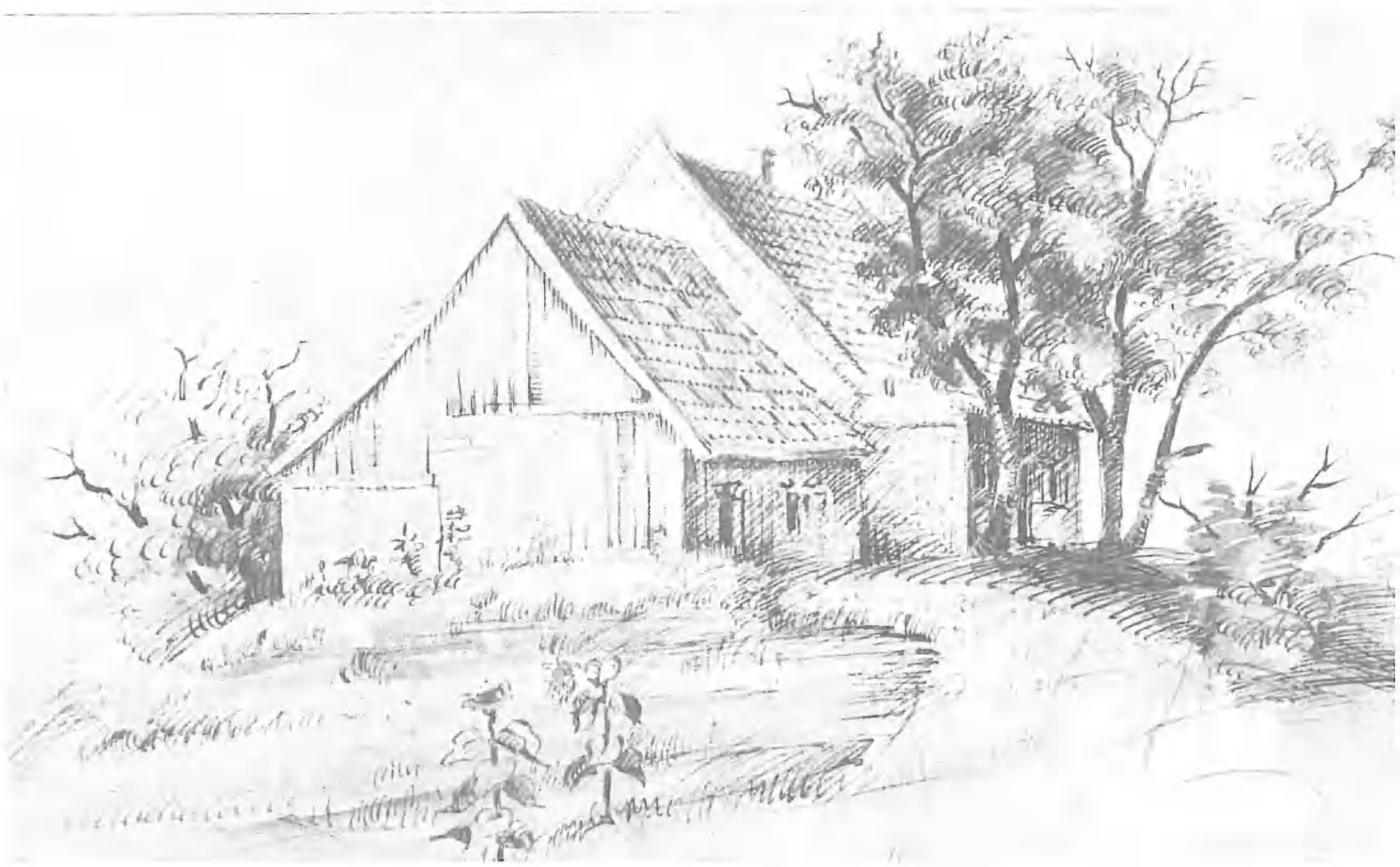
MENNONITE LIFE

MARCH 1978



In this Issue

This issue focuses on the Mennonite experience in Russia.

Cornelius Krahn re-examines the story of Eduard Wüst and the revival led by the *Brüdergemeinde*, a community of pietists who migrated in the early nineteenth century from Württemberg to an area immediately southeast of the large Mennonite colony of Molotschna. He describes the influence of this renewal movement on the German settlers in South Russia and also on the nearby Mennonites. It led to a quickening of the spiritual life both among the existing Mennonite congregations and the fellowship which emerged as the *Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde* (Mennonite Brethren). This essay adds to the growing literature probing the story of Mennonite Brethren origins in Russia and the varied pietistic influences shaping Mennonite life.

Mennonite school teachers have provided leadership in all generations for their people.. John B. Toews introduces us to a Christopher Dock-like schoolmaster from Orlov, Tobias Voth, a quiet saint who loved his children but whose methods displeased those of the establishment. His presence is only dimly discernible in the mists of history. We hope that more documents relating to this gentle soul may be found so that we may know and appreciate his true contribution.

Another gifted and gentle schoolmaster was described by Amelia Mueller in the December 1977 issue of *Mennonite Life*: "Jakob Ellenberger: Pastor, Teacher, Musician, Writer." As a sequel to this article we offer a brief photographic study of this South German Mennonite leader, who enriched the life of his people with his love of music, his concern for missions, and his affection for his flock and his students.

Walter Sawatsky brings us from the nineteenth century to the present with his study of the struggle of Mennonites to survive under sixty years of Soviet rule. In this most comprehensive account of Mennonite congregational life in Russia yet to appear we see the displacement of Mennonites from rural communities in the Ukraine to the new urban centers East of the Urals, from farmers to factory workers, from the quiet in the land to the quiet in the cities. Sawatsky's survey, based on his extensive studies under Mennonite Central Committee auspices, raises a host of absorbing questions for further study. How does a people preserve its identity under authoritarian rule? How are values transmitted from generation to generation in a Marxist society? How are values lost? What are the adaptive gifts required to survive and to be faithful? We await further writing by Walter Sawatsky on the sad and joyous, intriguing and complex story of the Mennonites in the Soviet Union.

The photographs of Heinz Hindorf, who visited the Mennonite colonies in South Russia in 1941-43 while he served with the German army, offers a nostalgic rural counterpoint to the story of the Mennonite diaspora in the cities of Siberia. Heinz Hindorf is now a gifted artist creating stained glass windows for churches in West Germany.

The Editors

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Cover

Old farm home in Chortitza, Ukraine. Sketched by Heinz Hindorf, c. 1943.

Back Cover

David Epp, born in Niederchortitza in 1873, sketched by Heinz Hindorf, c. 1943.

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A Pietist Revival Comes to South Russia

Eduard Wüst: From Kornthal in South Germany to Gnadenfeld in South Russia

By Cornelius Krahn

Drawing of Pastor Wüst from the biography, Pfarrer Eduart Wüst, *by A. Kröker.*

Cornelius Krahn is Professor Emeritus of Church History and German at Bethel College.

In his *magnum opus* P. M. Friesen refers to Jakob Prinz as the author of a book in which there is a marvelous, lively and accurate description" of Eduard Wüst. Unfortunately he did not disclose the title of the book which contained this valuable information.[1]

Eduard Wüst was an evangelist-revivalist from Württemberg, Germany. The church that he served in Russia had its roots in the independent congregation of Kornthal near Stuttgart known as *Brüdergemeinde.* This *Brüdergemeinde* had nothing to do with the Herrnhuter *Brüdergemeinde* started by N. L.: Zinzendorf in Saxony. However, this pietistic movement had some influence on the Mennonites of West Prussia before they went to Russia.[2]

The Kornthal *Brüdergemeinde* of Württemburg near Stuttgart had its origin in 1819 as a result of the religious unrest of those post-Napoleonic years. The Lutheran Church was being influenced by a theological liberalism fostered by some of the universities and challenged by a more inward oriented pietistic and eschatological movement inspired by men like J. A. Bengel, F. C. Oettinger and others. The increased interest in the apocalyptic writings of the Bible created expectations of the second coming of the Lord which was to take place in Russia

or in Palestine. This led many to leave the country or to sever their relationship with the Lutheran state church. Thus, the Kornthal community and *Brüdergemeinde* came into being.[3] Numerous other colonies organized similarly for migrations to the Ukraine, the Caucasus Mountains and even to Palestine, where they established settlements as independent *Brüdergemeinden, Templer* or Friends of Jerusalem.[4]

The ninety-nine families of the Kornthal *Brüdergemeinde* that migrated to the Ukraine consisted of 477 persons. They established three villages: Neuhoffnungsthal, Neuhoffnung, and Rosenfeld. The location was between the Molotschna Mennonite settlement and the city of Berdyansk which already had a Mennonite community and congregation at that time. The Kornthal pilgrims had escaped from the uncertain future at home and now found themselves surrounded by Mennonites, Lutherans, Catholics, Jews, Mohammedans, Gypsies, Russian Orthodox and other strangers. But here they would have an opportunity to develop and foster their own religious and cultural life without any interference by an established church and state, even though they had not actually fully escaped from "Babel" and had not yet arrived in the millennium where they would be "one body under one shepherd".[5]

Nevertheless, they established themselves economically observing and learning from the adjacent earlier Mennonite settlements. However, in their objective to establish and constitute a harmonious spiritual body of believers they experienced disappointments. They encountered not only the usual hardships of pioneers, they also had great difficulties in trying to realize their dream of establishing the body of Christ. When their elected ministers expressed views and thoughts not acceptable by some, complaints were heard. Thus they established the practice of having the ministers read sermons that would be acceptable to all. Ultimately the Neuhoffnung congregation decided to extend a call to a minister from their home community.[6]

Who was Jakob Prinz?

We are now turning to the primary source of information that will be used from here on to present the life and work of Eduard Wüst. The author, title and publisher of the book are: Jakob Prinz, *Die Kolonie der Brüdergemeinde.* Verlag van Jacob Prinz, Pyatigorsk, Moscow, 1898. The copy of this rare book was owned and used by C. H. Wedel. Under his pencilled name in the book is also the name of H. R. Voth, who obtained it from him and whose widow turned it over to the Mennonite Library and Archives where it was catalogued in 1940 with the book number 1573. Very few scholars have used this extremely scarce volume.

Abraham Kröker used it extensively when he wrote and published the book: *Pfarrer Eduard Wüst.* This book found a much wider distribution among the Mennonites than that by Prinz. Prinz is not only a great admirer of Wüst but he also displays scholastic skills and an unusual ability to write. It is surprising that P. M. Friesen did not fully recognize this. Prinz was a son of the Württemberg *Brüdergemeinde.* He interviewed numerous people and gathered many documents. It is not known whether any of these source materials survived. He must have had a very good education and was himself a good educator. He most likely had *Templer* leanings whereby the expectation of the speedy coming of the Lord to establish His kingdom on earth was in tension with his promotion of higher education, which was strongly affirmed by the *Templer* or Friends of Jerusalem.[7]

Prinz's presentation of the community life and the spiritual struggles at the various places are superb. Wüst becomes the hero of the drama of the *Brüdergemeinde* Prinz develops and writes. As Wüst reaches beyond the pales of the community that had called him to serve them, the author follows him wherever he goes among the Lutheran, Mennonite or Catholic neighbors or to Kharkov, Moscow, and Petersburg. This, however does not mean that Prinz gives us a full account of Wüst's influence on the Mennonites. This part must be filled in from other sources as has already been done. But few, if any, writers at the turn of the century have shed as much light and have given as much information and general observations of the German settlements established between the Molotschna settlement and the Crimea.

The Early Life of Eduard Wuest

Wüst grew up in an average Lutheran family in Württemburg as a quiet well-behaved boy.[8] Like his older brother he decided to become a minister. After finishing his secondary education he began with his theological education at the university. Soon he neglected his studies and, with others, began visiting the *Wirtshaus* more and more frequently. He turned into a "good-for-nothing" and became a "drop-out". The prayers and admonitions of his parents seemed fruitless. But suddenly he had a miraculous conversion experience that totally changed his life. This part of the life story of Wüst has been dealt with by A. Kroeker[9] and most recently by Victor Doerksen based on newly discovered primary sources.[10]

With some difficulties he now completed his theological studies at the university and accepted a call to serve a Lutheran church. His preaching fervor soon reached such a high pitch that an average established rural congregation could not tolerate him very long. He served a number of churches and was soon without a job. This time he became a "drop-out" as a fiery preacher of conversion disturbing the traditional "peace" of the churches.

