

**“I Will Remember
The Works Of The
Lord”**

**A Historical Sketch
of the
APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**From an address by
Henry Michel**



**Apostolic Christian Camp
Lake Bloomington, Illinois**

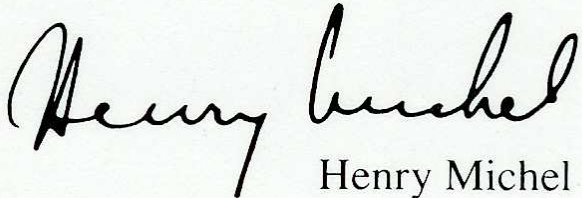
1947

INTRODUCTION

A few days before the opening of the Apostolic Christian Camp at Lake Bloomington, Illinois, on August 24, 1947, the wish was expressed at a meeting of the organization committee that one evening at Camp should be devoted to the history of the church. I accepted this assignment joyfully. I gave my message out of memory in an extemporaneous talk that was recorded on a recording machine. These notes, based on that talk, do not have the pretension of being a complete history or a piece of carefully worded literature. I have, however, made some changes, especially regarding sayings of Samuel Froehlich which have particular historical value, and have corrected my memorized quoting of these to conform to the wording of his diary.

It may be of interest to state here that a more complete history has been compiled in Switzerland and is being edited and published by Elder Brother Hermann Ruegger of Zurich. At present, however, it is available only in the German language.

The real purpose of the message given at Camp was, with the help of the Lord, to kindle in the younger generation the spark of zeal, joy, and faith that existed in those heroic times. If, under the Lord's gracious blessing, these notes can help to awaken the true flame of the "first love", the earnest urge and the zeal to bring souls to Christ, and if they can help to preserve the generation of our youth of today from the danger of living a leisurely and selfish life - dangers that are brought through wealth, comfort and modern conveniences - then the purpose of the assignment will have been fulfilled.



Henry Michel

A Historical Sketch of the APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH

This is not a history of a church. It is not a history of a sectarian group. It is a history of the Power of Christ revealed in the last days. This power has not changed through the centuries, but is still the same as it was at the time of the apostles.

When the suggestion was made that one evening at the Camp should be devoted to view the history of our brothers one hundred twenty years ago, I was so moved in my heart and so joyful that I could not sleep the whole night. I had waited a long time for this opportunity to interest our people in what our grandparents were doing. It is not merely a history that I am bringing; rather, it is a most fervent appeal into which I put my whole heart and my whole soul, that we may be reminded of the faithfulness and the zeal that they had one hundred years ago, and which, through the years, we have lost. It is an appeal to each one of you.

What I am bringing to you is not hearsay or gossip. I went and dug the historic points out of old letters and out of diaries of old brothers, and also interviewed old people, and I know whereof I speak. I devoted many of my evenings to this endeavor, and what I am bringing you is the result of fifteen or twenty years of research. The more I heard, the more I became zealous. When I was digging the details out of a diary, sometimes the writing was so small I had to use a magnifying glass. Sometimes I worked till 3 o'clock in the morning on this, and I went to bed then only because my wife insisted that I should take care of my health. However, I could not sleep. My heart was filled with thankfulness for what had been done; but often I felt ashamed that we are now such quiet citizens, sitting in easy chairs and just watching the time pass on.

I was so moved when I saw this zeal, the life that was in all these old people, that I was moved to say, "Now don't speak about new things, new suggestions. Just take the old ones that have been forgotten and then we

will be very zealous. We will be 'full of pep', if I dare so to say. We will be full of joy. We will be filled with the Spirit of God."

I believe, my dear ones - I am sure of this - that from the time of the Apostles until now, there was always a small number, a little flock of people who remained on the truth that Jesus brought, the truth which the Apostles afterwards used and whereby was created the church of God, the church of Christ. There was a long sequence of people, and history brings details about these people. They suffered, but they never lost their faith.

The Apostles, you know, continued after Jesus was risen to Heaven. They were looking at the sky, they were disturbed, they had lost their Savior. "What can we do without the Savior?" Then the angel came and said that Jesus will come again, and then they had a reason for their lives: "We are preparing our souls: we are witnesses of His death and of His resurrection until He comes."

One after the other, these Apostles disappeared. Peter was crucified; Andrew, the Apostle, was crucified; Paul, the Apostle, was beheaded; poor, poor Thomas had a terrible death. They heated a big table of iron until it was white hot, and then put poor Thomas on this and roasted him. Others died different deaths. Luke was hanged on a tree, and so on, one after the other. Timothy was of the younger generation, and he, like the others, had to seal with his blood the faith that he had found in his youth. One after the other they disappeared as a testimony of the Glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Then comes the long history of the martyrs. One after the other died for his faith. I was moved, when I was young, by the history of a boy who was thirteen years old, and who was bound, one foot and one hand on one side and the other hand and other foot on the other side. Then his persecutors put two horses, one on one side and the other on the other side, and you can easily imagine what happened to the poor boy. But he accepted his fate. He died joyfully. There are other thousands we could speak about, for hours, for the whole night, about all these wonderful witnesses that sealed the faith they had found in Jesus Christ with their blood. And the more who were killed in this wonderful way, the more joyful they were in dying, the more the Gospel was going from house to

house. The fire of which Jesus had spoken was burning, and the Gospel was going from country to country.

