

BETWEEN REMNANT AND RENEWAL:

A HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE “APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH” AMONG NEO-ANABAPTIST RENEWAL MOVEMENTS  
IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

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## **Dedication**

This project is dedicated to my grandmother, Elisabeth Pfeiffer (Müller). Born and raised in the Nazarene (Apostolic Christian) faith in Yugoslavia, she survived the cataclysm of World War II and the horrors of ethnic cleansing in post-war Yugoslavia, married and began a family in a refugee camp in Austria, and emigrated to America to begin anew in a foreign new world. Her devotion to her faith, her hope in God's goodness and in His promise of eternal life to those who overcome, and her peaceful and patient endurance of the troubles and sufferings of this life is an inspiration to her family, and to all. Hers is a faith that is lived.

## Introduction

In the early 1830's, a dynamic new "Neo-Anabaptist" movement emerged in Switzerland. Led by the charismatic young Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich (1803-1857), the vital new movement quickly spread across Switzerland, spanning from Geneva to St. Gallen. From there, it was carried on by Fröhlich and his associates into Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria in southern Germany, Alsace-Lorraine in France, Austria-Hungary, and across the Atlantic into the United States of America, where it continued to expand and grow numerically throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The movement would come to be known by different names in the various regions where it manifested. Early on, the believers of this faith called themselves simply *Gläubige*—"believers,"—and referred to one another simply as brother and sister. Because they came to adopt many of the beliefs and practices of the Swiss Mennonites – known simply as *Täufer* for "Baptizers" or "Baptists" because of their traditional emphasis on Believers' baptism entailing willful repentance and conversion of adults – this new movement soon came to be called *Neutäufer* or "New Baptists." Officially, they were called the *Gemeinschaft Evangelisch Taufgesinnter*, the "Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists."<sup>1</sup> In eastern Europe, they came to be known as the *Nazarenes*, hearkening back to the name of the early followers of Jesus, who came from Nazareth, the "Nazarene."<sup>2</sup> In America, they came to be most commonly known by the Apostolic Christian, because of their desire to restore apostolic, New Testament Christianity.

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<sup>1</sup> It ought to be kept in mind that in German, the terms *Täufer* and *Taufgesinnte* recall what in English is called the "Anabaptist" or Mennonite movement. Later bodies of groups that formed from the influence of English and American Baptists were known as *Baptisten*.

<sup>2</sup> See the Gospel of Matthew, 2:23.

Soon the *Neutäufer* would come to outnumber the *Alttäufer* in their own homeland as the numerically leading Anabaptist movement in Switzerland. The Nazarenes in Eastern Europe would represent the first major Anabaptist movement in modern history to find a significant following among such ethnicities as Hungarians, Serbians, Romanians, and Slovaks, coming to be fully inculturated within their respective cultural contexts and languages, and serving to forge bonds of reconciliation and brotherhood between those from ethnicities historically set against each other. Forged in the context of the expanding Midwestern frontier of mid-nineteenth century America populated mostly by German speaking immigrants, the movement would become uniquely inculturated among newly arrived European immigrants of a Swiss and German background. It would also serve as a neo-Anabaptist modernizing renewal movement among a culturally static Amish-Mennonite culture that had remained in virtual ethno-linguistic agrarian insulation for 200 years, and bridge a gap between them and new converts to a 19<sup>th</sup> century contextualization of an historic Anabaptist Believers Church faith. Yet serious scholarly study of this fascinating phenomenon has been curiously lacking.

### *The Problem*

The subject of the Apostolic Christian movements has long posed a gap in the area of Anabaptist scholarship. The absence of critical studies on what has proved to be a dynamic “neo-Anabaptist” renewal movement since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, manifesting since its inception the ability to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries with a radical Anabaptist “Believers’ Church” conviction, is noteworthy. Late Mennonite historian

Delbert Gratz once noted, “One of the major areas that has been neglected in the historical treatment of Anabaptism is the story of the Apostolic Christian Church in America.”<sup>3</sup> This was a deficiency to which Gratz called attention for much of his scholarly life.

Though a number of critical and scholarly treatments have been conducted on the European manifestations of the movement, no critical study has been conducted of the American manifestations of the Apostolic Christian Church.

Bernhard Ott’s *Missionarische Gemeinde werden*,<sup>4</sup> marked a milestone in the writing of critical history of the movement, especially in Western Europe. Beyond simply presenting a chronology of historic events and details, Ott employs a critical apparatus for understanding the movement’s emergence as an outgrowth of missionary renewal movements, to institutionalization and sectarianism, to embracing anew missionary renewal impulses and finding new vitality in relating constructively and faithfully to the outside world.

The Nazarenes of Eastern Europe have received the most attention, of any scholarly community. They have received such attention practically from the time of their explosive growth in east-central Europe in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The more modern critical treatments began with a historical and sociological study of Hungarian Nazarenes by Laszlo Kardos and Jenő Szigeti.<sup>5</sup> However, as this work has only been published in Hungarian, it has had a limited readership. Canadian historian of pacifism, Peter Brock,

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<sup>3</sup> Delbert Gratz, Review of *Marching to Zion: A History of the Apostolic Christian Church, 1847-1982* by Perry A. Klopfenstein, in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 61:4 (October 1987), 430.

<sup>4</sup> Bernhard Ott, *Missionarische Gemeinde werden: Der Weg der Evangelischen Täufergemeinden* (Uster, Switz.: ETG Verlag, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Laszlo Kardos and Jenő Szigeti, *Boldog emberek közösette: A magyarországi nazarenesok* (Budapest: Magveto, 1988). Roughly translated, the title reads: “Blessed People in Community: The Nazarenes in Hungary.”

wrote a number of articles on the Nazarenes, but focused almost exclusively on their aversion to violence and resolute stance on nonresistance.<sup>6</sup>

Serbian historian Bojan Aleksov has made the most recent scholarly contributions to study of this movement. This began with his 1999 masters thesis at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, on the identity struggles and decline of the Nazarene movement in Yugoslavia after 1945.<sup>7</sup> The work that Aleksov here began with his Masters thesis, he continued in his doctoral dissertation, on the 19<sup>th</sup> century Nazarene movement as a broker of modernization and religious renewal among ethnic Serbs in Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was later published.<sup>8</sup>

References have been made in Mennonite historical accounts, but these only note the story of the movement in a way that is tangential to Mennonite (or other) accounts of church history, and usually with only a rather cursory knowledge the movement's origins and development. These include several articles in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, as well as various other allusions in various other works of both European and American Mennonite and Anabaptist history. Likewise, several studies have treated the Amish and Mennonite migrations and settlements during the 19<sup>th</sup> century—especially as part of the long running *Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History* series, published by Herald Press. Many of these have given some (mostly marginal) attention to the Apostolic

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Brock, "From New Baptists to Nazarenes: A Nineteenth-Century Peace Witness," Chapter 16 in *Freedom from Violence: Sectarian Nonresistance from the Middle Ages to the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 172-190; "Some Materials on Nazarene Conscientious Objectors in Nineteenth-century Hungary" in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 57:1 (January 1983); "The Nonresistance of the Hungarian Nazarenes to 1914" in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 54:1 (January 1980); cf. "Nazarenes Confront Conscription in Dualist Hungary," Chapter 10 in *Against the Draft: Essays on Conscientious Objection From the Radical Transformation to the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 141-154.

<sup>7</sup> Bojan Aleksov, "The Dynamics of Extinction: The Nazarene Religious Community in Yugoslavia after 1945" (M.A. Thesis, Central European University, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Bojan Aleksov, *Religious Dissent between the Modern and the National: Nazarenes in Hungary and Serbia 1850-1914* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrasowitz, 2006).

Christian Church and its place in the particular histories of various Amish and Mennonite settlements where these coexisted with the Apostolic Christian Churches, noting especially where this coexistence has been antagonistic or caused schism. None of the above, however, treats extensively the nature of the Apostolic Christian Church in America, especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, as a dynamic, neo-Anabaptist renewal movement.

Perry Klopfenstein's *Marching to Zion* treats extensively the chronology and historical details of the founding and establishment of the Apostolic Christian Church of America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as its subsequent development. However, he focuses almost exclusively on this one denominational body. He treats only tangentially the other major American body, the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean), only includes the European history of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. While Klopfenstein's account contains many useful details, and while he does provide reflective and helpful insights at times, his account overall shows little comparative or critical reflection on Apostolic Christian history. However, as a denominational and congregational narrative history, it is a valuable resource for further research and scholarship.

Aside from these scholarly works is a growing body of literature on the movement which essentially serves as mere promotional literature, or simple chronology of denominational history, without much critical analytical depth. What is essentially lacking in such literature is a full and comparative treatment of the movement's formulation and development of communal and social identity in relation to the wider "world" in its various contexts. Such a perspective – namely, the issue that communal and theological formation might result from varying cultural contexts has only begun to

be acknowledged since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century among some Apostolic Christians. Indeed, it has been the lack of such contextual thinking that has proved such a hindrance to the mutual cooperation of the various manifestations of the movement in its various cultural, linguistic, and geographical contexts.

### *Objective and Scope*

This study attempts to construct, and reconstruct, a unified historical narrative of the Neutäufer and Nazarene movements in Europe, and of the Apostolic Christian Churches of America. It attempts to account for the impact and place of broader social, cultural, and religious movements on this tradition, from its emergence and establishment in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the challenges of modernization and subsequent crisis of identity throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and to the question of corporate identity renewal in light of new global realities into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is hoped that this study will allow such a critical and comparative study, taking note of the various historical and social developments surrounding the movement, and pose a sort of common grounds by which those shaped by this heritage can find some basis for mutual dialogue and understanding as they engage their own common history. This study will undertake the task of critically comparing the various contextual and historical manifestations of the movement, and then proposing common themes for a global core ecclesiological and theological identity and unity amidst diversity. This study will also explore the insights that this historical movement has to offer to the wider world of Anabaptist, Free Church, and other Christian thought.

## *Methodology*

It draws from various historical accounts that have been written, as well as primary source documents, such as journals, letters, memoirs, pamphlets, newsletters and corporate records and documents, as well as other available manuscripts from those within the Apostolic Christian tradition. Oral interviews with both current and former members of the Apostolic Christian Church traditions play a key role in informing the shaping of the inner substance of the narrative, where treatment or details in documents is lacking. Scholarly studies that treat other similar movements to the Apostolic Christian traditions, such as Mennonites, Brethren, and other historic Free Church traditions are employed as tools for critical and comparative study in understanding the common patterns of emergence, radicalization, sectarian ethnicization, and tensions over modernization and renewal.

## *Overview*

Chapter 1 surveys the landscape of what have frequently come to be known as “Believers Churches” or “Anabaptist” type churches. We will note that these movements tend to emerge as part of broader renewal movements more generally, and tend to emerge as the more radical manifestations of such movements, and often with the agenda of renewing or restoring an earlier radical vision of the radical reformation. Thus we may apply the name Neo-Anabaptist.

Chapter 2, treats the formation and development of one of the least studied manifestations of 19<sup>th</sup> century European Neo-Anabaptist renewal movements, the *Neutäufer* movement, led by the charismatic leader, Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich. We will

note how this movement emerged at the confluences of a number of historic renewal movements in Europe, particularly the *Reveil* and *Awakening* movements in western continental Europe. We will then take note of how the movement formed into its own specifically separatist Neo-Anabaptist movement, and how it in turn represented forces of modernization and renewal in the places where this movement spread. We will also account for the movements transformation into sectarian insulation.

In Chapter 3, we shift to the North American context and focus on the nature of this movement as a European Neo-Anabaptist renewal movement among a first generation European immigrant community. We will especially note the appeal of the movement among culturally static Amish and Mennonite communities which had also settled in the American Midwest during the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. We will then note the institutionalization processes of ethnicization that occurred, following patterns similar to the experiences of other ethnic and linguistic minority groups, especially among the Plain Church groups in American experience.

In Chapter 4, we encounter the 20<sup>th</sup> century movements of modernization as a challenge for renewal within the Apostolic Christian Church in America. Among one of these challenges was large numbers of Eastern European immigrants from their sister churches known as the Nazarenes, which presented the prospect of multiculturalism to a community that was based upon homogeneity and conformity, which resulted in a number of factions and divisions. We will see how the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a time of tension and transition for an ethnic Swiss-German American Apostolic Christian identity forged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We will also note the tensions and transitions in a newly arrived immigrant community, attempting to find both continuity and adjustment in a

new context. We will end by noting the challenge of World War II as a major impetus for both identity renewal and modernization.

Chapter 6 accounts for what has proved to be a time of identity struggle in post World-War II America. We will see that as the 20<sup>th</sup> century has progressed, especially rapidly since 1950, tensions between a sectarian isolationist identity and modernization have become especially strained, even as none of the various factions, from “conservative” to “liberal” can effectively avoid these impulses, although some have embraced them more freely, others more cautiously. We note especially the struggle over traditional notions of ethnicity and denominationalism, and how the descendents of the Apostolic Christian ethnicity understand themselves within the wider American, and global world at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Chapter 1

### Anabaptists and Neo-Anabaptists as Movements of Radical Renewal

The Apostolic Christian Church has long understood itself to stand in the tradition of the Anabaptists. In their own use of history, they consider the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement to have existed within the “remnant history” that has preserved the witness of the apostolic church down to the present time, despite the mainstream apostasy of the larger churches that embrace Constantinianism. Their traditional name long had been the *Gemeinschaft Evangelisch Taufgesinnter*—“Taufgesinnter” being a word that specifically refers to the Swiss Anabaptist-Mennonites—referred to in the English translation of Ruegger’s *Apostolic Christian Church History* as “Baptists.”

So central was the Anabaptist-Mennonite thought for the movement that they came to be known as the *Neutäufer* movement, meaning roughly “New Baptists/Anabaptists,” as opposed to the *Altäufer*, or “Old Baptists/Anabaptists.”<sup>1</sup> Though their respective names represented a divergence, the indicators of their identity still pointed to a common ideal with particular Mennonite historical rootage.<sup>2</sup>

The Apostolic Christian Church would not be the only group in history that claimed to be a “New Baptist” or “Neo-Anabaptist” movement in Church History. The common name of the Schwarzenau Brethren that arose in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century as a radical renewal movements, drawing from streams of both separatist Radical Pietism and

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<sup>1</sup> Most literally the German word *Täufer* means Baptist or baptizer. However, to avoid confusion with later English Baptist movements (which in German are known as *Baptisten*) it is common use the term Anabaptist (literally re-baptizer), originally a pejorative term against the *Täufer* movement, when translating into English, to avoid confusion.

<sup>2</sup> A European Mennonite treatment (albeit a brief one) that does particularly well integrating the Fröhlich movement into their account is that of Dieter Götz Lichdi, “Mennonites in Switzerland” in *Testing Faith and Tradition, Global Mennonite History Series: Europe*, eds. John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder, (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006), 166-167.

historic Anabaptism, also went by the name of *Neutäufer*. Nevertheless, both of these movements have been marginalized in the writing of Anabaptist-Mennonite history. At best, when they are included in the, they are often categorized as a “related movement” or some other derivative term.

Modern Anabaptist-Mennonite history, especially concerning the writing of Anabaptist-Mennonite history from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present, is marked by a distinct bias toward institutional and genealogical conceptions of what is normative Anabaptist-Mennonitism. Even groups with strong ethnic ties to historic Mennonite genealogy, such as Brethren in Christ, and Mennonite Brethren, are relegated to the category of “spin-off” or derivative movements. This is essentially due to a predilection against the renewal movements from which these manifestations of Neo-Anabaptism draw as seek to revise or rearticulate a new Anabaptist Christian identity. Usually this is some variant of Pietism—continental “conventicle” Pietism, Radical Pietism, evangelicalism, revivalism, Wesleyan-Holiness, to name a few. This bias has been based on an assumption that normative Anabaptism is set against such movements. However, as Mennonite have become more aware of their own need to draw upon such movements for their own source of renewal and revitalization, and as Mennonites are coming to embrace a global Anabaptist-Mennonite identity that transcends ethnic-genealogical definitions, this presupposition is coming to be revised.<sup>3</sup>

Donald Kraybill and C. Nelson Hostetter’s 2001 study, *Anabaptist World USA*, marked a milestone in the inclusion of the Apostolic Christian Church—as well as the Schwarzenau Brethren “families”—in Anabaptist-Mennonite identity. For the first time

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<sup>3</sup> For example Walter Sawatsky, *Mennonite History in Global Perspective* (Publication Forthcoming, Summer 2010). See also various articles in the Winter/Spring 1997 issue of *The Conrad Grebel Review* 15:1/2, on the theme “Toward a Global Mennonite/Brethren in Christ Historiography.”

in a major history written by Mennonites, they were classified as a part of the broader classification of Anabaptist-Mennonites. Kraybill and Hostetter reason that, even though the Apostolic Christian Church never was “directly related to a Mennonite body,” nevertheless they resemble too much the characteristics of their classification of conservative Mennonites not to be included.<sup>4</sup>

While this classification does indeed come the closest to including the Apostolic Christian Church, it falls short of ultimate inclusion for a number of reasons. For one, it confuses “organic ties”<sup>5</sup> with *organizational* and even *historical* ties.<sup>6</sup> However, if one looks at the history through truly organic and historical ties, as opposed to organizational-institutional ties, one might see how much more inclusive the Mennonite story would be not only of the Apostolic Christian Church, but the Amish and other Anabaptist groups as well.<sup>7</sup> Such a conception would take into account more the influence that inter-personal relationships and regional proximity might have, not to mention affinities of Christian worldview and mission.

Furthermore, Kraybill and Hostetter continue to judge Apostolic Christian movement through their own genealogical lens. The only group that they include is the Apostolic Christian Church of America, apparently because this is the group that most resembles the ethnic Amish-Mennonite characteristics by which they understand

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<sup>4</sup> Donald B. Kraybill and C. Nelson Hostetter, *Anabaptist World USA*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2001), 158.

<sup>5</sup> Kraybill and Hostetter, 106.

<sup>6</sup> Kraybill and Hostetter, 105, Table 8.1, Footnote c.

<sup>7</sup> For the sake of tidy categories, Kraybill and Hostetter, as well as most Mennonite historians often distinguish between “Mennonites” and “Amish,” who broke away from the Mennonites to form their own movement. However, as Steve Nolt points out, the Amish never repudiated their Mennonite heritage and their identity as Amish-Mennonites, with a particular understanding of the Mennonite (not simply Anabaptist) movement is seldom given full consideration. Furthermore, generations of congregational mergers, mixing, and intermarriage have blurred the lines in many areas. See Steven M. Nolt, *A History of the Amish*, (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2003), 193-230. In fairness, however, Kraybill and Hostetter is more a demographic profile than a work of history.

normative Anabaptism. They do not include the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) or any of the smaller groups, as they consider them to “display fewer Anabaptist traits.”<sup>8</sup> It is unclear what they mean by “Anabaptist traits” here, but it seems likely that their exposure to these groups was minimal. Thus the fascinating case of a New Anabaptist movement, that transcended ethnic Amish-Mennonite boundaries, including even such ethnic groups as Hungarians, Serbians, Romanians to the predominantly Germanic ethnic Anabaptist fold, and their own story of immigration, and acculturation, and negotiation of their Anabaptist principles to the American context is simply not included. A broader conception of Anabaptist is needed.

For example, though the original Fröhlichite movement in Switzerland was never “organizationally” connected to the loosely knit Mennonite conference structures of the time, Fröhlich’s thought was deeply influenced from his time and relationships with Mennonite congregations in the Emmental region of Switzerland.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, it was no small portion of Mennonites that left the old churches to join Fröhlich’s churches, but large numbers, including several ministers and key congregational leaders. They did not simply leave their Anabaptist-Mennonite identity behind, but rather followed Fröhlich and radically shaped his and the essence of his movement along Anabaptist lines, even as the radical renewal impulses that of his movement served to revive and renew much of the radical characteristics that had characterized their 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist forbears. Their movement renewed certain Anabaptist impulses that had lain dormant or forgotten for generations, such as mission and evangelism to those outside of the Mennonite ethnicity.

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<sup>8</sup> Kraybill and Hostetter, 219, n. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Garfield Alder, *Die Tauf- und Kirchenfrage in Leben und Lehre des Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich, VDM, von Brugg 1803-1857*, (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1976), pp.46-47.

## The Dynamics of Radical Renewal

Christian History is a history of renewal. Even at Christianity's earliest origins, the Lord Jesus claimed no different as he called the people of Israel to faithfulness to the God of their ancestors, drawing from an intimate knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures. Yet even as he did this, he continually challenged the status quo of the religious elite, calling them and all the people to the true *spirit* of the law, and not merely the letter. Even so, he preached on the need of new wineskins, reflecting on the need of new paradigms for new times that nevertheless remained in faithful continuity with the old.<sup>10</sup>

However radical it might be, this new community that emerged around Jesus and his apostles represented a renewal of Jewish identity for a new time and era, as the first followers attempted to understand the faith of their ancestors in light of the new revelation of Jesus Christ. Even so, another renewal of identity had to occur as the new Jewish Messianic communities engaged the non-Jewish gentile cultures and made converts.<sup>11</sup> Since that time, Christianity has found many forms as “new wineskins” have developed, and new forms have emerged to replace the older, which have lost their vitality and relevance to the new era or context.

Howard A. Snyder, in his book *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* provides for a comprehensive historical and theological understanding of how movements of renewal have played an integral part in the history of Christianity from

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 9:17, cf. Mark 2:22, Luke 5:37-38.

<sup>11</sup> Acts 15. See also Andrew Walls, “Evangelical and Ecumenical: The Rise and Fall of the Early Church Model” in *Anabaptist, Evangelical, and Ecumenical Missiologies in Conversation*, ed. James R. Krabill, et al. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2006), 28-37.

even the earliest origins of Christianity to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> In his study, Snyder argues that renewal has been, and must be, a constant force in Christian identity for a return to its own dynamic center, exhibited in the New Testament, as well as manifesting in a form that is relevant to the contemporary cultural and social context in which it finds itself.

While drawing attention to the general scope of renewal in Christian history by devoting a chapter to the New Prophecy, or “Montanist,” movement in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Roman world, Snyder focuses mostly on three interrelated post-Reformation renewal movements: Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism, in order to understand the common “inner dynamics” of renewal movements, and their workings in Christian history. Drawing from Stoeffler’s observations, Snyder notes the core elements of these three renewal movements as: 1. Emphasis on the “new birth;” 2. Intensity of “personal religious experience;” 3. Focus on personal piety, holiness, and discipline; 4. Emphasis on Scripture; 5. Primitivism and an “opposite element” to the established churches; 6. “Religious Idealism.”<sup>13</sup>

Snyder observes throughout his study the central importance that lay driven, organic “renewal communities” or “renewal cells” have played in the larger structures of the Church—traditionally understood by the term *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. Paying special attention to the role that these “renewal communities” play within larger institutionalized religions, Snyder offers helpful insights in that he focuses on the ecclesiological

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<sup>12</sup> Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1989). Much of this book is an adaptation of Snyder’s doctoral dissertation, “Pietism, Moravianism, and Methodism as Renewal Movements: A Comparative and Thematic Study (Ph.D diss., University of Notre Dame, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Snyder, 32-33. Cf. F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 13-23.

implications of these renewal movements. Noting the tensions that often arise from the critiques levied by these movements from within larger structures, Snyder remarks:

The formation of intimate renewal communities within the larger church (whether locally or trans-locally) raises fundamental questions of ecclesiology. It is usually seen as implying a negative judgment on the spirituality and sometimes the legitimacy of the larger church community and structure. Therefore tension and controversy often arise precisely over this issue.<sup>14</sup>

Snyder goes on to note that a particular point of this tension is the emergence of new “unauthorized” leaders, often arising from a sense of lay empowerment.<sup>15</sup>

Snyder does not develop this idea further to include movements of renewal that became radicalized due to rejection and persecution by the very *ecclesia* structures that they sought to renew and reform, which ultimately led them to more radicalized and separatistic stances. Snyder does not treat the emergence of such radical groups as the Anabaptists or Radical Pietists, focusing rather on movements that attempted to work for renewal within larger structures, such as mainstream “church” Pietism of Spener and Francke, and Wesley within the Anglican world.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Snyder’s study of the dynamics of renewal movements proves helpful in its understanding of the *initial* renewal impulses that occur among the more radical or separatist groups.

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<sup>14</sup> Snyder, 33.

<sup>15</sup> Snyder, 33.

<sup>16</sup> While giving a brief overview of “Believers Church Theories” as an approach to the study of renewal movements (Snyder, 40-42), Snyder apparently sees this as of little help in his study of renewal movements. It is curious that, given his extensive study of early Moravianism and early Methodism and their original aims of renewing larger institutions, that he does not go further and reflect on the factors that led both of these movements to become established in their own separate ecclesial structures. Neither does he treat how renewal movements, such as Pietism, might become subverted or co-opted by the dominant structure and powers, when those movements decisively chose *not* to take more politically radical or separatistic stances. See for example Koppel S. Pinson, *Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934) and Richard L. Gawthrop, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth-Century Prussia* (New York: Cambridge, 1993).

These initial dynamics of renewal would be pivotal issues in the early formation and development of the Apostolic Christian Churches, both in Europe and in America. The Neutäufer movement of Samuel H. Fröhlich that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and which eventually spread to America to become known as the Apostolic Christian Church, bore all of these tendencies to the extreme of becoming a separatist movement, much in the way that Anabaptists and later Neo-Anabaptist and Believers' Church movements would in succeeding generations. As will be discussed at length, wherever the movement spread, it gained most of its initial adherents out of a sense of dissatisfaction with the spiritual life and condition of their former religions, whether Amish or Mennonite, Swiss Reformed among ethnic Swiss in West Europe and North America, or Lutheran, Catholic, Hungarian Reformed, or Serbian Orthodox among the variety of ethnicities comprising the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

This project attempts to examine this 19<sup>th</sup> century radical renewal movement through the phenomenon of radical renewal movements, which in their character and structure took on “Neo-Anabaptist” characteristics. With a “renewal history” approach, it examines the dynamics of renewal at work in the formation, radicalization, separation and organization of new radical renewal movements.

### *Anabaptism and Pietism*

The Brethren and other Neo-Anabaptist movements are often described as combining Pietism and Anabaptism. But there is question as to how fair and accurate such usages of these terms are. For one, it pits the two against each other, allowing for an understanding of Anabaptism that can be isolated from the vital spirituality represented

by 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century manifestations of Pietism. This essentially is the argument of Robert Friedmann, who sought to pit the *essence* of Anabaptism, as he understood it, against the very essence of Pietism.<sup>17</sup> Friedmann's thesis was that Anabaptism represented an objective, concrete faith of discipleship and faithfulness, whereas Pietism represented a subjective inner spiritual conception of Christianity only, disembodied from the hard demands of discipleship. Thus, wherever Pietism made inroads into the Anabaptist Churches, Friedmann's conceptualized it in only negative terms. For Friedmann, it was not renewal, it was subversion.

Since the time of Friedmann's publication, his thesis has been thoroughly challenged.<sup>18</sup> Friedmann further makes no mention of the Brethren and of their own radical faith which they trace to both sources. Neither does he treat the Apostolic Christian movements.

We must understand that both Anabaptism and Pietism essentially represent renewal movements, and both would have a bearing on each other throughout modern Christian history, in their own respectively renewed forms. Rather, we propose a new approach that sees the two as integral facets at the very heart of what these two movements were in their history.

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries: Its Genius and Its Literature* (Goshen, IN: Mennonite Historical Society, 1949), 9-13.

<sup>18</sup> Dale W. Brown took the subject at length in his doctoral dissertation, charging scholars of Anabaptism, such as Friedmann as comparing an "early pristine Anabaptism" with a "caricatured Pietism" as "misleading if not fallacious." See Dale W. Brown, "The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" (Ph.D diss, Northwestern University, 1962), 31; 10-11. Theron F. Schlabach faults Friedmann for not seeing the valuable place that Pietism played in renewing the faith of Mennonites in America in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which effectively enabled its survival in the new context. Theron F. Schlabach, "Mennonites and Pietism in America, 1740-1880: Some Thoughts on the Friedmann Thesis" in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 57:3 (July 1983), 222-240. Both Mennonite scholars John D. Roth, "Pietism and the Anabaptist Soul" in *The Dilemma of Anabaptist Piety*, ed. Stephen L. Longenecker, (Camden, ME: Penobscot Press, 1997), 17-33, and Stephen Dintaman, "The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision" in *The Conrad Grebel Review* 10:2 (Spring 1992), 205-208, offer a critique Friedmann and of the "Anabaptist Vision" project of his time of overlooking the vital necessity of the kind of spiritual vitality that such renewal has brought to the Mennonites, and of the failure of the Anabaptist Vision to supply that need in the contemporary world.

*Remnant Theology: The “Pure Church” in Church History*

For much of their history, the Anabaptists and other radical sectarian groups were often referred to derogatively as “Donatists.” Many in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches continue to use this term of those Christian traditions which advocate for only a *believers baptism* and upon confession of faith and for a church which links Christian identity and the essential nature of the Church with a moral perfectionism or puritanism. Leonard Verduin demonstrates that Donatist or “neo-Donatist” was one of the first charges that the major Protestant Reformation traditions labeled against their radical “stepchildren,” the Anabaptists.<sup>19</sup>

Yet the claim that the Anabaptists and other radicals, including some of the later neo-Anabaptist movements, such as the Apostolic Christian Church tradition, adopted some positions that were similar to the Donatist movement of Fourth Century North Africa is not unfair. Many of those in the Anabaptist, Baptist, and other Free Church traditions would see themselves as spiritual descendents of the Donatists, seeing them as a movement that preserved many aspects of the Apostolic Christianity which characterized the early Church before the “Constantinian Shift,” whereby Christianity in the Roman Empire became the favored, privileged, and official religion of the Empire. To later restorationist and primitivist movements seeking to recover and reconstruct a Christian history and identity based upon the early Christian ideals of chiliastic zeal, heroic martyrdom, and purity and separation from a corrupt and hostile world—which for them would also include a corrupt worldly church—the Donatists are seen as a dissenting

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<sup>19</sup> Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 21ff.

movement, resisting the same structures of “Christendom” with all of its oppressive and corrupt centralized church hierarchies that work in collusion with state power for the oppression of those who truly seek to authentically follow Christ and his radical gospel. This heroic resistance to the forces of Constantinian corruption, this zeal to preserve the way of the pristine early church of the martyrs is what later movements would find so attractive about the Donatist story. Such a storyline is only seen through uncritical and often quite anachronistic eyes, however. Nevertheless, there are a number of aspects of the early Donatist movement which strongly resemble the ideals and patterns of the later primitivist impulses, most notably on the doctrine of the pure church separate from the world.

Donatism arose in the particular context of Roman North Africa, which had an especially strong martyr tradition. Although historian W.H.C. Frend makes a compelling case that much of the radical separatism and Puritanism of Donatism can be attributed to North African native nationalism and regional identity set against Rome,<sup>20</sup> much of it was also rooted in the theological claims that had been rooted in African soil since the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

#### *Anabaptist/Believers Church Ecclesiology*

Franklin H. Littell, in his classic work on the 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist movement, *The Anabaptist View of the Church: A Study in the Origins of Sectarian Protestantism* (later renamed *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism*), outlines several major essential characteristics of the Anabaptist movement. The most principle and foundational of

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<sup>20</sup> See W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952).

these, as he identifies it, is the doctrine and practice of the Church.<sup>21</sup> This doctrine and *practice*, Littell would emphasize, was not only the key characteristic that set the Anabaptist movement apart from the major state churches, whether Protestant or Catholic, but also from other radical manifestations of the Reformation, such as the spiritualists and political revolutionaries.<sup>22</sup> Littell identifies the core common trait in the formation of the Anabaptist movement as a “covenantal” sense of peoplehood as a visible and distinct social body in the world, bonded through communal accountability and discipline, based upon New Testament principles.<sup>23</sup>

Littell thus accepts a reading of 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist history that sees the developments of the later 16<sup>th</sup> century, under such leaders as Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, as normative for Anabaptist identity. To quote Littell: “By the time of Menno’s death (1561), all necessary lines of the Anabaptist church view were drawn, and the pattern of Free Church life had attained a certain historical and sociological maturity.”<sup>24</sup>

It was to this *normative* period of Anabaptist formation that later Neo-Anabaptist and other renewal movements within Mennonite groups would appeal in their attempts to renew the Anabaptist identity and mission in their time and context. This they did following the same pattern as the early Anabaptists. They found their initial impetus in broader renewal movements, but their radical implementation of it led to the their

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<sup>21</sup> Franklin H. Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1964), xvi-xvii.

<sup>22</sup> Littell, 1-32, 46. The focus is not so much on the earliest origins of the Radical Reformation movement, where these groups were perhaps at first not so distinguished from each other, but on the tradition that did come to be formed as normative Anabaptism. See footnote 25 below.

<sup>23</sup> Littell, 37.

<sup>24</sup> Littell, 42. It is important to note that Littell was not making a claim here about the earliest origins of Anabaptism, in the 1520’s and 1530’s, but about its crystallization. Though contemporary scholars such as Geoffrey Dipple, “*Just as in the Time of the Apostles*”: *Uses of History in the Radical Reformation* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2005), and Hans Hillerbrand, criticize the concept of primitivism as an early source of the emergence of 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist. Nevertheless, Littell’s characterization suffices for a working characterization of what would historically become the normative model of Anabaptist identity as a remnant of the New Testament Church, and for similar movements that have emerged since that time.

marginalization, and increased radicalism. After being impelled to a separatist posture, they looked to the pristine primitive church for their guidance, and they began to appeal to a remnant history.<sup>25</sup> For Neo-Anabaptists, this remnant history would include the earlier Anabaptist movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### *The Restitution of the True Church*

Quoting from Dirk Phillips's "The Seven Ordinances of the True Church," dated around 1560, Littell lists what he believes were the essential markers of the Anabaptist Church:<sup>26</sup>

1. true teaching, correct ministry
2. proper use of the two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper
3. footwashing
4. evangelical separation
5. brotherly love (including mutual admonition and communal sharing)
6. keeping all His commandments
7. accepting suffering and persecution

Generally speaking, these common traits would characterize "Neo-Anabaptist" movements of later centuries, which conscientiously sought to recover, within the context of their own time and location, the early zeal and ideals of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist movement.

Revolving around the central convictions and conceptions of the True Church as modeled in the New Testament, was the correspondingly negative conceptions of the predominant Christian churches around them. Devoting a full chapter to each of these themes, Littell notes three major themes in the formation of the Anabaptist ecclesial self-conception: "The Fall of the Church," "The Restitution of the True Church," and "The

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<sup>25</sup> Dipple, 117-128.

<sup>26</sup> Littell, 42.

Great Commission.”<sup>27</sup> However the Anabaptist or radical protestant movements emerge, it is by these three elements that by which they eventually came to distinguish themselves.

Key to the emergence of the self-identity 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist, as well as later neo-Anabaptist, movements, was their conception of the fall of the Church and their place in its restitution. They considered as the primal typology of the fall of the Church to be located in what many have called the “Constantinian Shift.” This watershed epoch in church history is thought by many to have occurred when the Christian Church—which until that point had existed as the persecuted outsiders in the Roman world, reinforcing the ecclesial self-conception of a people set apart from the sinful world—radically shifted in its orientation and trajectory through the courting of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who first made Christianity a legal religion in the Roman Empire (313 AD) and showed favor toward Christianity and thus elevated its status. This would eventually lead down the path of Constantine’s successor Theodosius I, who made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire (380 AD) and later the only legal religion of the Roman Empire (391 AD). It was a trajectory that led quite radically and dramatically from a Christianity that was persecuted, voluntary and disciplined according to New Testament standards, to a religion that endorsed the use of violence and coercion for maintaining its own power and prominence in the Empire.<sup>28</sup>

While most major traditions of Christianity have tended to see these developments as positive and beneficial—as a coming of age or point of maturity for

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<sup>27</sup> Littell, Chapters 2, 3, and 4 respectively.

<sup>28</sup> For an extended discussion of various facets and implications of the Constantinian shift for Christian identity and life, especially in the West, see Alan Kreider, ed., *The Origins of Christendom in the West* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001).

Christianity and its role in world history—those groups which have tended to espouse more *primitivist* ideals of Christian history tend to view the Constantinian Shift negatively. To them, it represents a departure from the essence and norm of what it means to be authentically Christian.

The Anabaptists were not the first or last of such primitivist impulses in Christian history. The early Christian “heresies” of Donatism and Novatianism both considered themselves as faithfully preserving the older tradition during a time of Christian social transition and transformation during the Constantinian shift of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>29</sup>

We could also mention the Waldensians, Czech Brethren (Hussites), as well as the, Moravian Brethren, Stone-Campbell Restorationist Movements, Millerites and Adventists, Wesleyan-Holiness Movements, Plymouth Brethren Pentecostals, and several others. All had a common sense of returning to some conceptualization of the norms of the New Testament primitive church— of “primitive Christianity revived” to use a Quaker term.<sup>30</sup>

Stemming from a sense of profound dissatisfaction with the reigning state of affairs, in the broader society, and in the established churches, all of these groups looked to an ideal of a pure New Testament primitive Christian (*Urchristian*) essence and sought to infuse this into their own time and context, in anticipation of the imminent consummation of all things in the Last Days. Whether they were forced to this by the dominant powers, or left willingly from a sense of spiritual or existential dissatisfaction.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> We here refer only to these groups’ conceptions of ecclesiology and ethical requirements as voluntary and pacifist, without needing to discuss the finer points of these groups’ respective theological or metaphysical peculiarities.

<sup>30</sup> All of the above movements are treated in Durnbaugh, *The Believers’ Church*.

<sup>31</sup> As Littell puts it: “Because primitivism is not essentially a theory of origins but really a device for passing judgment on contemporary society, it is closely linked with views of the future.” Littell, 51.

### *Defining Neo-Anabaptism*

What made the Anabaptist movement unique was not simply its primitivism or eschatological orientation, though these would be central to the essence of that movement, at least at its genesis. Such movements had and have occurred throughout Christian history in various forms, and there is much in these other movements with which Anabaptists have historically identified.

What made the Anabaptist movement particularly unique, however, was its particular time and location in history. The story of Anabaptism, thus, specifically speaking, is a 16<sup>th</sup> century radical reform/renewal movement that was a part of the broader Protestant Reformation renewal movement. Anabaptism is a historically normed tradition with a thread running through particular historical time and context.<sup>32</sup> Thus when we speak of *Neo-Anabaptists*, we speak in terms of particulars as well. We are speaking of movements that, at later times and places, found themselves in quite similar social contexts as those of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptists, and who reflect similar impulses of relationship to the dominant culture around them.

Furthermore, in speaking of *Neo-Anabaptists*, we refer to traditions that conscientiously draw from the historical Anabaptist movement for inspiration and influences on key markers of corporate Christian identity and theological conceptions. Most specifically and centrally, this relates to ecclesiology, the doctrine and understanding of the nature of the Church.

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<sup>32</sup> The centrality of this 16<sup>th</sup> century European history is of particular question in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, considering that now much of the world affiliating with the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition derives from nations and ethnicities other than that of European. See Walter Sawatsky, "Mennonite Historiography and the New Mennonites of Asia, Africa, and Latin America: Attempting a Critical Evaluation," in *The Conrad Grebel Review* 15:1/2 (Winter/Spring1997), 95-113.

We thus classify Neo-Anabaptist movements by the following criteria:

1. In their origins, they bear marked similarities to the original context of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptists: enthusiasm, primitivism, and eschatological outlook.
2. They emerge as radical forms of broader religious renewal movements, such as Pietism, Neo-Pietism, and American Revivalism.
3. They often represent more radical manifestations of the prevailing renewal movement and become more radicalized as they become marginalized or distanced from the original body from which they depart.
4. They conscientiously draw inspiration and identity from the 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist movement, especially with particular emphasis on the centrality of Christian discipleship, based upon the teachings of Jesus, and of the disciplined and covenanted visible brotherhood of believers, the Church.
5. They consider themselves as recovering or renewing essential characteristics of the Anabaptist movement that their contemporaries have forgotten or forsaken, often seeing the older tradition as spiritual predecessor in a previous age.

Various groups have fit these criteria, all stemming from similar impulses in the context of the modern European Christendom. Some of these movements are overviewed below.

### **Neo-Anabaptist Renewal Movements in History: Recurring Patterns**

#### *Quakerism among Dutch Mennonites*

The first example of a neo-Anabaptist movement might well be seen in the proliferation of Quakerism into the European Continent in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. Though not Anabaptist in the strictest sense of the term, due to their rejection of the outward ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Quakers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century ought not be confused with individualistic spiritualists and mystics, such as Jacob Boehme, Sebastian Franck, and Kaspar Schwenkfeld. Rather, the Quakers, at the time of their emergence in mid-17<sup>th</sup> century Britain, resembled in many ways the 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptists at the time of their emergence, with characteristic emphasis on the

priesthood, and mutual equality, of all believers, charismatic inspiration, eschatological anticipation, and pacifism.<sup>33</sup> Theirs was a concrete faith with tangible communal manifestations.

In their further communal formation and maturation, the Quakers came to develop strong emphases on ethics and holy living, along with communal discipline and membership controls, much along the same lines as other such movements. These became established early on in Quaker history as its first generation of leaders matured in their identity and leadership into collaborative networks, with a more defined sense of corporate identity and peoplehood in the world, by instituting what they called the “Gospel Order.”<sup>34</sup>

Though most other Radical Renewal movements would be most clearly connected to Pietism’s most recognizable form—its German manifestation—Quakerism too, stemming as a radical development of English Puritanism, is to be considered a renewal movement of the broader early Pietist movement as well.<sup>35</sup> As a new synthesis of faith

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<sup>33</sup> Douglas Gwyn has argued convincingly that the radical ethic of the earliest manifestations of Quakerism in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century stemmed from an intrinsically “apocalyptic” worldview, in which all things were made new through the revelation of Christ into the world, through the transformative power of God’s Spirit. See Douglas Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1986), 92-125.

