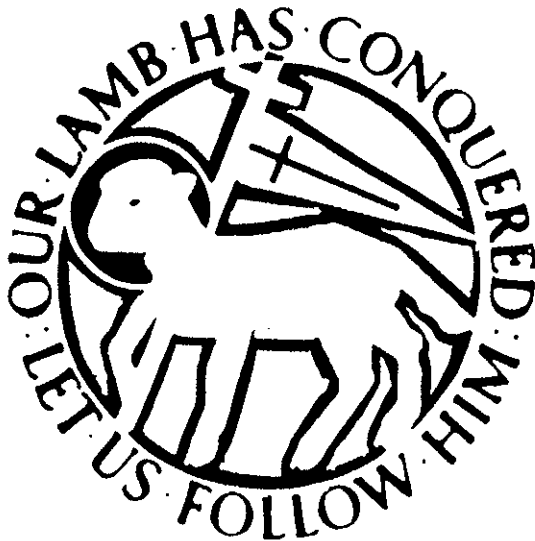


**WESTERN CANADIAN
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FOREWARD

The fourth issue of the Western Canadian Historical Magazine draws its material from a variety of sources. We are particularly grateful to Professor Terry Crawley of the Ontario Historical Society for granting us permission to reprint Dr. Frederick Dreyer's article, "The Moravian Mission to the Chippewas" which appeared in a recent issue of "Ontario History". This article is an expanded version of the presentation which Dr. Dreyer made to a meeting of the CMHS on February 28, 1997 in Edmonton. Dr. Dreyer is now retired from the History Department of the University of Ontario. He is a life member of our society and we are appreciative of his efforts in getting permission to provide this valuable material to our readers.

We always appreciate receiving written accounts from people about their service to the Moravian Church. Hopefully the articles in this issue by Rev. John Befus and members of the Lebsack family will inspire others to write about their experiences. Personal accounts have their own authenticity and flavour which cannot be matched by articles produced from secondary sources.

Some pieces of our history are found on individual scraps of paper, handwritten, sometimes in the old German script. Such was the case of the agreement dated November 16, 1895 which is contained in this issue. This agreement secured the land for the newly organized Bruderfeld Moravian Church (now the Millwoods Moravian Church) in southeast Edmonton, Alberta. Thus the way was paved for the calling of the founding pastor, the Rev. Clement Hoyler and the beginning of the Moravian Church in Canada.

MY CANADIAN DISTRICT SERVICE

by Rev. John Befus

Having been invited to share recollections of my service in the church, especially in the Canadian District, has proven to be a challenge trying to think back a number of years to 1937.

My confirmation took place in Calgary where I spent the first fifteen years of my life, after which we moved to Didsbury. My early desire was to be a farmer, but this changed shortly after I committed my life to Jesus, acknowledging Him as my personal Saviour. Several years later while attending a Sunday at the Prairie Bible Institute at Three Hills, Alberta, I sensed a call from God to enter His service. At that time I felt God was calling me to serve in China. However, after graduating from P.B.I. and applying to the China Inland Missions, I was asked to wait one year since the China-Japanese war made conditions somewhat dangerous in China and the C.I.M. was not sending single individuals to China that year. That was in the spring of 1937.

It was at this point in my life that I became involved in the ministry of the Moravian Church even though I had been a Moravian since childhood. The Edmonton Moravian Church happened to be vacant at that time. Brother Gutensohn, the president of the Moravian Church at the time, requested I serve the Edmonton congregation that year. However, there was a problem because the Sunday morning services and the Wednesday night prayer services were being conducted in the German language and my

German was really somewhat different than the German used in northern Alberta. In addition, I was not at all fluent in German, even the "Calgary" German. However, my pastor in the south, the Rev. W. F. Kroening said he would help me brush up on my German. Thus for several weeks I remained in Calgary getting help with my German from Bro. Kroening. Now when I think back to those days, I truly wonder where I got the courage to do what I was asked to do, but the Lord's help made it possible.

Thus, in about July 1937, I began as student pastor in Edmonton. Not being ordained I naturally couldn't baptize or serve communion. On such occasions, Bro. S. Wedman, pastor at Bruderfeld, would come to Edmonton while I went to Bruderfeld. This continued for one year. During that year I learned a great deal about ministry and the duties of a (lay) pastor. A good deal of my time was spent visiting the parishioners when I wasn't preparing sermons, etc. Generally it took much of Monday and Tuesday to prepare for the Wednesday prayer service, Wednesday and Thursday to prepare for the Sunday morning German service, and Friday and part of Saturday to prepare for the Sunday evening service.

Following that year of service in Edmonton, I re-applied to the China Inland Mission. Fortunately, Mr. Judd, the China Inland Mission representative for western Canada who lived in Vancouver, B.C., was in Alberta when I arranged for the Edmonton congregation to have a Missions Sunday. I invited Mr. Judd to be one of the speakers, and he accepted the invitation. My purpose in inviting Mr. Judd was two-fold. I knew he was really a mission-minded person having

served in China, and I also wanted to speak with him further about my future, especially with regards to China. Mr. Judd informed me that conditions in China had changed very little so it was very unlikely I could go to China that year. He also informed me that two of the six references, whose names I had sent the Mission for character references, had stated in their letters to the C.I.M. that they hoped I would remain with the Moravian Church. One of these was my pastor and the other was the president of the district. Thus, Mr. Judd felt it was the Lord's will that I remain with the Moravian Church. Subsequently, I applied for further study at the Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem, Pa. My service in Edmonton came to a close, and I went to Bethlehem for two years of further study. After two years in Bethlehem, I was ordained and went to Nicaragua in September 1940. In 1943 I returned to Canada for a few months, at which time I was married to Violet Emma Stelter from the Bruderheim congregation.

Our first furlough was in 1948. Our little daughter, Ruth, who was about two and one-half years of age, didn't know what to make of the different changes from Nicaragua, such as the snow, etc. While in Nicaragua, Ruth always wanted to eat apples, if available, even though apples were expensive. On our way to Canada, our train stopped over in Winnipeg for a number of hours, so we went for a short walk. Before long she saw some bananas and immediately wanted one even though they cost much more than they had in Nicaragua where the bananas were quite cheap but not the apples. It was on this furlough that our first son, Gerald, was born at the Archer Memorial Hospital in Lamont. This being a furlough year, we travelled to the

different churches for deputation work. Then early in 1949 we returned to Nicaragua.

Our next stint of service in Canada came in 1954. As a family, we were due a furlough from the work in Nicaragua. Since Violet was from the Bruderheim area, we first went to that part of Alberta. The Bruderheim congregation was in need of a pastor at that time, so the Rev. Elmer R. Stelter, president of the Moravian Church in Canada at that time, and my brother-in-law, asked whether we would consider staying in Canada for two years helping with the work of the church in Bruderheim. Since we were under the jurisdiction of the Mission Board, our reply was that they would have to get the permission of the Mission Board for us to remain in Canada for two years instead of our one furlough year. This permission was granted. We spent the next two years with the Bruderheim congregation. Again, I had to do some struggling with the German language for every second Sunday the morning service was in German. At times I noticed smiles on the faces of some of the congregation, implying to me I had just murdered the German language. But by and large, the congregation was very supportive and encouraging. We enjoyed two years of service in Bruderheim, learning to know the people and loving them. Then, in 1956, after two years in Bruderheim, we returned to Nicaragua for further service.

Our third stint in Canada was in Vancouver during the years of 1959 - 1962, when we were advised to seek further help for our youngest child, Tim, who had been born in Lamont during our service in Bruderheim. He still had speech and learning difficulties. In Vancouver we did not have to

struggle with the German language. Again we found the congregation very loving and supportive and thus we enjoyed our years of service in Vancouver. We were given to believe that special help for our child would be available in a special school in Vancouver. In 1962 we were told that we could likely return to Nicaragua because the child had made some progress, and that he could get further help from his mother who had actually taught the first two children by correspondence courses. Returning to Nicaragua in 1962, we remained there until 1966 when we realized that further help for our son was needed. This would be the end of our mission service. Since there were no openings among the Canadian churches, we accepted a call to one of our Philadelphia churches and thus our opportunities for service in Canada were over.

Our total service in Canada was for seven years. They were happy and fulfilling years despite hardships and setbacks. We hope and pray that those years of service were helpful to some and proved to be a blessing. We certainly thank God for having given us the opportunity to serve as we did.

We also wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation for all the help and encouragement we received from the Canadian people and churches. Not only did some of them make it possible for us to get a refrigerator, which meant a great deal to us in hot weather in Nicaragua, but also the many other things given us by individuals and groups from the various churches in Canada. Needless to say, these many acts of kindness and support meant a great deal to us.

HISTORY OF THE RAJPUR FOSTER CHILDREN PROJECT

Since 1974, Canadian Moravians have faithfully contributed to the Rajpur Foster Children Project, which supports the work of the Moravian Institute in Rajpur, northern India, where orphaned and needy children are provided with a quality education. Canadian involvement in this project came about as a result of the intersection of the lives of two people: Stephen Hishey and Kurt Vitt. Back in 1974 when this occurred, Stephen Hishey was a young Bible school student from Rajpur, who was studying in Regina. Kurt Vitt was at that time the pastor of the Heimtal Moravian Church, a country congregation close to Edmonton's south-west boundary. Rev. Vitt made contact with Stephen Hishey and the consequences are this overture and best related in **Stephen Hishey's own account**:

"A 3-year scholarship at the Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, Saskatchewan, brought me to Canada in the extreme winter of 1973-74. I had heard of the Moravian Church in the United States but was not aware, at that time, that there were Moravian churches in Canada, too.

