of the living rooms and parlors revealed a range from "plain" to "fancy." A parlor was remembered as: "Very plain. Area rug, plain lace curtains and chairs all around the room. When I was old enough to take piano lessons my father bought a player piano. This was a luxury." The front room of one family was summarized: "Perhaps it would be classed as a peasant style." In recalling a sitting room of 1918 with a tall bookcase desk, library table, and four oak chairs with a home-made rag carpet, a respondent noted that the room would appear "clean and plain to us now."

In contrast to the plain and simple style were descriptions of the over-furnished style commonly associated with the middle-class of the Victorian era. A parlor from 1910 to 1920 was described as containing: "flowered carpeting with red in it, lace curtains, a large dresser with mirror (antique) with handmade dresser scarf and lace doilies on the little drawers on top, hair-pin lace on glass door leading out, a red velvet lounge with many hand-made cushions, some straight chairs, and one rocker."

The recollection of plainness in home decoration may be attributed to a concern by some Mennonite families for maintaining a simple and humble lifestyle. However, none of the respondents told stories of prohibitions in home furnishings, other than one person's report of a proscription against musical instruments: "We weren't supposed to have musical instruments at that time." The questionnaire responses were not detailed enough to distinguish between plainness as a chosen style and plainness resulting from economic necessity. The range from plain to fancy makes it clear that there was no distinctive "Mennonite" household style after the turn of the century. In both plain and fancy living rooms, the furniture and furnishings described were the same as those found in American homes of the period. Thus, the objects of the living room attest to the integration of Mennonites into American society, in terms of domestic possessions.

The Special Things

Fifty-eight persons named something that was "special" in the living room (see table 3). More importantly, they reflected on the meanings of those objects. Interestingly, the respondents primarily chose large objects, and no one described toys or objects primarily belonging to children. However, some items were recalled in terms of children's play. A large oak rocking chair with leather cushions was described as follows: "I was rocked in it, was read to in it, sat with sister in it, and turned it over to 'play house.'" Three steps in front of a door leading to a storage area that were remembered as: "Ideal to place my doll and play church It was near to mother working at the stove and cabinet." For another respondent, the special thing provided a play activity in comparison to household duties: "I could always feel the urge to practice my piano lesson when it was dishwashing time. With very few lessons I learned to play hymns, and 'The Indian Love Call.'" Sometimes an object was recalled in terms of naughty behavior: "There was a trapdoor to the cellar and I fell into the cellar one time. My father bought Christmas candy by the bucket. It was kept in the cellar." In another home, the special thing was connected with the accomplishment of duties: "We could play the Victrola on special occasions and as a personal reward."

Other survey participants associated the special thing with their families. A table was selected as the special thing in one family's living room: "We gathered around table many times. The table seemed to bring us together." Pianos and organs were also recalled in association with family activities: "Our family loved to sing and we would gather around the piano. My mother especially liked it when we sang together: one brother as tenor, another as bass, and we girls played and sang soprano." For others, the special thing brought back memories of their parents. One person wrote: "Mother relieved the stress of nine siblings and a tight financial situation by playing and singing old comforting hymns on the piano." Another related: "My father had been a pretty fancy penman. In the desk were pictures of birds and the like made with a flourish, which I liked to see. We begged for him to show us how

he did it." A leather lounge was "special" to a respondent who indicated that "My father took his Sunday afternoon nap here."

Special things were also associated with memories of the home as the place of entertainment. A small hand stereoscope was special: "Because it was interesting to see the pictures as there wasn't radio or TV to look at, and traveling with buggies, we didn't get very far." Another respondent recalled that: "We never had chances to go to entertainments. Therefore, our source of entertaining was to invite friends to visit and share a common meal, and to have parties of young people in the evening." For this respondent, the organ in the parlor was a special object for providing that entertainment. In other Mennonite homes, however, objects for musical entertainment were not as common. One respondent recalled that a Victrola provided recreation and was special because "none of the neighbors had one."

Uniqueness was also a trait associated with specialness by other respondents: "Everybody wanted to use these Boston rockers and sleep and rock in them. Not many country folks had a rocker like these." For another respondent, the uniqueness of the four panels from his grandmother's lampshade created a lasting memory vivid with details: "Panel 1: Two men riding with an open sleigh pulled by three horses with a pack of wolves after them. 2: One unhitched horse being eaten by the wolves. 3: The second horse being eaten. 4: One man fighting off the wolves with his sword while another was whipping the remaining horse to a run. The result: I'd be afraid in the dark."

For five respondents, specialness was linked with beauty. A man described a flower stand with a large Christmas cactus and other flowering plants: "There was always something green and often beautiful flowers during the long Montana winters." However, beauty in the special object was often intertwined with exclusivity in ownership: "The piano was fumed oak and was more attractive than the usual black, shiny ones other people had." A man indicated that a piano purchased in 1918 and a sewing machine bought in 1921 were special because they were "more fancy and more expensive." Clearly specialness meant high status to some respon-

dents. In contrast another respondent reported that the installation of a telephone (sometime around 1905 to 1910) represented a community effort that was special because it involved neighborly sharing.

Other respondents were pragmatic in their selection of special things. A multi-purpose "sanitary" couch which could be used as a bed was described by one respondent. (A sanitary couch was a leather-covered item with springs rather than stuffing and exemplified the trend away from over-stuffed Victorian styles toward the clean lines of a more modern style of furnishing.) Five persons selected a heating stove with one respondent noting that: "It furnished much needed comfort on cold mornings." Another listed a sewing machine as special: "Mother sewed most of our clothing. Since we were a large family, that was an important part of our family activity."

The special things recalled by the survey participants reveal multiple meanings evoked by objects. Objects were tied to personal memories of the individual respondents (both in terms of good and naughty behavior). Memories that were linked to individual differentiation and social status through the possession of exclusive material goods are contrasted with the recollections of family togetherness and good times with the community.

Acquiring Special Things

More than half of the respondents (37 of 61) did not answer the question "When was the special thing acquired?" and 25 persons did not answer the question "How was it acquired?" (see table 4). Therefore, the answers to these questions cannot be generalized to the entire group.

Of those who answered the inquiry regarding the date of acquisition, 87.5% placed the acquisition in the first quarter of the 20th century. Thus, the large majority selected as "special" the items that were acquired during their childhood years. The role of newness as an important factor in defining specialness is supported by the descriptions of many of the special items as being unique, and by the following comment about a parlor: "Our furniture was as up-to-date as could be acquired at that time."

In contrast, only three persons be-

Table 3
Special Things
in the Living Room

	N	%
Furniture chair, couch, table, bed, heating stove	19	32.8%
Musical Entertainment piano, organ, record player	19	32.8%
Furnishings lamp, clock, carpet, telephone, plants, sewing machine, trinket collection, books, stereoscope, Christmas tree candles	12	20.7%
Visual Art painting, sculpture	6	10.3%
Structural Feature of Room stairs, door	2	3.5%
Total	58	

lieved that the special object was acquired prior to 1874 (a *ruhbank* or sleeping bench, a stereoscope, and a clock). In a home where the furniture was "brought from Europe," the special thing was a vase of artificial flowers created in the early 1900s by a great-aunt. None of the respondents indicated that the special object was acquired between 1874 and 1900 (the early years of settlement on the Plains). Many who did not indicate a probable date noted that they believed the special object had been acquired by their parents, thus dating from the early 1900s.

The supposition that the 20th century brought economic prosperity and purchasing power to Mennonites of the Plains is supported by the response of 61% of the participants who indicated that the special thing was purchased. In some cases, a family member or a friend was in business which facilitated the purchase: "Parents bought it from a store whose manager was a friend of a cousin." While Mennonites are known to have purchased second-hand furniture, only a rocking chair was mentioned as being purchased at an auction. Even some of the special things acquired as gifts were purchased items, as related by the woman who indicated

Table 4
Acquiring the Special Thing

	N	%
When Acquired		
Prior to 1874	3	12.0%
1875-1899	0	0.0%
1900-1909	9	36.0%
1910-1919	10	40.0%
1920-1929	3	12.0%
Total	25	
How Acquired		
Purchased	22	61.1%
Crafted	5	13.9%
Gift	4	11.1%
Already in House	3	8.3%
Inherited	2	5.6%
Total	36	

that a piano was purchased for her parents by a family of their church.

In contrast, only five persons noted that the special thing was crafted rather than being an industrially manufactured item. Of those, two persons referred to artistic works: a mother's paintings, and a father's pen sketches. Although hand-built furniture in the Kauffman Museum collections attest to the craftsmanship of Mennonite men, only three respondents named as special an object crafted of wood in the home. According to one respondent, her great-uncle built: "a pyramid, tiered in the shape of a Christmas tree, with candles to light which would rotate the whole pyramid." The other hand-built items were a flower stand and a trundle bed.

