

MIENNONITE LIFE

MARCH 1989



In this Issue

Mennonite Life begins its forty-fourth year with another expanded issue, our fourth in the last two years. Marlin Adrian presents further insights into General Conference missions among native Americans during the last quarter of the nineteenth century (see the September 1988 issue for his analysis of the religious paradigms and motivations of missions). This issue focuses on the religious beliefs of native Americans and their persistence. The July issue will continue his look at the reaction of the Mennonite missionaries to these beliefs.

This issue also features two 1988 Social Science Seminar papers by Bethel College history majors. Jeff Steely examines the fundamentalism of C. H. Suckau and Kristine Flaming studies early Mennonite homes in Kansas through the example of the Voth/Unruh/Fast house, now located at the Kauffman Museum. These papers tied for second place in the John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest of the Mennonite Historical Association and tied for first place in the Mennonite Contributions Contest of Bethel College.

J. Denny Weaver, Professor of Religion at Bluffton College, presents his observations on the relationship between peace theology and the nature of religion. The essay was presented as a convocation address at Bethel College and emphasizes the importance of the underlying theories of religion.

The final article in this issue illustrates the fire which destroyed the Eden Mennonite Church building in January, 1988, and describes the rebuilding process. (The experience should serve as another reminder to congregations and individuals who do not have copies of their vital records stored in a second location). The issue concludes with some poetry provided by Elmer Suderman of Gustavus Adolphus College and a fascinating photograph and family portrait presented by Marjorie Jantzen.

David A. Haury

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Editor

David A. Haury

Book Review Editor

John D. Thiesen

Editorial Assistant

Barbara Thiesen

Circulation Manager

Marilyn Loganbill

Cover

Photograph of a painting by Mary I. Wright, based on James Mooney's photographs of the Ghost Dance taken in 1893.

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General Conference Mennonite Missions and Native American Religions (Part 1)

by Marlin Adrian

Mennonite missionaries faced a variety of Native American religious beliefs on the mission fields in Oklahoma, Arizona, and Montana, including the Sun Dance, the Ghost Dance, Peyotism, and Hopi ceremonialism. Mennonite missionaries, however, showed little interest in the systematic study of Indian religions during the first ten years of the mission. Busy with school and farm work, missionaries struggled to learn the native language, but considered the religious vocabulary of the Indians to be too crude to be of consequence in their efforts to present Christianity in the vernacular. Missionaries believed that a superficial examination was sufficient to understand the "simple," "childish," and "foolish" superstitions of the Indians.

It was the sheer persistency of native religions that forced Mennonite missionaries to take a closer look. Missionaries began to study the spiritual vocabulary of the Indians in order to better combat the influence of traditional religions. Mennonite missionaries did not study native religious beliefs initially out of intellectual curiosity, but in order to destroy native religions and channel Indian spirituality into an acceptable form of Christianity.

When H. R. Voth began to work among the Arapaho and Cheyenne in 1882, he believed that the Indians would readily forsake their superstitious beliefs and embrace Christianity. Three short years later he had already accepted that the changes would be more gradual. He reported: "We hope and know that the regenerating power of the Gospel will . . . undermine the heathenish customs, and the superstitions of this people."¹

Mennonites first encountered native religion when Samuel Haury spent three

days attending an Arapaho Sun Dance in 1877. He found the religious beliefs and practices of the Arapaho as distasteful as the buffalo meat he was served for breakfast ("The Indians seemed to relish every bit of that meat, but I simply could not swallow it"), observing that "the performances of the Indians in connection with their religion are definitely dismal and unsatisfying, as are those of all heathen."

Haury experienced the Sun Dance as a profoundly alien event, and, while his emotional reaction fluctuated between revulsion and fascination, he struggled to place the Sun Dance within his own intellectual framework. Missionary religion contained a place for the "heathen" religions, and Haury pared his observations to fit the Sun Dance into this niche. First, Haury offered his readers a capsule interpretation of Arapaho beliefs which represented native spirituality as a naive materialism.

They (the Indians) believe in many good and bad spirits, which have a great influence on people. Indeed, (they believe that) people are ruled by these spirits. These spirits direct their (the Indians') decision-making, and business matters. The great good spirit sends the people everything that is good and essential in the form of health, peace, fruitfulness, and happiness . . . (and) evil spirits are responsible for all evil—such as sickness, war, hunger, and suffering. Therefore, the Indians' entire religious system centers around the one great ambition—to call on the good spirit for help in appeasing the evil spirits.²

Haury belittled the ritual aspects of the Sun Dance by labelling the actions of the shaman (*Zauberer*, literally "magician" or "sorcerer") "hocus pocus," a term commonly used by Mennonites of this period to describe the rituals of the Catholic church. And yet, Haury described in precise detail

the erection of the medicine lodge and the dancing and fasting of the participants. He based his speculations concerning the esoteric meaning of these ritual actions on his own soteriological beliefs. The Arapaho, according to Haury, felt their need for the God of Christianity and the forgiveness for sin, but satanic forces misled them into meaningless worship.

Three times 24 hours those men ate and drank nothing, and endured great self-inflicted pain. And for what purpose? Because within their souls there is an unrecognizable sense of sinfulness and an undefined longing for salvation and peace. But, as Paul writes about the Corinthians, the offerings they were making to the gods were actually made to devils. Likewise, these poor Indians are serving Satan with all their self-inflicted pain.³

The religious paradigms which emerged in the ritual of the Sun Dance, however, retained such power, even when filtered through his obvious religious and cultural bias, that Haury could not resist mentioning the suffering of Jesus on the cross. The suffering and "self-torture" of those Indians who participated in the climactic stage of the Sun Dance triggered in the mind of Haury an association of those Indians with the self-sacrifice of Christ.

At the same time, I feel a deep thankfulness for the great love, with which my Lord sacrificed himself on the cross at Golgotha, to draw me to Himself. We know that He also shed his lifeblood for these poor Indians as well. Oh may that day come when the light of the Gospel will illuminate the hearts of the benighted Heathen.⁴

Scholars for the most part agree on the prominence and provenance of the Sun Dance in the culture of the Plains Indians. Sam Gill notes that the Sun Dance had "established itself as a tradition rooted in the primordial past," but

acknowledges that the particular form which Europeans such as Haury witnessed could only have developed since Europeans had introduced the horse.⁵ Ruth Underhill regards the Sun Dance as, "in its complete form," a relatively new ceremony "composed of ancient elements." Underhill points out that "the self-torture that has made the occasion famous—or notorious—was incidental," and that the "essential feature of the ceremony was a prolonged dance."⁶

Even the prolonged dance, during which the participants fasted and gazed steadily at some holy object on a pole or directly into the sun, highlighted the prominence of the concept of suffering in the religious culture of the Arapaho and Cheyenne. Individuals chose to suffer for the general welfare of the tribe, so that rain would come, vegetation would flourish, and the buffalo would be plentiful.

Peter Powell, director of American Indian work for the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago, emphasizes the connections between Christianity and the religions of the plains Indians in his study of the religious beliefs and practices of the Northern Cheyenne. For Powell, the Sun Dance represents the strongest link between these two religious traditions. This link is the belief that a "man, through the sacrifice of himself and his body, brings blessing and renewal to his tribe and to all creation."

Traditionally, the Cheyennes and the Tetons have considered such a sacrifice, as offered in the Medicine lodge, to be the highest means whereby new life may be brought to the tribe and to the world.

These Cheyenne and Sioux concepts may be construed as the closest of analogies to the great central fact of the Church's life and worship. For it was the offering of one man, Jesus Christ, that brought blessing, peace, and new life, first to his own people, the Jews, and then to all the world.⁷

Although the pietistic and evolutionary perspectives which Powell interjects into his analysis are of dubious value, a paradigmatic association clearly exists between Native American and Christian religious traditions. Underhill



makes the observation that even the more strenuous ordeal which a few participants of the Sun Dance endured (the cutting of the pectoral area and the insertion of pins attached by lines to the top of the sun pole) "was probably no worse than the torture inflicted on themselves by medieval monks."⁸

Considering the prominence of suffering and sacrifice in Mennonite piety, it would be surprising to find Mennonite missionaries unmoved by their observation of the Sun Dance. However, if the Mennonite missionaries consciously recognized the affinity between Mennonite piety and Indian piety, they did not consider the similarities to be serious or significant. Haury responded emotionally to the paradigmatic association, but intellectually he maintained his distance. He admitted that he had not seen and heard everything that went on at this festival, but he had seen and heard enough to be "moved deeply by this heathenish superstition that keeps this poor people in the hands of Satan."

Mennonite missionaries argued that the effects of this satanic influence could be most clearly seen in the deplorable conditions of the Indians' physical life. Missionaries claimed that their objections to native religions grew out of the negative impact of these religions on both the present and future conditions of the Indians. Traditional

religions, according to the missionaries, were not only responsible for the squalid and depressing state of Indian life, but continued loyalty to these practices would crush any attempts by Indians to rise out of this deplorable situation.

In 1886 an Indian came to H. R. Voth at his mission house in Darlington and requested permission to gather stones near the mission. Voth gave his consent, but, when he realized that the stones were to be used in the creation of a "sweat house," he forbade the Indian to take with him the wheelbarrow of stones he had gathered. Voth assured the Indian gathering stones that these spiritual activities of the Indians had a dire impact on their physical condition. Through an interpreter, he "told the man in strong terms how the Indians themselves, or rather their foolish customs were to a great extent to blame for their wretched conditions."⁹

Voth believed that the treatment of sick Indians by the use of the sweat lodge had directly contributed to their deaths, and later reported just such a case.

Not long ago an Arapahoe, one of the strongest men in that tribe, got sick with inflammation of the lungs. At first he listened to our advice and took the proper medicine for that disease. We were in hope that he would recover again. As

soon as their medicine man saw that he was getting better they threw away the medicine that might have cured him and applied their own medicine so as to credit themselves for making him well again. They kept the air in the room as impure as possible, they made great noise with their medicine bells and singing their medicine songs at his bed, they brought the patient in a sweat-house (sic) and in fact killed him within a few days.¹⁰

The role of medicine and the treatment of the sick underscored the inseparability of spiritual and physical concerns in missionary relations with the natives. A. S. Voth, the superintendent of the Mennonite mission school at Cantonment in 1888, believed that the intransigence of the Indians on the issue of religious practices grew out of the "nature" of the Indians.

It lies in the nature of an Indian not to give up something which he claims as his, unless forced to do so. God however does not force anyone to repent and accept the offer of salvation. We must by our own free will feel the desire to be saved or else we shall be lost.

Such is the Indian! Tell him that his medicine is of no value, and he wraps his blanket closely around him and looks downward. Tell him he shall go to work and he will smile at you.¹¹

As Native Americans experienced increasing confinement in Indian Territory, the Sun Dance became one ceremony connected to an array of "medicine dances," which functioned much as Mennonite festivals did during this same period in frontier America. With the end of the buffalo hunt, many Indians turned to these dances because they promoted a sense of community among the various bands and tribes in a situation where traditional social structures were crumbling. Held several times during the year, these medicine dances became a constant irritant to the missionaries. Participants would travel considerable distances to attend, and therefore would not be available for missionary services. Missionaries involved in the Mennonite schools reported that many of the children did their best to escape school to join the adults.

Far from dying out, these ceremonial occasions increased in the summer of 1888. H. R. Voth's report for the quarter ending with September of 1888 showed the new superintendent of the mission attempting to put as good a face as possible on the persistence of native religions.

Upon my return from Kansas (July 1888), the Cheyennes just ended their

"medicine" feast, while the Arapahoes were making preparations to celebrate theirs. It is quite a while since the Arapahoes celebrated their annual medicine feast with so much earnestness and persistency, and with as many dancers as this year. It appeared as if they would with all their energy and tenacity cling to their old religion, and induce their children to the same. The chief cause of this may be the fact that the Indians see that "old things" are more and more passing away, and that a new day is dawning for them.¹²

Reports from the Mennonite missionaries between 1888 and 1890 repeatedly referred to changes and movement concerning Native American religious life. Missionaries saw the signs of native unrest as a positive influence of their mission work. This positive effect manifested itself in June of 1888 when Mennonites baptized their first native, Maggie Leonard, a young Arapaho woman. Likewise, missionary J. J. Kliever was encouraged in December of 1889, when local Indians approached him about the possibility of holding a Christmas festival and even offered to assist him in building a tent for the occasion.¹³

Mennonite interest in Indian religious beliefs became markedly more serious after 1889. The unlikely source of this interest was a new missionary, Daniel B. Hirschler. Hirschler had served for a short period in 1882 as the superintendent of the government school at Darlington. At this time he observed Little Raven, an Arapaho medicine man, "making medicine" over a woman and was struck by, what was to Hirschler, a novel idea.

He took a bit of this mixture of medicine, or whatever it was, between thumb and the index finger of his right hand, and dropped it on the cartilage of her right ear. Then he blew on it and put some on the thumb of her right hand, blew on it, and finally he put some of it on the big toe of her right foot and blew on it. The woman stood up, took the bundle of herbs that lay close to her and went out. Like a bolt of lightning, the thought entered my mind that this ceremony was similar to the one Moses performed with his brother Aaron and his sons. That was when they were inducted into the priesthood. The only differences was that Moses used blood to touch the designated places. Just then the thought came to me: "Could these Indians be Jews?"¹⁴

By the time Hirschler returned to Indian Territory and became the missionary at Cantonment on July 18, 1889, he had become convinced that the Indians were indeed a "lost" tribe of Jews. His four-part report, published during June

and July of 1890, related a series of interviews, conducted both in his office and in the homes of his informants, during which members of several tribes told Hirschler ancient Indian tales which corresponded almost exactly with stories from the Old and New Testaments.

These stories centered around a tribal ancestor named Mozeto or Mozeoh (whom Hirschler believed to be Moses), and told of him killing another man, calling plagues upon the people who held the Indians' ancestors captive, crossing the Red Sea and drowning the enemies who attempted to follow, receiving God's law on a mountain while his brother erected a calf which the people worshipped, and erecting a pole with a leather "snake" on top to protect the people from snakes which God had sent as punishment for their sinfulness. The Indians also told the missionary that they regularly spread blood or red paint on their "doorposts" after a ritual meal, because "a man of God" instructed them to do so, or else a "man from heaven" would slay their children.

At first it appears that these Indians were having a bit of fun at the expense of this young missionary. Certainly the Indians possessed a sufficient knowledge of Bible stories and the sense of humor to accomplish this. But there is evidence that more serious and important factors may have been at work in this seemingly ludicrous situation. On two occasions Hirschler's informant was an Arapaho named Red Pipe. On January 30, 1890, Red Pipe related the story of the great flood, which only one family survived in a floating "house," and a "king" who, after the flood, gave the ancestors of the Indians their first pipe.

He said that the king's name is Wawockajena. That particular tribe is still across the water, and he called it Mormonistewich. He told his brother-in-law's wife: Go out and get a parchment that was brought over from the other side of the water. His brother-in-law and also his wife are supposed to be able to read that parchment. They live at the Shoshoni agency. He opens that book only once every year and reads out of it. On that day all the Indians bring gifts for God over there.¹⁵

Many of the Arapaho at the agency near Darlington had relatives among the northern Arapaho, who shared a reservation in Wyoming with the Shoshoni. The Shoshoni, on the other hand, had lived since the summer of 1847 in con-



Daniel B. Hirschler with his second wife, Katie A. Ruth.



Rodolphe Petter, earliest photo of the translator and missionary.

tact with a large settlement of Mormons in the Great Basin area. The Mormons believed that the Indians were definitely part of the Jewish people, and identified them as the Lamanites, so prominent in the stories contained in the Book of Mormon.

According to the Book of Mormon, they (the Indians) had once practiced an advanced form of Christianity, having been taught its principles by Jesus Christ after his Crucifixion; but through their "abominations and loss of belief," these early settlers had eventually become "wild," "full of mischief," "loathsome," and "full of idleness." The Latter-day Saints had the responsibility, according to this theology, of introducing this "covenant people" to the Book of Mormon and teaching them the ways of their ancestors, who once followed Jesus. Eventually, these Lamanites, as the Book of Mormon called them, were destined to become revitalized, and the Latter-day Saints were expected to lead in this process by carrying them "in their arms and upon their shoulders" to help them "blossom as a rose."¹⁶

This connection would be of only passing interest, but in 1890 a new element entered the missionary field in In-

dian Territory. Indian religious life throughout the great plains surged because of the introduction of the ritual and message of the messianic cult of the Ghost Dance religion. Caught in the maelstrom of Indian religious activity associated with the emergence of the Ghost Dance religion, Mennonite missionaries increasingly acknowledged the depth and strength of native spirituality. Taking up the gauntlet offered by native religions, a growing realization emerged among Mennonite missionaries of the importance of studying the religious beliefs of the Indians in order to better combat their influence.

The religious life of the Indians was soon dominated by this religious revival sweeping down from the Northwest. In March of 1890 Clara Catching, an Indian student at the Mennonite school at Cantonment wrote to the readers of *The Mennonite*.

Now the Indians are talking of Jesus that he is in Wyoming or in Dakota. They say that he has a tent like the Indians, and herds of buffaloes. We do not want to believe that He is here. He won't be here on earth like that. He won't come

down like a child or a common man, but like a king, and we shall only believe the Bible.¹⁷

Henry Warner Bowden stresses the importance of the enthusiasm surrounding the Ghost Dance among American Indians and contends that the year 1890 "stands as the chronological terminus for the nineteenth century as far as red-white relations are concerned."¹⁸

Later protagonists on both sides sought different objectives in an altered context. But subsequent native attitudes preserved the sense of revitalized spirituality and coupled it with a desire to affirm Indian identity within the ancient traditions. Missionaries and politicians had tried unsuccessfully for a hundred years to eradicate an elemental component of cultural survival. The persistence of the Indians' spirituality shows that the reservoir of their self-consciousness did not dry up, and, in the twentieth century, powerful new spiritual expressions stemming from traditional ceremonialism have demonstrated anew the vitality of the Indians' religious consciousness.¹⁸

The Ghost Dance had a linkage with Mormons at its inception among the Paiute tribe in 1889, and the practice

of the Ghost Dance travelled to the Southern Arapaho through their northern relatives at the Shoshoni reservation. James Mooney chronicles the rapid spread of the Ghost Dance ceremony and beliefs from their founder, the Paiute "messiah" Wovoka, to the Shoshoni and northern Arapaho, and finally to the southern Arapaho, southern Cheyenne, and the Kiowa. Again, government schools played an important role in the spread of this new Indian religion.