The family who had originally thought of setting up this scholarship had been missionaries themselves in the northern area of Tibet amongst the Tibetans for many years. The region is known as the Amdo. So it was expected that I spend my summer vacations with them in Jackson, Michigan, and they

had also looked at various possibilities of keeping me busy during the vacation so that I could earn some pocket money for my College. As it worked out, the pastor of the local church wished to go for a holiday with his family and asked if I would be willing to help out during his absence. He had given me several days to make a decision.

It was during these several days of trying to make a decision that I received a long distance call from the Heimtal Moravian Church. On the line was Rev. Kurt Vitt speaking; he had tracked me down to this place. My college had given him the contact address. In the course of the conversation, he made it very clear that I should return back to Canada immediately and be involved in the Missionfest at the Heimtal Church. Without a second thought, I agreed to do so.

Br. Vitt was there at the Edmonton airport to receive me and during our short drive back to Heimtal he gave me a brief on the upcoming Missionfest programme and that he would want me to be the main speaker with the whole emphasis on Mission in northern India, the Moravian Church and the Tibetan Refugee Orphanage at the Moravian Institute. I was quite unprepared then except for the fact that Br. Vitt was greatly thrilled. Over the next two weeks, we both worked day and night on preparing our first set of slides on the ministry. I have yet to come across someone who could be so skilled and precise with preparing

for a Mission meeting like Br. Vitt did. That summer of 1974 was my first student pastor internship at the Heimtal Moravian Church under the leadership of Br. Vitt. I was very excited and the people were greatly thrilled. They surrounded me with their love and concern. Heimtal became my second home church. The children and the youth loved me very much as I participated in their camps, VBS and youth meetings.

As I prepared to go back to the Seminary, Br. Vitt wrote to the president of the Seminary seeking permission to allow me to return back the next summer to continue my internship. This was agreed. In the meanwhile, plans were underway for the Vitts to go for a holiday the next summer and the Elders had accepted me as their intern-pastor. And during the time in the Seminary, I was encouraged to take driving lessons which was successfully done.

I returned back to Heimtal church the next summer and a full programme was set up for me. The focus this summer was also on Missions. It was a great privilege for me to present the children's ministry at Rajpur as a challenge to the Canadian churches to be involved in sponsoring them as a part of their mission outreach. As young lives grew under the love and care of Christian teachers and house-parents, there were opportunities for them to hear the Gospel and understand in some way God's love for them. The Moravian churches in Edmonton and Calgary took that as a real challenge and started

their sponsorship programme. I am glad that a very close relationship has been established between north India and Canada and that there is a deeper involvement in Missions by the Canadian churches.

During the last year of my Seminary and in the process of my returning back to north India, I was encouraged to apply to the British Mission Board for my ordination. Through the recommendation of the District Board of the Moravian Church in Canada, this request was accepted and in the summer of 1976, Bishop Milo Loppnow ordained me a deacon in the Moravian Church in an Ordination Service at the Heimtal Moravian Church.

As I recall my years in Canada, especially the three summers I spent in the Moravian churches, my heart is filled with gratitude to God. Mission becomes more personal when you can put a face beside a name that is known and heard of. The Moravian churches in Edmonton and around were of tremendous encouragement to me throughout the times I was able to share with them. They responded with great generosity and concern.

May the Lord bless each one of you and keep us united till the day when Christ shall come."

*In Christ,
Stephen Hishey*

Stephen Hishey was returning to Rajpur to take over the responsibility as principal of the Moravian Institute. When

Kurt Vitt learned about the work of the Institute and its needs for financial support to enable it to provide needy children with a quality education in English in a Christian environment, he immediately organized the Rajpur Foster Children Project. The needs of the Institute became known since many people had come to know Stephen Hishey personally due to his involvement with the congregations in the Moravian Edmonton area and at the church camp, Camp Van Es, where he had participated as a resource person. Sponsors responded and the Project has been in operation ever since.

Hazel Schattschneider succeeded Kurt Vitt on the Board of World Missions and took on the tasks of coordinating the project. Her successor, Alfred Harke, did likewise.

In the fall of 1991, when Alice Sears (then Alice Weinlick) returned from a trip to India which included a visit to Rajpur, she was approached by Alfred Harke. He asked her to take on responsibility for the Rajpur Project, which she did willingly, having been inspired by her recent visit to the Moravian Institute. Alice's impressions of her visit to Rajpur are indicated by the following excerpts from an article which appeared in the December, 1991 issue of the MORAVIAN, entitled, "*Home is where the Moravians are*".

"This summer I had the great joy of being a guest among the Moravians in North India at the Moravian Institute in Rajpur. My son Michael was working for five months in Delhi, and his being there was an opportunity for me to visit India. Part of our three weeks together was a journey to Rajpur.

The "India experience" was a real culture shock. Food, language, sights, smells, crowds, heat, monsoon season, auto rickshaws, elephants, and much more swamped body, mind, and spirit.

An eleven-hour train ride brought us to the city of Dehra Dun. We rented an auto rickshaw (a motor scooter with three wheels and a canopy) for the ride to Rajpur. At the end of the road in a beautiful valley with mountains in the background, we came home to the Moravian Institute. To two weary, sick, beleaguered travelers the Moravian seal ("Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow Him") was a welcome sight.

The Moravian brothers and sisters, including the Rev. Obed Kundan and his son Thsespal and their families and the Rev. Stephen Hishey and his family, welcomed us with open hearts and lots of hot tea. The hot tea was both hospitality and soothing medicine for our severe cases of "Delhi belly."

...What impressed me was the spirit and joy evident among the children. The joy in their faces, the simple but ample food, the clean and tidy rooms, the constant excitement of soccer games even in the rain, and the program of Tibetan folk dancing for us, all spoke of the presence of Christ's love in this ministry.

A highlight was worshiping with the Moravian congregation in an upper room, on the second floor.

The congregation, young and old, sat on the floor on Tibetan carpets, and we as their guests sat on a bench. It was a warm peaceful service in both Hindi and English.

Ten years ago I discovered my church home among Moravians in Edmonton, Alberta. In this decade I am grateful to have found my church "home" among my brothers and sisters around the world. You can find home again. It's wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name and Spirit."

Alice Sears passed her "Rajpur" files on to Bill Brese in 1993. Bill has been the coordinator of the project since then.

The Moravian Institute was founded in 1963 by a Moravian pastor, the late Rev. Eliyah T. Phunthsog. The initiative arose in response to the needs of the Tibetan refugees who had fled from Tibet and settled in the Rajpur area. The work started with 12 students who were housed in a patched tarpaulin tent. It quickly became apparent that a hostel was needed to meet the needs of orphaned children and the children of destitute parents.

The Moravian Institute became an undertaking of the world-wide Moravian Church. It is designated as a Unity Project. Thus, support from Moravians around the world is channeled through the Moravian Church office in London, England, which has administrative responsibility for the work. Thus, annually funds raised by the Canadian Rajpur Foster Children Project are sent to London for safe and

efficient transmittal to the Institute in Rajpur. The Moravian officials in London kindly provide us with copies of reports which they make following periodic visits to Rajpur which serves to make us feel jointly linked to the work in north India.

A fuller understanding of the present scope of the work at the Moravian Institute is contained in the following write-up, prepared by a staff member of the Institute for presentation at the Miami Mission Conference which was held in 1994.

"The Moravian Institute is an undertaking of the world-wide Moravian church (Unitas-Fraterum). It aims to be a place of good for others (Tibetan - "zhan-Phan-Ling"), especially the underprivileged, the unfortunate, the deprived and the poorest among the poor; the focus being toward child care and development with special emphasis on the girl child.

Since 1963 Moravian Institute has been trying to provide quality education, nurture, care and guidance to children from a diverse section of Indian society. The work of the Institute is well known and appreciated. Children are selected after a careful assessment of social and economic status and a confidential survey. Care is taken to ensure that only the most deserving child is selected. Many churches, social organizations, eminent persons, etc. know of the work and recommend children. There are always more children than what we can cater to.

In a country where a large percentage of the people subsist below the poverty line, we have found that the needs are many and heart breaking. Such is the magnitude of poverty of people that mere words totally fail to describe their misery. The Moravian Church, through the Moravian Institute, is trying in a very small way to make a difference in the lives of the children who find themselves in an indifferent and uncaring world.

The task is not always easy. Children and their parents do not always appreciate the value of a good education and training. Families are mostly illiterate and unfortunately become the greatest challenge to the child's education and uplift.

Rajpur area has many uneducated girls and women. A good number of them have been married at an early age, have several children and very low family incomes. Some have husbands or parents with drinking problems. In order to help them, a Carpet Training and Weaving Center was started where hand knotted Tibetan carpets are produced. Today this Center not only provides meaningful employment to women and girls but, also provides the children an opportunity to learn a useful skill. Profit from sale of carpets goes towards the Institute's work.

There are about 300 children at the Institute between the age group 6 to 18 years. The school is on the campus and is upto class Xth (High School).