Meanwhile Wilhelm Hoffman of the *Brüdergemeinde* at Kornthal had received a request to send a suitable minister to the Neuhoffnung *Brüdergemeinde* in Russia. It so happened that Wüst visited the Kornthal community and was deeply impressed by what he saw. When Hoffman told him about the vacancy in Neuhoffnung he immediately accepted the call and went to Russia, where he arrived at his place of ministry in 1843.[11]

Prinz describes vividly the arrival and the early work of Wüst: "The call of Wüst was the salvation

of the congregation and of great service to it. With his arrival began the happiest period in the history of the church. . . . With the appearance of Wüst the congregation was transformed by an irresistable power of cleansing and received a new image and sparkle. Through the personality of Wüst a spiritual process was begun in a small farming community which spread rapidly, creating new life everywhere." He revived the influences of Bengel and Oettinger and found that the foundation they had laid was still intact.

On the other hand the author points out that during the 30 years that the *Brüdergemeinde* resided in the steppes of the Ukraine, changes had taken place in Germany in the prophetic atmosphere of Pietism when the return of the Lord had been predicted at specific times. The religious modernism of David Strauss and others and political or revolutionary forces had brought about great changes. These changes had also influenced the Würtemberg Pietism. The tendency to predict the time and place of the second coming of the Lord had been replaced by an emphasis on the emotional spiritual life in opposition to the spreading of Rationalism which rejected the Christian faith. Among the Pietist leaders were now Ludwig Hofacker, A. Knapp, Friedrich Spitta and others. That Wüst had his own brand of Pietism could be concluded from the fact that he could not remain in any of the congregations for any length of time. But he had now arrived at a place where he was received with open arms.

"Preach! Preach! I hear from all Sides!"

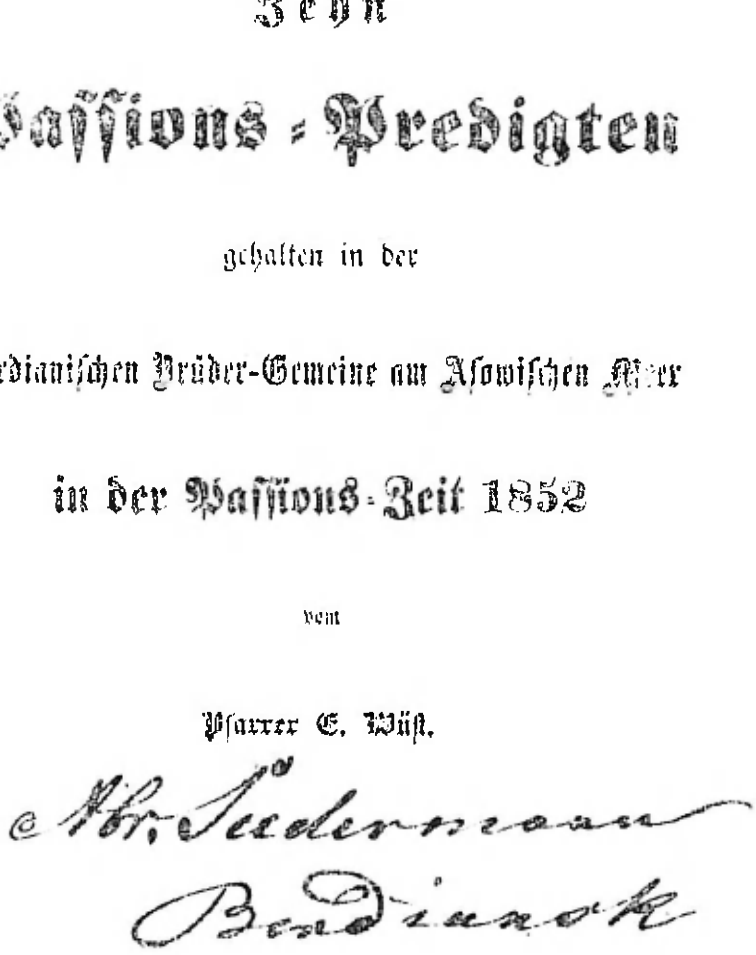
Prinz relates that the church was filled to the last seat on the first Sunday in Neuhoffnung. With a mighty voice and a convincing presentation his words were like sparks of fire in the hearts of his listeners. He began by saying: "Preach! Preach! I hear from all sides. From above I hear the voice say, Preach! and you demand of me, Preach! What shall I preach, I ask with the prophets? The answer is: All flesh is like grass. It dries up. Even the flower wilts, but the word of the Lord remains forever. And that is what I am going to proclaim to you. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him Crucified" (1. Cor. 2:2). From the very beginning he told his congregation: "This Christ I will not

only preach to you from the pulpit, but I will bring him to you in your homes and when you are not at home I will search for you in your daily work, and if necessary I will pursue you into the fields, and always it will be to present to you Jesus Christ crucified.' And this is what he did, Sunday after Sunday, month after month. Immediately the other *Brüdergemeinde* villages—Rosenfeld, Neuhoffnungsthal and Neustuttgart—asked him to serve them also as minister. He accepted the call by saying, "I am not interested in your money, but in your hearts. If I have your hearts, I will also have your pocketbook." But his annual salary remained 600 rubles throughout the 14 years.

The calls to repentance and conversion which Wüst emphasized were like thunderbolts that caught fire, particularly among the younger generation. He brought them to a sin consciousness, leading to an inner spiritual struggle and ultimately to peace and rejoicing over the assurance of forgiveness of sin. Often the younger generation led the older to this experience. Wüst would emphasize that the peace of the heart must be preceded by a confession of sin. He faced the problem that some were still believing in the presence of witches in their midst. Soon his sermons brought an end to this superstition.

The fire of the revival movement could not remain confined to the bounds of the *Brüdergemeinde*. It began to spread to the neighboring villages of the Lutherans and Mennonites. Among the first contacts that Wüst made outside of his parish were the Mennonites of Berdyansk and the Molotschna villages, particularly Gnadenfeld. Prinz claims that Mennonites were spiritually closest to Wüst and the *Brüdergemeinde* among all the German settlements. The closest friends among them were Leonhard Sudermann and Jakob Buhler of Berdyansk, Friedrich Lange of Gnadenfeld, Abraham Matthies of Rudnerweide and Heinrich Schmidt of Pastwa. However his contacts beyond his parish were not limited to the Mennonites. Wüst's revival meetings also attracted many of the Lutherans in the neighboring villages. He became known everywhere. At one occasion Wüst was passing through a Catholic village and ran into a wedding procession. The father of the bride stopped him and asked him to preach at the wedding. After the officiating priest had approved of it, Wüst complied. Prinz reports that there was much sobbing and crying during the presentation of his message.

One of the most popular events of the year was the Mission Festival of the *Brüdergemeinde* which was started in 1846. The attendance grew from year to year. Hundreds of horse-drawn wagons loaded with passengers came to the Mission Festival on the day before and were



Zehn

Passions-Predigten

gehalten in der

Berdianischen Brüder-Gemeine am Asowischen Meer

in der Passions-Zeit 1852

vom

Pfarrer E. Wüst.

Reval, 1853.

Gedruckt bei Lindfors Erben.

Left, a map of the Molotschna Colony in South Russia with the area circled where the Brüdergemeinde communities were located. Right, a title page of a book of sermons of Eduard Wüst, originally in the possession of Leonard Sudermann, elder of the Berdyansk congregation.

received in the homes of the *Brüdergemeinde* members. Up to ten vehicles could be seen in some of the yards and up to 30 guests would be sheltered at one place. In addition to Wüst, Lutheran and Mennonite preachers and laymen spoke at this ecumenical happening. These annual events created and fostered mission work at home and abroad.

Among other activities introduced were the Love Feasts which were started with an evening meal, continuing with singing, prayer and sharing. It was an opportunity to remove misunderstandings and clear the spiritual atmosphere of the congregation. Similarly there were meetings arranged for the brethren only. Representatives from all four villages met to discuss spiritual needs. Great emphasis was placed on matters pertaining to family life, raising children, the schools and the spiritual needs of the young people.

Is the Free Grace of God not Enough?

The emotional aspect of salvation played a very significant role in the spiritual life of the followers of Wüst. The emotions were ignited in the conversion of the individual and sustained on a high level in the spiritual fellowship. Soon Wüst had to raise the question whether there was more to the vital Christian life than the maintenance of this high emotional level. After a decade of spiritual glow, this question had to be faced and answered. Wüst realized that the jumy from the domain of sin and forgiveness to Christian living was inseparable. It had been overlooked that conversion was only the beginning of the spiritual pilgrimage and must be accompanied by the fruits of the Christian life. Young people were now encouraged to go into mission fields, and teachers from Württemberg were invited to come and help in the educational program.

Contacts were still maintained with the Kornthal *Brüdergemeinde* and Württemberg Pietism in general. However, great changes had taken place since Wüst had left. The warm pietistic atmosphere as well as orthodox Lutheranism had been challenged by a theological liberalism spreading from the universities. Christoff Hoffmann, the spokesman of the Kornthal *Brüdergemeinde,* had published "Twenty-one statements against the Modern Atheists." Hoffmann and the brothers Paulus began the publication of *Die Warte* (Watchtower) in order to defend true Christianity against the inroads of doctrinal liberalism and modernism. They also advocated the separation of church and state. Wüst not only read *Die Warte* but he also contributed to it.

Wüst wrote as follows: "With great interest we read about the gathering of the People of God in your paper. You will know that the fathers of our congregation came here forty years ago with great hope derived from Revelations. . . . Times have removed whatever was carnal in their expectation." He continued by saying that prosperity has been their reward. J. A. Bengel's prophecy that Russia would host the "Bride of Christ" was being fulfilled. They enjoyed total freedom as far as the Russian government was concerned. He continued that even the high authorities of the Lutheran church had to keep their hands off. He added, "Our Czar freely and publicly confesses his faith in the living God." On the other hand Wüst wrote to Weingart in Germany: "It is right that *Die Warte* aims to have the Christian faith demonstrated in real life . . . however it is different with its doctrine of justification . . . that is where it stops."

Nonetheless, Prinz maintained that Wüst, who continued to emphasize the free grace of God, now realized that there was another side to it, namely applying and practicing the free grace of God in daily life. However, Wüst now found some of his followers unwilling to take that step with him.

Changes took place in the expression of the joy and sadness of the Christian, the most effected being the music in the congregation. The old prophetic and slow hymns were replaced by contemporary songs of Pietist and Methodist origin. Among the favored hymns were those of F. Spitta, A. Knapp and others. Soon the *Glaubensstimme* by Julius Köbner was introduced. Naturally this development also influenced the Mennonites of Berdyansk and the Molotschna villages.

The Parting of the Ways

Through Wüst all had been exposed to a great spiritual stimulation. Many had come to the meetings and the tightly organized Lutheran administration had tolerated or even welcomed the fresh breeze coming their way. However, the tolerance and curiosity came to an end, resulting in an order by German administration and the Lutheran Church stating tha Wüst no longer had permision to preach or minister in the Lutheran congregations and districts. Thus Wüst could not look after the well-being of the flock and the individuals he had served beyond his own congregation.

Troubles started at the so-called *Preussenplan* (Prussian-Lutheran settlement). Here an independent *Brüdergemeinde* had come into being as a result of Wüst's visits and preaching. Now he could no longer visit there and nurture the spiritual life of the "beginners" in Christ. Consequently a man by the name of Kappes assumed the leadership and proclaimed a new direction with the motto of "full freedom in Christ." Wüst was denounced as having led the group to the gates of the kingdom of God but not into it. In 1857 Wüst had to sign a document that he would no longer visit congregations other than his own. However meetings of the annual *Missionsfest* of the *Brüdergemeinde* continued. They were still popular and attended by many outsiders. Thus in the fall of 1858, many from the Lutheran and Mennonite settlements were present again.