Only two persons indicated that the special thing was acquired through inheritance. One respondent indicated that a long pendulum clock was special: "Because it was an heirloom brought from Russia by my Grandfather whom I never knew." In comparison, the other inherited item was a cage of stuffed birds and a stuffed chipmunk given to her grandmother in 1903 and which remained with the furnishings of the "home place" when her family moved there.

The choice of household goods reflects both economic power and personal values. For the persons who answered this part of the questionnaire, specialness was linked to recently purchased items. This suggests that the ownership of modern, American-made objects was important to many Mennonite families.

Auf Deutsch

Beginning in the 1870s, the Plains of North America became home to large numbers of immigrants and many of the survey respondents descend from families who emigrated from German-speaking Mennonite settlements in Russia or Prussia. Several types of responses reflect that immigrant heritage. As shown in Table 2, German terms (primarily low German dialect) continued to be used by Mennonite families in the early 20th century. The German language was also related to other household items. The special thing in one home was: "a picture on the wall. The verse on the picture was in the German language. 'Me and my house will serve the Lord.'"

Various European-style objects were included in the living room descriptions: "furniture brought from Europe," a German Bible, pendulum clocks, and a Russian oven/cook stove. A *ruh bank* or sleeping bench from the home of her paternal grandparents was recalled: "It could be used to sit or take naps. It had a large lid. Inside they stored books and newspapers. At one end they always had a sack of candy and if we were obedient children they would give us some when we visited them."

However, only a few respondents selected objects representing their immigrant history as the "special" thing in their homes. Perhaps this can be explained by the comment of one man who recalled that by 1915 a sleeping bench was considered to be old fashioned: "It was so unusual that it attracted attention." While immigrant objects were remembered and sometimes viewed with nostalgia, industrially-manufactured items purchased in the United States were dominant in the childhood memories of the respondents.

The references to the German language and to immigrant items were all situated before 1920. These references indicate that there is a reservoir of memories regarding immigrant furniture and furnishings, which will become

the focus of the next study conducted by the Kauffman Museum staff. However, the decline of the German language and the general acceptance of American industrially-manufactured household goods among Mennonite families can be related to the Americanization of Mennonite lifestyles and the effects of World War I.

The Goods Life or the Good Life

The information provided by the survey respondents testifies to the value placed on the purchase of new, industrially-manufactured goods by Mennonite families during the early part of this century. Clearly Mennonite families benefited materially from the economic expansion experienced in the United States. Responses also indicate an awareness of the significance of these purchases, particularly the socio-economic status that comes from the possession of material things that others did not yet have.

However, the statements of many respondents indicated that these same objects and settings were tied to memories of the family's faith in God. Respondents recalled the presence of religious books and wall mottos in the home, times of hymn singing, family devotions, and Christian fellowship. While no one listed the Bible as the special thing in the living room, this omission may be an indication that Mennonites do not consider objects to be sacred. Instead, the family is the living context of Mennonite Christian faith. The oldest respondent in the survey, a 92-year old man, contributed an expressive description of the importance of the family and faith. He wrote that the living room was the place for: "Family gathering—fellowship around large center table for freshly cooked meals, or reading, exchange of jolly or learning or inspiring experiences, and

fellowship, morning greetings and the retiring 'Good Night' and the family blessing as mother led in a family good night prayer." The special thing for this respondent was a reed organ which accompanied: "family singing of hymns old and new. The fellowship of the family in the living room helped us to sing about the love of God, his nearness to us and our home and work and all our relations in storm or sorrow, after a day of hard work and of commitment and of love, each for the other, and the blessing of happy family relations."

The respondents to the Kauffman Museum Living Room study contributed information that supported the selection of many objects for its living room exhibits (three organs on display), raised the need for including other items (more straight-back chairs for the Voth-Unruh-Fast House), and provided evidence for the coexistence of a "fancy" furnishing style in the "Home and Family" exhibit and a "plain" style in the Voth-Unruh-Fast House. The respondents also contributed stories that can be retold to museum visitors of all ages. But most importantly, the responses confirmed that objects evoke memories of meanings. On the surface, the descriptions represented contrasting memories associated with living room objects: the pursuit of material comfort versus appreciation of the basics; a search for higher status versus the sharing of good times; the purchase of new American-style goods versus valuing inherited goods and the retention of the German language. Despite this diversity, the memories express two common values: the accumulation of material goods, and the centrality of the family. These values can be interpreted in museum exhibits on living rooms of the past. A question to ask ourselves is: "What values are expressed in the living room objects of younger generations of Mennonite families?"

ENDNOTES

¹See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The meaning of things: Domestic symbols and the self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

²Two home settings are presented in the Kauffman Museum's permanent exhibit, "Of Land and People," which opened on October 9, 1987. An 1875 log cabin, originally inhabited by the Maria and John Graber family in the Marion, South Dakota area, is featured in the "Immigrant People" section. This one-room house is furnished with immigrant furniture and hand-crafted furnishings. The "Home and Family" exhibit is a recreation of an early 20th century parlor, bedroom, and kitchen and features many industrially-manufactured items complemented by hand-crafted decorative items of the period. These two exhibits are complemented by the Voth-Unruh-Fast House located outside the interpretation building. Built in 1875 by David Voth (with an addition in 1911 by Cornelius Unruh) in the Goessel, Kansas area, the house was moved to the Museum grounds in 1976. The Voth-Unruh-Fast House is simply furnished with both immigrant-style items and industrially-manufactured objects.

³The format of the questionnaire was based on a study of contemporary urban dwellers by two University of Chicago sociologists (see note 1 above). In comparison to the University of Chicago study, this survey consisted of a self-administered written questionnaire rather than interviews by trained interviewers, was limited to objects in living rooms rather than dealing with any object in the house, and focused on memories of objects rather than eliciting information about present-day possessions. In this study there was no attempt to seek details on the "non-special" objects of the living room, to seek comparisons with other age groups, or to compare remembered objects and environments with those of today. The design of the data analysis from the University of Chicago study was also followed initially, with changes adapted to the data.

⁴The congregational affiliation of the Life Enrichment participants was not requested in the questionnaire. While non-Mennonites from the Newton area enroll in the Life Enrichment program, a large majority of the participants grew up in congregations affiliated with the General Conference Mennonite Church, with a smaller group coming from congregations affiliated with the Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren Church, and Church of the Brethren.

Corn Is Five Cents a Stalk

by Menno Duerksen

For the past two years Menno Duerksen's book, Dear God, I'm Only a Boy, has attracted attention in Mennonite communities because of the graphic chapters in the book detailing his strict Mennonite upbringing and his early struggle with religion. In October 1988, Duerksen was invited to participate in a "story telling," at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. Rather than use stories from his book, Duerksen wrote two new stories for the occasion, "Corn Is Five Cents a Stalk," and "The One Chicken Sunday."

But beyond telling (or reading) the new stories, Duerksen gave an introduction, explaining his alienation from his father and, after the stories, a postscript commenting on his renewed relationship to Mennonite culture.

After the book appeared, Mennonite Life received permission to re-publish one of the book's stories, "The Wildcat Bus," which appeared in the December 1987, issue. We have now received permission to use Duerksen's new story, "Corn Is Five Cents a Stalk," together with the introduction and postscript he gave at Bethel.

Introduction

Let me start by saying those who have read my book already know a great deal about me. Maybe too much.

In the book I did mention my alienation from my father but perhaps I did not fully explain how it all came about. And since my new stories also deal with my father, perhaps I need to explain a bit further how and why, as a child and a teen-ager, I became alienated not only from my father but from my Mennonite culture and, in a sense, my father's religious faith.

You see, I was born in 1916, which

meant I was growing up, as a child, right after World War I, I don't have to tell you that there was a good deal of anti-German sentiment in this country after that war and since Mennonites spoke German, a great deal of that anti-German sentiment was directed at them.

Perhaps if my family had remained in a tightly knit Mennonite community it would not have happened, but from the very beginning I was exposed to a secular education and quickly became aware of this anti-German sentiment. Especially when some of it hit me. What kind of reaction can one expect of a child when he goes to school and other children point their fingers and shout, "You're a kraut."

The next factor was that I was always a voracious reader. I read everything I could get my hands on, even as early as eight or nine years of age.

It just happened that about this time the Oklahoma State Board of education was trying to get a library into every school, even the small country schools. So, when our school, Friesen School, District 12, got its shipment of books, I was in heaven No. 7.

I didn't just read those books, I gobbled them up. They were opening an entirely new world to me. Teddy Roosevelt, out west hunting buffalo. *At War with Pontiac*, an exciting story of the Indian wars. Patriotic stories about our heroic doughboys fighting in France. I believe that in less than a year I had read every book in that library.

And there were my parents, at home, talking German. Well, it was "plattdeutsch" but that didn't matter. At church on Sunday my grandfather preached in high German. And suddenly I was ashamed of it. I not only refused to speak German but closed my ears when I heard it being spoken. I was

feeling the pressure from that "other" world to conform and I wanted to conform. The process of alienation had begun.