The medium of instruction is English. Hindi, Tibetan and Nepalese are taught as second languages. Courses are offered in Science, Commerce and Arts. After finishing High School the children are supported to either take up a vocational course or to continue further education."

We know from reports coming from the Moravian Institute that many challenges face the Board of Management which operates the facility. It is difficult for people outside of India to fully comprehend the magnitude and complexity of the difficulties which are encountered in the operation of the Moravian Institute. We cannot image the aftermath of the 1991 earthquake which damaged the buildings at the Institute severely, but spared the injury of a single child. During 1995 we received reports of severe political agitation and rioting which caused numerous disruptions and operating difficulties at the Institute. Other problems have been caused by heavy rains and resultant erosion to the grounds, and frequent electric power disruptions increasing the need for reliable onsite dependable emergency electric power generation equipment. Moreover they encounter impediments to getting Institute graduates accepted to places of higher learning due to corruption in admissions procedures.

However the leadership of the Institute continue to carry on, apparently undeterred by so many hindrances to their work. The following report, submitted by the Rev. Thsespal Kundan, Principal of the Moravian Institute, highlights the current challenges facing the Board of Managers:

“During the last couple of years the Institute has found it necessary to provide the financial means to train its secondary school-leavers and other young adults in various vocational and technical courses. This has become increasingly important as the job market is in a constant state of flux due to the tremendous economic changes taking place in India. Coupled with a growing population that is not expected to stabilize until well into the second quarter of the 21st century, at a figure surpassing China’s 1.2 billion, it becomes all the more imperative for the Institute to enable its school-leavers and other deprived young people who seek its help, to prepare, with a much better chance of success, to earn a livelihood in the intensely competitive job market, while carrying with them Christian values imbibed at the Institute.

In order to more effectively and economically help these young people meet such challenges in the coming decades, the Board of Management of Moravian Institute has approved a proposal to enhance the Institute’s curriculum so as to include opportunities for the students to learn various skills such as Computer Programming, Design, Technical Drawing, Electronics, Telecommunications etc. The Board of Management consists of well known professionals and educationalists residing in Dehra Dun, including the recently retired Secretary of the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations, New Delhi, the foremost school examining body in India. The members of the

Board of Management are either members or friends of the Moravian Church, fully committed to the Church's mission to the poor, as it works through the Institute.

The Board has noted that additional built-up area will be needed to house the vocational-technical (Vo-Tech) facilities. Some eminently suitable and easily convertible space (the second floor of the main building) is already available, but at present this is used as pupils' dormitories (sleeping areas). Therefore, the Board has decided that the most satisfactory solution would be to convert the existing dormitory space into the Vo-Tech Department and construct dormitories (in place of the ones vacated) in a new building. This new building, consisting of dormitories and toilets for about 50 pupils and flats/apartments for two resident staff families, would cover approximately 3,000 sq. ft. (279 sq. m.) and cost about US\$ 7,500. It is proposed that running costs of the new Vo-Tech Department should be raised by the Institute separately. Therefore, a total of approximately US\$ 37,500 is requested in the Unity Offering for 1998.

By assigning the 1998 Unity Offering to this proposal the Unity, through the Institute, would help a large number of young people prepare comprehensively for the world of work, making a significant impact on the future prospects of the young people, many of whom would otherwise struggle to find suitable jobs in spite of a high

standard of secondary schooling. This proposal and the Offering to underwrite it, is something that the world-wide Moravian Church, each of its constituent provinces and every member, can endorse unequivocally and pray for earnestly, knowing that the Church will be taking a big step in making the Moravian Institute of even greater benefit to others, which its Tibetan name, "zhan-Phan-Ling", signifies.

Everyone at the Moravian Institute is most grateful to the entire Unity and its every member, for your constant prayers, encouragement and support, and now for the 1998 Unity Offering. We praise God for you all and pray for God's blessings on each of you in the world-wide Unity."

It costs \$650.00 per year to maintain a child at the Moravian Institute. Currently the Canadian Rajpur Foster Child Project sponsors 25 children. One sponsor is in Newfoundland, another in Ontario and the remainder in Alberta. Besides individuals, and couples, sponsors include the Alberta Star Craft (sponsors 2 children) and 6 Alberta Moravian congregations. Two couples each sponsor 2 children. Some congregations take a special offering for Rajpur, while others make an appeal at a Christmas service. In some instances an organization, such as the Sunday School, raises funds to support a child at Rajpur.

A sponsorship may be shared by two parties, on a 50:50 basis, if they feel they cannot afford the entire amount of a

sponsorship. Other people simply make a contribution to the project without becoming involved as sponsors.

Efforts are made to communicate with the sponsors regularly so they are informed about the work of Rajpur. As well they receive letters from the children which they sponsor.

The miracle is that 25 destitute children in northern India can get a quality education in English in a Christian environment, which can radically improve their opportunities to have a better future, all because sponsors on the other side of the world are touched by the Holy Spirit and willingly share.

Stephen Hishey and Kurt Vitt are now 24 years older. Kurt Vitt is now a retired Seminary Director living in the Edmonton area and Stephen Hishey currently operates a Christian Broadcasting service out of Rajpur. The fact that their lives crossed in Canada, still has favourable impact on the lives of children at the Institute as the work of the Foster Children Project continues and sponsors continue to respond to the need.

* * *

REVEREND JACOB LEBSACK

SEPTEMBER 13, 1916 - SEPTEMBER 7, 1981

by David Lebsack

Reverend Jacob Lebsack was born September 13, 1916 in Lingle, Wyoming. He came to Canada with his parents where they took up farming and ranching in the Champion area. Pastor Lebsack received his formal education in the Yale School, east of Champion, Alberta. He graduated from Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, Alberta and on November 4, 1939, married Florence Hanson of Surrey, B.C.

Jacob and Florence went to Bethel, Alaska, as missionaries to the Eskimo people under the Moravian Mission, serving as house parents to 20 orphan boys for the first two years. In the following six years of ministry, Pastor Lebsack served in various capacities and was captain of the "Moravian", a 65 foot diesel powered river boat that hauled supplies and personnel along the Kuskokwim River. During the war, the "Moravian" and crew were called upon to pilot ocean going vessels up the Kuskokwim River as far as Bethel, some 125 miles from "Good News Bay" on the Bering Sea.

In 1949, Jake and Florence returned to Alberta with their four children: Arthur, David, Ruth and Maureen. They farmed in the Champion area and Jake continued to volunteer in the local church.

In 1958, Jake went into full time pastoral ministry. Pastor Lebsack was later ordained under the Associated Gospel Churches of Canada serving in congregations at Kipling,

Langbank and Herbert, Saskatchewan and Evangelical Free Churches at Provost, Coronation and Lacombe, Alberta. In 1979, Pastor Lebsack was asked to serve for one year as interim minister for the Free Methodist Church in Red Deer, Alberta.

Jacob passed away after a cancer operation just prior to his 65th birthday. His favorite bible passage was I Corinthians 3:6 - "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow."

* * *

SOME MEMORIES FROM ALASKA, 1946 - 1948

by Vera Lebsack

These memories date back over fifty years as I am over 80 years of age now and live in the Cathedral Manor for seniors. At that time my husband, Ben Lebsack, and I lived in Strawberry Hill, B. C.. Ben worked for Gilley Bro. in New Westminster, B.C. One day my husband came home from work very sick; the doctor said it was "undulant fever".

Shortly after this, Jake and Florence Lebsack and their two boys, Art and David, came home from Alaska on furlough. We visited each other often.

Jake told Ben that the Moravian Mission wanted the family to return to Alaska. Then Jake said, "How about you coming back with us?" Ben replied that he would have to go see the doctor and see what he says. The doctor told Ben that it would be good for him, a change in climate.

In the spring of 1946, we flew to Bethel. I remember that the pilot had to make a few passes before he could land because the landing field had been flooded. I also remember the next day when all the men had to move the church from the edge of the river as the banks were caving in.



(1946) - the Boys Dorm

We were stationed at the Boys Dorm at the orphanage. Ben worked in the shop fixing the diesel motors and whatever had to be fixed; he also helped to pump water from the river

into a big tank for all our use. Sometimes he went with Jake delivering supplies to the mission stations with the big boat, the "Moravian".



Ben, Vera, and Gerry Lebsack (1947)

Gerry was born November 30th at the Bethel Hospital; we were cared for by Dr. Langsom. I remember that winter when the doctor flew out somewhere to see some patients and could not return right away because of the cold weather. When I looked at the thermometer, all I could see was a red ball at the bottom and up above it read minus 60 degrees. A couple of days later, it started getting warmer in the house and the snow was melting off the roof. They said it was a "Japanese current"--like a chinook here in Alberta.

I grew beautiful pansies by the house. The children waited for spring break up, which usually happened around the beginning of June. Then we would have a picnic. One morning I looked out the window and said to Ben, "Come, look the river is flowing backwards!" It sure was odd. The big Kuskokwim river was not open yet and the Kwitluk, a

smaller river was starting to run. But there was no where to go but back. The men sure had to hurry and get things out of the quonset hut as it was starting to flood.



River flowing up hill - The "Moravian" boat - The quonset hut

One day Ben came in the house feeling very sick. I did not think he would make it. Dr. Langsom said, "I know something is poisoning your system, but I don't know what. Maybe it's your tonsils so we will take them out." He still had bad days after that, but never like this time.