Already in the early Church came great tribulation. There came the persecution in Jerusalem, and they had to go in all directions. One of the Apostles even went as far as India; one went to Arabia; and you know that Paul went first to Greece and then to Italy and later on to Spain. Everywhere the joyful message was given of Jesus, the Savior of the world. Then, after a time, men tried to extinguish the fire, but it never was completely put out. Others tried to make the way more easy. They set up all kinds of institutions so that people would not have to repent, would not have to be converted, would not have to go through a hard school before they would be accepted as children of God. They made all kinds of laws, all kinds of man-made churches; and after a while, the larger part of those that were called Christians just had the name of Christ, but not the power that was revealed in Him. But a few still remained, keeping this faith from generation to generation, and this long sequence of witnesses is what historians have called the Pilgrim Church. We have a few records in history about them, telling how they were persecuted. We know that the emperor Nero used Christians as torches in his garden at night so that he could see when there was a feast. They also used believers for torches at other times. We know that in one year, in the year 302 A.D., in one month alone in Rome, they killed 17,000 believers. They tried to destroy these faithful witnesses. The larger number of them were killed, but a small flock was always here from generation to generation.

In the year 400 A.D., in the southern part of France and in other countries, there were those who were believers and had the baptism of faith as we have. Baptism of faith is not an invention of our church, but always was since the Apostles, when these teachings were spread through all of Europe. I have read the history of some who went by foot from Spain to Germany. Those who know a little about geography can realize what a distance it was from Spain to Germany, crossing all of France. These pilgrims could spend every night during the long journey in the homes of baptized Christians, of ones who were in faith. I don't know how many miles they made a day, but it required shelter in many homes until

they reached their destination. Everywhere they found believers who were peacefully and joyfully going the way of truth.

Then came a big awakening. You know the history of the Reformation. I don't want to speak about this all evening, but perhaps the thing that you do not know is that the beginning of the Reformation, that eventually created the Lutheran churches and other churches, was really a beginning, an awakening, a revival of people believing in the baptism of faith. Even Luther believed in the baptism of faith. The one who brought the Reformation to Switzerland was a man who was visiting a small Swiss congregation where they preached the Gospel exactly as we do and where they were baptized after a conversion. After a while he received a vision of a big, big church and, wanting to have a big church, he had to make a great big door. Having a big, big door, the way had to be made easy. Babies had merely to be brought on the eighth day after they were born. They were sprinkled, and a document was given stating that they were a member of the church, and that was all. That was not the beginning. The beginning was the baptism of faith, based on conversion and new birth.

Afterwards the Täufer, as they were called, these poor people living in our wonderful country of Switzerland, were persecuted to death. The prisons were so filled that people could not stand, they could not sit. They were heaped one above the other for days, for months, for years, until they died. A terrible persecution raged from about 1517 to 1525. In this persecution thousands were killed. A person even received one hundred dollars when he denounced one of these people. One hundred dollars was a fortune at that time! In a certain forest in Switzerland in a very silent place, about three hundred used to come together. Informers denounced them, and so there was three hundred times one hundred dollars paid. All went to jail, and all died.

Many thousands were killed in other places. At the shore of one of our beautiful blue rivers, called the Limat, in Zurich, Switzerland, there is still a small chapel. From this chapel they used to put the believers in a cage, and then let them down into the water in this cage for a few minutes and then lift them back out. When they did so, all the spectators were yelling; and then they put them in the water again and continued so, up

and down, until they were dead. Many had been beheaded, and then something happened. One was the last who was beheaded. Before he was beheaded, he said, "I am dying for Jesus my Savior. I am dying because I believe in Him, because I have been cleansed by His blood. I am His child; and because I am a child of God, it will happen that after I am beheaded, my head will jump by itself into the basket that you have prepared for my body." But they laughed at him and beheaded him. In a moment, however, they were badly frightened, for after the head fell to the ground, it made a big leap and fell into the midst of the basket! Then the government of Bern, where this happened, decided, "No more, no more!" There is a monument in Bern of a man without a head and holding his head in his hands. That was the last one of these believers who was beheaded in that town; and not only in that town, but in the country. This was in 1571.

During the time of the Reformation these persecutions had continued until it was not bearable anymore. Even the Dutch government, the government of Holland, made a petition to the government of Switzerland to let these people get out of the country and come to Holland. "They are welcome in our land," they said, and the Swiss government allowed them to go. They were put on such a miserable boat and such miserable food was given to them on the way that from fifty-six who remained of about one thousand, thirty-four died on the way and the rest died when they arrived.

These fifty-six who left Switzerland at that time wanted to go to America, knowing that was a peaceful country, but they never reached it. They all died in Holland before they could get the next boat to come to your beautiful country. But there were always small groups, a small flock of whom the Word says, "Fear not, little flock, because it is a good pleasure of the Father to give you the kingdom of God!"

And now we are coming nearer, and we are coming to the Nineteenth Century. There was a revival in many places, and one of the results of this revival is this wonderful and dear crowd that we have before us. That is the wonderful story that I want to tell! Understand me rightly: I don't want to praise people, I don't want to make people higher than they are; but we

do have a lot of respect for these people who were persecuted through their whole life, who were full of zeal and full of the Spirit of God, leaving the comfort of their homes and going the way of self denial, bringing the good Gospel and the tidings of peace to the people.

I have now to mention a name that is perhaps going to be mentioned a few times: that of Samuel Froehlich. This was a French family. Their name was DeJoyeux, which is a French word meaning "the joyful". These people were living in France up to the persecution of 1648. On this date, the Catholic church decided that everyone that is not Catholic should either be killed or leave the country right away. In one night, the terrible Bartholomew night, 40,000 were killed: murdered in a terrible way in the name of the "holiness" of the church, of the "universal church", the only church through which, as they pretended, people could go to heaven. Many escaped, and one of the families that escaped was this family of DeJoyeux. They went to Switzerland and settled there in a part of the country that speaks the Swiss German. They changed their name from DeJoyeux to Froehlich which means "joyful" in German.