<sup>34</sup> See Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 131-141. Thus though, due to much of their historic spiritual-mysticist emphasis, as well as the universalist tendencies of many modern liberal Quakers, they are often mistakenly grouped with mystics or individualist spiritualists. When one actually studies the Quaker movement from a sociological point of view, they early on came to resemble the communal aspects of other “Believers’ Church” peoples, such as the Mennonites and Brethren, and thus have often been involved in mutual efforts with these more typically “Anabaptist” groups, and have included in comparative studies with these “plain church” and “peace church” groups as well. Thus Bowman, for example, includes the Quakers for purposes of comparative studies with the social transformations amongst the Brethren churches. See for example Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 6-9, 24-108. Stoeffler argues for an inclusive conception of Pietism as broad phenomenon arising out of the stagnant religious conditions of post-Reformation era, in the context of 17<sup>th</sup> century European modernity. This includes the English Puritans in both its moderate and more radical “enthusiastic” forms including Quakerism. For the Quaker connection to Puritanism, see Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 1-32.

and piety in a modern contextual idiom, 17<sup>th</sup> century Quakerism as a radical renewal spread rapidly throughout England and beyond, spreading to Scotland, Ireland, America, and Continental Europe.<sup>36</sup> Of the areas of continental Europe where Quakerism would thrive the strongest, was among the areas of Dutch Mennonites.

In the Netherlands, the Rhine Valley, and the Vistula River delta, in continental Europe, Quakerism would serve as radical renewal movement primarily among Dutch Mennonite communities there. As Quakerism was rising as a new vibrant new movement in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century in England, the older Dutch Mennonites were experiencing on a period of political privilege and economic prosperity as they had never before experienced. The fervent Quaker missionaries in England had arrived in the Netherlands to find a 130 year old tradition that had fractured into various factions, including strict sectarian traditionalists on the one hand, and liberals and rationalists on the other.<sup>37</sup> The apocalyptic, radical spiritualist movement that had characterized much of the earlier Dutch Anabaptism was waning. In this time of tension between stagnation and acculturation, Quakerism represented a “Neo-Anabaptist” renewal of many historic Anabaptist radical characteristics, in a new era, including plainness, devotional piety, and missionary endeavor.<sup>38</sup> Following what would be a typical pattern of Neo-Anabaptist

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<sup>36</sup> Moore refers to this as the “Quaker Explosion.” See Moore, 21-34.

<sup>37</sup> For a good survey of major cultural transitions among Dutch Mennonites in their 500 year history, see Alastair Hamilton, et al., eds., *From Martyr to Muppy (Mennonite Urban Professionals): A Historical Introduction to Cultural Assimilation Processes of a Religious Minority in the Netherlands, the Mennonites* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994).

<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, nothing has been published directly on the theme of Quakerism as a renewal movement of Dutch Mennonites. I have attempted to study this at some length in graduate course paper: Joseph F. Pfeiffer, “Quakerism as Renewal of Spiritual Apocalypticism Among 17th Century Dutch Mennonites” (Seminar Paper for the course “Anabaptist History and Theology,” taught by Dr. John Rempel, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Fall 2009). Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Quaker historian William I. Hull has written voluminously on Dutch Quakerism, and his works are full of accounts of Mennonites joining Quakers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century out of a sense of renewed spiritual and ethical vigor. One important example of this would be Dutch Mennonite convert to Quakerism Judith Zinspenning Sewel, who was an itinerant missionary, preacher, and prolific pamphleteer in the spread of Quakerism both in England and the

Renewal movements, the vibrant new movement brought together those from without the old “ethnic” radical tradition (in this case Dutch Mennonites) and new converts won through successful missionary movement expressed in relevant contextual idiom of the contemporary culture, which the old ethnic sectarian forms usually could not successfully accomplish in significant measure. It would take radical cultural transformation, “new wineskins” for a new critical adaptation of the tradition to the new situation. This is the essence of renewal.

The next stage of synthetic formation of the new strands of this particular renewal movement occurred not in the English homeland of Quakerism, but in the new Quaker-led “Holy Experiment” that was Pennsylvania. Here English Quakers escaping persecution during the “Restoration” period of the 1660’s and 1670’s would intermarry with the Dutch-Mennonite Quakers fleeing even more intense persecution and intolerance to form a new people in a new world.<sup>39</sup> At first, the newly arrived Quakers continued their radical renewal agenda to a degree in the American colonies.<sup>40</sup> In time, with a new world of prosperity and privilege in a colony that they governed, Quakers settled into an institutionalized form of their faith and eventually their own Quaker ethnicity.

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Netherland. See William I. Hull, *Willem Sewel of Amsterdam 1653-1720: The First Quaker Historian of Quakerism* (Swarthmore, PA: Swarthmore College, 1933), 3-18.

<sup>39</sup> See William I. Hull, *William Penn and the Dutch Quaker Migration to Pennsylvania* (Swarthmore, PA: Swarthmore College, 1935) 191-194, 262-271. With the large scale immigration from both Britain and Continental Europe, the center of global Quakerism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century effectively shifted westward. With their numbers so significantly reduced, Quakers would never again have the sheer social impact in Britain as they had in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In Continental Europe, the migration to America decimated the Quaker movement there to a fragment, disappearing there by the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Philadelphia would thus become the new center of the Quaker world of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and of the new ethnic, sectarian form of Quakerism that was to emerge.

<sup>40</sup> Richard K. McMaster overviews the early Quaker-Mennonite interactions in the early colonial period, noting cooperation and familial ties. Mennonites would often attend Quaker Meetings, and Quakers would often preach at Mennonite gatherings. See Richard K. McMaster, *Land, Piety, Peoplehood: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America, 1683-1790*, Vol. 1 of *The Mennonite Experience in America* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985), 35-44.

By the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Society of Friends was in need of its own identity renewal. Jack D. Marietta describes in great detail the process of Quakerism's transformation into sectarian isolationism.<sup>41</sup> With the passing of the first generation of charismatic leadership, the Quaker vision became obscured, as Quakers grew lax in their values of plainness and simplicity. A new generation of leaders and elders recognized the problem. But, as Marietta notes, their method of dealing with the problems was not to draw from the emerging Pietist and Awakening movements of Wesley, Whitefield, and Edwards for an evangelical renewal. In fact, the Quaker leaders had no interest in reaching those outside of the Quaker membership at all. Their approach was to reform the "sheep of Israel."<sup>42</sup> Rather, their solution was to codify regulations of behavior in new ways, and to legalistically enforce Quaker discipline as never before.<sup>43</sup> Their solution was new initiatives of boundary maintenance, which included strict penalties for behavioral offences, such as consuming alcohol in excess, wearing fancy colors, and especially exogamy. Disownment (excommunication) was the rule for such offenses.<sup>44</sup> By 1775, the Quaker membership had been "decimated."<sup>45</sup> The remnant of Zion was purified. The Quaker remnant had entered the isolationist period of *Quietism*.

It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Quakerism began to emerge from sectarian seclusion. This occurred through two movements. The first was the Hicksite movement which drew from prevalent transcendental thought of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which served

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<sup>41</sup> Jack D. Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984).

<sup>42</sup> Marietta, 33.

<sup>43</sup> Marietta, 36.

<sup>44</sup> Marietta, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Marietta, 73.

as a renewal impulse for the original Quaker “inner light.”<sup>46</sup> This new reassertion of that light “which enlighteneth every man” served as justification for rebelling against the tight control of the Quaker elders, established during the sectarian period.<sup>47</sup>

After a bitter division between the liberal “Hicksites” and the “Orthodox” Friends, this latter group would soon become itself divided between those “Conservatives” who wished to preserve the old sectarian model, and those who drew from Evangelicalism and Revivalism as a means toward renewing Friends earlier missionary and evangelistic impulses.<sup>48</sup>

The end result in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a three-way division which left a “conservative” group seeking to maintain the “old order” of sectarian isolationism, while the other two represent “progressive” movements of renewal, seeking in different modern movements resources for renewing an essential part of tradition that was considered as lost. The “Gurneyites” continued in a trend that led them to eventually become deeply influenced by mainstream Protestant Revivalist and Holiness movements.<sup>49</sup> Hicksites continued in their stream of transcendentalism and idealism to nearly total embrace of universalism. These three diverging streams—each holding and maintaining a certain “vision” of the Quaker movement—would only continue to diverge from each other,

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<sup>46</sup> For an overview of divergent Quaker understandings of the classic Quaker “Inner Light” doctrine, see Thomas D. Hamm, “The Problem of the Inner Light in Nineteenth Century Quakerism” in *The Lamb’s War: Quaker Essays to Honor Hugh Barbour*, Michael L Birkel and John W. Newman, eds. (Richmond, IN: Earlham College Press, 1992), 117.

<sup>47</sup> See “The Hicksites and the Discipline, 1827-1850” in *The Lamb’s War: Quaker Essays to Honor Hugh Barbour*, Michael L Birkel and John W. Newman, eds. (Richmond, IN: Earlham College Press, 1992), 118-129, and H. Larry Ingle, *Quakers in Conflict: The Hicksite Reformation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986). Cf. Robert W. Doherty, *The Hicksite Separation: A Sociological Analysis of Schism in Early Nineteenth Century America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1967).

<sup>48</sup> Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 36-73. Named after their leader, British Quaker Joseph John Gurney, this group came to be known as “Gurneyites.”

<sup>49</sup> Hamm, *Transformation*, 74-97.

informed both by and against certain streams and movements of modernization and renewal, down to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>50</sup>

### *Schwarzenau Brethren*

No sooner had the vitality of the Quakers plateaued at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century than had a dynamic new movement arisen in the German Palatinate, around their charismatic leader, Alexander Mack. Donald Durnbaugh traces the beginnings of Mack and his movement to the widespread presence of Radical Pietism in the Rhenish-Palatinate region of Germany in the early 1700's.<sup>51</sup> Mack became involved in this movement, which came to be persecuted in that region. Because of such opposition, Mack and his group became more radicalized and separatistic, becoming convinced that the state churches that persecuted them could not be on the side of the same God that was empowering their new movement. This followed a broader trend among separatist Radical Pietists around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>52</sup>

Having become separated from the dominant established church, the new group had to find its own identity. Most separatist Radical Pietists went in the route of individualistic spiritualism, and deplored outward religious forms and institutions. Mack and his movement, however, were not willing to go so far. Indeed, out of dissatisfaction with both the established churches out of which they had come, and with the trajectory of

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<sup>50</sup> Thomas Hamm provides an excellent and thorough overview of the divergent streams of American Quakerism, noting their distinctions, as well as their remain similarities, to one another. See Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

<sup>51</sup> Durnbaugh, *Brethren Beginnings*, 7-18.

<sup>52</sup> Hans Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, trans. Gerald T. MacDonald (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 17-26. According to Schneider, early Radical Pietists attempted to exist within the established churches, but increasingly became persecuted and rooted out, only further radicalizing their developing eschatological views. This contributed to ultimately identifying the established church as "Babylon" from which the true Christians must separate. Cf. Dipple's characterization of the origins of 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptists and Spiritualists in Dipple, 203-242.

the Radical Pietism movement of which they were a part, the new movement would look to alternative models, such as Baptists and Mennonites, formally organizing with their rites of believers' baptism in 1708.<sup>53</sup>

The Brethren, much like the earlier Mennonites and the later Apostolic Christians called themselves simply “brethren,” to connote their familiar type of primary communal bond. All groups came to be identified as *Täufer*, which in German had definite connotations of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist movements—the latter two being understood, especially by outsiders, as *Neue Täufer*<sup>54</sup> or simply Neutäufer, indicating an identification of them as a new manifestation of the original Anabaptist movements. Likewise, all three movements are manifestations of particular kind of German religious piety, deeply imbued with mystical and emotional undertones, combined with a radical and chiliastic sense of stark contrast of their communities as counter or “non-conformist” to the dominant world around them. And, of course, all three movements, at their origins were deeply evangelistic and missionary minded.<sup>55</sup> All would, in the course of time, find themselves challenged to maintain their separatist identities in a changing world, with the consequences of either social seclusion or social accommodation.

Yet, even as they drew from their Mennonite neighbors, they were also critical of them. Much in the way that the Quakers in the Netherlands admired the Dutch Mennonite heritage, but eschewed the fallen state of their contemporary Mennonite neighbors, so the Brethren viewed their Mennonite neighbors in the Palatinate and Rhine Valley, even as

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<sup>53</sup> Durnbaugh, *Brethren Beginnings*, 21-23.

<sup>54</sup> Bowman, *Brethren Society*, 4. Donald F. Durnbaugh, *Brethren Beginnings: The Origin of the Church of the Brethren in Early Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia Inc., 1992), 1.

<sup>55</sup> See *Anabaptism and Mission*, ed. Wilbert Shenk (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1984).

they drew upon their Anabaptist tradition for inspiration and example.<sup>56</sup> This tension between the old forms observed in the older radical body and the new fresh contemporary renewal impulses—here, Radical Pietism—is what would characterize them as an essentially Neo-Anabaptist (*Neue Täufer*) body, both distinct from, yet bonded to the older expression of radical Anabaptist renewal.

Thus the Schwarzenau Brethren emerged as a distinct separatist movement. Though inspired by the older Mennonites, they distanced themselves by not accepting their baptism and their order.<sup>57</sup> Likewise, in their embrace of concrete forms and rituals of religious expression, they became distanced from the other Radical Pietists.<sup>58</sup> With this, the Brethren had emerged from their initial period of formation into their period of organization and expansion, which occurred mostly in the Rhine basin of Germany, and into the Netherlands, into the 1730's. As early as 1719, they had begun migrating to America. It was during this period that many of the distinct forms of Brethren faith and Piety emerged. This included their distinct rituals of baptism, communion and footwashing, the holy kiss, anointing, and Annual Meeting, as well as worship and preaching, which resembled other “plain churches” in many ways.<sup>59</sup>

The combination of a vital spiritual piety with the discipline of organizational structure, ensured that the Brethren would survive and thrive. In America, the Brethren

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<sup>56</sup> Durnbaugh, *Brethren Beginnings*, 61-64. Dale R. Stoffer also gives a thorough treatment of the early Brethren negotiation between contemporary Radical Pietism and the older Mennonite Anabaptism, particularly through the lens of a distinct, emerging Brethren form of piety. See Dale R. Stoffer, “Anabaptized Pietism: The Schwarzenau Brethren” in *The Dilemma of Anabaptist Piety*, ed. Stephen L. Longenecker, (Camden, ME: Penobscot Press, 1997), 35-45.

<sup>57</sup> Durnbaugh, *Brethren Beginnings*, 62.

<sup>58</sup> Durnbaugh, *Brethren Beginnings*, 24-28.

<sup>59</sup> For a full description of traditional Brethren rituals and practices, see Carl F. Bowman, *Brethren Society: The Cultural Transformation of a “Peculiar People”* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 71-76.

movement continued to grow, drawing members from other European immigrant groups much as they had in Europe.

As with many similar movements, the sectarian period came about, with the formation of their own particular ethnicity, and the passing of the original charismatic and creative generation of leaders. As Bowman succinctly puts it, “Brethren lived with Brethren, interacted with Brethren, married Brethren, and died Brethren. Theirs was a Brethren world.”<sup>60</sup> The practices established early on became deeply engrained in the personal and corporate lives of the Brethren people, and little changed over the years, as Brethren culture became solidified and set, incubated by the many mountains and valleys of Pennsylvania and the Middle Atlantic states. Few converts from outside were won during this period, for about a century, from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Growth was mostly biological.

1850 marked a turning point in Brethren history in America. As Carl F. Bowman notes, the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about great exposure of the Brethren to the wider American society. This came about due to western expansion and migration to the western frontier, which simultaneously brought about major population increases in the Brethren Church.<sup>61</sup> No longer able to keep themselves in secluded isolation, the Brethren were forced to confront the rapidly developing nation, and to decide how they ought to relate to it. As with the Quakers and Mennonites, this would take different forms. Some clung to the old ways forged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Others wished to partake liberally in the modernization and renewal movements going on all around them. Many simply wanted to proceed forward, though rather cautiously.

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<sup>60</sup> Bowman, 66.

<sup>61</sup> Bowman, 95-131.

On the whole the major part of the Brethren world came to be transformed by the new renewal impulses of the early the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially the missions movement.<sup>62</sup> By the 1880's, the Brethren had experience their own three way division.<sup>63</sup> In the identity revision process that was taking place, those favoring the "old order" left in 1881 to form the Old German Baptist Brethren, convinced that the Brethren as a whole were losing their bearings. These clung to the traditional garb, and eschewed modern American innovations such as Sunday School, missionary movements, and revival meetings, as well as other modern adaptations to mainstream Protestantism.<sup>64</sup>

By contrast, the "progressive Brethren," influenced by American revivalism and popular Protestant movements, was convinced that the Dunker Brethren had not done enough to shed their sectarian trappings and join in the work of "saving the lost." Thus they left in 1883 to form the *Brethren Church*.<sup>65</sup> Through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the progressive Brethren would be further divided, over the issues of Fundamentalism and Dispensationalism, forming the "Ashland" Brethren Church, and the more fundamentalist and dispensationalist Grace Brethren Church.<sup>66</sup>

Slowly but surely, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the traditional Brethren aspects of separation, plain dress, and discipline ebbed away. Modern forms of organizational structuring and institutionalization took place.<sup>67</sup> Higher education also gained greater prominence. This occurred steadily with the mainline moderate Brethren, even if not as

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<sup>62</sup>Bowman, 159.

<sup>63</sup> Bowman, 126-131. See also Dale R. Stoffer, *Background and Development of Brethren Doctrines 1650-1987* (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia Inc., 1989), 133-164.

<sup>64</sup> Bowman, 126.

<sup>65</sup> Bowman, 127. Cf. Stoffer, *Brethren Doctrines*, 165f.

<sup>66</sup> Stoffer, *Brethren Doctrines*, 215-231.

<sup>67</sup> Emmert F. Bittinger, "The Organizational Imperative and Its Implications: The West Marva Example in *Brethren in Transition: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Directions & Dilemmas*, ed. Emmert F. Bittinger (Camden, ME: Penobscot Press, 1992), 141-165. Bittinger argues that the transition from a simple to complex organization had a profound effect on the identity of the Church of the Brethren.

quickly as with the progressive Brethren.<sup>68</sup> What became the Church of the Brethren, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, came to resemble other mainline church denominations, with a wide variety of practices and theological positions. By the 1990's, this represented everything from conservative evangelical to mainline liberalism. The result has been an ongoing identity crisis as to how Brethren can understand their own past tradition in conversation with the present modern world.<sup>69</sup>

### *Brethren in Christ (River Brethren)*

The Brethren in Christ Church emerged in the eastern Pennsylvania region in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, In the course of their history they have historically embraced the movements of German Pietism and Wesleyan Revivalism as sources for renewal of their Anabaptist identity.<sup>70</sup> This group offers a fascinating study of the formation of a Neo-Anabaptist movement out of an older one, and of the shifts that occur when new renewals come at a later time.

The “River Brethren” had emerged primarily out of ethnic Mennonite background in Southeast Pennsylvania, during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, at about the time that the Schwarzenau Brethren were entering into their sectarian period. The River Brethren had come to feel that Mennonites had become too formal and legalistic in their identity and had forgotten the necessity of the New Birth experience and personal transformation of the inner will of the individual that resulted. This is marked by their preservation and

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<sup>68</sup>Bowman, 159.

<sup>69</sup> For a good overview of the various positions and approaches to the Church of the Brethren situation at late 20<sup>th</sup> century, see *Brethren in Transition: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Directions & Dilemmas*, ed. Emmert F. Bittinger (Camden, ME: Penobscot Press, 1992).

<sup>70</sup> Carlton O. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience: The Story of the Brethren in Christ* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1978), 19-25.

renewal of classic and essentially characteristic Anabaptist convictions of believers baptism, a visible and covenanted brotherhood of believers (hence the self designation of Brethren), and separation from and non-conformity to an unregenerate world hostile to God and God's ways.<sup>71</sup>

For this renewal, they drew from a movement that other Neo-Anabaptist groups had resisted at this time: Wesleyan revivalist Pietism.<sup>72</sup> This type of Pietism had been mediated to ethnic Pennsylvania German communities, including the Mennonites, through late 18<sup>th</sup> century "ethnic" revivalist preachers, such as Philip Otterbein, Jacob Albright, and Martin Boehm.<sup>73</sup> This marked a new kind of German-American revivalist pietism that was distinct from old world forms of pietism that had influenced other German speaking groups.

The River Brethren represented Anabaptists who embraced this fascinating form of uniquely German-American religiosity, but chose to retain the distinguishing Anabaptist characteristics of believers baptism, visible church and church discipline, closed communion, and non-resistance. As with the emergence of other Neo-Anabaptist groups, the different elements which combined to form this unique movement proved to make the new movement somehow incompatible with any one of the streams. To the old Mennonites, the River Brethren were influenced by the world. To the mainstream of the revivalist renewal movement, the River Brethren were too separatist. What emerged was

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<sup>71</sup> Wittlinger, 38-54.

<sup>72</sup> For a brief treatment of the influence of German Pietism on early American Methodism, in both its English and German speaking forms, see F. Ernest Stoeffler, "Pietism, the Wesleys, and Methodist Beginnings in America" in *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*, ed. F. Ernest Stoeffler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 184-221.

<sup>73</sup> See Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land*, 50-56; also Martin H. Schrag, "The Impact of Pietism upon Early American Mennonites" in *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*, ed. F. Ernest Stoeffler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 78-94.

a new religious movement, resulting from the synthesis of the two preceding streams. As for the particular case of the River Brethren, Wittlinger says it well:

Finding themselves at the intersection of these two movements [Anabaptism and revivalistic Pietism], the Brethren [in Christ] founders could neither sacrifice their understanding of the church and the nature of the Christian life derived from the former nor their conception of the new birth gained from the latter.<sup>74</sup>

As with Church of the Brethren, the Brethren in Christ also found the period of 1880 to be a period of crisis and change, due also to westward expansion, which likewise brought about by the expanding frontier.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, they were also affected by the missions movement of the era, which helped to transform them from an inward to an outward looking community.<sup>76</sup>

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought about sharp transitions. Wittlinger attributes these to the overpowering forces of modernization and social transitions overtaking North America during that time, in ways with which the old River Brethren identity failed to cope.<sup>77</sup> It was during this time that the Brethren in Christ came to draw heavily from conservative evangelical elements in the broader Christian world, especially the Holiness movements, which were naturally compatible with the earlier Wesleyan piety. By the 1930's, influence of "Second Work" Holiness perfectionism was at its height, and holiness camps provided for a sense corporate faith identity expression and cohesion.<sup>78</sup>

All the while, many of the "nonconformity" principles that had traditionally defined Brethren in Christ identity were being challenged by the rapid modernization. As with the Mennonites, guidelines for appropriate uniforms were adopted because of the

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<sup>74</sup> Wittlinger, 12.

<sup>75</sup> Wittlinger, 145-155. Wittlinger calls this the "First Period of Transition" in Brethren in Christ corporate identity.

<sup>76</sup> Wittlinger, 162-195; E. Morris Sider, *The Brethren in Christ in Canada: Two Hundred Years of Tradition and Change* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1988), 166-186.

<sup>77</sup> Wittlinger, 321.

<sup>78</sup> Wittlinger, 328-338.

perceived social challenges to the issue of appropriate dress, as part of a resurgent sectarian impulse.<sup>79</sup> Many also began to call for freedom to use musical instruments in services, which was another source of tension.<sup>80</sup> Another aspect of modernization and renewal that came about was the organization and development of Sunday School and other Youth movements.<sup>81</sup>

Wittlinger has characterized the period since the 1950's as "The quest for a new Brethren in Christ identity."<sup>82</sup> Under the influence of the Neo-Evangelical movement, the Brethren in Christ found a new renewal stream for adjustment to the condition of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, with expanded work in the realm of outreach and mission. It was during this period that drastic cultural shifts have taken place among the Brethren in Christ, which have resulted in a sense of profound identity crisis.

Perhaps one of the most interesting characteristics of the Brethren in Christ has been their ability to embrace and integrate the different renewal impulses in the Church's two century history. Born out of a fusion of Anabaptism and revivalistic Pietism, the movement successfully drew from Wesleyan Holiness impulses a century later, and "domesticated" it to fit Brethren in Christ identity.<sup>83</sup> However, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was some discussion as to how successfully the Brethren in Christ were holding together these streams and integrating new renewal impulses. Keefer, for example, argues that Brethren in Christ were less keen on *critically* engaging evangelicalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which has caused it to supplant, rather than renew,

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<sup>79</sup> Wittlinger, 350-351.

<sup>80</sup> Wittlinger, 361-362.

<sup>81</sup> Wittlinger, 413-428; also Sider, 187-216.

<sup>82</sup> Wittlinger, 475.

<sup>83</sup> Luke L. Keefer, Jr., "Three Streams in Our Heritage: Separate or Parts of a Whole?" in *Reflections on a Heritage: Defining the Brethren in Christ*, ed. E. Morris Sider (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing, 1999), 39. Keefer argues that the fervor of Wesleyan Holiness movements was directed toward encouraging and upholding traditional Brethren in Christ values, such as non-conformity and plainness.

much of what has been the center of Brethren in Christ identity, especially traditional doctrines of sanctification, conditional salvation, and non-resistance.<sup>84</sup> According to Owen H. Alderfer, the legacy of Anabaptism in Brethren in Christ identity has been a “burden” since the 1950’s, seen as a carry over from the past with little relevance for the present—and that it would continue as such until it is reintegrated and revalued.<sup>85</sup>

### *Mennonite Brethren in Russia*

The Mennonite Brethren emerged among German-speaking Mennonite colonies in Russia beginning in the early mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The emergence of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia bears marked similarities to the emergence to Fröhlich’s Neutäufer movement in Switzerland, and they are roughly contemporary movements. Both drew from the contemporary Neo-Pietist *Awakening* movements that were emerging in Europe during the early and mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Mennonites had been settled in Russia since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Over a period of some 250 years, the Mennonites of Dutch descent had traversed across northern Germany, sojourned in Poland, and settled in southern Russia. In that time they had become socially transformed from a radical missionary chiliastic sect, to an insular and culturally conservative ethnicity. As Mennonite Brethren Historian J.A. Toews notes, the cultural conservatism and insular nature of these Mennonites had caused them to become

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<sup>84</sup> Keefer, 40-44. Wittlinger attributes this to the relative rapidity with which cultural adjustment had to occur in the post World War II, compared to the earlier period of transition (1880-1910) which occurred more gradually and allowed more time for critical reflection and integration. Wittlinger, 475.

<sup>85</sup> Owen H. Alderfer, “Anabaptism as a ‘Burden’ for the Brethren in Christ” in *Reflections on a Heritage: Defining the Brethren in Christ*, ed. E. Morris Sider (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing, 1999), 103-107.

in many ways their own *Landeskirche*, or “parish church.”<sup>86</sup> Now like the churches from which the early Anabaptists sought to separate themselves, for Mennonites by this period, citizenship within the ethnic Mennonite community and church membership were one in the same, ironically as they strove in so many outward ways to remain culturally separate from the dominant Prussian, and then Russian, cultures in which they lived. Separation from the world had become understood less in terms of evangelical piety and personal holiness for a living witness of Christ to the world, and more in terms maintaining a distinctive German language and culture, and maintaining a separate semi-autonomous socio-political community.<sup>87</sup>

The roots of the Neo-Pietist renewal are traced back to the work of Tobias Voth, who founded a private school in Ohrloff, Russia, in 1820. Voth had been influenced by Neo-Pietist Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling,<sup>88</sup> and was in regular contact with Moravian Brethren, who were quite active in mission work across Europe at that time.<sup>89</sup> However, the momentum of the reform movement begins with the work Lutheran Pietist pastor Eduard Wüst.

Wüst, who had his own profound spiritual awakening story, and who was in contact with the Württemberger Pietists, preached to both Lutherans and Mennonites a

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<sup>86</sup> J.A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing, 1975), 13-25.

<sup>87</sup> J.A. Toews, 14.

<sup>88</sup> Jung-Stilling is widely considered to be the first figure to bridge the German Pietist movement that had arisen in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, into a new modern form often called “Neo-Pietism.” He represented a figure that brought renewed vitality and freshness to an older pietism that had become dry and legalistic. His thought would help prepare the way for the Awakening movement that would come in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 253-265. Cf. Erich Beyreuther, *Die Erweckungsbewegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 26-27.

<sup>89</sup> J.B. Toews, *A Pilgrimage of Faith: The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia and North America, 1860-1990* (Winnipeg, MB & Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1993), 9.

“full, free, and ever present grace of God in Christ: ‘Christ the Crucified.’”<sup>90</sup> Wüst’s emphasis on justification by grace in Christ, and of deep heart-felt devotion of love and gratitude to the Savior for his righteousness and the shedding of his blood for the remission of sins, struck a deep emotional chord with a people who were languishing in a legalistic moralistic formalism. Wüst’s preaching and Bible studies on this theme led to the formation of a number of conventicles and Bible study groups for a more deliberate and renewed faith. Apparently some of the hearers took Wüst’s preaching of grace to such an extreme, that they fell into an emotional fanaticism, and emphasized “justification” to the exclusion of “sanctification.”<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, a synthesis would come to be achieved in time and a new renewal born out of an Anabaptist moral and ecclesial basis, and a Pietist inspired renewal of spiritual vitality.

The new synthesis would combine Pietistic elements of true heartfelt faith and devotion to Christ his free justifying grace (“orthopathy”), combined with the moral discipline and ethical rigor of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition (“orthopraxis”). Friesen wrote that Mennonites affirmed Menno Simons as laying the foundational tenets of their faith. He was the one who “built the house.” However, as Friesen goes on, the Mennonites kept part of the truth, remembering only the “external ‘correct doctrine,’” but forgetting the life with which the house was built. Wüst represented a “second reformer” who actually served to restore the Church to the original foundation upon which Menno built.<sup>92</sup> Thus we see a movement that considered the renewal not as a threat, but as a help

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<sup>90</sup> P.M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia, 1789-1910*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Rev. Ed., Trans. J.B. Toews, et al., (Winnipeg, MB: Christian Press), 211.

<sup>91</sup> Friesen, 211.

<sup>92</sup> Friesen, 211-212.

to recovery of an fuller concept of Anabaptism, drawing on the renewal resources of the contemporary era.

After Wüst's death in 1859, his interdenominational band of followers was left without a leader. As his Mennonite followers sought to further and deepen their bonds in their renewed faith, they took a first step toward a form of concrete ecclesial expression, and asked a Mennonite Elder to administer communion to them privately, since they would not take it with those whom they considered to be unbelievers.<sup>93</sup> When the Elder, Lenzmann, refused because he thought it would be prideful and divisive in the congregation, the new group decided to conduct their own. This was the beginning of the separation.

In January of 1860, the secession of the Mennonite Brethren from the main body was completed with a formal document sent to the elders of the Molotschna Mennonite Church. The document states that the Mennonite Brethren could no longer remain in communion with those whom they considered to be "decadant" and not truly converted. Baptism was a sign of a truly converted person, and could only be administered to such. Likewise, only true believers could partake of communion, and believers and unbelievers could not conscientiously partake together. All of this, they appealed, was the authentic teaching of Menno Simons, which they were restoring.<sup>94</sup> Thus, the Mennonite Brethren synthesis moved beyond the simple conventicle "para-church" style of Pietism that Wüst had advocated, which transcended ecclesial institutions. Yet, they could no longer remain

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<sup>93</sup> Friesen, 228. Friesen also mentions that Lutherans, Separatist Pietists, and Mennonites, who were affiliated with Wüst's conventicler, earlier partook in an open communion offered by a former elder at the Gnadenfeld church. However, Friesen mentions that he is not certain of the authenticity of this account.

<sup>94</sup> Friesen, 230-231.

with a church that they no longer considered spiritually true, and held together by tradition and morality alone. A Neo-Anabaptist movement was born.

The elders responded by reporting the incident to the civil authorities, in an attempt to gain legal pressure on the dissenters. This understandably did not help matters, and only further alienated and radicalized the new Mennonite Brethren.

As the new Mennonite Brethren fellowship organized, and defined itself, Mennonite traditions were revised to fit new understandings. One of the developments that would occur in the Mennonite Brethren tradition was introduction of the practice of immersion baptism as the preferred mode of baptism, similar to the Schwarzenau Brethren movement of 160 years prior.<sup>95</sup> Convinced that none of them had received true baptism in the old Mennonite church, because it was administered by pouring, the secessionists re-baptized each other through immersion, in what they considered to be the true mode.<sup>96</sup> The Mennonite Brethren movement also expanded and spread to other Russian Mennonite colonies, and fraternal networks were formed. The movement that grew out of renewal movements, was now itself a radical renewal movement. It was not without problems, however, and the fanatical *Froehliche Richtungen* group—known for loud shouting and dancing in meetings—was still present, for example, until 1862.<sup>97</sup> The period of “Consolidation and Expansion” of 1865-1885, after the “June reforms” of 1865, effectively suppressed such extreme manifestations, and a new moderate discipline was in place.<sup>98</sup> As the movement organized and institutionalized, it became more coordinated

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<sup>95</sup> In both instances, immersion baptism was used as symbol of expression of the new birth, through imagery of burial and resurrection, and to distance the new movements from the older Mennonites, by claiming a fuller expression of the true meaning of baptism, and apostolic order in the church.

<sup>96</sup> Friesen, 286.

<sup>97</sup> J.A. Toews, 60-61.

<sup>98</sup> J.A. Toews, 69-77.

in efforts in expansion, both within Russia, and in America with large migrations in the 1870's to central Kansas. This also served in the formation of a sustainable corporate identity, as particular forms of Mennonite Brethren piety and community life became set, creatively combining the Mennonite and Pietist elements of their new faith. Church discipline continued to be instituted, though some of the more harsh measures, as spousal avoidance were dropped. Proper teaching and preaching were also given their place in addition to time for personal testimony and sharing. Heartfelt worship was emphasized, but in a restrained, disciplined manner. Some use of musical instruments was also introduced. Many of the old hymns were used, as well as new ones drawn from the Pietists.<sup>99</sup>

Expansion through drawing from the mainstream “church” Mennonite slowed during the “golden age” of Russian Mennonites between 1885-1914, especially as the old church Mennonites were experiencing their own Pietist and missionary renewals.<sup>100</sup> Growth in both Europe and America leveled, tending to draw mostly from Mennonite Brethren families. Expansion, both in Russia and America tended to come from migrations. The Mennonite Brethren Church did, however, continue to remain involved in foreign missions.

In the United States, as with other ethnic immigrant groups as well, the Mennonite Brethren on the prairies withdrew into a protective, ethnic isolationism, rigidly enforcing rules that separate and distinguish them from other groups, such as the

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<sup>99</sup> J.A. Toews, 239-242. A favorite Pietist hymn from the earliest days was “Christ’s own Blood and Righteousness”—characteristic of the themes which originally gave rise to the Mennonite Brethren movement: Friesen, 216.

<sup>100</sup> John N. Klassen, “Mennonites in Russia and Their Migrations” in *Testing Faith and Tradition*, eds. John A Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006), 196-197.

Baptists.<sup>101</sup> However, as with such other groups descended from 19<sup>th</sup> century German speaking settlers, maintenance of ethno-linguistic isolation would prove nearly impossible to maintain, given the immense pressures put upon communities to conform to the English language and Anglo-American culture, especially during and after World War I. Eventually the Mennonite Brethren, like their General Conference Mennonite neighbors and those of other German-American religious groups would have to face the dominant Anglo-American culture and adjust.<sup>102</sup> Finding adequate sources for renewal would be essential to maintaining a relevant religious identity in a new context and new times. American popular religion, especially evangelicalism and fundamentalism, would come to play a key role in this endeavor.

As with other similar groups, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century proved a time of crisis and challenge to the Mennonite Brethren. The Russian Revolution was cataclysmic for all Russian Mennonites, including the Mennonite Brethren, and resulted in mass migrations to North America. The 20<sup>th</sup> century would largely be a struggle of emergence from German ethno-linguistic isolation through drawing upon other movements of renewal, especially American revivalism, and movements of evangelicalism and fundamentalism.

J.B. Toews notes that it was especially American public school education that forced exposure to the broader American society and emergence from ethnic isolation.

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<sup>101</sup> J.A. Toews, 138-139.

<sup>102</sup> Dennis Engbrecht, in his doctoral dissertation, gives a thorough and excellent study of the cultural transitions that Russian Mennonite descendents underwent during their Americanization process from the late 19<sup>th</sup> through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Engbrecht pays close attention to shifts in language, cultural self identity, worship and patterns of religious piety, congregational organization, religious education, and church architecture. He pays special attention to the influence of American Revivalist traditions in this transition. See Dennis Engbrecht, *The Americanization of a Rural Immigrant Church: The General Conference Mennonites in Central Kansas, 1874-1939* (New York: Garland Press, 1990), especially chapters 4-8.

Urbanization also became a factor in this process by the 1940's.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, from the 1920's to the 1940's, the progressive influence of American fundamentalism and dispensationalism among Mennonite Brethren and in Mennonite Brethren higher education contributed to shifts in Mennonite Brethren ecclesiology, along with the reorganization of structure to reflect more American denominational patterns of church organization.<sup>104</sup> As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, and the influence of American fundamentalism and Baptist churches increased, there came an increased spirit of congregationalism, which challenged the traditional "connectional church" model of congregational interdependence.<sup>105</sup> This was one among a number of issues facing the Mennonite Brethren in America, as it too, as with the Brethren in Christ, would come to be torn between its Mennonite heritage, and the evangelical and Pietist sources that have served as integral forces of renewal.

Relationship to North American Evangelicalism would become a key factor in late 20<sup>th</sup> century among American and Canadian Mennonite Brethren. This would become highlighted in the "name change" debates that took place among Mennonite Brethren toward the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Patricia Loewen, who discusses this issue in-depth, posits that at the heart of identity struggles in the Mennonite Brethren denomination in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, is the tension between "Anabaptist" and "Evangelical," or even "Fundamentalist" impulses, in formulating the articulation of a

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<sup>103</sup> J.B. Toews, *Pilgrimage of Faith: The Mennonite Brethren Church 1860-1990* (Winnipeg, MB & Hillsboro, KS: 1993), 164-165.

<sup>104</sup> Richard Kyle, "North American Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Century: Ecclesiological Developments" in *Bridging Troubled Waters: The Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Twentieth Century* (Winnipeg, MB & Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1995), 193-212.

<sup>105</sup> J.B. Toews, 218-237.

unified mission-oriented identity in modern American culture.<sup>106</sup> As Mennonite Brethren emerge from sectarian past the debate is, among others, how useful is the Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage in mission in the modern era.

## **Conclusion**

From the examples above, we see a definite pattern appear that characterizes the Neo-Anabaptist movements. First, they begin with impulses from broader renewal movements. As they develop into the more radical manifestations of the renewal movement, they face increasing opposition from the establishment forces, which only increases their radicalization. This eventually develops into a separatist mindset, and more radical forms of church are sought, the Anabaptist model of church becomes predominant. However, as the movement finds the older, more static form of Anabaptism incompatible with their renewed sense of mission, a new synthesis emerges, which results in the establishment of a Neo-Anabaptist movement. As the movement consolidates, it draws from the vitality of the renewal movement, and from the organizational structure of Anabaptism to enter a period of expansion, defining its identity both with and against the two streams that have contributed to its formation. Faced with challenges and pressures from without, the movement often then transitions into a sectarian isolationism, until the external pressures become so great, that new renewal and modernization impulses must be dealt with. This often leads to a profound sense of identity crisis, that only a thorough

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<sup>106</sup> Patricia Janzen Loewen, "Embracing Evangelicalism and Anabaptism: The Mennonite Brethren in Canada in the Late Twentieth Century" (MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2000), 88-119. Loewen's thesis perceptively explores the nuances of the issue through the consideration of various name changes, and various perceptions of what terms such as "Mennonite," "Evangelical," and "Anabaptist" mean and what they communicate within the church and without it for the articulation of an outward-looking, non-sectarian identity.

knowledge of the movement's own history, and of the history of the movements that have influenced it can address. When viewed through the lens of renewal history, these processes become apparent. We now turn to a more in depth study of one under-researched manifestation of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Neo-Anabaptist movement: The Apostolic Christian Church.

## Chapter 2

### **The Origins and Birth of a European Neo-Anabaptist Movement: Samuel Fröhlich and the Formation of the Neutäufer Movement to 1833**

In terms of social history, the Neutäufer movement can be understood as the product of the interaction of three historical religious movements that preceded it in the Protestant World of German speaking Western Europe: Pietism, Anabaptism, and the German Awakening and French *Reveil* movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. All three of these movements influenced Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich and the movement that would come to be characterized by his leadership and teachings. Of negative import on Fröhlich's thought was the doctrine and polity of the State Protestant Churches of Europe and the rationalist theology that had come to predominate the major Protestant theological faculties of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, in both of which Fröhlich had been reared.

#### *The Religious and Social Climate of early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe<sup>1</sup>*

Modern European social history may well be considered to have begun with the year 1815. Although powerful movements toward modernization had preceded this time, including the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and Rationalism, 1815 marked a decisive turning point. In the wake of the French Revolution of 1789, which had effectively overturned France's *ancien regime*, that only a century earlier was the most powerful bastion of European aristocratic absolutism, Napoleon had risen to carry out, through

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the rise and manifestations of 19<sup>th</sup> century Neo-Pietism and the Awakening movements within the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century European social and cultural movements, see Hartmut Lehmann, "Die Neue Lage," Chapter I in *Geschichte des Pietismus, Band 3: Der Pietismus im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert*, ed. Ulrich Gäbler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 1-26.

successive wars of conquest, to overturn regimes and social orders that had been in place for centuries.