The first direct knowledge of the messiah and the ghost dance came to the northern Arapaho in Wyoming, through Nakash, "Sage," who, with several Shoshoni, visited the messiah in the early spring of 1889, and on his return brought back to his people the first songs of the dance, these being probably some of the original Paiute songs of the messiah himself. The Ghost dance was at once inaugurated among the Shoshoni and the northern Arapaho. In the summer of the same year the first rumors of the new redeemer reached the southern Arapaho and Cheyenne in Oklahoma, through the medium of letters written by returned pupils of eastern government schools.¹⁹

The southern tribes wasted no time in sending delegations to meet Wovoka. In fact, several of Hirschler's informants (Little Raven, Bark, and Edward Guerrier) are identified by Mooney as "delegates to Wovoka." Hirschler interviewed them either shortly before or immediately after their trips to the North. Hirschler also mentioned the journey of Black Coyote, and certain prophecies which Arapaho medicine man Deaf Arapaho made concerning Black Coyote. Black Coyote traveled to the Shoshoni reservation where he "listened eagerly to all they (the delegates to Wovoka) had to tell, took part with the rest in the dance, learned the songs, and returned in April, 1890, and inaugurated the first Ghost dance in the south among the Arapaho."²⁰

On September 7, 1890, Hirschler (a widower) died after a brief bout of typhoid fever. His young daughter, Ruth, had succumbed to the same disease less than a month earlier. There is no evidence that Hirschler knew of the Ghost Dance, but he did confide his views on the origins of the Indians with his fellow missionary and supervisor H. R. Voth. Voth showed little enthusiasm for Hirschler's speculations about the Indians' identity as Jews, but he showed a strong interest in the new songs and dances being imported from the North. Voth became acquainted with the Ghost

Dance religion through his contact with the Arapaho Ghost Dance leader, Sitting Bull. Mooney identifies Sitting Bull as "the great apostle of the Ghost dance among the southern tribes, being regarded almost in the same light as the messiah himself."²¹

In May of 1891, Voth wrote that he had seen a great number of Indians gathered at the house of the lieutenant of the Indian police. He asked about the meaning of this assembly and was told by his interpreter that Sitting Bull was there to instruct the local Indians in preparations for a "great dance." Demonstrating the curiosity which would create trouble for him among the Hopi, Voth went to see what was happening.

Voth found Sitting Bull fastening a large eagle feather, dyed red, in the hair of Left Hand, a leader among the Arapaho. Sitting Bull invited Voth to an adjacent tent, where they had a "prolonged conversation" through an interpreter. The following day, Sitting Bull and his wife visited Voth's Sunday School. Sitting Bull addressed the children, telling them "to remain on the road which they were pursuing, to be diligent in study and not to run away from school." Sitting Bull and his wife then ate dinner with the missionaries.²²

There is a sense of camaraderie in Voth's description of Sitting Bull. On one level, Voth accepted Sitting Bull as a fellow opponent of traditional Indian religion. But the missionary continued to press the Indian leader to accept the Christian gospel as superior to all Indian religions, even the Ghost Dance. For his part, Sitting Bull proved to be gracious, articulate, and diplomatic in discussing religious matters. Voth reported:

I received the impression, that he (Sitting Bull) is in earnest, and that he desires to give to his people something better than that which they now have. Among other things he at one time said that he well knew that the "Bibleway" was the only true and the best way. But as he and the other old Indians could not read the Bible, they were worshiping the same God and Father we were worshiping, as well as they knew how. He confessed that their religion was inferior to ours, but he hoped that ultimately it would bring them to the same place where we were. He repeatedly requested me to help him in bringing his people to that place. He promised me that he would tell the Indians to attend our meetings, in order to become acquainted with the teachings of the Bible.²³

James Mooney quotes the report of Captain H. L. Scott, who was sent by the War Department to investigate the Ghost Dance, to show that Sitting Bull presented his beliefs with persuasive sincerity. Scott reported that Sitting Bull:

Upon being asked concerning his religion, he said that all I had heard must not be attributed to him, as some of it was false; that he does not believe that he saw the veritable "Jesus" alive in the north, but he did see a man there whom "Jesus" had helped or inspired. This person told him that if he persevered in the dance it would cause sickness and death to disappear . . . There is this to be said in his favor, that he has given these people a better religion than they ever had before, taught them precepts which if faithfully carried out will bring them into better accord with their white neighbors, and has prepared the way for their final Christianization.²⁴

Initially Voth also saw the Ghost Dances as a positive sign that Indians were becoming disenchanted with their traditional religious ceremonies, such as the Sun Dance. He reported in December of 1890:

The Indians take their messiah expectations very seriously, and it appears to me that there are more and better opportunities for spiritual work among them now than ever before. They seek for something better than what the few fragments of their decayed religion are able to give them . . . I have reason to believe, that many an Arapaho will before long be ready to accept Christ.²⁵

In the midst of a frustrating situation, Mennonites clung to the hope that the religious fervor rampant during this period of the Ghost Dance would somehow benefit the mission work. In a sense, any movement in the prevailing stagnant situation appeared to be desirable. The consensus on and off the mission field was that the Ghost Dance heralded movement in the right direction. But the expected rush of converts did not materialize, and Indian spirituality, for the most part, continued to follow paths outside of mission Christianity.

A. B. Shelly, chairman of the General Conference Mission Board, echoed both the hope and disappointment with which Mennonites viewed the Ghost Dance in the "Annual Report of the Mennonite Mission Board," dated December 31, 1892. Shelly saw the Ghost Dance not only as an example of growing spirituality among Indians, but also of the weaknesses of the Indians which caused them to fall short of the "true" religion.

A change appears to be coming on in regard to the religious state of these Indians. They are beginning to see the vanity of their old religious practices. They are seeking after something better. They are grasping at different things. But as a rule, they take a hold of that which is most in accordance with their own deluded ideas and which agrees best with their depraved natures. This to a great extent accounts for their late "Messiah Craze," and their religious dances as they are now more universally had than before. The Word of God, the religion of Christ, they have thus far not been willing to accept, because they do not meet with the approval of their carnal minds and sinful natures. They still hope to find that which they seek in some way more agreeable to them, without leaving their sinful, superstitious and ungodly ways and becoming the followers of Christ. But as their newer modes of worship must ultimately prove as vain and worthless to them as their old religion did, we have reason to believe, that the time is approaching when many of these Indians will come to see, that it is the *Christian* religion that exalteth a people, and that will give them that peace of heart after which they are longing, and that as a consequence, they will accept it as their religion. To convince them of this fact is the object of our mission among them.²⁶

Rodolphe Petter arrived in Indian Territory during the excitement of the Ghost Dance movement, and later declared that the missionaries themselves, and not the Indians, were to blame for the lack of progress during this period. According to Petter, the missionaries' failure to pursue the language, to the exclusion of all else, rendered them incapable of responding to the Indians' susceptible state.

Had the Indians at that time had the Gospel in their own language, I believe they would have eagerly accepted it and turned their back to their heathenism, for they were weary of it and groped for something better. Alas, missionaries were not ready with the knowledge of the Indian language, nor had they yet the needed Bible translations.²⁷

The Ghost Dance religion did not end with the massacre among the Sioux at Wounded Knee in South Dakota in 1890. Ghost Dances continued to be held for some time in Indian Territory. Mennonite missionaries competed with this movement among the Arapaho and Cheyenne for nearly five years. Mooney reports that "in September, 1894, the Kiowa publicly revived the ceremony in a great dance on the Washita, which lasted four days and was attended by several thousand Indians from all the surrounding tribes."²⁸



Sitting Bull, Arapaho.

ENDNOTES

- ¹*The Mennonite*, Oct. 1885, p. 11.
- ²*Nachrichten aus der Heidenwelt*, Oct. 1877, p. 74.
- ³*Ibid.*, p. 75.
- ⁴*Ibid.*
- ⁵Sam D. Gill, *Native American Religions: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1982), p. 163.
- ⁶Ruth M. Underhill, *Red Man's Religion: Beliefs and Practices of the Indians North of Mexico* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 143, 145.
- ⁷Peter Powell, *Sweet Medicine: the Continuing Role of the Sacred Arrows, the Sun Dance, and the Sacred Buffalo Hat in Northern Cheyenne History*, 2 vol. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), pp. xxiv-xxv.
- ⁸Underhill, p. 150.
- ⁹*The Mennonite*, Apr. 1886, p. 107.
- ¹⁰*The Mennonite*, March 1888, p. 90.
- ¹¹*The Mennonite*, May 1888, p. 122.
- ¹²*The Mennonite*, Feb. 1889, p. 70.
- ¹³*The Mennonite*, March 1890, p. 90.
- ¹⁴*Christlicher Bundesbote*, 12 June 1890, p. 1.

- ¹⁵*Christlicher Bundesbote*, 19 June 1890, p. 1.
- ¹⁶Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 145.
- ¹⁷*The Mennonite*, May 1890, p. 124.
- ¹⁸Bowden, p. 197.
- ¹⁹James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 148.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 150.
- ²¹*Ibid.*
- ²²*Christlicher Bundesbote*, 21 May 1891, p. 1.
- ²³*Ibid.*
- ²⁴Mooney, p. 153.
- ²⁵*Christlicher Bundesbote*, 4 Dec. 1890, p. 1.
- ²⁶*The Mennonite*, Feb. 1893, p. 38.
- ²⁷Rodolphe Petter, *Reminiscences of Past Years in Mission Service Among the Cheyenne* (Lame Deer, MT: Rodolphe Petter, 1936), p. 9.
- ²⁸Mooney, p. 175.

To be continued in the next issue.

A Peace of Religion or a Religion of Peace

by J. Denny Weaver

This essay was presented as a convocation address at Bethel College. The printed text retains much of the original oral format.

Introduction

A poster outside the office of my poet colleague Jeff Gundy reads: "A modest proposal for peace: let the Christians of the world agree that they will not kill each other." I am sure you have seen that poster on the Bethel Campus. The poster confronts us with a shocking irony. People who call themselves Christians, who claim the same God as Father and who have the same Jesus as Lord, have shot at each other and blown each other up with bombs in every war in which the United States has participated, and probably in virtually every war in the western world since at least the third century.

If Jesus Christ or Christian faith is really the highest allegiance one has, and if being God's children—having God for Father—transcends national boundaries so that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, . . . slave nor free, . . . male nor female," then why do so many united and transformed children of the same God so adamantly maintain their right to kill each other? What I will examine here is how the religion functions so as to legitimize that killing. This is a question about the nature of religion much more than a question of peace theology. I begin with a description of the common understanding of religion in general which makes peace [p-e-a-c-e] only a piece [p-i-e-c-e] of religion.

Description of American religion in general

First, I will just mention several pairs of related terms and concepts often used

in the American context to describe religion in general. One pair is the inner-outer dichotomy. Religion is often depicted as having an inner component and an outer component. The inner has to do with feelings and experience. When used opposite inner, 'outer' can refer to a variety of things—theology or rational thought, behavior or ethics; ceremonies like baptism, the outward symbol of an inward experience.

It is commonly assumed that it is the inner aspect which characterizes religion, the inner component which identifies an event as religious. That is, what makes something religious is that it ministers to the inner. This inner component is what is usually thought of as the more important, the essential part of religion, while the outer becomes secondary. Think of the frequent reassurances that the inner experience is more important than the baptism, or that one is not saved by what one believes. Sometimes it is even claimed that the outer gets in the way of the inner, or that too much focus on the outer—discussions of theology, ethics, ceremonies—detracts from the essence of religion.

A close parallel to inner-outer is describing religion as individual or personal in contrast to a social orientation. For much of American religion, the emphasis falls on the individual and personal—*personal* faith, *personal* salvation, *personal* testimony, 'what Christ has done for *me*.' Religion as personal or individual seems almost axiomatic. A current description of the individual character of American religion is *Habits of the Heart*, by Robert Bellah and others.¹ Bellah and his co-authors are rather critical of individualism, because it is not a coherent basis on which to organize a society.

An assumption that religion is inherently individual relegates many kinds of

issues and experiences to a non-religious category. If something does not come in a 'personal' or 'individual' category, it seems not to carry a religious connotation. Personal issues like abortion or homosexuality or drug use are usually recognized as religious issues, or at least as issues to which religious people can speak legitimately. In comparison with those personal issues, considerations about whether to provide an economic subsidy to Chrysler Corporation or the tobacco industry or to divest business interests from South Africa or to cut federal money for higher education, whether to maintain federal subsidy of the three-martini lunch while defining ketchup as a vegetable and cutting school lunch funds for poor children—these often are not considered religious questions in the popular mind-set. Church people or churches which get involved in such discussions often hear charges about an illegitimate mixing of *politics* and religion. Such charges assume that religion is first of all or primarily *inward*, *individual* and *personal* more than it is outer and social.

Another pair of terms sometimes contrasted is 'experiential' and 'rational' religion. Sometimes these are distinguished as 'heart' versus 'head' religion. As a complement to inner and personal, the common assumption is that if it is religious, it must be experiential. It is commonly assumed that religion has feelings associated with it. In fact, it is precisely these feelings which designated the experience as 'religious'—heart religion—rather than rational, theological, or head religion.

This experiential component comes in any number of forms. It is the essence of the crisis conversion experience, as described and practiced in the revivalistic traditions. A skillful revival preacher can build up a large burden of feelings through music and the right kind of

scary stories, a burden which one actually *feels* lifted in a very tangible way through the conversion experience. In a different way, an experiential assumption stands behind the explanation sometimes given for being religious while not going to church. There is a clear acceptance of religion as inward, personal and experiential, when one says some version of: "I *feel* just as close to God out in the woods or on top of a mountain as I do when hearing a sermon." When worship is to be primarily inspirational and uplifting, it is assumed that the basis of it is experiential.

Rationalistic faith is often posed—sometimes in uncomplimentary fashion—over against this experiential faith. If religion deals with inner, experiential things which cannot quite be explained, then appeals to reason and understanding and discussion of theology sometimes seem unnecessary or at best secondary matters. They may even appear as obstacles to true religion. Actually, reason and understanding are obstacles *only* if one assumes that religion belongs exclusively in an experiential category.

To sum up what I have said so far, in much of the public American religious scene it is assumed that 'religion' concerns something which is first of all or primarily 'inner,' 'personal' or 'individual' and 'experiential.' Issues and expressions which deal with things 'outer,' or 'social' or 'theological' or 'rational' are either not religious or else enter the religious picture at a secondary level. What I have said so far concerns religion in general as understood by much of the public mind of the United States.

Christian inner, personal, experiential religion

When one brings an explicitly Christian component to the assumptions about religion in general being inner, personal, and experiential, then Jesus Christ becomes the focus of the inner, personal and experiential. It involves possession of Christ within and a personal relationship with Christ. Since it involves a personal *relationship*, this experience with Christ cannot be fully captured in rational explanations and theological expressions. These theological expressions are secondary to having an inner, personal experience with Christ. Given the personal and inward nature of this experience, it is an ex-

perience virtually by definition complete between the individual and Christ.

Application to killing

Understanding the American assumptions about the nature of religion and then of the Christian religion constitutes one important part of understanding how Christians can agree to kill each other. In this perspective, what Christians of all nationalities and ethnic groups have in common is an inward experience with Jesus Christ. Being Christian means having this inner experience. Both corporate worship and private devotions minister to or cultivate this inner, individual experience. It is essentially an individual experience, complete in itself, and separated from the so-called social questions, and it is prior to and more important than rational understanding or theology.

In effect, the making of religion into something inward, individual and experiential separates religion or religious experience from ethics or behavior, and also from our theology, that is what we believe. It is assumed that faith begins with the inner experience, which constitutes the 'highest' or most important aspect of religion. That higher, inner experience is then expressed symbolically in doctrines and actions.² Since the inner experience is assumed to be prior and higher, the external or outer expressions are then inherently secondary and less important. One can therefore disagree about them without in any fundamental way affecting the more important aspect of the experience of religion. An overstated example is the phrase you sometimes hear: "it doesn't make any difference what you believe—just be sincere." In ecumenical discussions, this orientation has often appeared useful—it seems to provide a way to affirm unity in spite of evident disagreements. One simply declares the divergent and differing doctrines and or practices to be expressions of the same 'higher' reality—different paths to God, but still the same God. For example, both the textbooks we are currently reading in my course in Catholicism describe the relationship between Christianity and Judaism in this way.³

While this outlook may serve some kinds of ecumenical purposes, it also contributes to the ironical situation with which I began—namely, the fact that people who claim to be Christian also claim the right—and the need—to kill

each other. The enemies still have a personal experience with the same Jesus. It is their differing contexts which provide the secondary forms through which they will express their higher religious experience. People with the same *religious* experience—for Christians, the same *experience of Christ*—find themselves shooting at each other when their circumstances place them in conflicting 'social,' or 'external' or 'rationalistic' contexts. While these forms may bring them into mortal conflict, on neither side do the externals necessarily affect their fundamental, personal experience of Christ.

Origins of religion as inner, personal, experiential

The Christian religion was not always looked at primarily as inner, personal and experiential. I want to mention just two historic moments in that development.

The Constantinian Shift.—The first moment in the development of Christianity towards a more inner and personal religion is related to the rule of Roman emperor Constantine, early in the fourth century, and his legalization of Christianity. Although the series of changes began before Constantine and took place over a longer period of time than his reign, historians frequently use Constantine's name as the symbol for this series of developments.⁴

Before Constantine, when Christianity was illegal, it could be clear who the Christians were. They lived in a way which made them visibly different from their surrounding culture/society. It was generally clear who belonged and who did not. Since it was sometimes dangerous or costly to be Christian, it required courage, and there could be little doubt about the sincerity and commitment of Christians.

Much of that picture changed with Constantine and the following emperors in the fourth century. Constantine made Christianity a legal religion, and by the end of the fourth century it had become the *only* legal religion. After that, every one was formally a Christian. It was no longer the courageous thing to be Christian—in fact, it took courage not to be Christian. With everyone now nominally a Christian, Christians were no longer identifiable by a distinct way of life. However, it was not assumed that everyone was fully committed. In this situation where everyone lived about the same way, defining who the

true or real Christians were became a matter of inner attitudes and of sincerity. The true Christians were the sincere ones. Thus, reducing religion to inner attitudes and feelings was a way to give meaning to commitment in a society of nominal Christians. But that kind of shift also really changed the understanding of what religion is, and changed the role of faith in one's life. Religion moved away from a complete lifestyle to a matter of inner attitudes and personal commitment, an inner attitude which one may not even be able to detect.

Kant and Schleiermacher.—The second moment in the development of Christianity as an inner religion occurs at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Two German thinkers have contributed a great deal to the modern theoretical understanding of religion as essentially inward and personal and experiential. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) held that each individual has an inner sense of 'oughtness,' which impelled him to do good. Since that oughtness turns out to have an object, namely God, it shows the existence of God and serves as the beginning point for discussing ethics. Kant's assumed beginning point for ethics was inward and experiential.

A generation later, after studying Kant as well as a number of other thinkers, Friederich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) defined religion as a 'feeling of absolute dependence.' Schleiermacher believed that all religions began with this 'feeling of dependence.' Monotheism was its purest expression. Schleiermacher then considered the particular doctrines and distinctive practices developed by the various religions as lower level, secondary expressions of the higher or more primary feeling of dependence.

With these two men begins the modern description of religion as inner, personal and experiential. Schleiermacher developed that outlook precisely because it made possible the kind of relationships I have been describing, namely maintaining the unity of religious experience while reducing doctrines and ethics to secondary levels where disagreements become unimportant.

Current manifestations of experiential religion.—Schleiermacher's definition of religion and the view of doctrine it implies have received their most consistent development in the tradition

of liberal or ecumenical Protestantism. More recently it has found expression in Catholic theology through the writings of Bernard Lonergan and Karl Rahner. In a less articulated way, it lies behind the way that much of popular American religion defines its unity. It also has had an impact on evangelical or conservative traditions. Given his critique of traditional theology and the secondary role he attributed to doctrine, Schleiermacher's name has often been anathema to much of conservative Protestantism. Nonetheless, among evangelicals for whom a conversion *experience* is paramount, at least one has acknowledged the validity of the experiential component in Schleiermacher's theology.⁵

Thus far I have been descriptive about the development and status of American religion. In what follows, I want to provide a two-part response to this approach to religion. One part of the response deals with the nature of religion in general as primarily experiential. I think it is primarily something else. The second part of my response then discusses what constitutes specifically *Christian* religion. With my response I intend to provide an alternative way to look at the nature of religion and of the Christian religion.