This joyful family had a tradition that one of the family had to be a preacher, had to do something for the Lord. That was something decided. It was not a question of whether he liked it or not, if he were fit for this mission or not: he just had to be a preacher; and Samuel Froehlich was the one who just had to be a preacher. He did not believe, he did not like it, he was not interested; but he was rather mocking. Anyway, that did not matter, he had to be a preacher, that was all. He went to school, he went to college, he went to the theological school of Zurich, and in his diary he says, "When I came to the theological school, I had just a little bit of faith, but this little bit of faith I lost there completely." When he was graduated from theological school, he was an atheist. He would rather be blaspheming against God than praising Him. He was in a terrible state of unbelief; but, nevertheless, he was graduated a preacher ready to be ordained.

The Lord was watching this boy and He made him sick. He had a terrible sickness of the lungs: a sickness that was the reason for his early death, the reason why later on he was sick practically two months every

year and never recovered completely. He was in such a miserable condition that every doctor had no hopes whatsoever. And in his terror of death, he was asked, "Now how will you present yourself before the Lord in the resurrection of the dead? With your graduation paper, with your diploma, and your hatred against God?" He came into a terrible condition. He was not only very sick, but his soul found neither rest nor peace, and was full of "yearning, sadness, and anxiety." He found out that he was the poorest among the poor, and he came slowly but truly into repentance, crying days and nights for the wickedness of his soul; and he went through weeks and weeks of crying to the Lord that He would help him. Everybody wanted to help him for the sickness of his body, but there was no one, not a single one, who could be of any help, any comfort, for his soul; and he suffered more than can be told. In this misery of his repentance, suddenly he looked to the Bible, the Book he had been studying for years, criticizing and trying to find what was right and what was wrong; and when he had finished his study, there was nothing right in the Bible anymore, but everything was wrong. He took this Book, as much as he could in his weakness, and he found the revelation of Jesus. He found the reason why Jesus died: that Jesus died for him and for his sins. Joyfully he accepted salvation by grace and stretched his two hands towards his Savior, and he found a wonderful peace in his heart. As soon as his soul was saved and rescued, the body started to recover; and instead of dying, as they thought he would, he recovered: not completely, but, anyway, he was in fairly good health.

Then it was just the time when he should be ordained as a preacher. I don't know how they do it in this country, but over there when you are to be ordained in the State Church, you first have to deliver a sermon, bring a sample of your wisdom, of your ability. The people who listen to this first sermon are not the public who are generally in church, but just ministers and all the authorities of the church. A church is filled with preachers, old ones and critical ones, and they listen to this sermon and have to decide whether this man will be ordained or not. He was so joyful about the miracles that he experienced in his sickness that his sermon was a wonderful message of the power of Christ. He told how he had been:

how he went to school, how he lost his faith, how he was sinful as a student - regardless of the fact that he was a theological student - just as sinful as anyone was, and he gave the glory to Jesus. He spoke about the conversion he experienced, about the peace he found, and about the remission of his sins. The more he spoke, the more the people were concerned, and when he finished, they said, "Such a man is not good. We cannot use such a man." They thought that he would turn the whole church upside down, and they did not want such a disturbance. They wanted ministers able to keep the people quiet and silent, and able to keep them coming to church and faithfully paying their dues.

So he waited for one year and then made application again. They thought, "Now let us see if this man has lost his extravagance." I do not know exactly if his second sermon was as joyful as the first one. He at least had a year's experience behind him, and it certainly had been joyful, but perhaps in a moderate way, and he was ordained "on trial". It was said to him what is generally said when you receive your license on trial only: "We have a right to withdraw this license on a moment's notice." So he was joyful anyway: "Now I can live for my Lord."

There was a certain Lutheran church near the Lake of Constance, between Switzerland and Germany, where there was a very old preacher. He was sick in bed and could not preach anymore, so he always had to have somebody from outside come. And so, Samuel Froehlich was sent as a vicar. He started to give a testimony of Christ, and the result was so marvelous that after the first or second preaching, the whole church was deeply moved and in tears. And not only was the church deeply moved, but the old preacher in his bed, likewise, was under conviction. He had a whole life of preaching behind him, and yet he did not know Jesus. He was in his sins, and now he was dying and did not know anything about salvation. Samuel, who was a very zealous man, not only preached in the church, but he preached to the preacher. The Word wrought such a wonderful miracle that the preacher found peace before he died. He died in peace in the arms of Samuel, thanking him for what he brought to him, and he gave him permission to have the funeral service. So this young man, who just had a license on trial, had to give the funeral sermon before

a big congregation, most of whom were ministers and authorities of the church. They watched this young man, and the more he spoke, he wrote in his diary, the longer the faces became. Afterwards they took him aside and said, "You are discharged." He had the courage to say at the funeral service that the old preacher had found peace and remission of his sins on his death bed. That was terrible in the eyes of the authorities, but he could not do otherwise. The old man had wanted him to tell, but that was an offense to the church. So he was discharged and had to leave immediately.

After a while he received another call to a small town called Leutwil in the country of Argovy in Switzerland. This is a nice, quiet village, just a few miles from the village from which my wife came. Having received that call, he went there. It was a very much neglected congregation. He preached the full Gospel, preached remission of sins, preached salvation by the grace of God. After two or three sermons, many were deeply moved and brought under conviction to such an extent that sometimes he could hardly continue to speak. There was a wonderful awakening, and everyone came and confessed his sins and cried to the Lord to be saved.

