

To the “Outsiders”

On hazy summer afternoons, while the grownups worked elsewhere, we children played house on the back yard. Even though we didn't know English yet, we would dress up, pretend to be stylish and ignorant, and call ourselves *die Stoltze* (the proud ones). That is how we Mennonite children in southern Ontario learned to think of those who were not part of us.

Later on we called them by the more grown-up term: “Outsiders.” And in years since then, we have also learned the meaning of the gently derogatory terms: “seekers,” “converts,” and “new Christians.”

If you, a person without Anabaptist background, have felt some of that spirit come through in this book, I am sorry. If exclusive Anabaptist terms, names, and ideas have left you feeling like an “outsider” I will now correct that impression. I will go right out into the “world” and show you a man (an American Indian) who lived and died for Christ.

Following Christ and living in community with him is not the exclusive privilege of Swiss, German or Dutch people of Anabaptist background. Anyone may answer his call and people from all over the world, from all walks of life have done and are doing so.

Glikhikan, captain of the Lenni Lenape Wolf Clan, speaker in the council of Kaskaskunk, and principal advisor of the great chief Custaloga, grew up learning how to fight. The Lenni

Lenape were not a particularly warlike tribe, but the violence of the American frontier turned even “good men” into fighters during the eighteenth century.

Glikhikan grew to manhood during the French and Indian wars. In raids upon hostile Indian neighbours he learned how to handle a tomahawk with skill—three quick slashes and he could lift a victim’s scalp in triumph.

The Lenni Lenape learned to respect Glikhikan and, as a symbol of their bravery, he inspired their imagination. Not only did he become a leader in battle, he became a great orator, speaking around their council fires at night with the wisdom of shamans long gone. It was this gift of speech which brought Glikhikan into contact with the “Black Robes.”

For many years, black-robed missionaries from Quebec had braved the hardships of the frontier to bring the Christian (Roman Catholic) faith to the Indians. Glikhikan studied what they said. He concluded that what the Black Robes said was true, but that it must be the Great Spirit’s message to people across the sea. Therefore what the shamans of the Lenni Lenape said was not to be rejected for it.

Glikhikan’s first opportunity for a public debate with a Black Robe occurred at Fort Venango in what is now northwestern Pennsylvania. The Black Robe was a Jesuit priest, and, in the eyes of all the Indians present, Glikhikan silenced him completely.

Some time later, when new Black Robes (Moravian missionaries) appeared in western Pennsylvania, the Lenni Lenape called on Glikhikan again. With a band of shamans he travelled, eager for debate, to meet the intruders in their camp on the Allegheny River.

Things were not like Glikhikan had expected. Instead of a squalid frontier camp of Frenchmen or English Americans he found only Indian people like himself. Instead of lazy soldiers

flirting with the women and traders selling rum to drunken Indians, he found a quiet industrious people living in log shelters. The street between the shelters was swept clean. The Indian women, dressed in long skirts and with their hair done up under white caps which they tied under their chins, took care of children with strange names: Johanna, Maria, Benigna, Gottlob, Israel, Michael, etc.

Everywhere, Glikhikan and his men saw signs of peace and order. Corn and pumpkins grew in neat clearings behind the log cabins. Farm tools hung from the porch roofs. And when a group of men, led by a Monsee whom they called Anthony, came to greet him and to invite him to a community fellowship meal, Glikhikan was speechless. This religion was not at all like that of the Black Robes from Quebec. All his cleverly prepared arguments against it no longer seemed to fit and he told Anthony to go ahead and speak first.

Anthony spoke of the Maker of all things and sat down.

After a long silence, Glikhikan still did not know what to say. He motioned for Anthony to speak again.

Anthony now proceeded with the story of the Son of the Maker of all things, and how he let men kill him so he could give new life to all.

"I believe your words," was Glikhikan's reply. Then he rose, and with his companions following in silence, they returned to the camp of the Lenni Lenape several days journey south.

On his return, Glikhikan asked chief Custaloga to invite the Christian Indians, with their black-robed teachers, to come and show the Lenni Lenape how to live. Only too well did he know the evil superstitions, the vices and violence which kept his people bound. Custaloga, somewhat hesitantly, agreed, and before long, a new village called Langunto Utenuenk which means city of peace (*Friedensstadt*, in the language of the Black

Robes) stood on the shores of the Beaver River, northwest of Fort Pitt.

Many of the Lenni Lenape resisted the teachings of the Christian Indians. They bought rum and staged wild feasts and dances next to Langunto Utenuenk to entice the Christians back into their old way of life. But the Christians (whom the Lenni Lenape suspected of being under a powerful spell) could not be distracted. They kept on farming during the day, paying their debts, sharing their belongings with others and meeting to sing and pray in the evenings.

Glikhikan, after some months of observation, packed up his wife and family and went to live at Langunto Utenuenk. There he heard one of the Black Robes (David Zeisberger, a native of Zauchenthal in Moravia) speak in the meetinghouse and his heart broke. He began to weep and walked back to his shelter, his eyes blinded with tears. There he promised his life to the Son of God and great peace came with his baptism not long before Christmas in 1770.