We were in Alaska for two years and then decided to go back to Canada. Ben kept going to see doctors but was still getting these attacks until in 1960 he went to a doctor in Camrose. This doctor told him, "You are sitting on a powder keg ready to blow up." Ben went to the University Hospital in Edmonton. A nurse on duty said that one kidney was just a bag of pus; the kidney was preserved so that it could be shown to the interns how a man could live with such a kidney. Ben died later of bone cancer on August 15, 1984, at the age of 71 years.

Ben and I had three sons and one daughter:

Gerry lives in Calgary, has his own business - Alberta Pest Control;

John is a manager of a locksmith in Edmonton;

Dan is a Calgary fire fighter and does painting on the side;

Judy works in a Clinical laboratory in Vancouver.

* * *

TRANSLATION OF AGREEMENT BRUDERFELD, ALBERTA, NOV. 16, 1895

After the evening service, which was conducted by Br. Leibert in the home of Br. A. Stoltz, several of the brethren of the congregation stayed to conduct some business for the newly organized church. During their discourse it was agreed:

1) That the gift of five acres of land, on the corner of Range 23 and 24, Townships 51 and 52, from the brethren Riemer, Stoltz, and Hoppe to be accepted with thanks.

2) That a document be prepared and signed by the aforementioned brethren, for the land, which will be the foundation for the congregation to obtain the deed.

3) That 1/4 section, namely 160 acres, be purchased and owned by the congregation, to be brought under cultivation by the members, to contribute to the support of the pastor.

4) That between Nov. 16, 1895 and spring (1896) a home will be built as a residence for a pastor, also that a building be started for a church on the said (15) acres and if possible be finished before fall (1896).

5) It is understood from Br. Leibert that when all these have been accomplished and especially a pastor will be installed whose income for the first year would be supplied by the church as a whole.

6) It was also agreed that through letters and persuading Immigration authorities it would be possible to encourage brethren and friends under the diaspora from Russia to bring them to join with this congregation.

7) Finally it was agreed that in order that there would not be any confusion over the name of this congregation with that of Bruderthal in Brazil, it was decided to name this congregation "Bruederfeld".

The Moravian Mission to the Chippewas

FREDERICK DREYER

The Moravian presence in Upper Canada commences in 1792 when David Zeisberger, leading a congregation of Delaware Indians, settled at Fairfield in the Thames valley. The congregation numbered some hundred and fifty souls, making it the same size as the Catholic congregation at Assumption parish on the Detroit River.¹ As a rule five or six missionaries served on station, including wives, who were also ordained, albeit in minor orders, and who possessed pastoral responsibilities. The mission station survived until the War of 1812, when it was burnt down by American troops. It was refounded after the war as New Fairfield and lasted until 1903 when the Moravians transferred their interest to the Methodist church. What makes the Fairfield mission particularly significant are its records. As witnesses to the Ontario past, the Moravians run a close race with the Jesuits in their importance. Each Moravian congregation kept a diary, reporting the remarkable and unremarkable events of the day. The diary for Fairfield in its first foundation runs to over a thousand closely written pages; additional letters, travel diaries, and diaries for branch missions run to another five or six hundred. The records for Fairfield in its second foundation are equally full and detailed. The original records are preserved at the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and have been sorted and catalogued. In 1970 they were published in a microfilm edition.² Not speaking English as their first language, the Moravians kept their records in German and used an old-fashioned script that is difficult to read today. Hence their records have been neglected. Elma Gray's *Wilderness Christians*, published forty years ago, is still the standard book in the field. Elma Gray, however, knew little German and her work is based on a thin and haphazard selection of papers, written first in English or made available to her in English translation.³ The history of the Moravians in Upper Canada still remains to be written.

When it was settled, Fairfield formed part of a world-wide network of missions that extended from Germany to the Caribbean, South America, South

Africa, the East Indies, Siberia, Labrador and Greenland. By 1805 a hundred and fifty missionaries, male and female, were on station. In North America, excluding Labrador, nineteen missionaries were supported in six missions, of which Fairfield was the largest. The Fairfield mission was run from the Moravian colony in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.⁴ Fairfield was perhaps not really a mission. The Delaware at Fairfield, refugees fleeing from the turmoil of the American revolution, had all been converted to Christianity before they reached Upper Canada, where they persisted in their old denominational identity. In this respect they were no different from the Presbyterian Scots at Baldoon or the Mennonite Germans in Waterloo; in culture and language the Delawares were just as cut off from the native inhabitants of the region. In 1800 these were the Ojibwas or, as they figure in the Fairfield records, the Chippewas. The Delawares had assimilated to a European, agricultural economy. They kept livestock, fenced fields, grew corn for sale, and at harvest time earned money as labourers working for whites. The Chippewas were a forest people. They lived by hunting and fishing, and shifted from place to place as the seasons changed, eluding a meagre existence. The Delawares believed they practised cannibalism.⁵ According to Benjamin Mortimer, one of the few missionaries who wrote in English, the very word *chippeway* was a Delaware term of contempt, and meant "whistler."⁶ The Delawares' dislike of the Chippewas was sometimes shared by the missionaries. Gottlob Senseman said they were a population of beggars and thieves whom hunting had unfitted for civilization. "Our Indians see more and more that farming and grazing pay better than hunting. It civilizes them." The Indian who hunted became "savage, barbaric, and vain: savage, because he spends all his time chasing animals in the forest; barbaric, because his entire mind is obsessed with killing and slaughtering; vain and puffed up, because he fancies that he is free and better than other people." When such Indians turned bad they were always ready to take life: "that's what their business has been from childhood and still is; it hardens the human heart."⁷ A constant in the history of the Moravian mission to the Chippewas was the reluctance of the Delaware to assist in it.⁸ Then as now, Christians were sometimes universalists in theory and tribalists in practice.

The initiative to start a mission came from Bethlehem, and was taken at a meeting of the General Helpers' Conference, on 19 February 1799. Following Moravian practice, the conference put the decision to the lot to obtain the Saviour's approval. When the lot was drawn, three answers were possible: yes, no, or a blank, the blank being no answer at all. In this case the answer was yes. The conference then ordained Christian Friedrich Denke and sent him to Fairfield with instructions to evangelize the Chippewas. Denke was a young teacher who taught in the Moravian school at nearby Nazareth and who had "long felt an impulse in his heart to work among the heathen, particularly the

Chippewa.”⁹ Although like most Moravians in Pennsylvania his first language was German, Denke had a great gift for languages; he knew Latin and spoke fluent English. When he reached Fairfield, he quickly mastered Delaware, a task that had defeated many other missionaries. He was the only one on the station who could deliver a sermon in Delaware and easily converse with the Indian brethren on spiritual matters. When he was away in Chippewa country, pastoral work and discipline at Fairfield suffered.

For Denke, learning Delaware had been easy. On his way to Fairfield, he had spent three months with David Zeisberger at Goshen in Ohio. There he had access to Zeisberger’s notes on Delaware vocabulary and grammar and Zeisberger’s Delaware translations of scripture and Moravian hymns and liturgy. At Fairfield he could call on the help of Delaware brethren who spoke English or German. Learning Chippewa was another matter, however, and here he had to grope in the dark. Nothing substantial on the Chippewa language and grammar was available in print, and would not be until Frederic Baraga published his *Theoretical and Practical Grammar of the Otchipwe Language* in 1850 and his *Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language* in 1853.

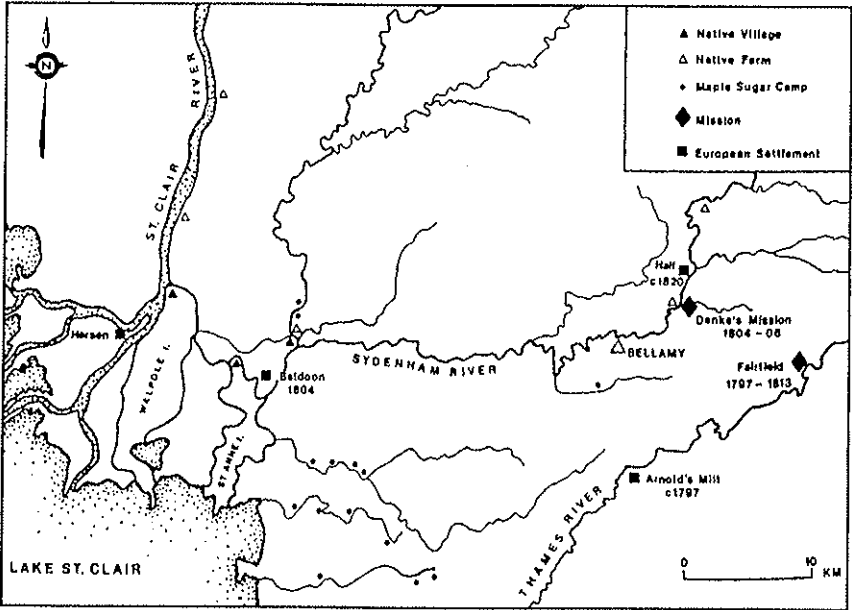
Denke learned Chippewa indirectly. His first teacher was Brother Boas, a Delaware and a member of the Fairfield congregation who spoke Chippewa; his second teacher, Mtschiki, was a Chippewa who spoke Delaware. Mtschiki lived on the perimeter of the congregation as the pagan husband of a Moravian sister. Neither Mtschiki nor Boas spoke English and Denke picked up Chippewa through the medium of Delaware.¹⁰ The whites with whom he came into contact were of little help. There were many who spoke a little Chippewa, but none well enough for Denke’s purpose. “No one knows any grammar in his own language,” he wrote. “Whenever I want to find out what a word means, I hear one definition one day and another the next. At one and the same time, they can give me two definitions that flatly contradict each other and mix up *I* for *him* and *you* for *them*. It is tiring and tedious and takes a long time before I get things straight.”¹¹