Perhaps the next part came because my father whipped me so much. (I did devote one whole chapter to this in my book.) It was not only the whipping but the way he went about it, first passing judgement, telling me I had a whipping coming and then letting me wait all day for it.

Did you ever stop and think what something like this could do to the psychological make-up of a child? The torture, like a condemned man waiting for the hangman. Is it hard to understand, then, why I began to not only fear but hate my father? It hurts me now to admit this but it was true. Dad would whip me and then put his arms around me, trying to kiss me and tell me he had done it only because he loved me. I would be sick with nausea and revulsion at his arms around me.

I suppose the next factor would have to be his broken promises to me. You see, one of my dreams as a boy was to own a bicycle. I wanted one so badly I would lay awake at night dreaming about one. Some of my happiest moments came on Sunday afternoons when I was allowed to visit at Uncle P. E. Friesen. He was the "rich uncle," who owned the Ford agency in town, selling Model T Fords by the dozens. All of his boys had shiny new bicycles and when I begged, they let me ride them.

Part of this bicycle hunger was tied up with the work factor. By the time I was born, the first born son, Dad already had four daughters. He could hardly wait for me to be old enough to help with the chores and farm work. At seven, eight, nine, he already had me hard at work. Plowing, shocking wheat,



Menno Duerksen during October, 1988, visit to Newton.

hoeing cotton and corn. I felt I was earning my bicycle, but when I begged Dad for one I always got the same answer. "Maybe, after harvest, if we have good crop." My bicycle day never came.

I finally invented the idea that Dad should give me a little corner of the farm, maybe an acre or two, from which I would get the proceeds and buy my bicycle with it. Several times Dad agreed to this plan and I watched with pride as my little plot of wheat grew, but when harvest came and I asked for my share, I never got it.

Sure, I know we were poor and Dad had a big family, 10 mouths to feed. But I saw him buying horses, cows, farm machinery and I figured he could buy me a bicycle. Maybe I didn't know about all the notes he signed at the bank to buy those things. All I knew was that

I was not getting my bicycle and I was beginning to hate Dad for his broken promises.

These things kept happening as I grew to become a teen-ager. I always had a talent for mechanical things and one day a car belonging to a neighbor got caught in a flash flood, the engine filled with mud. I took it apart, cleaned it out and got it running. The neighbor was short on cash so he gave me a calf in payment. I asked Dad if he would raise it on "halves" with me. He agreed but when the calf weighed three or four hundred pounds it disappeared. When I asked Dad about it he said he sold it to pay some urgent bills. The same thing happened to a pig someone gave me to fix their car.

Then the religion thing. That is, of course, in my book, but the pressure on me to "get saved," to be "born again,"

was constant and the part that was torturing me was the threat of a very hot hell. Somehow the joy and peace part never came through the way the fires of hell did.

So it was under fear, more than anything else, that I got down on my knees and prayed, and pleaded, and wept, and confessed, searching for the great white cloud of peace that never came. So, at age 17 I finally rejected my father's religion too.

When my father learned of this, a new war between us began. He prayed, he threatened, he shouted. He would have thrown me out of the house except for the fact that I was now earning a bit of money the family needed very badly. So we, father and son, stayed under the same roof in an atmosphere of bitter poison.

To sum it up, this was the situation when I left home. Father and son at dagger's point. It stayed that way for years.

Almost the same thing was happening to my brother, Ernie. He wasn't quite as tough as I was, psychologically, and he ended up trying to commit suicide. When he finally left home he didn't come back to see Dad for more than 25 years.

As for me, it took a long time but I finally forgave my father. True, I never became close to him, but I forgave him and loved him. Not the way I loved my wonderful mother, but I gave him what love I could and was with him the night he died. I had long ago realized that my father too was a victim of certain forces, sometimes evil forces, which had made him into the man he was.

In a sense, perhaps, he didn't even need to be forgiven. Someone has said that if we understand the sins of our fathers against us they are no longer sins.

Which brings us to my book. I became a writer and dreamed of writing great literature. When I found I would never be able to do that I still knew that I would write "my book"—the odyssey of a soul.

It isn't a great book, although a few people have said it is. Some have rejected it because they perceive in it a negative message on religion.

Some of my sisters have told me I was too tough on Dad in the book. They don't remember him the way I do. Maybe he wasn't as tough on them.

My answer to them has been—I wrote what I had to write, the way I remembered it. I had carried that painful thing around in my soul all those years and I had to get it down on paper. Writers are that way.

But then, after the book had been published, I remembered other things, stories related to my father, that I had left out. It is funny the way those memories come piling back into one's consciousness as he grows older.

In any case, I have now written two more of these stories which, in a way, deal with the forces that made my father what he was—"Corn Is Five Cents a Stalk," and "The One Chicken Sunday."

Perhaps we can say it is just a bit more of my forgiveness of him.

Corn Is Five Cents a Stalk

Somewhere, out there in the darkness, atop a gyp hill, a coyote lifted his nose to the sky and began to howl. The sound sent a shiver of fear through my being and I began to cry.

Even before that moment of fear I had been afraid, angry, bewildered, frustrated. Why was I out here in the corn field in the darkness? My knees pushed into the soft, moist earth as I bent and groped for the buried corn plants. My only light came from a kerosene lantern, standing beside me on the ground, casting a feeble circle of light, perhaps 15 feet. Beyond that, the utter darkness. And the coyote.

His mournful howling, seeming so near, had sent the new sudden rush of fear. As the tears began to slide down my cheeks, I peered fearfully into the darkness surrounding me. My terrified mind was telling me that in a moment I would see the flashing yellow eyes of the coyote, the white gleaming teeth as he would prepare to leap at my throat.

Perhaps my father had failed to tell me that coyotes did not attack humans. A small, helpless calf, perhaps. A rabbit or a field mouse, but not a boy. But even if my father had told me, would I, in my moment of fear, have believed him?

As for the force that had sent me out into that cornfield that night, in a sense I did know. It had been my father.

"Each corn plant is worth five

cents," he had told me sternly after seeing the havoc I had created in the corn field. It was the 1920's. A nickel was a solid piece of money.

Then, after supper he had lit the lantern, handed it to me and issued the edict,

"You will take the lantern, go out to the corn field and dig up every corn plant you buried," he had said.

Even at that moment, as he had pronounced the sentence, I had my first surge of fear. "No, please."

But my father had been stern, unrelenting. At that moment he didn't seem to understand that I had not buried those corn plants intentionally. I had simply been helpless to control what my father had expected me to control.

Yes, there had been a beginning. And it all began simply because I had been born a boy child into a house full of girls. My father, the Mennonite farmer struggling for a living on the plains of western Oklahoma, had been waiting anxiously for a son to help with the farm work. Now I was aged perhaps nine and my time had come. I must begin my journey into manhood.

In some ways it had already begun. I had been taught the art of milking cows, the more gentle ones. I had been taught how to feed the young calves their milk from a bucket, poking a finger into their slippery mouths, performing an act of fraud by making them believe it was their mother's teats. I had stood at my father's side, learning to fork the smelly manure out of the barns. But the real manhood would begin with driving a team of horses in the fields.

Oh I had driven a team a few times, sitting in the seat beside Dad on the farm wagon, out on the road. But handling a team on a wagon, down a road, was easy compared to the go-devil.

Yes, they did indeed call them go-devils, those little one row sled-cultivators pulled by two horses, down a row of corn, or cotton, to till the soil and with knives to slash at the threatening weeds.

Dad had taken me, that morning, with the horses and the go-devil, to the corn field where the greening plants now stood eight to twelve inches high. And the weeds were thriving too. It was time for the go-devil to be at work.

Dad had other work to do and was asking me, for the first time, to operate the little devil machine. The sled runners about 12 inches apart, were made to straddle the rows of corn, with little

gangs of discs at the rear, to till the soil. The weed knives at the sides.

"You have to make sure the horses stay straight between the rows. Otherwise you'll crush the corn plants," Father had warned, as he demonstrated the way to shift his weight on the little wings protruding from the sides up front. To make the machine go right you stepped on the left wing. To go left, on the right wing. It sounded simple and Dad's demonstration was convincing.

But then Dad weighed twice as much as I did and, I was about to learn, when I tromped on those wings they didn't respond as easily as it had seemed when he did it.

But somehow, while Dad watched, I managed to convince him that I had mastered the technique. But it was going to be the turning around at the end of the rows that would get me into trouble.

Dad had made it seem so easy. The well trained horses obediently following his tugs on the reins and his quiet commands. But for me it was going to turn into a hell of frustration.

Dad had helped me make a few turns before he left and he probably thought I had mastered the technique better than I really had, before he walked away, leaving me alone. He had trusted that the results would be workable. They weren't.

It was a day that became a hell. I knew full well that to run away from the job would simply earn me another licking. I had to stay. And to try. And to fail.

I was having trouble enough with the wing technique of guiding the crazy little machine. My heart would sink as the machine failed to respond quickly enough and I would see the runners crushing the corn plants, or burying them. But again, this was not the worst. Those horrible failures were in the turning process at the end of the rows.

