

**In Memoriam:
A. James Reimer (1942-2010)**

Jim Reimer was born in Altona, Manitoba, on August 10, 1942. He grew up within the rhythms of traditional Mennonite village life at a time when these rhythms were being reshaped by revivalism. At age 17 he was baptized on his confession of faith by David Schultz into the Altona Bergthaler Church. In 1960 Reimer enrolled at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. There he began the lifelong task of critically integrating his revivalist upbringing and Mennonite doctrine with an increasingly broadened intellectual horizon. After spending two years as a reporter and then a further two years teaching at Elim Bible School, Reimer continued his studies in history and philosophy at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. During this time he married Margaret Loewen, with whom he shared common religious and intellectual pursuits. They had three children, Christina, Thomas and Micah.

In 1971 Jim and Margaret spent a transformative year at Union Theological Seminary in New York City encountering the sophisticated world of liberal Protestant culture. The experience set him on a path toward master's and doctoral studies at St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto. The thought of the conservative philosopher George Grant and the social justice theologian Gregory Baum brought him face-to-face with the classical Christian tradition as well as its radical critique. This conflict became the subject of his dissertation as it was played out in the theologies of Emmanuel Hirsch and Paul Tillich at the beginning of the Nazi era in Germany. His ambition was to expand this emerging synthesis to engage Mennonite doctrine and ethics.

In the course of the early 1980s Reimer taught undergraduate courses and wrote prolifically on the themes of his synthesis in the popular and academic press. In 2000 most of these occasional pieces were gathered together into his magnum opus, *Mennonites and Classical Theology*. In 1986 he became a tenured instructor at Conrad Grebel College and the University of Waterloo. He soon developed a reputation as an erudite and passionate teacher. In addition, he was the formative force in the establishment of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre as an institute of the Toronto School of Theology, of which he became the

founding director. He retired from both positions because of prostate cancer in 2008. He died on August 28, 2010.

The church and the academy are indebted to Jim Reimer because of the boldness and tenacity of his intellectual and existential synthesis. That synthesis embraced three spheres. One was his engagement with modern life, especially its political and religious constructs. The second, and central, sphere was Reimer's critical and imaginative reappropriation of the classical thought patterns of Christian tradition in conversation with Mennonite and Free Church belief. The third sphere was a postcritical reclaiming of the life of faith grounded in Christ and the church.

As a person, Reimer was warm hearted, humorous and empathetic toward all who struggle with the ambiguities of life. His spirit will be missed in both church and academy.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on . . . says the Spirit . . . for their works follow after them." (Rev. 13:14)

– John D. Rempel

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