But the revival was not confined to that village: it spread to the neighboring ones also. People told their friends, "Come and listen. This is something different." So they came from all the neighboring towns, from all the other churches, so that the villages had empty churches on Sunday, and the church of Leutwil was filled with people hungry for salvation. You can understand how much jealousy that wrought in the preachers of the neighborhood. They made complaint after complaint to the authorities of the church: "Go and see what the trouble is. He is really turning the whole church upside down. Take his license." So they always sent people who listened and made notes and brought back notes about the sermon, but generally not correct notes, for they did not know about shorthand at that time.

After a year of his preaching there, nearly everyone in the congregation had come into repentance and many had found peace in Jesus. On Good Friday, two days before Easter, it was told him that he had to leave quickly and go to his home town. During this evening sermon, on the day commemorating the day when Jesus was crucified, he

spoke once more of Jesus, and then he said, "I must go. I received the decision that I have to leave the church." There followed a lamenting, a weeping aloud of all, and they asked him not to go. But what could he do? He left these poor ones who really were afterwards like sheep without a shepherd.

Then he came back to his home town, Brugg, and wondered, "What shall I do?" For a whole year he was quiet there, sitting, as he said, like Joseph in his prison, until the Lord would let him out. As his diary reports, he felt as though he were being shaken through a screen or sieve, being prepared for his ministry.

He wrote in his diary: "It was never in my mind to create a new congregation. My goal was to help gather the children of God. If I would not put all my trust in God, my Lord, that He has called me to preach the Gospel, I would have to regret to have started something to which He would not grant His blessing and that would not be according to His will."

But now the official church had rejected him. They did not allow him to speak. Shortly afterward, they took his license away, and it was forbidden him even to preach in homes and to travel across the country.

He cried to God, "What shall I do?" He said, "I am putting everything into the hand of the Lord, that He shall decide according to His good will." Then suddenly, he had the fire in his heart again, and he had to go. "A living spring of water cannot be stopped." So he went.

The first place to which he went on his missionary journey was to the village of Leutwil where he had preached, where he had been forbidden to go, where the many had heard the call of Jesus. He came at night that nobody would see him, but like a fire the rumor went through the whole village: "Samuel is here." They all came, about two hundred, before the house, and he had to go out of the house and preach to them in the open air. It was a joyful meeting, and they all thanked the Lord and said, "Oh, we are so thankful that you came back. Nobody took care of us in the meantime." Evening after evening they had a meeting in the open air, and evening after evening he preached of Jesus. The next week he baptized thirty-eight believers. That was the beginning, the first time he baptized. These were the first who, as a result of his ministry, accepted Jesus in

baptism.

But you can understand that the authorities were not happy. Complaint after complaint came, and six weeks after he had returned to this village, the police came and said that he had to leave within twenty-four hours. He did so. He went from place to place, from village to village: he was chased from one to the other. No rest was given and no place where he could go. Everywhere someone who heard he was there told the police, and he had to go.

One day he was preaching in a small town and it became known, and the police came during the meeting and took him away. He had to go for many miles and had to appear before a judge. The judge asked him, "Who told you to speak? From whom have you the authority to speak? Where is your license?" He answered, "I have a license." The police said, "No, your license has been taken away." Samuel said, "I have one," and the police said, "From whom?" "From Jesus." Then he said, "Ask this Mr. Jesus. . ." - he said Mr. Jesus as a joke - "Ask this Mr. Jesus to give you this in writing." He answered, "I have it in writing right here," and he showed him his Bible. The officer wanted to put him in jail, but he could not do it; and the officer, after mocking him, after insulting him, released him and allowed him to go on. That is the way he went from town to town.

In one journey that he took, he had to cross a mountain. A terrible thunderstorm came up, and he had to go seven or eight hours in a most dreadful storm and rain. He arrived in the city of Bern, which is our capital, shivering from fever and so sick that he went directly to the doctor. The doctor said, "Poor man, you are in a terrible condition. I cannot let you go a way." So he put him to bed in his sleeping room, and he was there for six weeks, during which time the doctor took care of him. This doctor, incidentally, was a good friend of the President of the Swiss Confederation, the President of the country, like your Mr. Truman. Later on, this doctor was very helpful in time of persecution. So everything that happened really was a miracle.

Once he came to a beautiful green valley, the valley where the famous Swiss cheese is made: Emmental. About five hundred came together at one time. He preached, and do you know how long? For three hours about

John chapter 16, verse 7! After three hours they had supper, and after supper he started again. The result was a movement, an extraordinary movement, and the church that was then founded is still existing. But the police came in that evening and gave him twenty-four hours to leave the country. The old man who had invited him to his place was named Gerber. There are many Gerbers here. He took him in his carriage to the border of the country. They took leave, and he said, "I am sorry that you have to go."

On Samuel Froehlich's passport, which he had to have, they put in red ink the remark: "This man is a terrible sectarian, a very dangerous man. Every policeman who sees this man should put him in jail, or chase him out of the country." In one town - it was the town where I started to preach - the preacher said in church on the Sunday following Samuel's visit, "A terrible, terrible thing happened to our town. The most terrible epidemic, sickness, or plague could not be worse than what has happened. This sectarian family called Samuel Froehlich came to our town. Behave and be careful: he is a terrible man." Three days later a big fire started on one end of the town, and the whole town except two houses disappeared. Included in the destruction was the church. It was the biggest fire disaster that ever took place in Switzerland, and the church, where it had been said that the most terrible catastrophe that could happen would be better than the coming of the sectarian, was gone.