By 1815, Napoleon had been defeated in his last stand at Waterloo, and the Congress of Vienna had redrawn the map of Europe, and unleashed processes of modernization that would flourish and rework the very social, cultural, and political institutions and ideologies that would come to define modern European – and especially Western European – ways of life.

Although these processes were by no means uniform, either in their constitutions or in their reception across the European continent – some areas being more liberal minded, others more conservative and resistant – it is beyond doubt that the social and intellectual movements of this time made an irreversible impact on the entire European continent. A course of events that was set in motion and that would come to define much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, finds its genesis here. It would not mean the end of monarchy in Europe, or of established religion (state churches)–these would take place more in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But it would mean the end of *absolute* monarchy in Europe, and signal a new shift toward the democratization and liberalization of the continent; and it would come to mean a new religious era in which religious toleration of not only privately held opinions, but of alternative religious communities. All of this would come from a fundamental shift in perspective to individual rights and voluntary beliefs of the individual. This new social climate gave rise to a new religious phenomenon, that resulted in the proliferation of free evangelical protestant churches across Europe, what British historian David Bebbington calls “the growth of voluntary religion.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> David Bebbington, “The Growth of Voluntary Religion,” chapter 4 in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, Volume 8, *World Christianities c.1815-c. 1914* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, 2006), 53-69.

This new precedent, as one aspect of rising modernity, stood in contrast to older social perspectives of unity of religious belief and institutions as integral to the fabric of the well being of society as a whole, to which dissent to either posed a potentially dangerous threat. The new trends toward secularization of society, tended to slacken, generally speaking, impulses toward coercive religious conformity through use of force. Implementations of these efforts were uneven in European history, however. The British and Dutch usually tended to be further along in the process of the tolerance of voluntary religion and of religious plurality, though it would be inaccurate to ascribe total egalitarianism even to them until later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The rest of Continental Europe tended to be further behind in these transitions, most markedly in eastern Europe. Central Europe, especially in German speaking lands, would become the broker between the more progressive impulses characteristic of Britain and the Netherlands, and the eastern European lands of the Austro-Hungarian Hapsburg Empire, Russia, and the Balkans. In the religious dimension, these processes will be illustrated by the two movements of the early leaders of two prominent mid-19<sup>th</sup> century free church movements: Johann Gerhard Oncken and the Baptists, and Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich and the Neutäufer. These two contemporaries, who occasionally crossed paths, both served as brokers between the evangelical revivalist and neo-pietist movement of Western Europe (especially in Britain), with new burgeoning proliferation of new protestant free church movements in eastern Europe.

Fröhlich's Neutäufer movement would have most of its success in Switzerland, South Germany and Alsace-Lorraine, and into the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the regions populated by ethnic Hungarians (Magyar), Slavic peoples, including Serbs,

Croats, and Slovaks, and Romanians. Oncken's Baptist movement would have most of its early success in northern Germany, across Prussia, and into Russia and Poland and the Baltic areas, and as far south as Austria and Hungary.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Life and Work of Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich**

The Origins of the Apostolic Christian Church movement centers around the person of Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich. Fröhlich was the genius of the movement in its formative years, and all branches of the movement down to the present trace the origins and communal identity to his life and influence. So central was he to this movement's core identity that for much of the movement's history, especially in Switzerland, his followers informally went by the name of *Fröhlichianer*, which approximated into English as "Fröhlichites."

Fröhlich emerged during a very tumultuous and transitional time in European history. It was the era of Romanticism and the fomentation of ideas of new religious and political liberties. It was also an era of the conflicting new religious impulses. Fröhlich, who was born and raised in the Swiss State Reformed Church, came to deep theological disagreements with the growing influence of Rationalism in the Swiss Reformed Church.

After a conversion experience while a theology student at the University of Basel, Fröhlich came to repudiate this Rationalistic theology and preach the need for heartfelt repentance of sin and the need for true conversion to Christ. This places Fröhlich

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<sup>3</sup> While Oncken's Baptist movement made some early inroads into the Hapsburg regions, reflecting a similar story to that of Fröhlich's movement—being carried in by Hungarian journeymen who had traveled to Hamburg to learn their trade—one early Baptist referred to these as "feeble beginnings" Since the Baptist movement in this part of Europe did not make deep roots until later in the century. See McBeth, 487. Only later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did the Baptists gain a significant following in southern and eastern Europe, and a good deal of this came as a result of proselytizing the Nazarene descendants of Fröhlich's movement. See Ott, 94.

squarely within the *Erweckungsbewegung* (awakening movement) that was taking place in German speaking areas during this time.<sup>4</sup> It was such preaching that cost Fröhlich his ministerial credentials, and for which reason the Swiss Reformed Consistory banned him from preaching. Nevertheless, Fröhlich persisted in preaching his message wherever he could from town to town in Switzerland, gaining a grassroots following. During this time he became more radical in his theology, and came to repudiate infant baptism in favor of adult believers' baptism.

During this time, Fröhlich came in contact with three influences which would have considerable weight in shaping his theology: the preacher Ami Bost of Geneva, who baptized Fröhlich, the English Baptist Continental Society, and the Swiss Mennonites of Emmental who would tremendously influence Fröhlich's teachings on non-resistance and ecclesiology and church order.

### *The Sources*

As far as sources written by Fröhlich's own hand, we only have access to those written after 1830, the year of Fröhlich's expulsion from the ministry of the Swiss Reformed Church, and his subsequent radicalization as a Free Church revival preacher and Neo-Anabaptist. Thus any of Fröhlich's personal reflections on his life and work before this point are written through the lens of his "post-conversion" experiences, after he had rejected the rationalist liberal theology of his education as a young adult and had adopted the point of view of the revivalistic pietism that characterized the *Awakening*

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<sup>4</sup> In contrast to much of the rationalist movements that came to characterize the German academic theology of the day, the *Erweckungsbewegung*, or "Awakening" movement, spread mostly amongst the populace and to many congregations and pastors. It was characterized by an emphasis on the repentance of sin and trust in Christ's atoning sacrifice. This movement would spur many of the renewal and missionary impulses of German churches during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See *The Spirituality of the German Awakening*, eds. David Crowner and Gerald Christianson, (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 5-41.

movement. Most of Fröhlich's writings and accounts have been collected, and translated and published in English Samuel J. Braun in *The Writings of S.H. Fröhlich* series.<sup>5</sup>

### *Fröhlich's Early Years*

The Fröhlich family was descended from French Huguenot settlers in Switzerland. After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes under King Louis XIV in 1685, Switzerland became one of the main points of refuge for Huguenots fleeing France.<sup>6</sup> The early influences of this Huguenot heritage are not to be overlooked. The Huguenot experience is unique and formative for many would bear it and its heritage. As a religious minority throughout their history, the Huguenots would always bear a more evangelical and pietist type of faith, owing perhaps to their experience as voluntary, often persecuted, minority group, as opposed to other parts of Europe where the Reformed Church was the established official religion. Perhaps hints of this come through in some of Fröhlich's remarks about his parents' faith and piety, and their dismay at his embrace of rationalist theology during his youth.

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<sup>5</sup> This series is drawn from writings in Fröhlich's theological treatises and his personal journals and letters, which include many of his sermons and meditations given during his period of ministry from the 1830's through the 1850's. It was first published during the 1940's and 1950's by the Apostolic Christian Publishing Company in Syracuse, NY. Since 1978, reprints have been published by the Apostolic Christian Church Publications in Eureka, IL.

<sup>6</sup> As 19<sup>th</sup> century historian Samuel Smiles accounts, the Huguenot refugees into Switzerland in 1685 and in the ensuing years, arrived daily in the hundreds and thousands, primarily through Geneva, and settled on into the interior Cantons of Switzerland, supported there by the Protestant Reformed State Church. Among the refugees, totaling in the tens of thousands, were thousands of skilled artisans, and intellectuals, who, bringing their talents and skills would have a profound influence on the social, economic, and political development of Switzerland in the modern era. See Samuel Smiles, *The Huguenots: Their Settlements, Churches, and Industries in England and Ireland* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868), 171-179.

*Education: Theological Rationalism and the Influence of W.M.L De Wette*

During the years 1820-1823, Fröhlich attended first the *Collegium Humanitatis* for a year, and then the *Gymnasium Carolinum* in Zurich, an institution tracing its history back to Zwingli, and devoted to classical and philological studies.<sup>7</sup> Here, Fröhlich would have received the classical education of the privileged classes, studying the Greek and Latin classical writers and their languages.<sup>8</sup> It was also here that Fröhlich first became familiar with the rationalist philosophy and theology that had come to characterize much of Protestant academic theological discourse since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. He ascribes this to the tutelage of a Professor Schultess there, during his “college” years in Zurich. According to Fröhlich’s account, he progressed rapidly in his studies. The growing influence of rationalist thought upon him during this time caused some distress to his parents, who seem to have held to a more traditional form of protestant piety. As Fröhlich recalls:

I progressed class by class and pursued my studies mechanically, without spirit or life; indeed without any real interest; however, not without absorbing the principles of theology and rationalism from the teaching of Dr. Schultess and others, although quite unnoticed and unconscious thereof. And now, when I came home on vacation with my head full of fancies, I caused my God-fearing mother, who is now dead, many tears, and even paraded with bare-faced fluency the glories of the new teaching “that there was no devil, no hell,” etc.<sup>9</sup>

From there, Fröhlich proceeded on to the University of Basel, where he conducted formal studies in theology, from 1823 to 1825, in preparation for ordained ministry in the Swiss State Reformed Church. Fröhlich mentions that Dr. De Wette, the prominent 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.klphs.uzh.ch/Studium/StudienfuehrerX.php> (accessed January 30, 2010). This prestigious academic institution is located near the historic “Grossmünster” church in Zurich, and traces its origins to Zwingli himself, as a center of Protestant learning.

<sup>8</sup> In later years, Fröhlich’s proficiency in Latin enabled him to communicate with some Hungarian followers of his movement who did not know German. Until 1844, Latin was the official language of Hungary for official business and education.

<sup>9</sup> Letter “To the English Continental Society,” Brugg, November 8-10, 1831, in *Evidence Demonstrating the Truth of the Word of God*, (Eureka, IL: Apostolic Christian Publications, 1978), 4.

century rationalist theologian and Bible scholar, had a great influence on him there. It would seem from his account that it was because of this “still famous name of DeWette” that Fröhlich chose to attend the University of Basel, rather than remain at Zurich to complete his studies in theology.

Given that De Wette had arrived in Basel in 1822, and had reorganized the theological faculty there as a new center of rationalist theology, Fröhlich seems to have been attracted by the notion of being a part of this new project, mentioning that he had gone to the “newly reorganized university” where De Wette had come to teach and reorganize the theological faculty.<sup>10</sup>

Wilhelm Martin Lebrecht De Wette (1780-1849), was one of the foremost rationalist bible scholars and theologians of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. He often referred to as the “Father of Biblical Criticism.” John W. Rogerson, the modern authoritative biographer of De Wette, gives a thorough account of the theological curriculum that De Wette in 1823 instituted at the University of Basel, which Samuel Fröhlich would have studied during his time there. The Curriculum follows a four year plan, outlined as follows<sup>11</sup>:

Year I: Exegetical Theology

1. Study of the most important books of the OT
2. Study of all or the majority of the NT books
3. Introduction to the OT and NT
4. History and antiquity of the Hebrews
5. OT and NT Hermeneutics

Year II: Historical Theology

1. Church history, including the Swiss Reformation
2. Selected texts, e.g. Origen

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Cf. John W. Rogerson, *W.M.L de Wette, Founder of Modern Biblical Criticism: An Intellectual Biography* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 191-197.

<sup>11</sup> The outline provided is my combination and adaptation of two outlines provided by Rogerson—one simple, and one complex. See Rogerson, 196-197.

3. History of dogma
4. Study of dogmatic formularies
5. Study of ecclesiastical formularies

Year III: Systematic Theology

1. Encyclopaedia
2. Belief (*Glaubenslehre*)
3. Morals

Year IV: Practical Theology

1. Theory of practical theology
2. Homiletics, with practicals

Fröhlich was only in Basel for two years, due to economic factors, from “the latter part” of 1823 to October of 1825. Though we are unsure of precisely which courses Fröhlich took, it is likely that he took most of his courses from the first two fields above, under the curriculum for Year I and Year II. This makes sense, as Fröhlich demonstrates in his writings a thorough knowledge of Scripture and biblical languages, and of Church history and historical theology as well; though he had very little to say about the more contemporary philosophical and systematic theologians of his day, which he would likely would have studied more in depth had he attended Basel for a third year.

We do know, however, that Fröhlich became thoroughly acquainted with rationalist theology, generally through the medium of biblical interpretation, as De Wette lectured primarily in Bible, as well as in theology. This corroborates well with Fröhlich’s account, as it would seem that Fröhlich’s strongest rationalistic impulses at Basel were during his first year, when he would have been under the strongest influences of De Wette and his lectures on Bible and Biblical criticism.

Fröhlich describes this time in his life as rather mechanical and rote. As noted above, Fröhlich seemed to have no real personal motivation for studying for the ministry, though he excelled academically. He mentions that the decision had actually been made

for him by his parents, and that he learned it “in the way of a trade instead of a profession.”<sup>12</sup> It was not until after a crisis conversion experience in 1825 that Fröhlich felt a true passion for preaching the Gospel of Christ.

Fröhlich reports having several interactions with the Moravian Brethren during his studies in Basel.<sup>13</sup> His contact with these Pietist Moravians came through a society of students at the University of Basel who met, as he describes, to read from the Greek New Testament, and to sing and pray.<sup>14</sup> Fröhlich interacted antagonistically to the group, apparently considering their practices as foolish, and persuaded several persons from the group to leave it, causing it to almost disband.<sup>15</sup>

Fröhlich had been referred to this group by a Pastor Theophil Passavant who appears from Fröhlich’s descriptions to have been a pietistically inclined Swiss Reformed pastor in Basel, whom the “state rector” of Fröhlich’s home parish, Pastor Märki in Brugg commended to him upon his moving from Zurich to Basel.<sup>16</sup> Fröhlich records that he had a number of interactions with this Passavant, who would ask him, upon each infrequent visit, “Well, how are things going in the most important matter of all?”<sup>17</sup> In typical pietist fashion, the pastor was referring to Fröhlich’s inner spiritual condition, and of the need, above all of his speculative theological ponderings, for genuine repentance

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<sup>12</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> See *Evidence*, 5. In the English translation of Fröhlich’s work, the German term *Brüdergemeine* is translated literally “Community of Brethren,” giving rise to the mistaken identification of this group with the *Swiss Brethren*—the name of 16<sup>th</sup> century Swiss Anabaptists (Jahn, 126 n.70), or Schwarzenau Brethren of Alexander Mack, the “Church of the Brethren” in North America today (Klopfenstein, ). Ward refers to Basel as “the strongest Moravian centre in Switzerland.” See Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 189.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. This would seem to evidence the more conservative nature of the smaller vicinity such as Brugg, where such people as Fröhlich’s parents continued to hold a place of influence.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Cf. Alder, 20-21. Alder informs us that this Pastor Theophil Passavant was a student of Bengel, and college friend of Dr. Barth in Möttlingen. He served in Basel as a “Studentenseelsorger” a chaplain to students.

from sin and spiritual renewal. To such questions, Fröhlich reports that he reflected embarrassment and perplexity at the question, not understanding the significance of that to which the pastor was referring.

It was during that time that Fröhlich had some periodic meetings with Passavant, and the seed of Pietist thought was planted in him, though Fröhlich very much resisted it, as noted above. Nevertheless, following one of Passavant's exhortations to repentance of sin, faith in God, and self-knowledge, Fröhlich recalls that he did find it thought provoking, mentioning that in a journal entry of his, dated April 6, 1824, he had written: "Through the knowledge of God, man comes to knowledge of self: that is the truth which Christ taught us and to which we arrive only through repentance."<sup>18</sup>

What follows in Fröhlich's account, as he presents it, is language that would perhaps hearken back to the classical Calvinist emphases of his early upbringing before the influence of rationalism, particularly relating to the doctrine that salvation can only come through divine election and revelation. After narrating the above mentioned encounter with Passavant, in April 1824, Fröhlich writes reflectively:

From that day on, however, a whole year had passed before I felt the slightest trace of this knowledge of self; and from the above it is clear that if the grace of God wished to make something of me to His glory, it certainly had in me, the greatest of all sinners, a fit object in whom to manifest, even in me, the great riches of the patience and pity of our Lord Jesus Christ; that I in turn should have pity toward my brethren in the flesh, who still wander in error along the course of this world and after the prince of darkness. Finally *it pleased God well to awaken*

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<sup>18</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 6. This excerpt evidences a typical Pietist way of thinking, that knowledge of God is essentially relational, and cannot be attained through mere reason, but in repentance of sin, devotion, and holiness of life, which restore that relationship with God. The concept of "self-knowledge" would come to play a central part in Fröhlich's thought and piety, as well as that of the communities that followed after him. For this reason, simple agreement, even with Apostolic Christian principles was not sufficient, but only a thorough in self-reflection which led one to see their own true sinful nature, and of their need for salvation and cleansing from sin. At this point, through full repentance and baptism, the believer was prepared for the sealing of the Holy Spirit, which came through the laying on of hands. The traditional Apostolic Christian order of salvation is laid out in a treatise by Ben Sommer, *Ye Must be Born Again* (Syracuse, NY: Apostolic Christian Publishing).

*me* from the sleep of death. He passed by me and saw me lying in my blood. He said to me as I thus lay in my blood: “Thou shalt live!” (Ezek. 16:6).<sup>19</sup>

Fröhlich continues on describing the particular instance of the beginning of his awakening and calling by God:

It was in the month of April, 1825, when I was spending my Easter vacation in Brugg. All the circumstances are as fresh in my mind today as if it had happened yesterday. I cannot even recall that there were many previous preparations or any special circumstances that led up to it. A very soft voice, which was neither terrifying nor depressing but nevertheless very convincing and penetrating, spoke in the depth of my soul, “It cannot remain thus with thee. Thou must change!” and at the same time it drew me irresistibly onward. I knelt for the first time before the hidden and with uplifted hands solemnly swore the oath of fidelity, that from then on it had to be different with me.<sup>20</sup>

It would appear from the above account that, at this point, Fröhlich evidences a certain combination of Reformed and Pietist themes in his faith development. On the one hand, we see the classic Reformed themes of total depravity and divine election in Fröhlich's account of one who is utterly blind to God's righteousness and grace, suddenly converted through God's divine intervention through no merit or effort of his own, but only through the special and mysterious independent will of God to act. On the other hand, we see in Fröhlich's account a “warming of the heart” experience similar to that of Pietists such as the Moravians and John Wesley. As Fröhlich notes, it was not an experience of voice that was terrifying or depressing, as might characterize some other Calvinistic accounts of conviction of sin, but rather gentle, life-giving, and deeply moving in a quite intimate way, which led to sorrow for sin as a joyous relief. It seems from this account of his personal experience, as well as from his preaching to his later followers, that Fröhlich had experience an *assurance of salvation* which seemed to combine elements of the older 17<sup>th</sup> century Puritan and Pietist standards of assurance,

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<sup>19</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 6. Italics mine.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

with the Moravians and Wesleyans of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The former asserted that such an experience only came after agonizing soul searching, while the latter preached an immediate experience of joyful assurance that accompanied the initial conversion experience.<sup>21</sup>

Fröhlich's experience and conception of salvation and of the assurance of salvation would resemble the moderating figure of the *Busskampf* as understood by the Pietist theologian August Hermann Francke. According to such an understanding, the assurance of salvation is notably and experientially manifest as a sense of peace in the heart of the believer at the initial experience of conversion. However, such a Christian conversion can only truly come after a period of soul-searching and self-knowledge, which leads the individual to knowledge of their own lost sinful state, a profound conviction of and sorrow for sin, and thus to genuine repentance to God through Christ, the Savior.<sup>22</sup> For Fröhlich and for his movement, this would not be an experience of morbid self-deprecation, but of the necessary struggle that comes about when a person encounters the revelation of God's grace and kindness, which necessarily leads to godly sorrow over one's sin, to the desire for amendment and reform of life, and ultimately to peace with

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<sup>21</sup> David Bebbington notes the shift in the two contrasting views of personal assurance among 18<sup>th</sup> century British evangelicals. He notes that the older Reformed and Puritan approach stressed that assurance might only be possible of a person who has long been a converted Christian, and comes as a fruit of sanctification. By contrast, many of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Evangelicals, especially among Wesleyans and Moravians, stressed the sense of assurance that accompanies the initial conversion experience. See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730's to the 1980's* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 42-50.

<sup>22</sup> The term *Busskampf* is attributed to German Pietist theologian August Herman Francke (1673-1727). It combines two words in German for turning, or repentance, and struggle. As F. Ernest Stoeffler defines it. See F. Ernest Stoeffler, "Introduction" in *Pietists: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 9 for his definition of *Busskampf*: "At conversion [Francke] believed, one begins to move from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. The new birth is initiated by with deep sorrow over past sins and an experience of repentance (*Busskampf*)." Cf. F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 14-20 for a discussion of Francke's conception of repentance and salvation, and usage of the term *Busskampf*.

God.<sup>23</sup> Eventually, Fröhlich came to add the experience of Believers Baptism to complete the conversion experience, which will be discussed further below. This concept of a thorough and rigorous conversion experience, requisite to inner peace and baptism, would eventually distinguish Fröhlich's *Neutäufer* movement from other similar evangelical movements of his day.

The next several years of Fröhlich's life would prove a time of testing and "self-knowledge." While still a student at Basel, Fröhlich came to reject the rationalistic theologies that were being taught at the University of Basel, noting that such lectures became an "abomination" to him, as he was now "in another school."<sup>24</sup> Fröhlich mentions that he was especially influenced by the works of mystic Francois Fenelon, as well as other Pietist writers.<sup>25</sup>

Returning to his parents home in Brugg, in 1826, Fröhlich continued to pursue a ministerial position in the Swiss state Reformed Church, seeking to preach his gospel of renewal within the structures of the national Church.<sup>26</sup> It was during this period that Fröhlich resembled the most mainstream elements of the Awakening, reflecting the life and work of other contemporary voices of the Awakening, such as August Tholuck in

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<sup>23</sup> Stoeffler also repeatedly attempts to defend Francke's understanding of Busskampf against accusations of a merely emotionalist oriented act of legalistic self-deprecation. Rather, he considers that in Francke's thought, the Busskampf represents the natural struggle within the will that occurs when a person comes to see their own sinfulness in light of God's revelation of justice and mercy, and the natural desire for conformity to Christ's holiness that comes about through godly sorrow which leads to repentance and reform of life. See Stoeffler, 8, 14-15, 50. Such themes would play a central role in the Neutäufers' conceptions of the order of salvation, as noted above.

<sup>24</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ott, 37-38. Ott likens Fröhlich to an "Erweckungsprediger" or Renewal preacher in the State church.

Germany, attempting to work toward evangelical renewal within his own Swiss Reformed Church.<sup>27</sup>

Fröhlich at first had difficulties gaining acceptance by the church council, due apparently to the evangelical and pietistic nature of his preaching. As part of his candidacy, Fröhlich had to write a short theological dissertation in Latin, and preach a trial sermon. The dissertation was titled “De Verbo Dei tamquam Medio Gratiae,” translated as “The Word of God as Mediator of Grace.” According to Alder, this included an exegetical meditation on Ephesians 2:8, 9, on salvation as a gift of God’s grace through faith, independent of any human work. Fröhlich’s pastoral-theological essay included an exposition on the necessity of a pastor to have himself experienced spiritual rebirth in order to adequately lead others into this necessary experience of divine grace and repentance.<sup>28</sup> Fröhlich’s sermon was on John 7:16, 17: “Jesus answered them, and said, ‘My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.’”<sup>29</sup> Fröhlich was challenging much of what he perceived to be the unregenerate nature of much of the Swiss Reformed Church, among both laity and clergy.

The examiners, while crediting Fröhlich for his clever intellect, nevertheless found offence at what they perceived to be a rather sanctimonious tone.<sup>30</sup> Fröhlich would

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<sup>27</sup> August Tholuck was a leading evangelical theologian and pastor in Germany, and attempted an intellectual challenge to the rising influence of rationalism and liberalism in German Protestantism. He at His important works include devotional works, such as *The Lesson Learned about sin and the Reconciler, or The True Consecration of the Skeptic* (1823) as well as a two part study on the seventeenth century origins of rationalist theology: *Das Kirchliche Leben des Siebzehnten Jahrhunderts bis die Anfänge der Aufklärung* (Berlin: Wiegandt and Grieben, 1861). For an overview of the life and work of August Tholuck a leading advocate of the Awakening within the State Church in Germany, see Crowner and Christianson, 45-51.

<sup>28</sup> Alder, 22. Alder mentions that a copy of this dissertation exists in the state archives in Aarau.

<sup>29</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Alder, 23.

describe such experiences as part of his testing and training in the “new school” of his formation, convincing him more and more that true faithfulness and discipleship requires suffering for the sake of truth, and that this leads to humility and purification. The whole experience of his theological training and ministerial candidature was rather distressing for Fröhlich, both spiritually and physically. It was during this time that Fröhlich’s “martyr theology” developed, which would only increase throughout his life.<sup>31</sup> He would come to see most opposition to his developing religious convictions as obstacles to overcome, as vehicles to the further development of his faith and perseverance in faithfulness.

After several setbacks, including a grilling before a panel of the State Church Consistory, Fröhlich eventually passed his examination in 1827. He spent a year as a private tutor in a home near Schaffhausen, where he came to know people sympathetic to his vision of faith, under the influence of Pastor David Spleiss and others who had been influenced by earlier Pietists such as Lavater, Frau von Krüdener, and Moravian missionaries.<sup>32</sup> Fröhlich finally gained a ministerial position at Wallensdorf in Canton Thurgau in 1828, as a vicar. It was here that Fröhlich claimed to feel a new spiritual vitality, as he now found a place to exercise his ministerial vocation. After only four months, he was called to Leutwil, in Canton Aargau, in December of 1828.

It was in Leutwil that Fröhlich’s successful ministry as a preacher of the evangelical awakening took off. Fröhlich reports that the Canton of Aargau was especially known as a depraved area, even among the general populace. Fröhlich himself had taken the place

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Marilyn Klaus, “‘Es giebt ein Wunderschönes Land’: A Story of the Gemeinschaft Evangelish Taufgesinnter, Neu Täufer, Fröhlichianer, New Amish, Evangelical Baptists, and The Apostolic Christian Church of America” (Student Paper, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, 1974), 5.

<sup>32</sup> Alder, 25.

of a pastor who was suspended for “open deeds of shame.” He also notes that there was a strict law against “conventicles” of more than three persons.<sup>33</sup> His approach, he notes, was to approach the congregation as a prophetic figure, crying out in the wilderness, upon which a spiritual awakening occurred in the congregation:

Accordingly I could only resolve to make my appearance there as the voice of one in the wilderness. The hand of the Lord was with me. He gave such strength unto His Word that the testimony of the crucified Christ cut like a two-edged sword through their hearts and overthrew one proud fortress of Satan after another. A great awakening took place in the whole congregation of about 1,800 souls. One poor sinner after another prostrated himself at the feet of Jesus. Many came also from other places to attend the services.<sup>34</sup>

Within his first year of his ministry at Leutwil, suspicions on the part of other state church clerics had been aroused, and Fröhlich was asked to submit copies of his sermons to the State Church council for review. The copies were returned with the areas of “obnoxious teachings” marked in red. Fröhlich understood these remarks to be especially aimed at what Fröhlich considered the central tenets of the Gospel:

1. “That by our very nature we were all dead through transgression and sin and are children of wrath;”
2. “That we are made righteous through Jesus Christ alone, through belief in the atonement which He brought about through His death on the cross;” and
3. “That through this belief in Christ we must be born anew and receive into our hearts the new living law of the Holy Spirit in place of the deadening and damning law.”<sup>35</sup>

Fröhlich at this point thus demonstrates one who has adopted the characteristic beliefs of the neo-Pietist Awakening of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, with the characteristic emphasis on the classic Reformation teaching on justification by grace through faith in

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<sup>33</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 11. The “conventicles” were most likely Pietistic assemblies.

<sup>34</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 11.

Christ's atoning sacrifice, along with the renewed optimism of human goodness through the regenerative and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in conversion.

As Fröhlich narrates it, the State Church council had been looking for an opportunity to depose him, but could not find one until 1830. In this year, the State Church council voted to discard the traditional Reformed symbolical books (which included the Heidelberg Catechism), and implemented new ones based upon the Rationalist principles that Fröhlich had rejected five years prior. Fröhlich refused to accept this change in his church because, "emphasis was placed upon the underlying principles of nature and upon the religion of reason rather than upon faith in Christ."<sup>36</sup>

In September of 1830, Fröhlich was summoned before the Church Council to give a defense of his refusal to conform to the new church law. After giving a defense of the Gospel as he understood it, as well as pleading the freedom of conscience, Fröhlich was dismissed from the meeting. The next month, Fröhlich was suddenly informed that he was removed from his parish in Leutwil, without even the opportunity to give a farewell sermon, to the grief of many in his congregation.<sup>37</sup> Ties would remain, however, and a number of people from this congregation would form the basis of Fröhlich's movement in later years.<sup>38</sup>

### *Fröhlich, the Baptist Continental Society, and Itinerant Mission Work*

After his dismissal from ministry in the State Church, Fröhlich only became increasingly radicalized in his convictions. At the end of 1831, Fröhlich wrote that the option of continuing in the ministry of the State Church was not out of the question, but

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<sup>36</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Ruegger, 91.

that he saw little prospect of being able to carry on the work that he desired to accomplish. He continued on for a short pastorate in Wilhelmsdorf in Württemberg, Germany, in a congregation that had separated from the State Church there for similar reasons that Fröhlich separated from the Swiss State Church, including similar imposed liturgical reforms. Nevertheless, this congregation was only willing to go so far with Fröhlich's now even more radicalized convictions. The most central of these convictions was that of *believers' baptism*, wherein the only true baptism was one administered to a confessing adult, following a definitive and identifiable Christian conversion, and an understanding, accountable, voluntary Christian commitment. Fröhlich may well have begun to question the validity of infant baptism while still ministering in the Swiss Reformed Church; nevertheless, by the time of his expulsion from the State Church, he had definite scruples against it.<sup>39</sup> This lends further credence to the thought that it was the facing of adversity that lent to the further radicalizing of Fröhlich's faith.

Fröhlich began looking for a new home among many of the smaller Free Church and radical groups that were emerging during this time in Switzerland (as in much of Western Europe), during the 1830's. Fröhlich had even looked into foreign mission work with the *Basel Mission*—a major center of the 19<sup>th</sup> century foreign missions movement in Continental Europe—but was discouraged from this due to a lack of language preparation

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<sup>39</sup> In his 1832 letter to the Baptist Continental Society, Fröhlich noted that he had held definite convictions on believers' baptism "for three years," circa 1830 the year that he was dismissed from the State Church ministry. According to Ruegger, Fröhlich's scruples developed from the inconsistency that he felt from addressing the traditional Reformed baptismal vows to the infant, by name, who was asked very pointed questions on matters of faith conviction, that a child could not possibly answer for himself, with the sponsors answering in his stead, such as "Do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways?" As Ruegger records it, Fröhlich wrote, "This play with holy things I could no longer carry on, in my conviction." Ruegger, 41-42.

and his poor health.<sup>40</sup> He thus sought support for a more domestic missionary endeavor of preaching his radicalized faith in his own homeland.

A number of organizations were rising up to evangelize Continental Europe during this time. Many of these groups were gathering up those disaffected with the Swiss Reformed Church, due to the lack of piety and rise of rationalism. One such organization was the Baptist Continental Society.<sup>41</sup> The Baptist Continental Society was formed to serve as a resource and an outlet for a specifically Baptist mission on the Continent, as opposed to a more generally Protestant one.<sup>42</sup> The BCS mission was to support and guide the evangelistic work of emerging congregations on the European continent that had come to reject infant baptism, in favor of believers' baptism. Their strategy was to connect with local leaders and preachers of such congregations, and support them financially and with other resources. Samuel Fröhlich was a prime candidate, given his evangelical Protestant background, strong new convictions on the necessity of believers' baptism, and leadership of an organic, local, newly emerging movement.

Fröhlich began to doubt the doctrine of infant baptism even as he ministered in the State Church and taught the traditional catechism.<sup>43</sup> By February 1832, Fröhlich's convictions were sealed as he submitted himself to adult believers baptism at the hands of Ami Bost in Geneva, who himself had developed a conviction about the imperative of

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<sup>40</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 14.

<sup>41</sup> Sebastien Fath, in an excellent overview article on the society's origins and work, informs us that the BCS was an endeavor of a renewed evangelical and mission-minded English Baptist movement to spread the Baptist faith (or the 'New Testament' faith, as they understood it) to the European Continent, via France, in the wake of the Revolutions of 1830. A prominent early affiliate of the BCS was Ami Bost, who had baptized and mentored Fröhlich in the early 1830's. The hope, characteristic of the social unrest and revolutionary energy of the era, was that the seeds would be planted for a major Protestant revival movement in France. See Sebastien Fath, "A Forgotten Missionary Link: The Baptist Continental Society in France (1831-1836)," in *Baptist Quarterly*, 133-137.

<sup>42</sup> Fath, 138.

<sup>43</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 12.

adult believers' baptism.<sup>44</sup> He could then write with full conviction, in his doctrinal statement to the BCS, that the qualifications for true believers' baptism was sincere repentance and sincere faith, from a spiritually renewed heart. By this clear definition, infant baptism did not qualify as true baptism, and that all true believers ought to be baptized again.<sup>45</sup> Following typical Anabaptist convictions, Fröhlich rejected that baptism of infants was valid Christian baptism. Thus, the baptism of adults who had been baptized as infants was not considered "re-baptism" but a first true baptism of faith.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout the duration of its short life (1831-1836), Samuel Fröhlich was affiliated with the Baptist Continental Society, even as he continued to work in an itinerant ministry among various emerging independent and Free Church groups, preaching his message of believers' baptism and conversion. The Society supported his work financially, as it did the work of Fröhlich's mentor, Ami Bost, in Geneva.

It was during this time that Fröhlich was engaged in the five "missionary journeys" that would come to be quite central to the shaping of his thought and ministry, and to that of the movement that grew up around him.

In the first missionary journey, Fröhlich traveled from Brugg to the vicinity of his former parish in Leutwil, where he stayed from April 13 to May 6, 1831. There Fröhlich

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<sup>44</sup> Ruegger, 43.

<sup>45</sup> Fröhlich, *Evidence*, 19-20.

<sup>46</sup> Fröhlich would himself repudiate the charge that his movement was "Anabaptist"- literally in German "Wiedertäufer," a derogatory term. In his extensive treatise on Christian baptism, Fröhlich would defensively write toward those of the Reformed Protestant church who accused him and his movement of fanatical, "Anabaptist" heresy: "Far be it that we would be Anabaptists, for we alone are baptized as Christ has commanded and you are not baptized at all. For this reason also the human invention of confirmation (instead of baptism) is falsely called a renewal of the baptismal covenant. For either was a covenant really made with God in infant baptism, and this covenant was later not kept by man or broken, or no covenant was established in the ignorant and unwilling infant baptism, and then it was also not broken (and cannot therefore be renewed by confirmation which, ( besides, is no baptism); but man lives as a natural man and sinner in the world (like a Jew or heathen) until the call of God into the communion of His Son, Jesus Christ, and then first must the covenant with God be established in baptism." Fröhlich, *Baptismal Truth*, 135.

reconnected with many of his former parishioners, and held daily meetings with them in the evenings preaching his message of repentance, renewal, and baptism of faith.

Ruegger reports that word quickly spread of Fröhlich's return, and that his evening meetings included some 200-300 people, and that within eight days, 38 of these received believers baptism, after questioning and examination, if they were willing to "count the cost" of following Jesus. With these, he began to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and a new congregation was born.<sup>47</sup> This journey would also mark Fröhlich's encounter with official persecution, for on May 6, after two weeks of ministry, the meeting was broken up by the police for conducting an unauthorized conventicle, and he was taken before a magistrate on these charges. After this he returned to Brugg, but was now a marked man.

Fröhlich's second missionary journey took him to Canton Bern, in the Bernese highlands, July-August, 1832. He originally set out to meet Ami Bost, who was in the area, but Bost had already departed. Nevertheless, Fröhlich continued to travel around the region and holding meetings with those friendly to his message. This included a meeting with a pietistic conventicle led by a friendly government official, and a meeting with a "believing" pastor in Lauterbrunnen, who accompanied Fröhlich for part of his journey in the area. Though no congregations were immediately founded, we see here the appeal that Fröhlich's message had among many in the Reformed church that sensed a need for renewal, and were happy to have someone such as Fröhlich preach. Nevertheless, Ruegger records that it was here that Fröhlich learned "not to take too much for granted with the people" but to "lay the right foundation first" in order to build with more

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<sup>47</sup> Ruegger, 44.

certainty.<sup>48</sup> Here we see Fröhlich's increasing tendency to caution in terms of judging the spiritual condition of others.

Fröhlich's third missionary journey, in August 1832, was perhaps the most significant of Fröhlich's journeys, in terms of the profound influences on the shaping of his theological views toward ecclesiology and Church practice and polity. To this point, we have seen Fröhlich's thought shaped and develop in the context of the *Reveil* movements within the predominantly Swiss Reformed world. We have further noted how the grounds for much of this movement had been preceded by the work of 18<sup>th</sup> century Pietist movements that had prepared the way, particularly the Moravian Brethren. Now, however, Fröhlich would encounter a people of a different stock who had been separated from the religious influences of the mainstream Reformed world since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These were the Swiss *Täufer*, or Mennonites.

On this journey, Fröhlich visited extensively with the remnants of the Mennonite communities of the Emmen River Valley, or *Emmental*, around the vicinity of Langnau.<sup>49</sup> Fröhlich was attracted to this community because of their traditional doctrines of believers' baptism. Here, Fröhlich made contact with Christian Gerber and Christian Baumgartner, leaders of the Emmental Mennonite congregation, who were seeking renewal for their congregation and its Anabaptist principles. Gerber especially had considered that the discipline of the younger preachers had become too lax.<sup>50</sup> Fröhlich was welcomed to preach his message of repentance and faith. Ruegger reports that he

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<sup>48</sup> Ruegger, 46.

<sup>49</sup> The Emmental region had long been a center for Anabaptist-Mennonites in Switzerland, dating back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and the emergence of the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland. For a thorough overview of the history Anabaptist-Mennonites of this region, and the significant forces that had shaped their communal life and identity from the 16<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Delbert L. Gratz, *Bernese Anabaptists and Their American Descendants* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1953), particularly chaps. III-VI.

<sup>50</sup> Gratz, *Bernese Anabaptists*, 114-115.

preached to combined audience of about 400-500 persons.<sup>51</sup> While these leaders of the Emmental Mennonite community had welcomed much of Fröhlich's preaching on repentance from sin and believers' baptism, they challenged Fröhlich, that in his principles of faith (which he had formulated for his application to the Baptist Continental Society) he did not include reference to military service. Nonresistance would be one Anabaptist doctrine that would become a major component of Fröhlich's developing faith, with a lasting legacy in the movement that followed him.<sup>52</sup>

In the course of his life, Fröhlich and his movement would come to be profoundly shaped by Anabaptist thought and doctrine in such a fundamental way that would serve to distinguish the movement from the other European movements, including Baptist movements, springing from the evangelical Awakening of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. These included Fröhlich's teachings on non-resistance, baptism, and ecclesiology. For all that Fröhlich and his movement drew from the evangelical, missionary, and Pietist impulses of the day, these set his movement apart fundamentally. The evangelical and Pietist movements tended to emphasize conversion, the inner spiritual life, and ethical formation of the individual. Unfortunately, this was seldom carried out into ecclesiological considerations.

Fröhlich's fourth missionary journey took him to East Switzerland, October-November 1832. Congregations would come to be established around Zürich, St. Gallen,

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<sup>51</sup> Ruegger, 48.

<sup>52</sup> See Alder, 123-133. Cf. Peter Brock, "From New Baptists to Nazarenes: A Nineteenth Century Peace Witness," Chap. 16 in *Freedom from Violence: Sectarian Nonresistance from the Middle Ages to the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991), 172-180.

and Hauptwil, in Canton Thurgau. This region would come to be in time the geographical center of Fröhlichite movement in Switzerland.<sup>53</sup>

After the conclusion of his fourth missionary journey, Fröhlich spent five months in London, in 1833, from the end of January until June. Fröhlich apparently went at the invitation of the Society for the purpose of getting to personally know the leaders of the BCS and to learn English better. However, during his stay, Fröhlich became aware that the Continental Society could no longer support him or Bost, due to lack of finances. While in London, Fröhlich is reported to have spent time with the “Strict Baptists.”<sup>54</sup> The “Strict Baptists” considered themselves the true heirs of the Particular Baptist tradition, which adhered quite closely to Calvinism, practices of closed communion only among baptized members, and separationism from other denominations, including other Baptists.<sup>55</sup> Apparently, these Strict Baptists attempted to convince Fröhlich to be baptized again after their form of immersion baptism (as Fröhlich had been baptized by pouring), though he declined.<sup>56</sup> Ott notes that this experience likely served to solidify Fröhlich’s own developing strict conception of mission and ecclesiology.<sup>57</sup> We might also wonder if Fröhlich was also influenced by the Darbyite Plymouth Brethren movement, which had a similar primitivist restorationist vision, and strict exclusive view of church and

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<sup>53</sup> See Ott, 45. This is in terms of number of congregations and aggregate number of adherents

<sup>54</sup> Ruegger, 51.

<sup>55</sup> McBeth, 521-522, 774. Cf. James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 198-200. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* 56-57, 64, 275. Bebbington characterizes the Strict Baptists as remaining in pre-Enlightenment forms of Baptist Puritan piety and thought, resistant toward the “new light” forms of enlightenment-influenced evangelicalism, such as revivalism, and programmatic missions and missionary organizations.