Wüst arranged for a special meeting after the *Missionsfest.* The meeting was to promote a peaceful settlement of issues at stake. Kappes and his followers were also present. They dominated the discussion and accused Wüst and his followers of being a *Steifes Parisäertum* (stiff-necked Pharisees) and a *totes Kirchentum* (a dead Christianity) while they favored an *Evangelische*

Freiheit (evangelical freedom). As the heat of the debate increased, Kappes rose and said: "We are finished." He and his group departed with a trivial song produced in their midst:

"Pharisäer lasset suchen
Wo ihr Hochmut Werke sind.
Das Gesetz wird sie verfluchen,
Denn ihr Herz is voller Sünd."

The song was continued in the yard of the church.

Wüst was deeply hurt. It could hardly be expected that this extreme flock of his fold would ever return to the sound and solid foundation of the church of Jesus Christ. He also began to realize that this had taken place among his followers and that there could have been something missing in his leadership. Nevertheless he steadfastly continued his work, but somewhat disillusioned.

But Wüst's problems were not limited to the outsiders of the *Preussenplan*. In the midst of the *Brüdergemeinde* there was a flock of the *Munteren* (joyful) extremists that separated from him under the leadership of Joseph Hottmann and Mattheus Prinz, who in turn became an outcast of the community. They discontinued even infant baptism since they insisted water could not save anybody. They expressed their joy in many new ways derived from the Old Testament. However, they were restricted in some of their activities by the administration of the community. Joseph Hottmann had been a close coworked of Wüst.

The former followers of Wüst from the Prussian Lutheran settlement renounced every contact with him and went their own way. They came up with a distinction of the "Old Adam" and the "New Adam." They claimed that through Christ sin has become ineffective and that they could not be made responsible for what their "Old Adam" was doing. Under the motto of "freedom in Christ" and Old Testament examples, they justified their loose and sinful living and became a public scandal with Kappes in leadership.

However, Prinz reports that some of the misled sheep of the flock returned to the fold of the moderates. Soon a strong opposition developed against the misunderstood "free Grace." According to the state and degree of emotionalism, the following distinct nicknames were used: *Muntere, Lustige, Springer, Hüpfer* (the joyous, the happy ones, the jumpers, the hoppers). Prinz claims that Wüst could have possibly prevented some of these extremes if his hands had not been tied since he had not been permitted to visit communities other than his own.[12]

In the midst of the struggle Wüst had become ill and his physical condition deteriorated rapidly. On July 13, 1859, he passed away. The attendance at the funeral demonstrated his unusual popularity in spite of what had happened during the last years of his life. Prinz reports that the crowd of mourners from nearby and far away was very large. There were the Württembergers and Mennonites, the flock from the *Brüdergemeinde* which he had served, and the Lutherans who had admired or opposed him. All stood at the grave of their spiritual father and teacher, who had brought to them a never previously experienced Christian joy and strength. The condolences that reached his widow were many.

Wüst's message had made a great impression on a large number of people and his emphasis remained consistent and unmistakable. He was, with John the Baptist, a preacher of repentence. He invited his listeners to accept Christ as a personal Saviour. He was so overwhelmed by this call that he said less about the invitation of Christ to take the cross and follow him.

The Background of Mennonite Brethren Origins

There has been a tendency to establish the origin of the Mennonite Brethren in a direct lineage of Eduard Wüst. There were steps or links that Wüst did not recognize which became very basic for the Mennonite Brethren from the very beginning. Wüst's problems were not limited to the followers of Kappes at the *Preussenplan*. In the midst of his *Brüdergemeinde* there was a group of *Muntere* (joyful) that had been started under the leadership of Joseph Hottmann and Matheus Prinz. Hottmann had been a supporter and close coworker of Wüst at the beginning. Later he developed separatist tendencies and started meetings in smaller circles. He was the most significant leader of the *Muntere* group of the *Brüdergemeinde*. The group met frequently. There was much singing and Bible study which was considered the only guide in faith and life. Some discontinued infant baptism since the gates of the heavenly kingdom were open to children regardless. They strongly emphasized the emotional life and expressed their Christian joy in various ways but remained within the bounds of common decency. This was not the case with the *Munteren* at the *Preussenplan* under the leadership of Kappes.

The fact that Joseph Hottmann and Matheus Prinz performed spiritual functions led to the arrest of Hottman. They considered these actions to be sufferings inflicted for the sake of Christ and their persecutors were considered "spiritless Pharisees." These extremist developments by his wayward disciples affected negatively Wüst's public image. His influence and outreach beyond his *Brüdergemeinde* were now limited.

This is the situation in which the Mennonite Brethren Church had its origin. We now shift from Prinz as our primary source to Jakob P. Bekker, a contemporary reporter on the events that took place. He stated that Hottman, "a displaced church official, called together a council of brethren at which this writer [Bekker], together with several other Mennonite brethren, was present." On the agenda was the statement that they "could no longer feel justified in observing communion with an apostate church membership." Why not? "Because they serve the devil in their daily walk" and consequently their "communion is no longer the Lord's table but the devil's table." Jakob Bekker stated that Pastor Wüst had "failed to teach how to differentiate between what is holy and what is unholy, how the devout should separate

themselves from the wicked." He went on to state that during this meeting "the entire Mennonite Church body became the object of consideration." The conclusion was that "if Pastor Wüst would not agree to administer communion only to those who were redeemed children of God, how much less would the elders of the Mennonite Church *Bruderschaft* do this, who, aside from Gnadenfeld, did not know who was converted or unconverted, holy or unholy. . . . And thus we agreed to observe communion among ourselves, in peace and quietness and also to include the Württemberg brethren," the group that had withdrawn from Wüst's *Brüdergemeinde* under the leadership of Joseph Hottman. This took place in the spring of 1859 and constituted the initial step in the founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

What about Communion and Baptism?

Bekker reports that "among the believing brethren in the Mennonite colonies, communion was observed several times in all quietness without being disturbed." Soon it became known and had severe consequences among the Mennonites as well as among the followers of Hottmann in Wüst's *Brüdergemeinde*. There appeared to be a clear sense of who was saved and unsaved: "The converted brethren were grieved that they must take communion with those who were not part of the body of Christ. . . . In Wüst's church more than half of the members were unconverted." The record is silent of the applicability of the experience of Jesus with his disciples at the last Supper when he told them that one of them would deny him and one would even betray him and yet did not ask them to leave the Lord's table.[13]

In addition to the matter of the Lord's Supper, the question of baptism came up. Baptism of adults by immersion could not have come from Wüst who baptized children to the end of his life. In the recently published diary of Jakob P. Bekker, he refers to Menno Simons *Foundation Book* as a source for baptism by immersion. This cannot be based on Menno's writings.[14]

However, it must be pointed out that Pietistic and immersionist influences were already noticeable among the Mennonites of Europe over a hundred years before they went from West Prussia to Russia. The Pietistic writings of Ph. J. Spener, A. H. Francke and N. L. Zinzendorf were read by Mennonites. The Moravian *Brüdergemeinde*, founded by Zinzendorf, had a strong influence on the Mennonites who came to Russia at the end of the 18th century. None of these Pietists, however, practiced believers baptism, but continued traditional infant baptism. The strongest Pietist leaders among the Mennonites were Jan Deknatel (born 1698) of Amsterdam and Jakob Denner (1659-1746) of Altona-Hamburg who exerted an influence far beyond the Mennonite congregations through their devotional writings. Denner's *Erbauliche Betrachtungen* . . . were reprinted many times in both Dutch and German and reached Mennonites everywhere. Already in 1792 two Mennonites from Pennsylvania went to Europe and returned with 500 copies of this book which were diseributed in a short time.[15]

Denner introduced baptism by immersion in Hamburg long before this matter came up in Russia. This influence came from the Collegiants in Holland and from the Baptists in England. Consequently, these practices spread throughout Europe and ultimately also reached Russian Mennonites. One should note that the Russian Orthodox Church always practiced infant baptism by immersion.[16]

The group that had observed the Lord's Supper without the approval and presence of Mennonite ministers now proceeded to do the same in baptizing each other in the open water by immersion in 1860.[17] This was the beginning of the *Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde*. It must be taken for granted that the name was taken over from Wüst's *Brüdergemeinde* which had been transplanted from Kornthal near Stuttgart to the steppes of Russia. That they prefaced the name with *Mennoniten* implied that they wanted to remain Mennonites. There could be a number of reasons for this. A more important question is why some of the followers of Wüst maintained that those who have accepted Christ in an act of surrender should separate themselves from those whom they should lead to Christ. The reasons were given in a document which was presented to "The All-Mennonite Elders *Aelteste*) of the Molotschna Mennonite Churches" by the seceding Mennonite brethren on January 6, 1860.[18] This began with the statement that the undersigned have "realized through the grace of God that the total Mennonite brotherhood has decayed to the extent that we can no more be a part of it" and fear the "approach of an unavoidable judgment of God." This led to an exchange of letters involving also the Mennonite civil administration.[19]

We must take into consideration that all foreign settlements in Russia were established by an arrangement with the highest government in Petersburg. Thus a special administrative arm of the Russian government dealt with the Mennonite agencies, the secular and the religious departments. There were numerous reasons why a separation of a group from the main body would cause problems on all administrative fronts, including the possible loss of the special rights that the Mennonites enjoyed with other foreign settlers. All this and many other questions complicated this parting of ways. Originally efforts were made to establish a special Mennonite Brethren settlement on the Kuban River in the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains but ultimately they established themselves in most of the Mennonite villages, particularly in the growing number of new Mennonite daughter settlements throughout Russia.

Menno and Wuest

P. M. Friesen, A. Kroeker and others have claimed that the Mennonite Brethren returned to the foundation laid by Menno Simons (I Cor. 3:11). Friesen says: "Menno and Wüst, in addition to the Word of God and his spirit, have made the Mennonite Brethren what the

church of Christ is to be." It must be said, however, that Wüst advocated no change from the sacramental character of Lutheran infant baptism. Secondly, Wüst advocated no withdrawal of those who had been led to a personal acceptance of Christ from the main body of his congregation as the founding fathers of the Mennonite Brethren did. The Mennonite Brethren separated from the Mennonites after the death of Wüst. He grieved over the withdrawal of some of his members from his church including both the Kappes-led group and the Hottmann-led group.[20]

Wüst had no knowledge of Menno nor Anabaptist history and theology as was also the case with many sons and daughters of Menno. It is true, Jakob P. Bekker makes reference to Menno's *Foundation Book* in which he searched for Menno's view in regard to his mode of baptism.[21]

Knowledge about the content of the *Foundation Book* of Menno Simons at that time was almost totally restricted to members of the *Kleine Gemeinde* who had brought copies of this book along from West Prussia where P. von Riesen had printed it in three volumes. These books were then confiscated by the West Prussian Mennonite ministers because Menno had some harsh words to say in regard to the governments that persecuted deviating believers in their country. Graciously the intimidated Mennonite leaders permitted *Kleine Gemeinde* Mennonites to take some copies along to Russia.[22]

Eduard Wüst, the drop-out in his home community and country, found, through the grace of God, a field of labor in the steppes of the Ukraine. Brief were the years of his activities (1843-59), but great was the harvest he brought in. Among those whose spiritual life he touched and sparked were some who gratefully carried on his work. We are thankful to Jakob Prinz who left behind a source of information about Wüst and the Mennonites, Lutherans, the *Brüdergemeinde* and related communities. We are glad to learn about the ecumenical relationships that already existed more than a century ago. All were men and women of clay and spirit and we must carry on the unfinished tasks, knowing well that others will have to continue the good works in Christ after us.