Critique

First, some additional comments on the idea of religion in general as primarily or as first of all experiential and personal. Experiential religion attempts to base religion in a universal beginning point accessible to all people. Doctrines then express that common beginning point, and each religion then becomes an expression of that prior common 'religious' experience. I want to point out three fallacies or problems related to that description of the problem.

The first problem is with the assumption that a common, universal beginning point exists and that one can in fact identify it. In actuality, there are only multiple beginning points. Each claimed universal beginning point actually reflects a humanly defined world view, a finite perspective with a set of assumptions. There is no perspective which is not parochial, in the sense of reflecting a particular point in time and space, specific to a particular culture. That is, there is no universal beginning point. There are only particular begin-

ning points. In the words of John H. Yoder: "Any given wider world is still just one more [finite] place, even if [it seems] slightly wider or [a] slightly more prestigious circle of interpreters talk about [it as] a better access to 'universality.'"⁶

The second fallacy parallels the first very closely. The assumption about a universal starting point renders the observer unaware of the culturally-conditioned forces which do shape one's religious experience. One cannot recognize and describe an experience without some prior formation. In fact, it is that prior formation which prepares an individual for what he will see. George Lindbeck, who has written a very influential book on the subject,⁷ described a tribe which cannot distinguish green from blue, since their language has one word which covers the two colors. Since we have only one word for snow, we would have a problem comprehending Eskimo distinctions, since they have six words for snow. In other words, the assumption that we start with experience blinds us to the many particular forces which shape the kind of inner experience we will have. Kant's claim to begin ethics on some inner feeling, which is completely independent of anything particular, just blinds him to the forces which do shape his outlook and perceptions.

In fact, what is depicted as the universal, inner religious experience actually reflects a western, rather Protestant orientation. For example, at the end of the last century, Adolph von Harnack wrote a very influential book in which he tried to peel away the husks of centuries of corrupt Catholic doctrine to get to the essence of Christianity. About Harnack's attempt it was later said that "The Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well."⁸ If the supposedly common inner religious experience were described by a Buddhist or Hindu, it would likely differ significantly from that described by westerners.⁹

The third problem—this one really does point out a fallacy—involves the idea of claiming a universal foundation from which to critique a religion. If a religion is that which merits one's *highest* allegiance, the very idea of a universally accessible beginning point actually contradicts the claim that the

religion is the highest thing there is. The idea of the common beginning point assumes that there is an apparently 'higher' standpoint from which to measure the religion. In fact, if such a 'higher' standpoint existed, *it*—not the religion or the religious experience being measured—would constitute the true ultimate religion.¹⁰ Thus it is a self-contradiction to claim a universal standpoint from which to judge the highest thing there is. And even more telling, *if* one can ground ethics or doctrine on that universal standpoint and apart from God, then why bother with God and religion at all?

These three points—universal beginning point does not exist; unawareness of prior formation; defining something higher than the religion—apply directly to the problem I have in seeing inward experience alone as the essence of Christianity. In one form or other, all the attempts to define Christianity experientially do not begin with the story of Jesus of Nazareth as the norm of truth. Rather, they have some other criteria by which to define the truth of the Christian religion, and by which to measure the truth of Jesus Christ. It may be a specific kind of inner feeling or experience—à la Revivalism or Pietism. It may be a general sense of truth or love or good intentions—à la Protestant liberalism. It may be a set of claimed absolutes anchored in a 19th century Newtonian view of the scientific world—à la modern Fundamentalism. Each of these in one way or another begins with a specific world view or culture or set of experiences as the assumed universal category, and then uses those givens as the norm by which to measure the supposedly 'higher' Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.

An Alternative View of Religion

The above supplied some critique of experiential religion. Now I will sketch an alternative way to understand what religion is. In articulating an alternative to defining religion as essentially experiential, I have a two-part answer—one part deals with what religion is in general, the second part deals with what explicitly Christian religion is.

First of all, I would argue that it is a mistake to understand religious life and structures as fundamentally external expressions of some higher or deeper, inner religious experience. My answer is not difficult to explain. Turn

the relationship around. It is the external practices, symbols, and beliefs—a religious tradition—which gives form and substance to the inward religion. In other words, the circumstances and context in which one is raised form the content of the inner life, form one's values and outlook. That is, doctrine and ethics as defined by a tradition go before an individual's experience and appropriation of them.¹¹ A religion is the set of ultimate values which function as regulative principles on the lives of the adherents of the tradition. In all kinds of ways, we are shaped by our environment. Religion is the set of guiding principles with ultimate or transcendent reference points which we allow to shape our values and attitudes.

That description of the way a religion shapes its members describes how any religion functions. There are a multitude of religions in the world and even in the United States. They begin at various points and use various references to shape their adherents and the way they look at the world—particular reference points like Buddha or Torah or Mohammed or Constantine's Roman empire. The Christian religion is the one which claims that it is not with any of these but rather the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, which is the foundation for shaping the life of God's children. The question is not: are we shaped? but rather *what* shapes us? Is it the Christian story or some other story which shapes us?

Being Christian means to make the faith statement that it is the story of Jesus which shapes the lives of Christians. Jesus shaped his first followers personally. And being a follower of Jesus meant adopting a new way of living—his way. When Jesus was no longer present physically, his followers continued the way he had demonstrated. To be a follower of Jesus—a Christian—meant being shaped by Jesus' life and teaching. Therefore, to accept Christ—to follow Jesus—was none of the things attributed to the modern theory of religion. It was not an act which one did alone, as something primarily *individual* or *personal*. Inherent in the nature of the event was participating in it and performing it *with others*. Responding to Jesus was not primarily *inward* nor *experiential*. Inherent in the nature of the event was the involvement of one's whole outlook and being and lifestyle. In other words, it involved much more

than a mere inward experience. It meant restructuring one's outlook, one's behavior, one's entire existence according to the norm demonstrated by Jesus.

Contrast that acceptance of Christian life with the assumptions after Constantine. Before Constantine, Christian commitment touched all of life. After Constantine, Christian commitment dealt with the inner and personal. Before Constantine, decisions about one's actions began with the Jesus story and were shaped within the Jesus story—in a sense, all of life was religious. After Constantine, what is religious concerned only one part of life, the religious was relegated to that part which deals with inner feelings and experience.

If one begins with being Christian as the life shaped by the Jesus story, then religious expression does not begin first and primarily within, and then move to seek external expression. The order is reversed. The inner experience is shaped by and is a *response* to the prior external structures, the prior story of Jesus of Nazareth. Prior to the inner response and inner experience is a decision—often an unconscious or unaware decision—about which external tradition one will allow to shape one's outlook.

Since the time of Constantine, most Christians have limited the scope of the religious primarily to the inner and individual, and they have chosen to allow the assumptions from the low common denominator of Roman, western society to shape external behavior and orientation. It has been the wider society—not the story of Jesus—which has shaped the social orientation of people claiming to be Christian. Applying this language to my original problem, people with parallel inner experiences of Jesus can agree to kill each other, when their external behaviors are shaped by different external traditions. Since Constantine, the majority view has claimed that Jesus rules within, while allowing some version of the emperor's standards to shape external behavior and outlook. Christians can agree to kill each other when they allow national values and national stories to shape external behavior. They can allow national stories to shape the external and keep Jesus within *if* it is also assumed that external behavior is somehow lower than or separated from the inner 'religious' experience.

In contrast, people will have a much

different outlook who see all of life oriented and shaped by the life or story of Jesus. If being Christian is expressed in a lifestyle shaped by the Jesus story, then *external* relationships as well as inner life come under the category of religious, and have Jesus' life as their reference points. Everyone agrees that Jesus rejected the use of violence. Consequently, those who make Jesus' life the reference point within which to shape their own lives will make non-violence an integral part of the discussion of appropriate behaviors. For these people, the fact that people claiming to be Christians can agree to kill each other rears up as a great incongruity. And it becomes obvious that it is the prior formation of the person by the Jesus story, rather than an inner experience which is the beginning point for a peace outlook.¹²

At the beginning I said that I was not so much talking about peace theology as about the underlying theory of religion which makes it possible for Christians to think of killing each other. I think I should now rephrase that comment. If one begins with a view of religion which makes a sharp separation between the inner and the outer, then what I said is true—one can discuss religion and the Christian religion without discussing peace. My statement was correct *if* religion deals only with the inner and the experiential. On the other hand, if one begins with the assumption that the Jesus story depicts a lifestyle which shapes all of life for a Christian, then my statement about not discussing peace theology is not quite true. In fact, from that perspective, peace is a part of every Christian theological discussion. When Jesus' life is compared with the available political and religious options of his day—Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots—his rejection of the sword is the single most fundamental component of his life. Those who claim Jesus' story as their own should not set it aside as peripheral or a secondary matter to be dealt with after salvation. Instead, rejection of violence becomes the orienting center of any discussion of the way Christians can continue to be the presence of Jesus in the world. And when Christians come to that understanding, Christianity will truly become a religion of peace, and we will not be asking the ironic question of why people with the same Jesus kill each other.

Implications

The above constituted the formal conclusions of the address. The following spells out several implications of the argument.

1) Worship includes more than experience, and worship should do much more than minister to inner experience. Worship remembers, recites and acts out the story which shapes our experience and outlook. Theology belongs explicitly to that recounting of the shaping story, since that is where we explain the makeup of the shaping tradition. If acceptance of an external tradition precedes one's inner life, worship should include explicit references to the presuppositions which shape and define the worship.

2) We need to be unapologetic about the centrality of peace—nonviolence—in the Christian story. Peace is not a by-product of something else. It is a specific world view which has an explicit foundation in the story of Jesus. In doing education within a peace context, or education for peace, we should then recognize that it is a perspective on all disciplines and issues, rather than a side issue for a few who happen to be interested.

3) Inner life and spirituality are not the best measure of growth in the Christian life. Rather, growth in the Christian life involves one's entire world view. We should measure growth in terms of the ability to discuss the implications of the Jesus story for any aspect of one's life.

4) The implications for the current Mennonite interest in the development of spirituality can be stated in another way. Since the inner life is shaped by and is a response to the external world, Mennonites need to cultivate more awareness of what should properly shape the inner life. For Mennonites that shaping tradition should include the ideas of peace and community, so that developing spirituality emphasizes the believing person, not as a lone individual before God, but as a participant in the believing community of God's people.

5) I think we should talk more rather than less about theology when pursuing ecumenical agendas. Greater awareness of the prior presuppositions would clarify some differences. Ecumenical goals will be furthered in the long run, I believe, by clarifying the shaping presuppositions rather than by covering them up with experiential religion.

That clarification carries a risk, namely the discovery that apart from piety, groups have very little in common. The result could be less rather than more structural unity. I would not consider that a great loss, however. It would be merely a clearer understanding of an already existing discord.

ENDNOTES

¹Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1985).

²George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

³In a less articulated way, this describes the situation at such recent Mennonite discussions on theology as Dialogues on Faith 1, II, where all enjoyed and took consolation in the hearty singing and worship in spite of sometimes very sharp disagreement on central theological issues. See reports in *The Mennonite*, 20 November 1984, pp. 563-65 and 10 Dec. 1985, 587-88.

⁴For a good recent statement on the significance of the Constantinian shift, see Robert D. Linder, "No Constantine Here! The Case for the Preservation of the American Heritage of Separation of Church and State," *Mennonite Life* (June 1987): 13-16.

⁵William A. Dryness, "The Pietist Heritage of Schleiermacher," *Christianity Today* (15 Dec. 1978): 347-49.

⁶John H. Yoder, "But We Do See Jesus": The Particularity of Incarnation and the Universality of Truth," in *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1984), p. 49. Stanley Hauerwas develops his ethic on the argument that ethics do not begin in "midair," that is, in some neutral or objective formulation, but on the contrary always reflect a particular set of assumptions. The particular history and narrative which orient an ethic Hauerwas calls a "qualifier." For Christian ethics, therefore, the qualifier is the story of Jesus. See Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1983).

⁷George A. Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

⁸Cited by Donald M. Baillie, *God was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (New York: Scribner, 1948), p. 40.

⁹Point made by Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, p. 41.

¹⁰In point of practice, it is this unintended substitution of one authority for another which Evangelicalism has done with its claim to an inerrant Bible. While claiming Jesus as the ultimate norm, they make the truth of Jesus depend on claims about the Bible, and those claims use a Newtonian view of science and a 19th century world view. For background on that discussion, see George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford, 1980), pp. 11-21, 55-61.

¹¹This summary follows the cultural-linguistic approach of George A. Lindbeck. See note 7 above.

¹²The nonviolent story of Jesus stands in marked and sharp contrast to the American story which appears in virtually every children's American history text book. By linking American freedom and freedoms to a war of independence, American mythology teaches that violence is the ultimate solution to social problems. For the beginning of an alternative interpretation of American history, see James C. Juhnke, "Revolution Without Independence," *Mennonite Life* (Sept. 1976): 10-13.

Cornelius Herman Suckau: Mennonite Fundamentalist?

by Jeff A. Steely

The formation of Grace Bible Institute in 1943 was not an isolated event. Some of the more conservative men in the General Conference felt that the leadership of the conference and the faculty of the General Conference's colleges were predominantly modernists. Most of these conservatives were interested in restoring what they considered orthodox Mennonite religion. One step in this direction, they felt, would be to establish a Mennonite Bible school committed to producing church workers and missionaries. Several of these men were actively involved in promoting this idea among Mennonites. Some within the conference resonated with this idea. Those in power, however, were largely opposed to the venture. Because of this resistance within the conference hierarchy to a fundamentalist Bible school, it took considerable perseverance and vision to make Grace Bible Institute a reality.

One of the key movers in this effort was Cornelius Herman Suckau. How should Suckau be labeled? Was he a Mennonite or a Fundamentalist? Or was he a Mennonite fundamentalist? Paul Toews summarizes the recent research on Mennonite fundamentalism as revealing two explanations for its existence. On the one hand, fundamentalism was an attempt at creating the theological boundaries needed to become an American denomination. On the other hand, the so-called "fundamentalism" of the Mennonites would be better defined as "denominational conservatism."¹ The evidence leads to the conclusion that, despite operating within Mennonite structures, Suckau was, first and foremost, a fundamentalist. The Mennonite church (in the general sense of the term, not referring to a specific denomination) merely served as a base for his operations.

C. H. Suckau's Early Years

C. H. Suckau was born January 23, 1881, on a farm near Newton, Kansas. His parents, John and Marie Andres Suckau, had immigrated from Prussia in 1876. Cornelius Herman was the third of four children.² Suckau's brother died of tuberculosis when Cornelius was ten, and his mother died in childbirth shortly thereafter.

Suckau spent most of his childhood in Newton, with the exception of two years (1888-1890) in Germany. He went to school in Germany while his father helped run Cornelius' grandfather's estate. On their return to the United States, Suckau attended the German Lutheran parochial school in Newton. After three years he entered the public schools. Suckau attended high school at the Bethel College Academy. As a young man he worked as a printer's apprentice under H. P. Krehbiel. Next he taught German in several Mennonite schools. During this period Suckau, a man in his early twenties, felt a "definite call" to follow a long-held inclination to become a missionary. After taking a Bible course at Bethel College, he spent three years at the Union Missionary Training Institute.³ The General Conference sent missionary trainees to UMTI until about 1910.⁴ While at UMTI C. H. met Lulu Johnson, a Quaker. They were married on June 24, 1909, and she was baptized into a General Conference congregation in Mountain Lake, Minnesota.

The Suckaus wanted to serve in China, but the foreign mission board of the General Conference needed missionaries in India, so C. H. and Lulu were sent there instead.

C. H. Suckau the Missionary

Suckau worked as the administrator of the Government Leper Asylum in Chandkuri during his first year in India. His next assignment was connected with a new Mennonite hospital in Champa, Central Provinces. His third assignment was to set up the mission station in Korba⁵ in 1915.⁶

In 1920 the Suckaus, now with two children, Theodore, born in 1910, and Edna, born in 1914, took a furlough. While back in the states C. H. completed his B.A. at Bethel. The family



C. H. Suckau in 1908.

returned to Korba in 1921 and remained there until 1928. Suckau (and most of the other missionaries in India) fought a continual battle with disease. Even in the early years of his term Suckau was frequently ill.⁷ During this second phase of his service in India he fought several battles with malaria. Another severe illness followed and did sufficient damage to his heart that it became necessary for him to leave the mission field to recuperate.

C. H. and Lulu Suckau began their term of service in India in November, 1909. Already in 1907 concerns were raised over Suckau. A. B. Shelly expressed his anxiety that the young missionary candidate might have "more zeal than judgement."⁸ It is difficult to assess the legitimacy of Shelly's concern. Existing documents regarding the General Conference mission in India give relatively little information concerning Suckau's effectiveness as a missionary.

It is unknown how the Suckaus got along with their missionary co-workers, at least during the majority of their term. Suckau became a staunch premillennialist while in India. He requested some time off from the mission board to translate William E. Blackstone's premillennialist book, *Jesus is Coming*, into Hindi. This request was denied, but Suckau found time to do it on his own. How Suckau's fellow missionaries received his position on this issue is not clear, but James C. Juhnke speculates that such theological issues may have been underneath the rocky departure of the Suckau family from the mission field.⁹ At any rate it is apparent that there was some tension between those missionaries remaining in India and the departing Suckaus. What was intended to be a temporary leave in the interest of C. H. Suckau's health became, at the request of the other missionaries, permanent.¹⁰

C. H. Suckau the Pastor

The First Mennonite Church of Berne, Indiana, the largest in the General Conference, was looking for an interim pastor in 1928. They were just coming out of the stormy pastorate of P. R. Schroeder. The church was badly divided. P. R. Schroeder was a premillennialist, and his actions—especially his accusations of modernism at Bluffton College—had been divisive. The retention of the pastor eventually came

to a vote and Schroeder fell just a few votes shy of the two-thirds needed to be retained.¹¹

In light of this, the deacons hoped to secure someone who could bring the two factions close enough together so that the dust could settle. It seems that the deacons successfully identified the area which could unite the church—missions. The Berne church was a major supporter of the General Conference's mission efforts. The unrest in the church undoubtedly worried the foreign missions board. It seems likely, and has been suggested by Loris Habegger, then a ten-year-old at First Mennonite of Berne, that P. H. Richert worked at getting the missionary Suckau into the Berne pastorate to "salve" the situation.¹² At the August 15, 1928, Board of Deacons meeting it was decided to extend a call to C. H. Suckau to serve as interim pastor. The Suckaus arrived in Berne on September 7, 1928.¹³

C. H. Suckau got off to a very good start in the congregation. During this "honeymoon" period, those who had been glad to get rid of Schroeder were elated over their new pastor. Berne was a "very evangelically oriented church," and those who had opposed Schroeder believed Suckau would resolve their problems.¹⁴ Apparently, Suckau's premillennialist beliefs kept a low profile during his first months.¹⁵ He had successfully, at least for the time being, begun the healing process within the church.