<sup>56</sup> Fröhlich, Letter to Brother K. Schwartz in Frohnhausen, Strassburg, Jan. 18, 1847, in *Writings of S.H. Froehlich*, CD-ROM, Version 31 (Fairbury, IL: Heritage Center Foundation, n.d.), 1974.

<sup>57</sup> Ott, 43.

communion.<sup>58</sup> As Ott observes, Fröhlich's return from London would represent a new period in the nature of Fröhlich's life and work, marking a shift from an itinerant evangelist, to an organizer and builder of congregations.<sup>59</sup> By this point the foundations of Fröhlich's theological formation had been laid. He now had a vision of a set apart Church community based upon the New Testament model of the early Apostolic Christian churches.

From his Reformed upbringing, he had a strong view of the centrality of the Bible as God's Word, and as the authoritative rule for Christian life and faith. Fröhlich further became solidified in the classic Reformed belief of absolute human depravity, such that salvation can only come about through divine initiative and election, and not through human effort or striving, effected only by the sacrificial atonement of Christ. The classic Reformed legacy anchored Fröhlich to a strong objective theology of Word and Spirit, against the prevailing winds of speculative idealism and subjective Romanticism.

From the Pietist and Neo-Pietist impulses mediated through the evangelical *Reveil* movement, Fröhlich came to emphasize an experiential, heartfelt conversion that only came about through the inner struggle (*Busskampf*) of godly sorrow over sin and true repentance to God, manifest in sincere desire for righteousness and moral reform. Pietism bequeathed to Fröhlich an acute optimism concerning the ability of the human heart and will to be totally renewed and cleansed from sin, through the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Fröhlich would develop a theology of sanctification that leaned toward perfectionism, paralleling developments in the Holiness movements elsewhere, especially in the Anglo-American world. More and more, Fröhlich became influenced by the more

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<sup>58</sup> See Robert Baylis, *My People: The History of those Christians Sometimes Called Plymouth Brethren* (Port Colborne, ON: Gospel Folio Press, 2006), 101-109.

<sup>59</sup> Ott, 44.

radical side of this world, especially the renewed English Baptists. He also drew from strong millennialist impulses of the era, which contributed to his stark contrast of pessimism toward the broader world, and optimism toward the redeemed sanctified communion of saints, a remnant preserved and perfected for God's glory.

The influence of Anabaptist-Mennonite belief had convinced Fröhlich that baptism and communion within the brotherhood of believers must go hand in hand. There is no place for a disembodied church. Baptism and conversion must of necessity involve a covenanted relationship with a distinct and visible corporate body of believers on earth. Christ has come not only to save individuals, but to redeem and sanctify a people, his Church, visible in corporate fellowship, communion, and discipline. From the Anabaptists, Fröhlich gained an integral ecclesiology, conceiving of the Church as a people set apart in the world as a community of suffering cross-bearing disciples, following the Savior along the narrow way to eternal salvation. Fröhlich would also come to adapt the Swiss Anabaptist system of church government, based upon the leadership of Elders (*Aeltester*) and preaching brothers (*Lehrbrüder*).

These various influences combined to form what was to become a unique manifestation of a Neo-Anabaptist church movement in his day. It was in this matrix of beliefs and influences that Fröhlich's unique worldview emerged. With these influences forged together into a new synthesis, Fröhlich returned from his trip to England in 1833 with a new sense of mission and purpose. His movement would aim to be none other than the restoration of true evangelical apostolic Church.

From 1833 to his untimely death in 1857, Fröhlich continued to set the doctrinal tone for the Neutäufer movement in Europe, through his teaching and writings. Two

theological treatises outline the core of his theology and worldview, as it came to shape the distinct identity of his new movement. The first, published in St. Gallen, Switzerland in 1838 was titled: *Das Geheimnis der Gottseligkeit und das Geheimnis der Gottlosigkeit—nach ihrem Wesen und in ihrem Gegensatze zu einander beleuchtet aus dem Worte Gottes* (“The Mystery of Godliness and the Mystery of Ungodliness—Their Natures and their Oppositions to each other illuminated by the Word of God”). The second was published later in 1838 as *Die Erretung des Menschen durch das Bad der Wiedergeburt und die Erneuerung des heiligen Geistes—Eine schriftgemaesse Eroerterung ueber die Taufe in Christum* (“The Salvation of Man through the washing of New Birth and the Renewal of the Holy Spirit—A Scriptural Discussion concerning Baptism in Christ”). In these treatises, we find the best articulation of Fröhlich’s distinctive theology of human nature, sin and salvation, regeneration, and the nature of baptism and of the true Christian Church.

In the first treatise, Fröhlich argues that there are essentially two mutually opposed kingdoms at work in the world: God’s Kingdom and Satan’s Kingdom. To be a part of one is to preclude participation in the other. Fröhlich presents a cosmic picture of God’s salvific work that goes beyond the individual to the cosmic war between these two kingdoms. Salvation, Fröhlich argues, is not merely the justification of the individual sinner from Adam’s fall; it is the sanctification of true believers in lives of holiness and discipleship in a set apart community that is called out of Babylon. For Fröhlich, this metaphorical Babylon, the Beast of Revelation 14, from which the followers of Christ are called out and sanctified, is none other than the State Church system.

Since the advent of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who gave Christianity official state privilege and sanction, the state Church (both in its Catholic and Protestant forms) has represented the “whore of Babylon,” and “Anti-Christendom” led by spirit of Antichrist.<sup>60</sup> What is so sinister is the subtlety by which the Antichrist deceives people into the idolatry that the state church is the true Christianity, and that the remnant of true New Testament Christians are heretics. For Fröhlich, it is clear that a true Christian cannot last long within the structures of this anti-Christian State Church, and truly be faithful. The pursuit of godliness will eventually lead to rejection and necessary separation from the fallen false Christendom, as by nature, it is opposed to the Spirit of Christ. Thus a person who stays within the state runs the risk of losing their salvation, due to faithlessness and disobedience to the radical commands of Christ. Fröhlich rejects a conception of justification that is solely through Christ’s imputed righteousness. Subsequent to conversion and regeneration, the believer must persevere in faithfulness and obedience in order for his salvation to be effective. Fröhlich puts it thus:

Thus we receive [in the new birth], in addition to our cleansed *human nature*, the *divine* nature of the Son (Rom. 8; II Pet.1); and as regenerated children of God we must in our following after Christ, *earn our share* in the future glory like Jesus, *i.e.*, we must become *worthy* of it by our *obedience* to the will of God in our efforts and sufferings, although it is to Him alone that we owe our *share* in the salvation, because of *His* obedience to death on the cross. But if we are not faithful and do not suffer with Him and *conquer* the world and the devil, *remaining constant* unto the end, then we cannot be raised to glory with Him, although He died for us (II Tim. 2:10ff, Rom 8:17ff).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> S.H. Fröhlich, *The Mystery of Godliness and the Mystery of Ungodliness* (Eureka, IL: Apostolic Christian Publications, 1978), 116-117.

<sup>61</sup> Fröhlich, *Mystery*, 129 (Italics in original). Fröhlich outlines three essential types of people in his schema: 1.) False, nominal Christians; 2.) the “Faithless Servants” and 3.) the “Faithful Servants.” The first group are those who believe that they are Christians, but simply have never come to know and/or believe the true Gospel. The second group consists of those who receives grace and faith, but loses it through failing to persevere in obedience to Christ and in his sufferings. The third group are those who respond in faith to God’s word in faith, and persevere to the end, through obedient lives of discipleship to Christ and embrace of his sufferings. Only the last will be saved. See *Ibid.*, 123-127.

Fröhlich is clear. While God alone is the initiator of grace and salvation, Christians have a part in covenanting to uphold their end of the covenant, by walking in faith and obedience as Christ's disciples, working out their salvation with "fear and trembling." It is precisely such doctrines of holiness, sanctification, and discipleship which strike at the very core of the State Church system, as Fröhlich understands it. The promise of cheap grace, without the cost of obedience and discipleship and suffering for the sake of Christ, is exactly what is so deceiving about the state church system. If spiritual regeneration and transformation unto Christian holiness, discipleship, and suffering are requisite to salvation, then the State Church is doing none other than hoodwinking the masses into a false gospel, and leading them to Hell. For Fröhlich and his followers, this fundamentally anti-Christian spirit of the State Church is ultimately symbolized in its most pernicious doctrine: Infant Baptism.

Fröhlich's second treatise, the most extensive and theologically articulate of his extant writings, is a treatise on the nature of Christian baptism. In this writing, Fröhlich sets a stark dualistic contrast between the nature of fallen humanity, in Adam, and the new regenerate nature, in Christ. In this, Fröhlich follows the Pauline contrast between Adam as representative of the old "fallen" Man who represents a broken relationship with God and disposition toward sin, and Christ, who is the representative of the new, restored humanity, through the new covenant in Christ.<sup>62</sup> Fröhlich follows a traditional Reformed Augustinian conception here, that Adam's fall brought about a marred nature in humanity, "original sin," characterized by rebellion against God. The giving of the Law in the Old Testament was for the purpose of revealing and convicting Man of his lost and

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<sup>62</sup> See Romans 5:12. For a fuller discussion on this subject of Paul's contrast and use of the figures of Adam and Christ, see James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 90-101.

sinful state, apart from God, and inability of humanity to be reconciled on their own terms. This was for God's purpose in leading people to repentance, and to seeking after Him, to the ultimate end of preparing them for the coming of Christ. To Fröhlich, this contrition and repentance was ultimately represented by John the Baptist, and his "baptism of repentance."

Fröhlich, at this point, leveled his most stringent invective against the State Church, stating that, not only was the infant baptism of the State Church not true Christian baptism, it did not even qualify as the "baptism of John" which at least demanded humility and repentance and prepared people for the baptism of Christ. Rather, as the infant baptism of the State Church required no condition, it was essentially anti-Christian, and worked against the purposes of Christ.<sup>63</sup> Fröhlich would afford other Baptist and Free Church groups, who disagreed with him on the issues of sinless perfectionism, as preaching a "baptism of John" that called for repentance, yet proved ultimately insufficient.

In Fröhlich's understanding, repentance alone was not sufficient. What Man needed was to be made into a new creation altogether, whereby the old sinful nature of Adam was washed away, and replaced by the new spiritual nature of Christ. This Fröhlich understood to be the baptism "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" that John the Baptist prophesied as Christ's baptism.<sup>64</sup>

But in Christ, truly a new epoch had come, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the power of humanity to have a new nature in Christ, through the transformative power of God's Spirit. So radical was the spiritual transformation and conversion to be,

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<sup>63</sup> S.H. Fröhlich, *Baptismal Truth* (Eureka, IL: Apostolic Christian Publications, 1978), 91-92.

<sup>64</sup> Fröhlich, *Baptismal Truth*, 85-89.

that the marks of original sin were to be washed away, and the believer would no longer sin. In this, Fröhlich would resemble considerably Anglo-American holiness groups that preached a sinless perfectionism, known as “Christian Perfectionism” or “entire sanctification.”<sup>65</sup> Unlike these other groups, however, Fröhlich linked this experience of entire consecration and regeneration in Holy Spirit to the baptismal experience. Whereas in other holiness groups, the experience of entire sanctification would often come after conversion (to belief in one’s forgiveness through Christ’s atonement), and subsequent baptism (perhaps), as a part of Christian growth, Fröhlich saw it as integral to Christian conversion, indeed to regeneration itself, which occurred in the literal baptismal experience.<sup>66</sup>

In this chapter, we have surveyed the spiritual and intellectual formation of the leader of the Neutäufer, Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich, and the various contemporary influences that affected his life and thought. We have seen how Fröhlich, in his life and thought, embodied a new synthesis of the various intellectual and theological currents of his day—with some, and against others. Fröhlich’s theological conceptions would define the central doctrinal identity of all the various groups that derived from his movement down to the present. His central theological convictions would not be significantly challenged by some within the descendants of his movement until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The movement that this educated, middle-class reformer led would become rooted mostly among the common peasant and working classes. From then on, it would

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<sup>65</sup> Such groups, springing from the historical Methodist tradition, have included the Wesleyan Church, Free Methodists, Primitive Methodists, and the Church of the Nazarene, among numerous other smaller groups. For a fuller overview of the Holiness movement and movements that advocated Christian Perfectionism, see Melvin Easterday Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996).

<sup>66</sup> In this regard, Fröhlich resembles the Stone-Campbell Churches of Christ movement that also teaches baptismal regeneration at believers baptism.

become exclusively a popular movement. Few would have the intellectual powers on par with Fröhlich, and none would have the intellectual acumen in critical theology that Fröhlich had. As Bernhard Ott aptly expresses it, Fröhlich was the first and last, Neutäufer theologian.<sup>67</sup> We now turn the communal formation and development of the religious communities that would follow in Fröhlich's legacy.

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<sup>67</sup> Ott, 87.

### Chapter 3:

#### Organization and Expansion of a European Neo-Anabaptist Sect (1833-1865)

##### *Fröhlich and the Formation of the Evangelisch Taufgesinnter Gemeinden*

Fröhlich's return to Europe marked the beginning of the *Evangelisch Taufgesinnter Gemeinden*—the “Communities of Evangelical Baptists.”<sup>1</sup> From his return to Switzerland in 1833, to his death in Strassburg in 1857, Fröhlich remained the central defining figure of the Neutäufer movement. Fröhlich provided guidance and direction to his brethren and followers by letter, and by occasional pastoral visits. Nevertheless, the Neutäufer movement never developed centralized structures, as had other Neo-Protestant movements of the day. The movement would always remain egalitarian and collegial at the core of its identity. Its polity was essentially relational: congregations elected from their own ranks *Aeltester* or “Elders” (the equivalent of a bishop or overseer in Mennonite and Amish polity structures), who were then confirmed by other Elders, and who related collegially through a network of neighboring Elders and congregations. Unlike his German Baptist contemporary, Johann Gerhard Oncken, Fröhlich never attempted to centralize control under his leadership.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, as the undeniable charismatic leader of the movement, Fröhlich's word held considerable weight. Yet, his co-laborers do not seem to have felt compelled to arbitrarily follow Fröhlich's every opinion.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ott, 43.

<sup>2</sup> At one point, in the 1870's Oncken attempted to make all of the German Baptist churches in continental Europe to be branches of his central Baptist Church in Hamburg. See McBeth, 476. To be fair, however, Oncken outlived Fröhlich by almost three decades. Had Fröhlich lived longer, the Neutäufer movement might have developed rather differently.

<sup>3</sup> Surviving correspondence between Fröhlich and the various communities scattered in Switzerland, America, and Hungary, seems to indicate that these communities developed primarily

Sociologist Werner Stark has written about the vital place that religious leaders play in the founding and center of a religious movement. The charismatic leader as founder leads a “secession” to form the new “cleansed” clan, out of the old “soiled” one.<sup>4</sup> In a time of upheaval and disaffection with the religious status quo, Fröhlich became the center of a movement that drew from a number of sources. This was true intellectually, as we have noted above, as well as demographically. People of every tribe and tongue seemed to gather out of the nations into a new, sanctified, people of God. God was doing a new work in the world, precipitating the millennial return of Christ and his Kingdom. In an era of massive social and political upheaval, with accompanying radical cultural and intellectual shifts, Fröhlich’s movement provided one synthesis that was relevant to many in need of renewal.

Fröhlich became the leader of an indigenous, organic, contextual movement in Central Europe. Indeed, Fröhlich served as the unifying figure of a geographically widespread and ethnically varied community, weaving together the various strands of Continental Pietism (including Radical Pietism), *Reveil* and German Awakening impulses, influences from English Evangelical and Baptist movements- all contributing to a phenomenon that resembles many of the principles of other contemporary Restorationist movements. His movement also brought together people from a number of ethnicities, including Swiss-German, German, French, Swiss Mennonite, and Hungarian.

Though never traveling to America or to Hungary, and only seldom, in the last thirteen years of his life, back to his native Switzerland, the heartland of the movement,

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independently within their own context. Fröhlich’s letters seem to be more advisory in nature, responding to where certain leaders and members write to him for counsel on various matters.

<sup>4</sup> Werner Stark, *The Sociology of Religion, Vol. III: Religious Man* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1970), 31.

Fröhlich continued to unify and guide this movement through live and active written correspondence.

*Radicalization, Identity Definition, and Divisions.*

1836 marked a definitive year in the history of the Evangelical Baptist movement in Switzerland. As Fröhlich came to define more precisely his more radical views on baptism, tensions mounted, and led to the separation of most of the congregations of Western, French speaking Switzerland.<sup>5</sup> The separation occurred over Fröhlich's radicalized views of baptism, sanctification, and non-resistance. This would further mark Fröhlich's movement as an Anabaptist movement.

W. Hadorn, in his study of the history of the Pietist movement in the Swiss Reformed Church, notes that a significant movement of separatist radical Pietists emerged. Many of these joined with the Moravian Brethren, but some of the most radical, which he identifies as *Inspirierten* (the "Inspired"),<sup>6</sup> remained in secretive meetings or conventicles in private homes. It was one such group that Hadorn claims that Samuel Fröhlich gathered into a Neutäufer congregation in 1835.<sup>7</sup> As the Neutäufer movement gained momentum as a decisively radical and separatist movement, it likely picked up such groups that were remnants of earlier radical Pietism, as Hadorn seems to suggest was the case with this group.

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<sup>5</sup> Ruegger, 145-147. Ott 51-52. Ott notes that many of these congregations later found a home among the the new Darbyite movement that had risen their, following a visit by Darby.

<sup>6</sup> The 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the proliferation of a number of radical (some quite fanatical) sects. One of these was the Community of the True Inspiration, which placed emphasis on prophecy and direct ecstatic experience of the Spirit. Many of these radical Pietist groups would emigrate to North America and form communal societies, such as the Amana colony in Iowa. See H. Schneider, 118-124.

<sup>7</sup> W. Hadorn, *Geschichte des Pietismus in den Schweizerischen Reformierten Kirchen* (Konstanz: Carl Hirsch, 1901), 238.

*The New Restorationist Vision*

In the formulation of Fröhlich's doctrine of the Church, we see some quite formative influences of Fröhlich's education in Church History. His writings evidence a thorough familiarity with early Christian history, and his theological reflection on the nature and structure of the Church resembles strongly the purist impulses of ante-Nicene Christianity.<sup>8</sup>

Issues going on in Fröhlich's community mirror similar developments among similar groups, such as the Plymouth Brethren. For instance, the Plymouth Brethren leader Darby took a similar stance as Fröhlich did toward the church and its essential unity on earth during the division within the Plymouth Brethren into the "Open Brethren" and the "Exclusive Brethren." When Darby and his meeting expelled one member, Darby insisted that all other meetings in communion with his also consider that person out of communion, since it would be inconceivable that since there was only one church of Christ, it would be inconceivable for someone to be in communion with one congregation but not with another.<sup>9</sup> It was for the similar reason that, because certain of his former fellow church members had been expelled and subsequently joined other Baptist type churches, Fröhlich later on in his life refused to involve his movement in trans-denominational conferences or ecumenical endeavors.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Alder especially notes an affinity in Fröhlich's theology of baptism and holiness with that of Tertullian. See Garfield Alder, *Die Tauf- und Kirchenfrage in Leben und Lehre des Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1980), 38, 192-193.

<sup>9</sup> Durnbaugh, 170.

<sup>10</sup> Fröhlich. "Letter to Baptist Preachers' Conference," September 4, 1856, in *Writings of S.H. Froehlich*, CD-ROM, Version 31 (Fairbury, IL: Heritage Center Foundation, n.d.), 46.

### *Zion's Harp Hymnal*<sup>11</sup>

The chief compiler of the Zion's Harp Hymnal was G.M. Mangold, who would serve as a leader of the Neutäufer movement both in Europe, and as well as writer of a number of its hymns. This hymnal would find its place at the core of Apostolic Christian faith and identity. Most of the hymns come from Pietist and Lutheran sources, with a strongly devotional theme. A number of these reflect a church of harmony and peace and brotherhood set apart from a world of unbelief and evil, and discord. Many of the hymns that he would contribute note a themes note an evangelical and devotional nature, as well as counting the cost of being Christ's disciple. Mangold himself would contribute 26 hymns to the collection.<sup>12</sup>

### *A Millennialist Identity: Mangold's "Meditations upon the Past, Present, and Future"*

Originally published in Zurich, 1862.<sup>13</sup> Mangold, in this work, interprets the actions of world history through a providential matrix, based upon a reading to the Book of Revelation. Mangold's reading of Revelation is typological in nature, and he admits that "God's Word is an inexhaustible, living fountain" and claims that his reading cannot be a "universal or final statement," and is to be taken as "suggestions and guidances" for the present.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the ability to read and interpret the meaning of God's Word and these revelations, is only for those who have "eyes to see," in a spiritual sense, the

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<sup>11</sup> For a thorough critical study of music and hymnology of the *Zion's Harp* hymnal, consult Robert Edward Moser, "The Origin, Content, and Development of the Zion's Harp, Hymnal of the Apostolic Christian Church of America" (M.S.Ed. Thesis, Illinois State University, 1973). See also Perry A. Klopfenstein, *A Treasure of Praise: A History of the Zion's Harp Hymnal* (Fort Scott, KS: Sekan, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Moser, 55.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Geiser, ME, s.v "Neutäufer (Gemeinschaft Evangelisch Taufgesinnter)."

<sup>14</sup> G.M. Mangold, *Meditations upon the Past, Present, and Future: Remarks about the Revelations of Jesus Christ Unto His Servant John*, trans. Ernest Graf, Sr. (Akron, OH: n.p. n.d.), 8.

ability to discern at work in the present world and in history the workings of the warring spiritual forces that are described in the Book of Revelation.

Mangold essentially applies Fröhlich's conceptions of soteriology, baptismal theology, and ecclesiology, in his reading of revelation, and in his application of it in interpreting Christian History. The true church consists of those who are truly converted to the truth through repentance, and then sanctified through the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit through baptism into the one true spotless church of Christ, the communion of saints.<sup>15</sup> Mangold's meditations on revelation perhaps most systematically and holistically represent the culmination and the synthesis of the Fröhlich legacy for the new movement.

The Seven Churches of Revelation 1-3 are emblematic of true Christian churches which exist to shine forth the light of gospel to the world in present era of the New Covenant, as a herald of the coming day of God's Judgment, and the call to repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, and regeneration of a new inner nature that is sanctified, and prepared for the imminent coming of the millennial Kingdom of God. Because of this particular conception, essentially linked with the necessity and centrality of believers baptism to this schema, those who practice infant baptism represent no less than the spirit of antichrist and the whore of Babylon, out of which the saints are called. As with Fröhlich, the very concept of infant baptism is inherently anti-christian, and incompatible with Christian witness, stemming ultimately from the Devil, and false prophecy.<sup>16</sup> Mangold would also mention that one dimension of this fall was the introduction of baptism by sprinkling, instead of immersion to signify burial into the death

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<sup>15</sup> See Mangold, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Mangold, 22.

of Christ, although Mangold mentions that this is done out of ignorance and therefore God does not count it as sin when practiced in a state of ignorance, such as those faithful martyrs of the medieval era, the Waldensians, who practiced both infant baptism and sprinkling out of ignorance, but in faithfulness nonetheless.<sup>17</sup>

Mangold also interprets the seven churches typologically, to represent the various manifestations of the true church, and its decline through Christian history, due to various factors. These examples serve as a warning to the present generation to overcome, lest they lose their lampstands as did the seven figures described in these chapters. Ephesus represents the apostolic church of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, which lost the light of its first love, and thus gave way to the ensuing dispensations to come.

Mangold interprets the book of Revelation typologically through the lens of Church History, as it is mediated primarily through Gottfried Arnold's *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzeristorie*.<sup>18</sup> Mangold reads the book of Revelation through a hermeneutic akin to the dispensationalist modes of interpretation arising during his period, in reading the book of Revelation as referring to specific eras or epoch's in human history.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Mangold, 36. The Mennonite Brethren also came to a stern stance on the importance of baptism by immersion during this time as well.

<sup>18</sup> Mangold, 7. Gottfried Arnold was a 17<sup>th</sup> century leader of the Radical Pietists in Germany. His work, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historien, vom Anfang Des Neuen Testaments biss auff das Jahr Christi 1688*, marked a milestone in the writing of Church History, in that Arnold treats fairly and even sympathetically the dissident "heretical" groups, defending them against the usual polemical attacks with which most traditional histories had treated them. See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. I, *Apostolic Christianity*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Rev.(New York: Scribners, 1910), 39. Cf. F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 175-176. Arnold's favorable view toward history's religious dissenters on many points feeds well into Mangold's aim to demonstrate a radical alternative reading of history through the eyes of the religious dissenters to the mainstream, in much the same way that Landmark Baptists would read it, tracing a continuous line of pure biblical *remnant* church, set against the major mainstream Christian tradition, considered to be apostate.

<sup>19</sup> The most famous and influential of such readings has been that of John Nelson Darby, whose schema for understanding the timeline of the end times is still widely applied to the present among many conservative evangelical protestant churches that have been influenced by Dispensationalism. See

In Mangold's schema, Christian history is divided seven distinct periods, based upon the Seven Visions, described in Revelation, and are typified by the Seven Churches of Revelation 1-3.<sup>20</sup> The First Period, typified by the Church of Ephesus, represents the Apostolic Church, from the era of the first century (1-120 A.D.). This era is represented by the rider on a white horse, which is Christ, "who with the word of truth in the Gospel went forth to win the victory of the truth in the world" and who has the authority to seal the elect.<sup>21</sup>

The Second Period, typified by the Church of Smyrna, represents the Era of the Martyrs (120-260 A.D.), and typified by the "woman in travail" persecuted by the Dragon in Revelation 12:2-3. Mangold interprets this travail not only as the external persecution by the Roman authorities, but also as the internal dissensions affecting the Church within, which stem from the loss of Christian love and the embrace of "perverted doctrines" such as superstitious reliance on the sacraments and, above all, the introduction of infant baptism (under Cyprian).<sup>22</sup> Due to such invasions of speculative theological divisions, such as the controversy over the date of Easter in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century, inner dissensions brewed and opened the way for other dissensions.<sup>23</sup> Thus the rider on the red horse (Revelation 6:3-4) takes the peace from the earth, which Mangold interprets as the peace of the Apostolic Church. Nevertheless, it is an era of many white robed martyrs (7:8-14) who have overcome through Christ, and who hold palms as

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Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church*, 169 and C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1958), 45-56.

<sup>20</sup> A full synoptical outline of the various eras and their representative figures woven throughout the text of Revelation is found in his "Appendix" to the book. See Mangold, 293-300.

<sup>21</sup> Mangold, 293.

<sup>22</sup> Mangold, 63.

<sup>23</sup> One should note the parallel here with the Stone-Campbell Restorationist movement in early 19<sup>th</sup> century American, which sought to restore Christian unity through purely biblical vocabulary and avoidance of non-biblical language for Christian concepts as divisive and unedifying.

symbols of victory and peace. Thus, even during this early time, many, though still a minority, of Christian teachers began to introduce the leaven that would lead to the apostasy of the entire church—the one third of the stars that fell from the sky to the earth—viz. from heavenly knowledge to earthly knowledge.

The great upset occurs during the Third Period (260-606 A.D.), typified by the Church at Pergamum. This is the period of the Church's rise to political power, which it embraces due to the weakening of its witness that began in the previous period. This is the era of Constantine's rise to power and the reforms that he brought about through which Christianity became ensnared in worldly power. Mangold interprets the black horse whose rider carries scales (Rev. 6:5-6) to represent insatiable hunger and greed for power and economic gain. It was an era where "political and speculative" ambitions and designs crept into the church, not only because of the influence of Constantine, but due much in part to the unspiritual faith of the many masses who sought in the Constantinian alliance the means of worldly power and success.<sup>24</sup> The result was the widespread shift in Christian culture and liturgy to a "form and formalism" that was instituted by coercion, rather than by voluntary faith and conviction, and thus the inner substance of Christianity becomes hollow, even as the introduction of art, architecture, and elaborate rituals appear outwardly beautiful, but accompany spiritual "ruination."<sup>25</sup> This was an era of widespread "spiritual adultery and idolatry" in which the true church became a persecuted minority, now known as "heretics," symbolized by the flight of the woman into the wilderness (Rev. 2:12-17).

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<sup>24</sup> Mangold, 64-65.

<sup>25</sup> Mangold, 67.

Mangold interprets such dissenting movements as the Novatianists and Donatists of this period as the truly faithful remnant of the Apostolic Church.<sup>26</sup> Augustine is the key figure in the Church's complete shift into theological heresy, most centrally for his teaching on the meaning of baptism. Although Mangold recognizes that the doctrine of infant baptism did not begin with Augustine, it was still Augustine that gave the theological basis for a baptism *ex operato*, the validity of which did not depend on the candidate's own volition, let alone sense of sorrow for sin, and repentance. Thus the theological foundation was laid for the new worldly false church. Of Augustine's theories of baptism and their subsequent influence on the theological thought of Christianity for the next millennia, Mangold writes: "Upon such a foundation rests the entire structure of the worldly church, the outward form and nominal Christendom."<sup>27</sup>

The Fourth Period (606-1517 A.D.), was typified by the Church of Thyatira. This era marks the full measure of the Apostasy, height of the Beast's power on earth, during the Medieval Era. The rise of the Papacy, as in much of Protestant polemical work, represents the height of this infidelity of the false church in collusion with the worldly power. The rise of antichrist to power leads to the institution of the Inquisition, where those preaching true faithfulness and righteousness, such as the Waldensians, Bohemian Brethren (Hussites), Wycliffites, are blasphemously persecuted and killed in the name of Christ. These represent the slain martyrs crying out for justice from underneath the altar

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<sup>26</sup> The Novatianists and Donatists were 3<sup>rd</sup> century movements that separated from the mainstream Church over the issue of whether to readmit to full communion Christians who had lapsed during the persecutions of that time. These movements held that the integrity of the pure church must be upheld, and that it was impossible for those who betrayed Christ to be restored, and that the mainstream Catholic Church was now fallen due to pollution of these impure members among their ranks, especially in the clergy.

<sup>27</sup> Mangold, 95.

(Rev. 6:9-11).<sup>28</sup> The Crusades, and the institution of the doctrine of purgatory for the sake of indulgences, illustrate further the Beast's lust for power and wealth, in contrast to true Christian virtues of peace and simplicity. It is now a full counterfeit Church, the domain of the Antichrist.

The Fifth Period (1517-1830 A.D.), typified by the Church of Sardis, is the era of the Reformation. Mangold refers to this era as the "The imperfect work of the Reformation, which had a name as though it lived, but was dead."<sup>29</sup> Mangold here follows Fröhlich's essential teachings of the inadequacy of the Reformation for the restoration of apostolic Christianity, despite its early potential for doing so. This era was ushered in by the "angel of the open book" (Rev. 10:1-4), which symbolizes the new openness of the Bible to bring light into the darkness of Medieval superstition.<sup>30</sup>

The Sixth Period (1830-Judgment), is the era of the Churches of Philadelphia and Laodicea. This is the era in which Mangold found himself, and of which he considered his movement to be a part. In Mangold schema of cosmic history, the year 1830 marked a new eon in cosmic history. The Seventh Period, is the Millennial Kingdom of God on Earth, which will reign for a thousand years, before the silent eternity of joy and bliss.

Mangold's whole schema of history reflects a prevalent "declension theory" of Church History, which posits a pristine golden age which characterized the early church from which it eventually fell from grace. The *True Church* was the *remnant* of faithful Christians after the fall of mainstream Christendom. Thus a *remnant history* would emerge especially among radical and primitivist Christian groups who saw themselves in

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<sup>28</sup> Mangold, 70.

<sup>29</sup> Mangold, 297.

<sup>30</sup> Mangold, 111-112. Mangold also sees in this new dispensation God's mercy toward the Germanic and Nordic peoples, in giving them the opportunity to hear the gospel, as they before had the chance, as their "conversion" came only through force in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

opposition to the mainstream of the Fallen or “Constantinian” false Christianity that prevailed. The suffering, embattled, yet faithful Church is the center of History, from its foundation. The Beast’s raging against the Church was initially expressed in Roman Imperial Persecution, but soon turned to more subtle and sinister means: Constantinian Christendom. False Christianity would be the form of the beast to reign until the end of days, against which the true remnant Church must be vigilant and ready. Mangold saw the blights of Papacy and Islam as judgment on nominal Christianity, and part of God’s work to call his people out of bondage.<sup>31</sup>

Mangold here explicitly provides an historical narrative for his new movement that placed it within this concept of cosmic history. Yet it also marks the fall and shortcomings of these various remnant groups, such as Waldensians, Anabaptists, and Quakers. Mangold’s narrative is thus simultaneously *remnant* and *restorationist* in perspective – both prolific impulses among radical religious groups in both Europe and America in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It provides a narrative for this movement that connects with broader impulses of God’s work in history, while giving it a unique and central place in the contemporary world of its emergence. There is no doubt that for Mangold and for the other early leaders of the Neutäufer in their day, their movement was at the center of God’s work in world of the early and mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. We can also see that what Fröhlich had begun in the earlier years of the movement became solidified in the generation of his followers, and with this organized front set to expand throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>31</sup> Mangold, 108.

*Neutäufer and Baptisten: Two Parallel Movements, Two Differing Trajectories*

Baptist historians tend to note in their treatments of Continental European Baptists their unique history and characteristics which tend to set them apart from other Baptists of the English speaking world. This includes the German Pietist movements of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the continental Neo-Pietist Awakening movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> Both of these movement have distinct, though not entirely unrelated, histories and characteristics from British and American evangelical and revivalist movements.

Johann Gerhard Oncken, only three years older than Samuel Fröhlich, would lead a life remarkably similar to that of Fröhlich. These two contemporaries were both of German speaking ethnicity, and would come to lead two parallel believer's baptizing movements on the European continent. Both were to a large degree shaped by the Awakening movement in the German speaking world at that time, largely influenced by Anglo-evangelical movements in Britain. Like Fröhlich, Oncken was also commissioned by the Continental Society, during its short life, to preach the need for personal conversion and baptism on the European Continent, after experiencing his own dynamic conversion and conviction for the need to be baptized in water as a confessing believer.

Toward the end of his life, in his final years in Strassburg, Fröhlich and his movement became more self-isolated and closed off from other communities, even from the Mennonites and Baptists, to whom his movement bore most similarity. His encounters with Alsatian Mennonites were not positive for him, and he commented that they would choose rather to "remain in sin" than to embrace his movement and what it stood for,

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<sup>32</sup> H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1987), 466-467.

accusing them of falling away from the ideals and teachings of their 16<sup>th</sup> century leader, Menno Simons, whom Fröhlich admired.<sup>33</sup>

Further work with Baptists would also prove impossible. Only a few months before his death in 1857, Fröhlich would be invited to a conference of Baptist leaders in Zurich that had aimed to bring together the various factions of Baptists in Germany, France, and Switzerland. Fröhlich's response would set the isolationist course that his movement would take toward other denominations for the next century.

The formation and development of Samuel Fröhlich and the Neutäufer movement in Switzerland and South Germany represents a number of historically fascinating aspects of a unique period of transition in European history in general, and in European religious history in particular. Like all movements, it was invariably a product of its time and culture. And it also represents a renewal of the Anabaptist impulse in 19<sup>th</sup> century, much in the same way that the Schwarzenau Brethren had at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **The Origin and Spread of the Nazarene Movement in Eastern Europe**

As Fröhlich's movement developed and spread in the context of West Europe, especially around the areas of Switzerland, Alsace, and South Germany, it also began to spread eastward, into the domains of the Austrian Empire, particularly into the southern regions of what was then known as Hungary.<sup>34</sup> This region at the time was the "wild west" of the Hapsburg Empire. Due to large tracts of formerly vacant wild land being opened up to development and farming, the region became a mixing pot for various

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<sup>33</sup> Alder, 169.

<sup>34</sup> This region became subsequently divided up after World War I, and presently comprises the area encompassing the southern regions of modern Hungary, western Romania, and northern areas of the former Yugoslavia.

ethnic groups, including Danube-Swabian Germans, Hungarians (Magyar), Serbs, Slovaks, Romanians, and even a number of French settlers. All of these groups would come to be represented among the ranks of the Nazarene movement of 19<sup>th</sup> century Austria-Hungary.

The first Hungarians to hear Samuel Fröhlich's teachings were two traveling journeymen from Hungary, John Denkel and John Kropacsek, who were learning the watchmaking trade in Zürich, Switzerland. Through these initial contacts and later developments—most notably through the leadership of Joseph Bella and Louis Hencsey, a distinct inculturation of the Neutäufer movement emerged.<sup>35</sup> According to Eotvos, the starting point of the Nazarene movement in Hungary began with the communion of four Hungarian men in Budapest on May 8, 1840. This was the occasion of the (re)baptism of Louis Hencsey who was to become a major leader and apostle of the Nazarene faith in Hungary. Denkel and Kropacsek, the two who were baptized by Fröhlich in Switzerland, were present, in addition to Joseph Bella, who would later himself be baptized and become a major proponent of the Nazarene movement in Hungary, and later with the Apostolic Christian movement in North America. Eotvos notes that while the Nazarene movement was indebted to Fröhlich and adopted much of his theology and practice, they nevertheless took on their own distinct flavor under the leadership of Hencsey.<sup>36</sup> Much of the development and spread of the Nazarene movement in Eastern Europe occurred in the revolutionary and post-revolutionary era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

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<sup>35</sup> For a detailed account of the story of the founders of the Hungarian Nazarene movement and their contacts with Fröhlich and the Swiss brethren, see the account of the 19<sup>th</sup> century contemporary scholar and political figure, Karoly Eotvos— Karoly Eotvos, *The Nazarenes*, trans. Joseph Csaba, ed. Perry A. Klopfenstein, (Fort Scott, KS: Sekan Publications, 1997).

<sup>36</sup> Both Eotvos and Aleksov underscore this point.

The experience of the Kropacek and Denkel as brokers of a Western-European Germanic faith into Hungary is paralleled by the experiences of the earliest Baptist missionaries into Hungary. Like Kropacek and Denkel, the first Hungarian Baptists were journeymen learning a trade in Western Europe.<sup>37</sup>

The revolution of 1848 had profound impacts upon Hungarian and Austrian identity that would set the tone for culture and society until the First World War. Bojan Aleksov in his recent ground-breaking work on this period of Nazarene history, notes that it was during this time that the Nazarene movement came to its peak.<sup>38</sup> It was during this period that the movement became fully inculturated into the context of central-Eastern Europe and saw its greatest spread and growth in this region.

The Nazarenes drew from many sources for the generation of their movement in mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungary. These included ethnic Donauschwaben Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks, and Serbs. While many of the earliest converts were from Roman Catholic background, as indeed would continue to be the case through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Nazarenes later drew most heavily upon those of the various ethnic and minority churches in the region, especially Hungarian Reformed, and Slovak Lutherans.<sup>39</sup> This

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<sup>37</sup> McBeth, 487-488.

<sup>38</sup> Aleksov's central thesis in his work—focusing especially upon the Serbian ethnic group—is that the rapid forces of modernization brought about an acute sense of cultural disequilibrium of sorts, and that therefore the time was ripe for a religious movement, such as that of the Nazarenes, with tight-knit social structures and sense of identity to take root in the midst of a traditional order that had been usurped. The Nazarenes, Aleksov argues, provided the synthesis of the traditional “pre-modern” folk society, but with the adaptation to the modern cultural idiom that was upsetting the traditional order in this part of Europe. See Bojan Aleksov, *Religious Dissent between the Modern and the National: Nazarenes in Hungary and Serbia 1850-1914*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 87-116.

<sup>39</sup> Aleksov notes that the Slovak Lutherans were especially vulnerable to the Nazarene movement due to their place in South Hungary as a dual ethnic minority in the region, as well as their religious Lutheran minority status amongst predominantly Catholic Slovaks. Because of this, and the unflinching implementation of Slovak language and cultural identity, most of the Slovaks came from Lutheran background. Aleksov, *Religious Dissent*, 77. This would seem to further highlight that the Nazarene movement serves as both a neo-Protestant renewal movement, as well as a movement of ethnic contextualization.

would seem to further highlight that the Nazarene movement serves as both a neo-Protestant renewal movement, as well as a movement of ethnic contextualization.

Serbian historian Branko Bjelajac notes that because of this, each of these confessions, highly divided on both religious and ethnic lines, came to a common agreement in opposition of the Nazarene movement, by which they all felt threatened.<sup>40</sup>

It was during this period that the Nazarenes became especially solidified in their tenet of Christian non-resistance. While often not attempting to dodge compulsory military service altogether, they nevertheless drew the line at killing, and refused to take up arms, choosing non-combatant alternatives where they were available.<sup>41</sup> There would be many occasions throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries would often be bitterly tested on this, which often resulted in suffering imprisonment, torture, and even death. The great test would be hammered out in the growing atmosphere of nationalism that was taking root in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe.<sup>42</sup> Unlike longer established groups, such as the Mennonites in Volhynia and Galicia (in present day Poland and Ukraine), the Nazarenes were not permitted exemption from combatant military service, often on the grounds that the Nazarenes, being a new movement that was rapidly growing provided the opportunity for anyone to join who wished to dodge military service.<sup>43</sup> It is also of significance to note that national or ethnic difference meant little to the Nazarenes. This is quite amazing

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<sup>40</sup> Bjelejac, 179. Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutherans, and Reformed leaders met in an interconfessional conference to strategize on how to oppose the Nazarene movement and sent letters encouraging the government to only recognize marriages performed by their legal confessions, and to give to legal recognition to the Nazarene faith.