It was something which demanded just a bit more than I, the nine-year-old boy seemed able to provide. On several occasions the failures were horrendous. We, I, the horses, the go-devil ended up in a monstrous tangle of harness, double-tree, machine and boy. The go-devil upside down.

Several times I simply sat down and wept helplessly. The tangle seemed hopeless. And always that vision of my punishment at the end of it all. I even found myself wishing I could die.

In later years my family and friends

would say I had a stubborn streak in me. Perhaps even on that day I had a bit of it. I finally had to finish with my weeping and tackle the mess. I did it simply by unhitching the harness tugs from the double-tree and straightening out the harness. Then, as the gentle horses stood patiently waiting I wrestled with the go-devil to get it turned back over on its bottom and, with all the strength I could summon from my boy muscles, I managed to get the machine lined up with the corn row. Finally, I re-hitched the horses and the struggle began all over again.

Perhaps, in a sense, I was even proud of the fact that I had managed, without help, to rescue myself from a horrible predicament. To have been forced to go home and summon Dad would have been more than a defeat. But if indeed I did feel a tinge of pride at what I had been able to do, it had to fade before the prospect of what Dad was going to say when he saw the destruction of his precious corn.

No matter, I had to struggle through that day and the tears I had shed, becoming a dried, muddy paste on my face.

And yes, it came, the screaming and bitter scolding from Dad when he came to summon me home at the end of the day and saw the terrible battle field. I was certain I was in for another whipping.

Only Dad never whipped while angry. His was the religious ritual he made out of it. I would get the whipping after supper.

But this was one time when my father departed from his usual routine on such punishment. Perhaps he did realize, after all, that it had been a bit much to expect so small a boy to master that horse turning technique so quickly.

But another kind of punishment there would be. Inevitably. It was after supper, after all the barnyard chores had been finished, when he lit the lantern and told me that I would go to the now darkened corn field and dig out all the buried plants. I would, he decreed, stay out there until every last plant had been uncovered.

So I had gone. Hesitantly. Fearfully. And yet knowing that it must be so.

And so I had begun. The knees boring into the soft earth as I groped for those buried plants. My fear had also told me about the possibility of a snake crawling out to find me. A child's im-

agination was a living thing. There were indeed snakes out there on those western plains. I had seen enough of those. So my fear was already alive when the coyote began to howl.

As the sound echoed through the night there came again the thought of grabbing the lantern and running in panic towards the house. But always the stern image of my father pressed down upon me. If the coyote did indeed come rushing out of the darkness to grab me, it would be my father's fault if he arrived later to find my bloody bones lying in the corn field.

Somehow—perhaps because the howling did not come closer, or the coyote ceased his howling, my fear receded just a bit. Enough to allow me to continue the frustrating groping.

Some of my continuing anguish now came from the fact that as I groped I was discovering that many of the buried corn plants were beyond saving. The sliding runners of the go-devil had simply snapped off the stalks. Or the knives of the machine had sliced them off. Dad would be angry about that too.

Maybe that was what I was thinking about when I heard footsteps in the darkness. There was a sort of hollow, thudding quality to those footsteps which now sent a new rush of fear through my being. That strange, echoing sound was something I would also learn about later but now, in my childish ignorance, it could only add to the apprehension of whatever, or whoever, was approaching me in the darkness. Certainly not the coyote, for no coyote made footsteps like this. More like a human, a man, but the strange, hollow thudding nature of the sound.

There was a low, flat-topped gyp hill to the south of that corn field, a small pasture where our stallion Reubon was penned by day and, as in so many of those Oklahoma gyp hills, there were hollows, something like small caves, below those hill tops and it was these small underground caverns which gave the echo when one walked over them. Later I would learn about that too and get a childish pleasure out of the sound one could make by stomping or jumping over one of those hollow spots. But now, in my moment of banishment to the fearful darkness of the cornfield, the thudding sound gave a ghostly, frightening quality to the approaching footsteps.

Once again my impulse was to leap to my feet and run, in panic. But to run away from the new sound would only take me further away from the house. I could only wait, trembling.

And then I saw him. It was my father coming into the circle of my lantern light. My heart could stop its wild beating now. The most he could do would be to wield the whip and I had experienced that before.

Dad didn't say much at first. Just stood looking at what I had been able to accomplish. I could see him wince at the evidence of destruction of some of the buried plants.

"I told you each plant was worth five cents," he finally said. He had said it earlier as he had lit the lantern. Now he wanted me to hear it again. "You see what has happened to so many of the fine corn stalks?" He made it sort of a question, to make certain I understood the gravity of my failure. I understood, but for me this was not a moment to speak. I kept digging at the buried plants. I did know, in that time, that five cents was a lot of money.

But now Dad got down on his knees too and began digging at the buried corn stalks. When he found one weakened by the slash of the go-devil blades but not completely severed, he would carefully bring the stalk to a standing position and then, with his cupped hands, press several handfuls of moist earth around the crippled stalk to prop it up, in hope that it would recover, its wounded nature healing to bear its nickel's worth of corn ear. When I saw what he was doing, I too began pressing the moist earth around the wounded stalks. I too hoped that each would live and somehow lessen my sin.

For long minutes we worked, the two of us, attempting to repair the damage done, not by intent, but by failure. The inability of a man-child to master in such a short time the technique of handling horses in a difficult situation. At that moment I could feel only the guilt of failure, not of sinful intent.

After a time, perhaps less than an hour, Dad stood up and said, "I guess that is enough for tonight. We can finish it in the morning. Mama and the girls will be waiting for the evening worship."

Now he had spoken of the daily ritual, never failing, of the family session of Bible reading and prayer, a must, before anyone went to bed. To

me, now, it would be a blessed relief. An escape from that maddening corn field, the scene of my childhood defeat.

We walked silently back to the house. Not across the hollow gyp hill now, but along the trail leading first to the barn; a last minute check of the horses, and then the house. I walked just a bit behind Dad. He made no effort to take my hand, to pull me to his side. After all, I was supposed to be something of a man now, entrusted with the horses and the go-devil. Taking the hand of a child was symbolic of real childhood, something my father would have done, had done, when I was five or six. I was nine now and, in a sense at least, in the world of my father, no longer a child but a growing boy stumbling through the learning process of becoming a man.

Besides, I wasn't sure yet whether Dad still intended to whip me or not. He hadn't said it and he usually did when he intended to do so. I could only hope that he wouldn't.

And the answer, this time, was no. It came during his nightly prayer as each member of his family was kneeling at their chairs, the way it was always done in our house. My father spoke briefly in his prayer about the need for children to learn to accept responsibility and to pay for their transgressions by making amends. Dad had simply decided that my period of penance in the corn field, in the darkness, had been enough. For perhaps he too sensed that it had not really been a sin, but a failure that had led to the burying of the corn.

But the next day he took me once more to the corn field, with the horses and the go-devil. This time he made sure that I had learned a bit more about how to turn the horses at the ends of the rows before he trusted me to do it alone.

"See, you hold a tight rein. Make the horses go where you want them to go. First you swing a bit to the right, then make your left turn," he said. And in time I did learn to make it work.

Eventually I even got better at the art of guiding the little devil machine. In the end, after making sure I had learned, he turned his back and left me alone again. Only this time, instead of leaving he went back to that part of the field where I had suffered my defeats, the buried corn. Now it was Dad who was on his knees, finishing the job of digging out those plants. To me, as I

saw him bending to his task I must have sensed that in a measure, at least, it was an act of forgiveness. In the meantime still trusting me with the go-devil.

The process of growing up in the presence of my rigid, stern, Mennonite father would, in the coming years, sometimes be a painful one. There would be times when my feelings toward him would border on hatred as he continued to punish me with the rod, and the leather strap. As he would break promises to me. And even later, in a dispute over his religious faith.

It would take years, many bitter years, before I would begin to understand the real forces that had sent me into the cornfield that night, to a real understanding of the forces that had shaped him, the things that impelled him to become the cruel father image he had become to me.

For it was now the image of another boy which began to creep into my consciousness and which would lead me to an understanding. It was a boy whose father had died when he was only four. A boy whose mother was simply unable to support her family, without the father, and who was forced to place the boy in a foster home.

It was a foster home truly without love, where the foster child was forced to stand at the table to eat while the real family sat on chairs. Given only scraps from the table, left-overs, to eat. A child who was locked in a shed when visitors came, so they would not see him. A child given only cast-off clothing from the other children to wear. A boy forced to work like a slave, even while only a child, and whipped sadistically for the slightest error in his chores.

A boy who would be forced to grow to manhood with the memory of times when he had been lashed to a post in the barn, his shirt stripped off and then whipped across his back with a black-snake whip until the blood streamed down and he was unable to sleep on his back for weeks.

As a crowning indignity to the whippings, to have wet ashes dumped on his head to symbolize humiliation. A sadistically twisted version of the Biblical "sackcloth and ashes."