The unsettled situation in the Berne church was not the only wound, however, that needed salve. The problems between Suckau and the missionaries in India remained unsolved. P. H. Richert worked very hard to settle the dispute, but was not very successful. The problems centered around finances. Two issues were at stake from the missionaries' points of view. The primary problem had to do with Suckau's handling of funds at his departure. Suckau had apparently taken some funds to which the others did not feel that he was entitled. A second factor which must have played into the frustration of the missionaries was the failure of Suckau to pay his final income taxes before leaving India. The letters between P. A. Penner and both Suckau and the tax collector, K. Gore, reveal a high level of annoyance with both Suckau's alleged failure to pay and Gore's suggestions that Penner should be responsible for payment in the event that Suckau did not pay.¹⁶ A triangle of correspondence be-

tween Suckau, Richert, and the missionaries developed, with Richert attempting, as the middle man, to reconcile differences. He may have wanted to enable Suckau to return to India, but he was probably even more concerned that his plan to calm the waters in Berne might backfire if Suckau turned against the General Conference's mission efforts.

As stated previously, Richert was not very successful in resolving the dispute. Some of the minor matters were settled, but, for the most part, both groups refused to accept any blame for the problems. While Suckau apologized for having "caused so much trouble and that there (had) been so much misunderstanding" on the matter of an exchange rate he had used,¹⁷ he later complained that the missionaries had "condemned" his family without hearing their side of the story.¹⁸ At about the same time, the missionaries expressed that they had "nothing to explain, unless some intimation from the other side" were to come.¹⁹

The Berne church, as a whole, did not know about this dispute. Those who did know, and undoubtedly there were some from the very start, kept it quiet. Suckau remained a generally popular pastor. After a little more than a year, the deacons sent an inquiry to the foreign missions board through J. W. Kliewer, a member of the missions board and former Berne pastor, about the possibility of extending Suckau's furlough for another year. The question was addressed to the missionaries in India by the board. While the foreign missions board members seemed to agree that Suckau could not return to India yet, at least one member, Michael M. Horsch, felt that it would be best if that time away was *not* spent at Berne. Unfortunately, he did not give a reason for this concern.²⁰ On December 5, 1929, J. W. Kliewer received the following telegram from the missionaries: "WE HAVE NO OBJECTION TO SUCKAUS ACCEPTING FURTHER WORK AT HOME."²¹ Four days later Richert passed this message along to D. J. Sprunger, one of the Berne deacons.²²

The deacons sent a further request to the missions board, asking for permission to hire Suckau as the permanent pastor of the church until such time that the missions board would decide to place him in a mission assignment.²³ Since the board would not meet until late February, on January 1, 1930 the



C. H. Suckau and his wife, Lulu Johnson.



The Suckau family, including Theodore and Edna.

congregation voted, in anticipation of permission from the mission board, on the search committee's recommendation that Suckau be the permanent pastor. The vote, 668 affirmative and 8 negative, reaffirms that early in his pastorate Suckau was popular with the church members as a whole. Those who had worked to remove Schroeder apparently did not yet see the similarities in the perspectives of the two. Suckau was "voted in on his mission credentials, and not on his doctrinal credentials."²⁴

Before long the congregation began to divide along the same lines as had existed under Schroeder. To the conservative, Swiss church, Suckau the conservative was appealing. To the evangelistic church, Suckau the missionary was an asset. Suckau's teachings on the work of the Holy Spirit were also considered a positive contribution. Many enjoyed the visits they received from Pastor Suckau and his wife. But the church began to divide over Suckau's teachings on the premillennial second coming, dispensationalism, and eternal security (the idea that once one believes

in Jesus Christ, she/he acquires salvation and can not lose it). Suckau's anti-General Conference sentiments aroused further concern in the church. With the exception of the conference's mission programs, Suckau had little use for the conference. During his pastorate, speakers from outside the church were also from outside the conference. Loris Habegger suggests that Suckau believed no one in the conference leadership had sound theology. Pastor Suckau's opinion of the General Conference's schools, Bluffton in particular, is clear. He picked up the polemic against Bluffton where P. R. Schroeder had left off.²⁵ During this period most of the young people who sought further education attended either Wheaton College or Moody Bible Institute. Not only did Suckau deliver the commencement address at Wheaton College in 1938, but the college also bestowed on him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. Some say that this went to his head. Naomi Lehman, in her history of the Berne congregation, states that it was after this event that Dr. Suckau began to wear tails when he preached.²⁶

Another account reveals that the tails became Suckau's new attire for the pulpit following the wedding of his son, Theodore. The coat was apparently purchased for performing the wedding. An interesting footnote is that Theodore changed his last name to Young in order to acquire the blessing and inheritance of his bride's family. This was a bitter pill for Suckau to swallow. However, the coat became a part of his wardrobe, and the first time he wore it while preaching at Berne was "the Sunday that the congregation talked about coats instead of sermons."²⁷

C. H. Suckau's term of service at Berne included the beginning of World War II. Suckau's position on serving in the war raised further questions for at least some of the church members. In counseling sessions, Suckau advised the young men of the church to join the non-combatant medical corps. While he was against claiming the status of a conscientious objector, he also advised against service as a combatant.²⁸ Suckau sent a condensed sermon in the form of a letter to all of the men in Civilian Public Service camps, in non-

combatant service, and in active military duty. This letter, dated November 18, 1942, clearly defines Suckau's position on "Service to our God and to our Country."²⁹ He attempted to defend all three forms of service, but clearly preferred the route of non-combatant service.

Civilian service is, according to Suckau's letter, a "special privilege" granted by the government. Those who chose this route should be supported, because this is a form of "tribute to Caesar." But those in the CPS camps should realize that "others must enter into the Military for (them)." The right to be a "CO" is, therefore, according to Suckau's letter, a right granted by the military.³⁰

In contrast to this limited affirmation of choosing CO status, Dr. Suckau was a strong supporter of non-combatant service. Suckau stated that such service "has been historically and traditionally the service of the Mennonite church." The accuracy of this statement is questionable. Such an understanding was probably based on the "Red Cross service of Mennonites in Russia."³¹

Suckau also considered military service an authentic Christian possibility. While it may be "non-Mennonite," such a role is, according to the letter, based on precedents in both the Old and New Testaments. Suckau did nothing to question those arguments, and therefore implicitly condoned them. This letter might be considered a model in tolerance, but it also levels the positions ethically. Many in the Berne church agreed with this tolerance of the military, but some did not. In particular, one Berne member in a CPS unit, Carl M. Lehman, responded in a letter which he sent to Suckau, the Board of Deacons, and all of the others in CPS camps. The letter is very kind in tone, but thoroughly critiques the position of Suckau on military service. Lehman wrote to explain the views of those who had chosen to be COs.³² Lehman never received a response from Suckau, but did receive considerable affirmation from other COs.³³

Suckau's position on war and non-violence, his anti-General Conference bias, and his doctrinal positions on premillennialism, dispensationalism, and eternal security, are all clues that fundamentalism was his primary orientation. But Suckau never tried to change the church's conference affiliation to a more conservative group. The church

was evenly enough divided that such an attempt would probably have failed. But perhaps Suckau did not want to. It is unclear what denomination he would have tried to join. Furthermore, deliberations between the Berne church and Abraham Warkentin, the editor of the *Sunday School Quarterly*, indicate a desire on the part of Suckau and his flock to correct what they considered to be doctrinal errors within the denomination.

C. H. Suckau wrote to Warkentin in March, 1936. His letter was in response to a sample of the new *Sunday School Quarterly* which he had received. He was concerned about some of the material which he found objectionable.³⁴ About five months later Edison Sprunger, the Berne Sunday school superintendent, also complained to Warkentin about the presence of some liberal theology in the *Quarterly*.³⁵ Warkentin responded to both of these letters (though his response to Suckau did not come until about eighteen months later). He expressed thanks that both were concerned about the quality of the quarterly, and in the letter to Suckau said that he might not have been critical enough in leaving a certain question in. Since he had not received any other complaints, however, he had not taken the question out.

These efforts to pacify the Berne leaders were not sufficient. The Sunday school committee decided to order the quarterlies for just one quarter unless they could be assured that they would be "corrected." Suckau sent some pages from the previous year's quarterly which he considered objectionable. Warkentin responded that he would be willing to come to Berne to try to "work things out," but this still did not satisfy Suckau. Warkentin received a telegram from Suckau on March 4, 1938. It stated: "ORDER FOR QUARTERLY DETAINED. ANSWER MY LETTER BY AIRMAIL." An obviously frustrated Abraham Warkentin replied that he could not "respond to all the objections . . . marked on the pages of the quarterly." Such "would be an almost impossible task." Warkentin did thank Suckau for his suggestions and admitted that he "definitely . . . should have been more critical in reading some of the statements which might lead to misinterpretation." In this statement Warkentin was able to admit to a fault (not being critical enough) without actually stating that there were

problems with the theology presented (by using the term "misinterpretation"). This confession of mistakes, even though qualified, when combined with another offer to come to Berne to settle the matter, was apparently a satisfactory reply, for just six days later Suckau wrote to inform Warkentin that the congregation had decided to order the quarterly for the remainder of the year.

In this dispute Suckau's intolerance for other opinions is evident. This seems to have been a flaw of his character.³⁶ It is also clear from this account that Suckau was truly trying to change the conference from within. This does not necessarily mean that Suckau was a "denominational conservative." Unfortunately the quarterlies that were marked as objectionable by Suckau have not been located, but it seems likely that his objections were based on his consistently fundamentalistic perspective rather than on a desire to purge Mennonitism, in particular, from modernism.

C. H. Suckau the Educator

During his pastorate, Suckau never formally attempted to sever his tenuous ties to the conference. But he was never a General Conference supporter. Eventually his fight against modernism, and undoubtedly his battle with some of his congregation, led him to stretch these ties to the breaking point. He and several like-minded Mennonite fundamentalists created the Grace Bible Institute (GBI) in Omaha, Nebraska.

The beginning of Grace was connected, among other things, with dissatisfaction over Bethel College within the Western District Conference (WDC). Charges of modernism, which were an especially volatile topic from 1916 to 1918, were still lingering in 1932. H. P. Krehbiel, a long time advocate of forming a Bible institute within the WDC, began a campaign to establish one. His "Notes: Origin and Realization of a School for Preparing Spiritual Workers for Mennonite Churches and Communities," a handwritten notebook, is a fascinating account of his previous attempts to form such a school and of this effort in 1932.³⁷

In July 1931, Krehbiel drew up and later printed a "Provisional Constitution for the Menno Christian Workers School."³⁸ Krehbiel and P. H. Unruh began a careful process of selection and communication with those whom they

expected to support such a school. In preparation for an October 20, 1932, meeting of the "Elders interested in the cause of a Christian Workers School," Krehbiel printed a letter for these elders bemoaning the failure of the conference to prepare "laborers for the Lord's cause." The educational efforts of the conference (implicitly at Bethel) had been "only pertaining to things of this perishing world." It is therefore not surprising, the letter states, that the young people "have little interest in and understanding for spiritual things." One step to remedy the situation, Krehbiel suggested, would be to start a "Christian worker's school."³⁹

H. P. Krehbiel, P. H. Unruh, C. E. Krehbiel, and P. H. Richert were active in bringing together a special WDC session. At the session on April 6, 1932, H. P. Krehbiel asked that a \$100,000 endowment from the WDC be taken from the financially weak Bethel College and be reinvested in his Bible school. The request was narrowly voted down, 149 to 131. Without the support of the conference and these funds, Bethel would have almost inevitably been forced to shut down.⁴⁰

H. P. Krehbiel did not give up on his vision for a Bible school. His plan was that such a school should be set up by interested congregations. That he still wanted to establish the school after his WDC defeat is apparent in some of his correspondence. In a letter dated May 2, 1932, P. P. Wedel declined an invitation to attend a scheduled May 6 meeting, apparently similar to those held in late 1931. It is during this same general period that Suckau enters the picture.

C. H. Suckau had known H. P. Krehbiel for many years. He had been an apprentice under Krehbiel as a young man and had hosted Krehbiel and his wife during their visit of the mission field in India. In March 1932, right in the middle of Krehbiel's efforts to overthrow Bethel, Suckau sent one dollar to Krehbiel for a subscription to the *Mennonite Weekly Review*. He enclosed a note thanking Krehbiel for his "stand . . . against modernism."⁴¹ In Krehbiel's response, he says that he had been fighting a "long and rather lonely conflict." But new persons were finally beginning to join in the cause. Krehbiel invited Suckau to submit some pieces to the paper. A year later Suckau again wrote to Krehbiel, this time to find out if a certain person was "fundamentally

sound." After responding to Suckau's inquiry, in a letter dated May 16, 1933, the relentless Krehbiel asked Suckau for his thoughts on "the ripeness of the time that those churches . . . that do hold to the true faith, organize and operate a Bible school."⁴²

Krehbiel's plan did not achieve fruition in GBI for another decade. In the spring of 1943 Suckau met with the superintendent and chairman of the board of the Oklahoma Bible Academy (OBA) to discuss the future of the school. Suckau was in Meno, Oklahoma, to speak at the school's prophetic conference. Suckau had also been at the OBA "Bible Week" the year before. Another of the speakers at the 1942 Bible Week was P. H. Unruh.⁴³ Unruh had worked closely with H. P. Krehbiel in 1932-3 in the effort to establish a Bible school within the WDC. The official history of GBI does not mention Unruh specifically. The records show that "a number of ministers met for a short prayer meeting one afternoon (during the Bible week) to pray for the Lord's guidance as to the enlargement of the school."⁴⁴ Perhaps Unruh was one of those present, and may have played an important role in planting the idea of a full-fledged Bible school (post-secondary) in the minds of Suckau and those at OBA.

Other connections can be made between H. P. Krehbiel's efforts in the 1930s and the early years of Grace. Thus far Krehbiel's communication with Suckau and P. H. Unruh's presence at the OBA Bible week have been mentioned. Furthermore, two members of the GBI Advisory Council's original thirty-nine⁴⁵ were mentioned in H. P. Krehbiel's notebook on the Bible school idea. H. R. Harms of Meade, Kansas, was one of the elders present at an October 22, 1931, meeting of persons interested in a Bible school. J. W. Bergen of Ransom, Kansas, was listed by Krehbiel as a pastor to be contacted about the idea.⁴⁶

On June 1, 1943, ten men gathered at the Flatiron Hotel in Omaha, Nebraska, to discuss the possibility of starting a new Bible school for their various Mennonite constituencies. In the following days the plans were made that would be necessary to begin the school. Suckau was asked to state the conditions under which he would consider accepting the presidency of Grace. Because of concerns about losing his pension if he were to leave the Berne

church, it was agreed that he should continue as pastor of that church. Paul Kuhlmann agreed to serve as the acting president but insisted that a better-known person should be sought for the permanent position.⁴⁷ A summer filled with what seemed to these men to be miraculous events led to September 8, 1943, registration day for the Grace Bible Institute. Twenty-three students participated in the first term.

As the tasks of pastoring the large Berne congregation began to appear to be too much for Suckau, he considered doing something else. When the availability of Suckau became known to Kuhlmann, the acting president contacted others within the institution, and another opportunity was presented to Suckau to accept the presidency. He accepted this offer and became the president of Grace on January 1, 1944.

The theology of Suckau during this period and the perspective represented by the school are at least a partial reflection of the interests of Suckau. The "Doctrinal Statement" of Grace is an informative document. Also of interest from these early years of the school is its relationship to the General Conference. Ten of the eleven charter board members of Grace were affiliated with the conference.⁴⁸

Suckau served as the chair for the Charter and Doctrine Committee which was responsible for, among other things, writing the school's doctrinal statement.⁴⁹ The first article states that the Bible is "the infallible Word of God, a divine revelation, the original autographs of which were verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit." Original sin and blood atonement are also crucial doctrines in the statement. None of these necessarily make the document fundamentalistic, but the combination certainly begins to point in that direction. Several other articles in the doctrinal statement confirm this idea. The hope of those accepting the document is for "the personal, premillennial, and imminent return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Those who don't believe, by contrast, can expect "after the thousand years" (the millenium) to "be raised from the dead, and throughout eternity exist in a state of conscious and endless torment." Eternal life is seen as "a present possession" (doctrine of eternal security). Finally, history is viewed in terms of dispensations, with the church consisting of "all those who, in this dispensation, truly

believe in Jesus Christ." The function of the church in this present dispensation is "to witness for Christ among the nations." Premillennialism, eternal security, dispensationalism, an invisible church, and an emphasis on missions are all related to fundamentalism. By contrast, only one of the twelve articles in the doctrinal statement deals with what might be considered peculiarly Mennonite doctrines or practices. Clearly, the school's primary orientation is fundamentalist, like that of Suckau himself.

But why did these men feel the need for a "Mennonite" Bible school? If fundamentalism was their aim, what was wrong with having their young people go to non-Mennonite Bible institutes like Moody Bible Institute or the Bible Institute of Los Angeles? There are at least three possible answers, and all three may contain some truth. Kuhlman suggests that World War II prompted the desire among Mennonite conservatives for a less militaristic Bible school.⁵⁰ Related to this, some of those in the Mennonite churches, and even among the founding fathers of Grace, were denominational conservatives whose reaction against modernism was at least partly based on a desire to preserve an orthodox Mennonitism. Finally, and this was probably Suckau's intent, some wanted to introduce a fundamentalist perspective into the General Conference for those who might be receptive. The concern among this last group for Mennonite distinctives was slight.

The establishment of this school was not taken well by the leaders of the General Conference. C. E. Krehbiel, conference president, questioned the motivations of those involved. Since four of the five members of the Executive Committee of Grace were ministers in the conference, they had signed a commitment to be loyal to the denomination. He was concerned that it appeared that these men were dissatisfied with either the Board of Education or the Foreign Mission Board, or both.⁵¹ Of course, the action of these ministers was a rejection of Bethel College. C. E. Krehbiel stated an official position in *The Mennonite* in August 1943. He called on those within the conference to remain faithful in their commitments to conference activities, and implicitly, not to support Grace. Whatever the intentions of those at GBI, it is clear that the conference leadership perceived this as

divisive and therefore rejected the school.⁵²

Suckau's work as president of Grace was largely promotional. He traveled extensively, often with performing groups of students, to promote the school. He was also the editor of the school paper, *Grace Tidings*. Suckau's articles in this publication are consistently conservative and frequently point out his fundamentalist loyalties.

In May 1944, Suckau wrote a polemic against modernism. He deduced from the Bible that there will be a "religious world crisis" during the last days before Christ's return. "Modernism," he states, "is the apostasy . . . that will bring about the religious crisis."⁵³ An article the following December was devoted to proving on the basis of reason and Scripture the virgin birth of Christ.⁵⁴ In July 1945, Suckau assured his readers that GBI had taken "every precaution which is humanly possible . . . to prevent modernism from creeping into the Grace Bible Institute."⁵⁵ Suckau's dispensational premillennialism was mapped out on a timeline in another edition of the paper.⁵⁶ A number of other examples elaborate such themes.

Suckau also dealt with the relationship of the institute to the various Mennonite denominations. In response to concerns about the position of the school on nonresistance, Suckau stated that GBI upheld "personal and scriptural non-resistance," but defended the fact that the school did not clarify its position earlier at a meeting of the General Conference.⁵⁷ In an article reflecting on the role of GBI among Mennonites, Suckau explained that "Grace Bible Institute was founded for the purpose of uniting and strengthening the conservative forces" in the churches. This is true "Mennonite fundamentalism," that is, "denominational conservatism." Yet in the same article Suckau makes it clear that, in addition to Mennonite particularities, those at the school "believe in and affirm . . . unequivocal adherence to the fundamentals of the faith."⁵⁸ This is not, for a fundamentalist, a contradiction. George M. Marsden points out that the combination of such forces as denominational conservatism and fundamentalist creeds is common in the fundamentalist movement.⁵⁹ What is clear is that the various motives suggested above for starting a Mennonite Bible institute—to have a less militaristic Bible school,

to preserve the denominations against the evils of modernism, and to introduce new, fundamentalist ideas into the Mennonite churches—are all expressed in the policies of GBI and reflections of Suckau on the school.