The Chippewas who spoke English were little better. “If a Chippewa pretends to know French or English, it amounts to a few standard expressions, and all too often, vulgarities, and, alas, probably insults and profanities.” This he blamed on the whites, who “make it an idle amusement teaching these things to the Indians.” What Denke found particularly difficult was to see how Chippewa worked as a system of grammar. Chippewa abounds, he wrote, “with short prefixes, suffixes, and even internal additions, consisting of a syllable or a single letter that gives the word they are attached to a really different meaning. I can recognize twenty-four of them ... In the inflections of nouns and the conjugation of verbs, I find unfamiliar tenses just like the aorist in Greek. Sometimes the tense has its own prefix or suffix.” Seeking a short cut, Denke asked his friends

in Bethlehem to send a Greek grammar, or "still better," a book in German on the structure of Hebrew. "Supposing that all these oriental languages have the same basic structure, such a book would help me see my way and put my work on a firm grammatical footing."¹²

With or without the help of a Hebrew grammar, Denke inched forward. At the start of the mission he had to rely entirely on interpreters; at the end he conducted services and delivered sermons in Chippewa and conversed at length with Chippewa visitors. It was probably a language he never learned to speak with complete readiness. In Delaware he was fluent and could say anything he wanted. "As soon as I feel it in my heart, I can speak it on my tongue." In Chippewa, he writes of his "stammering" efforts.¹³

Denke's labours in the mission started with his arrival in Upper Canada in 1800 and lasted until 1807, when he was sent to another mission in Ohio. As well as Fairfield, the Chippewa mission had two other stations. The first was at Pointe



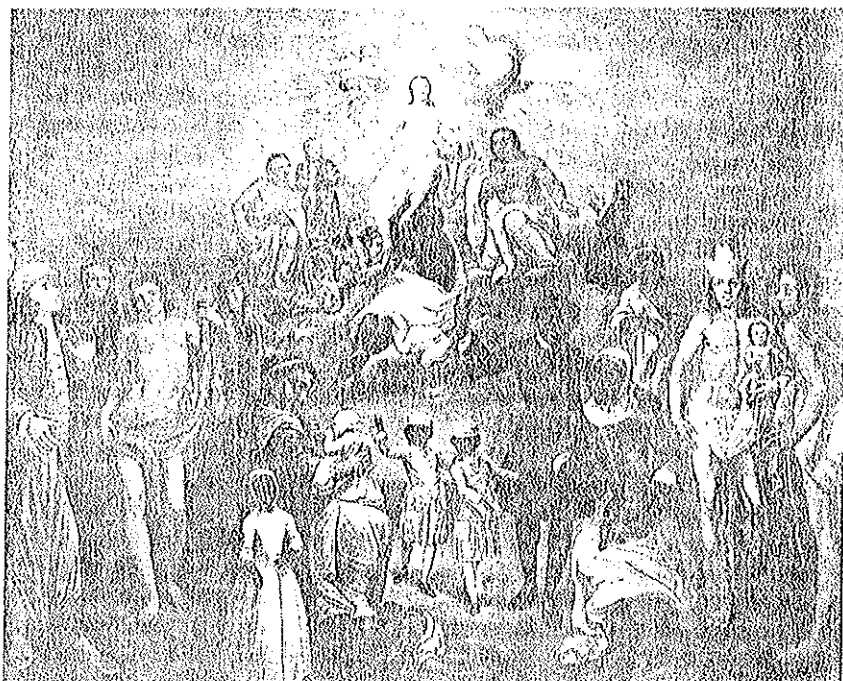
Settlement in the Sydenham River area of southwestern Ontario showing the location of Denke's mission, ca. 1790-1820 (*Ontario Archaeology* 44 (1985) : 4).

aux Chenes on the Michigan side of the St. Clair River, where Denke worked from May 1802 to March 1803. The second was on the Sydenham River and closer to

Fairfield. Denke worked here from April 1804 to December 1806, where he was joined by his wife, Anna Maria Heckedorf, whom he had married in 1803. No evidence of Denke's habitation survives at either place. From his papers and diaries, it is pretty certain that Denke's cabin on the St. Clair was built on today's Pointe aux Chenes in Algonac, Michigan, and looked across the North Channel to Harsens Island. The Sydenham site is a little more difficult to locate. Through the bush, it was twelve or fifteen miles from Fairfield and the cabin was built on the south bank of the river, most probably at the point where the river is joined by today's Donkey Creek, Donkey perhaps being an English corruption of Denke's name. Denke first called the Sydenham River the Chenail Ecarte, presumably thinking it was the source of the channel that bears this name that runs through the St. Clair delta. Later he uses its Chippewa name, the Jonquakamik, meaning "a river which is ash-coloured and opaque in the spring."¹⁴

In Denke's time the mission lay some four or five miles up river from Kitigan, a Chippewa village of some thirty people. Denke had visited Kitigan as early as 1801 and called there again going back and forth from Fairfield to the mission on the St. Clair. The village was described in some detail by Denke in the report he made of his first visit.¹⁵ Kitigan may perhaps be the Chippewa habitation that Neal Ferris excavated at the Bellamy site in 1984.¹⁶ In 1802 Denke travelled the Sydenham three times, but Patotiqueja at its mouth is the only other Indian habitation he mentions. Just below Kitigan, he forded the river at an old Indian planting-ground "now overgrown with grass."¹⁷ If we assume it was occupied in 1802, Ferris's Bellamy site may well be the same place as Denke's Kitigan.

Denke wrote his diary and papers in German. Typed and translated into English, the diary for the mission years runs to two hundred double-spaced pages, his letters to two hundred and thirty. Like all records, the Denke papers reflect the interests of their author and not what the historian thinks those interests ought to be. Denke was a zealous Christian and doing the Lord's work. He wrote for other zealous Christians, people who recognized the importance of that work. He is disappointingly uncurious about the details of Chippewa daily life. Whether the Chippewa practise cross-cousin marriage is not a fact of a kind he will trouble to seek out and record. He shunned tribal festivals. "These days," he wrote from the St. Clair, "the Indians up river are dancing in celebration of good luck in the autumn hunt. I cannot describe the midnight darkness and horrible superstition in which these poor people live.... They are lost in the most dreadful kind of idolatry, infidelity, heathenish blasphemy, loathsomeness and superstition." Satan held them in his grasp. "The prince of darkness has set up his throne in their midst and reigns over them without restraint." His task was to tell the Chippewas of their salvation and in the face of this anthropological details shrink into insignificance. "We hope that the Saviour soon will take mercy on them and



Painting of the "Erstlinge" or "First Fruits" of Moravian worldwide missionary activity. Ontario is represented by the Indian man in the upper left, beside two Greenland natives, while the artist's configuration with a resurrected Jesus at the top expresses the Christocentrism of Moravian beliefs (Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania)

let sound the joyful hour of grace. Their souls too are precious in his eyes. He shed his blood and died to gain their eternal salvation. Even these, he has redeemed."¹⁸

Viewed from this perspective, the Denke papers are an important record of Moravian piety. Moravians are part of the evangelical revival that swept over Europe and North America in the eighteenth century. What broadly identifies them as evangelicals is their belief that our salvation is decided by the merits of Christ and the sacrifice he made on our behalf. All evangelicals suppose this. Our salvation is something we can know about here and now and if we do not know about it, then, here and now at least, we are not saved. What distinguishes the Moravians from other evangelicals, however, is a Christocentric emphasis in their divinity. For most evangelicals, Christ, the Son, reconciles us to God, the

Father; for the Moravians, however, Christ reconciles us to himself. Christ is the only manifestation of God that we can know and perhaps the only one we need worry about.¹⁹ "Our Lord Jesus Christ is the express image of his Father," August Spangenberg wrote in the *Idea Fidei Fratrum* (1779), the standard manual of Moravian divinity. "Therefore 'he that seeth him, seeth the Father also; and he that knoweth him, knoweth the Father also,' John xiv. 9. The Scripture says of the Father, that no man hath seen him at any time."²⁰

Moravianism represents a somewhat extreme negation of eighteenth-century Deism. The Deist imagines that the only God we can know is the God of philosophic conjecture, the God whose existence must be postulated to explain the creation of the Newtonian universe. For the Moravian, God is known only through revelation and his existence independent of revelation does not matter. Jesus is both Saviour and Creator. For the Deist, God acts by means of universal laws; for the Moravian, by means of providential mercies. In their Christocentrism, Jesus is imagined with a special particularity and vividness. This is graphically represented in Johann Valentin Haidt's painting of the "Erstlinge" or "First Fruits," which in Denke's time hung in the Gemeinhause in Bethlehem. It shows a resurrected Jesus in the upper half and grouped around him the first converts from each of the "nations" to whom the Moravians had sent missionaries. Overhead an angel bears the text in German of Revelations 14:4: "These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." Jesus, the Lamb, is the sole manifestation of God.