So from one town to the other the Gospel came, and joy came. The papers were full of this. They spoke of this man as the most dangerous man, and he was chased from one place to the other. He could never travel in the day time, but at night, so he would not be seen. But the more they tried to punish him and persecute him, the more they advertised the cause for which he was striving, and everybody was speaking and everybody was wondering, "What is the reason of this persecution?" And the people who came to see generally came and found peace and joy.

Just to give an example of what happened - remember, it was forbidden to preach in houses: if somebody would preach in the house, the preacher would go to jail, and the proprietor of the house also. So it happened in one place that he had meetings for a few evenings. There was

an old man who was put in jail and came before the judge.

The judge said, "What is the idea? We have a church! Why have church in your house? Don't you think it is better to go to church? What is the difference in the preaching in the church and in your house?"

This old man said, "Oh, certain differences. Do you want to know?"
"Surely I want to know!"

"Oh, the same difference as between day and night, or between life and death."

"Oh, you don't want to say there is such a difference?"

"Surely."

"Now explain why."

"Now you see, I am an old man. See my hair? I went to church all my life and nothing stirred in my soul. I went in and went out and there wasn't much change. So I think that what I heard there was just chaff. Now we had a few meetings in my house, and I heard the message of this man, and something is stirring, growing, working in my heart; my whole heart is drastically changed, for I think this man has been casting out good seed: corn, and not chaff."

That is what he said, and he was sent to jail because he was an offense to the church. So it went from house to house and village to village, and the number of the believers was growing.

Are you interested in knowing how many congregations existed after six years of this missionary work? Fourteen congregations with a few hundred believers, in six years, in spite of the most terrible persecutions!

It happened then that Samuel Froehlich wanted to have help. He heard of a society that was formed in England which was called The Baptist Continental Missionary Society. This Baptist Continental Society wanted to send out missionaries from England or to appoint missionaries from France and other countries. Samuel Froehlich wrote to these people. At the same time, another preacher was driven out of the church, a man whose name was Bost, and these two came together and helped each other. It was Bost who had baptized Samuel Froehlich a few years before. These two worked in Switzerland under the supervision of the Baptist Continental Society in London. I do not think that they sent more than one

hundred or two hundred dollars a year to finance the whole missionary work. In 1833, they asked Froehlich to come to London, and he spent four months there. He said that sometimes he was very unhappy in that city, and he went back. After a while they wrote to him, "We cannot be of any further help to you because we do not have any more money." They had no more funds for missionary work in Europe, and the Baptist Continental Society disappeared because of lack of funds. So Samuel Froehlich was left alone; and being left alone, he started to organize the congregations. He had the wonderful help of zealous brothers who were appointed as elders. They were just as joyful as he, and they spent many nights, especially Sunday nights, in jail. But the Gospel was spread. I know a small village near where we are building a church now. It is a village of perhaps eight hundred to one thousand people. When he came there were five hundred who came to listen to his message, and afterwards the boys of the village were throwing stones at them.

Now in 1840, that is fifteen years after he started, there were fifty-five congregations. Ten years later there were fifty-five more. That makes one hundred ten. So in twenty-five years of missionary work, they had built, with the help of God, one hundred ten congregations. Is that not wonderful? Do you not think it is a wonderful result? They were so joyful although they were terribly persecuted.

You may perhaps not know the reason for the persecution. There were these reasons: First, it was forbidden to preach in houses, so the one who preached, the one who gave the house, and the ones who attended these meetings were all guilty. Once a brother was preaching. He had a beard. The police came and tore his beard out. The whole cheek was bleeding, and that is the way he was taken to jail for ten miles. You have no idea what they suffered just because they had meetings, and meetings were forbidden. There was another reason for persecution. There was not compulsory military service, but one question was capital, and that was the question of marriage. No one had the right to marry people except the Lutheran Church, the Catholic Church, and the Jews. So if you were not Catholic, Jewish, or Lutheran, you could not get married: you had to remain single or join one of these churches. They married anyway, and

Brother Froehlich married, too; but the authorities would not recognize this marriage. His wife was punished and fined for each baby she had. They did not have the right to live in the same house, not even in the same village. He had to live separated from his family for seven years. Once he received the news that one of his boys was dying. He wanted by all means to go to sit at the bedside of his dying son, but he expected to be put to jail any moment. But God had mercy on him, and on that night a terrible fire broke out, and the police were kept busy at the fire, and they let this man sit at the bed of his dying boy. However, he was not permitted to go to the funeral.

Another reason for persecution was that since the church was considered as the State Church, everything the church requested was obligatory. The baptism of newborn children was compulsory. I know of a believing father who was put in jail so that the police were free to bring the newborn child to the official church where it was baptized. The father was compelled to pay the fees and expenses incidental to this.

Attendance at the training lessons for confirmation and the confirmation itself were compulsory. I know of two girls, who died as faithful sisters, who were put in jail on Saturday night and then brought by the police the next morning to Sunday School. At the confirmation ceremony each pupil received a Bible verse as a dedication. These girls received the quotation: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Another girl, whom I knew well when she was a grandmother, had spent time in jail at the age of thirteen because she had visited our Sunday School.

Even funeral services were considered an offense. At one funeral the police had been instructed to arrest Samuel Froehlich as soon as he would appear. When he did not come because he had been warned, the police beat the brother who held the services.