FOOTNOTES

1. P. M. Friesen, *Die alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland* (1789-1910) *im Rahmen der mennonitschen Gesamtgeschichte*, Halbstadt, 1911, p. 184.
2. "Pietism", *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, p. 177.
3. S. C. Kapff, *Die Wuertembergischen Bruedergemeinde, Kornthal and Wilhelmsdorf, ihre Geschichte, Einrichtung u. Erziehungs-Anstalten . . .* Kornthal, 1839.
4. Fr. Lange, *Geschichte des Tempels*, Jerusalem, 1699.
5. J. Prinz, *Die Kolonien der Bruedergemeinde*. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien in Suedrussland. Moscow, 1898.
6. J. Prinz, *op. cit.*, 81 ff.
7. "Temple", *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, IV, p. 693.
8. J. Prinz, 74 ff.
9. A. Kroeker, *Pfarres eduard Wuest der grosse Erweckungsprediger in den deutschen Kolonien Suedrusslands*, 1903.
10. Victor Doerksen, "Verwuestung der Kirche: Eduard Wuest in Wuerttemberg, 1844-45". Paper presented in Winnipeg, 1977. (Based on primary sources).
11. From here on we follow our source from page 77 to 164: Prinz, *Die Kolonien der Bruedergemeinde*.
12. J. Prinz, p. 109 ff., P. M. Friesen, op. cit., *Die Froehliche und freie Richtung*, pp. 221-290, presents documents pertaining to the *Froeliche* and *Muntere* of the early Mennonite Brethren in letters, testimonies, etc. This constitutes a significant storehouse of information in the field.
13. Jacob P. Bekker, *Origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, Mennonite Brethren Historical Society, 1973, pp. 29, 31 ff.
14. Jacob P. Bekker, op. cit., p. 39 ff. *Taufe auf den Glauben* in chapter of C. Krahn, *Menno Simons*, 1936, pp. 129-133. See also footnotes.
15. "Pietism", *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. IV, p. 177 f.
16. "Denner", Jakob, *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, p. 36 ff.
17. Bekker, op. cit., pp. 179-182.
18. Bekker, op. cit., pp. 43 ff.; Frans Isaac, *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten*. H. J. Braun, Halbstadt, 1908, pp. 174 ff.
19. Frans Isaac, op. cit., pp. 174-195.
20. P. M. Friesen, op. cit., pp. 174 ff.
21. Bekker, op. cit., pp. 44, 79, 179 ff.
22. "Peter von Riesen", *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. IV, p. 332.

Mennonite Congregations in the Soviet Union Today

By Walter Sawatsky

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Very few Mennonites coming from the Soviet Union today are capable of telling the complete story of their local church. Most have lived in several places and have been involved in the life of several churches. The persons with the most diverse stories to tell are the older ones whose memories go back to the period before World War I. They still remember the Mennonite colonies in the Ukraine. They still remember the active church life, the Bible schools, the local schools, Mennonite self-government, Mennonite mission work. They remember the period when as many as 20,000 of their fellow Mennonites emigrated to North America, often taking the best leaders with them. They remember the so-called *DeKulakization* period when so many were labelled *Kulaks* (rich farmers) and were exiled to Siberia. Starting in 1929 they experienced collectivization of the land and the immediately resulting economic collapse. Some of them remember stealing their own grain back from the government in order to survive the winter.

But the 1930's are without question their saddest memory. First came the arrests of the ministers following soon thereafter by the arrest of other leading persons or anyone having contacts abroad. The intensive anti-religious campaign finally resulted in the closure of all churches. Johann Epp, a recent emigrant, remembers how in July 1935 the two remaining ministers in the Chortitza region, Heinrich Winter and Aron Thiessen, were arrested. By the fall of 1935 all the churches in the Chortitza region had been closed. During the next six years people were too afraid to conduct religious services. When Epp himself returned from prison in December 1940 he attended a funeral for a young 16 year old boy. No preacher was present, only a few women sang some songs. A few men hid themselves nearby and managed to overhear the funeral proceedings but did not dare show themselves. When the German armies invaded in 1941 there was a brief flowering of church life. Men like Heinrich Winter were active reorganizing the churches, ordaining ministers, and baptizing. But the revival was brief and after the Autumn of 1943 Mennonites had physicially disappeared from the Southern Ukraine having joined the retreating German army or having been sent to Eastern Russia.

I. The New Homes of the Dispersion

Of the 35,000 Russian Mennonites who fled to Germany during World War II, 20-23,000 were forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Union. On an average, they endured a 45 day trip in unheated or semi-heated box cars, little food and no sanitary facilities and indescribable suffering. When the trains stopped they found themselves not in the Ukraine as some had hoped but in far away frontier areas. Many were sent north to the Arkhangelsk region or the Komi ASSR or into the uninhabited forests of the Vologda region where they worked in lumber mills. Many found themselves in the Ural mountain region whereas others were sent to the mines of northern Kazakhstan, especially to the Karaganda region. Scattered groups were sent still farther east and north.

The major Mennonite settlements along the Volga (Old and New Samara) as well as the Trakt settlement were virtually destroyed during the war while the settlements in the Caucasus also disappeared. The best informed scholar for this period, Cornelius Krahn, estimated that at the time of the Hitler invasion in 1941 there were 100,000 Mennonites in the Soviet Union. One-fifth of these were exiled under Stalin, one-quarter were evacuated eastward. That meant that 45,000 were either in forced labor camps or had been evacuated to uninhabited places by the time of the outbreak of World War II in Russia. Adding to this the 35,000 Mennonites in the Ukraine, 23,000 of whom also travelled eastward but in a "roundabout" way via Germany, this leaves about 20,000 Mennonites out of the 100,000 total, who lived in regions that were "undisturbed." These were the settlements of Slavgorod, Omsk and Pavlodar in Siberia and also Orenburg.[1]

During the first post-war decade, approximately 68,000 Mennonites were living in a situation of uprootedness. The majority found themselves in "special settlements" which were administered directly by

the state security apparatus, the NKVD. The villages usually consisted of a series of barrack-like structures, which might be surrounded by barbed wire and an armed guard. In any case, all persons were required to report to the special command weekly and were not permitted to leave their village without special permission. A smaller percentage spent a decade in prison or prison camps, serving from 8 to 25 year sentences for so-called anti-Soviet activities usually because they had been forced to serve in the German army. There were many cases where the simple fact of having been present in Germany even as prisoner of war sufficed for a 10 year sentence.

As far as the western public and even the Soviet public was concerned, until 1956 Soviet Germans were non-persons. The first amnesties were granted in September 1955 and on December 13, 1955 the Supreme Soviet decreed that the "special settlements" were to be discontinued.[2] The Germans now received identity papers and were permitted to move about. The new freedoms also permitted letter writing to foreign countries. Mennonites among others now set about trying to find their relatives. The period from 1956 to approximately 1960 became a period of movement during which time many of the present day Mennonite clusters formed. Many moved simply to get away from a place that had been their virtual prison. Others moved to join relatives. Those living in the north started moving southward in search of better climate. A return to their old settlements in the Ukraine was forbidden. Toward the end of that period an additional factor for movement developed. People moved to southern Kazakhstan, to Kirgizia and Tadzhikistan because the anti-religious pressures were not as severe there. Some responded to Khrushchev's appeal to farm the virgin lands of Kazakhstan. Relatively few moved away from the Novosibirsk region. As others joined relatives there, it has become a Mennonite cluster. Many Mennonites were clustered in northern Kazakhstan from Karaganda to Semipalatinsk. By 1960 there were major groups in the Alma Ata region. Extending to Dzhambul, a series of Mennonite churches formed from Frunze to Lake Issyk Kul, and others lived in Leninabad and Dushanbe of Tadzhikistan.

Although the major new centers had been established by the 1960's two subsequent movements of people have taken place. From 1965 to ca. 1974 large numbers moved to Estonia and Latvia and later also to Moldavia. These regions offered better living conditions, a higher culture. In particular people hoped that from there it would be easier to emigrate to Germany. It soon became known that there was less religious persecution there and this also attracted settlers.

During the past decade the fourth emigration movement from the Soviet Union has been taking place. As many as 31,500 Soviet Germans have emigrated so far, more than 6,000 of these being of Mennonite origin.[3] Those who had emigrated to the Baltic republics were to a large extent successful in emigrating. Increasing numbers began to emigrate from the Alma Ata region, then from Tadzhikistan, and at the moment there is a major influx from the Frunze region. During the past year increasing numbers have been coming from the Altai region. As early as 1974 it became apparent that ministers, especially those from the "Reform Baptist" movement, were getting permission to leave more readily than their lay members.

The story of the Post-war Mennonite church in the Soviet Union is therefore a story characterized by newness rather than continuity. New congregations or fellowships started in new homes. For a short period there were new churches in the barracks. New group meetings started in the old settlements in Siberia that had remained undisturbed and recently new churches developed in the Baltic region.

II. Mennonite Fellowships in the Barracks

Life in the barracks was indescribably hard. Most survivors report that during the first two or three years, they could think only about food. Where would they find the next piece of bread? Would they ever again have the sense of a full stomach? Then the situation eased and some began thinking about spiritual things. In places where newly registered Baptist churches existed, Mennonites began attending and often joined. More typically, however, were the evenings of fellowship in the barracks. For example in one town in the Vologda region a few travelling ministers risked coming and holding meetings in the individual apartments in the barracks. Sometimes people in neighboring rooms who were unbelievers complained and the believers were punished, but it was impossible to stop them coming together. There had been such a period of spiritual starvation that now the old denominational differences were considered quite unimportant. Often these small group meetings in the barracks included Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren, Lutherans, Baptists, and Pentecostals.[4]

A few groups such as the one in Solikamsk (Perm Oblast) were fortunate to have a minister in their midst. Elder Johann Penner led the group and two others, while Cornelius Epp and Diedrich Pauls (originally from an Evangelical Mennonite or Allianz congregation) assisted. Elder Penner was arrested in 1950 and received a 25 year sentence. In many other regions such a brief flickering of revival fires was snuffed out with the arrests of the leading persons. But for the people in the barracks this did not mean that worship services stopped everywhere. Between 1953 and 1958 a major spiritual revival swept through virtually all the areas where the Mennonites were living. The letters that started appearing in *Der Bote* and *Mennonitische Rundschau* in Canada after 1955 give evidence of this. Many others reported it to H. S. Bender and D. B. Wiens when these two from North America visited the Soviet Union in 1956.[5] Since then more details have become available. For the Mennonites it was this revival that was to guarantee their continued existence as a people.

The most striking feature was the widespread readiness of the people to confess their sins and become converted. With the death of Stalin in 1954 tensions relaxed. This was the period when prisoners who had survived, many of them ministers, returned to their families and resumed their preaching activity. Those who had received 25 year sentences in 1950 were also released after five or six years as part of a de-Stalinization policy. Soviet scholars also claim that at this time "foreign Mennonite organizations resumed a vigorous activity to subordinate individual Mennonite groups in the USSR to their influence."[6] A vital role was played by travelling lay ministers, persons who at great personal risk sought out fellow believers and conducted church services, ordained preachers and organized the local congregations and then came by again to baptize newly converted. Often the baptisms took p'ace in great secrecy in the middle of the night with only a handful of witnesses present. In other places there were mass baptisms, one sickly elderly minister baptizing 96 persons and then courageously entering the cold water once again to baptize a latecomer from a distant village. A few of these heroic ministers were Heinrich H. Voth, Franz Cornies, Franz Pauls, Johann Penner, Hans Penner and Jacob Thiessen of the Mennonite Church.[7] Among the Mennonite Brethren were Abram Reimer, Jacob Rempel, Jacob Wiebe and Abram Koop.

Scenes from former Mennonite villages in Chortitza, South Russia, photographed by Heinz Hindorf during the German occupation, 1941-43.

But it would be a mistake to give primary credit to these ministers, some of whom had been ordained and had received some biblical training in the 1920's before the Mennonite congregations vanished. In some places a courageous old woman invited people into her house, read the Bible if she had one or perhaps a leaflet from an old church calendar and people were converted. In the old village of Waldheim, Omsk region, the revival was quite spontaneous. One of the young men of the village went to Vorkuta to work, met the small Christian group emerging there and was converted. When he returned home a short while later, his parent's house quickly filled with curious neighbours without anyone needing to invite them. Young Jacob Regier produced a Bible, read a short passage, added two or three halting sentences and then announced he was going to pray. In a brief prayer he simply asked God to direct events so that each person in the room would be converted that night. Following this a woman from the other room came to young Regier and asked him how she could pray. She dropped on her knees crying to God for mercy and in a moment the entire house was on its knees and there was bedlam. Regier tried to quiet them, saying that God could hear without their needing to shout. Children who were converted rushed home to their parents, awoke them and insisted they too must come and be converted. They explained that the whole village was being converted that night. Such a story is typical.