Other memories of being sent, still as a small boy, into the field to plow with a stubborn walking plow and then, when his furrows were not straight enough to please his master, laid over

the plow beam in the field and whipped.

The memory of the time when he could no longer bear the cruelty and ran away, back to his poverty-stricken mother, pleading with her not to send him back into that hell.

When the foster father trailed his runaway to the mother's home, to reclaim his "slave," the man would swear he had never whipped the child.

"That was when I stripped off my shirt and showed my mother the scars from the lashing," this other boy would remember.

Finally, when the man promised to stop the whippings, the mother allowed him to take the boy with him once more. And you may have guessed it, as punishment for running away, here came another cruel beating, the worst of them all. And locked up constantly to prevent a new "escape."

Eventually that child would manage to escape once more, swearing to his mother that if she sent him back he would kill himself. It was only then that the mother found for him a more kind foster home.

Thus a cruelly battered child who eventually became a man, but always living with the memory of the post in the barn, the plow beam, the shocking pain of the leather lash on his back, the wet ashes trickling down his face.

Then it was I, the once "sinner" of the corn field, the boy who suffered his moment of fear at the howls of the coyote, who had his own moment of panic at the sound of ghostly, thudding footsteps in the darkness, would come in time to learn that this other boy had been my own father.

Eventually, in a process that would take many years, a coming of age, of reaching a certain maturity, I would come to my own moments of understanding, and forgiveness.

My father's son!

Epilogue

Now, having come this far, is there anything more to say? Some of you, especially those of you who have read my book, may wonder if I still, in any sense, consider myself a Mennonite. Or feel any cultural ties to the Mennonite community.

Perhaps the best way to answer that question is to say that, in my opinion, no one ever completely escapes from their heritage or the culture into which



In 1945 Menno Duerksen served as a public relations officer for the United Nations (UNRRA). The top photograph shows him on a Jewish training farm where Jewish refugees were being trained for farm work in Palestine (today Israel). The bottom photograph is also on a similar farm for Jewish Displaced Persons in Germany. Duerksen was writing a story about the farms and remarked to the residents that he could milk a cow, and he did. Next the chief of his public relations section told him to slap an UNRRA stencil on anything they took a picture of. So they did, including the cow.

they are born.

As I moved away from Oklahoma and moved out into the secular world, all those things that happened to me when I was a boy, as a teenager, remained a part of my being.

Later, when I decided to write my book, during all the years I had carried it around in my head, unwritten, I knew in my mind that all those things would be a part of that book. Including the struggle for redemption.

When the book was finally written, and published, I suppose I simply assumed that it would be rejected by relatives and friends who had remained a part of the Mennonite religious community.

But I decided, just as a "testing of the waters," as they say, to send a copy of it to one of my cousins at Weatherford, Oklahoma, and with whom I had retained some contacts.

I guess I had to be surprised, then, when she wrote such a friendly and glowing letter, telling me how much she enjoyed it and said she did not feel that I had tried to crucify the Mennonites. She even ordered several copies for other members of her family. I have since heard from them too and they all seem pleased with it.

Then I sent a copy to Robert Kreider, in North Newton, Kansas, with whom I had had some correspondence in regards to Gordon Friesen. Gordon, as some of you will remember, had written a novel, *FLAMETHROWERS*, with a Mennonite setting, back in 1936.

The reaction from Mr. Kreider was a glowing letter, one of the nicest I ever received. I believe that started it. After that the book began to circulate in the Mennonite communities—Kansas, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, California and Canada. I began receiving letters from relatives and strangers, almost all of them positive. Many of them, like Mr. Kreider's, simply glowing.

Even the reviews that have been published in Mennonite publications have been mostly positive.

Even when Marie Wiens reviewed it for the *Mennonite Weekly Review*, she made it clear that some aspects of the book troubled her but she also made it clear that she understood what had happened to me as a boy.

I suppose it is only coincidence that only last week Ms. Wiens reviewed another book, *WHY I AM A MENNONITE*, edited by Harry Loewen and published by Herald Press.

Imagine my surprise to learn, from her review, that some of the writers who contributed to the book were described as non-practicing and non-churchgoing Mennonites.

Which raises the question—can men or women who have cut their ties with the God their fathers taught them about, still be Mennonites?

I won't try to answer that question but I will say that the positive reaction to my book led me to do some new thinking about my own Mennonite heritage.

I subscribed to several Mennonite publications and, in a sense, renewed my ties with Mennonite culture.

Let me simply say there is so much to be admired in the Mennonite world. The doctrine of service to mankind, especially fellow humans in trouble.

The willingness to be such a painful minority in the matter of belief that man must not bear arms against his brothers. The insistence that man must be a moral creature.

Does any of this mean that there is a re-awakening, in any sense, of a faith in the God of the Mennonites, the same God being claimed by so many other churches and faiths?

I won't try to answer that question. I'm not even sure there is an answer.

But a few weeks ago I happened to read a review of a new book of poetry by the great Polish-American poet, Czeslaw Milosz. The review contained some of his poetry and one of these poems simply grabbed my attention.

I won't say that this bit of poetry, entitled *Veni (I came) Creator*, is the

answer to your question, or mine. Perhaps yes, perhaps no. Perhaps only partly an answer. No matter, I will simply give it to you and let you make your own decision—

VENI CREATOR

by

Czeslaw Milosz — 1961

Come, Holy Spirit,
bending or not bending the grasses,
appearing or not above our heads in a
tongue of flame
I am only a man: I need visible signs.
I tire easily, building the stairway of
abstraction.

The Course of Special Needs

by R. de Zeeuw

(From: *Doopsgezind Jaarboekje* 1987 (vol. 81). Published by the *Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit*, Singel 450-454, P.c.: 1017 AV Amsterdam-C. Under editorship of A. J. van der Sluis, J. Wieringa, and M. C. de Wilde-Mulder. Translated by William Keeney. pp. 22-32.)

The Beginnings

Anyone wanting to know the beginnings of "Bijzondere Noden" (Special Needs), which happened already forty years ago, will best turn to the 43rd

volume of the *Doopsgezind Jaarboekje* (Dutch Mennonite Yearbook.) I cite the following from the historical survey put together by H. W. Meihuizen and published on pages nineteen through thirty-one about what has happened in our Brotherhood, both for good and for woe, between 1946 and 1948: "In 1947 the *Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit* established a commission for special, that is, current needs."

Some additional details about the origin of this commission, which a short time later became an independent foundation, can be found from the first

minute books. The needs for which help was asked from the Dutch Brotherhood in the early years after the World War can be divided into three categories:

1. The first was a call made by and for the Mennonite refugees from foreign countries.

2. In our country the previous war had also left behind traces of enduring dislocation, among others, for a great number of children.

3. In different parts of Europe one spoke of acute famine (among others, in Austria and Germany).

The following details are taken from

the Foundation's first minute books which still exist. On March 27, 1947, a meeting took place in the Amsterdam Singel Church—known not only as the local congregation but also as being the national office for all Mennonite congregations in the Netherlands. The meeting's principal purpose can be viewed as the founding assembly of Bijzondere Noden. The background of this assembly came about because of the appeal that was made to the Dutch Mennonites to provide housing, care, and protection on behalf of several hundred Mennonite refugees who came out of Russia. In the short term a solution had to be found for these refugees because of the extremely precarious position in which they found themselves. The problem was indeed solved. A part of these refugees found shelter in Mennonite families, above all in the northern part of the country; a smaller group was housed in a brotherhood house (Fredesheim); a larger group was housed in a large villa especially rented and set up for this purpose in Maartensdijk: Roverestein.

The original meeting to set up Bijzondere Noden on March 27, 1947, included representatives from the Algemene Doopgezind Sociëteit, the just established Gemeenschap voor Doopgezind Broederschapswerk [Fellowship for Mennonite Brotherhood Work] (earlier the Gemeentedagbeweging [Church Renewal Movement] and the Elspeet Union), and the Dutch Doopgezinde Immigration Bureau.

Along with an eye to other requests for help in the social area, it was decided to set up a new Mennonite national organization that was more or less the successor to the 17th and 18th century "Fund for Foreign Needs" ("Fonds voor Buitenlandse Noden"), the name of which would be the "Stichting voor Bijzondere Noden in de Doopgezinde Broederschap en daarbuiten" [The Foundation for Special Needs in the Mennonite Brotherhood and Outside]. The persons who set up the organization saw the concept of brotherhood very broadly, as a world brotherhood. The new foundation began with a certain dynamic. It did not hesitate to take over the debt that already existed prior to March 27, 1947, from the care for and housing of Mennonite refugees from Russia.

No more funds were available from the work of the older Fund for Foreign Needs. This fund was abolished by the

termination of the activities in 1803 because freedom of religion had been gained for all Mennonites in Europe and North America.

No one could have expected that this would ever change again in a negative sense. Therefore it was decided that the existing balance would be divided among the congregations that had offered support. The beginning of Bijzondere Noden in a new style can thus be described with the words: much work, little money.