<sup>41</sup> This is an understanding of Christian Pacifism that some distinguish from more radical and separatist versions of Christian pacifism, often referred to as the “Non-Resistance” position. It is rooted in a premillennialist “interim ethic” in which Christians live free from violence and bloodshed, in anticipation and preparation for the imminent coming of Christ’s return, Judgment, and inauguration of the Kingdom of God. See Herman A. Hoyt, “Non-Resistance” in *War: Four Christian Views*, ed. Robert C. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991).

<sup>42</sup> Aleksov, *Religious Dissent*, 126-129.

<sup>43</sup> Aleksov finds this quite unlikely, given the strict regulations and testing that was required to become a part of the community. Aleksov, *Religious Dissent*, 127.

considering that all other major religious groups of the time were invariably connected with one of the various ethnic groups. Even the broader Anabaptist story, the Nazarenes would seem to be breaking ground here in this period of time.<sup>44</sup> Peter Brock has argued that it was the Nazarene's missionary impulse and rapid expansion, coupled with their uncompromising conviction of non-resistance that attracted such virulent opposition and persecution from the authorities.<sup>45</sup> While the Mennonites did maintain in general pacifist principles, they were generally agreeable to settle in a fixed area and not proselytize their neighbors. They would not allow their message to be compromised.

The Nazarene movement spread rapidly throughout Central and Eastern Europe, especially during the mid and later 19<sup>th</sup> century. Through the lens of renewal history, we see how the Nazarene movement served as a dynamic "Neo-Protestant" movement of religious renewal, much in the same way that other parallel movements played this role in Eastern Europe, such as the Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists.<sup>46</sup> Yet the Nazarenes would represent a uniquely Neo-Anabaptist manifestation in Eastern Europe. As such, they would represent a fresh new manifestation of Anabaptism that was vital and relevant to the spiritual hunger and needs of many in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Central and Eastern European context, much in the same way as the Neutäufer in West Europe.

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<sup>44</sup> Aleksov asserts that "Unlike the Mennonites who were predominantly ethnic German, the Nazarenes were of an extremely mixed ethnic origin. By the middle of the century, the Nazarenes spread to southern parts of Hungary, which were traditionally the most diverse in terms of ethnic composition, inhabited by Magyars, Serbs, Germans, Romanians, Slovaks and others. Up to the present day, ethnic background is a matter of minor if any importance to the Nazarenes who, united in faith, actively sought out a solution to the troublesome nationality issues, which had historically rent the region." Bojan Aleksov, "The Dynamics of Extinction: The Nazarene Religious Community in Yugoslavia after 1945" (M.A. Thesis, Central European University, 1999), 1.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Brock, "The Nonresistance of the Hungarian Nazarenes to 1914," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 50:1 (January 1980), 53-63.

<sup>46</sup> Parush Parushev and Toivo Pilli, "Protestantism in Eastern Europe to the Present Day" in Alister McGrath et al., eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

## Chapter 4

### **A European Faith on the American Frontier: Immigration, Expansion and Ethnicization, 1847-1890**

In this chapter we explore the combination of factors that led to the establishment and formation of the Apostolic Christian Church in 19<sup>th</sup> century America, with special attention to issues of immigration, religious identity renewal, ethnicization and Americanization. Spreading mostly among recent European immigrants (mostly Swiss and South German), the movement brought together both those who had come from Amish and Mennonite background and those who came from more mainstream religious backgrounds, much in the same way that the early Neutäufer had in Europe. However, while in many ways this paralleled developments in Western Europe, there were a number of key differences that would differentiate what would become the Apostolic Christian Church of America from the Neutäufer of Western Europe.

The proportion of members coming from Amish and Mennonite background would be much higher than in Europe. Also, and perhaps most significant, the distinct differences of life in the new American context brought with it a whole host of issues to bear upon the experiences of those communities initially forged by German speaking immigrants on the American Midwest frontier. Through a distinct process of ethnicization and Americanization, the Apostolic Christian Church, though remaining German speaking until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, would become considerably distinct from its sister churches in Europe, highlighted through tensions and struggles that would ensue with a new wave of European immigrants toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the first generation of Fröhlich's movement in America, contemporaneous to the first generation in Europe, the movement served much the same role as it had in Western Europe: an Anabaptist renewal movement. This role it would seem to play exclusively amongst first generation Swiss and German immigrants, especially amongst the recently arrived Amish-Mennonites.

The first arrival of Fröhlich's movement into North America occurred in 1847. By this point, as we have mentioned above, the European movement, especially in the German speaking regions of Switzerland and south Germany had developed a sense of distinctive communal and religious identity. They had by and large formed how they would define themselves both with and against the preceding movements which had contributed to their own formation, namely Continental Protestantism, Anabaptist-Mennonitism, and Evangelical Neo-Pietism, as worked out theologically in Fröhlich's preaching and writings. But how would this identity become understood in the new American context of the new immigrants.

A common European experience and cultural identity of ethnic German immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century would ensure that the German European identity of the Apostolic Christian Church and its message would remain easily translatable and appealing among the first generation of German speaking immigrants to the American frontiers. The language barrier, as well as geography would also ensure a degree of cultural separation from the mainstream of Anglo-American culture and its influences, at least until later generations. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, German ethnic immigration to the rural areas of the west and Midwest had by and large ceased, and was coming to be superseded by new patterns of immigration to newer and more burgeoning industrial

urban areas of the United States. These developments would pose serious challenges toward the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

All of this was occurring at the critical juncture of the second major wave of ethnic German immigration to the North American continent.<sup>1</sup> Settlement of Apostolic Christians (at this time still called Evangelical Baptists) generally followed patterns of ethnic Swiss patterns of immigration, with dense settlements in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Lewis County, New York. These migrations had been caused by various factors, including the burgeoning population of Western Europe during this time, the promise of cheap and productive land available on the western frontier of the expanding empire of the United States, and the prospect of religious freedom, especially for persecuted minority groups, especially Anabaptists such as the Amish, Mennonites, and the new Neutäufer movement..

It was amongst these recently arrived immigrants that the early formation of what would become the Apostolic Christian Church of America came to be established and spread. The German immigrants of the 19<sup>th</sup> century frontier had an entire history and culture that would not become challenged in some particular ways until later on into the

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<sup>1</sup> We are here speaking primarily of the immigrations that occurred during the ante-bellum years of the Early Republic, particularly 1830-1860. primarily to the then frontier regions of what is now known as the American Midwest, especially in the states of Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana, which were then being formed and settled. The first wave of German immigration that occurred during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, primarily to the then frontier of the British colony of Pennsylvania. By the time of the arrival of the second wave of German immigrants in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, nearly a century of different experiences, both of the Europe and of the American context had separated the more Americanized German descendants of the older settlers, known as the Pennsylvania Germans or “Pennsylvania Dutch.” For a fuller treatment of the variations of German-American religiosity, with particular attention to differences between 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century migrations, see Carl E. Schneider, *The German Church on the American Frontier: A Study in the Rise of Religion among the Germans of the West*, (St. Louis: Eden Publishing, 1939 [Reprint: Wipf & Stock, 2009]). Cf. Steven M. Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land: Pennsylvania Germans in the Early Republic*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002.

20<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of American nationalism and nativism, surrounding the events of World War I.

### *The Appeal among Amish and Mennonites Immigrants*

The Amish came to America in two great waves of immigration. The first occurred in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, to Pennsylvania and the Middle Atlantic colonies, integrating there with Pennsylvania German culture, from which they subsequently spread through the Midwest, and other parts of the United States. A second wave of immigration came more than a century later, and will concern us more here.

Strasbourg had been an early center of the Anabaptist movement. However, a significant presence of Mennonites would not be found in the area until the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. Mennonites of Swiss Bernese descent, had settled in Alsace and south Germany as early as 1643 to escape persecution in the Swiss Canton of Bern. Immigration to rural Alsace and the Jura mountains was especially heavy in the early 1670's due to intensified persecution in Canton Bern. They were welcomed and tolerated especially for their agricultural skills.<sup>2</sup>

French historian Jean Seguy, a French historian and sociologist, accounts for the long development and formation of this people in France, and how their faith and community life were shaped through their insular agrarian-based society which had developed from the 17<sup>th</sup> century through the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> During this time, a definite subculture emerged, which distinguished the Mennonites by their rural agrarian lifestyle,

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<sup>2</sup> Jean Seguy, "The French Anabaptists: Four and One-Half Centuries of History," translated by Hannes Maria Aleman, in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 58 (July 1984), 207-208.

<sup>3</sup> See Jean Seguy, "Religion and Agricultural Success: The Vocational Life of the French Anabaptists from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries," translated by Michael Shank, in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 47 (July 1973), 179-224.

the preservation of their Swiss German language, their family-centered communal lifestyle, and their plain, distinct style of dress. All of this, furthermore, came to be understood within the context of their religious faith. Matters of religion and doctrine could not be so easily separated from their distinct communal life.

The second wave of Amish-Mennonite immigrants came following the end of the Napoleonic era in western Europe. As Seguy reports, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras in French history (1789-1815) were a difficult time of transition for the Amish-Mennonites in France. Though now considered full French citizens under the new republic, they were required to fulfill the duties of all French citizens, without exception, including subjection to military conscription, and swearing of oaths.<sup>4</sup>

The large scale immigration was triggered by the growing militarism and nationalism, and increased pressure of national cultural hegemony among the Amish communities to conform to state pressure, especially on the issue of military conscription. Many of the Amish families had chosen to emigrate, rather than allow their sons to be drafted into military service, or allow their communal values and customs to be compromised through social pressure from the outside world. Most of these immigrants came from Alsace-Lorraine, France, and southern Germany, where Amish and Mennonites of Swiss origin had settled since the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries to escape persecution by Swiss authorities. When these communities felt again threatened in their new homelands, and no longer found the provisions for military exemption that they had previously, many of them opted to emigrate again. This was especially true in France and Germany, where nationalism and militarism and budding imperialism were on the rise throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By mid-century, prospects for the ability of Amish-Mennonites to continue on in

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<sup>4</sup> Seguy, "The French Anabaptists," 212.

the traditional agrarian communal cultural way of life looked dim. Many saw the only options as accommodation or emigration. Seguy remarks that,

A significant number [of Amish]...emigrated to the United States. There they were able to rejoin their Swiss and German brothers in the faith; they were able to settle on farmlands suitable to their needs, and they were able to carry on, at least in part, the way of life which they had established in northeastern France.<sup>5</sup>

Having earlier noted the tension between the more radicalized group that desired to emigrate, and the more moderate group that opted to remain and compromise with the new social situation, Seguy notes that the emigration of this large number of French Amish had “upset the equilibrium” that had held the community in balance between the two elements. With the emigration of large numbers of traditionalist Amish-Mennonites, those left behind eventually succumbed in large degree to the cultural pressures around them to accommodate in matters of language: “The decade of 1850-60 marked the peak of emigration abroad and saw the progressive disappearance of the distinguishing characteristics of an earlier Anabaptism, the one upon which Amman had impressed his personal stamp.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus many of the Amish and Mennonite immigrants that immigrated to North America during this period had been radicalized by their recent experiences in Europe, and had already developed a thoroughly insular, protectionist, and isolationist posture when they emigrated to North America beginning as early as the 1820’s, and lasting through the 1860’s. This wave of immigrants was initially determined to preserve, in an unqualified sense, the life that they had known in Alsace-Lorraine. They left, in part, to preserve what they considered to be the core and uncompromisable aspects of their faith.

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<sup>5</sup> Seguy, “The French Anabaptists,” 213.

<sup>6</sup> Seguy, “The French Anabaptists,” 213.

Yet they also left to avoid, perhaps unconsciously, the perceived threat of forces of modernization.

Their mindset was—as is the case perhaps with many immigrant communities—to take Europe to America. They were thus, on the whole, unprepared to deal with the challenges that the North American context would bring to bear on these key issues of modernization and religious identity. Many would find that the world that they had left behind in Europe was gone, and that new adaptations would have to be made. Others, which eventually became the Old Order Amish, sought to preserve the life, customs, and language of their European forbears as much as possible. Soon after immigration, within a generation, the newly founded immigrant communities would be caught up in a nationwide upheaval among the entire Amish-Mennonite community in America as to how to deal with the modernizing cultural forces taking place in America. Historian Steven Nolt would call this period of 1850-1878 among Amish in America as the “years of division.”<sup>7</sup>

Upon immigrating to America, the new Amish immigrants spread to a variety of areas, mostly on the newly opened frontier lands in much of what is now the American Midwest. Areas of heavy settlement included Lewis County in upstate western New York, Ohio, Allen, Wells, and Adams counties in northeastern Indiana, and central Illinois around Peoria, and surrounding counties.<sup>8</sup>

The first establishment of the Fröhlichite Neutäufer movement in America occurred amongst the Amish-Mennonite immigrants of Lewis County, in upstate New

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<sup>7</sup> It was during this period that several factions of Amish would emerge, ranging from Old Order traditionalists, to moderate conservative, and “New Order” groups. See Steven M. Nolt, *A History of the Amish* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2003), 157-192.

<sup>8</sup> Nolt, *A History of the Amish*, 161.

York, due west of the Adirondack Mountains. Thus the story of the establishment of the Fröhlich movement occurs within the matrix of an isolated new-immigrant frontier community. The area had been settled from the 1830's through the 1850's by Amish-Mennonites<sup>9</sup> emigrating from the of region Alsace-Lorraine, France—primarily from the vicinity of Metz.<sup>10</sup> (Most of these immigrants left France in response to the new compulsory military service laws in France.) Thus, the settlement around the vicinity of Croghan, New York was only about ten years old when Benedict Weyeneth, the first “Evangelical Baptist”<sup>11</sup> Elder arrived in 1847, the major influx of French Amish-Mennonite immigrants not arriving until after 1837.<sup>12</sup> Weyeneth, twenty-eight years old at the time, and a close associate of Fröhlich in Switzerland, had been ordained Elder with the specific commission of traveling to Lewis County to minister to the Amish-Mennonites of the area.<sup>13</sup>

Weyeneth and his associate came at the request of the local Amish-Mennonite leadership to share with the congregation their views on faith and practice. Yousey reports that there had been a good deal of turbulence within the community concerning issues of faith and religious practices which lead up to the sending of this invitation.<sup>14</sup> Particularly adamant in the push for change was the Amish-Mennonite Minister, Rudolph

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<sup>9</sup> The sources refer to this group at times as “Amish” and at other times as “Mennonite.” I use the term Amish-Mennonite, because this would be a later name for this same group which would distinguish them from the “Old Order” Amish, as well as the “Old Mennonite” Church. The Amish-Mennonite group would go through divisions in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century separating in Old Order Amish and more progressive and moderate Amish-Mennonites. Many of these latter would become part of what is today the “Conservative Mennonite Conference.” See Nolt, *A History of the Amish*, 193-221.

<sup>10</sup> See Arlene Yousey, *Strangers and Pilgrims: History of Lewis County Mennonites*, (Croghan, NY: Arlene Yousey, 1987), 26-39.

<sup>11</sup> “Evangelical Baptist” was the earliest English name for the Fröhlich movement in America, a direct translation of the German “Evangelische Taufgesinnter.”

<sup>12</sup> Arletha Zehr Bender, *A History of the Mennonites in Croghan and Lowville, New York*, (n.p., n.d. [ca.1964]), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Perry Klopfenstein, *Marching to Zion: A History of the Apostolic Christian Church of America, 1847-1982*, (Fort Scott, KS: Sekan Printing, 1984), 78.

<sup>14</sup> Yousey, 48.

Virkler. When Weyeneth asked if he would be permitted to read to the congregation a song, Virkler consented. Weyeneth speech concerned the necessity of the New Birth experience and the necessity of a baptism of faith by immersion. A 19<sup>th</sup> century Amish-Mennonite account of the Evangelical Baptist (also popularly called “New Amish”) reads:

They had themselves [the Amish-Mennonite converts] baptized again. Their main doctrines were that no person could be saved unless they belonged to their church, the form of baptism had to be immersion, and they made a big thing of the New Birth.<sup>15</sup>

After often hearing Weyeneth’s preaching from the scriptures “Be baptized, every one of you,” Minister Virkler and his family left the Amish-Mennonite Church to begin the first “Evangelical Baptist” church in North America. Two years later, the Bishop himself, Joseph Farney, left to join the new group. The remaining members called upon neighboring bishops in Canada and Pennsylvania to ordain new ministers for them, yet even many of these left. In all, about three-fourths of the Amish-Mennonite community in the Lewis County vicinity joined with the Evangelical Baptists in that time.<sup>16</sup>

By the early 1850’s, inroads had been made among the Amish-Mennonites of central Illinois, in Woodford County, in the vicinity of Partridge Prairie, near Metamora. Conditions here were very primitive at the time, and worship services were conducted in a barn, with some attendees walking as far as twenty five miles for services.<sup>17</sup> Through a number of circumstances, Illinois would become a major center of the Apostolic Christian Church movement. The availability of inexpensive and fertile newly developed land attracted many immigrants, including many Swiss immigrants who were followers

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Yousey, 52-53.

<sup>16</sup> Yousey, 48.

<sup>17</sup> Steven R. Estes, *Living Stones: A History of the Metamora Mennonite Church* (Metamora, IL: Metamora Mennonite Church, 1984), 76-79.

of Fröhlich's movement in Switzerland, as well as Amish-Mennonites—many of whom would be won over to the Apostolic Christian faith.

By the 1860's, a significant portion of the Swiss Mennonites of the Chippewa, Ohio community (later Crown Hill Mennonite Congregation) had left to form the Apostolic Christian Church of Rittman, Ohio.<sup>18</sup> This is now one of the largest Apostolic Christian congregations in the world, with over 1,000 in weekly attendance.<sup>19</sup> A similar defection occurred around the same time among the Amish-Mennonite settlers of Davis county, Iowa, with prominent Amish minister Christ Kropf leaving the Amish Mennonite Church to help organize the Apostolic Christian Church in that area.<sup>20</sup>

A similar movement occurred in Northeast Indiana in Allen, Wells, and Adams Counties in 1862, which had absorbed a large number of Amish-Mennonite immigrants in the preceding decades. This led to the establishment of two of the historically strong Apostolic Christian congregations of Bluffton<sup>21</sup>—the largest single Apostolic Christian congregation in the world—and Leo.<sup>22</sup> J.C. Wenger mentions that a group of Swiss Mennonites from Berne, Indiana left that community to join the Apostolic Christian Church.<sup>23</sup>

The new Apostolic Christian faith also appealed to recently arrived Swiss Mennonite immigrants to the Willamette valley of Oregon. Led by Christian C. Wenger (from Ohio, whose father was a Swiss immigrant) many of these disorganized Swiss

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<sup>18</sup> James O. Lehman, *Crosswinds: From Switzerland to Crown Hill* (Rittman, OH: Crown Hill Mennonite Church, 1975), 28-30.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.apostolicchristian.org/congregations.php?id=77> (accessed April 30, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Melvin Gingerich, *The Mennonites in Iowa* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1939), 62. Gingerich notes immersion baptism as a key point in Apostolic Christian proselytism.

<sup>21</sup> Klopfenstein, *Marching to Zion*, 158-161.

<sup>22</sup> Klopfenstein, *Marching to Zion*, 180-182.

<sup>23</sup> John Christian Wenger, *The Mennonites in Indiana and Michigan* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1961), 357.

Mennonites joined the Apostolic Christian church, as they were the first to care for their spiritual needs. They were attracted by a “warm piety” and “definite salvation experience” which the Apostolic Christians emphasized.<sup>24</sup>

In all of the above instances, the renewal theme is evident. For those of an Amish or Mennonite background, the Apostolic Christian tradition presented a viable option for both continuity and change. It provided continuity in the essential aspects of an Anabaptist identity as they had understood it—separation from the world, believers baptism, ethic of nonresistance, and a strong sense of a bonded peoplehood. Yet the Apostolic Christian tradition also presented for change. As with other similar 19<sup>th</sup> century neo-Anabaptist movements of renewal, the Apostolic Christian Church served as a mediator of Pietism as an agent of renewal, as is best seen in the shifts in piety oriented toward personal appropriation of faith as essential—rather than simple willingness to abide by the *Ordnung* of the community.

The Zion’s Harp hymnal in particular, served as a bridge of critical modernization and renewal, through its synthetic quality of holding in creative tension traditional Amish and Mennonite emphases of martyrdom and hope for those who patiently endure the rejection and suffering naturally due those who follow Christ, along with Pietist notions present in many of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century hymns.

What accounts for this large scale defection? Yousey notes the strong sense of family connections that bound the community together in the lonely American frontier. This, coupled with the sharp separatism of the Evangelical Baptist group may have had a

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<sup>24</sup> Hope Kauffman Lind, *Apart & Together: Mennonites in Oregon and Neighboring States 1876-1976* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1990), 137-138.

part in encouraging other family members to join for the sake of maintaining family relationships.<sup>25</sup>

History shows that the spread of the Apostolic Christian movement among the 19<sup>th</sup> century European Amish immigrant communities anticipated by a generation similar movements of renewal that would take root among these Amish and Mennonite Communities. The “Egley Amish” followed the closest behind the emergence of the Apostolic Christian Church in America, and was in turn followed by a variety of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century movements that would draw from mainstream American revivalism as a source of renewal for their communities, such as the Missionary Church Association, and Conservative Mennonite Conference (Rosedale). Perhaps what distinguished the Apostolic Christian Church from these other movements, was its unique Continental European origins as a renewal movement. Although the Neutäufer movement drew from much the same 19<sup>th</sup> century neo-Pietist sources as did American Revivalism,<sup>26</sup> the German speaking communities, and especially immigrant communities, were still resistant to the influences of Anglo-American forms of religious piety.<sup>27</sup> Not until these communities had themselves undergone a certain degree of Americanization would some of them be open to such influences—though even then many have resisted such influences, as history has proven.

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<sup>25</sup> Yousey, 48-49.

<sup>26</sup> See F. Ernest Stoeffler, “Pietism, the Wesleys, and Methodist beginnings in America” in *Continental Pietism in Early American Christianity*, F. Ernest Stoeffler, ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 184-219.

<sup>27</sup> See Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land*, 47-65. Nolt reports the failure of such early American revivalists as Charles Finney to spread their popular revival movements into the ethnic German vicinities of Pennsylvania. Revivalism. Only when such movements came to be modified and expressed in German forms did they gain any sort of foothold, through such mediating figures as Otterbein and Albright (*Ibid.*, 50-56). Even then, the most prevalent and ensconced form of religious renewal among this German-American ethnic group would remain Continental Pietism (*Ibid.*, 57).

### *Dynamics of Immigration*

We must not forget that a significant portion of the early Apostolic Christian believers in America were not of Amish or Mennonite background. A significant number of believers were immigrant members of the Neutäufer congregations in Europe. Many of these came from the heart of the movement in East Switzerland, where most of those people had followed Fröhlich out of the state Reformed Church, as well as from other parts of Europe. One fascinating case is the transplant of the entire congregation of Schweinfurt, Bavaria—led by Andrew Braun—to Peoria, Illinois in 1854.<sup>28</sup>

According to Klopfenstein's accounting, the congregations at Sardis, OH, New Martinville, WV, Elgin, IA, Tremont, IL, Girard, OH, and West Bend, IA were all founded primarily by Swiss and German immigrants from non-Mennonite background. Many of the congregations of central Illinois were most heavily settled by Swiss and Germans of non-Mennonite or Amish background as well, including Fairbury, Peoria, Cissa Park, and Roanoke. Most of these were founded by people who had either converted under Fröhlich's ministry in Europe, or had heard about it there before immigrating to America and joining with it in America. Or they were simply Swiss and German immigrants who found their way into this particular movement through the ethnic and linguistic social avenues which existed at the time for the immigrant communities.

Swiss and German immigrants continued to arrive throughout the 1860's and 1870's in a steady inflow. However as Henry Geistlich noted in his 1866 travel journal, land prices were no longer so attractively cheap for new-coming immigrants as they had

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<sup>28</sup> See S.J. Braun, "My Father's Conversion," 3, cf. Ruegger, 157-159, 183-184.

been for the pioneer settlers of the 1840's and 50's. Amish-Mennonite immigration had, however, passed its peak after the 1850's, and trailed off in the 1860's.<sup>29</sup>

Geistlich records two American brothers from Roanoke, IL, as saying that continuing European immigrants ought to migrate to the newer settlement of Fairbury, IL, where land was still relatively inexpensive.<sup>30</sup> Geistlich further notes that there were tensions within the communities between those who were of different nationalities, and between the older and the more recent immigrants:

[Joseph Bella] complained to me of the domineering actions of some of the brethren toward him, brethren of foreign birth also complaining the same...there appears a difference in the customs and habits of the different nationalities which cannot quite agree with each other, so this difference than appears to be here between them that came from the old country and the Americans who were here longer.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, because the movement continued to spread beyond ethnic Mennonite and Amish genealogical lines, it would always remain a movement at the margins for those understanding Anabaptist-Mennonite history from a purely ethno-genealogical perspective, though that would continue as an important strand within the Church. As a 19<sup>th</sup> century renewal movement, however, it broke through many of these boundaries of ethnic subcommunity to reach a larger world.

This continuing influx of European immigrants continued to reinforce the primarily West European ethnicity and character of the movement, consistently inhibiting the assimilation process into more dominant Anglo-American patterns of life. At the same time, the movement continued to evolve into its own shape and form. With their strong sense of separation from the world, and commitment to the social and communal

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<sup>29</sup> Nolt, *History of the Amish*, 222.

<sup>30</sup> Geistlich Journal, 15, dated June 29.

<sup>31</sup> Geistlich Journal, 15, dated June 29.

integrity and endogamy, the Apostolic Christian Church, the people from the various ethnic strains began to combine to form a new ethnicity. Soon those who came from families of Amish background were intermarrying those from Swiss or German background, even as they came to be more and more distanced from their ancestral communities. For many communities, the process of Americanization was lengthy and drawn out, especially as several generations of immigrants came over a protracted period of time.

L.DeAne Lagerquist notes a similar phenomenon in her studies of 19<sup>th</sup> century ethnic Norwegian immigration patterns and the formation of a Norwegian-American identity.<sup>32</sup> Using the metaphor of a boiling teapot as representing the process of Americanization, the continual periodic inflow of Norwegian immigrants served as a tempering agent to the Americanization process of the earlier generations of Norwegian immigrants, as cool water tempers boiling water. The new immigrants, however, were “warmed” by their Americanized Norwegian-Americans of the earlier generation of immigrants. The memories and customs of the newer Norwegian immigrants came from a different Norway than the Norway of the memories of older generations of Norwegian-Americans. What thus resulted was a community that developed a uniquely Norwegian-American identity that was shaped by the synthesis of cultural negotiations between the more Americanized descendants of an earlier generation and the newly arrived European immigrants. What resulted was a uniquely defined ethnicity that would not fully assimilate comfortably into a new fully Americanized identity. Yet neither would it or could it fully be European simply by virtue of its place in the new American context.

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<sup>32</sup> L. DeAne Lagerquist, *In America the Men Milk the Cows: Factors of Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion in the Americanization of Norwegian-American Women* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson, 1991), 57.

What resulted was a movement that was stuck in the realm of an ethnic-American subculture, set apart by language, culture and religion that assumed mostly European forms, but adapted to a degree to the American context. Thus to apply Gordon's terms, the constant inflow of immigrants mixing with older more Americanized communities, ensured that the community would remain as an American ethnic subculture, resistant to the pressures of "Anglo-conformity" As long as immigrants were arriving and were accepted into the American congregations of their denominations, compromises would ensue that kept the movement in the first stage of acculturation, without moving on to later stages of more deeper cultural assimilation.<sup>33</sup> In this regard, Apostolic Christian Church history is rather somewhat distinct from other Believers' Church historical patterns.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Economic Prosperity and Communal Development*

In a journal entry of June 4, Henry Geistlich—a Swiss Elder who was touring the Apostolic Christian Churches in Summer of 1866—notes that the land is quite wild, and that it would take much hard work to make the land profitable. Describing the close knit nature of the community, Geistlich reports: "They live close together and through raising cattle have a pleasant and quiet life. They are for the most part well to do."<sup>35</sup> He mentions that settlement of this land is best for youth, such as those who immigrated some twenty years prior in their youth, who, Geistlich notes, "are wealthy men now."<sup>36</sup> In Croghan, Geistlich also noted that, due to development, the land is no longer as cheap as it was

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<sup>33</sup> Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 70-71.

<sup>34</sup> See discussion in Chapter 1 above.

<sup>35</sup> Geistlich Journal, 8

<sup>36</sup> Geistlich Journal, 9.

when the settlers first arrived: “For the most part they have lived here for a long time and are now nearly all well to do, having made good, as in earlier times the land was as low as \$5.00 an acre and now it is \$20.00 or more. They also have a good market and get a high price for their produce.”<sup>37</sup>

Many of those with whom Geistlich conversed were immigrants themselves and shared memories of the old world. He was presented a letter from Switzerland, to review, which evidences that communications were kept with the immigrants’ homeland during this time.

Geistlich witnessed a number of church practices and rituals during his time and was often the guest officiant. He preached at a funeral, and performed a baptism in a local river. Geistlich notes that the American church practices differed from Switzerland in that American churches had their own cemeteries, and that Americans had the freedom to baptize in open daylight, which they were forbidden to do in Switzerland.<sup>38</sup> He also noted that the brethren there met daily for church, because they had the freedom of time that those in Switzerland had not.

This experience of relative toleration would be a rather different experience than those in Europe, at least for another half century in Switzerland, and more than a century and a half in eastern Europe. In the cultural matrix of forming a new ethnicity, in a new immigrant culture on the American Midwestern frontier, it would seem that the Apostolic Christians of 19<sup>th</sup> century America were undergoing their own process of “ethnicization” and a part of their Americanization process.<sup>39</sup> Though initially spreading among first

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<sup>37</sup> Geistlich Journal, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Geistlich Journal, 11-12.

<sup>39</sup> Historian Steven M. Nolt argues that Americanization need not only be understood in terms of mere Anglicization. Rather, as Nolt attempts to demonstrate in his study of the formation of Pennsylvania

generation German-speaking immigrants from Switzerland, Germany, and France, by immigrant missionaries and leaders from these same countries, the Americanization process occurred almost immediately through the necessary and inevitable social and cultural adaptations that had to occur as the European immigrants were forced to adapt to the realities of American frontier life in the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Henry Geistlich notes that many of the Swiss and German immigrants that he encountered—most having immigrated a decade or two before—expressed a profound homesickness.<sup>40</sup> Yet this was even as they were attempting reconstruct their European homeland in the New World, as they cleared the forests, tilled the prairies, and established their homesteads on the frontier, and as they built new towns and villages as best as they could on European models, though pragmatically adapted to contextual realities of the American frontier.

As noted above a major and critical adjustment that the Apostolic Christians would have to make in their adjustment to the American context was the relative lack of persecution, which had been a major facet of their identity formation in Europe. No longer a minority in the face of a gargantuan government and state church prejudiced against them, they now settled in the frontier areas of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century America, where in they would find abundant freedom to make their own way. They were now a minority among minorities, in a land where the majority consisted of minorities, and no one religious group predominated. As American historian James E. Davis observes in his

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Germans in the Early Republic, the formation of an ethnic minority group is always determined in part through interaction with a dominant culture which “provides the outer boundaries and the guiding core principles of ethnicity, because cultural values set the terms of negotiation with the surrounding society” for inevitably “minority cultures change, selectively adapt, and modify their traditions and practices in conversation with the larger host society.” See Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Geistlich Journal, 14.

history of early emerging Illinois frontier society of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (to which immigration of Apostolic Christians contributed a significant portion):

Growing frontier diversity, perhaps ironically, helped strengthen consensus. By the 1830's or so, no single social or political segment could dominate all others. Like it or not, people were stuck with each other...Illinois—especially the northern two thirds—was an admixture of French, French-Indian, southern, Yankee, English, Irish, German, and other folk, as well as offspring of countless mixed marriages. The mixed population resembled that of the Middle Atlantic region during colonial times and later. Like that region, Illinois experienced social and political strife, which led to fluid coalitions, fragile compromises, and cautious restraint, but not horrendous conflict. Consensus often emerged because factions realized that pushing things to extremes was neither possible nor desirable. Furthermore, a toleration, however grudging, of strange neighbors became the norm, not the exception. Toleration did not imply acceptance, but it did mean that pragmatic live-and-let-live sentiments pervaded society.<sup>41</sup>

As with many other religious minority groups, it was in this unique tolerant frontier setting that the Apostolic Christian Church could find its niche, its own piece of the promised land, where it and its people would live in peace and holiness, separate from the world, until the consummation of God's Kingdom on earth.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, in the frontier areas, where no clear culture yet predominated, they would find the freedom to establish and shape their own communal and religious identity, in the vast wilderness that would become the heartland of the American Midwest.<sup>43</sup> They thus came into a new position of become culture shapers as much as those shaped by the dominant culture around them. We are here referring to their place in the formation and development of rural Midwestern culture, both through their settlement and cultivation of

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<sup>41</sup> James E. Davis, *Frontier Illinois* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1998), 310.

<sup>42</sup> This theme of frontier immigration, especially amongst European radical religious and other minority groups would be a perennial one in American religious history. Cf. *Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America*, eds. Eberhard Reichman, et al. (Indianapolis, IN: Max Kade German American Center, 1995). See also Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

<sup>43</sup> As with American Mennonites, this relative sense of isolation would only come to be challenges periodically and briefly, as during the World War I era.

the land, as well as their significant place in developing the economic establishment in the small towns and rural counties of central Illinois and other areas in the Midwest, where their numbers were quite significant as to have a significant bearing upon the overall economic and cultural development of these communities, even as they sought to maintain a separatist existence. Because of the Apostolic Christian taboos toward exogamy (marriage outside of the community), and strict doctrine of “non-fraternization” with those outside the church community, they have maintained a unique religious-ethnic identity which distinguishes them to the present. However, because they did not practice strict communal and economic separation as did Hutterites and other communitarian sects, they would always, to a degree, shape, and be shaped by, the dominant rural Midwestern culture around them.<sup>44</sup>

How then was a religious group such as the Apostolic Christian Churches, with an identity so shaped by a mentality of being a faithful martyr remnant in an antagonistic and persecuting world in this new context—in a context where there was no longer a dominant state church system and civil laws biased against them? Apostolic Christian identity in America thus soon shifted from a mentality of martyr complex shaped by persecution through official legal sanction and discrimination, to a mentality of remaining as a morally and ethnically (in a religious sense) pure remnant—only separate now not from a powerful dominant Satanic false church, epitomized in the “Constaninan” state church, but now from plurality of competing sects and, representing idolatrous Babel as “confusion.” In this understanding, Babel represented the human frustration, confusion,

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<sup>44</sup> Davis, in his study of Illinoisan context, refers to this as the “Illinoisan hybrid culture,” whereby the various areas of expertise of the various ethnic groups in areas of agriculture and other occupations came to be identified, adapted, and assimilated in common, based upon their relevance to the new context of the Midwestern Illinois frontier. See Davis, 311.

and strife, represented by a plurality of sects inevitably resting on false, human-derived doctrines.

The Apostolic Church, thus, was idealized as the church of harmony, peace, and true holiness—of one accord, resting on the true foundations of Christ and the Apostles, absolutely unified in doctrine and spirit.<sup>45</sup> Thus their identity was now centered on the central issue of the purity of their faith and doctrine and practices, over against the myriad of competing faiths around them. This only contributing to their developing ethnicization, as they came increasingly to crystallize their communal rituals, and to define what it meant to be “separate from the world.” Maureen Tilley notes a similar trend that occurred in the Donatist Church of ancient Roman North Africa in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>46</sup>

Although this mentality of Babel is to be found from the European roots of the movement as well, particularly epitomized in Fröhlich’s rejection of relationships or alliances with other emerging free church traditions, it was secondary to the larger conflict with the State Church. In America, however, where plurality of independent denominations and free churches abounded, the latter would become the primary device for conceiving of Apostolic Christian identity in relation to the wider world. In time, it

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<sup>45</sup> A tract written in the 1930’s by S.J. Braun and P.I. Schiler describes concisely the mentality that had set in among Apostolic Christians during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See S.J. Braun and P.I. Schiler, *What is Babel? (Or: Confusion)*. (Apostolic Christian Publishing Co., 1937).

<sup>46</sup> Maureen A. Tilley, “Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity: From the Church of the Martyrs to the Collecta of the Desert,” in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5:1 (Spring 1997), 21-35. Donatism, as Tilley notes, had emerged around the issues of preserving the faith and heritage of the martyrs against the compromises of allowing the lapsed to be readmitted to the church. In time, the “catholic” side of the schism gained the support of the Roman state, and had occasionally used state power against the Donatists, for which Augustine legitimated in his theological arguments. However, as Tilley contends that these times of persecution were not always ongoing, and that in many places Donatism was the more prevalent and powerful religious force. Thus, Tilley argues, the more useful Donatist conception of self-image and identity was that of faithful assembly of a ritually pure and distinct Israel, set apart from the impure world around them. This sustained Donatist identity in times where persecution and prospect of martyrdom were not so overt, and helped to guard against the more subtle threat of assimilation.

would come more to the fore in the Western European communities, as Swiss and German society and government became more tolerant and liberalized. Never would dissenting religions reach the same degree of respect and popularity as in the American pluralist context, however.

In the American context the Apostolic Christian people lived mostly peaceable lives, and aided in the social, cultural, and ecological transformation of their new homes from the wild American frontier, to the expanse of cultivated fields of the American Midwest. Within the farming villages and communities of these European settlers, the people attempted to preserve the cultural patterns of language, dress, and piety, as they had inherited them from Switzerland. The emigration of several key leaders from Europe, including Benedict Weyeneth and Joseph Bella ensured that the early foundation of the Evangelical Baptist Movement would have a strong basis and guidance in its first generation, and strong sense of continuity with the Fröhlichite movement in Europe.

However, with the death of the first generation leaders, and of the ebbing of Swiss immigration to the Midwest, Apostolic Christians settled into a maintenance orientation in the second generation, seeking to consolidate and preserve the forms of faith and piety bequeathed to them by the first generation. The maintenance of German language, coupled with a rural-based isolationism and sociology served to insulate the community from outside influences, including populist American Revivalism that was prevalent in the United States throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> American Revivalism would influence and serve as a source of renewal for other Anabaptist-Mennonite traditions, particularly the Egly Amish and Conservative Amish-Mennonites in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, serving as a catalyst for renewal in the succeeding generation afterwards (in 1866, two decades after the coming of the first Neutäufer among the Amish-Mennonites in America) after the Neutäufer.

Even a discernible connection to Amish-Mennonite culture is present. Many families continue to maintain relationships between the Mennonite and Apostolic Christian sides of their respective families. Sharing a common history and rural local context has also encouraged such affinities to remain, despite theological or polemical differences.

Although the Apostolic Christian Church of America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was in many ways a subculture of Swiss German speaking immigrants, and remained ethnically secluded throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century in terms of language, culture, and communal and social life, this nevertheless represents a distinct process of ethnicization as Americanization, following Nolt. This would become readily apparent when new waves of immigrants would arrive from Europe in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century—this time not only Swiss, but many ethnicities, especially from the Nazarene movement of eastern Europe—claiming the same faith and heritage, attempted to integrate with the Apostolic Christian ethnic faith as it had already come to be established. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Tensions with Modernization at the Turn of the Century: Immigration, Divisions, and Americanization, 1890-1950**

The deaths of the early and formative 19<sup>th</sup> century leaders, coupled with the changes that the newly industrialized society posed left to American churches in a somewhat vulnerable position for facing the crises and changes that the 20<sup>th</sup> century would bring. One of these would be the challenge to the homogeneity of the American churches.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw an attempt to retrieve a sense of historical identity. This was the era that the works of Samuel Fröhlich were transcribed from manuscript into modern German type, and then translated into English. The processes of modernization have also brought to the fore issues of relating to the surrounding dominant American culture, beyond rural isolation or ethnic seclusion.

As mentioned earlier, the Apostolic Christian Church had grown and developed within the mostly homogenous communities of Swiss-South German immigration to the American frontier regions, concentrated mostly in the American Midwest. As mentioned, the church grew especially amongst those of Amish and Mennonite extraction, whose own communal ethnic and cultural identities had been forged within the context of the Swiss-South German rural culture. The new movement appealed to those who may have desired to develop their religious tradition beyond the trappings of Amish-Mennonite identity (that had been shaped primarily by the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries), yet who desired to remain within the general cultural-religious matrix of the Amish-Mennonite and Swiss German ways of life.

Eastern European immigration was especially heavy in Northeast Ohio, which led to the establishment of ethnic east European congregations in Cleveland, Warren, Wooster, Barberton, and Akron. Congregations were also formed in other industrial areas, especially on the eastern seaboard, including New Haven, CT, Richmond, VA, Sharon and Erie, PA. All of these were areas in which there was major growth and development of heavy industries, and which drew large numbers of immigrants from southern and central Europe especially. Congregations which were already located in or near urban industrial areas, such as Mansfield, OH, or Chicago, IL would also receive an influx of immigrants, which soon caused tensions over issues of language and custom. The new waves of immigration from Central and Eastern Europe of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries—which included many of those who came to embrace the Nazarene faith outlined above—would pose a challenge to the identity of the Apostolic Christian churches in America in such a way that had been unprecedented.

In Europe, the two distinct traditions had developed—one developing in vicinity of Switzerland, Alsace-Lorraine, and South Germany, and the other in what was then central and southern Hungary.<sup>1</sup> Relations between the two had been cordial and fraternal in Europe, and most of the faith and doctrine and religious practice were very similar. However, when these eastern European brethren had arrived to settle in the same communities as had the earlier Swiss-Germans, subtle cultural issues came to cause major problems. In the communities of Amish-Mennonite heritage, group conformity had been the norm.

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<sup>1</sup> This is region today covers areas of southern Hungary, western Romania, and northern regions of the former Yugoslavia.