The time came that Samuel Froehlich could not live in that wonderful country which people call "Paradise", and in the year 1844 he was told once more that he had to leave the country. But he did not know where to go. Here comes a wonderful story, the story of why I am here. It was always so: the persecution in Jerusalem brought the Gospel to Arabia, to

India, and to Europe. The persecution at that time brought the Gospel to other countries, and Samuel Froehlich received the call to come to France. The call came in a wonderful way. I have to tell you the story. It is too beautiful to leave untold. My family is directly involved. I am not praising my family, no; but you may perhaps understand my zeal for God if you know what history and how many generations of prayers are behind me.

My mother's father, John Diebold, was a young tailor, a very ambitious man. After young men learned their trade, they always wanted to go for a few years from one village to the next to collect experience. So he left his home country, which was Strassburg in France, and went to Switzerland, but he was wonderfully guided. He was looking for a job, and he found a job in a small village in the tailor shop of a Mennonite. During the stitching, the Mennonite preached the Gospel till this 19-year old boy was converted and was baptized with the baptism of faith. Then, afterwards, he went back home, and he wanted to see if there were not people of this same faith there. So he was looking, listening, and asking, but he could not find anybody. But somebody told him, "Go to the next narrow street called Dornengasse, and on the second floor, on Sunday, in a small room, they have a very small assembly." So he went, and, really, there was an assembly: old people generally, and an old man was reading the Bible and preaching. After the young man had listened patiently and the preaching was over, he asked the preacher if he could say something. He was ambitious. The preacher said, "Yes." So the young man said, "I want to praise Jesus, because I found Him," and he told about his conversion. That made a good impression on all except the preacher. So the next Sunday the young man went again, and he listened patiently, and afterward he said, "Can I say something?" The preacher said, "No." And this beautiful "No" is the reason that my family came to faith. Because when my grandfather went downstairs, he found a few ladies who were talking together, and they said, "If this preacher does not want to let you speak, then come to our house." And one of the ladies said, "Come to our farm." The name of that lady was the same name that I have also: Michel. She said, "Next Sunday come to our farm and preach the way you preached last Sunday." He said, "Fine," and another lady said, "I am

coming too." This other lady was Mother's grandmother. So in this first meeting, several of my family were there, though they were not connected at that time. My father's grandfather and grandmother, my mother's grandmother, and my mother's mother were all in the same room. And it was my mother's father, John Diebold, who preached in that assembly.

The people listened with joy, and my great-grandfather, Martin Michel, said to him that his father had died in peace a few years before, and in his will had said, "I have no money to give to you, my children, but I am telling you that I found Jesus." He had given his children this message, "Seek Jesus and He will remit your sins, and you will find this wonderful peace that I found." That was my great-great-grandfather. Then his son, my great-grandfather, who gave his farm for the meetings, and his wife were ready to accept the Lord, but there was no one there to baptize them. So, through a sequence of miracles, through connections in Switzerland, they heard that a certain Samuel Froehlich was in Switzerland and that he was being chased out of the country. They gave him an invitation. "Come and see, and be our minister." So just at the time when Samuel Froehlich had to leave Switzerland, he received the invitation to come to France. We were all farmers, although I am not a farmer, as you know. He came to Michel's farm and found a group of people to whom grandfather Diebold had preached. The first baptized were my great-grandfather, my great-grandmother and my grandmother. They had wonderful meetings and many of these books which are printed now are from sermons that were spoken on my great-grandfather's farm.

They started small. When they had the Lord's supper for the first time at the end of one year, they were twelve. One year afterwards they were thirty-five, then sixty-five, and they were growing from time to time.

How poor they were and how modest their means can be illustrated by the following story: Every week they had a brother meeting on Friday evening to speak about questions that came up during the week. Once they had a discussion on the following matter: "What should we do on Sunday when we have guests and have nothing to eat?" The brothers decided that the families should fast in order to have enough to receive guests on Sunday. Such was the spirit at that time.

The Gospel went joyfully through all of Alsace from one town to the next. But do you know why? Brother Froehlich had a rule: "Never more than two preaching brothers in one room on a Sunday, and the others go on the road." Where to? God knows. The Gospel had to be preached. The Spirit of God would guide them. My grandfather Diebold was ambitious. He was young. He was now nineteen or twenty. He was one of the youngest, and he went to work. He was always on the road, and on Sunday evenings, for a rest, he was in jail. Just an example of how they were working: He heard that on a farm seven hours away was a man seeking God. He went there and this man said, "Oh, no." And, as he wanted to get rid of him, he said, "I know a man who is more interested than I. Go and visit him." This man was two hours away. All right, he went to this man. That totaled nine hours walking. When he came to this farm - it was a beautiful farm - the windows were all open and he heard a loud noise. When he looked, there was a large number of guests in the house. The people called out, "This is a new house, and a new barn, and he has invited the whole village because the whole village helped him to build; so now the whole village is here." What would you do in such a case? He had wanted to speak in secret to this man and now he found the whole village. Is that not wonderful? So he came to the house hungry - after walking for nine hours he must have been hungry! The owner was full of joy for this beautiful farm, and he said, "Come in, have a meal with us." My grandfather went in and enjoyed the meal with them. When he was through and satisfied, this ambitious man said, "Now friends, we had a wonderful meal, and we all enjoyed it," and he started to speak of the meal, and of the invitation to the feast at the marriage of the Lamb. While he was preaching, the wife of this man ran out and fell on her knees and prayed the Lord that this terrible sectarian would be chased out of the house. But he was not chased, and this wife was a very dear sister afterwards. This beautiful farm was just built for a church, and it became a church, and is still a church now.

That is the way they were working at that time. Just another example of Froehlich: He was hungry at noon and went into a restaurant in a small village to have a meal. So he started to speak with the proprietor, a lady.