The immediacy of Jesus in Moravian piety is also reflected in the use of the lot.²¹ By this mechanism the Moravian can consult the Saviour and get his guidance in difficult matters. It is not used for prophecy or to discover doctrine; as Protestants the Moravians get their doctrine from scripture. It is used, however, in matters of practical importance. The Fairfield missionaries consulted the lot in deciding where on the Sydenham Denke should locate. Early in 1804 they scouted the river and identified five suitable sites and let the lot decide.²²

Denke's marriage was also decided by lot, not only whether he should get married but whom he should marry and when. He first raised the matter in the summer of 1801 to the Helpers' Conference in Bethlehem. He proposed three names: "first, Maria Christ, Daniel Christ's daughter in Lititz, second, Cathy Prozman also in Lititz, and Elizabeth Clewel, John Clewel's daughter near Nazareth Hall." Failing these, Denke asked that whoever was chosen be faithful to the Lord and prepared to support him in his calling. She should be younger and not older than he was himself. Also, "she should be healthy and strong and either know something about farm work or be ready to learn." In a second list of requirements, he said she should be able to read and write. The conference took no action. Denke pressed his application. In November 1802, he wrote from the St.

Clair and said he saw the need for getting married "still more clearly." He needed help with the housekeeping and someone to look after the cow. "My skill in milking, cooking, and washing and things like that is not great and I do it awkwardly."²³

The following February the conference put the question to the lot and obtained a favourable answer. Denke was called back to Bethlehem, arriving sometime in June. On 19 July the conference put Sister Elizabeth Clewel's name to the lot, perhaps in deference to Denke's wishes. The answer was no. Next, Sister Anna Maria Heckewelder was proposed. Some discussion followed about the wishes of her parents. When the lot was drawn the answer was again no. Then Sister Chatherina Scyfried and again no. No also for Sister Maria Salome Knauss and Sister Salome Heckewelder. At this point the conference adjourned. It met again on 26 July. The names of Sisters Elizabeth Danz, Chatharina Kindig, Elizabeth Rothrock, and Rosina Kornmann were in turn proposed to the lot and rejected. Then and on the instructions of the lot Denke was sent to the congregation at Lititz. The Elders' Conference at Lititz convened on 1 August and proposed Chatharina Christ. The answer was again no. Next, Anna Maria Heckedorn and finally the answer was yes.²⁴ There is no reason to think that Denke and Anna Maria had met or even knew of each other's existence at this point. They were married on 7 August and in September set out for Upper Canada. What we know about their marriage depends on what Denke tells us, but he seems to have been devoted to his wife and writes about her with fondness and respect.

How Moravians think of Christ also governs how they conduct their missions. In effecting conversions, most evangelicals start with a conviction of sin. The sinner is persuaded to think of his own unworthiness. Convinced he is damned and deserves to be damned, he is then urged to turn to Christ and learn of his salvation. For the Moravian this is putting the cart before the horse. Before you can know about your unworthiness, you must first know about your salvation. Christ is not only our redeemer, he is the first fact we must learn about if we are to benefit from his sacrifice. That Christ became a man, suffered a painful death on the cross, and did it for our sake is the totality of Christian truth. "For a wretched worm like me he shed his blood," said the founder of Moravianism, Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf. "It is our panacea against everything that is wrong in thought and deed. It will be so for ever."²⁵

The Passion story possesses an almost miraculous force for Moravians and works when nothing else does. Denke's primary task in the mission was to translate it and tell it to the Chippewa. The first time he succeeds in doing it, when he is on the St. Clair, is a red-letter day in the diary. A Chippewa on his way up river to Lake Huron paid him a visit. "I had just finished revising my first attempt to

translate extracts from the Passion story. I found it very difficult with no one to help me or give me advice. In prayer, I relied on the help of God, alone." Denke read his text. The Chippewa "listened with attention, showing signs of great astonishment." He assured Denke that he understood him. "When I finished, he sat for a while reverently with folded hands and then rose up, extended his hand and promised to come again soon."²⁶

Over the next three months Denke told his story again and again, waiting for something to happen. Christmas eve, 1802, "The Indian who is camping here ... visited me again. He was very attentive when the great words were repeated. I have now made it a rule to proclaim the Gospel to every Indian who enters my house and I do it without making any distinction." His visitor returned in the New Year. "My neighbour visited me and heard the sweet Gospel once again and paid even more attention than several days earlier. At the end, I sang a few verses in Chippewa about the sufferings of our Saviour. He seemed to like this very much." On 15 January Denke spoke to another Indian. "Kandidondank or Long Heel came to see me in the evening. I told him the story of Jesus's suffering. He promised to come again. January 16, He returned and listened to the story again and then left going up river. In the afternoon one of the petty chiefs visited me. I told him the story too."

A few weeks later Denke was visited by Niganiga, a young Indian, who had been wintering on the Nattowesibi River in Michigan. "He stayed a few hours, but did not understand the words. He heard them, he said, but could not grasp them in his heart. I told him, if he heard them more often, then they would become clear and easy to understand. They were meant for him." Niganiga asked Denke to write down the Arabic numerals so that he could learn to count. Three days later he returned. "We had a good talk. The only reason he came was to hear the great word once more." What Denke had told kept him awake at night. "Father," he said, "when I am with other Indians, I cannot listen to their stories. With my head bowed, all I can think of is what you told me of the Saviour and how he suffered. Sometimes I ask myself if it is true; and my heart says right away, yes, it is true. This is why I come to hear more." He had been baptized by the Catholics, and his mother also. On 7 February he left for the Saginaw country but promised to return and stay with Denke in the summer. "Then," he said, "I shall hear the great word, which you first spoke to me. I too want to be saved. Even if the Indians say it is not true, I believe it, and the Indians are known to be liars." "God grant he stands by his resolution," wrote Denke.²⁷ Whether he did or not, we cannot tell. In March Denke left the St. Clair and the next spring set up the mission anew on the Sydenham.

There he continued to tell his story to the Chippewa, one or two at a time. Two men visited them at Kitigan soon after Denke arrived with his wife. "They

stayed for a visit, were friendly, and smoked a pipe. When we spoke in praise of the love that God revealed in Christ to save the heathen, they were most attentive and promised to come back and visit us soon." One of the visitors had painted himself black in mourning for his son who had recently died. "This is the first time Sister Denke had seen an Indian all painted black; and when they came, she was a little frightened at first."²⁸

In the spring of 1804, he was visited by Jawinit, a Chippewa who was planting up river from the mission. "Brother Denke took the opportunity to speak with him once more and tell him about the Saviour's love, his death, and his atonement." Jawinit was responsive and promised to think about this, but thought it was impossible for someone like him to become a believer and live as God wishes. He was a slave to drink. He believed it was hard to learn to read and use books in church like the Catholics. "He told us in great detail how he stood at the moment, and held nothing back." Denke said he should not lose heart. "All of us were weak by nature and incapable of doing good. The Saviour gave us strength and made it possible for us to live as he wishes. To be saved, Jawinit did not have to know how to read. He had to do only one thing, offer his heart to the Saviour, who had done and suffered so much for him, yes, and for his benefit had even died on the cross ... When he left Jawinit thanked us and promised to visit us again soon." Getting up the next morning, the Denkes found at their door a nice fish that Jawinit had left.²⁹

Denke's conversion efforts provoked little open argument; the usual response was civil and evasive. The one exception was Siskaboa, a shaman who hailed from the lower Thames River. He came to the Sydenham, perhaps for the purpose of starting trouble, and set up camp in sight of Denke's cabin. When Denke's pigs got into his garden, Siskaboa threatened to shoot them and tried to force Denke to leave, claiming the land belonged to him. "We replied with great patience," wrote Denke, saying the Chippewa were happy with their being here and Siskaboa "was the only one who was not," and God had sent them to take mercy on the poor Chippewas. "What sort of God is that?" shouted Siskaboa. "We don't need any God to take pity on us. Our own God has already taken pity on us. Indians who have come from God have told us how we should live, and that this will please our God. And so we shall live!" Denke's words, he said, were false. The missionaries were sent to teach school and give Indians food to eat. "There are really two Gods: one is yours and the other is ours." Denke replied there was only one God: the maker of all things and the Saviour of all men. "Your God is the devil. That's the God that you know. The real God you know nothing of ... He is the God who said, 'Whoever believes in me and is baptized, he will be saved; he who does not believe will be damned.'" Siskaboa was "dumbfounded," according to Denke. "A day is coming, a great day ... If you do not believe on the word that

I preach and if you do not seek forgiveness for your many sins ... then, my friend, you are damned. Know that for a fact!" Siskaboa paused, struggled to collect his thoughts and then replied. "When Chippewas are damned they will be branded with red-hot iron. They will be tortured until all the bad things they have done are burned away and they are good people once more."³⁰