Cornelius Henry Suckau remained president of GBI until September of 1950, at which time he took a leave of absence which was to last for one year.⁶⁰ By March 1951, however, Suckau had submitted his resignation, citing "'prolonged illness'"⁶¹ as the reason. This resignation became effective on September 1, 1951. During his illness he spent some time visiting his children, but preferred his room near Grace. On November 12, 1951, C. H. Suckau died in his Omaha home.⁶²

Conclusion

Was C. H. Suckau a Mennonite fundamentalist? His intentions were not primarily to preserve a tradition, but to introduce new ideas into the Mennonite world. He may have even seen himself as a prophet of the "faith once delivered unto the saints" to Mennonites. His apparent self-confidence would certainly not preclude such an interpretation. Fundamentalism may have been his primary agenda, but one must also remember that he did remain, throughout his life, within Mennonite circles. He even involved himself in an enterprise, the forming of Grace Bible Institute which had as *one* underlying *raison d'être* the preservation of Mennonitism. Yet his fundamentalistic perspective persistently took precedence over Mennonite particularities. Such a stand places Suckau, if not outside of, then on the fringes of, the previously defined limits of "Mennonite fundamentalism."

ENDNOTES

¹"Fundamentalist Conflict in Mennonite Colleges: A Response to Cultural Transitions?" *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 57 (July 1983): 245-6.

²Edna Suckau Gerstner, "Personal Data and Observations Regarding Dr. C. H. Suckau," essay held by the Registrar's Office, Grace College of the Bible, Omaha, Nebraska. *The Story of Grace* (Omaha, Nebraska: n.p., 1980), by Paul Kuhlmann, switches the placement of the two sisters (p. 68), but since it used the Gerstner essay as its source, the former is the more reliable.

³Gerstner, 3-4.

⁴James C. Juhnke, *A People of Mission* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1979), 90.

⁵Kuhlmann, 69.

⁶Juhnke, 28.

⁷C. H. Suckau, "Diary—1912," Suckau Papers, in the possession of the author, 1, 14, 216, 266 (hereafter "Suckau Diary").

⁸A. B. Shelly to Balzer and Harder, 20 July 1907, Board of Missions Correspondence, Men-

nonite Library and Archives, MLA-I-1-2, Box 4, Folder 19.

⁹Juhnke, 95.

¹⁰Juhnke, 95, 256; unfortunately, the important document in note 13 on page 256 has been misplaced in the reorganization of the Mennonite Library and Archives.

¹¹Naomi Lehman, *Pilgrimage of a Congregation* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1982), 73-74.

¹²Interview with Loris Habegger, former First Mennonite Church of Berne, Indiana, member, North Newton, Kansas, 11 April 1988.

¹³Lehman, 79.

¹⁴Habegger interview.

¹⁵Interview with Naomi Lehman, member First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana, 8 April 1988, via telephone.

¹⁶Letters concerning C. H. Suckau's 1928 taxes, 6 December 1928 - 14 March 1929, Board of Missions/General Correspondence, Mennonite Library and Archives, MLA-I-1-2, Box 23, Folder 168.

¹⁷C. H. Suckau to the Foreign Missions Board, 22 May 1929, P. H. Richert Collection, MLA-MS-16, Box 20, Folder 147.

¹⁸C. H. Suckau to P. H. Richert, 23 September 1929, P. H. Richert Collection, MLA-MS-16, Box 20, Folder 147.

¹⁹P. W. Penner to P. H. Richert, 7 November 1929, P. H. Richert Collection, MLA-MS-16, Box 20, Folder 147.

²⁰M. Horsch to P. H. Richert, note on letter from Richert to foreign missions board, 12 November 1929, P. H. Richert Collection, MLA-MS-16, Box 20, Folder 147.

²¹India Conference telegram to Kliewer, 5 December 1929, P. H. Richert Collection, MLA-MS-16, Box 20, Folder 147.

²²P. H. Richert to D. J. Sprunger, 9 December 1929, P. H. Richert Collection, MLA-MS-16, Box 20, Folder 147.

²³D. J. Sprunger to P. H. Richert, 16 December 1929, P. H. Richert Collection, MLA-MS-16, Box 20, Folder 147.

²⁴Habegger interview.

²⁵Lehman, 81-82.

²⁶Naomi Lehman interview.

²⁷Habegger interview.

²⁸Habegger interview.

²⁹C. H. Suckau to "friend(s) in the service," 18 November 1942, "First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana," MLA Vertical Files.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Habegger interview.

³²Carl M. Lehman to C. H. Suckau, 9 December 1942, "First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana," MLA, Vertical File.

³³Interview with Carl Lehman, Bluffton, Ohio, 13 April 1988, via telephone.

³⁴C. H. Suckau to Abraham Warkentin, 26 March 1936, Abraham Warkentin Collection, MLA-MS-23, Box 11, Folder 159.

³⁵Edison Sprunger to Abraham Warkentin, 5 September 1936, Abraham Warkentin Collection, MLA-MS-23, Box 11, Folder 159.

³⁶Carl Lehman suggested that this was the most pressing indictment that could be made against Suckau as a pastor.

³⁷H. P. Krehbiel Collection, MLA-MS-12, Box 12, Folder 78.

³⁸A copy of a 31 July 1931 draft, as well as two copies of the printed constitution, are located in the H. P. Krehbiel Collection, MLA-MS-12, Box 12, Folder 78.

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⁴²H. P. Krehbiel to C. H. Suckau, 16 May 1933, H. P. Krehbiel Collection, MLA-MS-12, Box 7, Folder 40.



C. H. Suckau.

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⁴⁴Kuhlmann, 13.

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⁴⁶Krehbiel, "Notes."

⁴⁷Kuhlmann, 44-45.

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⁴⁹Ibid., 27.

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⁵⁴"Biblical Claims for the Virgin Birth of Christ," *Grace Tidings* 2 (December 1944): 2-3.

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⁵⁷"Non-resistance," *Grace Tidings* 3 (June 1945): 8.

⁵⁸"The Place of Grace Bible Institute in Mennonite History," *Grace Tidings* 6 (January 1949): 2-3.

⁵⁹George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 165ff.

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⁶¹Rev. C. H. Suckau, D.D., Resigns as President of Grace Bible Institute," *Grace Tidings* 8 (March 1951): 2.

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Cast Back to Their Root System: Rebuilding Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kansas

by June Galle Krehbiel

The Fire and Sadness

Wisps of smoke rose from the stark rubble of the Eden Mennonite Church building at dawn on January 25, 1988, signaling the end of a structure that had dominated the landscape four miles west and two miles north of Moundridge for 64 years. Completely destroyed in two hours by a fire of unknown origin, the wood structure had housed 472 people the previous day during its final hours of worship.

Tears and shocked emotions flooded the phone lines as those same people and others grieved for the building that was theirs. That building had helped dedicate babies, teach children, baptize believers, marry couples, guide adults, and bury loved ones. Many had known no other church home.

"The structure, remodeled extensively in 1949, had been improved in many ways the past few years. The newest improvement was a modern kitchen completed a year ago. New restrooms, an elevator for the handicapped and an improved speaker system were other recent improvements.

"Another huge loss was the church's large pipe organ. There was a well stocked library and music library, quilts . . . as well as valued historical items."¹

Church records stored at the church office in Moundridge were saved. The church's activity center one-half mile from the church site received no damage.

"For many of Eden's members it is the only church they or their families have known.

"I feel like part of my roots have been interfered with," said Vera Thiesen . . . "That's the only church I ever knew since I was quite young," said Martin M. Goering . . .

"Ray Lichti told of his daughter's reaction by phone from Maryland. Lou Lichti . . . expressed deep regret at the loss. 'There was so much history tied up for me in that building,' she said. She was thinking back to her grandfather Gerhard Zerger and her own Mennonite faith."²

Memories and roots brought many people to the first church gathering two days after the fire. Held at the local high school auditorium, the meeting allowed time for many to share their feelings. Tears flowed freely during a time devoted to open sharing. The janitor recalled her attachment to the building. A saddened new mother regretted that her baby would not be dedicated there. A member of the Salina Mennonite Church (Salina, Ks.) offered encouragement. Though tears prevailed, humor lightened the burden. Former janitor Ellis Goering told of his experiences, including one tale of "the little man that lived in the tower." Remnants from the fire—blackened handbells, melted down silver set, misshapen forks, knives, and spoons, and an ashen hymnbook—offered a few mementoes of the three-story building.

Responses to the Loss

Responses from the larger community sustained the members of the church during their time of grief. Only hours after the fire the Moundridge school system offered its auditorium and classrooms for services. Eden members continue to gather there weekly.

"An unidentified man from Wichita stopped at the home of one of the church members the day of the fire and delivered two envelopes: one contained \$50 and the other \$20."³ This set a pattern of giving that would continue for months.

Non-Mennonite Larry Stroup of McPherson "wrote letters to 46 daily newspapers and 210 weekly newspapers because he wanted to help repay the Mennonites for helping in other peoples' crises throughout the years."⁴ His letter prompted hundreds of donations from all over the state.

The letters accompanying these donations offered moral support to the grieving congregation: "Now it is our turn to help those who help so often . . ." "We are also a rural congregation and suffered the loss of our church building . . ." "We will continue to uphold you in prayer . . ." "Please be assured that we are feeling with you in this great loss."⁵

In addition to money, other churches sent green plants with notes of sympathy and loaned Sunday school supplies for the remainder of the quarter. They offered use of their buildings for weddings and funerals.

Major Decisions

Two weeks after the fire, the members of the congregation began the building process. Members agreed to use a three-fold plan submitted by the deacons. First, members listed the names of possible building committee candidates; then the nominating committee prepared a slate; finally the members chose the names of ten individuals to form the building committee. Two deacons and two trustees joined the committee. Intentionally the committee represented both women and men of varying ages.

February 17 this committee met to begin its work. The committee chose Howard Kaufman as chairman, E. Fred Goering took the job of vice-chairman, and Glenna Schrag was elected secretary.

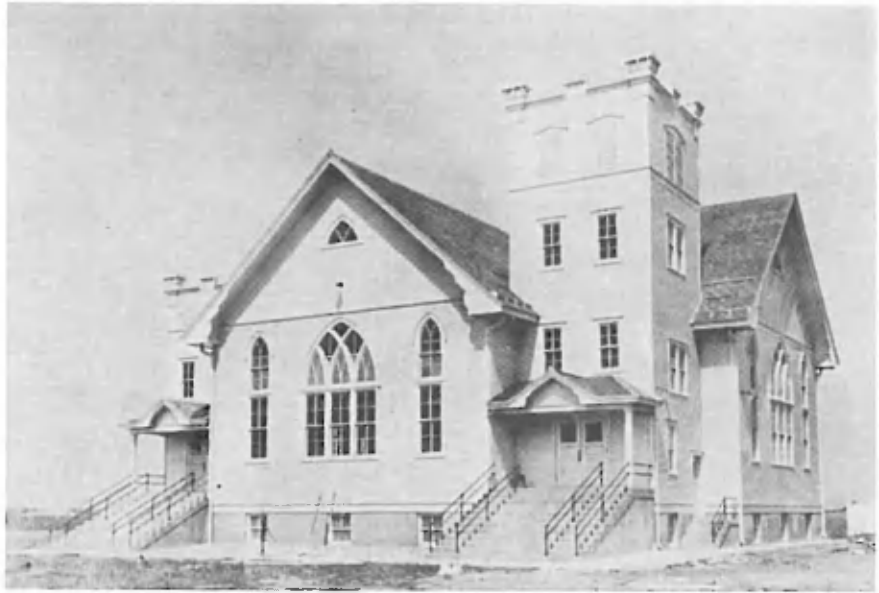
Decisions were being made. Following an earlier church meeting which determined that the congregation would build a new church, a March 2nd meeting decided that the location of the church would be at the old site.

Later the building committee created ten sub-committees which focused on different aspects of the structure. The committees included Sunday school and education, library and visual aids, nursery, sanctuary and foyer, music and organ, maintenance and restrooms, sound system, kitchen and storage, fellowship and recreation, outdoor planning and landscaping. A building committee member chaired each of these committees, which included fifty people from the congregation. After visiting new churches in the area and listening to needs of the congregation, these committees formed guidelines to present to the architects.

By the end of April the building committee had interviewed architects and recommended the congregation approve LeRoy Troyer & Associates, Mishawaka, Indiana, as architect. The congregation affirmed this choice.

May 26 the congregation approved the schematic design: a one level building with seating for 516 in a semi-circular sanctuary and an area of nearly 6000 square feet for fellowship hall or Sunday school use. Featured in the Troyer plan are multi-use areas, foldable walls, choir room, overflow, nursery, kitchen, library, friendship room, teachers' workroom, restrooms and mechanical areas, and ten Sunday school rooms for children under grade six. Total area: 27,747 square feet.

In summer, congregational meetings selected the elevation plan and color of bricks for the proposed building.



Top. This Eden Church building was dedicated in 1924. Four carpenters oversaw the volunteer workers who built it in less than a year. Men used the west (left) entrance, women the east. Middle. A 1949 remodeling project extended the building on three sides. An east balcony was made into classrooms. Bottom. In the 1950s an east entrance was added (right), putting in stairs to the children's classrooms in the basement. In 1982 an elevator for the handicapped, additional restrooms, and a brick entrance were built (center). Photos: Delbert Goering.



Top. Teacher Esther Schrag tells the Bible story to the three year old class on January 24, 1988, their last hour in the building. Photo: June Krehbiel. Middle. Discovered at 2:00 a.m. on January 25, 1988, the fire had consumed most of the structure before 4:00 a.m. Strong winds fanned flames which allowed only the northwest corner to stand at that time. Photo: Vernon R. Goering. Bottom. After the fire only a brick chimney shows the height of the three-story structure. Later members of the congregation sifted through the ashes for souvenirs. Photo: June Krehbiel.



During early planning several questionnaires surveyed the congregation. One helped determine the building site, another clarified the mission of Eden Church, and a third analyzed the church members' priorities in a building: balcony, steeple, storm shelter, stained glass and basement.

Hired as construction managers were Terry Duerksen and Max Fuqua of Inman. Duerksen took the position of job superintendent, overseeing individual contractors who would complete the work.

Even the minor decisions seemed major. Lack of hymnals created frustration; later they were purchased with money from two benefit concerts and other donations. Week by week new purchases were made: guest books, Sunday school supplies, microphones, cordless hearing aids, choir music, library books, piano, 500 folding chairs, kitchen equipment, sewing supplies and plant stands. Some items were purchased for use at the worship services in the high school; others added to the needs at the activity center.

By the end of the summer major decisions were completed, and the architects were drawing the final plans for construction.



Groundbreaking

Seven months after the fire 550 people gathered under the warm early morning August sun to symbolically break the ground for the new church building. In his sermon Eden's pastor Don Longbottom said, "Every tragedy carries within it the seeds of triumph. The triumph in our fiery tragedy is that we have been cast back to our root system and forced to rely upon it and even to deepen it." Longbottom said the congregation's plan to rebuild "sends a message that we are one rural church that does not intend to die...."

"The pastor said Eden's people had strong roots in the past and a faith for the future."⁶

Highlighting the service were three types of groundbreaking. With a team of work horses, two men plowed a furrow to represent the church's agricultural history. Then the fourteen members of the building committee pulled the plow. Finally the members of the congregation used garden spades to turn over the ground. Even little children, using toy shovels, joined for this part of the service.

Remembering the past, 91-year old Jacob Goering who had helped construct the church that burned reminded the congregation that the building "served the purpose and it served it well and we should praise God for it."⁷



Top. August 21, 1988, was groundbreaking for the new church. As a reminder of the congregation's roots, Wes and Maynard Krehbiel plow with a team of work horses. Photo: Delbert Goering. Middle. The fourteen member building committee pulls a one bottom plow during the groundbreaking service. Photo: Delbert Goering. Footings were poured in September, 1988, and the new one-level building will contain 27,747 square feet. Bottom: Cement blocks surround storm shelters built into the structure. Workers prepare to pour concrete on top. Photo: Larry Goering.



Construction manager Terry Doerksen works on steel beams. Photo: Larry Goering.

Finances and Fundraisers

Insurance coverage on the burnt building and its contents amounted to \$1,439,000. This coverage came from two Mennonite mutual aid companies: Mennonite Property Aid Association, Moundridge, and Mennonite Aid Union, Hesston.

In July the building committee formed a three-member finance committee to develop a plan for raising the money to cover the projected cost of \$2,237,314. Without using a fund drive, their plan simply recommended that for three years, all members increase their giving by 33% per year. A second part of the finance committee's plan is donated labor which is expected to amount to \$150,000 for the three years.

Fundraisers provided additional monies. Youth cleaned and sold chimney bricks saved from the church. One of the women's groups sold commemorative plates. Other money raisers included a lamb and pig roast, fish fry, and bake sales.

Other churches added to Eden's building money by taking offerings, presenting musical programs, and serving meals. Including the money generated by Larry Stroup's letter, donations from non-members exceeded \$60,000.

By January 8, 1989, the finance committee reported that the total amount collected in insurance money and donations equalled \$1,706,782.

New Structure and Optimism

Actual construction began in August.

With the start of construction came pleas for volunteer labor. A church member offered to organize the volunteers. Members filled out forms which indicated the kinds of volunteer work they could do. Dozens of volunteers hauled truck-loads of dirt or sand, tarred the outside of the foundation, shoveled and packed dirt, helped with cement work, put an air vent below the sanctuary floor, swept the cement slab, picked up nails, sorted lumber and carried cement blocks to the builders.

In December the cement slab was completed, and later builders laid cement blocks which surround three storm shelters built into the structure. Concrete work was finished on January 17.

A major factor in the building's construction, according to Terry Duerksen, construction manager, was the unusually mild as well as dry autumn and winter which allowed the builders to proceed unhindered by weather. By mid-January the ground had not frozen, contrary to normal Kansas winters. The mild conditions forced workers to wait for supplies because the men were working on projects several weeks earlier than planned.

While outside work continued, the building committee signed a contract with Martin Ott, an organ builder from

St. Louis, Missouri. The contract calls for a tracker organ to be installed in 1990.

At the church's annual business meeting in January 1989 Orlo Kaufman, senior deacon, referred to Romans 8:28 when remembering the fire and the months that followed. Through tragedy he said, "God has been at work for good." Kaufman explained that God's will has been at work in the generosity of the local churches and high school, in the church committee members working together, and in the challenge of contemplating the mission of the Eden church. "Good things we haven't imagined will come to reality," he said.

At that first annual meeting since the fire, the congregation voted to make plans to lay a cornerstone in the new building. Though rooted in the past, the same group of people, who just a year before mourned the loss of its building, now looks to the future.

ENDNOTES

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²Ibid.

³"Religious bonds hold displaced parishioners together," *The Hutchinson News* (January 31, 1988), p. 1.

⁴"Letter becomes catalyst for donations," *The McPherson Sentinel* (March 1, 1988), p. 1.