He spoke of the Gospel, and she said, "Oh, I know somebody who is interested. He lives on the next farm." He went to the next farm and spoke there, and a church started there. He went to the next village where there was a big restaurant and a big hall for dancing. Did you know that a dance hall is a wonderful place for a church? It became a church. These people became converted and changed this dance hall into a church; and it was a church for perhaps fifteen years, until it was too small. But that is the way they were working. That is the reason why we have congregations. They never stayed at home to take it easy: they went on the road. And when they had a call of the Spirit of God, they went long ways in spite of all the dangers. So the Gospel came also to France. The congregations were increasing, and it was wonderful how everything fitted together.

Once a young shoemaker came. This young shoemaker had the name of Andrew Braun. He went to a Swiss place, near the border, and he found a job with a shoemaker. The shoemaker was a believer! During the repairing of shoes and the hammering on of the soles, he preached the Gospel to this lad. Andrew was a receptive man. He accepted the Lord and became converted. He went to Strassburg and was baptized; and afterwards he went to Germany, his home country, to his home town, and after a very short while, a church existed in that town. So the Gospel came to Germany. Is that not wonderful? We can be in a town for fifty years and there is no church. But at that time when they were somewhere, after a few months, believers were to be found there. My grandfather had to go there to baptize, and later Andrew Braun was made an elder at twenty-two years because they needed him in that country. He came to Strassburg and was ordained an elder there. So they went this same evening to my great-grandfather's farm to have a meeting. This farm was near the Rhine. During the winter, the Rhine was overflowing and the road was covered with water. But the one of them was a very ambitious man and the one elder took the other elder on his shoulders and they went through the water. I am sorry that I was not present with a camera at that time taking the picture of one elder having the other elder on his shoulders. I think that would be a marvelous picture. One of the fellow elders of Samuel Froehlich and of my grandfather was the grandfather of David Mangold

of Roanoke.

It happened that two men, not tailors or shoemakers, but mechanics, came to Switzerland. Their names were Denkел and Kropatschek. Coming into Switzerland, they became acquainted with us and came to the assembly, and found peace with God. They went back in 1839; and when they had returned, they found a very ambitious and zealous young man called Hencsey. As soon as they told him of the Gospel, he accepted it; and he was the one then who went to all these countries - Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Romania - to bring the Gospel from one village to the other. Persecution followed - I may say a hundred years of persecution followed - and has still not stopped. That is probably one reason that these churches were always increasing, and that in these countries we had a total of fifty to one hundred thousand members in our congregations there before the war.

So the Gospel came to Austria-Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania. From one village to the other came the joyful message of Jesus. See how wonderfully the Lord prepared everything! Hencsey himself found another young man whose name was Bela, a very zealous man; and this man had been prepared for you, for America, for the United States! Although Hencsey was not so persecuted, Bela was so fearfully persecuted that he had to leave his country and come to America. He was persecuted terribly day after day. Do you know how he was kept in jail? They bound hands and feet together and then hung him up on a ring on the wall, so he could neither sit, nor stand, nor lie. That is the way he had to be in jail. He suffered so much that even the authorities said, "We cannot watch this anymore. Something has to be done." So they gave him the license to emigrate to the United States. But before he emigrated, the jail keeper and his wife were converted. That was in 1861. They told him that he could emigrate, but that was just for the sake of the public: to make them think that the authorities were being good to him. But they made arrangements that on his arrival at the harbor of Bremen some wicked people would waylay him and kill him. On the way, by the inspiration of God just like it was with Joseph, he was warned; and instead of going to Bremen, he went to Hamburg, and boarded his ship

and went to the United States.

Now let me tell you something about the United States. That is interesting, too. The Lord prepared the way wonderfully. He permitted persecution of Andrew Braun, of Joseph Bela, and of a few others, and He prepared in advance a wonderful settlement. It is a very interesting story. In the beginning of the 19th century, the Duke of Chaumont, who was a very wealthy Frenchman, emigrated to the United States; and, having plenty of money, he bought a large tract of land. At that time, it may interest you, the cost per acre was \$1.50. So he bought this very big place and he wanted to find people who would come to work his land, but he could not find people. He tried to convince the Indians, but the Indians were not very good farmers. So he sent his managers to Europe, and especially to France, to try to find people and families to come to America to his settlement. The settlement was called French Settlement and was near New Bremen. This man went to France looking for people. Two of the families he found were the Virkler family and the Farney family. These people were Mennonites. I may mention here that the story of the Virklers is wonderful too. They originated in Switzerland, and, because of persecution, they had to leave Switzerland in 1730. They settled in France, because at that time France had a government which was tolerant. They did not have compulsory military service, so they settled in France in a place which I know very well. Now came the war of Napoleon. The young Virklers, who came to France to avoid military service, had to go to the service. One of the young Virklers had to go with Napoleon, and my great-grandfather likewise also went to Russia, in that terrible winter campaign where in the middle of winter Napoleon had to go back, and where he lost most of his army. The young Virkler came back and my great-grandfather too, but they did not like it anymore. They were looking for an opportunity to go to a place called something like "Paradise", the United States.

Then it just happened through the wonderful guidance of God that this man from the French Settlement was coming for people and found the Virkler family and asked them to come. They came to the French Settlement; and not only they, but others too. So the family was

increasing. They had meetings, they were singing hymns and reading the Bible, but they lacked a minister, somebody to show them the way. Through a wonderful guidance, they had the address of our people in Switzerland. They asked for a minister, and then came the opportunity for Benedict Weyeneth to come to this country, and he went to this French Settlement. He found these people and baptized them. One was appointed an elder, another as a teacher of these Virklers and Farneys, and that was the first of our congregations that existed in the United States.