Early Projects

One may thus call the first project the housing, caring, protection, and further directing of the Roverestein group of Russian Mennonite refugees. For this project a fairly substantial contribution (about 2,000 guilders per month) was necessary. For the safety of these refugees, however, it was desirable that they should leave our land again as speedily as possible and travel to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. No one could, of course, guarantee their safety in the Netherlands.

As the second project the Doopsgezind children's home in Houten can be mentioned. This house offered a refuge for some 30 children of school age from dislocated families. The house was first rented from the former user (Help for Homeless in Amsterdam [Hulp voor Onbehuisden te Amsterdam]) and later bought.

The unique occasion for gathering of food and clothing together with the Mennonite Peace Group (Doopsgezind Vredesgroep) and the sending of this to the cities of Europe where famine still reigned can be mentioned as a third activity. These relief goods were sent first to Vienna and later to Emden and Berlin. The gathering was made possible through the activity of many volunteers. This form of relief work continued for forty years and is presently cared for by the subcommission for practical relief work [Praktische Hulpwerk] which carries on its work in and out of the clothing barracks at Warn. The goods are pressed into bales and sent to Paraguay and other developing countries.

From the beginning period we can also remember receiving and caring for a small group of displaced persons from East Europe. An urgent appeal came from the World Council of Churches (to which the ADS also belonged) through

the Refugee Section to all member churches to help by finding a shelter for a group of refugees from Hungary, Rumania, and Russia. They were difficult to place elsewhere because of their age and partly invalid status. An especially burdensome and expensive condition was also placed by the Dutch Government through its Refugee Administration. Permission to allow these people into the country would only be granted if the churches would assume the responsibility for these displaced persons until their death.

Consultation was taken with the Remonstrant Brotherhood about the housing and care for 15 from this group of displaced persons. A creative solution was found by building a small home for the aged at Schoorl for this purpose. This came to be named the "Van de Waterhuis" for the energetic and creative chairman of Bijzondere Noden.

Further Developments

That "Bijzondere Noden" would quickly become an accepted concept is, according to my thinking, due not only because of the concrete projects which it launched but also because of the manner in which the members of the congregations were involved in a great number of small projects. As an example of this, we can point to the canning jars action. More than 1000 canning jars were bought by Bijzondere Noden with the intention that they would be filled by the members in the rural areas and be returned with new contents to meet various needs, for example for the Children's Home at Houten.

I can mention as another example the transport of children, first over short distances, but later on a larger scale. As a consequence of the bombing during the previous world war and the changing of borders thereafter, the condition of Doopsgezinden (Mennonites) in Germany and Poland was changed. West Germany had more refugee Mennonites than non-refugees. The proportion was even as great as three to one.

Bijzondere Noden in cooperation with the German Mennonite relief organization organized a children's transport for these refugee children. I cite from the annual report of Bijzondere Noden for the year 1950 the following:

There were three children transports this year, the first in North Holland, the sec-

ond in Friesland, the last in Groningen. In general they have all proceeded very well. About 100 children were in the Netherlands for three months for recuperation. The chairman pointed to the great contribution which the temporary foster parents had offered. Excluding the liberal contribution of clothing, these persons made a contribution of 100 guilders per child.

The transport of children was expanded to a broader interchurch relationship in 1954.

Flood Relief

The readiness to help was also very clear when the need became visible in the time of the flood (February, 1953). Many responded to the call to offer a helping hand to the victims of this disaster on the South Holland and Zeeuws islands. Members of sister circles formed clean-up teams to clean up and make livable the houses that were uninhabitable because of the water and silt on the island of Goeree-Overflakkee.

Others volunteered to assist in the rebuilding of barns for some very badly affected members of the Ouddorp congregation. The barns had been swept away by the water in the fatal night of the flood. Later this sort of relief work was done on the island with the most victims, Schouwen-Duiveland. Volunteers reported not only from our own land and brotherhood for the Mennonite relief work in the disaster area but the work could also be carried out thanks to the assistance from foreign lands.

Financing the Work

The establishment of the Mennonite relief work usually had to be administered out of current giving. Bijzondere Noden began in 1947 with a debt. The first Brotherhood collection on Pentecost raised 29,899.30 guilders. In the following years the Pentecost collection would remain the main financial basis for the relief projects within and outside the country. Certainly a shift in the designation of the money coming in could be observed: more for projects in foreign countries, above all in the so-called third world countries, and less in our own country.

The Pentecost action continued in our Brotherhood for about thirty years, and the work of the Commission Practical Relief Work has shown a similar continuity. Each year help for private persons was also undertaken as a part of

the program.

A Change in Emphasis

A survey of projects in foreign countries, however, makes visible a substantial change. Until 1965 the action radius remained limited to Europe with an emphasis on refugee help in the broadest possible sense, that is, not only the struggle against hunger, poverty and lack of housing but also structural help over a longer term.

In this phase the most important support was to Mennoheim in Berlin for East-West relationships and for building up the congregation. The participation of Bijzondere Noden consisted not only in finances but also in staff. One of our first volunteers in foreign countries was active in Berlin. Later a Dutch social worker committed a number of years to bring together the scattered Mennonite refugees from many parts of the world and among others the erection of one of the largest congregations in Germany: Bechterdissen (by Bielefeld). A church and a fellowship house was built there, along with other things. Almost all of the people who lived in this place were once or even often driven from house and hearth. They named a street in a new residential area for the secretary of Bijzondere Noden, C. H. Blaauw.

In the years 1966-1969 the first contact was established with Mennonites who before and also after World War II migrated to South America and found a place of refuge there, among others, in the Chaco of Paraguay, because no other place was available for them elsewhere. Help was also offered there in money as well as with the sending of volunteers.

Volunteers

In many countries volunteers were and are still active. One can mention in this regard the Middle East, Brazil, Paraguay, Guatemala, Italy, Botswana, Chad, Zaire, and Portugal.

The volunteers contributed their talents in the areas of education, medical care, social-technical development, sometimes also in very specialized forms, such as a tree school for Indians or for veterinary arts. A careful preparation, including mentally, was demanded for all of them in order to be able to deal with the shock which must be accepted in departing from this part

of the world and transferring to primitive lands and to a totally different culture.

A careful preparation for sending of qualified volunteers required a cooperative work in one's own country with other organizations, such as Service Across Borders (Dienst over Grenzen).

The desire to cooperate also grew in foreign countries, above all by the Mennonites in the Federal Republic of Germany. So after some searching an organization was started. It can be compared with the M.C.C. (Mennonite Central Committee), the service organization of the North American Mennonites. An European center for relief work was established, first in Frankfurt, later at Weierhof (Pfalz), and in Neuwied (on the Rhine). Its name is I.M.O. (Internationale Mennonitische Organization für Hilfswerk). The Dutch made an important contribution both in the administration and in the relief work that has taken place, primarily in the form of cooperative development work.

Whoever has been involved in doing this relief work has also undergone a change. To describe this is not simple. I think of the relativizing of one's own world, but also of the enlarging of the scope and extension of one's perspective. One finds oneself bound in solidarity with the people who are poor by chance and threatened regularly with defeat, destruction, and death. The reports of volunteers continue to be a high point at the annual conferences of Bijzondere Noden. From these reports the contact persons from the congregations come to realize the value of relief most clearly.

Sometimes the volunteer's experiences shock and sometimes disappoint them. They have counted on a very rapid improvement between the developed and undeveloped parts of the inhabited world. Relief work often also means waiving of an expectation for a clear result, and having patience and endurance, with readiness to participate in the change process. Whoever has participated in the forty years of Mennonite relief work cannot be content but certainly thankful and hopeful with regard to the progress of the work.

Mennonites in the Soviet Union

The concern for the last remaining Mennonites in the Soviet Union has taken a special place in the last twenty years. Although exact numbers are not

available because of the lack of direct contact and the absence of any registration, about 50,000 still remain out of the 200,000 Mennonites living in the Ukraine and elsewhere in the first decade of this century. More than ever they are scattered as a group and have become divided. Still it appears from time to time that they are still there and desire in large measure to travel elsewhere.

As a symptom of the general relaxation in East-West relationships there are some possibilities for that. Since 1975 a departure from Russia is no longer forbidden legally. As a result a stream of migrants and others seeking asylum has come about, which has led to more than 12,000 Mennonites migrating to the Federal Republic of Germany. Bijzondere Noden was involved in providing help for these spiritually related people. Cooperative efforts were undertaken with other relief organizations and the Red Cross to receive this group who are called "Umsiedler" (Resettled). Extra financial support was extended by congregations in the Netherlands to make possible improved contact with those who have departed from the U.S.S.R., but also with the Mennonites who have remained there.

The support for the "Umsiedlers" consists of information with regard to housing, work, and education possibilities in the new land, and especially with regard to contact with fellow believers. More than 20 new Mennonite congregations have already been formed and churches built. Several are very large, such as Bechterdissen, Bielefeld, and Espelkamp.