Thanks to this revival movement

and the return of the preachers, congregations began to be organized. There were regular services often with a choir. However, many of these fellowships of the barracks soon disappeared. Some of them were forcibly closed. In one place the elder was finally forbidden to preach and in spite of this the group met without the ministers present. In other places the ministers were arrested and the meetings stopped again. Many of the congregations disappeared, however, because their members moved away. Sometimes they moved as a group and continued their activities elsewhere; sometimes they scattered to join existing congregations.

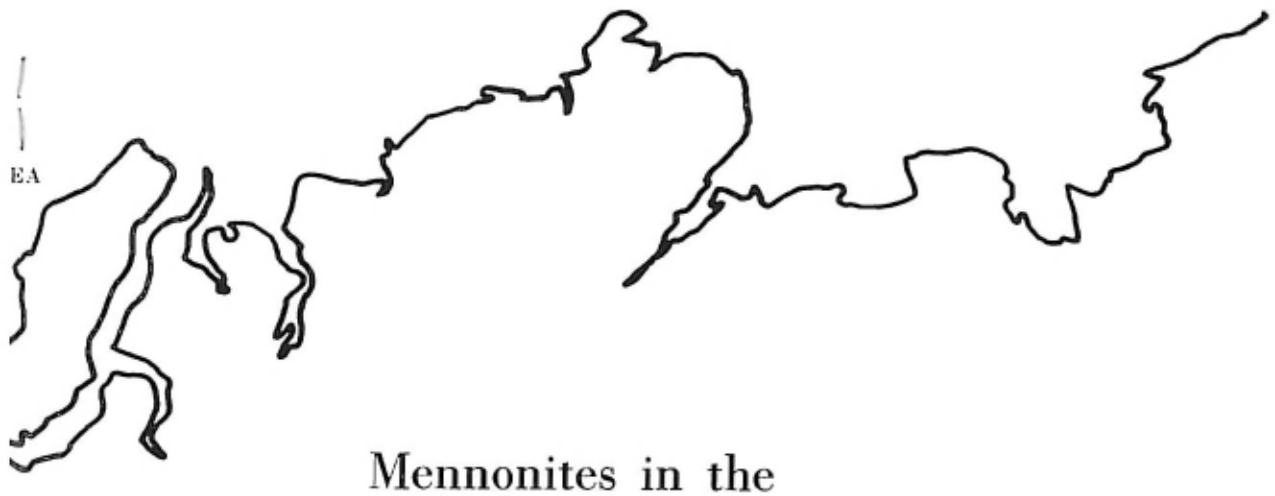
III. Congregations That Survived

The Mennonite churches that were organized first and managed to survive are mostly those that became affiliated with the Registered Baptist movement (AUCECB). Following the collapse of the Mennonite churches in the 1930's the last Mennonite General Conference having taken place in 1925, Mennonite congregations no longer had a legal basis for existence. In the large cities such as Novosibirsk, Karaganda, and Dushanbe where Mennonites found themselves, registered Baptist churches were in existence, having been registered during or shortly after the war. Here they could hear the preaching of the Word and share in the fellowship. Mennonite Brethren in particular felt themselves close to the Baptists because they, too, practiced baptism by immersion. The older ministers, who might have been aware of distinctions between Mennonites and Baptists were away in prison. The layman was either unaware of these differences or took no notice. In any case it was not a time to permit oneself the luxury of disputation.

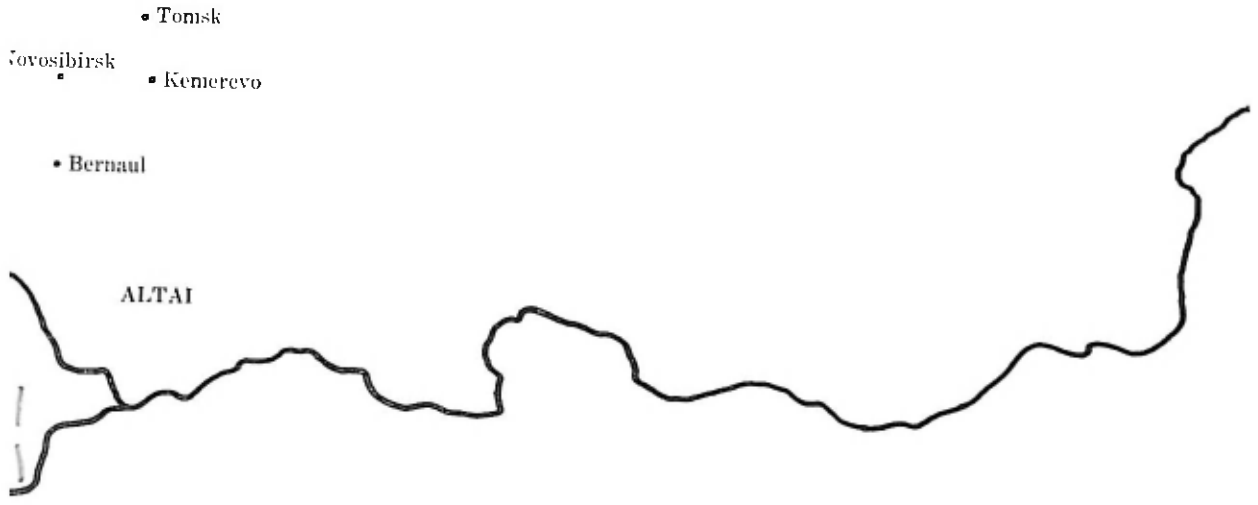
In Novosibirsk some Mennonite Brethren attended Baptist meetings and joined immediately. Gradually more German speaking Mennonites moved to the city. Among those who were ordained were Jacob Esau and David D. Klassen. Klassen and Esau not only preached locally but began receiving invitations to preach in the surrounding villages where there was a hunger for God's Word but no preachers were available. Because of this activity the authorities put pressure on the local Russian pastor and both Klassen and Esau were excommunicated. They continued to preach until arrested and the unregistered congregation that developed still exists. Others, such as Jacob Fast, were not ousted and eventually Fast emerged in the mid-sixties as leader of the German wing of the registered Baptist church. The Russian pastor who had given in to state pressures had left and been replaced by Aldunin. The church suffered losses in membership during the late fifties, then gradually grew again and now numbers 975 members, 200 of whom are German. The German group since 1964 has been able to conduct separate services in the

Scenes from former Mennonite villages in Chortitza, South Russia, photographed by Heinz Hindorf during the German occupation, 1941-43.


BALTIC SEA
LATVIA
POLAND
LITHUANIA
ESTONIA
Leningrad
WHITE SEA
Arkhangelsk
KARA SE
European Russia
MOLDAVIA
Tiraspol
Moscow
KOMI A.S.S.R.
Vorkuta
CHORTITZA
MOLOTSCHNA
CRIMEA
Krasnovishersk
Saratov (Tract)
Perm
URAL MOUNTAINS
BLACK SEA
Samaria
Siberia
Orenburg
(Chkalov)
TURKEY
Orsk
Omsk
KAZAKHSTAN
Slavgorod
Pavlodar
CASPIAN SEA
Aral Sea
Dzhezkazgan
Karaganda
Lake Balkash
IRAN
Tashkent
Dzhambul
Tokmak
Alma Ata
Frunze
KIRGIZIA
Dushambe
Lake Issyk Kul
AFGHANISTAN
TADZHIKISTAN
CHINA



Mennonites in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics



1 in. = 226 mi. 0 100 200 300 400 500 600 Miles

German language. The German ministers meet for separate planning sessions. When Aldunin died in 1975 Fast was elected presbyter for the entire church, an unusual achievement for a German Mennonite minority.

In Dushanbe, Tadzhikistan, the gradual absorption of the Mennonites into the Baptist church was similar. There were no Mennonites in the city itself initially, but by 1948 several Mennonite students had encountered the Baptist Church and been converted through its ministry. After 1953 more moved from the collective farms to the city and soon the Germans formed a significant number in the church. Traugott Quiring, then a young man, was elected deacon in 1955 and became the *de facto* leader of the German group. After some difficulty they managed by about 1961 to introduce weekly services in the German language. After lengthy delay Quiring was finally ordained leading minister in 1975 of the entire church.

Mennonites also worshipped in the Baptist church in Karaganda which was active immediately after the war. In the winter of 1957 many Mennonites left the Baptist church and formed a Mennonite Brethren Church which met in homes. There were two major reasons for this: the Russian leader of the church appeared to maintain too strict a control, forbidding any religious activity outside the building such as a wedding at home; and, second, the Mennonites wanted to hold services in German because they saw this as a way of serving their older fellow Germans who knew no Russian. Led by Abram Friesen initially, the group grew quickly. It attempted to purchase a building but the authorities closed it down and harrassed them. Several years later elder David I. Klassen was arrested and served a prison term.

Scenes from former Mennonite villages in Chortitza, South Russia, 1941-43, photographed by Heinz Hindorf.

Because of the Khrushchev campaign the Registered Church was also forced to resort to illegal meetings in homes. Since there were so many believers, meetings were held in several homes in different parts of the city. As a result local differences began to develop. When the groups finally obtained registration several years later, not only was there a Baptist church, there was also a purely German Mennonite Brethren Church, a Mennonite group and two Initiative Groups, one of them German speaking. The Baptist church included a German or Mennonite grouping led by Abram Friesen until his retirement in 1976. E. K. Baumbach is the present leader.

In one of the groups meeting in homes during the early sixties the influence of new leadership made itself felt. Heinrich Woelk and Wilhelm Matthies had moved to Karaganda in 1960 and 1961 respectively. Both belonged originally to the Mennonite Church, who had been rebaptized and now had become arch supporters of the Mennonite Brethren Church. In contrast to Friesen they placed greater emphasis on the German language and the need for a Mennonite identity. In 1966 Woelk was elected the elder with Matthies his assistant. Thanks largely to the energetic efforts of

the latter, permission was finally granted in 1967 to be registered as a separate autonomous Mennonite Brethren Church. After several more years of negotiation they were able to erect a building to house their 900 members.

The registration of the independent Mennonite church was a significant event. In many localities Mennonites had joined local Baptist churches in the absence of any other option. Others had followed the advice of Harold S. Bender and D. B. Wiens to accept the offer of protection, to view the Baptist union as an umbrella under which similar evangelical groups could maintain the necessities of church life. Then came a more formal act of union between Mennonite Brethren and Baptists. The subject was initially broached at the first All-Union Congress held in 1963 and this date has since been used as the year when the Mennonite Brethren joined the Baptists. During the next several years some negotiations followed and a formal statement involving recognition by the Baptist Union (AUCECB) and request for membership in it was submitted at the 1966 Congress.[8] Of the 74 Germans at this Congress, several did not sign. They included Woelk, Matthies, Siebert and Klassen of Karaganda and some representatives from Omsk. Since then the Baptist Union has attempted to persuade more of the local Mennonite Brethren groups to join their union, often using the argument that this was their only hope of getting registered. With the establishment and registration of an independent Mennonite Brethren Church, that argument lost its force although very few churches have followed the Karaganda example.

Perhaps the best known result of the Khrushchev anti-religious campaign of 1959-64 was the split that occurred in the Baptist Union.[9] An Initiative Group objected to the restricted statutes and accompanying letter of instructions which the Baptist Union was forced to dispatch to its Senior Presbyters in 1960. The Moscow leadership would not repent and the Initiative Group pronounced them excommunicated. Soon thereafter the *Initiativniki* (Initiative Group) organized a Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB). In 1966 they obtained permission to hold a legal congress but since then have been continuing their work illegally with congresses taking place in great secrecy. Estimates vary widely but it is possible that during the first two years perhaps half the Baptist movement supported the Initiative Group. Gradually the Baptist Union was able to make concessions that satisfied growing numbers who returned to the AUCECB fold. Others joined the Registered Baptists subsequently for various reasons, perhaps to achieve local unity, perhaps because the unacceptable local minister was now gone, perhaps because they had become weary of the state pressures exerted with special force on the Initiative groups, perhaps because some felt that the Initiative leaders had become too rigidly partisan.