⁵"Letters," *Eden Echoes* newsletter (April, 1988), pp. 9-11.

⁶"Moundridge, Kan., Church Begins Anew," *Mennonite Weekly Review* (August 25, 1988), p. 1.

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Early Mennonite Houses in Goessel, Kansas: The Voth/Unruh/Fast House

by Kristine K. Flaming

When the Mennonites of the Alexanderwohl village arrived as a group in Kansas in September of 1874, they brought their traditional architecture. Many of these traditions had their origins in Prussia and the Netherlands; for example, the housebarn and the Russian stove.¹ The Mennonites attempted to continue these traditions in their first structures even though they had to use different materials.

Most of the early dwellings of the Mennonites that came to the Goessel area fit into the classification of vernacular architecture. Vernacular architecture can be defined as a building built by an ordinary person, either the owner, or a person in the community without formal architectural plans.² The structure is usually built according to cultural traditions and values.³ Most vernacular buildings were built before 1900, and show a medieval, English influence which is characterized by an "undisguised use of materials and functional simplicity"⁴ and are "an expression of folk culture and the expressed values of that culture."⁵ Buildings, then, can often reveal the values of the person designing and building the structure as well as the values of the community to which the person belongs. In studying individual buildings it is also possible to see how the values of a community change. In the Goessel area the first homes, of which the Voth/Unruh/Fast House is an example, were simple in design, structure, and materials used. However, as the Mennonites became more Americanized so did their homes, and by 1900 the houses were larger and fancier. This article will focus on the first homes of the immigrants, using the Voth/Unruh/Fast House as the primary example.

ALEXANDERWOHL MENNONITES - FIRST HOMES

People who chose to settle in Kansas had to face a harsh physical environment which had an effect on the type of house built and the material used. The materials available to the Mennonites were quite different from those available to eastern pioneers. Kansas did not have the abundance of trees found in the east, so other materials had to be found. Early settlers built three basic types of structures: sod or adobe homes, housebarns, and wood frame homes. Building materials were sod, wood and in many cases a combination of materials.

Sod Houses

Because winter was approaching, the Alexanderwohl settlers were anxious to begin building houses. Although lumber was used in later building, sod and adobe were more common building materials for the first structures. Sod was readily available and had insulating qualities that kept the inside cool in the hot Kansas summers and warm in the bitter winters. Although the sod had positive qualities of insulation and availability, drawbacks also existed. Herman Schmidt remembered that the house with sod walls in which he resided had problems because the mice were attracted to the sod bricks. He finally had to remove the majority of the sod bricks because of the mice which his wife kept hearing in the walls.⁶

The process for making the sod bricks, or *sood tajal* in Low German, was not complicated. In some cases sod could be cut out of the ground in the form of a square. If the grass roots were

dense enough the roots would hold the sod and the brick would be used as it was.⁷ If this was not possible the brick was made of a mixture of clay from a nearby creek and manure. The brick shape was formed "by placing the wooden mold on the ground, pressing the clay into it, scraping off excess clay, removing the form" when dry.⁸ The clay brick would then be used as either the load-bearing material in the wall or as a mortar. Houses built entirely of sod were often small with one room serving as kitchen/sitting room and another room for a bedroom.⁹ A sod home, which was built in 1876, still stands three-fourths mile east of Goessel. Some wood frame houses also have adobe bricks between the studs of the exterior wall. An interior wall would then completely conceal the adobe which acted as an insulator.

As the settlers became more established and their economic situations improved, these first structures were often abandoned in favor of a wood frame house. Another common practice was to build on to the existing sod or adobe structure and use the older part as a kitchen.

The Housebarn

The second type of structure which was built by the settlers was the housebarn. In the Goessel area this type of building was not as common as it was in some other communities. The housebarn was unique because it had living quarters for people as well as the area for the animals all under one roof. The building materials would either be sod, wood, or a combination. The floor plan of the housebarn followed the pattern



Adobe house owned by Del Paulson located in West Branch Township (section 4), Marion County.



Herman Schmidt home, owned by Rannie Schmidt and located in West Branch Township (section 3), Marion County.

of the homes in Russia which can be traced back to Prussia and the Netherlands. The living quarters and the barn were connected either directly or by a short hall between the two. The purpose of the hallway was to keep the animal smell out of the living quarters. The house part was a story and a half and the upper story was used as a granary or as a place to store cured meats.¹⁰

Newspaper reporters describing the first Mennonite dwellings marveled at the cleanliness of these housebarns. One wrote, "From the appearance of these buildings on the exterior, and in some instances having to pass through a stable to get in, we were not a little surprised at the neat appearance of the interior."¹¹ However, this practice of building the house and barn under one roof was "realized to be impractical"¹² and was discontinued. Two families with housebarns were the Peter Voths,¹³ and the Johann Voths.¹⁴ The Johann Voth housebarn was made of sod brick two feet thick. Neither of these two homes are standing today; however, there are photographs of them. The Adobe House Museum in Hillsboro, Kansas, is also an example of a sod housebarn which would have been similar to those built in the Goessel area.

Wood Frame Houses

Even though there were few trees in the area, wood frame houses were built

quite frequently by the early settlers in New Alexanderwohl.¹⁵ The Alexanderwohl group made arrangements with a Halstead contractor, David Ruth, to build their homes by Christmas. With the assistance of approximately 130 carpenters, Ruth finished building sixty-five homes by mid-December of 1874.¹⁶ All of the houses that were built at this time by Ruth followed one simple plan. Henry Banman described the houses as being built on "one model, thirty feet by forty feet, one story, but built so that another floor could be added later if needed. The upper floor was the storage area for harvested grain for many years."¹⁷ The cost of these houses was several hundred dollars.¹⁸ By November of 1874, a mere two months after construction had begun, the houses were finished and people were able to move in. Rev. Heinrich Goertz of the Alexanderwohl group recalled moving into the new homes: "We were fortunate with building that we could move in on November 12. The cost of it was \$611.75. It was just the shells, the inside not being finished."¹⁹

The homes that the Mennonites of Alexanderwohl built had some basic characteristics in common. The structures were usually a wood structure without ornament. Some had insulating adobe bricks between the outside and the interior wall. The roof usually had wood shingles, but the interior attic was unfinished. There were usually two en-

trances, front and back. The windows had six to eight small panes and were sometimes shuttered. The interior floor boards were wide and not uniform. Many homes originally had a Russian grass burning stove, which was often removed later. The Mennonites had "good comfortable homes, with no evidences of luxury indeed, but everywhere solid substantial comfort."²⁰

The economic conditions and size of the family determined differences in the housing style. A common practice was to add on to an existing house rather than build an entirely new one. Often the original structure was built along the traditional plans of a larger room adjoined with two smaller rooms and an unfinished upstairs. As the family grew, so did the house by the addition of rooms as they were needed, or when the additions could be afforded. Additions to a house were usually done by a member of the family or community—sometimes as part of a trade, or bartered labor. August Duerksen remembered how an uncle of his, Cornelius Duerksen, did some work for a neighbor, H. H. Schmidt, who in payment for the work built the northeast addition to the Duerksen home.²¹ In some cases a longer wing was added to the front to make a T-shaped house,²² while another option was to add block sections to make a square-shaped house. There did not seem to be a reason for the different styles that emerged except for personal preference and financial conditions.²³

THE VOTH/UNRUH/FAST HOUSE: AN EXAMPLE OF GOESSEL AREA ARCHITECTURE

The Voth/Unruh/Fast House, which has been preserved and restored on the Kauffman Museum grounds, North Newton, Kansas, is typical of the first houses built by the Mennonite settlers in the Goessel area. The exterior maintained the simplicity of form with no porches or decorative detail. The Voth/Unruh/Fast House, however, does represent a difference from the housebarn in the use of space and the arrangement of rooms.

The Voth/Unruh/Fast House was built in 1875 by the newly married David Voth. In keeping with the traditions of the community the house was built on the homestead of his parents, Pastor Peter and Catherine Unruh Voth. The location of the Voth homestead was in the Alexanderwohl settlement in Section 9 of the Gnadenfeld village.²⁴ This was just east of present Goessel, Kansas.

The original structure of the house, as built by David Voth, was a simple frame house with a sod wall inside. The floor plan was similar to the Peter Voth home. There were three rooms which included a larger kitchen-dining area, a bedroom, and a sitting room. These three rooms make a square with half of the square being the kitchen and the other two smaller rooms being the other half. The adobe was located between the smaller rooms.²⁵

The Voth/Unruh/Fast House does not have the many room divisions that the houses built according to the Prussian-Russian model do. A comparison of the parental home floor plan and the floor plan of the Voth/Unruh/Fast House shows this change. In the more traditional Mennonite home each of the smaller room divisions had a specific function usually indicated by the room name. The Voth/Unruh/Fast House does not have the many small rooms, rather it has one large all-purpose room connected with two smaller rooms that have specific purposes. This change in the basic floor plan and the movement away from the housebarn arrangement with more room divisions demonstrates how the Mennonites were adjusting to their new environment. The traditional housebarn arrangement, although it had been practical in Russia, was not so practical in Kansas, and modifications were made.²⁶

The David Voth family lived in the

house for nine years and in 1884 the house was bought by Kornelius and Anna Funk Unruh. The Unruh's moved the house one mile east to Section 3 of the Gnadenfeld village.²⁷ The house was placed on rollers and horses pulled the house to its new location.²⁸ The Kornelius Unruh family and descendants owned and lived in the house until it was moved to North Newton, Kansas, in 1974, to be part of the Kauffman Museum. Since the Unruh/Fast family owned and lived in the house the longest, the concentration of this article will be on the time that they owned it, especially the earlier years.

The Kornelius Unruh Family - Background

Kornelius Unruh was born in the Alexanderwohl village in South Russia in 1843. When Kornelius was four years old his father died, and a year later his mother remarried a man by the name of Jacob Schmidt. In 1861 he was baptized and became a member of the Alexanderwohl Church. In 1874 Kornelius joined the group of Mennonites emigrating to America on the ship the *Cimbria*. He kept a journal of the events of the trip in which he described the arrival in Topeka, Kansas, and the immigrant houses built by the Santa Fe Railroad. Upon arriving in the Goessel area, Kornelius stayed in the immigrant house with his mother and step-father for eight weeks before moving into their home.²⁹

Kornelius soon bought land of his own. He chose an eighty-acre tract in West Branch Township, Section 3, which he knew was not the best land. He chose it, however, in order to be close to his parents. Nevertheless, he was so discouraged about the land that when he showed it to his future wife, Katharine Reimer, he "asked her whether she would still like to be his bride." She consented anyway. They were married in June 1878; however, Katharine died a year later. Kornelius married a second time to Anna Funk Unruh in August 1879.³⁰

Kornelius Unruh "was a very serious-minded person. He would not permit anyone to take a picture of him."³¹ He was very religious and based his beliefs about pictures on the biblical verse, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth," Exodus 20:4.

He also believed that it was unscriptural to have pictures or mottos hanging on the walls of his home.³²

Kornelius' second wife Anna Funk Unruh was very talented with sewing and handwork. She made most of the clothing for the family and was "very creative with crocheting." She would often design her own patterns. She enjoyed making bonnets which had a woven wheat straw bill and the rest was cloth. She also did a lot of cross-stitch on gingham material to decorate ordinary items like aprons.³³

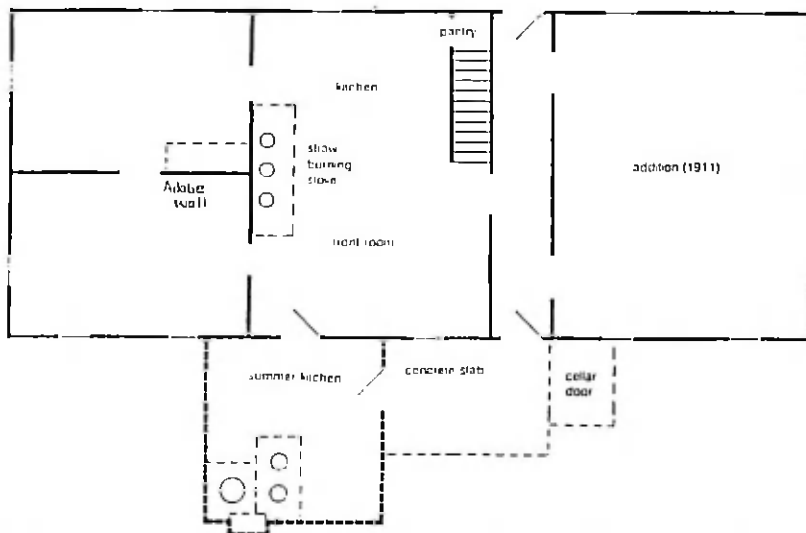
Kornelius and Anna had eight children. Kornelius died in December 1923 and Anna in February 1936. Daniel F. Unruh was the oldest son and did much of the remodeling of the house. He was widely known for his carpentry work in the Goessel community. He designed and built the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church building, and the original Goessel Mennonite Church, which is no longer standing. He also designed and built many homes in the Goessel area.³⁴

Setting on the Farmstead

A small rise next to a creek was the setting for the house on the Unruh homestead. A wooded area was the background to the west of the house. The front of the house faced east and the length ran north and south. This was just opposite of how it stands today at the Kauffman Museum where it faces south, and what is referred to as the north room is now on the east side. For the purposes of this article it is described as it was on the farm.

The summer kitchen was attached on the east side and is not in existence today.³⁵ The door of the summer kitchen opened out onto a concrete slab. The cellar door was at the end of the concrete slab with the cistern located just outside the summer kitchen door close to the house.³⁶ Elsie Flaming remembers that as grandchildren they used to love to run down the steep incline of the cellar door, but "Grandpa was so sure that if we would run up and down that slanting door we would fall and get hurt. He did not want us to do that."³⁷ This arrangement of the summer kitchen and cistern was fairly common among the Mennonites of the Alexanderwohl village and was retained as a way of building for several years.

The Unruhs, like most of the Mennonites, had an orchard. The seeds for various types of fruit trees had been brought over from Russia and success-



Floor plan and 1948 photograph of the Voth/Unruh/Fast house.

fully planted and grown.³⁸ The Unruhs had two orchards, one to the west of the house and another to the north across the creek. The orchard included trees bearing peaches, apricots, and apples.³⁹

The Unruhs, like many of their neighbors, had a neat yard with a "prevalence of flowers."⁴⁰ Anna Funk had a vegetable garden and two flower gardens. There was a flower garden west of the house and more flowers in the garden which was located on the east side of the driveway near the road. The flower gardens were very beautiful. Elsie remembered the fun the cousins had while playing in the flower garden. She also recalled a steep ravine just north of the house which they were often warned away from because of its danger.⁴¹

The Interior

Prior to 1911 the main floor consisted of three rooms. The first and largest room was the kitchen-dining area. This room served as an all-purpose room. The table was in the middle of the room and was the only kitchen work space

available, and it was put to good use. They "mixed up everything on the kitchen table and after eating they put a pan on the table for doing dishes."⁴² A sink was later put in along the west wall, and another storage cupboard was in the southwest corner.⁴³

Storing food was more complicated and labor intensive than it is today. After butchering, a good portion of the meat was canned and then stored in the cellar.⁴⁴ The country sausage would be hung over a rod in the north corner of the attic where it was very cold. Onions were also stored in the attic in sacks which were hung from the rafters.⁴⁵ In the summer food had to be kept cool. This was done in a variety of ways. Butter was often hung in the well by the house and then right before mealtimes someone had to go get it. Another method to keep food cool was to put the food "right on the concrete in the basement." The food would be covered with a bowl to keep out bugs, and the concrete would keep the food cooler than wood.⁴⁶

The original stove which was used for cooking and heating was a Russian style

adobe grass burning stove. The Russian stove was part of the adobe wall and was located between the bedroom and sitting room with an opening to the kitchen. The oven was approximately five feet high with two levels. The lower level was used for baking and the upper level was used for cooking. The stove also heated the house; it was heated once in the morning and again in the evening to keep the room warm all night. This Russian stove was taken out in the early 1900's when Kornelius Unruh did some remodeling. The stove that replaced the Russian grass burning stove was probably a round black stove, and later a "home comfort range" was placed in the middle of the room.⁴⁷ During the restoration of the house done by the Kauffman Museum the Russian stove was rebuilt as the original may have been.

The inside walls of the house were whitewashed and the "outside walls were filled with adobe brick between the studs." In 1902 the oil cloth was taken out and Kornelius "put in laths and plastered the walls which were then papered. The crossings were painted green and the floors were bare." The adobe brick wall between the two bedrooms was left in. Before 1900 all of the floors were wood. In the early 1900's linoleum was put on the floors of the two bedrooms. Curtains were white with lace at the edges.⁴⁸ In winter Anna always had the windows full of geraniums which were always blooming and at Christmas time she always had Christmas cactus blooming.⁴⁹

Many common accessories found in the Alexanderwohl community were brought from Russia. One of the most popular items was the Russian clock which usually had a green and gold face and a long pendulum with a disk "as big as a buckwheat cake."⁵⁰ Frieda Barkman wrote of such a clock at her grandfather's house and described it as a "tall clock with its innards exposed."⁵¹ These Russian clocks were not freestanding, but were hung on the wall. Other items that were common in Goessel area homes included Russian trunks and the Russian tea kettle which was copper and lined with tin. Before kerosene lamps came into use for lighting, a wick was dipped into tallow or fat and lit much like a candle.⁵²

Kornelius and Anna's bedroom was in the southwest part of the house. The bed was along the east wall. During the later years when Kornelius was sick a

hook was put in the ceiling above the bed. A leather strap was fastened to the hook and by holding onto the strap he could raise himself up in bed. Elsie Flaming remembered when it was her parent's turn to stay with her Grandpa, she would have to stand by the bed and sing "Haus dem Himmel Ferne" for him.⁵³

In the other bedroom a sewing machine was kept. Sewing was an important feature of the Unruh's life. Anna Funk Unruh made most of Kornelius' clothes "because she made them in the style that he liked."⁵⁴ The daughters were also good at sewing and "a lot of sewing was done in that house."⁵⁵

The attic rooms were fixed up by Dan Unruh, the oldest son of Kornelius and Anna Unruh, "when he was old enough to have an interest in building."⁵⁶ Although the attic was mainly used for food storage, there were two bedrooms for the children. In 1900 a new roof as well as new siding was put on the house. Also at this time one room in the attic was finished, painted, and a stove installed. This room was built specifically for the boys because before this they had "slept under the shingles" in the attic. A few years later this one room was made into two rooms and the girls were able to have a bedroom. Otherwise the attic remained unfinished with no insulation, only shingles separating the inside from the elements. The beds that the children slept on are described as having a "mattress of hay or cornhusk which could fold up, and push together."⁵⁷

The stairway up to the attic bedrooms is very steep and without a railing. The ceiling by the stairway door is a different color and can be removed. This was for the occasion when they had to carry large objects up the stairs, then part of the ceiling could be removed to make room for the object.⁵⁸

The main floor also changed over the years. The north room or front room was added in 1911 under the supervision of Dan Unruh because he thought the family needed more room. This multi-purpose room served as a place for family gatherings and in 1912 the oldest daughter, Anna, was married in this room.⁵⁹ Visitors also slept in this room when they stayed overnight. Later, families lived in this room when they stayed to care for the ailing parents. The north room had an impressive "piece of furniture that could be made

up into a bed." This spare bed was purchased (soon after the room was added) for company that would come for night.⁶⁰ The north room is also remembered as having a lot of straight chairs, but there were no sofas or benches. After family meals the men visited in the north room while the women would stay in the warmer kitchen.⁶¹

CONCLUSION

The Voth/Unruh/Fast house is representative of many houses built by the Mennonites between 1874-1900. Basically it was a plain house made of materials readily available and built (without use of architectural drawings) by the people that were to live in it. The floor plan of the Voth/Unruh/Fast house is very similar to other homes; however, it is lacking the many smaller rooms of a typical Russian-Prussian house. It is not as elaborate as other homes built by Mennonites a few years later.

