



Who Speaks Plautdietsch?

Plautdietsch speakers are primarily Mennonites of Dutch origin, who traveled east from Holland through Poland and south into Russia in the 1700s before eventually coming to North America in the late 1800s. Those who have stayed by their old traditions are called Old Colony Mennonites. Many of them moved to Mexico and South America in the early 1900s. Although their culture may appear innocent, there are many who live under tremendous bondage and oppression.



What ministries have Rudi and Beth been involved in?

We both received our Bachelor of Arts degree in intercultural ministries from New Tribes mission and spent one term in tribal ministry. Later we gave Bible studies for ten years among the Plautdietsch speaking people in Bolivia who were very similar to the people among whom Rudi grew up in Paraguay. Most of the Mennonites with whom we studied had Old Colony backgrounds. Studying with them brought the need for a clear and accurate Plautdietsch New Testament translation to the forefront. With our training and background we felt that this project was something that God had prepared us to do. While still involved in discipleship in Bolivia a New Tribes Mission translation consultant evaluated whether or not a new translation was warranted. He agreed to be Rudi's consultant, and the Plautdietsch translation project was approved by NTM Bolivia. Work on this translation has now become our primary focus.



Why translate?

Old Colony Mennonites commonly accept the 1912 Martin Luther translation of the Bible. This

version is in High German, a language most Old Colony Mennonites use mainly in church and grade school, but in which only a few are truly literate. For many, this creates a mental block to reading their own language, Plautdietsch. The reading experience for many people is like driving down a road with a series of speed bumps. Foreign words and an unnatural way of saying things slow them down so they lose concentration and fail to comprehend what they read.

Without a translation people can easily understand, people are very dependent on others to explain God's Word to them. Since Old Colony Mennonites come out of a culture where they depend mainly on what their bishop and preachers say about spiritual things, they have a natural bent toward following a person instead of God. Therefore, it is crucial that they should be able to read an accurate and understandable translation of the New Testament for themselves.

What confirmed this need for us was when Rudi and his consultant did a comprehension check of Matthew with their Plautdietsch helper. Rudi had begun to apply some of the translation principles his consultant had taught him, but when they read one particularly large paragraph to their Mennonite helper, she couldn't even begin to repeat to the consultant what she'd heard. So Rudi went home and reworked the passage following more closely the spoken Plautdietsch language pattern. Although the paragraph grew to nearly twice its original size, the helper easily understood it and gave it back clearly in Spanish to the consultant. The lesson we learned is that when God's Word is written in the way people speak, people will be able to understand *and* retain it better.



What are we doing now?

We returned from Bolivia and are now living in Missouri, concentrating on the translation project. Although we don't have official ties with New Tribes Mission, we are blessed that Kevin Gutwein, an NTM translation consultant coordinator, has agreed to assist us in this project. We are also thankful for our Plautdietsch speaking friends and family in Manitoba, Texas, Bolivia, and Paraguay who have been giving their much appreciated help.

Our desire is that individual Plautdietsch speakers all over the world should have an accurate and understandable New Testament translation. We desire especially for those who speak only Plautdietsch to be able to understand God's Word for themselves, in order to get to know Christ better, and to be able to share Him with others. To this end we've opened a new web site at www.plautdietschnt.com where the books of the New Testament are placed as they are being finished. They are free to download for reading and we are working on making them available in audio form.

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Our ministry is supported by the gifts and prayers of God's people. If you are interested in supporting the translation work please make your check out to 'Graceland Ministries' and attach a note explaining that it is for the Plautdietsch translation work, or contact someone at Graceland for further information.