Within a few months of his baptism, Glikhikan, (or Isaak, as they now called him) left on his first missionary journey into the Ohio River Valley. Anthony the Monsee, Jeremiah a converted Mingo chief, David Zeisberger and another Lenni Lenape man accompanied him. Everywhere he went, Isaak Glikhikan, due to the respect the Indians felt for him, found a ready audience.

Chief Custaloga, nevertheless, found Glikhikan's conversion a let-down and told him so. "What do you expect?" the chief asked him. "Do you think that you will get a white skin for accepting the white man's religion?"

Isaak told him, no. He did not want a white skin. He wanted to know the Son of God and live with him forever.

Another Lenni Lenape tribal leader whom they called Koquethagakhton (White Eyes) had been Isaak Glikhikan's boyhood friend. When Koquethagakhton asked him about his

conversion, Isaak reminded him of a promise they had made long ago. "Do you remember," he asked, "when I set my tobacco pouch between us and gave you permission to take from it for the rest of your life? Do you remember how we promised to share everything between us, and that if one of us finds a good thing to be sure to inform the other? Now I have found that good thing, and I want to share it with you. I have found new life with the Son of God."

On several occasions Isaak Glikhikan met danger as a Christian. But he met it without arms. When new Christian villages sprang up in Ohio's Tuscarawas valley the Wyandots, a warlike tribe from the North fell upon them. Isaak Glikhikan went out to meet them, loaded with gifts and speaking peace. Pomoacan, the Wyandot chief, listened to him and did the Christian Indians no harm.

Not long after this, during the Revolutionary War, when a young girl from the Christian villages escaped the Wyandots on horseback, Isaak Glikhikan was in trouble again. The girl, a converted Indian prostitute, was his relative. The Wyandots surrounded his house, war whoops and cries to scalp him shattering the night. Isaak opened the door, stood in the light of his lamp and silence fell upon all.

"I would fight you," Isaak said. "I know how to fight and I scalped many a warrior before you knew your right feet from your left. But I fight with my bow and tomahawk no longer. I fight with the power of the Great Spirit. I no longer fight those who do evil, I fight evil itself. Here I am. You may capture me and take me to your chief! "

The Wyandot chief released Isaak Glikhikan, but more trouble was not long in coming.

Caught between the British and the Americans in the Revolutionary War, the Christian Indians of the Tuscarawas Valley aroused the suspicion of both. Trying to treat all men alike they gave lodging to armed bands of both sides of the

conflict. Finally the British General in Fort Detroit ordered the Wyandots to remove the believers to far northern Ohio.

The order from Fort Detroit came in late August. The corn was not yet ripe and the pumpkins still too small to harvest. With great sadness the Indians left their prosperous villages *Gnadenhütten* (Shelters of Grace), *Schönbrunn* (Beautiful Fountain) and Salem, behind. The overland march was long and rough. Some little children died. Food was scarce, and before winter set in, starvation faced them at the Wyandot camp.

For several months the Christian Indians could buy and ration corn. (Even in their captivity, white traders reported, they paid their debts and bought nothing but necessary staples.) But by February there was no more. The supply of edible roots and wild game had been depleted. Then Isaak Glikhikan and almost a hundred people turned back to the Tuscarawas valley.

Both white and Indian friends warned the Christians about the danger of returning to that war-torn region. But their need was so great they felt they had to go ahead. And there, digging corn from beneath the snow in the abandoned village of *Gnadenhütten*, a band of American militia found them in early March.

The Christian Indians received the Americans with accustomed hospitality. Colonel David Williamson and his men even appeared to be interested in their faith. Isaak Glikhikan and an older minister named Tobias, spoke earnestly to the young white soldiers. The soldiers told them, "You are good Christians!" and called the remainder of the believers together during the following day.

After two nights among the Christian Indians, the Americans revealed to them their true intentions. Up to this point they had deceived them by telling them of a new and peaceful location to which they would lead them. Now, with around ninety men, women and children gathered before them, the Americans changed their story. They began to accuse the Christian Indians.

"You are warriors," they said. "And we know that you are thieves. Look at all the metal pots, the tools and the white men's clothing among you. You stole that from our frontier settlements."

The Christian Indians were almost too surprised to speak. "We do not go to war anymore," Isaak Glikhikan explained. "We are followers of the Son of God and do no men harm." But the Americans would not listen to them. They took a vote. Colonel Williamson ordered all his soldiers in favour of sparing the Indians to step forward. Only sixteen did so, leaving the great majority in favour of killing them on the spot.

Isaak Glikhikan, captain of the Lenni Lenape Wolf Clan, seasoned warrior of many battles in the wilderness and expert with the tomahawk, looked the Americans in the eye. "We belong to Christ," he said. "We are ready to die. But, will you allow us to spend one more night together at this place?"

The Americans allowed it. They put all the men in one of the log houses of Gnadenhütten and the women in another. There the Christian Indians confessed their faults, prayed together and sang. All night long they encouraged one another and called out to Christ before whom they knew they would stand on the following day.

