
Preface

This is the fifth annual issue of the *Journal*. What began in 1983 with a hope that we might make a modest contribution to the ever-expanding area of Mennonite studies, has been largely fulfilled. The *Journal* is being increasingly recognized as a serious publication which focuses on Anabaptist-Mennonite studies in general and on Canadian-Mennonite cultural and literary issues in particular. Some five hundred subscribers in North America and Europe, scholars and writers who are submitting their material to the *Journal*, and academics who are referring time and again to the various articles in this journal — all this attests to the fact that our publication fills a need in the Mennonite studies field. We are especially grateful to those institutions and individuals who supplement the subscription income with generous financial contributions. Without their help the *Journal* could not survive.

This year's issue begins with three articles of a literary-cultural nature. Rudy Wiebe in "The Skull in the Swamp" goes back 25 years when he published his first novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962). That first Canadian-Mennonite novel in English not only launched its author on his literary career, but also closed doors for him in some Mennonite constituencies. Today Wiebe is recognized as the foremost Mennonite novelist and a Canadian writer of note. "The Skull in the Swamp" was first presented as a paper at the University of Manitoba earlier this year.

The article "A Mennonite Artist as a Young Man," by the Editor, deals with the pre-World War I era when many young Russian-Mennonite men left their homes on the Steppes to study theology, philosophy, literature and art in west European centres, including Switzerland and Germany. Until recently there has been little documentary evidence concerning the experiences of these young men abroad and their reception at home after they had completed their studies. The letters of Johann Klassen, who in 1924 went to Bluffton College, provide rare insights into the life and thought of a highly talented young man and artist.

The third article, Reynold Siemens' interview of Peter Brown (now deceased) concerning Frederick Philip Grove among the Mennonites in Southern Manitoba, sheds further light on this important and interesting German-Canadian writer.

The next two articles deal with 19th-century Russian-Mennonite culture and the development of Mennonite Low German respectively. Lawrence Klippenstein's translation and edition of a valuable document from the pen of Johann Wieler, an itinerant evangelist among 19th-century Russians, shows to what extent Mennonites were involved in spreading the Gospel beyond their colonies. Reuben Epp in his article shows clearly how Prussian-Russian-Canadian Low German, known as *Plautdietsch*, has developed through the centuries and what its state is today.

In preparation for Volume 3 of the History of Canadian Mennonites — the late Frank H. Epp wrote the first two volumes — the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada and the Chair and Centre of Mennonite Studies sponsored a symposium at the University of Winnipeg on May 21-23, 1987. Under the general theme "The Influence of World War II on Canadian Mennonites" some nine full-length papers were presented. In this year's issue of the *Journal* we are pleased to include three of these papers: The keynote address by Ted D. Regehr, Marlene Epp on "Women in Canadian-Mennonite History," and George Epp's gripping account of the experiences of Mennonite immigrants during the war. Other papers presented at this symposium may appear in subsequent issues of the *Journal*.

In the last article Egil Grislis continues his studies on Menno Simons (See his "Menno Simons' Account of His Conversion and Call in the Light of the Bible," in the *Journal*, Vol. 3, 1985). Grislis argues persuasively that Menno believed in "justification through faith" as much as Martin Luther did, although he sought to balance works and grace according to his understanding of Paul and James. Grislis' article was originally part of a series of papers given at the University of Winnipeg in October, 1986.

In this issue we are including two review articles, one by Victor Doerksen on three Manitoba-Mennonite poets and the other by Paul Toews on *A People Apart* by John H. Redekop. The latter review article comes in the wake of a heated discussion among Mennonite Brethren with regard to Redekop's proposal to drop the Mennonite label from the conference name.

The hitherto unpublished poems by Johannes Harder and Abram B. Enns, written in German, are but a few examples of the two men's poetic works. Johannes Harder, well known to readers of the *Journal*, died unexpectedly in Germany on March 7, 1987. Al Reimer in the *In Memoriam* section of this issue pays a fitting tribute to this "remarkable Mennonite." Abram B. Enns of Lübeck, who turned 100 on April 23, 1987, is less known among Mennonites. The letters of young Johann Klassen, written between 1905 and 1913, (see the article in this issue) were addressed to him.

This issue concludes with several book reviews and book notices. Readers might be reminded again that our "call for papers" is a standing invitation to submit articles and reviews for possible publication in the *Journal*. With regard to preparing manuscripts, we have decided to change to the new MLA style. This seems to be the trend in journals, and once writers are used to this style they will no doubt find it simpler and more convenient to use. The inside cover provides the bibliographical data for the new MLA booklet. However, during the transition period — at least for another year — we will accept manuscripts prepared according to the Kate Turabian style as well.

Harry Loewen, Editor