The Adoption Program

The adoption program must be mentioned as a more or less independent part of the work of Bijzondere Noden. This program is connected primarily with the relief work projects in a number of developing lands with which contact has been maintained for many years already. This has meant that the costs of administering the program can be very limited. A high percentage of the contributions which are given for this purpose (for example, by private persons, congregations, or circles) can go for the welfare of the adopted children themselves.

A stipend of 400 guilders per child per year can be designated for education, school needs, and clothing. A considerably higher contribution is necessary for older children who must follow advanced education. In a survey of the activities of Bijzondere Noden in the most recent years, the following details are reported about the adoption program:

Number of adopted children 201.
Total contributions received 78,000 guilders.

In certain respects cooperation for this purpose is maintained with Mennonite relief work organizations in foreign lands.

Interchurch Activities

For this survey of forty years of relief work of the Mennonites in the Netherlands, one may not ignore the extensive cooperative work with other church organizations, in our own brotherhood

as well as in interchurch and ecumenical connections. In this regard a high point was reached in 1969 and 1972 at the time of both great actions under the name "Come over the Bridge" (Kom over de Brug). On a smaller scale, an organization was formed in the most recent years for cooperation among our congregations for the work in the world in the areas of missions, relief, peace, and development.

Conclusion

This course of forty years of Mennonite relief work has many sides which still appeal to our congregations and their members. Most important of all, the number of persons making themselves available to invest their time for several years as volunteers for relief work has increased. It has also become clear that helping is a very complex affair.

Relief work may have earned some goodwill in our own circles; in general it is still too much of an unknown concept. No Dutch dictionary, even the well-known Van Dale, reports and clarifies this word. Whoever would seek clarification of this word will have to open the dictionary of the secret biblical languages and must plunge into the deeper significance of concepts such as righteousness, mercy, reconciliation, and liberation. His or her faith shall continue to be inspired through that which Jesus has set forth in parables such as the Prodigal Son and the Merciful Samaritan, for that is the background of the Mennonite relief work.

Radical Reformation and Mennonite Bibliography, 1988

by Marilyn Loganbill

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Book Reviews

Albert N. Keim and Grant M. Stoltzfus, *The Politics of Conscience: The Historic Peace Churches and America at War, 1917-1955*. Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1988. Pp. 176. (\$14.95—paperback)

Keim and Stoltzfus's *The Politics of Conscience* is an excellent summary of the relations between the historic peace churches and the federal government over the issue of conscientious objection to military service during the first half of the twentieth century. It is a short, well-focused piece, interesting and readable, and easily accessible to a general audience.

The book sets the stage for its subject matter by stressing the peculiar nature of conscientious objection in the United States: namely, that it is not a right of citizenship enshrined in the Constitution, but a privilege that Congress can extend or deny at will, and thus a matter which must be negotiated anew in every time of war or military conscription. After a brief excursus describing the three peace churches and tracing the history of conscientious objection in the United States up to 1917, Keim and Stoltzfus embark on their main project of showing how the legal provisions for conscientious objection were negotiated from World War I through the Korean conflict. Here Keim and Stoltzfus are at their best: they resist the temptation to oversimplify or idealize the relationships between the historic peace churches and the government or among the peace churches themselves. The story of the legislative accommodation to conscientious objection is painted in all its historical embeddedness; the visionary and principled aspects of the struggle to secure adequate CO provision are treated side-by-side with the particularistic and sometimes petty concerns of various government and church organizations and individuals. This is especially true of the account given of historic peace church collaboration. The unique character of each of the three peace churches comes to life in this book and their points of consensus and conflict become newly comprehensible.

The primary significance of *The Politics of Conscience* is that it continually calls attention to the reasons why Congress and Selective Service were motivated to arrive at conscientious objector provisions which were mutually satisfactory to them and to the peace churches. This is a point frequently neglected by the peace churches, who

tended—especially during the two world wars—to regard themselves as politically powerless, as constantly in the position of asking favors from their government and hoping for benevolent consideration. Keim and Stoltzfus correct this error by stressing the ways in which COs presented a problem to the government, the manner in which they acted as a wrench in the works of efficient military conscription, whether willingly or unwillingly. Keim and Stoltzfus describe this as “the conscientious objector nuisance factor” and see it as the crack in the door that allowed the historic peace churches to lobby successfully for alternative service. Unfortunately, Keim and Stoltzfus themselves seem to miss the importance of the conscientious objector nuisance factor when they conclude in their final paragraph that CO provisions were a victory of moral and religious conviction on the part of churches which “had no political leverage.”

Though the peace churches were for a variety of reasons disinclined to recognize their situation as one of political leverage, they nevertheless possessed this leverage, and will again the next time the government institutes military conscription. How the peace churches and sympathetic parties choose to use this leverage is a matter of both moral and practical import. It is clear from the changes that Keim and Stoltzfus document in peace church attitudes toward alternative service during the period of their study that the fragile consensus between the churches and Selective Service reached just prior to World War II broke down in practice and will likely never be resurrected in the same form. The tendency to conciliate, to find ways to reduce the nuisance factor in hopes of winning positive consideration from the government has frequently given way to a policy of aggravating the nuisance factor in an effort to frustrate the government's attempt to successfully institute military conscription (though there are still major segments of the peace church constituency who favor conciliation along the lines of the earlier model).

The churches are perhaps more divided today in their assessment of the appropriate response to conscription than they were during the two world wars, and they have been joined by numerous other groups, both religious and non-religious, who also have a stake in establishing adequate CO provisions. It would be well then to take account of the lessons that earlier

negotiations with the government over the issue of conscientious objection can teach us. In *The Politics of Conscience*, Keim and Stoltzfus have given us a valuable resource for learning these lessons, for coming to understand how historical decisions about conscientious objection have been reached, about the forces that operate when a group tries to secure legislative provisions from the government, and about all the historical contingencies which can interrupt even the most careful and coherent plans.

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Daniel Liechty, *Andreas Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists: An Early Reformation Episode in East Central Europe*. Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1988. Pp. 168. (\$29.95)

Daniel Liechty's *Andreas Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists* is the latest volume in the Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History series. Liechty's book is an important contribution to Anabaptist research for a number of reasons. First, it points to the Anabaptist movement as the forerunner of Sabbatarianism. In other words, Sabbatarian theology is grounded in Anabaptist theology. Second, Liechty grounds Sabbatarian theology in the “restitution” theme of the Radical Reformation; the author hopes that “this study of Andreas Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists should obligate the historian to develop a more nuanced mode of restitution” (p. 110). Third, *Andreas Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists* should contribute to the bettering of Jewish-Christian relations through highlighting those figures and movements in church history that were opposed to Christian anti-Judaism. Finally, Liechty's book is the first comprehensive biography of Andreas Fischer. Liechty calls his study “an experiment in biography” (p. 22). In this reviewer's opinion Liechty's research is a solid, informative and extremely well-documented account of Andreas Fischer's life and his Sabbatarian theology.

Liechty considers first the life of Andreas Fischer. Admitting the limited number of primary and secondary sources, Liechty embarks on a careful and critical analysis of evidence concerning the life of Fischer. Along the way, he concludes that Fischer was born around 1480 in the Bohemian town

of Luttau (Lutova); that he studied at the University of Vienna; that he was *not* a priest; that he *was* raised in the South German-Austrian Anabaptist circles; that through Oswald Glaidt he was familiar with (and influenced by?) the teaching of Hans Hut; that Sabbatarian ideas came to Fischer from Glaidt; that Fischer's Sabbatarian congregation in Liegnitz (Legnica) moved away from the enthusiast and chiliast overtones of Glaidt; that Fischer was a committed Sabbatarian in Silesia but he *did not* stress that point in his work in Slovakia; that from 1529 he was known to the Hutterites as the leader of the Sabbatarians; that from 1532 Fischer assumed a position of leadership from the *Schwertler* faction of the Moravian Anabaptists; and that he was murdered in 1540 while on a missionary trip in Slovakia.

Liechty then turns to a systematic summary of Fischer's teaching. By working from the limited number of primary sources, all hostile to Fischer, Liechty was able to reconstruct Fischer's views on a number of issues. Fischer's Sabbatarianism, argued Liechty, "is nothing other than restitutionism in a form more radical than is usually the case" (p. 85). Fischer, like many other Anabaptists, agreed that the conversion of Constantine was a devastating turn for the church but points to the papacy of Victor I (d. 198) as the time of the fall of the Church. Fischer argued that the fall of the Church began at the point where it *consciously* ceased to teach the Decalogue. Fischer believed that God wills that people follow the Law; he rejected the idea that Christ had abolished the Law. Rather, Christ works in the heart of the believer the *desire* to keep God's law. Liechty points out that Fischer did teach some form of perfectionism; that he held to the Bible as the *only* true guide to faith and practice in the Church; that he accepted Hut's view on baptism; that he was a "peaceful" but not a pacifistic Anabaptist; that Fischer taught communism but very distinct from Hutterian practice; that he was opposed to polygamy; and that he "was not prone to chiliastic formulas and enthusiasms" (p. 101). Finally, Liechty points to the core of the Sabbatarian teaching of Fischer: the fall of the Church happened when the continuity was broken between the Church and Judaism. Consequently, the shift from Sabbath to Sunday happened when the split between the *ecclesia* and the *synagogue* took

place. Fischer insisted that salvation had come through the Jews and that both Christians and Jews worship "the same God, the one true God" (p. 105).