After 1900 architectural styles in the Goessel area shifted. The T-shaped house became popular, and larger, fancier houses were built. The shift can be attributed to various factors. The sod houses were beginning to fall apart, and when new houses were built, they were larger and more elaborate. Mennonites followed the styles of their American neighbors, rather than the traditional styles of the past. Goessel Mennonites, between 1900 and 1920, were becoming more secure economically and followed a national trend of building in the Victorian or classical architectural style.

ENDNOTES

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⁵Michael H. Koop, "German - Russian Folk Architecture in South Dakota," *Journal of American Historical Society of Germans from Russia* 6 (1983): 35.

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⁷Jacob G. Flaming, Oral Interview, Goessel, Kansas, February, 1988.

⁸Koop, 37.

⁹Abraham Albrecht, "Mennonite Settlements in Kansas" (Masters thesis, University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1924), 38.

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¹²Richard H. Schmidt, "The Hochfeld Village," *Mennonite Life* 40 (March 1985): 13.

¹³Marie Voth, "My Great Grandfather's Home" (Student paper, Bethel College, 1959), 1.

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¹⁹Rev. Heinrich Goertz, "Memoirs" (Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Centennial Committee, 1986), 7.

²⁰Hiebert, *Brothers In Deed*, 383a.

²¹August Duerksen, Oral Interview, Bethesda Home, Goessel, Kansas, February 10, 1988.

²²August Duerksen interview.

²³Elsie Schmidt Flaming, Oral Interview, Goessel, Kansas, November 10, 1987.

²⁴Kauffman Museum, "The 1870's Mennonite Farm House: The Voth/Unruh/Fast House," Leaflet 1.

²⁵Wayne Lee, source and date of article not recorded, a newspaper article about the Voth/Unruh/Fast House, in the Kauffman Museum File.

²⁶Richard H. Schmidt, "Hochfeld Village," 13.

²⁷P. U. Schmidt, "The Beginning of Hochfeld Village and the Alexanderwohl Church," translated by Richard H. Schmidt, *Mennonite Life* 36 (March 1981): 224.

²⁸Katherine Unruh Schmidt, "Recollections of the Unruh House" (No date), 3. In the possession of Selma Fast Schmidt.

²⁹Ella (Mrs. E. J.) Schmidt, ed., *The Peter Unruh Genealogy 1675-1981*, (1981), 223-224.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 227-8.

³¹Elsie Flaming interview.

³²Ella Schmidt, *Unruh Genealogy*, 225.

³³Elsie Flaming interview.

³⁴Ella Schmidt, *Unruh Genealogy*, 226.

³⁵The cooking was generally done in the summer kitchen in summer so as not to heat up the house during the hot summer months.

³⁶Selma Schmidt, Oral Interview, Kauffman Museum, North Newton, Kansas, January 22, 1988.

³⁷Elsie Flaming interview.

³⁸Hiebert, *Brothers In Deed*, 402.

³⁹Selma Schmidt interview.

⁴⁰Hiebert, *Brothers In Deed*, 384.

⁴¹Elsie Flaming interview.

⁴²Selma Schmidt interview.

⁴³Elsie Flaming interview.

⁴⁴Selma Schmidt interview.

⁴⁵Elsie Flaming interview.

⁴⁶Selma Schmidt interview.

⁴⁷Katherine Schmidt, "Recollections," 1-2.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Elsie Flaming interview.

⁵⁰Noble L. Prentis, "As Others Saw Them," *Mennonite Life* 25 (April 1970): 60.

⁵¹Frieda Barkman, "Grandpa Johann Flaming" (No date), 8. MS in possession of author.

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⁵³Elsie Schmidt interview.

⁵⁴Ella Schmidt, *Unruh Genealogy*, 225.

⁵⁵Elsie Flaming interview.

⁵⁶Katherine Schmidt, "Recollections," 3.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Elsie Flaming interview.

⁵⁹Katherine Schmidt, "Recollections," 3.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹Elsie Flaming and Selma Schmidt interviews.

Gerhard Ensz Family

"In September 1893 our farm in Kaisergrade, Russia, was sold to Father's half-brother, John Thiessen. We continued to live there until March 1894 when we had auction sale of cattle, machinery and household goods. For two weeks we were permitted to live in my parents' summer kitchen with our nine children On May 30 we left our old home for America With God's gracious guidance and protection we arrived in McLain [Kansas on July 7] at five o'clock in the afternoon"

So wrote Marie Matthies Ensz forty years after she and her husband, Gerhard, arrived in Kansas in 1894. Gerhard and Marie were born in West Prussia. Gerhard was born in Halbstadt to Aron and Judith Ensz, members of the Heubuden congregation. He migrated to Russia with an uncle in 1860. Marie was born in 1858 to Bernhard and Elizabeth Dyck Matthies. In 1860 the Matthies family migrated to Russia, where Bernhard helped establish with Claass Epp the village of Alexanderthal.

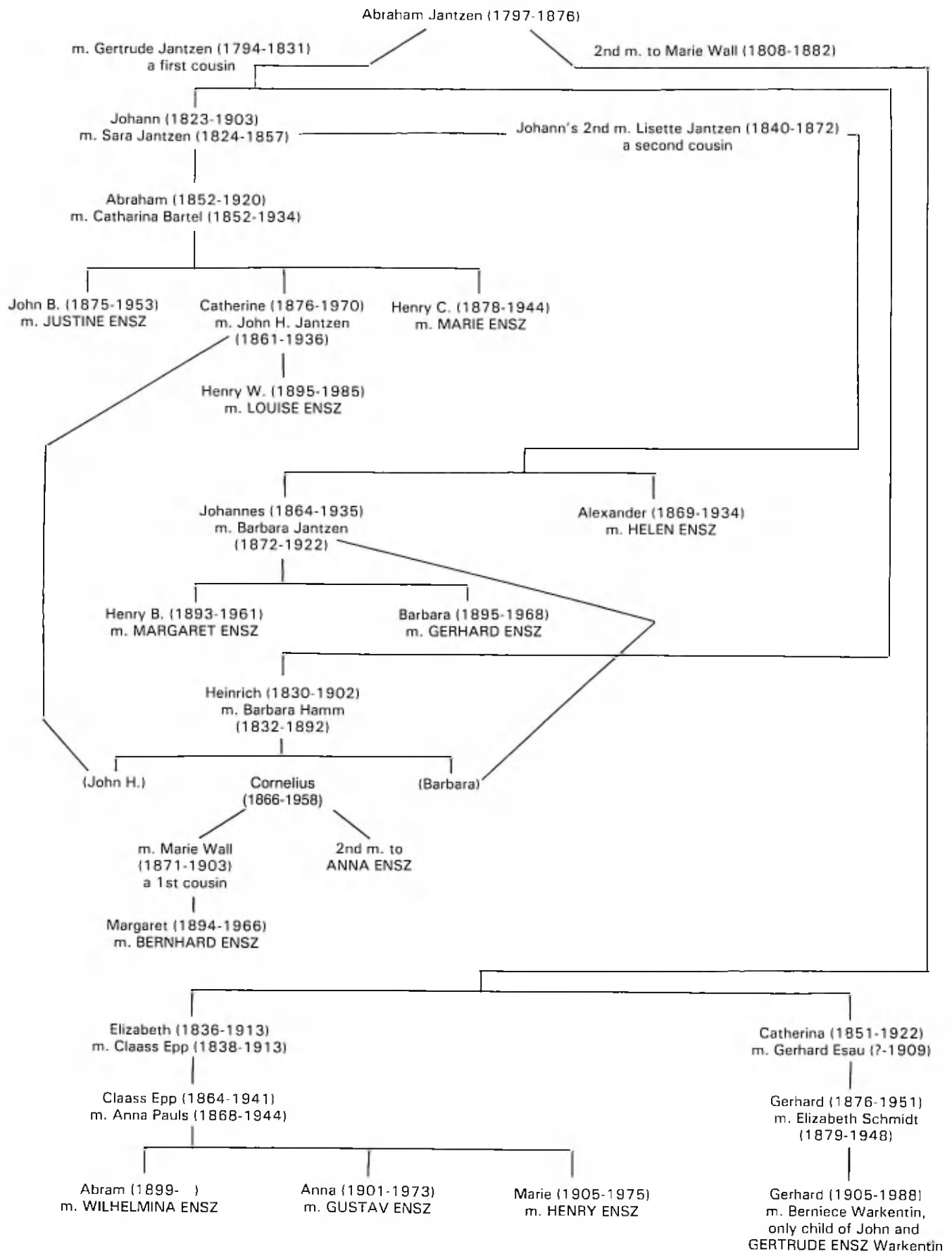
This photograph was taken in Newton in 1898, probably sometime before May 26, the wedding date of their oldest daughter, Helen. (The Enszes' last and twelfth living child, Wilhelmina, was born in October that year. She died in 1985.)

Front row: Henry (1895-1958), Gerhard (1848-1912), Louise (1891-1944), Margaret (1893-1953), Bernhard M. (1890-1980), Marie (1858-1939) and Gustav William (1897-1975). Back row: Justine (1888-1965), Marie (1884-1936), Helen (1878-1963), Gertrude (1882-1940), Anna (1881-1967) and Gerhard Bernhard (1885-1963).

On May 26, 1898, Helen married Alexander Jantzen of rural Plymouth, Nebraska. In 1905 Anna married Alexander's first cousin Cornelius Jantzen, also of rural Plymouth. The next year the Ensz family moved from Newton to Beatrice, Nebraska. All the children eventually married—eight to Jantzens, three to Epps and one to a Warkentin. How the Jantzens and Epps were related is illustrated on the next page.

—Marjorie A. Jantzen





Poetry

by Elmer Suderman

WHO THEY WERE

The buffalo grass my parents walked
and cut for sod for their first home
and busted and harrowed
and sowed Turkey Red Wheat on
and harvested thousands of bushels
leans south today.

The gravestones tell who they were.
Daniel Suderman: Born: September 6, 1867.
Died: May 14, 1938.
Margaret Becker Suderman:
Born: December 13, 1875.
Died: May 22, 1968.

But the wind which whispers
in the grass
says more than gravestone
who they were:
hardy people, neighbors to good years,
disaster familiar as family.
Simple people acquainted
with sky-conquered land,
with sandburrs, wheat and winter,
and a simple clap board church
surrounded by wheat fields.

SOMETIMES

Sometimes
fence posts throw
long shadows
as they march
single file
along the road
I walk
each evening.

Sometimes
a solitary
post
stands out
suddenly
separate
from all
the rest.

HAULING WHEAT IN HARVEST: 1932

Rattling through the dusty brown field
with grain wagon
to pick up another load of wheat,
more sweaty and tired
than the team of horses
pulling my wagon,
the evening sun's
shadows leading the way,
I watched wagon wheels
bend wheat stubble,
not wondering then as I wonder now
if in this aside of life
the creak of wagon wheels
almost filled the possibility
of space,
if the wheat, worth only
twenty five cents a bushel,
was a footnote to help me know
sky and shadow
sweat and serenity.

STORIES HAVE TO BE TOLD TO BECOME REAL

He asked for stories.
Instead he got advice,
prudential, vague:
"Be good, Work hard.
Save your money.
Don't go to movies or dances
or anywhere else you wouldn't
want to be
or play cards or do anything
else you wouldn't want to be doing
when Jesus comes."
He may have heard some
other advice. No doubt he did.
He has long since forgotten
what it was.
Somehow it never seemed important.
He asked for stories
but no one—neither father
or mother or preacher, no one—
told him what needed to be told
to make life real.

lying on the buffalo grass

earth breaths under my back.
clouds rolling sunward

over vast sky,
turn the pages of memory to boyhood.

then sizzortails, crows and
cottonwoods called my name.

now, they sing only their own song.
who will now name my name?

ELIJAH AND THE WHIRLWIND

Fourteen hours a day
I sat in dust of moldboard
tractor pulled.
I was fifteen.
Little whirlwinds
swirled around the tractor
and plow.
Once out of the corner of my eye
I thought I saw Elijah
in a larger whirlwind
caught up into heaven.

FATHER'S FIRST TRACTOR

One evening, after Father retired,
we sat together on that porch swing
with the creaky chain holding
it from porch's ceiling. He talked

about his first tractors. "It was not a
rubber-tired tractor, though it could
have been. No, it was an earlier one
with lugs, the first I bought to replace

the horses. In the heat it didn't tire,
nor need, as I did, to rest at noon
or to sleep at night. It easily pulled
a three bottom plow fourteen hours a day

and responded with equal lack of enthusiasm
to my recitations of the twenty-third Psalm
or singing "Ich weis einen Strom" or my
mild and sometimes not so mild swearing

when its steel wheels dug with long lugs
into a particularly soggy spot in the fields,
and I was sure I'd get stuck and sometimes
did. I liked it best when I didn't.

Country Road

The country road
climbs the next hill
through prairie grass
reaching for the horizon.
It gets there.

Book Reviews

C. Norman Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from a Disciple's Perspective*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987. Pp. 264. (\$19.95—paperback)

This work of systematic theology promises to make a major contribution not only to Mennonite thought but to all Christian understanding. It displays Kraus's many years of reflection on the issues, first as professor of religion at Goshen College and more recently as teacher in Japan for much of the past seven years. This review will focus on the book primarily in the context of

Mennonite theology.

Since Mennonites began interacting with and learning from American culture at the end of the nineteenth century—an event which recent Mennonite historians have come to call the Quickening—an important and ongoing part of that dialogue has focused on theology. One can perhaps represent that conversation in terms of the often-used T. Traditional Mennonite thought (oriented by emphases such as discipleship, communitarian ecclesiology, peace, biblical authority, and concern for a lived-out faith), occupying the stem of the T, confronts a number of options along a continuum which occupies the cross bar of the T. In the 1920s this continuum stretched rather tightly

between fundamentalist and liberal theology, but has always included a variety of experiential and philosophical options. The challenge for Mennonite thinkers was one of learning from the spectrum of options while maintaining a sense of Mennonite orientation and avoiding absorption into the spectrum. These interactions produced a variety of results and even those which maintained a Mennonite identity were not always particularly successful. For example, the era of Daniel Kauffman accepted much of fundamentalism's outlook and outline and then added a subsection to the outline—called 'restrictions'—in which to put the Mennonite emphases. On the other end of the Mennonite theological spectrum,

concern for a lived faith turned into little more than declarations of tolerance and support for the liberal American political agenda.

Kraus' theology belongs to a different genre of Mennonite thought. It succeeds quite well at the task of dialogue with the major theological options—crossing the bar of the T—learning in the process, but continuing in a direction which is oriented by and reflective of the Mennonite, believers' church heritage. It is perhaps the first attempt in this century to articulate a comprehensive christology from a specifically Anabaptist, Mennonite, believers' church perspective.

Anabaptist, believers' church assumptions clearly orient this statement of christology. It is a peace theology, showing clearly that the cross and resurrection is God's way of dealing with evil. It makes Jesus himself, and "neither creation, general revelation, nor even special revelation prior to Jesus" the normative criterion for theology. And it accepts the New Testament witness as the authoritative source to Jesus, and the "composite apostolic witness . . . of the crucified and risen Lord" (pp. 17-18) as the shape of that theological norm. As the subtitle of the book indicates, these points work with the assumption that the Jesus so described will be one which Christians follow and that his story will be one in which they participate.

The methodological orientation of the book is that of narrative theology, made familiar to Mennonite readers by names such as John H. Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas. George A. Lindbeck and others have described the theoretical basis of this approach.

The book also addresses questions raised about christology and soteriology by the current generation of theologians. It assumes that the gospel has social as well as individual connotations. It speaks to questions raised in critique of the traditional Nicene-Chalcedonian definitions. Two such crucial questions are traditional orthodoxy's separation of christology from ethics and its separation of christology and atonement.

The book is divided into two major parts, the first dealing with who Jesus is and the second asking what his mission was. Part one stresses the genuine humanity of Jesus and explains how that humanity is the norm for defining authentic human existence. The discus-

sion of the deity of Jesus then focuses on how this genuine humanity is the particular self-revelation of God in the world, so that in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God is present in the world. Kraus used the analogy of person to speak to Jesus' relationship to God. Thus it is God's identity which Jesus shares with us rather than written prophecy, doctrines or commands.

Part two, on Jesus' mission in the world, shows that Jesus' identity comes from what he did, and thus reveals Kraus's clear understanding of the inseparable link between christology and soteriology. To depict Jesus' mission, Kraus chooses to focus on Jesus as king, who inaugurates a new kingdom, a new way to live in history. King Jesus creates peace and justice, not by reforming the old institutions but by inaugurating a new movement. This kingdom is ruled by Agape. In Kraus's treatment, the cross—the supreme act of God's loving involvement in creation—answers the question of theodicy. It reveals humanity's act in opposing God as well as God's participation in the world and his way of overcoming evil. The resurrection which overcomes the consequences of sin—and not final judgment—is then seen as the ultimate justification of God in the world. After noting several biblical images of salvation, Kraus suggests that renewal of the image of God in humankind is the most appropriate metaphor of salvation. The concluding chapter of the book makes the point that salvation depends not on Jesus as a substitute for sinful humanity (which makes the mission of Jesus qualitatively different from that of his disciples) but on the repentant individual's solidarity with Christ, that is, on the creation of a new humanity which shares the mind of Christ and participates in his mission in the world.

A new and important contribution of the book is Kraus's distinction between shame and guilt. He rejects specifically the tendency of the western theological tradition to make escape from guilt and deserved penalty the primary problem of sin. Kraus separates shame from guilt, seeing shame as the primary element of atonement, a shame produced by awareness of the cross as God's way of confronting evil. Shame means a recognition that the sinner has unjustly offended God and others, and is thus aware of his or her true status, that of sinner. This recognition of sin then constitutes the first step of salvation, name-

ly repentance or a desire to change brought on by the awareness of one's true state.

This approach to atonement and salvation in part plays off the motif of Abelard that the death of Christ does not cause God to change his mind but rather brings the sinful individual to an awareness of sin and the need for repentance. However, in contrast to Abelard, for Kraus salvation is not dependent on human response. He goes far beyond that motif in anchoring the work of Christ in history, incarnation and resurrection, with the cross as a bearing of humanity's sin and the objective proof of atonement located in the actual power of cross and resurrection to bring newness of life.

Undoubtedly the years Kraus spent in Japan contributed in a crucial way to his conceptualization of the book. That influence appears most clearly in the references to cultures which express the problem of evil in terms of shame rather than the western guilt orientation. That Japanese contribution appears explicitly, however, only in scattered paragraphs throughout the book. The theological argument of the book is comprehensible in its own right as a conversation with the received, western theological tradition.

This book dares to break new ground, both in its critique of the received theology and in its own statement of an alternative christology. As such an epoch-making work, some dialogue with it is to be expected. In fact not to engage in some conversation would be a dishonor and a disservice to it. In that spirit, then, I wish to make a few observations about this work whose direction and implications I can support unreservedly.