In supposing a special dispensation that is revealed to Indians, Siskaboa gave voice to a version of native theology that harks back to Neolin and the Pontiac rising of 1763 and perhaps even beyond. It is the same theology asserted by Tenskwatawa in the Tecumseh rising. When the Jesuits returned to Upper Canada in the nineteenth century, they would encounter it among the Chippewas on Walpole Island. On the Sydenham River, Siskaboa supposes the existence of two deities, one for whites and one for Indians; on Walpole Island forty years on there is only one deity, who presides over two creations, one white and one Indian. But the essential point is the same: what is true for one creation is not true for the other.³¹

Like the Jesuits on Walpole Island, Denke probably believed he won the debate and in his report of it gave himself the last word. "God has sent me to instruct you in his word. How you and the other Indians live displeases him. I tell you nothing but the simple truth. I say God loves you. Why do you say my words are false and I am a liar? Why do you hate me? I love you and tell you words that are good for your heart and your soul." After hearing that Siskaboa has taken up residence in his old cabin after he left the mission, Denke's irritation is evident. "He now owns the house, the out-buildings, the garden, the field, in short the whole property. He has moved into the house and is actually living there. What a pity, it is now used to give this devil shelter. Better, had we burned it to the ground!"³²

When Denke started his mission, he aimed at setting up a Chippewa congregation on the model of the Delaware congregation at Fairfield. But in this he failed. After six years of effort, only one Chippewa converted. This was a boy named Schaganasch who was baptized with the name of Abraham. What we know about him comes from a memorial Denke wrote after his death. Schaganasch was an orphan who had been raised by his uncle, Mtschiki, who had helped Denke learn Chippewa. The boy came to Fairfield in 1800 when he was about nine or ten years of age. He learned to speak Delaware and as he was not well treated by his family, he attached himself to Denke. "He was modest, friendly, simple, and obliging," Denke wrote. "I took a liking to him and tried to tell him a little of the Saviour's love." The Denkes saw much of him when they moved to the Sydenham. "Whenever his friends stayed there, he came to school regularly and was very helpful, specially to my dear wife." Denke remembered one conversation with him in particular.

It was a quiet moonlit night. Schaganasch had stolen away from his friends and came to us alone. There in the moonlight we perceived something was working within him and we were glad. After telling us the Indians said this and that, he asked us about the creation of the earth, the moon, and the stars. We gave him a brief answer. The conversation then turned to him who had created all the worlds, who died for our sins, and whom we must acknowledge if we are to be saved. At this point the boy's eyes moistened. "This I believe and love," he said, "I hate the way the heathens live. Let me stay with you. Speak to my friends. I want to learn and understand everything."

The boy wanted to live with Denke and asked to him again to intercede with his friends. "Alas," wrote Denke, "our efforts came to naught. His friends refused us flatly and neither his pleading nor ours did any good. The next day he was made to go off with them and when he said goodbye he wept. It upset us too. With him here, it lessened our isolation, since he told us everything he heard." The boy was later "given ... to someone who lives on the Miami [Maumee]." His friends did this "to separate him from us and cut off all means of contact." When Denke and the boy parted that day, "we did not know we should not see him again for several years. With all my heart, I begged him to think on the Saviour and on what we had told him about the love that proved itself by his death on the cross. He said he would and gladly."

Denke supposes the boy was again badly treated when he was taken to the Miami. "He was made to go out hunting and once was given nothing to eat for ten days. On the last day, he could stand it no longer. He went out hunting ... but when he thought his uncle had left, he came back and asked the wife for food. She gave it to him, but as he was eating, the uncle returned and picked up a stick and began to beat him." The uncle then threw him out of the hut. "I made you starve," he said, "so that you would dream dreams. Instead of that you eat. Go into the bush, anyway, and seek visions."

What Denke describes here is an ordinary Indian puberty ritual: the adolescent is expected to fast in order to experience visions and effect his passage from boyhood to manhood. Possibly Denke did not understand this. The point he wants to make is that the uncle was frustrated in his purpose. "The boy did go out and fall asleep and dream, but not as the uncle wished. No guardian spirit emerged to enter into conversation with the boy." Schaganasch dreamt Christian dreams. "He dreamt he was in the assembly room at Fairfield; he had rung the bell for the meeting and was serving at the door. He felt a heavenly sense of well-being." He resolved to leave and prayed to the Saviour for help. "There was nothing he could do but run away. This he did, meeting with some Tawas and going with them to Malden and then on to us; and when we moved back to Fairfield he came too; and taking up residence with Brother Jacob and Sister Christiana, he stayed there to

the end, a respected member of their family. They were in a sense his guardians."

Schaganasch wished to convert and join the congregation. "The task of discussing the matter thoroughly with him fell to Jacob as one of the helper brothers. The boy was then fifteen or sixteen and you had to be amazed at the correctness and logicity of what he said. Jacob thought he made better sense than a grown-up." Before he could be admitted, he had to sever his ties with his Chippewa family. He did this, aided by the helper brothers. "At last his friends said he was free to live where he wanted and how he wanted." To get his freedom, he gave them a keg of whisky and some medicinal herbs. On Pentecost the next year, he was baptized with the name of Abraham. "It was evident the Holy Spirit had been working on his heart." The congregation prayed that he should not only persist in grace, "but shine as a light unto his people and help in their conversion." He was a candidate for confirmation and admission to holy communion.

Before he died, Denke tells us, he lapsed into sinfulness. "Last summer, we were very worried about him." He rejected their admonitions and had to be taken aside and asked "how he wanted to live and what he wanted to be." Presumably, he was threatened with expulsion from the congregation and the threats worked. "Hereupon he turned thoughtful and seriously examined himself." In the spring of 1810 he fell ill and realized he was going to die. "At first he was unhappy. But in his sickness God worked powerfully upon his heart. It was really good to see, how he grew and increased every day in the knowledge that saves. He wished to receive holy communion and on the day he died spoke about it to one of the missionaries, who assured him that he would receive it soon, perhaps even today, and in a better world." In the evening as he lay dying, "the brethren were called to him. He was unconscious. We sang death-bed hymns and quietly and blessedly he passed in to the arms of Jesus. He was twenty years old and in the prime of life."³³

Given the large resources Christians have expended on Indian missions, this is not a field of work where anyone can claim great success. But even by this standard, Denke's mission is conspicuous in its failure. His one convert is a troubled and unhappy boy, already half-assimilated to the world of the Delaware Christians. Is it not likely that he would have converted, even if Denke had not learned a single word of Chippewa? When he has his vision on the Miami, it is not of Denke's incarnate and suffering Saviour but of the assembly hall at Fairfield. He is converted first to a place and only afterwards to a religion.

Twenty years later other missionaries would manage to set up working congregations among the Chippewa, and succeed where Denke failed. The Methodists will do it among the Mississauga on the Credit River and Grape Island, and the Catholics among the Ottawa at Arbre Croche in northern Michigan. This time the work was done by professional, salaried ministers supported and funded by home churches and central missionary boards. Moravian

missionaries received some support from Bethlehem, but in the end they were on their own and expected to make their own living. On the St. Clair and again on the Sydenham, Denke had to clear the land, build a cabin, put up fences, plant crops, take in the harvest, and look after cattle. Every spring he had to make maple sugar to get something he could sell for cash. Like any other settler, he was tied down to a homestead and could not get away; he had to wait for the Chippewas to come to him. The Chippewas, in contrast, were hunters, and moved from place to place according to the season and the necessities of the hunt. Denke could not move and the Chippewas could not stop. That was the reality of their relationship.

Like many other things in church history, the failure of Denke's mission had an economic dimension. By persuading a single Chippewa to take up residence, Denke hoped the work of real conversion could begin. Christianity and agriculture went together. This was something that was understood by the Delawares. Brother Boas, who accompanied Denke on the first visit to Kitigan, made the point forcefully to the Chippewas:

It is true we live better than you. We have cows that give us milk and butter, pigs that give us meat and fat. We all stay together. Our plantations are big and we grow much corn. There is always enough to eat for ourselves and our children. Before we did not live like this. Once we wandered about from place to place like you. But now we have teachers who instruct us in the word of God and tell us how to gain eternal salvation. They show us how to improve our lives in material things. We take their advice and the result is we live in comfort. The reason, why we all stay together in the same town is to hear the word of God preached every day.³⁴

Brother Boas confirms what John Webster Grant called the experience "common to all missions in all periods." That is the need for stability in Indian life. "Only in a settled community could there be the regular round of worship which, in one form or another, all denominations regarded as essential. Only there could one have a mission school, with a bell calling the children to classes each morning."³⁵

Whether they were better or worse off than the Christian Delawares, it was still possible in 1800 for the Chippewas in Upper Canada to survive as hunters. Twenty years later, it was not. White settlement had killed off the game and destroyed the old migratory economy. It became a necessity for them to settle down in one place and earn their living as cultivators. At this point, their conversion became a possibility. It was clearly an event that had to await for a change to occur in the means of production. The Moravians tried to do the right thing at the wrong historical moment.