Weyeneth afterwards left the French Settlement and returned to Switzerland, but came back here later to a country called Illinois. That country was said to be a very, very bad country, not healthful: they had malaria and other sicknesses. They had mosquitoes: such terrible mosquitoes that it was almost impossible to live. But the ground was good. So they started, and many others came; and we see the families Koch, Pflederer, Riggerbach, and many others. Weyeneth was working in their midst and he was a wonderful man. He said himself that he was a poor farmer. Yet he was a good evangelist. When the last crop was in his barn, he went for missionary work the whole winter until spring came. One spring, he forgot to go home; that is, he did not forget: he could not go home. His wife said, "Benedict, it is high time that you come home," but he had been too busy that winter. He was doing missionary work in these parts of the country. A brother told me that in the winter of 1879, he had one hundred fifty-nine baptisms.

Another man of whom I think I have found some relatives in this country, had the name of Kraehenbuehl. He was Swiss by birth. He went with his buggy and spread the Gospel all around the countryside. Before last summer I always believed that the congregations in America had been created only by Europeans who came through persecution or through people who wanted to make more dollars than they could make at home, but I have seen since that the congregations here are also the result of an extensive missionary work of many, many years. Andrew Braun had to leave his country with his whole congregation. They, the congregation of Schweinfurt, Germany, all came together. They traveled through Strassburg, were in my grandfather's house, and came to America and

settled in Ohio. And working together, Illinois, Ohio, and the French Settlement, they went from house to house, preaching, bringing good tidings of peace. One of the Virklers even crossed the whole United States and came to the Pacific coast, and that was the beginning of the church in Oregon.

I could speak a long time about this wonderful, wonderful time, and sometimes you may be astonished. For instance, Mansfield existed a long time before Akron. One Swiss brother, who came first to visit the congregations, was Brother Geistlich. He came in 1866 and traveled the whole United States visiting the churches, and when he came to Akron, he said, "A busy town, but not one believer; and it seems not to be a very good ground for the Gospel." What a poor impression of Akron, where we now have the largest church! See how it can change, how it is changing, and how we should be zealous to do what we can?

One thing happened. The families were growing. They all had many children; and where they had big families, much food was needed. Nobody wanted to be a poor farmer, as Weyeneth called himself, so they started to be good farmers. They had the reputation of being the best farmers, but the result was that they settled down. No buggies anymore to go to the Pacific coast, to bring the Gospel from house to house! And after a while, congregations having been formed, they were enjoying themselves in singing hymns and working hard, but the missionary work had been forgotten. We know how many congregations exist, and we are thankful, but we do not care so much to expand. We have a beautiful hymn, "Where is the Spirit of all these pioneers who were filled with the love of God, the love of Christ, who had the passion for souls and who wanted to bring the good tidings of peace to others?" A time came, the same on the other side of the ocean as here, as soon as the persecution stopped in Europe, then the people settled. In Switzerland the persecution ended about 1854. Following that, brethren expanded their properties, and the missionary work waits for a new revival.

I had much joy in my heart that I could tell you this story. We are in the last times, my dear ones! We had yesterday or this morning as a topic for our Bible study, "Shall I find faith on Earth?" When the Son of man

comes back, shall He find faith? We, dear ones, who received through the grace of God the knowledge of the mystery of Christ, the knowledge of salvation by grace through faith, we are the ones who have to extend that knowledge and to tell our young people, as well as our neighbors everywhere, as we have the opportunity, that Jesus is the same today as He was one hundred years ago, and that He is willing to save everyone who is ready to believe in Him. Let us therefore have a revival in our midst, let us therefore be reminded of what our grandparents did, and let us sometimes lay our business aside, like Andrew Braun sometimes did. He just locked his shoemaker shop and put out a sign: "Absent 3 or 4 months". He was away preaching the Gospel. He did not have anyone who was working or making money in the meantime. He had to see how he financed his way. Let us have this spirit of testimony, and let us be in these last times joyful witnesses of the glory of Christ. If I could give you tonight more thankfulness for what has been done, and, on the other hand, more zeal for what has to be done, I would be thankful my whole life that I had this privilege to speak to you about this wonderful story of old times. Jesus is today what He was at that time! And what our grandparents were doing we need to do for His sake, and to His Glory, and to the advancement of His kingdom.

May the Lord give us the needed joy, the needed zeal, and the necessary wisdom, that in these last days, in such a wicked world, in such darkness, in such confusion as exists in the whole world, in the midst of all this may the Lord grant that we be joyful witnesses of Jesus, our Savior, who died at the cross. Amen.

"Not boasting, but we have the best thing in the world. The more we look at it, the more we have to marvel how much light has been given to our brothers, and how much light is given to us in our time. We don't want to have an alliance with other congregations. That is not the meaning. I want to make myself free. We don't want to have the way of making Christians easily or quickly. Sometimes just the signing of a paper, or the signing of a Bible or Testament, or the raising of the hand is a proof that they have accepted Christ as their personal Saviour. We are not in agreement on this. There is much more behind new birth than just a moment of emotion where under the pressure of a fiery preaching we stretch out the hand and say we have accepted Christ. It is a sign of the times to have such quick and spectacular results. We do not believe in such a way of making conversions. We believe in the slower, more difficult way of going through repentance, confession, and so on. We believe in an absolute, sincere, complete conversion."

-BROTHER HENRY MICHEL

1948 Brothers Meeting
Mansfield, Ohio