1) The discussion of shame as distinguished from guilt is significant and helpful. However, following the proper, strong emphasis on Jesus as king and on the corporate, social nature of the gospel (after all, a king has to rule over a kingdom), the treatment of shame takes place mostly in terms of the individual. Also appropriate would be development of corporate and institutional dimensions of the shame motif. Is it possible to deal with shame as a collective, for example when the church as an institution is caught up in a racist or economically exploitative society in spite of each individual Christian's intent to be non-racist and non-exploitative?

2) To pose the corporate issue in a

different way, in my opinion Kraus could have made more of the ecclesiological dimension of christology. We use the name of Constantine to symbolize a shift in the conception of the church from a persecuted minority to an ally of the status quo. We still need analysis of the impact of the ecclesiological contribution to the shift from narrative to ontological categories, the separation of christology from atonement, and the separation of christology from ethics.

3) Kraus's critique of the various aspects of the Anselmian view of atonement is timely, appropriate, thorough and telling. In my opinion, however, Kraus has passed over too lightly the classic theory of atonement which has attained some prominence in revised and demythologized forms in several recent statements of Mennonite theology.

Only with great effort can one underestimate the significance of this book. It is must reading for all serious theologians, Mennonite or otherwise.

J. Denny Weaver
Professor of Religion
Bluffton College
Bluffton, Ohio

Willard M. Swartley and Cornelius J. Dyck, eds., *Annotated Bibliography of Mennonite Writings on War and Peace: 1930-1980*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987. Pp. 740. (\$59.95—hardback)

The bibliography will no doubt prove to be an invaluable reference work. It represents nearly fifteen years of work by a number of people. The scope and detail which are covered in the book are amazing.

The researchers covered not only every major Mennonite periodical, but also some non-Mennonite periodicals in which Mennonites have published or which published about Mennonites on peace and war issues.

The items identified are listed under 17 different headings, and they indicate that "war and peace" in the Mennonite context are very broadly defined. The headings are: Alternative Service; Arms, Armament, and Disarmament; Attitudes and Education; the Bible, Peace, and War; Church and State; Civil Disobedience; Conscientious Objection; International Relations; Justice; Mennonite Central Committee; Military

Service; Nationalism; Peace; Race Relations; Refugees; War; and Wars. These major categories each have as many as seven sub-categories under them.

The listings are documentation sufficient in themselves to show the importance that the doctrine of nonresistance and peace has for Mennonites. A study of the listings would probably show how the interest has spread as Mennonites have sought to understand the implications of the doctrine for many problems other than war in this century.

Anyone researching or with historical interest in the field will find the book very useful. It not only has annotations; it has what appears to be a complete index of authors listed. Sometimes it is a bit tricky to use the index. When a woman has published under both her maiden and married names, you need to look at both places to find all of her writing. For example, Luann Habegger Martin is listed for some items under Habegger and for others under Martin.

When an author is published jointly with another person, the index includes the name, but one has to search the page on which the item is found. For example, on page 35 Donovan Smucker published a pamphlet jointly with Edward Yoder. One has to scan the page to find which item Donovan Smucker co-authored since it does not indicate in the index that it is listed alphabetically under Edward Yoder.

The editors did establish some policies to use uniform listing of names of authors. A person might publish with full name, with a middle initial, with first and second initials, or with just first and last names. By using a consistent form, the listings are brought together in the same place so that one does not have to search under different forms for the works by the same author.

The listings sometimes seem to be rather idiosyncratic. I do not know if it was the choice of the researchers, or the way in which the computer grouped writings by the same author. When an article appeared in several church periodicals under different titles, it was sometimes listed as one item with indication of all the places it was located, or in other instances it was listed as two separate items. For example, my article on "WCC Called to Nonviolent Position" is listed on pp. 152 and 625 alone. The same article is listed separately in two places under that title and under the title "Calling the World Council of

Churches to a Nonviolent Position" on pp. 252-3 and 528. The article on "What Peace and Which Prince?" is only listed for the *Gospel Herald* (pp. 528, 423) but also appeared in the *Mennonite Weekly Review*, *The Mennonite*, and the *Christian Leader* under slightly variant forms.

On the other hand, the bibliography picked up nine articles, some of which were reprints in other periodicals, which I did not have listed in my personal bibliography. So the researchers identified more publications of my writings than I knew about.

It is interesting to note who the authors are that appear most frequently. Except for Guy F. Hershberger, I did not try to trace the number of items listed, but only counted the number of pages on which they appear, as indicated in the index. Guy F. Hershberger had, of course, the greatest number of entries by far. He is listed in the index with 59 entries, and on those pages has a total of 333 items entered, some of which are duplicated under more than one heading. The next nearest is John A. Lapp with 43, and then down to 39 for Frank Epp, 34 for C. F. Derstine, 33 for J. Ward Shank, 32 for Melvin Gingerich and Delton Franz, and 31 for Carl Kreider.

John A. Lapp and John E. Lapp as father and son have 62 between them (19 for John E. Lapp). The Peachey brothers also have a substantial number of entries. The only woman with more than 20 entries (with about 25 men who have 20 or more) is Lois Barrett with 23.

In looking over the largest number of listings, it is evident that it helps to be an editor, a staff person on a peace and social concerns committee, or to write a column that touches on issues of peace, war and related concerns. It also helps to have a long, active life span, as Guy F. Hershberger has! Edward Yoder, who lived less than 15 of the 50 years covered (he died in March 1945) already had 28 entries in the index.

A valuable asset mentioned in the introduction is that all the items are preserved on a computer at Herald Press. For a nominal fee one can get a search of a topic or cluster of topics for the years covered by the bibliography. That should be a great resource for persons doing research. Several masters and doctoral studies should result from use of the bibliography with assistance from a computer search of topics.

It would be interesting to have a print-out of just the titles and authors chronologically. It would show very starkly at many points the rise and fall of interest in certain topics. They could then be correlated with events happening. It would be helpful then to have an analysis done of the emphases on various peace, social justice, and related topics, indicating how thinking and action have changed over the fifty year span.

The editors and staff are to be congratulated on completing such a tremendous undertaking. With such a major endeavor behind them, they should not now stop the project. The Institute of Mennonite Studies ought to be encouraged and helped to continue the listing of annotations. A supplement to the book could be printed every decade, or in some other regular period of time, to keep the information current and growing.

Though the cost of the book is not unreasonable for the size and type, it will deter most people from having a copy personally. Certainly church libraries ought to consider having it available for use.

William Keeney
Acting Director,
Center for Peaceful Change
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio

James Liu and Stephen Wang, *Christians True in China*. Edited by Robert Kreider. Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1988. Pp. 114. (\$10.95—paperback)

This is a work which is hard to classify, and harder to evaluate. It will be of considerable interest to many in the Mennonite tradition, especially those with family ties to China missions or Bethel College, and I recommend it to them. But both as a non-Mennonite Christian and as a professional historian of China, I was often frustrated by its superficiality and lack of context, which perhaps were inevitable results of its method of creation.

Liu and Wang, born in 1904 and 1905, both were products of the Mennonite north China mission and its schools, and were 1932 graduates of Bethel College. Starting in the late 1970s, they resumed contact with old U.S. missionary friends whom they had not seen since the 1940s or even the 1930s. In the 1980s, as they turned 80,

they each wrote an autobiography. Robert Kreider and others, in an exemplary labor of love, encouraged them in this task and then pieced the stories together to make a more or less chronological account of their lives from before 1910 to the 1980s. Kreider also has provided a very brief historical synopsis of the China context and a list of dates and events at the start of each chapter. The accounts of Liu and Wang are interspersed in each chapter, sometimes jumping back and forth too frequently.

Generally speaking, this slim volume as a work of history is quite inadequate; unexplained forces or events seem to buffet the two men's lives, giving an impression of exotic chaos. And as autobiography the volume is simply too shallow. The two gentlemen, writing in their late 70s and early 80s, are not self-reflective in the ways that good autobiography would require. There is much left unstated, for example details of the missionary-Chinese Christian relationship. Much else is put in strange terms, such as Stephen Wang referring to himself as a "bourgeois rightist" (not in quotation marks) who *needed* to undergo thought reform in the early 1950s.

References to the situation of Christian churches under the Communist regime are also often opaque and slogan-ridden. Liu and Wang and their families must continue to live in China, of course, and like many scarred older Western-trained intellectuals, victims of several previous criticism campaigns, they were probably instinctively wary of writing anything that could be construed as criticism of the political system. But the result is that the reader must go to other accounts to get anywhere near an adequate portrayal of the events from the 1950s to the present which impacted these men's lives.

Despite these real deficiencies, after all the book is not a history or the usual autobiography. It is a testimony, mostly of the determination and perseverance of these two venerable old men, but also of the legacy of the Mennonite China missionaries who created the structures which produced and shaped them in their early years. It is clear, for example, that without the mission educational system neither of these lower-class boys would have had a chance to receive even a middle school, let alone a university, education. As testimony, we may spare this book the vigilant scrutiny that

scholars instinctively impose upon the printed word, and accept it for its unique identity. Those with personal connections to the people involved (which can be ascertained in the good index), and those looking for concrete evidence that foreign missionaries did leave a human legacy of resilient Christians in China when they were forced to leave in 1949-1950, will find it important and probably heart-warming.

Daniel H. Bays
Professor of History
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

Trevor J. Saxby, *Pilgrims of a Common Life: Christian Community of Goods Through the Centuries*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987. Pp. 208. (\$17.95—paperback)

This is a short, cursory look at historical attempts to establish communal organizations. It is also an evangelistic treatise supporting communal life based on the teachings of the New Testament.

In the Foreword Donald Durnbaugh notes that though "these subjects are described in rather brief, overview fashion . . . the reader does not have the feeling of sketchiness." This reader definitely had the feeling of "sketchiness." Only 100 pages of the book are actually devoted to a historical look at community life so each communal movement is reviewed in an extremely sketchy manner. How may 2000 years of communalism be described in any other way?

There is nothing inherently wrong with this but one must approach the book with the realization that relatively little new information is offered and the information which is offered is given in very sketchy form and many important groups are overlooked. I am concerned, for example, that Saxby spent no time discussing the popular communal movements which emerged in the United States from the 1950s on. What about Clarence Jordan's Koinonia Farm and its offshoots, or the various Anabaptist and Jesus People communities which were established?

Some information in the book is very dated. Saxby's information on the Amana Society, for example, appears to come primarily from a history published in 1891 and a 1975 *National Geographic* article. What about Diane Barthel's 1984 book, Jonathan Andel-

son's authoritative dissertation, and the numerous articles about the Amana Society published in the journal *Communal Societies* and in various other periodicals in the last thirteen years? This is one of many examples of the sketchy nature of this study. If one is only able to use one or two sources for a work such as this, then they must be the best one or two sources.

I also have some serious questions concerning Saxby's negative description of the Doukhobor people. It is similar to descriptions of Anabaptism which take the Münster kingdom as normative. Saxby's characterizations of certain persons are also difficult to understand. Franz K. Meffert, for example, is referred to as "the German" whereas others are not referred to as "the Greek," "the American," or "the Englishman." Saxby's three page discussion of the Nigerian communal group Aiyetoro is fascinating until one notes that the information was evidently obtained from a single 1957 article. There are no additional footnotes. Saxby notes, "One visitor in 1957 stated that monogamy was being increasingly favored among the younger generation." But this is now 1988! What is the situation today?

Saxby often makes statements that are perplexing. He notes, "It has recently become fashionable to classify Christian meetings under three headings according to size: cell, congregation and celebration." Perhaps this is true in Great Britain but I am not aware that this is "fashionable" in North America. And for whom has it become "fashionable"? These kinds of statements are distracting to the reader.

The 75 or so pages which set forth the biblical case for communal life are excellent for the most part, but even here I must raise one concern. Limiting the definition of "neighbors" to "members of the church" (which can be supported by critical analysis of *some* of Jesus' statements) can very easily mislead Christians into a self-centeredness which has no place in a Christian community. According to Saxby, "Jesus' ministry is to the church, not the world." Saxby states this in the course of an argument presenting the biblical foundation for a communal concern for *all* aspects of fellow church members' lives. The more individualistic ethos in mainstream Christianity does often omit this emphasis. Nonetheless, a closed-in communal disciplinary philosophy can

easily lead communal movements to become so separate and isolated from the rest of the world that they have little impact on the world at all. As Hutterite minister Jacob Waldner (Bon Homme Colony, Tabor, South Dakota) once told me, "Missions is our weakest area."

Should we treat members of our own churches "better" than anyone else? This is a practice even if not a theological position which has created ethnocentric arrogance in many Anabaptist churches. Notwithstanding everything noted above, Saxby's book is a fairly good introductory presentation of the case for communal life with a number of valuable examples from the history of the church. Total commitment to life without private property is a hard life but it is one very important manifestation of the Christian life.

Rod A. Janzen
Principal
Iowa Mennonite School
Kalona, Iowa

Ulrich Eggers, *Community for Life*.
Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988.
Pp. 200. (\$9.95—paperback)

One of the great questions facing 30,000 Hutterites in the United States and Canada today concerns what kind of relationship should be established between the traditional Hutterian Brethren (the Hofers, Waldners, Kleinsassers, and Deckers) who live in 300 colonies on the plains of the midwest and the 1300 English-speaking Bruderhof followers of the late Eberhard Arnold who live in the eastern United States and have, since 1974, been accepted as members of the Hutterian Brethren.

Community for Life is West German Christian journalist Ulrich Egger's portrait of life at Woodcrest Bruderhof in upstate New York. This book does not analyze Bruderhof beliefs and practices with any of the critical intensity of ex-Bruderhof novice Benjamin Zablocki, whose *The Joyful Community* was published in 1971. And Eggers does not comment on the ongoing and seemingly increasing tension between the Bruderhof East (where they manufacture Community Playthings and special equipment for the handicapped) and the traditional agricultural Hutterite West. Even *Schmiedeleut* Hutterites, the most progressive western branch, are deeply divided over relations with the former Society of Brothers.

But Eggers does give the reader a good understanding of what makes the Bruderhof communities tick and how they are trying not only to bring a revitalizing renaissance to the Hutterian Brethren as a whole but also, in a self-critical way, attempting to discern weaknesses within their own communities.

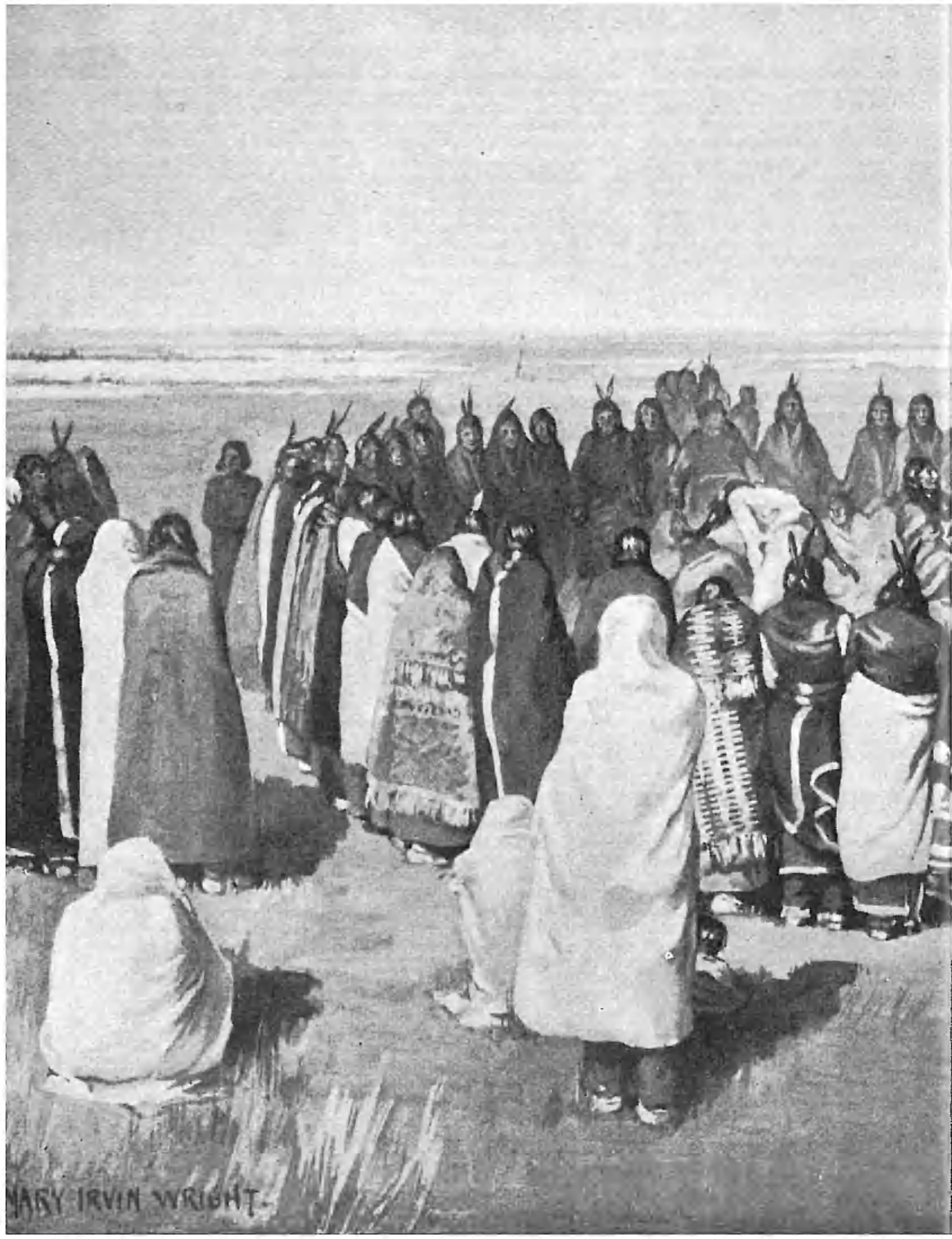
I too have visited Woodcrest and was struck by the physical beauty of the place (it is located just south and east of the Catskills), the sincere commitment of members and their great happiness in work, play, and conversation. Eggers comments briefly on most aspects of Woodcrest life, from educational practices to dress styles. Woodcrest is a place where one may indeed breakfast on wooden tables under the trees, operate a drill press in the shops alongside people with graduate degrees, observe male members washing dishes after meals, and listen to a Haydn quartet followed by Christian testimonies in the evening hours. Members, however, dress in traditional Hutterite style, men wearing suspenders, women the polka-dotted head covering.

Unlike most western Hutterites, the Bruderhofs send their young people to public high schools where they are exposed to contemporary secular trends. Daily evaluative sessions ensure that young people do not become totally immersed in worldly traditions in an uncritical fashion. The Bruderhofs are increasingly involved in prison ministries and social work and have conducted study conferences with a variety of Christian groups in attendance.

Eggers expresses his own personal reluctance to give up private possessions and individual practices in order to join such a Christian community and he questions Woodcrest's minimal commitment to missions outreach due to a separatist ideology. "New outlets?" one member asks, "Wouldn't that be dangerous for us? Will we be able to retain our identity?"

For the most part, however, Eggers' book is a positive introduction to a group of people who seek to follow the teachings and practices of the early church as pictured in Acts 2, 4, and 5 and are being eminently successful in their attempt.

Rod A. Janzen
Principal
Iowa Mennonite School
Kalona, Iowa



MARY IRVIN WRIGHT.