The massacre began in the morning. The first one the Americans clubbed to death and scalped was Abraham, an old Mohican brother who had believed in Christ for many years. Then followed the five ministers, Jonas, Christian, Johann Martin, Samuel and Tobias; seven married men: Adam, Heinrich, Lukas, Philipp, Ludwig, Nikolas and Israel; the young men: Joseph, Markus, Johannes, Abel, Paul, Heinrich, Hans, Michael, Peter, Gottlob and David; and the little boys: Christian, Josef, Markus, Jonathan, Christian Gottlieb, Timotheus, Anton, Jonas, Gottlieb, Benjamin and Hans Thomas.

Dying with Christian names, dying like Christ rather than take sides in the American Revolutionary War, the Indian believers of Gnadenhütten did not resist their murderers.

One young man, Jakob, managed to escape and crawl beneath the floor of one of the “slaughterhouses” where the soldiers took the believers in groups of three or four, to smash their skulls with a cooper’s mallet. But so much blood ran down between the floor boards that he had to leave. He made a break for the woods and was one of two survivors who returned to the rest of the Christian Indians in northern Ohio. The other survivor was a young boy named Thomas. The Americans left him for dead among a pile of corpses. But in the night, when everyone had gone, he came to and crawled, stunned and bleeding through the woods to Neuschönbrunn where he found help.

The Christian Indian women died, like the men, without resisting the Americans. One after another: Amelie, Jonas’ wife, Augustina, Christian’s wife, and seven other married women, Cornelia, Anna, Johanna Salome, Lucia, Lorel, Ruth and Johanna Sabina met their death. The unmarried sisters from whose heads the American soldiers jerked white prayer veilings to scalp them, were Katherina, Judith, Christiana, Maria, Rebekah, Rachel, Maria Susanne, Anna and Bathsheba (daughters of the Indian minister, Joshua), Julianna, Elisabeth, Martha, Anna Rosina and Salome. Then there were eleven little girls: Christina, Leah, Benigna, Gertrud, Anna Christine, Anna Salome, Maria Elisabeth, Sarah, Hannah (the child of Maria the widow) and Anna Elisabeth. Besides these, and five unbaptised seekers, the Americans clubbed twelve babies (too young to scalp) to death.

Isaak Glikhikan, leader of the Christian Indians at Gnadenhütten, was not the first to be killed. Perhaps he stayed back to comfort the new in the faith and the children among them. Perhaps he hoped to encourage the sisters in the other house. But when they laid hands on his wife, Anna Benigna, and

on him, he died as he had lived—for Christ in whom he believed.

It was March 10, 1782, the day of his last battle . . . and greatest triumph.

You, North Americans, Latins, Blacks, Orientals, Catholics, Protestants . . . whoever you are, have you considered doing like Isaak Glikhikan?

Have you considered living like Jesus, no matter what happens—no matter how great a cultural adjustment it may involve, and regardless of what it might do to your career and reputation? Nothing stands between you and glorious triumph in Christ except the cross.

A deep discouragement and pessimism threatens to take a hold of many who seek for the truth. Listening to what they say one could think “the old ship of Zion” was going under. But it is not! One could think the church community was in trouble. But it is not!

Christ said, “Look up! Your redemption draws near!”

Paul said, “God wants men to seek him, to reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” The Lord Christ walks on ahead. Shall we run and catch up? Waiting on our friends is not necessary. Neither waiting on our churches, our wives, husbands or children. It is time to get up and go like the fishermen of Galilee, the Anabaptists, and the Indians of the Tuscarawas valley.

If we have not prayed to Christ, now is the time. No one can follow him while being afraid of talking directly to him.

“Whoever comes to me I will never drive away. . . . I am the way. . . . Everyone who looks to the Son and believes on him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

The Spirit of Christ fills those who spend time with his life and teachings in the Gospels, especially the Sermon on the Mount. It

is not much material. But it is enough, and the more time one spends with it the more extensive it becomes.

Above all, when the voice of Christ is understood it must be followed. I believe that as you “outsiders,” “Greeks,” and “Syro-Phoenicians,” do that, marvellous works shall be accomplished. Not the least of them may be to reorient and mobilise what is left of the Anabaptist movement.

We, the Anabaptists’ descendants, have shown ourselves to be a difficult group to work with. We learn slowly (since we tend to think we already know all we need to know). We hate to change, even for the better. It is next to impossible for us to admit that we are wrong, or that someone else has a better way of doing things. Our steadfastness, in many cases, has degenerated into sheer blockheadedness. We are by nature withdrawn, proud, and self-righteous. But many of us, little by little, are coming to realise that without you and your convictions, our movement will surely disintegrate further and die. You have great things to teach us—about reaching out to the poor, about forgiveness and equality, about keeping the Gospel a simple one. Don’t let us down!

The Anabaptist movement was never stronger than when it consisted of more than a hundred thousand “new Christians” without a single experienced person among them to say how things should be done.

You can be part of something like that.