An account of one of newly arrived Hungarian immigrant family has been preserved. This is the story of Wendel Kalman and his family. In this story, written 29 years after the fact, Kalman narrates the experience of him and of his family in the first years of their arrival in Fairbury, Illinois. Kalman reports that upon his arrival to Fairbury, Kalman was immediately informed by the Elder, Martin Steidinger, that he would have to conform to the order and discipline in America, which prohibited the wearing of mustaches.<sup>2</sup> Steidinger was concerned to preserve the church from worldly influences, such as wearing mustaches—to many Amish-Mennonites, a symbol of militarism and pride. This same Steidinger would also play a central role in another schism that would take place in the 1930's concerning the standards of dress, and use of the German language.

Kalman also relates that his wife, Barbara, at first wore a traditional eastern European scarf as a head covering, but was soon admonished that the women of the church would be more accepting of her if she would dress as the other women. She found this to be the case after she bought a “plain hat” of their style. Kalman reports Barbara’s response: “Now I can see, that here love is merely attached to costumes and dresses.” Kalman reports that he agreed that it was the same attitude with mustaches.<sup>3</sup> He further relates that another Hungarian Nazarene was greeted at port on his arrival by ship, but was rejected because of his mustache, so he returned to Hungary with a “bleeding heart.”<sup>4</sup>

When another group of Hungarian Nazarenes arrived at Fairbury, they were addressed and told by Steidinger that they would be welcomed only on condition that

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<sup>2</sup> Wendel Kalman, “Account of First Experiences in America,” 1. Available online at <http://acc.caboodles.info/archives/AccountOfFirstExperiencesInAmerica.pdf> (accessed 1 November 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

they submit to the discipline, and agree to shave off their mustaches.<sup>5</sup> A number of brethren were taken aback by what they considered to be such an unbiblical man-made doctrine. After several warnings, many of them submitted at first and shaved, but were stricken in conscience, and thereafter refused. This eventually led to their punishment for not submitting to discipline.<sup>6</sup> Kalman was himself eventually expelled over the issue. Such actions reflected growing tensions within the Apostolic Christian congregations, especially as more and more immigrants arrived, and certain elders became more and more strict in their discipline. This reflects a general reactionary attitude that had become established toward any change, even minor ones, which would be viewed as conforming to the world. On the whole, the American Apostolic Christian Church of the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century was not prepared to accept the terms of cultural plurality that modernization would inevitably bring.<sup>7</sup>

By 1906, tensions had reached a critical point. Congregations and groups of people, comprising about one fourth of the entire membership of the Apostolic Christian Church at the time, withdrew to form a new denomination, the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean), or ACCN. The majority group would later come to be known as the Apostolic Christian Church of America, or ACCA. This new title is fitting for the new association, for it was a distinctively American phenomenon, having its roots in the establishment of the Apostolic Christian Church in America. In time, though no formal reconciliation could be made, the two groups came to refer to each other, respectively as

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<sup>5</sup> Among these, Kalman mentions the names Nagy, Joseph, Toth, Pamer, Muntz, and Ratzenberger. Kalman, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Kalman, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Donald B. Kraybill, in a study of Anabaptist-Mennonite identity and the sociological conceptions of modernization and modernity, lists pluralism as a aspect of modernization that Anabaptist-Mennonite communities (which have historically emphasized social conformity) inevitably face in their struggle with modernity. Donald B. Kraybill, "Modernity and Modernization" in *Anabaptist-Mennonite Identities in Ferment* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1990), 94.

the “Sister Church” and informal relationships and exchanges have continued to the present. Indeed, by this division, many people in this denomination were, like the “Sister Church” (ACCA), now second and third generation Americans. Yet, the addition of the qualifier “Nazarene” indicates an enduring identification with the eastern European constituency of the movement.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, this denomination was composed by and large by Nazarene immigrants from areas within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

There was a certain geographical dimension to the split as well. The majority of the rural churches, which had been settled by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by Swiss and South German immigrants, often in areas with large concentrations of Amish and Mennonites, chose to remain with the original body. It is also noteworthy that, in vicinities where there was little or no new European immigration, congregations were simply unaffected by the division. The years of the division, 1906-1907, also corresponded to the height of immigrations from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, particularly of ethnic Serbs and Slovaks to Ohio and Illinois,<sup>9</sup> where numerous Apostolic Christian Churches, primarily of Swiss-German background already existed. Many of the new ACCN churches were located in urban areas, reflecting new trends in settlement. At the time of the division, it was in these urban areas where the ACCN party had most of its strength. For example, the majority of the Apostolic Christian congregation in Portland, Oregon favored ACCN side, leaving only a handful of members who chose to affiliate with the ACCA.<sup>10</sup> ACCN churches tended to be located in urban areas, where most of the new immigrants settled to

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<sup>8</sup> It should also be noted that a good number of Swiss descendents joined with the ACCN, likely because they were more open minded about certain rules and regulations. Family relations also likely played a factor.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Shipman, "The Slavs in America" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14051a.htm> (accessed March 28, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Klopfenstein, *Marching to Zion*, 268, 275-276.

work in the burgeoning industries. ACCA churches were primarily located in rural agricultural areas.

The precedents of the division set the two denominations on two different trajectories. The ACCA would always be more conservative and set in the ways of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Midwestern Germanic immigrant culture. The ACCN would be much more flexible in regards to issues of cultural relativity and would develop a stronger missionary spirit. One cannot but imagine that the multi-cultural composition of this movement—including Donauschwaben German, Hungarian, Slovak, and Serbian—did not affect ideas of common brotherhood amidst national differences. This movement would also be more generally oriented toward Europe for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to the fact that after the division, most European immigrants of the faith would settle in the ACCN congregations. Furthermore, since none of the American-born Elders chose to join the new denomination, and since the majority of the European elders supported the progressive side of the movement,<sup>11</sup> the ACCN would look to a new European-born immigrant Eldership, with the result of stronger links with Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Perhaps one reason for the more rapid processes that took place during this period of ACCN history was the more missionary disposition of the Nazarene immigrants that came from Europe. This, along with a more ethnically sensitive and cross-cultural disposition, aided in part by having learned to coexist with others in a multiethnic regions in a multiethnic empire, perhaps produced a people with a more flexible approach to issues of cultural difference. As Aleksov notes, the Nazarenes continued to expand and

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<sup>11</sup> See Ott, 100-102.

grow exponentially, up to the end of World War I.<sup>12</sup> This occurred even as the Swiss Neutäufer had already by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century retreated into a closed and insular community.<sup>13</sup> The same might be said of the mentality of many of the more ethnic Swiss and Amish congregations of the Apostolic Christian Church, which had been established in the more rural agricultural parts of the Midwest since the middle of the nineteenth century. The appearance now, however, of a fresh influx of immigrants of Nazarenes into the North American context, brought with it cross-cultural challenges as well. So long as the different communities remained in their own geographical and cultural spheres, referring to the others as “brethren” was not difficult. However, when two different cultures came to meet in the same congregation in North America, cultural assumptions hitherto assumed came to the fore as major issues.

### **World War I and New Pressures Toward Anglo-Conformity**

World War I was a difficult and trying time for Apostolic Christians on both sides of the divide. Both their doctrine of non-resistance and their foreign ethnicity and languages worked against them in popular opinion in an era of growing nationalism and xenophobia. In response to challenges to the growing nationalist and militarist sentiments, S.J. Braun wrote and published a tract on Christian non-resistance, entitled *Christ and War*. In this tract, Braun argues that the masses of Christians are in fact trapped within the confusion of Babylon, for though they bear scriptures and witness to the New Covenant of Christ, which is peace, they remain in the old covenant of the law

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<sup>12</sup> Aleksov, *Religious Dissent*, 180. Aleksov notes that the turning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked the zenith of the Nazarene movement in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where it had already become a numerically large and multi-ethnic movement.

<sup>13</sup> Ott notes that in Switzerland, the mission theme had already ceased to become an issue, with most growth resulting from family movements and reproduction. Ott, 98.

and retribution, showing that they lack the Spirit of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Braun further points out what he considers to be a glaring inconsistency among the Christians in the western world that had so united to spur the great missionary movement around the globe, but are now turned against each other in war:

But let us now consider the hostility and eagerness to shed human blood, which manifests itself in nations, one and all, who adorn themselves with the name of Christian, those who have the Gospel (the tidings of peace); The very nations who spend millions of dollars in missionary work among the heathen nations, sending great quantities of bibles to them.<sup>15</sup>

Braun argues that it is through the renewal of the Holy Spirit that Christians forsake violence, and that “if the Established Church members were filled with the Holy Spirit, they would gladly lay down their own life rather than take the life of their neighbor.”<sup>16</sup> The call to the world, even in the time of war is clear: come out of Babylon. Holding tightly to these convictions, the Apostolic Christians stood strong in their resolve to see themselves as a sanctified people of God’s peace, though the supposedly “Christian” world around was caught up in nationalistic war fever.

Young men that were drafted into the American military endured many of the same trials as men from other Peace Church groups, such as the Mennonites.<sup>17</sup> Their suffering was hardly comparable to that suffered by their European brethren.<sup>18</sup> Though occasionally suffering insult, injury, and imprisonment at the hands for their refusal to

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<sup>14</sup> S.J. Braun, *Christ and War* (Syracuse, NY: Apostolic Christian Publishing Co., 1916), 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> James C. Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War : Mennonite Identity and Organization in America, 1890-1930*, Vol. 3 of *The Mennonite Experience in America* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 229-241. As Juhnke notes, much of the negative attitudes toward conscientious objectors came about due to lack of systematic organized structures for dealing with CO’s during World War I, and due to fear of pro-German sympathies.

<sup>18</sup> As Peter Brock documents, the Nazarenes of Eastern Europe, by far suffered the most for their nonresistant dispositions, especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and before, during, and after World War I. See Peter Brock, “Nazarenes Confront Conscriptioin in Dualist Hungary” in *Against the Draft: Essays on Conscientious Objection from the Radical Transformation to the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 150.

take up arms against their enemies,<sup>19</sup> most soldiers were able to find positions in a non-combatant role, in general alignment with the principles of their faith, during the USA's brief participation in World War I. Most of the challenges to Apostolic Christian community during World War I and after were social and cultural in nature.

*English Language Transition Efforts: The Legacy of S.J. Braun and Ernest Graf, Sr.*

Until the 1920's, all of the various Apostolic Christian congregations worshipped in non-English languages. The language of older, primarily rural congregations was German. In cities with substantial new European immigration, congregations either used multiple languages in worship, or where the numbers of respective ethnic groups were large enough, congregations emerged were established to serve the each particular ethnic group. Ted and Ernie Pavkov, of the ACCN in Akron, have written a fine descriptive article on the history and development of the Apostolic Christian Churches in the Akron, OH vicinity, of this period. The "flood stage" of immigration to the Akron area, which included thousands of Eastern Europeans of the era, was 1905-1907, and included a substantial number of Nazarenes.<sup>20</sup> So great and ethnically varied was the influx of immigrants to the area, that by the 1920's and 1930's, five separate congregations had been established to accomodate services in each of the various languages represented by those coming from the multi-ethnic Pannonian basin of southern Austria-Hungary. These

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<sup>19</sup> For some anecdotal examples, see Kurt and Jane Ehnle, eds., *Stories of Faith and Courage: Experiences of Apostolic Christian Believers*, Vol. 2 (Edelstein, IL: Heritage Press, 2006), 15-20.

<sup>20</sup> Ted and Ernie Pavkov, "Akron Area Churches, 1903-1989," in *Mountaintops along the Way: Essays in the History of the Apostolic Christian Church of North America (Nazarean) Vols. I & II* (Tremont, IL: Apostolic Christian Church Foundation, [1989]), 30. This was an era of rapid industrial expansion in the Akron area, which brought thousands of immigrants to the Akron area, a large portion of them representing various ethnic groups from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. See "Immigration & Migration in the Industrial Age 1870-1930" at <http://learn.uakron.edu/beyond/industrialAge.htm> (accessed April 19, 2010).

included German, Serbian, Hungarian, and Slovak.<sup>21</sup> There were also Romanian speaking services elsewhere. Of the five languages commonly used in various Apostolic Christian congregations at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, English was not one of them.

The long-lasting ethnic and linguistic boundaries of the Apostolic Christian world prevented significant inroads from the American Fundamentalism and the Home Missions movement. The conservative and separatist nature of the Apostolic Christian Churches of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century insulated this community, more than others, from such efforts as the Home Missions movements to promote Anglo-Conformity and linguistic assimilation.<sup>22</sup> The general tendency to avoid close social relations with those outside their communities, and especially their separatist posture toward other denominations shielded them from Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy that was raging in the American Protestant world at the time.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, both the exterior and interior pressures faced by other ethnic religious communities were still quite present to the Apostolic Christian churches on both “sides”

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<sup>21</sup> Pavkov and Pavkov, 32. Retired Elder of the Vesper Lake Apostolic Christian Church, William Hrubik, related that it was his father (who was also an elder) who oversaw the division of the Akron Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) into the various ethnic congregations, for ease of language use.

<sup>22</sup> The “Home Missions” movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were led largely by American Protestants, and aimed at assimilating various immigrant communities in “American” ways of life. Much of the efforts of these movements, taking place from the end of World War I through the 1930’s was the education of immigrants in English language and Anglo-American culture and customs. For a contemporary work documenting the popular Anglo-American Protestant rationalization for, and programmatic approach to, such efforts, see Charles A. Brooks, *Christian Americanization: A Task for the Churches* (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions/ Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1919).

<sup>23</sup> There may be some evidence of awareness of the Fundamentalist-Modernist issues, especially in some articles of the Apostolic Christian periodical of the time, *The Visitor: A Friendly Christian Message*. In a series, titled “The Securing of Christian Victory” consisting of installments of one of Fröhlich’s letters, Braun referred to the principles therein as “the fundamentals of Christian life and faith.” 2:3 (March 1928), 65. In this series of extracts, the basics of faith are belief in the transforming power of Christ for victorious and holy living, which are the ultimate ends of Christ’s incarnation and sending of the Holy Spirit. This may perhaps reflect Braun’s attempt at recovering essential Apostolic Christian “fundamentals” for a new era, rather than attempting to draw on larger religious currents. Furthermore a brief 1935 article, “What Ancient Records Tell” 9:2 (February 1935), 21, highlights certain archaeological discoveries which verify certain historical events from the New Testament. This evidences at least some passing familiarity with skeptical higher critical approaches to the Bible.

of the division.<sup>24</sup> Perry Klopfenstein has documented the real pressures faced by many of the Apostolic Christians in the xenophobic era following World War I—much of it centered around the use of the German language in religious and community life.<sup>25</sup> Occasionally, acts of vandalism and other forms of intimidation occurred, which prompted more concern to use the English language in worship services.<sup>26</sup> However, the internal motivations were present as well, as Apostolic Christians, particularly in the more urban areas, were more inclined to adopt the English language in everyday worship and service, especially as subsequent generations became Americanized.

Following World War I, immigration to the United State was reduced to a mere trickle, following conservative and xenophobic legislation to halt the perceived problems that continued inflows of immigrants would bring to the integrity of an authentic “American” identity. The influence of new immigrants from their ancestral homelands now significantly reduced, the large ethnic immigrant enclaves that had developed since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were now subject to both external and internal pressures to conformity to dominant patters of Anglo-American language and culture—what became known as “Americanization.” Churches and other ethnic religious communities – which often served as centers of traditional ethnic identity – were not excluded from such pressures toward conformity.

Movements within the ethnic communities toward inculturation and assimilation into mainstream American society occurred for various reasons. One was in response to

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<sup>24</sup> From the time of the 1906 division, to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the two different groups that formed often referred to the other as “the other side.” This may be due to the fact that polity remained informal in nature, with no formal denominational structures emerging until the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the language of “sides” indicated the recognition of division, yet without the strict corporate “body” language associated with more centralized and official bureaucratic structures.

<sup>25</sup> Klopfenstein, 388-390.

<sup>26</sup> Klopfenstein, 378.

pressure from xenophobic elements in the predominant American society of the time that was suspicious of anything that seemed foreign or “un-American” – especially towards the use of foreign language in religious services and other community events and publications. The other factor came from within the ethnic communities themselves, which saw second and third generation descendents of the original immigrants becoming progressively less invested in maintaining the distinctive language and ethnic identity of their parents, and more interested in adjusting and inculturating into the broader American society that they knew as their own homeland.<sup>27</sup>

From the 1920’s, both sides had their major advocates for English language transition. For both, the recognition that the popular language of the constituency was changing, was a major factor. The writing and translation of Apostolic Christian materials into English was motivated largely by the desire educate the younger generation in the tenets of the Apostolic Christian faith in a form and language that they could understand. Furthermore, there was also the renewed concern to make the Apostolic Christian message comprehensible to the wider, English speaking society. Each side had its progressive minded leaders to blaze the trails. On the ACCN side, the effort was led by Samuel J. Braun, who started the Apostolic Christian Publishing Company in his home of

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<sup>27</sup> Aladar Komjathy treats this issue extensively in his doctoral dissertation on the experience of the Hungarian Reformed Church in America as an ethnic church struggling with an identity that is both Hungarian and American. Komjathy notes that the first generation of the major influx of Hungarian immigrants instituted “Saturday schools” for the education of youth in Hungarian language and culture, and the particularly Hungarian Calvinist understanding of Christianity through knowledge of Hungarian religious literature. This system was modeled on that used by ethnic Hungarian enclaves in parts of Europe where Hungarians were a minority. However, unlike in Europe, the American environment did not foster an environment of ethnic nationalism and identity pit against those of other ethnic groups – at least not for long. Komjathy notes that the second generation of ethnic Hungarians, though fluent in Hungarian language and culture, were much more ambivalent about pressing these upon their own children. Furthermore, by the third generation, there was much more interest in adapting English language – now their main language and not simply trade language – into their religious services. See Aladar Komjathy, “The Hungarian Reformed Church in America: An Effort to Preserve a Denominational Heritage” (Th.D diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1962), 255-273.

Syracuse, New York. The press published various tracts and items about the Apostolic Christian faith as Braun understood, and became the center of the denomination's publishing efforts up to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Braun worked especially to publish works in English, both for his own Apostolic Christian Church, as well as for the English speaking world in which the community found itself.

S.J. Braun seems to have been especially concerned with reclaiming the mission orientation of his religious heritage, especially as he uncovered it in the various writings and letters of Samuel Fröhlich, and the early evangelistic efforts of Fröhlich and the first generation of the Neutäufer and Nazarenes. At the ACCN 1948 Brother's Meeting in Mansfield, Ohio, his son, Philip Braun would recall that during his youth, his father Samuel was the only English preacher that he knew of.<sup>28</sup> S.J. Braun also published a large number of tracts in English for the education of modern Apostolic Christians in the principles of their faith, as well as to meaningfully relate it to the broader English speaking world. But the greatest legacy of Braun and of his publishing house was his translation and publication of a large portion of the writings of Samuel Fröhlich into English, and of the publication and translation of the Zion's Harp hymnal into English.<sup>29</sup> Braun's translation, published in a number of editions, remains the only major English translation of Fröhlich's works. Likewise the hymnal, reprinted repeatedly, remains the version used by the ACCN English speaking congregations.

The translation project in the ACCA was spearheaded by Elder Ernest Graf, Sr. of Akron, OH and Henry Beer. Graf personally translated Mangold's *Blicke in die*

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<sup>28</sup> *Report: Brother Meeting, Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean), Mansfield, OH, June 19 & 20, 1948*, 23. More will be said about the importance of the 1948 Brothers Meeting below.

<sup>29</sup> According to Mike Freund, an elder in the Syracuse, NY ACCN congregation, the works of Fröhlich were translated by Braun, while the hymnal was translated by professional linguists (Interview with Mike Freund, Mansfield, OH, Spring 2009).

*Vergangenheit* into a 300 page English translation, entitled *Meditations upon the Past, Present, and Future*,<sup>30</sup> as well as some of Samuel Fröhlich's letters and other early Apostolic Christian writings. Henry Beer began to translate hymns from the *Zions Harp* hymnal as early as 1921, completing it by 1924. Graf also served on a board which by 1924 had translated the Zion's Harp hymnal into the English edition used by the ACCA, and gave considerable energy to furthering translation efforts of Apostolic Christian literature into the English language.<sup>31</sup> This shift in the literature underscored growing adoption of the English language as the primary language of the communities in everyday public life, especially among the younger generations, as well as within their own communities of faith.

As with many other German speaking groups of the era, World War I had brought a definite shift in popular American sentiments toward non-Anglo elements in American Society, especially toward things German. Extensive social pressure was put on German speaking communities and churches to adopt the English language and adopt American cultural and social norms. The Apostolic Christian Churches were not immune to this. During the xenophobic era of World War I and the interwar years, many Apostolic Christian Churches felt increasing social pressure to adjust to the English language.<sup>32</sup>

This shift in language use caused another schism in the ACCA in 1932, known as the "German Apostolic Christian Church" which continues today with a handful of congregations, in Illinois, Oregon, and Kansas.<sup>33</sup> This split was led by Elder Martin Steidinger of Fairbury, Illinois. As with many issues of division and controversy in

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<sup>30</sup> For additional comments on this work, see chapter 3 above.

<sup>31</sup> Klopfenstein, *A Treasure of Praise*, 17-18.

<sup>32</sup> Klopfenstein, *Marching to Zion*, 378, 388-390.

<sup>33</sup> See J. Gordon Melton, ed., *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Institute, 1996), 451, s.v. "German Apostolic Christian Church."

religious and other groups, it is seldom limited to any one issue, though certain issues become iconic. Klopfenstein notes the issues surrounding the language controversy in the ACCA in the 1930's: "Auxiliary issues of controversy centered around how far the church should carry the Biblical themes of non-conformity to, and separation from, the world of sin," and goes on to remark that it was those who favored more "exacting standards" in regards to church custom and practice, who chose to align themselves with what came to be known as the German Apostolic Christian Church.<sup>34</sup> At the time of the split, the German Apostolic Christian Church took ten percent of the adherents from the main body.<sup>35</sup> This group continues in existence to this day, and represents a more "old order" tendency in the Apostolic Christian Church world, clinging strictly to the nineteenth century forms of the Apostolic Christian Church world. They continue to use the German language in worship and tend to be rather isolationist in posture toward the outside world. Visitors to their meetings must ask permission before attending.<sup>36</sup>

This group has faced its own series of difficulties, with another group splitting off in the 1950's, and becoming the "Christian Apostolic Church." This group is in many ways similar to the Apostolic Christian Church of America, and many of their members have joined with the ACCA denomination.<sup>37</sup>

We see here, in each of the successive divisions, first circa 1906, the second in 1932, and lastly in 1955 the working out, in similar patterns, the same tensions between modernity of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a tradition forged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century American Midwest. Where the main body of conservatives had expressed their resentment of

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<sup>34</sup> Klopfenstein, *Marching to Zion*, 238.

<sup>35</sup> Klopfenstein, *Marching to Zion*, 419.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Perry Klopfenstein, December, 2008.

<sup>37</sup> Klopfenstein, *Marching to Zion*, 419.

changing modern culture at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by enforcing a ban on the mustache and other culturally normed customs, by the 1920's and 1930's, a generation later, they were more willing to accommodate the changing circumstances of 20<sup>th</sup> century America, causing a splinter group—this time much smaller—to separate bent on preserving the old way, only to face the same issue within its own ranks a generation later in the 1950's.

### *Recovery and Renewal of a Historic Vision*

The ACCN movement was born out of the crisis of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: modernization and Americanization. As the “progressive” branch of the Apostolic Christian Church movement in America, it now fell upon the new *Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean)* body to understand anew its identity and heritage in the world of 20<sup>th</sup> century America. This was a challenge that faced what emerged as a very ethnically and culturally diverse movement. Having decidedly left behind them the recourse to ethnic social and cultural isolation in a 19<sup>th</sup> century rural, mode of thinking, which would yet characterize the ACCA for another generation (until they faced a similar crisis over the use of the English language in the 1930's), a number of leaders in the new ACCN movement sought to find a fresh articulation of their faith through a movement of historical recovery.

We might perhaps speak of this movement, led by such spirited ACCN leaders of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as Henry Michel, the Braun Brothers, and Ben Sommer, as a recovery of an “Apostolic Christian Vision.”<sup>38</sup> It is common for renewal movements

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<sup>38</sup> This term is entirely my own, and is not used by any Apostolic Christians. I use it as a play on the title of Harold S. Bender's seminal article, “The Anabaptist Vision” given first as his presidential

within a tradition to lead a re-examination of the founders and leaders of their movement. Samuel J. Braun (in cooperation with the Swiss) especially sought to recover their historical identity through the translation and publication of their historic literature, especially the works of the founder, Samuel H. Fröhlich.<sup>39</sup> Thus he founded in the 1920's, in his hometown of Syracuse, New York, the *Apostolic Christian Publishing Company*. The translation into English of Samuel Fröhlich's treatises and diaries—which included his meditations and sermon notes for most of his ministry—and various letters, as well as letters and writings of other early Apostolic Christian, is perhaps the Braun brothers' most enduring legacy. These remain the only extensively translated of Fröhlich's works in English today, although they have been reprinted several times, and continue to be reprinted in various editions.<sup>40</sup>

One publication from this press, while it was located in Peoria, Illinois, and in circulation from 1927-1937 was *The Visitor: "A Friendly Christian Message."* Through the 1920's and 30's, this periodical served as the major church organ of the ACCN. This bimonthly periodical was published mostly in English, with one article in German per issue to accommodate German speakers. This indicates a decisive popular linguistic shift from German to English taking place in these congregations at the time. Articles were

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address to the American Society of Church History in 1942. The aim of Bender and his generation of scholars was the project to "recover" a sense of normative Anabaptist-Mennonite identity and thought which came about through process of a renaissance of historical research in the field of Anabaptist studies, brought about by the crisis and challenge of modernity that Mennonites were facing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly as they emerged out of ethnic isolation into an American society that was itself rapidly changing with the advance of modernity, coupled with a perceived need for an identity over and against other predominant religious movements, particularly fundamentalism and modernism. See *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, ed. Guy F. Hershberger (Scottsdale, PA: 1957).

<sup>39</sup> For the process of transcribing and translating Fröhlich's writings, see the "Revised Draft of Preface to Froehlich Writings" in *Writings of S.H. Froehlich*, CD-ROM, Digital Version 31, (Fairbury, IL: Heritage Center Foundation, n.d.), 23-25. This preface is also published in each of the 1978 reprinted volumes of the *Writings of S.H. Froehlich* series, published by the Apostolic Christian Publications, Eureka, IL.

<sup>40</sup> The *Works of S.H. Froehlich* has been published since the 1970's by Apostolic Christian Church Publications, Eureka, IL They are currently published in both printed and electronic formats.

mostly devotional in nature, and included devotional meditations, poems, serial reflections on biblical texts and Bible lessons, and excerpts from larger devotional works, such as Bunyan's, *The Pilgrims Progress*.<sup>41</sup> Practical topics were also addressed, such as child rearing, and other issues of daily life. Many of the articles were written by the prominent persons of the ACCN in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including S.J. Braun, Henry Michel, Otto Seeger, Edward Baer, Walter Meister, Ben Sommer, and Alfred Geistlich. Excerpts from the writings of Samuel Fröhlich are often included as well. Remarkably attuned to many of the contemporary issues of its day, the periodical represents a movement of adaptation to the modern world, and an attempt to meaningfully relate the traditional faith of the Apostolic Christians to it.

### **World War II and Aftermath: New Challenges, New Efforts at Renewal**

In the aftermath of World War II, the Apostolic Christian Churches felt the drastic winds of social and cultural changes brought about by the war and its aftermath. As America had lost the ability to remain in the condition of the social and political isolationism that had characterized the interwar years, so also the churches of various denominations could no longer live in a state of “innocence” and isolation from world affairs as they once had. With two continents in ruins and devastation from the war, with millions threatened with starvation and death from political and economic upheaval, Americans of all sorts felt the need to alleviate the pain and suffering of Europeans especially.

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<sup>41</sup> *The Visitor* 6:6 (June 1932).

### *Postwar Immigration and Relief Efforts*

With the enactment of the “European Recovery Program” later renamed the *Marshall Plan*, the United States government contributed some \$13 billion toward European economic recovery and reconstruction.<sup>42</sup> Many other relief organizations and charities contributed to the effort of post war European relief and recovery, some with more or less specific goals. Included among these was a strong contingent of historic “Peace Church” efforts, including the *American Friends Service Committee*, the *Brethren Service Committee*, and the *Mennonite Central Committee*, to help especially with the more than 12 million refugees and displaced persons, many of whom were of ethnic German *Volksdeutsche*.<sup>43</sup>

The Mennonite Central Committee had been formed in 1920 to provide relief to Mennonites in Russia experiencing the aftermath of the Russian Revolution and World War II.<sup>44</sup> Faced with the challenges of such a great task to provide relief for so many, Mennonites, who had traditionally been a very decentralized people, were required to organize and cooperate in new ways in order to address the wider concerns of their brethren overseas.<sup>45</sup> The result would be an irreversible transition in the process of denominationalization. The Mennonite Central Committee continued to develop and expand its relief efforts even beyond its initial aim, to extend aid to Russian Mennonite

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<sup>42</sup> *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 7, 15<sup>th</sup> ed., (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1998), 881, s.v. “Marshall Plan.”

<sup>43</sup> See Donald F. Durnbaugh, “The Response of American Peace Churches to Relief and Rehabilitation Needs in Germany Following World War II” in *Prophetic and Renewal Movements, The Prague Consultations: Proceedings from the Prague VI and Prague VII Multilateral Ecumenical Conversations (2000 & 2003)*, Studies from the World Alliance of Churches No. 47, ed. Walter Sawatsky (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 2009), 209-220.

<sup>44</sup> H.S. Bender, “Mennonite Central Committee,” in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. III (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1957), 606.

<sup>45</sup> See James C. Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America 1890-1930*, Vol. 3 of *The Mennonite Experience in America* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 243-257.

refugees in Europe and in Canada throughout the 1920's and 1930's, and would come to play a significant effort in European relief and recovery during and after World War II.<sup>46</sup>

By the late 1940's, American Apostolic Christians found themselves in a similar situation. Whereas their Swiss counterparts had established the organization *Hilfe* as early as World War I to deal with the plight of suffering Neutäufer and Nazarenes during the war and its aftermath, the American Apostolic Christians would not organize along similar lines until the late 1940's. Americans often did contribute to *Hilfe* and the work of the Swiss, however, in an informal and unorganized manner.<sup>47</sup> In the aftermath of World War II, American Apostolic Christians felt the need to organize themselves, for work in supporting the relief efforts in eastern Europe. The strongest impulse came from the ACCN which had maintained ties with Europe after the war. However, many individuals from the ACCA side were also eager to join in the work of service and aid to the poor and suffering Nazarenes, and devoted themselves to cooperating with the ACCN efforts on this issue. This new spirit of cooperation in mutual aid served to bridge the gap between the two factions of Apostolic Christians, much in the same way that Mennonite Central Committee served to mediate in inter-Mennonite cooperation.<sup>48</sup> It was this cooperation in mutual aid that made possible dialogue for possible reunification of the two factions.

The first efforts at organizing for relief work came in August of 1946, with the formation of an ad hoc relief committee, which was at first termed a "local Hilfe" meeting for the purpose of coordinating relief efforts, and for nominating a committee

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<sup>46</sup> Bender, 606-607.

<sup>47</sup> See Ott, 108-109.

<sup>48</sup> See Juhnke, 248-250.

chairman for the purpose of calling a regular meeting and setting an agenda.<sup>49</sup> That meeting occurred on September 18, 1946 at Barberton, Ohio. As expressed in the meeting minutes, the purpose of the meeting was “for forming an organization similar to Hilfe in Switzerland.”<sup>50</sup> The meeting was called in a sense of urgency to help “starving and dying” brethren in “starvation and death camps.” This was to be accomplished through organization of direct relief aid, as well as organizing an official representative body to lobby on behalf of persecuted Yugoslav Nazarenes to the Yugoslavian Embassy, in Washington, DC.<sup>51</sup> This organization would develop into an institution of the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean), first known as A.I.D. for “Aid Internationally Distributed” as a “A Relief Agency within the Apostolic Christian Church” and “a counterpart to *Hilfe* in Zurich.”<sup>52</sup>

*“Fishers of Men”— the 1948 ACCN Brothers Meeting*

By 1948, the Elders of the ACCN saw fit to call a general “Brothers’ Meeting” to discuss pressing issues of vital importance facing the fellowship in the rapidly modernizing post-war era. The Brothers’ Meeting of 1948, held June 19 and 20 of that year in Mansfield, Ohio, was an attempt to work through such various issues that came to the fore in the postwar period. Of special concern was the issue of possible reunion with the ACCA, evangelism and the retention of youth, relief for postwar European brethren,

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<sup>49</sup> “Minutes of a local ‘Hilfe’ meeting, held at Syracuse, New York, August 28, 1946,” in Virginia Historical Society Archives, Richmond, VA, “Apostolic Christian Church Foundation Records, 1946-1992,” Mss3Ap466a Fa2 50.

<sup>50</sup> “Minutes of a Special Meeting called at Barberton, Ohio, September 18, 1946” in Virginia Historical Society Archives, Richmond, VA, “Apostolic Christian Church Foundation Records, 1946-1992,” Mss3Ap466a Fa2 50.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> AID letterhead, dated April 6, 1954 in Virginia Historical Society Archives, Richmond, VA, “Apostolic Christian Church Foundation Records, 1946-1992,” Mss3Ap466a Fa2 50.

and accommodation and support of new immigrants and scattered congregations. The agenda for the meeting consisted of the following topics to be discussed: 1. Report on Possible Reunion with the ACCA; 2. Evangelism; 3. The Foundation, the Word of God; 4. Organization; 5. Report on a Trip to South America; 6. Immigration and Relief; 7. Education of Children; and 8. Church Discipline.

### *Possible Reunion*

Through a common desire to contribute to suffering in Europe, moderate leaders in the ACCN and ACCA began to work together to support the work of *Hilfe*. In post-war relief. Through a reconnecting of the new generation of more progressive and moderate leaders on each side, both considered that their fathers' generation had been too hasty in their separation. Both sides now agreed that more patience should have been shown, and both expressed that many of their elderly leaders had expressed before their deaths that they would have done things differently had they the chance again.<sup>53</sup> Efforts at dialogue were led by Tremont, IL elder Jakob Meyer. Francis Gutwein, of Francesville, IL represented the ACCA side.<sup>54</sup>

### *Evangelism*

Perhaps the most significant topic discussed during at the Brothers' Meeting was that of a renewed interest in mission and evangelism. The theme of the discussion was

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<sup>53</sup> 1948 Brothers Meeting Report,

<sup>54</sup> Eventually, the elders could not come to agreement on a reunification, due to minor issues remaining. However, they no longer referred to each other as the "other side" and now endeavored to call each other "sister churches." Elders and general members of the two bodies continue to consult with each other and work in a limited manner.

titled “Fishers of Men,” and centered around the theme of Matthew 4:19, where Jesus says to his disciples: “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”

Discussion of the issue was sparked in part by the new global awareness brought about in the postwar era, as well as by an awareness of numerical decline in the ACCN during the 1930’s. During that time, the United States government had conducted a census of religious bodies, and had noted a decline of several hundred members in the ACCN over the period of a decade, putting the total membership of the ACCN at just over 1,000. At hearing this statistic, one elder asked could they really be so few? Considerable discussion was prompted by the notion that the church was “going the wrong way” in terms of decline rather than the growth that ought to follow obedience to Jesus command to preach the gospel to all nations.

Henry Michel recalled the early evangelistic zeal of the first generation of the movement’s leaders in Europe and in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and asked rhetorically what was different now? He answered, “We have not time like Bela and many other brothers had. They went to the people...And now I would say that we are in a time that we expect the fishes to come and fall in our net.” After noting this, Michel went on to give the call, “So let us go where the fishes are, and do our duty and fish.”<sup>55</sup>

Mike Korody of Mansfield considered the loss of missionary impulse to have been a symptom of generational dynamics, remarking that the first generation of believers is zealous and advances their messages; the second generation is appreciative and maintains the gains of the first; and the third generation loses the gains of the first.<sup>56</sup> One symptom of this, Korody warns, was the creeping in of a dangerous attitude of

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<sup>55</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 21.

<sup>56</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 20.

“predestinationism,” whereby it was thought that converts would come purely on their own through God’s call, and not through any special effort on the part of Christians. Korody recounted that an Apostolic preacher from his youth once remarked on the translation and dissemination of the Bible among unbelievers in various languages by missionaries and Bible Societies: “What good does it do to them, if they cannot come to the full knowledge of God?”<sup>57</sup> Korody, however, rejects this as incorrect, and calls the brotherhood to account for lack of obedience to the biblical commandment: “I have a desire in my heart that we, as the children of God, shall rise; we shall awake to our duties; we shall seek what our duties are; we shall not be slothful, but willing workers.”<sup>58</sup>

Philip Braun called attention of the brotherhood to the concerns of the younger generation, and particularly of the need to communicate the gospel message through preaching in English, noting that many youth did not feel comfortable inviting friends to church since the service was not conducted in English.<sup>59</sup> Braun called for support for “Youth meetings” of the youth “not yet reborn”—i.e., not yet having gone through the Apostolic Christian pattern of repentance, conversion and baptism—noting that they need a place of discipleship and encouragement in the “spiritual side of life,” even though certain standard would not be fully expected of them as not yet full members.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 21. This underscores the very pessimistic and separationist mindset toward the world that had set in by the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 23.

<sup>60</sup> The issue of finding a place for youth in believers churches has often been a problem, especially among those raised in the particular culture and tradition of the church, but not yet having experienced a crisis conversion experience, or not being ready or willing to fully commit to the process or requirements of full membership. A similar issue faced the second generation of Puritans New England. The radical step of emigration to New England had enabled the establishment of a radical “pure church” based upon the principles of conversion and regeneration as requisite for membership and participation in the community. Not all of the children of these members could abide by the strict standards and patterns of piety established by their parents, which led to the creation of a class known as “Half-Way” covenanters, who generally led a more or less moral and “God fearing” life, according to the general moral standards of the community, though without the privilege of communion and the rights of full membership for the fully “converted.” See

Steve Babin then speaks up to ask an incisive question of cultural hermeneutics, and the value of comparing the European forbears to the contemporary situation in America. Noting the essential differences between a generation of European immigrants who had come to the faith and endured in it in times of persecution and suffering, and an American context of liberty and prosperity, Babin asks the brotherhood if the quality of preaching and the English language are the only issues at stake. Following the pervasive metaphor of fishing, Babin asks whether the fish will bite if they are already *full*?—namely, from the worldly enticements which liberty and prosperity bring.<sup>61</sup> Ultimately, the question seemed to be coming down to what degree the Apostolic Christian Church should be willing to accommodate to modern postwar culture for the sake of evangelism, or whether such trends toward modernization were signs of spiritual danger—to be resisted and avoided.

Braun then returns to the microphone to remind the brotherhood that, beyond simply learning the English language, the youth are American at heart, and that, having been raised in America, they have a deeper knowledge of the nation and culture than can be understood by the older generation of immigrants. In returning to the early heroic

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Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 158-160, 280 and Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 94-104. Cf. Robert G. Pope, *The Half-Way Covenant: Church Membership in Puritan New England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969 [Reprint: Wipf & Stock, 2002]), who has argued that the introduction of the “half-way” covenant represented not a decline in the life of New England Puritanism, but a creative adaptation to a new context and contributed to the ongoing life and movement of New England Puritanism, including among those who would become full members. A distinct parallel can be noticed in the immigration and acculturation narrative of the Apostolic Christian Churches. As Bojan Aleksov has noted, for example, in his study of the Yugoslavian Nazarenes after 1945, emigration, for the sake of preserving radical non-conformist faith, chose emigration, rather than acculturation and permeation as the option for survival. See Aleksov, “Dynamics of Extinction,” 48ff. The dynamic of first generation American children filling this role would be a pervasive one, due to the several successive waves of immigration that would occur.

<sup>61</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 25-26.

figures of the tradition, Braun notes the contextual nature of their early ministry, and of the need to follow their example in a way that is appropriate to the American context:

Now, in the old country, we find that Brother [Hencsey,] Brother Geipel, all of the old names, they went up and down the land, they spoke from the very beginning to the people in the language in which those people lived. And they spoke out of the bosom of their own countrymen... We owe this country also such thoroughness, such sympathy, and for that reason... more forbearance to the youth and the young generation of our land, because they are the ones who carry the citizenship and the heartfelt love of the ideals that are inborn different in every country... But in order to approach and do the fishing, not the way we think, but the way they think, and that is what fishing is, to go where the fish are—to catch them with the right kind of bait.<sup>62</sup>

We note here Braun's conscious attempt to draw from the historic heritage as a source of renewal.

Claude Petroff, of St. Louis, a younger man, presuming to speak for the sentiments of the youth, affirms Braun's metaphor of the English language as bait, and emphatically expresses the deep need of the youth for services in English. He further proposes other creative forms of outreach, such as Bible studies that include unbelievers, for the purposes of frank and open discussion of what is in people's hearts.<sup>63</sup>

The consensus of the body was to recognize the need of providing for the needs of English speaking preaching and services for the benefit of youth and of visitors. There was also general agreement on the need to think in terms of mission and evangelism as a priority integral to faith and tradition of the Apostolic Christian Church, and of Jesus' commands to his disciples. The "Fishers of Men" conversation would interestingly continue to be brought up again and again through the rest of the conference, signifying

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<sup>62</sup> 1948 Brothers' Meeting Report, 26.

<sup>63</sup> 1948 Brothers' Meeting Report, 27-28.

the spirit of the brotherhood to examine the various issues through a sort of mission focused lens.

*“Foundation, the Word of God”*

The next topic of discussion was the issue of “Foundations” with specific reference to the Bible, “The Word of God.”<sup>64</sup> Most religious movements encountering a period of renewal are led back to reconsiderations of traditions and practices, based upon the challenges of a new age. This often includes fresh new examinations of the religion’s defining historical narratives and experiences, and sacred texts. As we have seen above, part of the mission-oriented renewal came from reexamination and recovery of earlier mission impulses in the movement’s origins, as well as of fresh reading of biblical texts, such as Matthew, chapters 4 and 28.

