

An Ackerman Allegory

Growing up in the 1940's and 1950's in Western Pennsylvania meant learning how to pronounce peoples' last names. Virtually every nationality was represented with multiple languages being spoken and ethnic neighborhoods with ethnic churches, being maintained. "Multi-culturalism" and "Diversity" meant going to the First Grade and meeting your classmates. Sometimes we saw a paper Menorah in our classroom window and sometimes we saw a Christmas Tree. Some of our classmates took a few extra days off during the year to go to their place of worship, and some of us walked in with ashes on our forehead once a year. When we had a Jewish teacher, she did all of the Bible readings from the Old Testament. When we had a Christian teacher he read to us from the Old Testament and New Testament. Some people from the same family spelled their last names differently because not everyone at Ellis Island could spell properly. When my grandfather moved from Sweden he was Axel Frichoff Akerman (with one dot above the "A"). He very quickly became "Fred Ackerman." My paternal grandmother was named Paulina Jonsson and she quickly became Jenny Johnson - after all weren't all Swedish women named after Jenny Lind (which wasn't her real name anyway!)

Not too many years ago I received a letter indicating that I was not a member of the "TRUE" Ackerman family. The true Ackerman family, so the letter told me, came from Germany. Now, I recognize that the Vikings travelled quite a bit...but this was a stretch! The letter contained quite a bit of information that was designed to explain that I was not a TRUE Ackerman, and at the same time WHO the true Ackerman's were. Obviously from the letter those who wrote it put themselves in the position of determining what the criteria was to be a TRUE Ackerman. The letter even attempted to say that the Swedish Akerman's needed to stop using the name "Ackerman" since it might confuse people. My family and I had a lengthy meeting of about 3 1/2 minutes and decided to call ourselves what we have been called for generations.

In life some people and some groups have a need to function in a superior fashion. They have a need always to be right, and they need to be a part of what they have determined is "true." While there certainly is objective truth, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but me" being an obvious example, there is no mention in the Bible of which "Akerman/Ackermann/Ackerman" is the TRUE Ackerman.

There are still "Ackerman" people who think we're not a TRUE "Ackerman," but we have simply decided to live a happy Ackerman life, and let the TRUE Ackerman's spend time trying to figure out who is not a TRUE Ackerman. They have more time than I do to work on that worthy project.