This Baptist split directly affected the Mennonites. To some degree the invitation to Mennonite

Scenes from former Mennonite villages in Chortitza, South Russia, 1941-43, photographed by Heinz Hindorf.

Brethren to join the Baptists was extended at the 1963 Congress as a way of demonstrating positive signs of unity and to take the focus of attention away from the Initiative Group. One of the first leaders of the Initiative Group was Georgi P. Vins (Wiens) the name obviously Mennonite. Vins himself, however, has never indicated any Mennonite self-consciousness. His grandfather Jacob was a Mennonite Brethren minister with close links to Russian Baptist evangelists and his father Peter was already a major Baptist leader in the Siberian and Far Eastern Union during the 1920's. The only other Mennonite on the CCECB (Initiative Group) was Kornelius K. Kroeker. Thanks to him many Low-German speaking evangelicals joined the Initiative Group. Even without his influence, the presence of Mennonites in the movement is striking. In Novosibirsk, for example, it was the Mennonites Klassen and Esau who were forced out of the church several years earlier who now joined the Initiative Group. At the time Klassen was being criticized in the atheist press for denouncing war and advising Mennonite young people "Do not serve in the Soviet Army, do not bear arms. God will never forgive you for this."[10] Not far away in Barnaul, an almost exclusively Mennonite church joined the Initiative Group. For unregistered Mennonite Brethren groups, to join the Initiative Group sometimes seemed a serious alternative option to joining the Baptists. The Initiative Group recognized this and as recently as 1974 printed in its *Fraternal Leaflet* greetings "to some German Mennonite Congregations which have stated that they are united with our brotherhood on all basic questions of the work of God."[11]

Neither of the two Baptist unions

Scenes from former Mennonite villages in Chortitza, South Russia, 1941-43, photographed by Heinz Hindorf. To left, the bank of the Dnieper River.

was prepared to offer protection to the other wing of the Mennonites who were called "(Church) Mennonites." Yet they too have developed new congregations that have survived as strong churches to the present day. In Novosibirsk the Mennonite Church began meeting in 1955. Partly they owed their initial impetus to the Mennonite Brethren-Baptist evangelists Esau and Klassen but much more so it was the effort of Elder Heinrich H. Voth who helped in organizational efforts. Voth visited them when he was still living at Krasnovishersk, several hundred kilometers north of Perm and conducted a baptism in March 1956. On a second visit in 1957 he baptized about 60 people, ordained the local leader Franz Wiebe and arranged for others to assist. When the state pressure became rather intense in 1961 Wiebe moved to Tokmak, Kirgizia and several of the other ministers moved away as well. From 1961-67 regular church services ceased and instead there were infreqent meetings of smaller groups in homes. As families moved away, other families came to Novosibirsk so that the potential remained. Finally in 1967 a list of proposed members was submitted to the authorities and they were registered. They now elected Bernhard Sawatsky as leader, Karaganda elder Jacob Thiessen coming to ordain him in 1969. In the fall of 1970 a church building was finally obtained and officially dedicated. At the time 200 persons attended and although about 30 per cent of the group have emigrated since, there are still 200 persons attending.

In their attempts to register, which involved submitting a constitution, the Novosibirsk church was influenced by what was happening in Karaganda. In Karaganda, the Mennonites began meeting for worship in homes around 1960. Their elder was a man named Penner but he was too old to be effective. Shortly thereafter Jacob Thiessen, who had been active in a Baptist church in the Kemerovo region, joined them. A significant element of the Karaganda church came from the Trakt Mennonite settlement under the leadership of Elder Penner. Men like Thiessen were less traditionalist, emphasized the rebirth and a changed life style which included the avoidance of tobacco and alcohol. Jacob Thiessen became the leader in 1965 and in the next five years the church grew rapidly. Growth was increased when they finally gained access to a church building. Since 1968 these Mennonites have been meeting in the Mennonite Brethren building for two hours on Sunday and two hours on Saturday morning. Finally in August 1975 it was officially announced that they had been registered. They have a membership of 500.

Several other major Mennonite congregations have a shorter history because they are continuations of churches started elsewhere. The church leadership and the bulk of the membership of the Alma Ata church was already established in Nitva. They moved to Alma Ata around 1960. For the first 6 years it was difficult to meet due to state disruption of meetings. In 1966 their leader Cornelius Wiebe started negotiations to register their church and to obtain a building for worship. He and Johann Epp of nearby Polit Otdel were in touch with Peter Heese of Tokmak, the person who travelled with Elder Johann Penner of Tokmak to Moscow to submit the registration requests. A vital role was also played by the present Elder Hans Penner of Frunze who translated the Mennonite confession of faith into Russian. After they started registration procedures in 1966, the Alma Ata group met for worship regularly every Sunday. Finally by 1973 they had managed to obtain a building and verbal assurances of permission to meet, although the formal registration papers had not yet been granted.

As more people moved to Kirgizia, several small fellowships of Mennonites started. After a decade of not being permitted to preach, Elder Heinrich Voth who had moved to Tokmak functioned as the senior elder for all Mennonites until his death in 1973. All recognized in the strongly authoritarian Voth, "a wonderfully gifted man of God whom God had preserved to help the church. He was filled with the power of God, had a marvelous trust in God and revealed great wisdom." When Voth died in 1973 seniority passed to the aged Elder Johann Penner but he was too feeble to serve effectively. At present there are two elders in Kirgizia. Elder Franz Wiebe who moved from Novosibirsk in 1960 leads a 190 member church in Tokmak which was registered in 1966. Elder Hans Penner is responsible for the Romanovka church (near Frunze) which was registered in 1968 and for semi-registered branches in Krasnaia Rechka (180 members), Stantsia Ivanovka (30 members) and Iurevka.

Another important but more isolated church is the Mennonite Brethren church in Dzhetisai. As a church fellowship it started in 1957 under the leadership of Johann Ott. In 1958 a group of 18 adults with their minister David Regier joined them, having moved there from Kostroma. Soon thereafter Ott retired and Regier became the leader. Until then the group had included both Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren but Regier now took a strong stand arguing that according to God's Word only immersion was the correct form of baptism. Thus the Mennonites who had been receiving communion were denied membership and the right to receive communion. After about 1964 Regier reconsidered his position and became less rigid. This church had great difficulty in obtaining registration. It first applied in 1959 and registration was not granted until 1967. It now has a membership of 600 and a youth group of several hundred. Although it is officially a member of the AUCECB, locally members regard themselves as a Mennonite Brethren congregation.

IV. New Churches in Old Settlements

Orenburg has come to be known as a place where the people are afraid to worship, as a place where the authorities persecute the believers more than anywhere else. Someone described the region as an area for conducting social experi-

ments in manipulation of the people. When young Abram Hamm came home from church one night shortly after he was converted he informed his wife that he had read the Word and preached and felt God was calling him to do more preaching. His wife's immediate reply was "Then they will arrest you." They sat down and discussed the matter and read the Word and decided that this was the only right way, and if that was the cost, so be it. Abram Hamm was not arrested while living in Orenburg region but only because he moved to Kirgizia to avoid arrest. He served time in prison for his faith later.

It is somewhat difficult to understand why fear has reigned so long in this region. The settlement was relatively undisturbed during the war though there were disruptions. Church services had ceased in 1929 and the ministers were all gone. People began meeting for worship in 1948 but with great secrecy but by 1950 this had stopped. A revival began here as elsewhere around 1954. It was still too early for travelling evangelists to make a significant impact. In most of the villages women formed the first groups. These had been in the work battalion around the city of Orsk and had been converted to the Baptist church there. They met to sing a few songs. In some places a congregation gradually developed out of a singing group and only much later did the boldest try to formulate a few coherent sentences which might be called a sermon.

In the mid fifties several persons came to the fore. One was Heinrich Engbrecht who had been converted in 1952. In the 1920's he had studied to become an atheist lecturer. There he had been surprised to discover that the atheists could not disprove the existence of God. Finally in 1930 he was himself arrested as a German and while in prison started to believe in the existence of God. When he returned home to the Samara region he was thought to be terminally ill. Here Engbrecht entertained himself by visiting old minister Wilhelm Sawadsky and teasing him about believing in God. Actually Engbrecht was undergoing intense doubt and wanted the old man to bring him to God. Sawadsky responded to the teasing questions softly and kindly and one day Engbrecht came and announced, "I've come to pray with you." Sawadsky replied "I have been waiting for that a long time, won't you come inside?" Engbrecht immediately became an active evangelist. Shortly thereafter Sawadsky was arrested and Engbrecht took over leadership of the local church. At the same time he made extended visits to the Orenburg region and Northern Kazakhstan where revivals took place and Engbrecht baptized as many as 75 persons at one time.

Several members of a Rempel family who had been able to study theology also lived in the Orenburg villages. Jacob D. Rempel had been home since 1950 but was greatly restricted by the authorities. However younger ministers came to him for advice even if he could not visit the services. In 1955 he was dismissed as a medical doctor and now took up the work of elder of the church in Suzannovo, a village 60 kilometers away from the other Orenburg villages. In 1959 state pressure became intense. Six of the leading men were sentenced to five years prison and exile. Rempel was very sickly and was persuaded to move to Kirgizia. One of Rempel's fellow students at the Crimean Bible School was Susanna (Kehler) Rempel who worked many years as a deaconess in Suzanovo. Rempel's brothers Abram and Gerhard, the former living in the upper Orenburg villages, also were active church workers and suffered persecution as a result.

For many years only one church, located in village No. 12 was registered. Two other churches, till then branches of No. 12, were registered in 1976. They are Karaguy with a membership of 40 and led by Peter Lidtke and Suvorovka where Heinrich Wiebe serves as deacon. Recently too a Mennonite congregation was registered in No. 2 with filial groups in No. 14 and 4. The leader is Abram Dueck.

In the Altai region the large Mennonite settlements of Slavgorod as well as Pavlodar (now in Kazakhstan) were physically relatively undisturbed. Here, too, no church services were conducted between 1930 and 1950. With so many of the ministers gone or dead, it meant that the new generation that was affected by the mid-fifties revival had no theological foundation on which to build. As in Orenburg, this region has experienced more intensive state anti-religious pressure. In Slavgorod perhaps 60 per cent of the population is German and Mennonite but most do not go to church. Some of these may be secret believers. When Klaus Mehnert visited this region in 1955 he remarked that "he had never found a German settlement in all his journeys throughout the world which depressed his heart more than that of Slavgorod. It was not so much the poverty as the general despondency and apathy of the people, who no longer knew whence they had come and whither they were going."[12]

A striking feature for this region is that here there are few registered Baptist churches but rather strong churches adhering to the Initiative Group. Why that is so is not yet possible to say. Generally speaking apart from the major cities such as Slavgorod and Pavlodar the Initiative Group movement was introduced several years late. Since the churches were not registered anyway, they had a natural affinity for the Initiative Group who sounded as if they were trying to be true to the Bible whereas they heard that the registered churches were less consistently biblical. The leading ministers from many of the churches have appeared on the prisoner's lists of the Initiative Group. These include Peter Löwen (Orlov), Gerhard Schmidt (Slavgorod), Johann Fröse (Dzhezkazgan), Johann Wall (Waldheim), Jacob Derksen (Waldheim), Aron Wiebe (Pavlodar), K. K. Kroeker (Pavlodar), and Henrich Voth (Trofimovka).

Information about the Mennonites in the Omsk region is still very slim. The registered Baptist church in the city of Omsk has some German preachers but most of the Mennonites live in the villages. The Baptist Union attempted

to get some of the Mennonite leaders here to sign the unity statement with the Registered Baptists before they had checked with their congregations. Partly as a result these Mennonites have turned to the Initiative Group. They have sought to cultivate them by printing a German songbook. Former Omsk residents now active in the Initiative Group have maintained personal ties with their relatives in Omsk and this helps to explain the apparent greater strength of the Initiative Group.

V. New Churches in the Baltic

The churches in the Baltic Republics of Estonia and Latvia have had a short life span. It has meant that the churches have a provisional character. At first there were too few to make a separate church worthwhile. Usually the Mennonites did not cluster but were widely scattered, depending on work and lodging possibilities. Not long after emigration to Germany became a distinct probability, the authorities clamped down on any further movement of Germans to these two republics. With the extensive emigration from these two republics which has taken place so far, the small church fellowships which were established are once again in disarray.