The issue of the place of the Bible was taken up more directly in this third item on the conference agenda, the place of the Bible as the foundation of Apostolic Christian faith. During this session, the Bible was whole-heartedly reaffirmed as the basis of Apostolic Christian faith and life, above any “tradition.” Still, the biblical basis of many of the Apostolic Christian traditions and testimonies was reaffirmed. Nevertheless, the core principle that it is the Bible, and not any tradition for its own sake, that is normative for Apostolic Christian faith and life.

Discussion revolved around the specific understanding of what *tradition* is. The general negative sentiment toward the word “tradition” denotes the movement’s identity as being a Biblicist movement, as opposed to defined by “traditions of Man,” as they have typically understood the traditions of many other churches to be. G.A. Braun thus

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<sup>64</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 30-41.

reflects this attitude in an answer that he reports giving to a member of another denomination who contended Apostolic Christians had their own set of traditions, just like any other. To this he reports answering creatively, that the Apostolic Christian church does not have *traditions* but rather *usages* of biblical injunctions that are pertinent to given times and situations.

Thus while distancing from language of *traditions* which are thought to be binding in and of themselves (as with Roman Catholic and Conciliar Protestant attitudes toward creed and confessions), Braun implies a certain contextual dimension to interpreting and understanding the Bible's particular applicability to particular situations.<sup>65</sup> Overall, the discussion of the Bible as the "Foundation" of faith and practice of the Apostolic Christian church, and not *traditions*—even particular traditions practiced and passed down by the churches' earlier leaders—reaffirmed one of the key distinguishing marks of the ACCN as a movement more oriented in the direction of a radical free church, rather than a culturally insulated, isolationist sect.<sup>66</sup>

### *Organization*

Considerable lengthy discussion revolved around the issue of "Organization" Discussion on this issue revolved around the need for common funds and organization to support scattered smaller and fledgling congregations in remote parts of North America. The issue came to the fore not only by inner migration of American Apostolic Christians

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<sup>65</sup> This follows a traditional pattern of Anabaptist biblical interpretation in community discernment. See Walter Klaassen, "Anabaptist Hermeneutics: Presuppositions, Principles and Practice" in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives*, ed. Willard Swartley (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 9-10.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Ott, 101.

to new communities, but also by arrival of new immigrants from Europe to areas previously not populated by Apostolic Christians.

Of main concern was the recognition that many of the smaller congregations, some consisting of less than 20 persons, were struggling due to lack of resources for support of church buildings, educational materials, and qualified preachers. As inequities came to be realized, a sense of obligation on behalf of the larger congregations to smaller congregations became apparent, as the larger congregations often had more than enough in terms of financial resources and qualified preachers. The need was further exacerbated in that many of these smaller congregations were isolated and sometimes hundreds of miles away from other congregations.<sup>67</sup> The need was thus noted for a coordinated, organized effort to identify and adequately address the needs of the smaller struggling congregations, as well as the congregations newly formed by the more recent inflow of new immigrant communities.<sup>68</sup>

Considerable discussion ensued over the implications of such a transition. We can note some of the tensions in the speech of elder John Popp, who gave the opening address on the issue,

The word “organization” is quite new in our circle. If we are to be the body of Christ, the body must be organized; it is directed by the head and the members move accordingly. But we, as a church—as a body, so far cannot say that we are organized and it probably is wise that we do not become too mechanical in this or resort too much to organized methods, but certainly when one sees the need in

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<sup>67</sup> It is to be remembered that Apostolic Christians, like many other traditional Plain Church traditions, did not believe in salaried professional clergy. Preachers or ministers, also known as “teaching brothers” (*Lehrbruder*, in German), were selected, as qualified, from among local congregations to fill in preaching and other duties as they had time, in addition to their family and vocational responsibilities. Thus, larger congregations might have several, while smaller congregation might have only one, or even none, having to rely on preaching by itinerant ministers from other congregations.

<sup>68</sup> 1948 Brothers Meeting Report, 42. This may reflect the renewal, or at least extension, of the “mutual aid” principle integral to the identity of most Anabaptist traditions. See Juhnke, 243f, who asserts that the development of Mennonite Central Committee and other Mennonite relief efforts, foreign and domestic, were modern adaptations and renewal of their own historic value of the “mutual aid” principle.

these many places, we cannot believe that we should not do something to alleviate the need.<sup>69</sup>

Popp then goes on to propose the organization of a common fund to support those who would be able to take care of such needs. Popp goes on to qualify that he had never personally been in support of a paid full-time ministry, but that the need seemed so great at the present time, that it seemed a necessity in order to avoid neglect of the work, and especially since it did not seem that anyone would be able to volunteer their time for the accomplishment of the tasks at hand.<sup>70</sup> These included organizing regular preaching and oversight for the scattered congregations, as well as organizing a systematic Sunday School program.

Philip Braun, who himself was a prominent businessman in Syracuse, New York, reflecting on Jesus' remark that he must be about his father's *business*, remarked that Christians must also be about their "Father's Business" and that this business takes time, money, and "loving interest" in much the way that any business does. Braun then exhorts the brotherhood to invest in that to which they will have a "gain," namely "a gain of satisfaction and a gain of souls."<sup>71</sup>

John Kiss affirmed the discussion of organization and called the brotherhood further in their efforts to organize a system of paid full time itinerant ministers, spending 8-10 days at each for the purposes of preaching and instructing the local people the word of God, and holding "revival meetings." In reflecting on his observation of a joint revival meeting held by Presbyterians and Methodists, in which the sanctuary was full, he declared, "my heart broke...Where do we shine, we have the best doctrine in the world

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<sup>69</sup> 1948 Brothers Meeting Report, 42-43.

<sup>70</sup> 1948 Brothers Meeting Report, 43.

<sup>71</sup> 1948 Brothers Meeting Report, 44.

and we hold it back... We can't convert souls, but we should preach the word of God—its up to us.”<sup>72</sup>

Andy Meng, Jr., furthered the conversation and called the brotherhood not only to organize on the national level, but on the local congregational level, setting up regular funds and budgets in each local church. He further suggested that each congregation contribute a certain amount to the national fund by virtue of their size and ability.<sup>73</sup>

Edward Baer affirmed Meng's comments, and furthered that, since the Holy Spirit guides whole churches into action, and not merely a select few, commenting, “I believe, that anything like this should not be a move by a few of the more well-to-do brothers, but something that should be supported by the congregation as a whole.”<sup>74</sup>

Henry Michel spoke with the intention of clarifying the intention of the proposed solution of organization which, in many ways, was patterned on other churches:

We don't want to have some alliance work with other congregations [i.e. denominations]...we don't want in this way to make Christians quick and easily. Sometimes just the signing of a Bible or a Testament or raising of a hand is a proof that they accept Christ as their personal Savior. We are not in agreement with this. We think there is more behind the “New Birth” than just a moment of emotion where, under the stirring up of a private teaching, we stretch out the hand and say “We accepted Christ.” It is a trend of the time to have such quick and particular results. We believe in the slower, more difficult ways of going through repentance, through confession, and so on. I just mention this so that none have a false idea because especially these words “Evangelization” and “Missionary Work” are sometimes misunderstood.<sup>75</sup>

Michel's remarks here evidence how the 1948 Brothers' Meeting represented a critical appropriation of elements of other traditions. While the greater part of the ACCN was willing to accommodate to certain modernization efforts, evidenced by the distinct and

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<sup>72</sup> 1948 Brothers Meeting Report, 46.

<sup>73</sup> 1948 Brothers Meeting Report, 47.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> 1948 Brothers Meeting Report, 48.

observable process of organization and denominationalization, other aspects considered central to the church's identity, such as a strong and distinct integral ecclesial identity, represented through strong requirements for baptism and admission to membership, and exclusive communion among members only. Apostolic Christians might come to renewed convictions that they ought to become involved in evangelism and mission efforts—and they might learn a good deal from observing others—but they were going to qualify the meaning and content of these terms *for themselves*.

### *Immigration and Relief*

A delegation of Apostolic Christian elders traveled to South America, particularly to Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil, in order to make contacts with fellow believers there, as well as to study the living conditions of recent European immigrants there.<sup>76</sup> The delegation had also gone with the mission of understanding the possibilities and plausibility of helping to resettle there eastern European Nazarene refugees. Extended conversation was held about various options, and about what could be learned from other similar organizations that were working to resettle refugees, including the Tolstoy Foundation in New York, and especially the Mennonite Central Committee, and their resettlement projects of Russian Mennonite refugees to Canada.

A delegation had also gone to visit the Yugoslavian ambassador in Washington, on behalf of the imprisoned Nazarenes in post-War Yugoslavia, especially those of

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<sup>76</sup> Apostolic Christian had been established in South America, particularly in southern Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, following European immigrations there from Switzerland and Austria-Hungary in the 1870's and 1880's—Rosalie Donais Pfleiderer, "Formation and Development of the Apostolic Christian Church in Argentina" Unpublished Manuscript in possession of the author.

German descent.<sup>77</sup> The ambassador reported that the Yugoslav government was willing to release the Germans if they had a place to emigrate. The committee also faced the issue of how to move large numbers of people held up in refugee camps in Austria and Germany. As of 1948, the main country willing to take new European immigrants was Argentina, as well as a few other South American countries. Among other locations that presented themselves as possibilities, the committee considered Venezuela, and Saskatchewan, Canada.<sup>78</sup> Areas of immigration would later come to include southern Ontario, and the northeastern, midwestern, and southwestern United States.

### *Education*

The theme of the second day of the 1948 Brothers' Meeting was conducted under the heading of "Care of the Church." The two main topics discussed were "Education of Children" and "Church Discipline." The topic of Education was discussed extensively, and was often related to the issues of mission and evangelism raised the previous day. The topic of "Church Discipline" raised the voices of some of those within the brotherhood who felt most threatened by the winds of change taking place at mid-century.

The committee to explore the state of education in the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) was Anton Betz, elder in Mansfield, Ohio. With a sense of urgency and gravity, Betz reported that the state of basic Christian education in the ACCN was poor. The committee attempted to approach the issue from various angles and surveys. His first

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<sup>77</sup> After the end of World War II, the new government of Yugoslavia had revoked the citizenship and rights of all ethnic Germans living in Yugoslavia, confiscated their property, and detained them in forced labor camps.

<sup>78</sup> 1948 Brothers Meeting Report, 76-77.

point was to reflect on the traditional approach of Christian education of children in the ACCN, that religious education takes place primarily in the home. While affirming this principle as primary ideal, he reported that the committee found that it simply was being neglected in many homes, due to “busyness” of the modern lifestyle.<sup>79</sup> Betz also pressed the issue of the need to value and implement quality Sunday School programs in the ACCN churches that are well organized and conducted by well-trained teachers. He noted that the European churches—referring to the Swiss—had adopted Sunday School programs as well.<sup>80</sup> Betz ended with a speech that appears very sensitive to life cycle issues, commenting that children are at a very tender age, and need to hear instruction in God’s word in their own “language” in terms they can understand pertinent to their stage of life.

Trefon Segadencky followed with a summary of a statistical report they had compiled. Seeking to understand the state of Sunday Schools within the ACCN, Segadencky reported that most churches did not have Sunday School programs, and that, on the whole, parents did not value Sunday School, even if their church did offer it.<sup>81</sup> It was critical, Segadencky argued, to work for a change of mindset in the church, so that parents will value the proper religious formation of their children, both at home through their own efforts, and at Sunday School, for which the parents ought to model respect and encouragement.

Another major issue of concern was the lack of adequate materials. The committee reports that the selection of materials was random and inconsistent, and often not satisfactorily compatible with all the principles of the Apostolic Christian faith. Thus

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<sup>79</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 82-83.

<sup>80</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 84.

<sup>81</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 86.

Segadencky calls for attention to the development of a systematic curriculum for instructing Apostolic Christian children, and for preparing Sunday School teachers.<sup>82</sup>

Segadencky then alluded to the “Fishers of Men” conversation the previous day, and proposed that Sunday School ought to serve a broader purpose beyond only educating the children of members, into the broader community as an outreach to other children and their families. His reasoning was that we must work where the “harvest is not yet gathered in” rather than simply gleaning from the already threshed fields, and so contribute to the “future of the church.”<sup>83</sup>

Reaction to these presentations was generally positive and affirming. One man, Gene Schiller, recalled how little attention was paid to children’s spiritual well being in his youth during the 1920’s, especially from fathers and grandfathers. Another, Will Erckert, recalled how Andrew Braun, one of the pioneer leaders of the Apostolic Christian Church in America, had been his Sunday school teacher as a boy, in the late 1890’s, emphasizing using the Bible as a instrument for teaching reading and reflection, and lamenting that schools do not teach good reading and comprehension skills.

### *Church Discipline*

John Dimitor, who would also present later on issues of “Church Discipline,” cautioned that a major problem was not only the lack of Christian education, but of parents allowing children too many privileges—such as reading the “funnies,” listening to radio programs, and going to “ball games.”<sup>84</sup> Dimitor argued that people cannot serve “two masters” and that spiritual results of Christian education cannot be expected as long

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<sup>82</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 88.

<sup>83</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 87.

<sup>84</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 92.

as youth are also permitted to engage in such behaviors. Steve Kovacs, a Hungarian immigrant, reflected on how children did not even attend Nazarene churches in Europe until they were “converted,” and drew their primary religious education from the public schools (run by the state churches) and by their parents at home. Kovacs affirmed the American practice of bringing children to church and of Sunday School, but agreed with Dimitor, that fixation with “modern inventions” and the worldly secular curriculum of American public schools “fills the hearts” of children so that they do not think about salvation.<sup>85</sup>

Henry Michel gave a call for action, and called for the formation of an officially approved executive committee to carry on the work of developing and implementing a plan of action for Sunday School programming in the ACCN, and for “going house to house” to educate parents on the need to support Sunday School and Christian education in the home, and encourage their children to attend Sunday School.<sup>86</sup> The brotherhood thus passed a resolution that included four points: 1. Reading and teaching of the Bible in the home ought to be emphasized, and parents ought to teach their children “about Jesus and his love;” 2. Communication with children ought to be carried out with sensitivity to their age and in their language, pertinent to their stage in life; 3. There is a need for qualified teachers with a method of instruction; and 4. There is a need for a systematic educational curriculum and printed materials for instruction, coherent with the Apostolic Christian faith, as well as a plan for uniform quality Sunday School programs.

John Dimitor then attempted to resume a discussion of Church Discipline. Dimitor remarked that he had noted a marked increase in practice of activities which he

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 90.

considered worldly, especially in the practice of wedding ceremonies. Such practices included the place of a “best man” in weddings, and going on honeymoons.<sup>87</sup> Dimitor also notes that the rise of modern inventions and conveniences also pose the threat of encouraging spiritual lethargy and blindness to trends which may lead to spiritual destruction. Though admitting that “man changes with time” he nevertheless notes that there is a dimension of human life and experience that is constant and that is the inherent fallen nature of the world, and of the responsibility of Christians to be wary of its subtle influences. “I am only trying to bring out the facts that we are living in a dangerous time and position,” Dimitor remarked, concerning the appeal of modern conveniences in a rapidly changing social world.<sup>88</sup> Dimitor’s main concern is that material and spiritual dimensions of life are integrally linked, and that acceptance of shifting cultural norms and values may well reflect shifting spiritual values as well. Steve Babin, of the West Akron, Ohio, congregation, noted his concern over certain youth in his congregation who were playing baseball and going to movies. In his mindset, these were activities out of which Christians had been called, and were thus incompatible with Christian identity.<sup>89</sup>

Discussion of the topic did not last long. Anton Betz gave a final remark, in line with traditional Anabaptist view of the Church “Without Church discipline there is no church” and furthered added, in the chiliastic tradition of the Apostolic Christian Church from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “the time is short” and we must be prepared to meet Christ at his

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<sup>87</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 98. Traditional Apostolic Christian weddings were rather plain affairs, carried out on the Sunday afternoon following Church services, and involved the bride and groom exchanging vows of fidelity before the witnessing congregation, which gave approval and blessing to the marriage. Though Dimitor does not mention the issue here, the practice of having weddings on Saturdays, and using wedding rings would later become another issue of contention for Apostolic Christians.

<sup>88</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting Report, 99.

<sup>89</sup> 1948 Brothers’ Meeting, 100.

coming.<sup>90</sup> However, no formal resolution was made as to what this meant, and no programmatic approach to the issues raised by Dimitor and Babin was pursued. So concluded the 1948 Brothers' Meeting of the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean).

The way to a critical modernization, including appropriation of new social and cultural trends was left open, with no attempt to define a legalistic codification of behaviors. The brothers gathered to discern through the manifold changes and challenges would leave energized and catalyzed to deal creatively with the new challenges, yet not entirely certain, to be sure, of all that this would entail. The issues touched upon at the 1948 Brothers Meeting would only prove to be the beginning. The consequences of their actions would unfold drastically in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. .

## **Conclusion**

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century represented a period of struggle with the modernizing forces of the industrialization, immigration, and urbanization for the Apostolic Christians Churches. The confrontation with the confluence of these factors, and the rapid acceleration of social change that followed, can be considered the primary underlying cause for much of the Apostolic Christian identity struggles of the time. The winds of change challenged American Apostolics to renewal, who had hitherto settled in a 19<sup>th</sup> century rural-agrarian isolationist ethnic mindset. To the conservatives, the forces of modernization represented an affront from the world to pure ways of the sanctified remnant community. These responded, by and large to culturally reactionary, *pure remnant* mentality. To the progressive minded, it represented an opportunity for renewal and mission to a changing modern world. Though the ACCN side of the division tended

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<sup>90</sup> 1948 Brothers' Meeting, 101.

to lead the way in terms of cultural adaptation, especially in terms of cultural pluralism, the struggle with modernity and tradition would characterize both “sides” of the American Apostolic Christian world. The new generation of Apostolic Christian leaders that would arise on both sides of the division, during the period of the 1920’s, 30’s, and 40’s, would be more moderate and recognize the need to engage modernity. Both sides came to embrace necessary changes in their approach to the modern world, especially in terms of language, dress, lifestyle, and forms of piety—while still seeking to find an adaptation consistent with historic and foundational principles of their faith. Only the most adamantly “old order” minority of traditionalists, who sought to vigorously cling to 19<sup>th</sup> century modes and forms, rejected these modernizing processes altogether—led by Steidinger and the “German Apostolic” party. World War II and the social situation in Post-war America would only further accelerate these changes and questions of essential identity, as it would for Americans at large.

## Chapter 6

### **Toward a Renewed Global Identity: Modernization, Identity Crisis, and New Global Realities, 1950-2010**

Following the 1948 Brothers' Meeting, there followed a strong progressive impulse toward modernization and Americanization. Many recall the times as an era of energy, revitalization, and renewal in the ACCN. Ted and Ernie Pavkov record that, beginning in the 1940's, each of the congregations gradually converted their services into the English language, which served to attract members of other ethnic communities, including Irish, Italians, Greeks, and English.<sup>1</sup> Many congregations, as with the Barberton/Norton, Ohio congregation, eliminated practices no longer considered useful or helpful in an American context, such as holding baptisms and weddings in secret, and closed to any but members (including children and family of members).<sup>2</sup> This was occurring in many congregations, even as a fresh new wave of immigration was beginning to pour in, many of whom would favor clinging to the old ways, in the new and strange land.

### **Postwar Immigration**

#### *Background of Nazarene Immigration to America*

This beginning of the end of this formative period of Nazarene flourishing would come to an end with the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire. With the division of the Empire into various states and with the new rise of nationalism, the Nazarene movement would have new challenges to face. Aleksov posits that it was the rise of

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<sup>1</sup> Pavkov and Pavkov, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Pavkov and Pavkov, 35.

Serbian religious nationalism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that marked the end of large scale conversions among the Serbian population. With the social anomie created by the shattering of the old regime now filled by a resurgent Serb nationalism, and a national Serbian Orthodox Church with a renewed sense of national identity, The masses were simply not as open to the message of the Nazarenes.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Nazarenes came to bear much resemblance to a conservative movement that lacked the ability for cultural adaptation to a changing world.

The Inter-war years were as trying and as confusing for the Nazarenes as for the wider society. The movement, which had been formed in the stew pot that was the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire of the 19<sup>th</sup> century now found themselves separated into several different countries officially based on ethnic nationality rather than on a common royal dynasty.<sup>4</sup> The ethnic tensions that had arisen with the rise of nationalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century now became, after the First World War and the Treaty of Triannon, official political and ideological reality. Nevertheless, the Nazarenes persisted in their beliefs that the Gospel transcended ethnic and cultural lines, and that the brotherhood of Christians was stronger than the ethnic and national loyalties.<sup>5</sup> This is obviously an aspect of their Anabaptist sense of the Church as called out community of faith in non-conformity with the world, and with strict communal discipline and identity.

The Nazarenes also faced much the same persecution for their stance of non-resistance as they had under the Austro-Hungarian governments, if not more. The climate

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<sup>3</sup> Aleksov, *Religious Dissent*, pp. 166-179.

<sup>4</sup> Although, Yugoslavia and Romania were both monarchies at this time, their national identities were still based on the primary ethnic groups: Romanians in the case of Romania, and South Slavs, officially “Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes,” in the case of Yugoslavia, (although ethnic tensions were present among these groups and the charge was always made that the monarchy favored the Serbs).

<sup>5</sup> Aleksov, “Dynamics of Extinction,” p.1.

of nationalism and uneasy sense of national and political insecurity during the interwar years only exacerbated the issue. The Nazarenes in Yugoslavia continued to appeal for non-combatant roles in the military, and were often rebuffed with the answer that allowing alternative service for the Nazarenes would result in many people converting to that religion simply for the sake of avoiding armed fighting.<sup>6</sup> The mixed ethnicity of the movement, which included ethnic minority groups that now found themselves within the borders of another country seems also to have caused some suspicion of the Nazarenes, who usually now lived in border areas with neighboring countries which their new home country was suspicious of attempting to infiltrate and subvert them.<sup>7</sup>

The most cataclysmic impact on the Nazarene movement in Eastern Europe have occurred since World War II. This was due in large part to the demographic changes of the post-war years. This included the ethnic cleansing of virtually the entire German population of Yugoslavia after World War II, which made up a sizable portion of the Nazarenes in that country, as well as subsequent immigration and coercion under the Communist government during the later portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Aleksov posits that the Nazarenes simply did not adjust well to the changing social and cultural climate of modernity, choosing instead to cling to the old ways that characterized them at the time of their emergence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On this issue, the official delegate for Yugoslavia to the League of Nations meeting stated that the persecution was not for religious reasons, but for legal reasons. His attitude that pacifism is indeed a higher order and way of the future for an evolved humanity betrays his ideological liberalism. Yet this leaves, in his mind, no legitimate place for dissent on this issue in the current political climate. See Karl Stäubli et al., *Report of the Conference with the Jugoslavian and the Roumanian Delegates in Brussels, Friday, March 16, 1928*, (Syracuse, NY: Apostolic Christian Publishing Co., n.d.), pp. 3-8.

<sup>7</sup> This seems to have been the case especially in the areas of Romania that were near the border with Hungary, which was known to have ambitions of reclaiming that territory. Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Aleksov, "Dynamics of Extinction," 52-59.

The post-World War II era proved a very trying time for the Nazarenes in eastern Europe. Those in the former Yugoslavia, especially of German descent, suffered the most in the immediate years. Others suffered more over time as the communist governments became more established, consolidated their power, and attempted to advance their atheistic, anti-religious agendas. Many of those who fled after the war, bore with them deep memories of the war, that would shape a generation of immigrants to America.

Large numbers of immigrants poured into North America in the years following World War II. Many of these were ethnic Germans, especially displaced persons (DP's) who had lived in Eastern Europe for generations, even centuries. Among these were the Donauschwaben people, who had settled in the Danube valley since the 1700's in the southern Austro-Hungarian Empire, later divided between modern Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Romania. These people in particular were treated the most horribly in post-1945 Yugoslavia. Among them were many Nazarenes (around 2,000), who eventually fled Yugoslavia. A great number of these eventually immigrated to the United States and Canada during between 1945 and 1960. Many Hungarians immigrated in the 1950's and 1960's during the unsuccessful anti-Soviet uprisings. And many Yugoslavs and Romanians immigrated during the 1960's and 1970's as travel restrictions lightened in these countries.

The presence of the Nazarenes in Eastern Europe has been a precarious one. In none of communist states in which the Nazarenes were to be found were they officially recognized, much less were their religious views respected. Nonresistance continued to be a major issue of tension with the governments as well. In Yugoslavia, this was especially harsh, with Nazarene men continuing to suffer for their refusal to bear arms up

to the late 1990's.<sup>9</sup> The communist legacy has left these churches quite impoverished. At present, the congregations in Yugoslavia maintain fraternal relations with, as well as receive financial aid and support from, both the ACCA<sup>10</sup> and ACCN<sup>11</sup> in North America.

In the postwar years, hundreds of thousands of immigrants poured into North America from war torn Europe. With President Harry Truman's signing of the Displaced Person Act of 1948, three decades of xenophobic isolationism and ethnic bigotry had ended in the United States immigration policy.<sup>12</sup> This included several hundred European Nazarene refugees following the war. At first, most of these were Donauschwaben German refugees, who were forced to leave Yugoslavia after 1945.<sup>13</sup> The Swiss *Hilfe* organization helped to resettle many of the Nazarene refugees find refuge in Austria, immediately after World War II. From there, with cooperation of *Hilfe* and Apostolic Christians in America, many of them were resettled in North America—many among Apostolic Christians there.

### *Effects of Immigration in the ACCN*

This continuous influx of immigrants, since World War II, had profound effects upon the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean), which had not had any major influx of immigrants in three decades. That it furthermore was a geographically uneven immigration, occurring mostly in the eastern part of the United States and Canada, would

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<sup>9</sup> Branco Bjelajac, "Protestantism in Serbia," *Religion, State & Society* 30:3 (September 2002), p.183.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.acworldrelief.org/europe-overview/> (accessed December 27, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Apostolic Christian Church Foundation *Newsletter* (March/April 2008), p.1. Available online at <http://www.accfoundation.org> (accessed December 19, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> See John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12942> (accessed April 21, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> See Ott, 137-139.

instill divisions that would take root and only widen as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed onward. This would come to play as a factor in future divisions between the more conservative “Eastern” and more progressive “Western” conferences within the ACCN.

Nevertheless, the challenges of the postwar era sparked revitalization and renewal within the ACCN, especially in the younger generation. Janice Sheetz and Evelyn H. Betz, members of the ACCN who lived through the post-war era, remember the years 1945-1949 as a time of “revival” and renewal of corporate identity in the Apostolic Christian Church, especially as they worked to accommodate the refugee Nazarenes into their fold. A quote from their account captures the essence and spirit of the church during a period of renewal amidst rapid social changes within the church and in the wider society:

There was a national feeling of relief and joy that the war years were over and the churches were actively involved in war relief activities, including sending boxes of food and clothing to brethren in the European churches. However, there was growing concern in many of the churches, particularly in the East, about the continued dominance of foreign language services and the lack of activities for the youth. Many urgently felt the need for change in order to reach out to and keep the young people and the unchurched in the community.<sup>14</sup>

The transition also marked a renewal more outward and global thinking, as the Apostolic Christians came into contact with the new wave of immigrants from central and eastern Europe, many of them bearing deep scars from traumatic experiences in the war:

Our hearts went out to the increasing flow of refugees from Eastern Europe. We listened to their stories of the horrors of war and renewed our pledge to be peacemakers; to build the bridges of understanding between those who had been kept apart by the ravages of armed conflict, pressures of false imprisonment, anxieties of escape from inhuman atrocities born of hate and fear, and unnecessary shortages and emergencies. Gone were the feelings of isolation and helpless despair; we reached out to every soul who expressed a need, tried to

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<sup>14</sup> Janice Sheetz and Evelyn H. Betz, “Winds of Change: 1945-1949” in *Mountaintops along the Way: Essays in the History of the Apostolic Christian Church of North America (Nazarean) Vols. I & II* (Tremont, IL: Apostolic Christian Church Foundation, [1989]), 1.

understand what he felt, and then offered whatever we had or could get to restore and support the survivors of war. Barriers of language, culture, circumstance and personal quirk were overcome in our zeal to extend the love of God.<sup>15</sup>

The new waves of immigration, now some three decades since the last wave, represented new experiences. Whereas the first wave of immigrants represented the Nazarene movement of eastern Europe at its apex of vitality and creativity, the new generation of immigrants represented a Nazarene faith that was beginning to wane, due to difficulty in coping with the social changes occurring in eastern Europe after World War

I. As Aleksov puts it:

All churches had to contend with the adjustment of their doctrines and structures to the impact of modernization and state pressure. However, the Nazarenes' ability to adjustment was low as they were heavily influenced by the social order and practices of the period of their emergence and growth, that is the 19th century.<sup>16</sup>

Going on further to comment about the specific dynamics of the Yugoslav Nazarenes' adjustment with modernity in post World War I Europe, Aleksov notes:

The [Nazarene] community turned static, very conservative and ceased the evangelization. Instead of aiming to increase in size, it aimed at increasing respect for its principles, one of them being a separation from the rest of the world. Their moral stringency was not relaxed, nor did they open to other churches and society in general.

Aleksov goes on to mention that in this same vein the Nazarenes developed an isolationist communal spirit characterized by an “us versus them” mentality. This was in regards to not only an increasingly complex social world of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marked by distinct modernization and secularization, as well as pressures by a hostile communist

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>16</sup> Aleksov, “Dynamics of Extinction,” Chapter 3.

government, but also from competition from the proliferation of new and growing alternative Protestant sects.<sup>17</sup>

The influx of such a large number of immigrants of this mentality would understandably cause tensions with the more progressive Americanized church body represented in the progressive spirit of the 1948 Brothers' Meeting. One example of this is the shifts that occurred especially in the West Akron congregation of the ACCN, which historically had strong ethnic Serbian ties, and which had received a large number of immigrants throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas the congregation had come to adopt more American customs such as having choirs, Vacation Bible Schools, and church advertising, and weddings on Saturdays, many of these measures were reversed as the congregation came more and more to be dominated by immigrant Nazarenes from eastern Europe.<sup>18</sup> Another story concerning more conservative shifts with the arrival of immigrants is the practice of the laying on of hands after the Christian baptism. In many congregations, it had become the practice to lay on hands for the sealing of the Holy Spirit immediately after baptism in the public ceremony. However, as elder George Freund once recalled in his congregation, the practice was changed to reserving the post-baptism laying on of hands to a private ceremony, due to pressure of new immigrant members.<sup>19</sup>

This conservative mentality prevailed where large numbers of immigrants were gathered. In many communities, new congregations were established that used exclusively ethnic languages. In other English speaking congregations, alternate foreign language services were either revived or reestablished. Where immigrants were fewer in

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<sup>17</sup> Aleksov, "Dynamics of Extinction," Chapter 4.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Petar Nenadov (March 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Related by Petar Nenadov (March 2010).

number such as in the western congregations, assimilation into the more Americanized version of the Apostolic Christian faith was initially easier.

### *The Apostolic Christian Church Foundation*

It was decided at the 1948 Brothers' Meeting that an organization would need to be established that could provide for the corporate needs of the Apostolic Christian diaspora in North America. It was also decided that an organization which could officially represent the denomination to the wider world was needed.<sup>20</sup> What resulted from this was the founding of the *Apostolic Christian Church Foundation*. The Apostolic Christian Church Foundation (ACCF) was originally founded in 1952, in order to organize the sending of teaching ministers to military camps where brothers were stationed for their service.<sup>21</sup> Soon the Foundation grew into the role as the agency of central coordination for a number of efforts, including relief work, and financial support of churches. Mission would become one of the central foci of the of the organization, and this found most direct support through the Western Churches, who organized the "Western Missionary Committee" in the 1950's to coordinate mission efforts and support missionaries.

As the denomination never developed centralized denominational leadership structures, the ACCF became the most central organization ACCN inter-congregational relationships and cooperation in material endeavors. Spiritual leadership and doctrinal authority, however, remained in the informal body of elders. This would create difficulties later on, as the ACCF, a cooperative, primarily lay-driven, organization for

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<sup>20</sup> See discussion on "Organization" in Chapter 5 above.

<sup>21</sup> *Apostolic Christian Church Foundation Directory*, 1952.

mutual aid and mission, would by and large be caught in the middle as two different factions of elders emerged.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ACCF would serve as the primary vehicle of ACCN unity and identity, however fragile it might be. It served this role through serving the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) as an arm for funding of church building and repair projects, organizing preaching rotations for smaller, isolated, or fledging “outreach” churches, publications (including newsletters, directories, and religious literature), missionary coordination and support, and mutual aid and relief funds, the International Christian Friendship Group (ICFG)—an organization for Apostolic Christian youth—and through organizing various regional yearly camp meetings for Apostolic Christians to gather for consultation and fellowship together.

### **Broadening Horizons, Mounting Tensions: 1960-1990**

#### *Becoming a Global Movement*

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the spread of the movement to other non-Western eras—geographically outside of Europe and North America, through settlement, as well as through intentional missionary outreach. These churches represent a dynamic new story line that has yet to be fully integrated into the broader Apostolic Christian church history. These churches especially have much to contribute in their conceptions of the spiritual world and the exercise of spiritual warfare ministries. Yet they generally lack in their early stages of development a global historical awareness of their own movements. While much indeed has been passed on by the founding missionaries about the basics of Christian life and faith, it seems that little has been passed on in terms of their own

influences from the Apostolic Christian Churches in America or their own historical heritage.

The establishment of the Church in South America began initially through settlement, with several Nazarene families immigrating to Brazil from Yugoslavia after World War I to settle in Sao Paulo and Sao Jose dos Campos.<sup>22</sup> This was the beginning of the “Evangelica Nazareno Church” in Brazil. These congregations would remain small and in relative ethnic isolation until the coming of the American (and later some European) missionaries in the 1950’s. The first missionaries, Melvin and Katherine Huber, made their primary agenda to work among the indigenous, Portuguese-speaking populations, although they maintained ties with the Nazareno churches. A decisive decision which would affect the outcome of the Church’s identity was made early on.

After about a year in Brazil, Melvin had successfully established a nucleus of new converts who desired baptism and who could establish a new church. However, not being an ordained Elder, Melvin did not have authority to baptize. The options were for Melvin to go ahead independently with the work, or an Elder from the U.S. could come and preside at the baptisms, or they could partner with the Nazareno churches. After consulting with Elder Philip Gutwein from the U.S., they agreed that it would be best to work with the Nazareno churches, so as not to propagate divisions. The impact of this action would be great. The Elders of the Nazareno churches accepted the invitation to baptize the new converts and welcome their congregation into fellowship. Elder Carlos Marsi presided at the baptisms and church dedications.<sup>23</sup> Thus the precedent for evangelism and church planting as a part of that churches identity had been set, as new

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<sup>22</sup> Rosalie Donais Pflederer, *Sunrise on the Amazon*, (Tremont, IL:Apostolic Christian Church Foundation, 1991), p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Pflederer, p.19.

congregations became established by the missionaries, and as old churches became more outreach-oriented in their worship and programming.<sup>24</sup> What resulted was nothing less than an evangelical renewal of the Evangelica Nazareno Church, as new converts were won and new church buildings were built.<sup>25</sup> Eventually, through its growing congregations and new openness to cultural diversity, new churches in 1958 came to be planted among the ethnic German settlements of Brazil's Parana province, at the initiation of the home churches, under the leadership of Elder Carlos Marsi. It is noteworthy to mention that it was actually Marsi who took the initiative here, who then asked the American missionary Melvin Huber to help out.<sup>26</sup> This eventually led to the establishment of congregations in Argentina. By the 1960's the Mission had become well established with regular missionaries coming from North American and Europe. It was during this time as well that saw the Mission becoming increasingly concerned with the impoverished conditions of so much of the Brazilian populace, resulting in the establishment of orphanages at Nepomuceno, Boa Esperanca, and Parana, and the beginning of medical missionary endeavors after 1963.<sup>27</sup>

A characteristic mark of these South American churches and missions has been their encounters with spiritual warfare. From the beginning, the missionaries here encountered the spiritism that so characterizes popular Brazilian culture. There would be many spiritual encounters which would result in the exorcism of demons and miraculous healing.

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<sup>24</sup> Pfleiderer, p.28.

<sup>25</sup> Pfleiderer, p.20.

<sup>26</sup> Pfleiderer, p.27.

<sup>27</sup> Pfleiderer, pp.33- 34.

“Project Amazon,” better known as PAZ, is a ministry that is an outgrowth of Apostolic Christian mission work from the south. This has proved to one of the most innovative, dynamic, and rapidly growing, yet ecclesially undefined ministries in South America. Founded by Luke Huber, son of Melvin Huber, PAZ has had a unique ministry of pioneering deep into the Amazon basin, accessible only by boat and airplane. The ministry has organized into yearly gatherings of the PAZ churches called the “Congresso da PAZ” which seem to be focused mainly on evangelism and teaching.<sup>28</sup> Organization of these churches seems to be pretty basic and doctrine pretty simple, and defined somewhat along fundamentalist dispensationalist lines.<sup>29</sup> For the time, PAZ seems to be mostly a loose connection of charismatic evangelical congregations in the Amazon basin through the PAZ mission agency. Even though most of the local congregations are mostly under indigenous leadership, much of the training and leadership from the top (the agency) consists of Western missionaries. The next step in the development of this unique organization seems unclear, as these unique adaptations to the remoteness of the huge and inaccessible Amazon basin. However, it would seem that as time goes on, one has to wonder if a more ecclesial concept of PAZ might need to emerge that is more organized as an ecclesiastical than pragmatic based organization. Eventually, as these communities continue on with their sense of ecclesial identity and community formation, they will need to develop their own sense of historical identity and theological thinking.

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<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.projectamazon.org/news/?p=44> (accessed December 27, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> The PAZ “Statement of Beliefs” includes as its core beliefs such doctrines as the “inerrancy of scripture,” belief in the virgin birth, and a brief mention of the “rapture of the church.” It is unclear how much these particularly American derived formulations represent the people of the PAZ churches, or simply the interdenominational missionaries that come, as the website seems mostly aimed at these. No mention is made about non-resistance. See <http://www.projectamazon.org/about/beliefs.php> (accessed December 27, 2008).

A characteristic mark of these South American churches and missions has been their encounters with spiritual warfare and a spiritual worldview. From the beginning, the missionaries here encountered the spiritism that so characterizes popular Brazilian culture. There would be many spiritual encounters which would result in the exorcism of demons and miraculous healing. Through links with missionaries, the charismatic movement would make some inroads into the Western Conference ACCN during the 1980's and 1990's.

#### *Papua New Guinea/Australia/ South Pacific Islands*

The story of the Apostolic Christian Connections in Papua New Guinea owes its genesis and stability to the faithful life's work of Vic and Elsie Schlatter. Vic and Elsie first came to isolated rainforest covered Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea in 1961. Vic, who had been a nuclear physicist, and Elsie, who was a nurse, were both trained at Wycliffe Bible Institute's Summer Linguistics program.<sup>30</sup> They worked primarily among the Waola people, a "stone age" culture people, who knew very little outside of their isolated villages, in ministries of church planting, teaching, healthcare, and spiritual deliverance ministries. The Church they planted came to be called the Tiliba Christian Church, meaning "beside the Til river" where their work began.<sup>31</sup>

By 1975 Schlatter had developed a written language for the Waola language, and finished a complete translation of the Bible into the Waola language. In the course of their three decades work in New Guinea they had established the Tiliba Christian Church,

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<sup>30</sup> Rosalie M. Donais, *To Them Gave He the Power: The gripping tale of God's great love for the Stone Age Waola Highlanders of Papua New Guinea*, (Tremont, IL: Apostolic Christian Church Foundation, 1987), pp 9-12.

<sup>31</sup> Elsie Schlatter, in Donais, p. vii.

now called the “Good News Christian Church.” The Church has functioned independently since 1994, and consists of “123 congregations of some 10,000 believers.”<sup>32</sup> The church has a fascinating story. As with the South American churches, there is strong consciousness of the spirit world. Furthermore, the traditional Anabaptist testimony of the biblical witness of non-resistance has found a different manifestation in Papua New Guinea. Rather than posed primarily in terms of resistance to a militarized nation-state, the biblical witness of non-resistance applies more to the forgiveness of enemies (which includes not violently avenging offenses in blood feuds) and in the cessation of tribal warfare. The church practices Believer’s Baptism, by immersion, for those who profess a conversion, and are accepted by the Elders of the church, whose oversight they come under. The church culture and religious practices reflect a mixture of the basic practices of the Apostolic Christian Church, including singing worship and simple preaching from the Scriptures, with many particular Waola cultural customs and styles integrated into worship life.<sup>33</sup> This church has maintained strong contacts with ACCN churches in North America through American missionaries that have worked in Papua New Guinea, as well as fraternal relations through the Apostolic Christian Church Foundation.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Apostolic Christian Church Foundation *Newsletter* (July/August 2008), p.10. Available online at <http://www.accfoundation.org> (accessed December 19, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Personal correspondence between Vic Schlatter and the author, November 19, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Since 1991, the Schlatters have been based in Northern Australia, working periodically as consultants to the Good News Christian Church, but primarily through a new venture into relational and resource ministries with other congregations in the South Pacific Islands, known as “South Pacific Islands Ministries.” This is also a quite ecclesially undefined project, as Vic Schlatter seems to be focusing on a Dispensationalist Zionist agenda See [www.spim.org.au](http://www.spim.org.au) (accessed December 27, 2008).