Whether the time was ripe or not, however, was not something that mattered much for the Moravians. They cannot be numbered among the missionaries who saw civilization as the necessary preliminary to conversion. James Axtell has made this side of mission history in North America his special study.³⁶ In the intention of the Moravians, conversion came before civilization. Denke condemned the nomad-like existence of the Chippewas, but thought of it as an evil that would not cease "until they accept the word of God and find enjoyment in it and its salutary blessings."³⁷ Conversion was the means to civilization and not the other way around. Benjamin Mortimer made the same point in more general terms: "Nothing tends so much to ameliorate the condition of mankind, and dispose them to cultivate the useful arts, as the introduction of true Christianity." This was what the first apostles attempted: "first to make disciples of and baptize the nations and then to instruct them to observe all things he [the Saviour] had commanded. Once primitive people are converted, "their minds soon become enlightened to discover their wants, failings and follies; and they acquire an ardent longing to have them relieved, remedied and cured. And where, from this principle, such a disposition is brought into existence, there cannot be a doubt but that, *with proper assistance* [Mortimer's emphasis], the most happy consequences will follow, in a solid improvement of moral character." Thus "to Christianize a people is also a certain means of civilizing them; and it seems to be that means which God himself has appointed."³⁸

Moravians knew a lot about pagan missions and their judgment cannot be lightly dismissed. Yet in the end the considerations that influenced them were not tactical. Like all evangelicals they stressed the atoning merit of Christ. It is this that saved the believer and not respectability or worldly goodness. However great these might be, they contributed nothing to salvation or attainment of faith. Faith was the gift of God. "He was the heavenly instructor or expositor," wrote Denke. "To those who are called, he will make it clear unto their hearts with his sovereign powers of instruction." The missionary told the unbeliever of his salvation and that was all that he could do. Everything else depended upon God. "It is his cause; the souls belong to him, for he has redeemed them. Having conquered he can liberate them. Nothing is impossible with God."³⁹

In public estimation the missionary often figures as an agent of European assimilation. We forget perhaps that Christianity as a doctrine is much older than Europe as a sociological fact. Christians can exist apart from Europe and sometimes in opposition to it. In the Moravian case, the missionaries were Christians first and Europeans second, and salvation was too important to wait for the right historical moment.

- 1 Ernest J. Lajeunesse, ed., *The Windsor Border Region: Canada's Southernmost Frontier, a Collection of Documents* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1980), p. 153.
- 2 *Records of the Moravian mission among the Indians of North America, a microform publication of Research Publications, New Haven, Connecticut, photographed from original material at the Archives of the Moravian Church, Bethlehem Pa., 1970* (hereafter MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.); a copy of this collection is held at the D.B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario. I am indebted to the Moravian Archives for permission to quote from it and from other records in their possession. All quotations have been translated into English by me.
- 3 Elma Gray, *Wilderness Christians: The Moravian Mission to the Delaware Indians* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1956).
- 4 Beylage zum Protocoll der neunzehnten Versammlung der Bruder-Societat in Bethlehem zur Ausbreitung der Evangelii unter den Heiden, d. 21 August 1805, SPG, 4-1-2, Archives of the Moravian Church, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; the best general survey of the Moravian church and its missions in English is J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: the Renewed Unitas Fratrum, 1722-1957* (Bethlehem, Penna: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, Moravian Church in America, 1967).
- 5 Fairfield Diary, 27 April 1802, Reel 12, 162-7-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic (my translation). Half the problem in reading Moravian records is deciding what the text says in German. Linda Sabathy-Judd is translating the congregation diary into English. See her "Profile of a Diary: Fairfield, Upper Canada, 1792-1813," *German Canadian Yearbook*, 1993, pp. 149-66. She has generously let me make use of her transcription of the German text which I rely on in my references to the Fairfield diary. Elsewhere I rely on my own transcriptions.
- 6 Leslie R. Gray, ed., "From Fairfield to Schonbrun — 1798," *Ontario History* 49, no. 2 (1957), p. 70.
- 7 Fairfield Diary, 16, 17, August, 26 November 1798, Reel 12, 162-1-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 8 J.Schnall to J. van Vleck, Fairfield, 8 September 1802, Reel 17, 1694-4-18-German; Schnall to van Vleck, Fairfield, 26 November 1802, Reel 17, 1694-4-21-German; C. F. Denke to van Vleck, Jonquakamik, 10 April 1806, Reel 13, 164-13-4-German; Denke Diary, 13 December 1806, Reel 13, 164-9-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 9 Auszug aus dem Protocoll der vierzehnten allgemeinen Versammlung der Bruder-Societaet zur Ausbreitung des Evangelii unter den Heiden, gehalten zu Bethlehem den 21tn August 1800, Protocolle, SPG, 2-2-50, Archives of the Moravian Church, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
- 10 Auszug aus dem Protocoll der funfzehnten allgemeinen Versammlung der Bruder-Societaet zur Ausbreitung des Evangelii unter den Heiden, gehalten zu Bethlehem den 21tn August 1801, Protocolle, SPG, 2-3-53, Archives of the Moravian Church, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; Denke to C. G. Reichel, 21 March 1801, Fairfield, Reel 17, 1694-4-10-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 11 Denke to van Vleck, 17 November 1802, Harsens Island, Reel 17, 1694-4-20-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 12 Denke Diary, 7 January 1803, Reel 13, 164-4-1-German; Denke to van Vleck, 17 November, 1803, Pointe aux Chenes, St. Clair River, Reel 17, 1694-3-2-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.

- 13 Denke to van Vleck, 11 February, 1806, Jonquakamik, Reel 13, 164-13-12-German; Denke Diary, 9 December 1802, Reel 13, 164-4-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 14 Denke Diary, June 1801, Reel 13, 164-1-1-German; Denke to van Vleck, 18 February, 1806, Jonquakamik, Reel 13, 164-13-3-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic. Denke was not alone in supposing the Sydenham and the Chenail Ecarte were the same river. See Lajeunesse, *The Windsor Border Region*, p. cx.
- 15 Denke to van Vleck, 18 February 1806, Jonquakamik, Reel 13, 164-13-3-German; Denke Diary, June 1801, Reel 13, 164-1-1-German; 19 April 1802, Reel 13, 164-1-1-German; 13 September, 30 October 1802, Reel 13, 164-4-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 16 Neal Ferris, Ian Kenyon, Rosemary Prevec, and Carl Murphy, "Bellamy: A Late Ontario Obijwa Habitation," *Ontario Archaeology*, Ontario Archaeological Society Publication 44 (Toronto 1985), p. 321.
- 17 Denke Diary, 14 September, 28, 30 October 1802, Reel 13, 164-4-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 23 September 1802, and June 1801.
- 19 Erich Beyreuther, "Christocentrismus und Trinitatsauffassung," *Studien zur Theologie Zinzendorfs: gesammelte Aufsätze* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962), pp. 9-35; Otto Uttendorfer, *Zinzendorfs religiöse Grundgedanke* (Herrnhut: Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, 1935), pp. 5-26.
- 20 August Spangenberg, *An Exposition of Christian Doctrine as taught in the Protestant Church of the United Brethren, or Unitas Fratrum ...*, 3rd ed. (Winston-Salem NC: The Board of Christian Education of the Southern Province of the Moravian Church, 1959), pp. 139-40.
- 21 Erich Beyreuther, "Lostheorie und Lospraxis," *Studien*, pp. 109-40.
- 22 Friedrich Denke and Johann Schnall, Travel Diary, January 1804, 164-5-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 23 Schnall to Reichel, 17 August 1801, Fairfield, Reel 17, 1694-3-13-German; Denke to van Vleck, 17 November, 1802, Harsens Island, Huron Straits, St. Clair River, Wayne County, Western Territory, Reel 17, 1694-4-20, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 24 Protokoll der Helfer Konferenz fürs Ganze der Pennsylvanischen und umliegenden Gemeinen, 1 February, 19, 26 July 1803; 1 August 1803, Protokoll der Aeltesten-Conferenz in Litz von den Jahren 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, Archives of the Moravian Church Bethlehem.
- 25 August Spangenberg, *Leben des Herrn Graf von Zinzendorf in Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf: Materialien und Dokumente*, ed. Erich Beyreuther und Gerhard Meyer, 2nd ser., 8 vols in 4 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1971), 5-6: 1284, my translation.; Ludwig Carl von Schrautenbach, *Der Graf von Zinzendorf und der Brudergemeine seiner Zeit in Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf: Materialien und Dokumente*, ed. Erich Beyreuther und Gerhard Meyer, 2nd ser., vol. 9 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972), p. 225, my translation.
- 26 Denke Diary, 9 December 1802, Reel 13, 164-4-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 9, 25 December 1802, 7, 15, 16, 24 January, 2, 5, 7 February 1803.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 24 April 1804, Reel 13, 164-6-1-German.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 21, 22 May 1804.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 3 September 1806, Reel 13, 164-9-1.

- 31 Denys Delage and Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Ottawa-Jesuit Debate at Walpole Island, 1844," *Ethnohistory* 41 (1994), pp. 295-321.
- 32 Denke Diary, 2 December 1806, Reel 13, 164-9-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 33 Beylage zum Fairfielder Diario, 1810. Reel 13, 164-10-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 34 Denke Diary, June 1801, Reel 13, 164-1-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 35 John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 224.
- 36 James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), and *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 39-87.
- 37 Denke Diary, June 1801, Reel 3, 164-6-1-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.
- 38 Mortimer Diary, 11 May 1799, Reel 19, 172-2-1, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic. Mortimer kept his diary in English.
- 39 Denke Diary, 26 November 1802, Reel 13, 164-4-1-German; Denke to van Vleck, 30 March 1803, Reel 17, 1694-5-6-German, MAB, Ind. Rec. Mic.