Most striking has been the mixed nature of these fellowships. If Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren could not get along in Kazakhstan, for example, here in the Baltic a united fellowship was once again possible. Several German families moved to Kokhta Jarve, Latvia, after 1967 and attended the registered Baptist church. Initially they held a German language service once a quarter, then monthly and soon weekly. The registered minister, thanks to state influence, restricted their activities and all the Germans, 69 persons, as well as 40 Russians left. After meeting in homes for awhile or attending Baptist churches long distances away, they finally received permission to buy a building in 1972. Registration was a problem until finally the Methodists made a generous offer to register them as a Methodist affiliate. So this mixed Mennonite group officially became a Methodist church. They agreed to accept all forms of baptism depending on the wishes of the candidate. If, however, a German Lutheran family would request child baptism, then the Methodist bishop would be called upon to perform this service. At present, however, virtually all the Germans have emigrated to Germany.

Although Registered Baptist and Initiative Group lines were sharply drawn elsewhere, in the Baltic Republics even Initiative Council Members such as Miniakov in Valga, Latvia could become members of a locally registered church. The Valga church had attempted for awhile to let the registered and unregistered go their separate ways, but soon the weaker registered group invited the others back and they elected mutually acceptable leaders from the Initsiativniki group but remained officially registered. Here too, the Germans usually met in the same building as the registered Latvian Baptist church, had a separate German service on Sunday, met for Bible study usually on Wednesday night and for prayer on Friday or Saturday. Some of these groups such as Priekuli and Valga had 130 and 150 members respectively at their peak around 1972. The Germans often lived in widely scattered areas. In one collective farm there were about eight German families belonging to Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren, Baptist and Pentecostal denominations. During the week they met for Bible study in the collective farm although on Sunday they scattered to their respective churches. The procedure was to go through a book of the Bible verse by verse followed by prayer meeting. There was no leadership. They simply sat around a table and shared their views. If they came across a problematic passage that might lead to denominational argumentation they simply skipped it.

The Initiative groups in the Baltic were mostly German speaking or Mennonite. These organized their own *Bruderrat* (Bratsky Soviet) consisting of seven members. These met monthly and organized the various divisions of their work. There were 18 or 19 congregations loosely affiliated with this organization or in sympathy with them though perhaps officially belonging to the AUCECB or Methodists. This group also maintained cordial relations with the official Latvian and Estonian Baptist leadership which they felt had integrity. The Baltic republics during these years were much less subjected to oppressive antireligious measures taken by the state. Few meetings were disturbed and even from the Initiative Group only about five persons were imprisoned although a printing press was seized here and that resulted in seven arrests.

When the authorities tried to stop the influx of Germans into the Baltic republics by refusing to give them residence permits, a number of them turned to Moldavia since word was received that it was possible to emigrate from Moldavia. Housing was difficult to obtain so the Germans have settled as isolated families in local villages. More of a cluster has developed around the city of Tiraspol where a Baptist church is led by a certain Pauls. A Mennonite Brethren group at Grigoropol led by Gennadi Dyck will be registered shortly under the Baptists. It has been a Tiraspol affiliate. Mennonites have moved there more recently in smaller number. Included in their number are several experienced ministers.

At present, virtually all the Germans are gone from the Baltic republics and the Moldavian groups are still relatively insignificant. Thus the story of the new churches in the Baltic is nearly over. Did they leave any contribution behind? Frequently in places where they shared buildings and sometimes fellowship with local Estonian and Latvian groups their spiritual dynamism became contagious. For the churches further east, their presence in the Baltic meant that they began receiving Bibles. In the Baltic old German Bibles were still available and for awhile it was easier to obtain some from Germany. Some families saw it as their mission to buy up all Bibles they could find and take them to their churches back in Asia.

Conclusion

The new history of the Russian Mennonites has been characterized by great diversity. True there are some common patterns. There are Mennonites or Mennonite Brethren. But in the past two decades the Initiative Group phenomenon makes it difficult to determine who is and who is not Mennonite. There are also chronological patterns common to all. Everyone had to start over again after 1945, the lucky ones could continue to worship but in a new location; most, however, not only had to undergo several years of spiritual starvation but had already experienced the nothingness of closed churches before the war. Many were touched briefly by an awakening in the late 1940's to be followed by harsh repressions, many more date their spiritual pilgrimage from the mid-fifties revivals.

Then the diversity begins to become apparent. Many moved and as a result missed the Khrushchev persecutions and experienced them somewhat later; others experienced them to the full and shared the bitterness of internal church splits. Small groups found the strength to pack their belongings onto a train for another arduous journey of many thousands of kilometers to the Baltic republics on the Western border of the USSR. Here they found a spiritual haven. Most of these have by now been able to collect their suitcases for one more move which they regard as coming home to West Germany.

No matter how diverse the experiences, at present all are again emphasizing a common point. It is that they have never had it so good. The striking economic progress of the Soviet Union has benefitted them. In recent years state pressure on the churches has eased a bit. It has not disappeared and most expect it to return but it simply cannot be compared with the Stalin years.

Scenes from Chortitza, South Russia, 1941-43, photographed by Heinz Hindorf.

Women in a Mennonite worship service in Central Asia.

This means also that the Mennonites are sharing in the gradual flowering of spiritual life in the Soviet Union. Not all churches have been mentioned in this brief history, partly because we do not yet know where the others are. It is also quite certain that there will be more churches. Believing Mennonites are producing large families and large numbers of conversions are regularly reported. With continuing ease in tensions one can expect that this will continue.

FOOTNOTES:

1 *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, IV, page 392.

2 Text of Decree Given in Adam Giesinger, *From Catherine to Khrushchev, The Story of Russia's Germans*. (Winnipeg, 1974) page 317.

3 *Mennonitische Blaetter*, 9/77 page 123-6

4 There is no satisfactory way of rendering Russian Mennonite denominational labels into English. One option is to translate literally the Russian terms *Tserkovnyi mennonity* as "Church Mennonite" and *Bratskii mennonity* as "Brethren Mennonites." The editors have chosei to refer to the former simply as "Mennonites" or on occasion "(Church) Mennonite" and the latter as "Mennonite Brethren." Present registered congregations bear the Russian names.

5 The Letters in *Der Bote* and *Mennonitische Rundschau* have been analyzed in two research papers at Bethel College: Virginia Classen, Peter Neufeld, and Vern Q. Prehelm. "Glimpses of the Mennonites in Russia 1948-1957," Bethel College February 1957; Richard Schroeder, "A Survey of letters from German Mennonites in the USSR 1961-1965," Bethel College, February 1966. H. S. Bender and D. B. Wiens, "Report on the Mission to Russia," 1956 is preserved in the MCC archives; the author also relied on information contained in subsequent MCC trips to the Soviet Union.

6 Viktor Fedorovich Krest'ianinov, *Mennonity* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1967) page 77-8. This was the first major Soviet book dealing with the Mennonites that had appeared since 1930. A scholarly article A. Ipatov, "Mennonity: Proshloe i nastoiashchee" appeared in *Naukaei Religio* 4/73 and 6/73. Other than this, Mennonites are mentioned in passing in various atheist handbooks and in numerous newspaper articles attacking individual persons and groups.

7 The first three are cited in *Ibid*.

8 *Bratsky Vestnik*, 3/76 page 69-70.

9 The standard treatment is Michel Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, (London: Macmillan, 1968).

10 Krest'ianinov page 111.

11 *Bratsky Listock* 2/74 (March/April).

12 Quoted in *M.E.*, IV, page 542.

NOTE ON SOURCES: A major source for this paper is the collection of systematic interviews which the author has been conducting with Soviet German emigrants to West Germany during the past three years. In addition other sources which are not specifically identified are materials taken from Mennonite Central Committee and Baptist files and personal notes and impressions gained through meetings with Soviet believers.

Tobias Voth: The Gentle Schoolmaster of Orlov

A Document of 1850

Edited by John B. Toews

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One of the earliest and best known educators among the Russian Mennonites was Tobias Voth. He was born in Brenkenhofswalde in Brandenburg. At age sixteen he became a school teacher in his native village, a position he held until 1812. Napolean's invasion of Russia brought suffering and hardship to the Brandenburg region, from which Tobias Voth and his wife were not exempt. In 1814 he accepted a government teaching position in Koenigsberg. Several years later, influenced by the writings of Jung Stilling, he was converted. He developed an inward looking, deeply sensitive faith, which at times conflicted with the formalized Mennonite church structures of his day. After teaching two years in a Mennonite village (Komrau near Graudenz) he left for a new position in the Molochnaya colony in South Russia. In 1820 Orlov villagers organized the *Christlicher Schulverein* (Christian School Association) in order to raise the educational level of the community. Voth's teaching mandate from the *Verein* was twofold: infuse Christian principles into the settlement through the school; teach High German, in which the average colonist possessed only rudimentary skills. His brief autobiography, published in P.M. Friesen's monumental work (pp. 567-77), chronicles his activities and aspirations until 1829 when he resigned under pressure from Johann Cornies.

Cornies was typical of the frontier entrepreneur, who not only understands the essential economic needs of the new setting but can effectively exploit them for his own benefit. His experimentation in horse and sheep breeding as well as plant cultivation soon brought fame and fortune. Cornies' rise to power coincided with Voth's seven years at the Orlov school. His outstanding economic achievement endeared him to government officials, who in turn granted him extraordinary powers over the colonists. Cornies naturally extended his authority into the field of education. Judging by Voth's account Cornies seemed to assume that the authoritarian ways of the business and agricultural world were transferable to the classroom. At a special meeting [January 31, 1829] between Voth and members of the Orlov School Association, Cornies admonished Voth to "conduct school in a manly way. . . ." When Voth, with good reason, refused to accept this criticism of his competence Cornies caustically responded: "Nothing can be accomplished with him today. I will come back in fourteen days. Meanwhile he better think it over. . . ." Not long after, Voth resigned from the school. His warm-hearted, evangelical pietism did not produce men capable of subduing the Russian steppes, at least that was Cornies' estimation. When Cornies appointed Heinrich Heese as Voth's successor, he viewed him as one who would teach with more "manliness" (discipline and authority, perhaps despotism) than his predecessor. Both Voth's autobiography as well as a memorandum left by him (also published by Friesen), give the impression of a refined, cultured and sensitive man who lived in a time "in which mankind is very calloused, very insensitive."

Voth's brief article in *Unterhaltungsblatt für deutsche Ansiedler im südlichen Russland*, Vol. V, No. 1, (January, 1850), pp. 70-72 is, in addition to the autobiography, the only known document in which this early Mennonite teacher expresses his views on discipline. The document confirms Voth as an emotional, sensitive man. His "empire," in contrast to that of Cornies, was the heart and soul of even the retarded pupil.

The document adds little to our actual biographical knowledge of Voth. After his Orlov sojourn he left for Schönwiese near Chortitza, remaining briefly at Steinbach in the Molochnaya and ostensibly died in Berdyansk. We are not sure of the date of his death. According to his article he was still alive in the South Crimean town of Sudak in 1850. We still know nothing of his activities from c. 1832 onwards. For over fifteen years he appears to have had no contact with the people he left Prussia to serve. Unfortunately no other copies of the *Unterhaltungsblatt* have been found to date. Some of these might contain additional articles written by Voth. The 1850 volume for example contains another brief article (p. 30) by Voth in which he describes a special plant suitable for cattle feed in times of drought.

THE TEXT
A WORD ABOUT SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

The treatment of those children who have difficulty comprehending and learning is very burdensome for a teacher, especially in a village school where there are many children to instruct. The following example drawn from personal experience is not told for my own credit, but for the consideration of parents and educators.

During the second year of my teaching career I had a small school of some seven or eight children. Among these was a boy who could be taught virtually nothing in arithmetic.