Andreas Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists is a well researched and written book. An extensive bibliography that includes Hungarian and Slovakian titles is a testimony to Liechty's superb use of the primary and secondary sources available to him. A great plus of this publication is its ability to meet the scholarly expectation without neglecting the needs of the general audience. Liechty must be congratulated for a great contribution to Anabaptist history and theology with this small book.

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John P. Dyck, ed., *Troubles and Triumphs, 1914-1924: Excerpts from the Diary of Peter J. Dyck*. Springstein, Manitoba: privately published, 1981. Pp. 259. (\$8.00 Canadian—paperback)

Olga Remple, *Siberian Diary of Aron P. Toews*. Edited by Lawrence Klippenstein. Trans. by Esther Klaassen Bergen. Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1984. Pp. 177. (\$10.95 Canadian—paperback)

People need to make sense of their lives; they need to attach meaning to those events which figure importantly in their lives. One such category of events is tragedy and it affects people in a variety of ways.

Russian Mennonites experienced much suffering and tragedy during the Civil War period 1918-24 and then during the years of Stalinist rule in the Soviet Union. Fortunately, a number of excellent accounts of this period are now in print so it is possible for the reading public to gain a deeper understanding of how tragedy affects human lives and the ability of people to endure suffering and still remain human. In the diaries of Peter J. Dyck and Aron P. Toews we have two quite different approaches to tragedy.

Peter J. Dyck kept his diary *Troubles and Triumphs* from the beginning of World War I to his emigration from the Soviet Union in 1924. The purpose of publishing the diary, his editor and son John P. Dyck explains, is firstly to set the record straight: the Mennonites of Russia did not "bring this terrible situation upon themselves," nor were they all rich, as some critics have suggested,

and secondly, to portray "village life as it took place from day to day" (Preface). The diary is written from the perspective of a resident and local Mennonite administrator in the village of Ladekopp in the Molotschna Colony. It contains personal impressions, and eyewitness accounts of the turmoil and sufferings experienced during this time by his friends and neighbors and detailed information about local social and economic conditions during this period of Soviet history.

The implied point of the diary is to show the error of those critics who believe that Russian Mennonites compromised their faith and culture during the revolutionary period. The diary shows that when survival is at stake, the meaner characteristics in people become more evident. Dyck writes in 1922: "Famine does not improve the disposition of people . . . Our people also who enjoy higher standards of living and, who think they are superior to the Russians, are becoming corrupted and depraved" (p. 193). Desperation induced people to commit and condone acts which violated their moral sensibilities.

The *Siberian Diary of Aron P. Toews*, on the other hand, captures the acute inner turmoil, suffering and work of one of the Mennonite church elders in the colony of Khortitza during the years of religious repression in Soviet Russia. While Dyck's book presents snapshot portraits of events and their impact on people, Remple, in her biography, sets the historical context of her father's life in Russia. She, moreover, tries to make sense of a question which Dyck asks but never answers directly: What lesson was the Lord teaching us in Russia, during this period of lawlessness and persecution? How can this experience enrich our Christian lives?

To this end, the objective of the Remple book is to give successive generations insight into the "faith and lifestyle of our forefathers" (p. x). She is convinced that "in order to understand ourselves as Mennonites among fellow Mennonites, we must know our origins." The story of her father goes some distance in that direction. In contrast to Peter J. Dyck, whose purpose was to show both the good and the bad side of human life, Remple writes a spiritual biography which shows how the faith and witness of one man, her father, can be an inspiration and guide for future generations of young people.

Toews is more willing than Dyck to recognize the culpability of Mennonites in their own misfortunes. There is evident in his diary entries a deep pastoral love for the church and for Toews' family. Due to his exile 1936-1937, spiritual guidance becomes the dominant theme in his writings.

With respect to both the diaries of Peter J. Dyck and Aron Toews, faith and anguish are constant bedfellows. Writing at the height of the Civil War (8-5-1919) Dyck expresses the anguish felt by all caught up in the vortex of revolution: "The arrests are beginning once again. Oh God, what will become of us? What has become of justice? It drives one insane to see all the things that are happening" (p. 75). Yet only three days later his entry reads: "After Vesper another service took place at the church, with a report on the tent mission: H. Enns and a Latvian who also works in the mission spoke. It was a momentous meeting! The Lord will bless this mission work" (p. 75). The frequent expressions of helplessness and critical comment (evidence of the daily uncertainty which Dyck and others lived with) is offset by numerous references to God's faithfulness and love.

This record of Dyck's emotional roller coaster ride gives the book a richness and integrity often lacking in sanitized accounts like that of Olga Remple. Because Remple is certain we need good examples from the "past" for the youth to follow, the picture of her father takes on an air of unreality. No differences of opinion about important matters are mentioned, no weaknesses of character are revealed. Dyck, on the other hand, sees the complexity of the situation facing the Mennonites in the Ukraine. He captures the mood of the hour, of the day. His own misgivings and attitudes are freely shared.

Toews is equally concerned about the moral degradation of the Mennonites. His criticisms, however, are couched in spiritual admonition. In answer to the question "Why is it thus?", Toews responds with Psalm 4: "But know that the Lord leads the godly marvelously" (p. 117). There is no doubt in his mind, as there is in Dyck's, that suffering has a good purpose.

Dyck's world is very much a Mennonite world, that is, he portrays events and life from a Mennonite perspective. Defensive of the Mennonite past, he is critical of the policies enacted against Mennonites by the various regimes

which held power during the period 1914-1924. While the political conflict between various contending powers was costly in terms of human lives, the economy of the Mennonite colonies was crippled by the conflicting and ever-changing policies of successive regional governments. In contrast, Toews ignores the economic deprivation, concentrating on the spiritual decline of his people. In his view, "daily difficulties, troubles, sickness, crosses and sufferings about which so many of us complain, are often our redemption" (p. 118).

What emerges from these two diaries are two contrasting interpretations of how we should understand tragedy. Dyck states that tragedy has a mixed influence on life, bringing to light both the good and the bad in humans which has always been there. Remple shows that it is possible for people to grow and develop as a result of tragedy. Her book includes numerous pictures of individuals and families which Aron Toews knew and that lends the book a very personal touch. I found both books interesting and recommend them to others.

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BOOK NOTES

Lawrence Klippenstein, Margaret Franz, and Adolf Ens, eds., *Resources for Canadian Mennonite Studies: An Inventory and Guide to Archival Holdings at the Mennonite Heritage Centre*. Winnipeg: Mennonite Heritage Centre, 1988. Pp. 136. (\$7.50 Canadian—paperback)

This new guide to the holdings of the Mennonite Heritage Centre (located on the campus of Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg) is a useful contribution to research in Mennonite history. Only a few Mennonite archives have published guides to their holdings, and even fewer have produced such a professional-looking publication. Mennonite Heritage Centre is to be commended for making its collections more accessible in this way and bringing them to the attention of amateur and professional researchers alike.

In addition to an overview of the Centre's history, programs, and collections,

the guide includes a detailed description of 26 archival and manuscript collections and notes on 78 more. The Centre holds several large collections of key importance to North American and also Russian Mennonite history. One could question the value of some of the detailed descriptions (G. G. Epp, for example) and wish for more than a short note on some others (Gerhard Lohrenz, for example). In general, the scope and content descriptions provided in this publication are quite precise and will be a great help for researchers.

Copies of the *Inventory* are available from the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4.

Michael M. Miller, compiler, *Researching the Germans from Russia*. Fargo, North Dakota: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1987. Pp. 224.

Michael M. Miller has compiled an annotated bibliography of the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University Library (Fargo). The Institute contains over 1000 manuscript collections, 20,000 photographs, and 4000 books. The bibliography includes an historical sketch and chronology for the Germans from Russia. There are helpful annotations for over 800 items including atlases, bibliographies, family histories, newspapers, periodicals, books on specific ethnic groups, and other special topics.

The contents of the volumes of the *Heimatsbuch der Deutschen aus Russland*, compiled by Karl Stumpp and Joseph Schnurr, are described in detail. In Section II numerous church, community, and family histories are listed, but not indexed or annotated. The three concluding indexes provide useful access through authors, other names, titles, subjects, and colonies/districts. While the volume is thorough and attractive and contains references to many materials related to Mennonite Germans from Russia, it was disappointing not to find *Mennonite Life* among the periodical holdings of the Institute. The inclusion of only seven manuscript collections in this bibliography is a more serious deficiency, and a second volume with this information would be a welcome supplement. Nevertheless, this guide is an indispensable aid to those wishing to use the Institute's resources.