I must confess to my shame that I, spurred on by the thoughtless fervor of a novice, dealt severely with this child. This especially happened during instruction in mental arithmetic. I noticed with astonishment that the boy completely changed on the day when mental arithmetic was scheduled. He looked at me with fear and trembling and as his hour of agony approached (as well as mine) his anxiety increased. He began to tremble and cry and though I tried to comfort him and infuse courage, he remained in his state of fear. Naturally in an exercise like mental arithmetic (which requires all five senses and excludes all other thoughts, whether they arouse happiness or fear), such a frightened mind, which focuses the little concentration power it still has left on the expected punishment, cannot know what 5 and 9 is. This happened to my anxious pupil. Thank God this sad situation in my school, which resulted from the dullness of this child and my contemptible zeal, was happily resolved.

One evening, depressed and tired from the day's activities, I sat in my room reflecting on the state of my slow learning student. I wondered if I was perhaps to blame for this child's difficulty in understanding. Was I dealing too severely with this weak creature. Then again I thought "you're not at fault, this child has no power of comprehension."

My thoughts were interrupted by a voice calling me for an evening snack. Afterwards I returned to my room and following my custom reached for the Bible. I opened it and noticed in the Wisdom of Solomon Chapter 2, verse 18: "You who are sovereign in strength judge with mildness and with great forbearance. You govern us for you have power to act whenever you choose." I changed my mind. How differently God views human weakness I thought. There is no man upon whom God does not look with compassion, mercy and gentleness; no man whose weakness and imperfection He does not take into account. Yet you worm, who vanishes amidst the countless numbers of beings His omnipotence has called into existence, you dealt so mercilessly with the weak creation entrusted to you! I called out "God be merciful to me a sinner!; don't measure me with the same measure I have used; have mercy on me; wrest the fervor from my breast and give me a resigned, humble and gentle heart." Thank God I was humbled. I resolved that on the next school day I would bring my pupil to fruition through calmness and softness.

The day came and my students assembled. My eyes focused in jovial geniality on the student who had been so deeply hurt by my severity. After the hour, during which I taught Bible stories, the normally shy, slow learner came and without fear complained about the pain he had in his finger which, thanks to my severity, he would have never done previously.

Anxious to learn whether he would exhibit such fearlessness in the for him torturous mental arithmetic I did not wait for the normal Friday class period and asked the class (consisting of four students) in which the lad found himself to stand. "Dear children" I said, "many apples are being sold at the present time. I think it is therefore important that we practice the arithmetic needed to buy them so that we will not be cheated. Since no fruitseller is on hand I will take his place. I will remain as congenial as the Greek who was selling apples the day before yesterday. He didn't scold anyone did he?"

Answer: "No."

"Well you can expect just as few reproaches from me."

During this conversation my eyes mainly focused on the slow learner who anticipated this hour with dread. To my pleasant surprise he found himself in a state in which he displayed neither fear nor perplexity. The sale began with the student who my honored readers already know.

"Do you have money?", I asked him.

"Yes I have."

"How much?"

"I have seven kopecks with me, but at home I have another twenty-two. With your permission I'll quickly run home and get them."

"Oh, no, I don't have that many apples. I'll have to sell these rather expensively to get the money you have here. See I only have these three apples and I want to sell you two of them. But you face a serious predicament since you want both, and for that you'll need ten kopecks. I'll extend the balance to you on credit until tomorrow. How much do you have?"

"Seven kopecks."

"How many more do you need to make ten?"

"Three."

I gave him the needed money—

"Here are the two apples each costing three and a half kopecks. If you want them give me ten kopecks."

He gave them to me, but had hardly done so when he demanded three kopecks in change, making the comment that the total price only came to seven kopecks. I made other similar deals with him and noticed with no small joy that more could be taught to this debilitated creation in one week through patience and calmness than in one month through zeal and anger. Since that time, to the best of my ability, I avoid displays of impatience in school, and by composure seek to encourage the children to learn.

For a whole year I personally had instruction from a teacher before whom the entire student body trembled. I knew from experience the mental bewilderment experienced by

a student when he always hears: If you don't get this and this you will get so and so many whacks. I knew from experience how the student dislikes his teacher if the latter never directs a kind glance his way or lowers himself to speak to the student confidently. The child becomes fearful and contrary-minded, and where there is contrary-mindedness enthusiasm is lacking, and where enthusiasm is lacking, love is lacking, and where there is no love there can be no blessing. If the blessing of the Lord does not rest upon the teacher's endeavors, then he is like a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal.

A student must respect his teacher not fear him, for fear is more difficult than work. As we read in the book of Sirach: Whoever wishes to learn the Scripture cannot do any other work and if one is to learn one must do nothing else. Perhaps one or the other of my honored readers, who consider my view of teacher-student relations exaggerated, will point to Sirach's word (30:1): "Whosoever loves his child will whip him often in order that he may rejoice at the way he turns out."

We can see that this applies only to the parents or the tutor of a child, since there is a great difference between the training of children at home and the education of the mind at school. At home a child is usually expected to learn a trade, an occupation which by and large takes into account the strength of the body. In such circumstances corporal punishment occasionally occurs and the desired goal is achieved, namely the child is redirected towards the work. How different is the situation of the child in school, where his spirit and mind are to be educated, where he is acquainted with the goodness and power of his creator.

I could be misunderstood as totally rejecting punishment in the school and that is not my view in the least. Punishment must also take place in the school, but at the right time and only if the need arise, and without emotion and anger. A child must not become frightened for: "Let every man be quick to hear but slow to anger, for man's anger does not do what is right before God" (James 1:19,20). No one can observe this more than we teachers.

It may be of significance that we consider the school as the outer court of the church and that the many punishments meted out in anger are consequently not suited for this place. [The school] stands in close relationship to the same [the church] and how would it appear if corporal punishments were meted out in a church?

We teachers have two reasons for dealing with the children entrusted to us according to duty and conscience: if we neglect them we increase our responsibility and secondly, we are to thankfully acknowledge the blessing bestowing spirit of wisdom in the laws of a magistracy under whose umbrella we may pursue our affairs. Should this not encourage us towards a conscientious management of our schools and thereby fulfill the wishes of the government, so benevolently concerned for the general welfare?

We must above all practice forbearance for without this we will accomplish nothing; forbearance according to the example of our Savior is our first duty. This forbearance is the fruit of our compassion and whoever immediately pounces upon the weakness of his subordinates and cannot uphold and tolerate, does not yet know the compassion and forbearance which is daily practiced on him. O blessed is the man of whom the Spirit of God testifies that he practice patience (Revelation 2:3).

Sudak, March 7, 1850

Tobias Voth
formerly of the Molochnaya Mennonite District, presently teacher in colony Sudak, in the Crimea

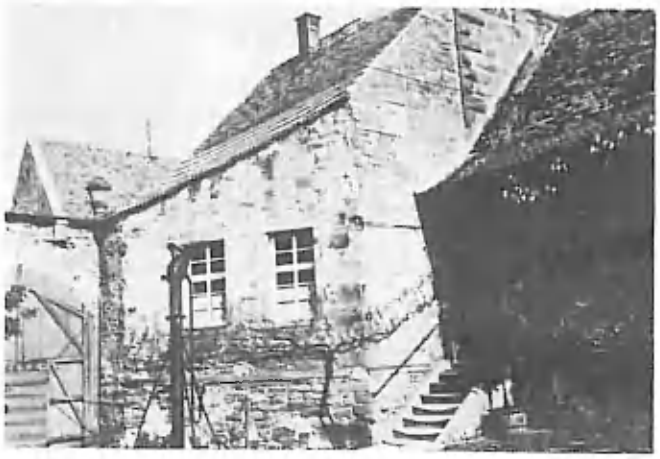
Jakob Ellenberger:

Pastor, Teacher, Musician, Writer — Part II

A Pictorial Essay

by Amelia Mueller

Aerial view of the town of Friedelsheim in the Palatinate of South Germany, the home of the beloved and talented Mennonite pastor, Jakob Ellenberger, 1800-1879. He was born in the nearby village of Gönnheim. He taught in a Mennonite school in Friedelsheim beginning in 1827. Below are two views of the Mennonite meetinghouse in Friedelsheim where he served as pastor from 1832 until his death in 1879.

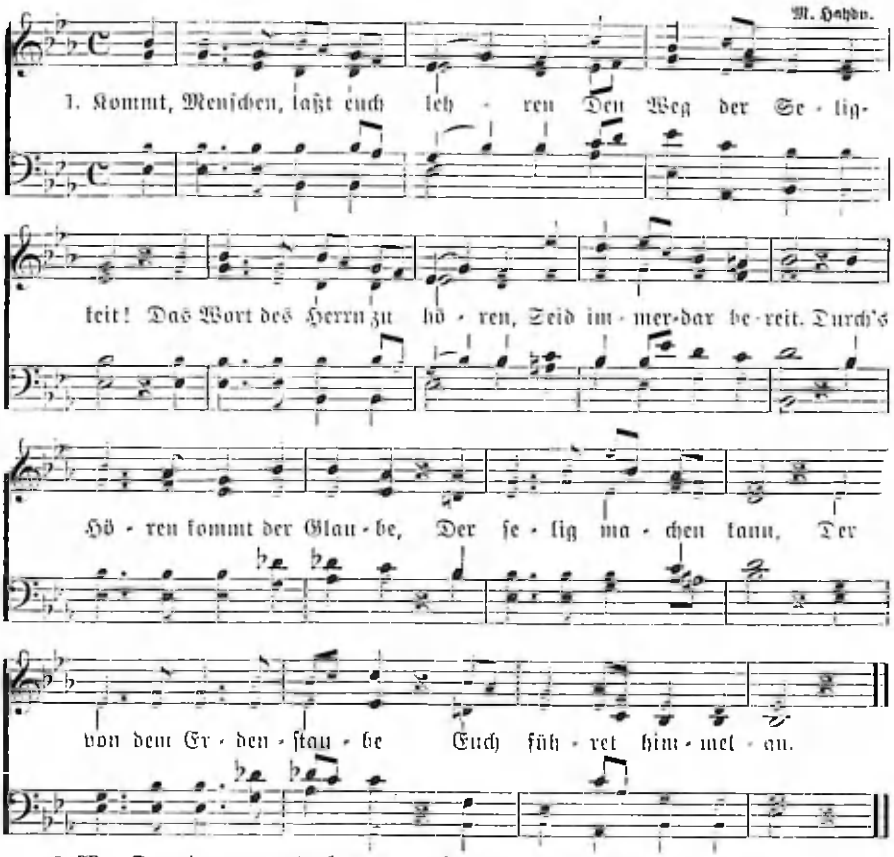


Jakob Ellenberger, above, who taught school, served as pastor of several congregations, farmed, wrote poetry, composed hymns, directed choirs, made cabinets, and promoted missions. Below, he is with his wife Elizabeth Blickensdörfer, who were the parents of eight sons and five daughters.

152 Von der heiligen Taufe.

229. Matth. 28, 19, 20. Gehet hin, und lehret alle Völker, und taufet sie im Namen des Vaters und des Sohnes und des heiligen Geistes; und lehret sie halten alles, was ich euch befohlen habe. (267)

M. Haydn.



2 Wer Den, der uns erkaufet,
Erkennt, bekennt und preist;
Wer glaubet, wird getaufet
Auf Vater, Sohn und Geist:
Und er empfängt im Bade
Der Taufe volles Heil;
Denn Gottes freie Gnade
Wird herrlich ihm zu Theil.

3 So nahet, theure Seelen,
Zur Taufe gläubig hin!
Ihr wollt den Herrn erwählen:
Ach, so umfasset Ihn!
Ergebt Ihm eure Herzen!
Er macht sie neu und rein.
In Freude wie in Schmerzen
Will Er euch alles sein.

4 Die Seelen, die hier flehen,
O Heiland, sie sind Dein!
Es ist ihr Wunsch und Flehen,
Auf Dich getauft zu sein,
Die Sünde zu begraben
In ihres Mittlers Tod,
Und mit des Geistes Gaben
Geschmückt zu sein von Gott.

5 Dreieiniger, erfülle
Der Herzen heißes Fleh'n!
Gieß Deines Geistes Fülle
Auf sie von Deinen Höh'n!
Mach sie im Wasserbade
Von ihren Sünden rein;
Gieb ihnen Deine Gnade,
Dir ewig treu zu sein! J. Ellenberger.

The above hymn on baptism, published in the Gesangbuch mit Noten, *is one of those written by Jakob Ellenberger.*