*Western vs. Eastern: Contrasting Visions of Church and Mission*

One of the major shifts within the more progressive branches of the Apostolic Christian Church traditions is in terms of ecclesiology. While retaining the chiliastic elements of their tradition, a sense of urgency in evangelizing a world that is short lived in the light of the second advent of Christ's coming, and that repentance and salvation are essential preparation for Christ's return, they reject the ecclesiological formulations of their inherited tradition, namely, that they are the one true visible church. Rather, they would more readily move away from a *sectarian* separatist identity, to accepting a *denominational* framework of self-understanding and approaching ecclesiological issues.<sup>35</sup> Thus, while they would consider themselves to have a particular denominational identity, with a certain tradition and outlook, and even with a unique understanding of theology, they are willing to recognize the "ecclesial minimum"<sup>36</sup> in the other denominations and movements—most particularly in other evangelical and fundamentalist denominations and movements. They would be more open to interaction with other "like minded" traditions and churches, and to adopting their (more Anglo-American) forms of piety as part of their inculturation into modern American society.

Close friendships and intermarriages with those of similar traditions would thus be considered more tolerable. People wishing to join their churches and transfer membership from other evangelical denominations, need only show evidence of

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<sup>35</sup> Many scholars of Anabaptism have adopted Troeltsch's sect-denomination typology for accounting for the transformative aspects of modernization on various Anabaptist movements. For a fuller discussion and appraisal of these, see Calvin Redekop, "Sectarianism and the Sect Cycle" in *Anabaptist-Mennonite Identities in Ferment*, eds. Leo Driedger and Leland Harder (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1990), 59-75.

<sup>36</sup> Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 157. In his formulation of Free Church ecclesiology, Volf argues that, due to its essential nature, Free Church ecclesiology is inherently broad and embracing of a plurality of views and doctrinal conceptions. The "ecclesial minimum" of what constitutes a true church is the voluntary gathering of believers in the name of Jesus Christ.

conversion to the gospel and have received a believer's baptism at an age of volitional accountability, and be in general agreement with the congregations statement of faith and practice. They are also more willing to send their ministers to evangelical schools or seminaries—usually Baptist or similar conservative evangelical Free Church groups—for advanced training in bible, theology, and practical ministry, and see contributions from these other traditions as helpful. In general, they are more willing to look toward outside strains of American fundamentalist and Baptist traditions as a source of renewal.

The more moderate groups, such as the more conservative side of the ACCN, and the more progressive elements of the ACCA would hold to a more denominational approach, but would also insist that differing standards and beliefs among the denominations requires a separation for the sake of purity of doctrine and avoidance of confusion regarding who is genuinely converted and in good standing in fellowship. Though they would have a generally optimistic view about the working of God's grace and salvation outside of their fellowship, there is no way to judge those outside of their communion.

This is essentially the argument of Robert W. Freund, long time traditionalist elder and leader in the ACCN "Conservative Conference" in an oft cited treatise of his, *Fraternization: Ecumenism in Its Infancy*.<sup>37</sup> In this treatise, Freund offers his definition and understanding of what ecumenism is and how "fraternization" is the first step on the slippery slope toward the ecumenical movement, which he understands as the deceitful work of minimizing essential Christian doctrines of holiness and discipline for the sake of a common denominator superficial unity, which only ultimately works to undermine the

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<sup>37</sup> Robert W. Freund, *Fraternization: Ecumenism in Its Infancy* (Syracuse, NY: Apostolic Christian Publishing Co., n.d. [1960's]), 14-15.

true gospel, arguing that such is a sign of the rise of the church of Antichrist in the last days.<sup>38</sup> Freund's concern about the ecumenical movement, which was developing rapidly during the time of his writing, was its worldwide interconfessional focus. The purpose of the Church, Freund argues, is not to be a great mighty centralized and powerful movement in the world, but a pure, scattered, and faithful remnant looking to a Kingdom that is to come.<sup>39</sup>

That other movements and communities may have God's blessings and a place in the great kingdom harvest is indeed quite probable, but nothing good is to come of "watering down" faith in fundamental beliefs for the sake of a superficial unity. The loss of integrity that would inevitably result is far worse.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, those outside the fellowship of the Apostolic Christian Church are not to be judged, but commended to God's judgment, as the Church has no authority to judge those outside its communion and discipline. They can only be commended to God. At most, relationships with Christians of other denominations are to be kept at only the most informal and professional dimensions. At most, non-ACC literature might be read at a safe distance where it can be scrutinized and evaluated for any insights or contributions that are coherent with the tradition and which might serve to strengthen or benefit Apostolic Christian congregations. Certain institutions, such as the *Behalt* in Ohio, or the *Mennohof* in Shipshewana, Indiana are often deemed as "safe" places because they are perceived to serve as places which tend to underscore the Anabaptist and separatist roots of the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 1-2, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Freund, *Fraternization*, 14.

<sup>40</sup> Freund is especially critical of what he considers to be four main premises that allowed for the ecumenical movements of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to occur: 1. "No one has monopoly on the Truth," thus allowing many and various interpretations as viable; 2. All humans have "individual expectations and faults" and therefore must tolerate each others' weaknesses in love; 3. "There is no need for discipline in the church since all are saved under the umbrella of grace;" and 4. God will receive anyone as long as they are sincere in what they believe. Ibid., 5.

denomination over against the impulses of American evangelicalism and fundamentalism, which are perceived to be more of a threat to Apostolic Christian Church separatist ecclesial identity.<sup>41</sup> Relationships with those not members of the AC Church are to be cordial and friendly, but should not progress to the levels of intimacy that one would experience with brothers or sisters in the faith. Attendance at non-Apostolic Christian Churches, and even in non-Conservative Conference churches, is highly discouraged, as well as attendance at ecumenical or para-church gatherings or functions.

Having sought to establish the flaws and ultimately spiritually destructive nature of ecumenical movements, Freund next goes on to demonstrate why “fraternizing” with even seemingly likeminded groups can ultimately be detrimental, leading ultimately to ecumenism.

This entanglement [leading ultimately to compromise and apostasy, referring to II Peter 2:20-22] comes only when one has exposed himself to other teachings and practices through fraternization with others outside his fellowship. This begins very innocently at the outset as he becomes involved with other “fundamental” groups having *similar* doctrines and practices. *Similar* is not the same discriminate identification given the church in Eph. 4:4-6.<sup>42</sup>

Freund’s subsequent reference to Ephesians, chapter 4—“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism”—serves to underscore the strong emphasis on the traditional Anabaptist emphasis on the reality and necessity of one pure, holy, and *visible* church in unity of doctrine and discipline. As Freund goes on to say, “With such decisive language is the

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<sup>41</sup> The *Behalt* in Berlin, OH and the *Mennohof* in Shippshewana, IN are both Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage centers that seek to educate the public in Anabaptist and in Mennonite and Amish history and culture.

<sup>42</sup> Freund, *Fraternization*, 6-7. Emphasis in original.

body, the true church, the bride of Christ identified. What great discernment is implied for those who claim a place on this body through conversion and total spiritual rebirth.”<sup>43</sup>

We see here not only the rejection of that conciliar movement of mostly mainline protestant denominations that is known most strictly by the term “Ecumenical Movement,” which includes the national and international bodies of the *National Council of Churches* and the *World Council of Churches*, but also the rejection of other varieties of ecumenical endeavors amongst more conservative Christian bodies, such as the Neo-Evangelical *National Association of Evangelicals* and *World Evangelical Fellowship*, and even the much more conservative and fundamentalist *American Council of Christian Churches* and *International Council of Christian Churches*. In this way, Freund and likeminded Apostolic Christians were reaffirming and reinforcing a traditional sectarian stance, and furthering the agenda of the previous generation of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century ACCN leaders of recovering and preserving a unique and separatist sectarian identity in the face of the challenges of modernization brought by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even as they were a product of that broader social and cultural transition.

In his study of cultural conflict and social transitions in the historic northeastern conferences of the old Mennonite Church, Kniss notes a similar trend in the 1960’s through the 1980’s of what he termed a “Resurgent Sectarianism.”<sup>44</sup> This, he posits, was a result of a general loosening through the 1950’s and 1960’s of traditional sectarian communal disciplinary social controls, such as strict regulations on dress and access to certain forms of media, such as radio and television. In the Mennonite Church that Kniss describes, this movement became strongest mostly in pockets and in individual

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>44</sup> Fred Kniss, *Disquiet in the Land: Cultural Conflict in American Mennonite Communities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 85.

congregations that no longer felt that they were able to authentically relate to their conference bodies, which were no longer willing to enforce such sectarian regulations. Thus, in the Mennonite communities, the “sectarian resurgence” was the reaction of a distinct minority, many of whom felt compelled to withdraw, as they no longer held power in their conferences.

These same impulses toward social liberalization, which characterized mainstream American cultural movements of the 1960’s and 1970’s, occurred in the Apostolic Christian world as well. However, though both Apostolic Christian denominations had maintained strong communal identity centered on separation from the world, humility, modesty, and plainness of dress and lifestyle, AC churches had never codified or centralized their communal disciplines as the old Mennonite Church had, especially since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> Neither had they engaged so thoroughly with wider Christian circles and society as had Bender and other leaders of the “Anabaptist Vision” project as well.<sup>46</sup> Yet, even then, liberalizing and modernizing impulses from the surrounding culture were unavoidable.

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<sup>45</sup> The ACCA had come the closest, through the establishment of their Elder Council, and through a separatist culture of social conservatism set on opposition to general trends in “the world.” Even then, however, congregational autonomy was central.

<sup>46</sup> Discussion of the influences on Harold Bender’s formulation of his Anabaptist Vision project can be found in a number of articles in the Fall 1994 issue of the *Conrad Grebel Review* 12:3. See especially: Al Keim, “The Anabaptist Vision: History of a New Paradigm,” 239-255 and Nate Yoder, “J. Grescham Machen: An Outside Influence on Harold S. Bender’s Formulation of the Anabaptist Vision,” 257-270. Leonard Gross, “The Locus of Mennonite Spiritual Intelligence: The Anabaptist Vision as Confession,” 271-282, and Mary S. Sprunger, “The Anabaptist Vision: Reflections from Dutch-Russian Mennonitism,” 299-307, both reflect on the historiographical scope and limitations of, Bender’s formulation as well. See also Walter Sawatsky, “Historical Roots of a Post-Gulag Theology for Russian Mennonites” in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 76:2 (April 2002), 149-180, who argues that Bender’s thesis is particularly too limited an approach for a Russian and more broadly global Mennonite vision beyond the affluence context of North America. Though these voices tend to agree that continuing reliance on Bender’s particular limited conception of the Anabaptist Vision project for today, it is nevertheless agreed that Bender’s project focused on an attempt (whether he was conscious of it or not) at general renewal of Anabaptist-Mennonite identity for his particular situation in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

These manifested most drastically in the ACCN. Within the ACCN congregations, there is much more variety of religious expression and influence from the wider culture and society. Many of the “Western” conference ACCN churches have adopted more contemporary praise and worship music, modern bible translations, modern fashions in dress, although modesty would continue to be encouraged. The requirement of women’s prayer veiling has largely been removed. The more conservative “Eastern” conference churches would continue to require prayer veils during church services and other times of sacred gatherings, such as singings, though not for daily life. They would also continue to sing mostly from the traditional Zion’s Harp hymnal, though they would also allow musical accompaniment of organ or piano. Yet, even within these congregations there is often variety that reduces down even to the family level, such as what sort of clothing is appropriate, how short a woman may cut her hair,

The ACCA has been able to avoid or resist these impulses more successfully due to their historic predilection to communal isolationism and rural sociology.<sup>47</sup> Practices such as avoiding intimate relationships with non-church members, and avoiding many types of modern media, including cinema, and often television aid in this. Thus modernization impulses have been slower to take root among them, especially in regards to their religious practices, though changes do tend to occur gradually.<sup>48</sup>

As discussed above, the 1940’s had seen a major renewal movement among the ACCN churches, which had augmented and catalyzed impulses toward modernization.

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<sup>47</sup> Gordon, 78. Gordon identifies spatial isolation in a rural area as a factor in the slowing of the cultural assimilation process.

<sup>48</sup> This was the main subject of Darrel Sutter’s 1968 master’s thesis, in which he posited that rural religious sociology accounts for the Apostolic Christian Church of America’s slowness toward adaptability and change in modern culture, though it would never be able to fully avoid it. See Darrell A. Sutter, “The Anabaptist Apostolic Christian Church of America” (M.S. Thesis, Illinois State University, 1968), 65-76. For a personal account of growing up in the ACCA during this time period, see Tom Speicher, *A Lifetime of Church* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2004).

By the late 1960's tensions had reached a boiling point within many congregations. A number of divisions and movements of congregational realignment began, which would occur throughout the 1970's and 1980's. Areas which tended to be centers of recent immigrants became centers of conservatism, reflecting the general disposition of ethnic religious immigrant communities toward preservationism. In some areas, new congregations were founded when immigrants moved to regions where there were no Apostolic Christian congregations present. This occurred especially in Canada, in southern Ontario, and in southern California. When immigrants arrived in large numbers in areas where Apostolic Christian Churches already existed, especially in the Northeastern U.S., especially in northeastern Ohio, and in other industrial areas in Pennsylvania and New York, they had the tendency to exacerbate conservative-progressive tensions that were already present.

Divisions occurred in the 1960's in two of the historic ACCN churches, which had been centers of progressivist modernizing impulses. One occurred in Syracuse, NY which led to a number of progressive minded people leaving the church altogether. Another major division occurred in the Mansfield congregation, which involved a group of progressives leaving in 1969 to form a new Apostolic Christian congregation in Ontario, OH, a western suburb of Mansfield. One of the founding issues of the congregation was, "to provide a means of promoting foreign mission work."<sup>49</sup> This congregation maintained an affiliation with the ACCN, and became one of the flagship churches of what has come to be known as the "Western Conference."

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<sup>49</sup> Ontario Christian Fellowship website, 'About Us' Section, <http://www.ocfchurch.org/index.php?Section=AboutUs> (accessed May 6, 2010).

Other movements occurred more internally. In areas where there was a higher concentration of Apostolic Christian congregations, Apostolic Christians began to transfer membership to congregations that they perceived had like views. Members would leave congregations considered to be too liberal by transferring to congregations that they considered as preserving central aspects of the faith. Likewise, others would leave congregations that they considered to be too stuffy or stuck in old ways—or even reactionary in reinstating practices that had been let go—and would join more progressive “mission oriented” congregations.

Here within the ACCN we see the fruits of a divided legacy. When it became clear to conservatives, who favored the maintenance of such forms over against the dominant social trends taking place toward social liberalization more generally (especially in the 1960’s and 1970’s), a distinct movement toward enforcing or reinstating traditional stances appeared in certain areas, while in others the traditional regulations and practices were relaxed. Geographic differences became apparent, as the Western congregations, which had received fewer immigrants, tended to become more liberalized, and Eastern congregations often became more staunchly resistant to change. Each side tended to use theological language to justify their actions. Those embracing change were seeking to be “outreach” or “missionary” oriented, those resisting change claimed to be cautiously avoiding “conformity to the world.” These tensions that began mounting in the 1960’s and 1970’s would become critical during the 1980’s.

### *The Reinstatement Controversy*

Two issues have been of pivotal concern, primarily since the 1980’s, and have brought divisions within the ACCN. These namely are issues concerning church polity in

face of perceived trends in accommodating to dominant American culture, and what is most often referred to as the “reinstatement” controversy.

The issue of *reinstatement* (or *restoration* as some prefer to call it) has long been one of the controversial aspects of the Fröhlichite traditions since their inception, and it is one of the core issues that has historically distinguished them from other European evangelical and Free Church movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The issue has revolved around the question of whether a brother or sister within the fellowship can be restored or reinstated into full communion after having fallen into “gross sin” sometime after their conversion and baptism.<sup>50</sup> The issue is directly related to Samuel Fröhlich’s conceptions of theological anthropology and perfectionism. Once a believer has experienced a true conversion, found atonement for sin in Christ through repentance and baptism, and has experienced the sealing and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, it is traditionally considered impossible to be again fully restored if that person again falls into gross sin and thus “crucify Christ a second time.”<sup>51</sup> Thus to those to whom such occurs, a permanent excommunication occurs whereby the person excommunicated is never again permitted the appellation of brother or sister, and can never again participate in the communion ceremony. They are thus never again to be considered for any type of public ministry, such as preaching, teaching, or praying aloud in the assembly. They may, however, if showing signs of genuine sorrow, be permitted to a limited place in the congregation, as a “friend” or other “God fearer” would hold, being permitted to attend public services, and to participate in social life of the church to the same degree that non-

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<sup>50</sup> “Gross Sin” is typically understood to be murder, adultery, fornication, or “idolatry.”

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Hebrews 6:4-6. See Chapter 3 above on Fröhlich’s theological anthropology and conceptions of sanctification and holiness.

members would. The eternal salvation of their soul is then left up to God.<sup>52</sup> The life of the excommunicated was thus a life of penance, with the hope of restoration to God's Kingdom in the end. It was thought that by holding to such practices, high moral standards and strict discipline could be maintained within the communities.

As early as the 1950's, this concept was coming to be challenged by some within the Swiss congregations, regarding the reinstatement of those previously excommunicated for adultery, but had come to repentance and desired re-admittance to full communion. This reflects the social identity shifts that the Swiss churches were undergoing during and after World War II.<sup>53</sup>

In an untitled collection of translated minutes of Swiss Elders meetings and correspondence between American and European elders from the 1950's to 1970, regarding the shifts within the Swiss Neutäufer on the issue of reinstating repentant adulterers, we find thorough documentation of the shifts in attitudes amongst the Swiss eldership on this issue, and of the American elders' reaction to it. The period of the 1950's and 1960's brought about radical shifts in Swiss fellowship on this issue. The Swiss eldership, from the 1939 Elders Meeting minutes, appears to be in unanimity in maintaining the traditional uncategorical denial of the possibility of readmission to full communion to those who have been excommunicated for adultery at that time.

However, when the issue came up again in 1953, a new generation was coming into leadership. Of the 18 elders that were present for the 1939 resolution, only eight remained by 1953. The letters and minutes from the 1950's and 1960's represent much

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<sup>52</sup> The scripture passage typically applied to such is I Corinthians 5: 4-5, where the fallen believer is to be "handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit might be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus."

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Ott, 135ff.

more of a diversity of opinions, with a number of elders favoring consideration for restoration of penitent excommunicated adulterers, based on a case by case basis. Though divided in opinions, the Swiss elders decided not make a resolution either way, but rather to allow such cases to be decided by local congregations, where three or four elders could be found to agree that the penitent excommunicant was worthy of restoration.<sup>54</sup>

The American elders, along with elders from the other parts of Europe (elders from Germany, Austria, and Romania are included among these), were very much united in their opposition to this measure, and expressed to the Swiss eldership their unanimity in resolving to maintain the traditional practice, and of their dismay at the apparent compromises that the Swiss were making.<sup>55</sup> In a 1961 letter to the Swiss elders, the American elders wrote,

In this matter, which is so heavy with responsibility, whether by silence or by speaking, we feel that we owe it to you to express our selves clearly. In all earnestness we beseech that you discontinue such work, harkening to the voice of many brethren and elders who are cast down.<sup>56</sup>

Four years later, Swiss elder Hermann Ruegger wrote to elder G.A. Braun, concerning a change of heart that Ruegger had experienced in regards to readmitting the penitent lapsed, citing II Corinthians 2:5-11. Braun, in reply in behalf of six other American elders as well, wrote in reply to Ruegger that, “ In the United States and Canada, we today are still agreed in our understanding as it ever was, that those who have become guilty of fornication and adultery cannot again be received into the church.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Letter in Collected Documents.

<sup>55</sup> Among the major European voices in opposition to the possibility of reinstatement were Heinrich Müller of Linz, Austria, and Valentin Gantner of Neuhuetten, Germany. Both were personally involved in opposing the restoration of “A.K.” to membership, and both called upon other American and European brethren to oppose the Swiss in their growing attitudes of tolerance for the practice of restoring the penitent excommunicated.

<sup>56</sup> Letter of August 23, 1961, from American Elders to the Swiss Elders. Coll. Doc. pp. 63-64.

<sup>57</sup> Excerpt from Braun’s letter in reply to Ruegger, December 3, 1965. Coll. Doc. p.77.

By the 1980's, a new generation of elders had arisen in the ACCN, and these would come to represent the diversity of opinions amongst the American elders that had characterized the earlier generation of Swiss elders of the 1950's and 1960's. During this time, the reinstatement controversy became much more of a central issue among the ACCN churches as well. It was a central topic of discussion and exchange in various issues of the *ACC Journal of Theology*.<sup>58</sup> During the span of this journal's activity, much of its pages dealt with issues related to culture and identity of the church in the modern world.

The treatment of the Reinstatement issue in the ACC Journal occurs in a series of articles, beginning in the Spring 1985 issue. The main correspondents on this topic within the Journal were David Brumm, of Phoenix, Dennis Feucht, of Portland, and Jim Fodor, of Edmonton, Canada. In Part I of his essay, Brumm attempts a broad outline of the "Reinstatement" issue in early church history and in the Apostolic Christian Church denominational history.<sup>59</sup> He concludes that there have been mixed practices in both, and that both "sides" of the debate can claim their own particular sources to affirm their own position.

A seminal article that would demarcate departure from the teachings of Samuel Fröhlich and the traditional view was Dennis Feucht's article in the Winter 1985 issue of the *ACC Journal*.<sup>60</sup> This article approaches Samuel Fröhlich and his theology in a critical

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<sup>58</sup> This periodical, under the editorship of Jim Fodor, was in print from 1983 to 1988. It served as a point of discourse on various doctrinal, theological, and cultural issues facing ACCN churches of the day. It appears to have served mostly the constituency of more progressive leaders within the ACCN denomination, though not exclusively, as they were wrestling with traditional identity in face of the changing social and cultural climate, both within and without their communities.

<sup>59</sup> Brumm's article appears in two parts: "A Study on 'Reinstatement'" in *ACCJ* 2:4 (Spring 1985), 6-11 and "A Study on 'Reinstatement' Part 2" in *ACCJ* 3:1 (Summer 1985), 7-13.

<sup>60</sup> Dennis L. Feucht, "Theological Roots of the Reinstatement Issue" in *ACCJ* 3:3 (Winter 1985), 5-14.

manner unprecedented from an insider in the ACC. Feucht's main thesis was that the reason for ACC confusion and contention on this issue is related to confused and conflicting elements within Samuel Fröhlich's thought and writings. Feucht argues that Fröhlich unsystematically advocated what he considers to be two contradictory concepts of the doctrine of justification—a "Protestant" one, which views justification objectively and ontologically as dependent in and through the work and merits of "Christ alone," and a "Catholic" one, which views justification as somewhat dependent on the individual's appropriation of Christ's character through obedience and sanctification. The only solution, according to Feucht was for the Apostolic Christians to recognize Fröhlich's inconsistencies (as a non-systematic thinker) and to evaluate them, and only keep that which is coherent and faithful to scripture as understood by the Protestant Reformers.<sup>61</sup>

This highlights the critical disposition toward their own historical tradition, taken within this more socially progressive and Americanized congregations. The questioning of the historic sectarian mindset is what is at stake, along with the historic disposition toward all outsiders as "Other." It is essentially a question of contextuality, which inevitably arises within all religious traditions over time, concerning the modern applicability of historic beliefs and positions. How do Samuel Fröhlich's particular concepts apply in the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, is the key question. As with other traditions arising from the 19<sup>th</sup> century restorationist movements, indeed, with most

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<sup>61</sup> For Feucht, this referred primarily to John Calvin, as well as Luther's early and basic concepts of salvation through faith by grace alone. However, Feucht is clear that this proper Protestant Reformation concept of salvation apart from human works not be confused with antinomian tendencies that totally sever the essential link between justification by faith, and the necessity of sanctification which evidences that faith. Feucht considers Fröhlich's positive role to have been that of a reformer, calling people out of such antinomianism that had set in, to a living and vital faith in Christ, which produces the fruits of repentance and sanctification. See Feucht, "Theological Roots," 11-12.

movements, the issue of relationship to the principles and teachings of the founder is central.

There have been some further trends of development and tensions among the Apostolic Christians in America. For one there is a polarization within the ACCN largely over issues of tradition versus acculturation. In many areas where there has been a large population of Apostolic Christians, this has led to separate congregations developing in a certain area, one associating with the conservative Elder body and the others association primarily with more open elders. This has been the case in Mansfield, Ohio and in Phoenix, Arizona. Conservative congregations will generally hold more to their traditional customs and worship styles, such as singing from the Zion's Harp, and kneeling in prayer, and other customs that draw from German and Continental Pietist forms piety.

## **Trends Since the 1990's**

### *Division between East and West*

As a number of elders and congregations, particularly in the West and Midwest regions of the United States and Canada continued to follow in this more culturally progressivist path, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the growth of what has come to be known as the "Conservative Conference" or "Eastern conference" of the ACCN, in reaction to what they considered to be more liberal developments of the Americanized, or "Western conference" churches.<sup>62</sup> This group emerged out of the identity struggles that occurred during the 1980's and 1990's.

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<sup>62</sup> The geographical terms of "Western" and "Eastern" apply only very generally, reflecting the fact that the strongest core of the Conservative conference churches of the ACCN are in the eastern parts of

In response to the various cultural shifts that were pressing on the ACCN denomination in the postwar period—trends which characterized transitions in American culture more generally—the conservative conference emerged through the efforts of conservative elders which sought to define and enforce a discernible sense of normative Apostolic Christian identity. This occurred primarily through the emergence of three documents which were sought to be normative, the *We Believe* Statement, the *Elders Procedural Handbook*, and the “Definitive Statement on Social Acceptance.” These three documents were to outline the authority structures and polity of the ACCN denomination. The drafting of the *We Believe* Statement took place in the 1980’s. Elders were instructed to comply with all the tenets of the *We Believe* statement and to teach specifically on the issues of non-resistance, and the wearing of the head covering by women members. The 1988 “Definitive Statement on Social Acceptance” stipulated that excommunicated members could never again be restored to full membership. The conservative Elders considered that all these traditional tenets of faith were being threatened.

By the early 1990’s the division became set. It was clear that a conflict in understanding of denominational polity and governance. At the April 1991 Elders Meeting, elders were given a survey to understand their view of their responsibilities and priorities as elders. They were to vote #1 if they saw their responsibility and accountability as to the Elder Body before their congregation. They were to vote #2 if they saw their responsibility as to their congregation before the Elder Body. Nineteen

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USA and Canada, finding their center in the “Eastern Camp” which meets yearly in Harrisonburg, VA., while the “Western” congregations are strongest in the Midwest and West Coast regions. The

elders selected #1, Fourteen selected #2.<sup>63</sup> This issue of denominational polity structure would become perhaps the major source of division, as several elders considered their first loyalty to be to their congregations, before the Elder Body. Thus there was a contention between those favoring a *presbyterian* polity structure and a more *congregationalist* polity. To the latter, the place of the Elder Body was more consultative and advisory, than binding.

Unable to bring the entire Elder body under the new, more precise, terms of discipline, the conservative “Eastern conference” of the Elders became firmly established, and distanced themselves from the more liberal “Western conference.” The division, however, is on a more congregational level, with a restriction on pulpit exchanges, and on cooperation on formal social events, such as the camps and other inter-congregational social activities. The conservatives responded by organizing an Elders’ Council that only included those who voted #1, or were willing to change. Requirements were strict fidelity to the major documents drafted during the 1980’s (listed below), which delineated the traditional Apostolic Christian positions on certain issues.<sup>64</sup> Thus the division between an Eastern and Western Conference became somewhat formalized. Only the cooperative efforts in funding and mission, outlined in the charter of the ACC Foundation, would link the two “conferences” in one “denomination.

The *Elders Procedural Handbook* outlined a strict presbyterian system of authority structure whereby the Elder body became the chief source of authoritative decision making in the denomination. All individual elders would be duty bound to the

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<sup>63</sup> “The Lines of Responsibility,” document in Appendix to Robert W. Freund, “Chronology of the Development of Two Conferences of the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean),” 6. Manuscript from collection of Paul Weingartner.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

decisions of this body. The ratification process of these documents was meant to be a shifting process to bring the elders in line with the new centralized authority. These authoritative statements were intended to serve as a litmus test for the eldership. If an elder would come to find himself in disagreement with any of these documents, or with the decisions of the elder body, he would thereby become disqualified from full standing in the elder body, under sanction, and thus removed from any position of power in the denomination.

These actions taken on the part of the “conservatives” came about because of a sense of threat to the tradition that they had inherited. They feared that too much accommodation would undermine core essentials of their faith, especially by American Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism. Documents such as the *We Believe* Statement, and the *Elders Procedural Handbook* were devised to provide strategic boundary setting. Even the ACCA Elder Body felt compelled to issue the 1986 *Winds of Doctrine* treatise, underscoring and comparing the major elements of traditional Apostolic Christian faith and doctrine and the tenets of Neo-Evangelicalism. This document likewise issues the warning against the subtle influences of the mainstream Evangelicalism (which some apparently suspected had infiltrated parts of the ACCA), and reaffirms the traditional ACCA beliefs in the visible church, binding and loosing authority of the Elders, full conversion, and nonresistance—which they felt that Evangelical influences threatened the most.<sup>65</sup>

On an informal level, the two sides have continued to be connected through strong family connections. Moderates on both sides, of course, have been eager to keep lines of

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<sup>65</sup> *Winds of Doctrine*, Elder Body of the Apostolic Christian Church of America (Fort Scott, KS: Sekan, 1986),

communications and dialogue open between the two “conferences,” despite the drifting of more extreme elements within each further away from each other. Both sides also continue to be formally connected, however loosely, to the same denomination, through the Apostolic Christian Church Foundation, which oversees common efforts and funds, such as church building and repair, missions, mutual aid, and relief work, as well as publishing and educational resources. Thus arrangement is often referred to as “two conferences in one denomination” although tensions and sharp divisions remain.

### *Trends within the Eastern Conference*

The Eastern Conference of the ACCN has remained the closest to those particular Apostolic Christian traditions that have distinguished the movement from others. The period of the 1990’s, especially following the informal division into the “two conferences” was especially reactionary. The Apostolic Christian Publishing Company, founded by S.J. Braun in the 1920’s, was located in the conservative Syracuse, NY congregation, and continued to reprint older Apostolic Christian literature, especially emphasizing themes that the conservative Eastern Conference elders felt most threatened.

During the mid 1990’s, the newsletter of the publishing company, *Exhortations*, became an organ for reactionary discourse. The first issue contains articles on “The Headcovering” for Christian women and its continued relevance and biblical basis, and on “Adornment” and resisting worldly fashions, such as jewelry and make-up. Excerpts from Samuel Fröhlich’s writings and “Fundamentals of Faith and Fellowship” are also selected to emphasize traditional Apostolic themes, such as repentance and holiness.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Exhortations: The Newsletter of the Apostolic Christian Publishing Company* 1:1 (February 1996).

Another issue contain a reprinting of excerpts from “Fraternization: Ecumenism in its Infancy” by Robert Freund.<sup>67</sup> Issue three contains a particularly interesting article by Mark Igic, conservative elder in San Diego, CA, considers Contemporary Christian music, and concludes that the inherent nature of much of the very style and rhythms of popular music, from which it draws, despite the lyrics, dishonors God and opposes the Christian virtues of humility and holiness.<sup>68</sup> Two articles in Issue 4 challenge Calvinism, which the conservative elders considered to be making inroads into the progressive congregations. One is aimed at the doctrine of Eternal Security, considered especially pernicious by the older traditionalist AC elders that emphasize the traditional Anabaptist doctrine that salvation is only secured through a life of faithful obedience and Christian discipleship.<sup>69</sup> The other article considers point by point the traditional “TULIP” doctrines of five point Calvinism their inherent flaws and dangers, which ultimately lead to the dangerous eternal security doctrine.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, this polemic is prefaces with the comment that evidences a sense of the need to understand and articulate afresh their traditional faith, in face of challenges: “Every generation must come to grips on a personal level with the doctrinal truths which form the basis of our faith. It is not sufficient to simply be aware of what our fathers believed, without understanding the scriptural reasons why they believed what they did.”<sup>71</sup> Another article defends the traditional Apostolic Christian practice of public confession of sin and deliberate acts of restitution as requisite to the conversion experience, over against an Evangelicalism that

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<sup>67</sup> *Exhortations* 1:2 (May 1996), 8-12.

<sup>68</sup> *Exhortations* 1:3 (Summer 1996), 9-11. Igic does cite some research by musicologists here.

<sup>69</sup> Werner Leimgruber, Robert W. Freund, George Freund, “The Fallacy of Eternal Security” in *Exhortations* 1:4 (Autumn 1996), 1, 4-8.

<sup>70</sup> Kirk Huber and Mark Igic, “Doctrinal Deviations of Calvinism” in *Exhortations* 1:4 (Autumn 1996), 9-12.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

reduces it to merely a private inner feeling, rather than an act that heals the soul and witnesses God's grace to others.<sup>72</sup> The overarching themes within this short-lived publication are often polemic and preservationist in nature, evidencing a community that feels on the defensive.

Discussion over similar issues continued to dominate discourse among conservative Eastern Conference leadership into the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Elder Endre Toth of Warren, Ohio, who represented the extreme conservative position coordinated the "Like Precious Faith Communiqué," a circular periodical to address various issues faced by the conservative Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean). Toth advocated complete separation from the "liberal churches" and the categorical uprooting of liberal practices in churches that he considered to be threatening to the true biblical Apostolic Christian faith.<sup>73</sup> Toth argued that so long as conservative churches allowed even informal communication and fellowship with the "liberal churches," the conservative churches which preserved the true "Like Precious Faith" would inevitably be caught up in the same pitfalls as they had a generation earlier. To him, the case of the Swiss churches was the ultimate epitome of spiritual ruin. Toth expressed his concerns and frustrations in a position paper presented to a March 2004 conservative Elders

Meeting:

Our years of indecision to deal with spiritual errors wasting our churches produced seriously divisive decisions and damaging actions by ministers and elders, that ill influenced peace and unity in our churches...Sadly, we are no longer a Conservative Conference. We have become a mixture of liberal,

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<sup>72</sup> John Zeug, "Confession of Sin and Restitution" in *Exhortations 2:2* (Summer 1997), 1-3.

<sup>73</sup> Chief among these was the acceptance of wedding bands. Toth seemed to be convinced that a pattern of spiritual decline in the various churches begins with the acceptance of wedding bands (a pagan originated custom) which inevitably leads to more wearing of jewelry and other forms of "adornment" and on to spiritual pride and vanity, and conformity to the world in other manners. Endre Toth, Open Letter, May 2005, 2, (In private collection of Paul Weingartner).

compromising, and conservative elders, ministers, teachers, and churches. The question therefore remains: Does our Heavenly Father still consider our spiritually failing fellowship salvageable?<sup>74</sup>

Toth vehemently urged his fellow conservative elders to firmly adhere to the traditional stances of the Apostolic Christian faith and of the conservative conference. To him the recourse the only recourse was clear: The Conservative conference must cut off all contact with the liberal churches, despite family connections. They must also withdraw from joint “co-ventures” such as the Apostolic Christian Church Foundation, and establish their own Foundation, Newsletter, Church Directory, Youth Gatherings, and Publications.<sup>75</sup> Only in such separation—veiled in the rhetoric that the liberals had “separated themselves”—could there be hope of restoring the peace and discipline in the true, pure, Apostolic Christian Church. The vehemence with which Toth argues, however, is only evidence that the majority of Conservative leadership did not follow his extreme path, and held to more moderate positions.

Since the 1990’s, many of the elders who were a part of the formation of the conservative Eastern Conference have since died or retired. A new generation of leadership had emerged within the Eastern Conference and is showing its own continued signs of modernization, though most of these churches feel closely bound to tradition. Nevertheless, many in these churches are showing signs of similar tensions that occurred earlier in the Western conference, in the attempt to balance a sense of missional identity with faithfulness to tradition. At the most recent Eastern Camp in 2009, the theme of

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<sup>74</sup> Endre Toth. “Position Paper Summary of Ongoing, Unresolved Concerns Presented at Previous Elders Meetings,” presented at Apostolic Christian Church, Nazarean Elders Meeting, Mansfield, Ohio, March 26-27, 2004, 1. In collection of Paul Weingartner.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 3.

“Christian Liberties” was an issue of major discussion.<sup>76</sup> Thus, since the 1990’s a more moderate leadership and youth appear to be emerging.

### *Trends within the “Western Conference”*

The term “Western conference” is mostly a term of convenience. While most of the congregations affiliated with the western conference are located in the American Midwest and West, and in Western Canada, there are also congregations as far east as Pennsylvania and Ontario. Because of its characteristic of congregational autonomy, there is degree of variety in terms of church practice and belief. Since the division in the early 1990’s, the western churches have continued in accommodation to more dominant patterns of American evangelical patterns of piety in different degrees. In worship, these churches will seldom, if ever, sing from the traditional Zion’s Harp hymnal. Most singing will be from either traditional or modern Protestant Gospel hymns, or in many cases, especially with the larger congregations, contemporary Christian “Praise and Worship” songs and choruses. Many of these churches have also followed a pattern of changing their names to drop or obscure their traditional denominational name of Apostolic Christian Church, in an attempt to become modernized and distanced from the trappings of their denominational affiliation. All of these mirror trends in the wider world of American Evangelicalism.<sup>77</sup> Here we see marked resemblances to the identity struggles

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<sup>76</sup> Apostolic Christian Church Eastern Camp 2009, CD Recording.

<sup>77</sup> Tom Heinen, “Churches, Just Without the Label: Seeking to Attract Outsiders, Congregations Drop Denomination--or More--From Their Names,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 6, 2005. From <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/05/AR2005080501525.html> (Retrieved March 25, 2010). See also Rachel Zoll, “Churches drop denominational name to reach nonbelievers” in *The Free Lance-Star* (November 20, 1999), B4, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=yewyAAAIBAJ&sjid=mAgGAAAIBAJ&pg=6936%2C4963857> (accessed March 30, 2010), and Michelle Rupe Eubanks, “Some churches drop denominational distinctions: Churches locally and nationwide have been dropping their denominational distinctions” in

of other Neo-Anabaptist groups in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Brethren in Christ and Mennonite Brethren, as well as among mainstream Mennonites and the Brethren Churches.<sup>78</sup>

The “Western” congregations are much more inclined to adapt to mainstream evangelical culture, mostly in the Anglo-Baptist fundamentalist strain. This has produced in many ways a generation of leaders that are much more in tune with the mainstream of American religious culture. Yet this may cause some proneness to uncritically abandon some of the unique contributions of their European and Anabaptist roots. These congregations are the most likely to drop the title “Apostolic Christian” from their official name and revise their congregational statements of faith along fundamentalist protestant lines. There is also a trend among some of these churches of their ministers attending Anglo-Baptist fundamentalist Bible colleges and Seminaries, such as: Western Seminary, Portland, OR; Phoenix Seminary, Phoenix, AZ; and Liberty College and Seminary, in Lynchburg, VA; Masters Bible College and Seminary in California, and Moody Bible College in Chicago.

What we see in these trends is the attempt at some sort of renewal for the world 21<sup>st</sup> century America as they experience it. But what world is this, especially when we figure in issues of class, ethnicity, and social location? Most of the signs of such

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*TimesDaily* (February 11, 2008), <http://www.timesdaily.com/article/20080211/FAITH07/403655949?Title=Some-churches-drop-denominational-distinctions> (accessed March 30, 2010). The theme of each of these articles revolves around the theme of local churches, particularly those of an evangelical background, changing their names due to a perceptions that denominational labels now hinder rather than help in their efforts to evangelize their communities. More neutral names might include “Bible Church” or “Bible Fellowship,” “Christian Fellowship,” and perhaps the most common “Community Church” with a more distinct name, based either on geography or theme affixed to the front. This phenomenon, occurring in so many different denominations and regions, indicates significant trans-denominational identity shifts occurring since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in the world of evangelical free churches.

<sup>78</sup> See Chapter 1 above on the relationship between American Evangelicalism and Neo-Anabaptist movements.

transition reflect the general trends of the whole community into a suburban, middle class social location.<sup>79</sup> Most churches of the ACCN churches are now physically located in the suburban areas. The exception to this is a number of conservative ethnic churches which remain near urban centers where first generation east European immigrants tend to settle, who have not yet transitioned into the American middle-class mentality.

The place on the spectrum where particular ACCN churches and members find themselves is quite often correlated with their proximity to, or distance from, their ethnic and immigrant past. As congregations and members see themselves shaped and formed less by their ethnic heritage, and more by the mainstream American culture in which they live, they are increasingly apt to dispense with some of the more particular forms and “trappings” of their faith, especially where they perceive it to be a hindrance the working of the gospel in the mission of the church toward outreach and evangelism. Thus the struggle and tension with self identity often comes down to the choice of remaining an separated ethnic church that zealously guards its traditions and only grows inwardly, through biological reproduction by those families already within the church culture of the ACC world, or of adapting to other models of evangelical and free church traditions which seem to be more effective in their outreach in the American cultural context.<sup>80</sup>

What has ensued is a tension within the denomination between the very foundational elements of identity within the Apostolic Christian church tradition, and of

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<sup>79</sup> This is an issue faced not only by the progressive ACCN churches, but with the conservative churches as well. I have heard on more than one occasion a member of either “side” of the denomination mentioning anecdotes of members of “conservative” congregations maintaining a aversion to the wearing of wedding rings as worldly, yet wearing fancy and expensive designer watches and clothing, or owning expensive cars or homes.

<sup>80</sup> In reflecting on her congregation’s decision to change their name (from Apostolic Christian Church of Portland” (Oregon) to “Woodstock Bible Church” and some of their practices, one woman interviewee said, “We wanted to reach out to the community around us, and not only to our own children.” Interview with Anne Donais.

the underlying tensions between the different streams of thought that have defined them, particularly “Anabaptist” and “Evangelical” identities. Both of these terms merit definition, as neither is clear in and of itself, and both have been used in various ways.

There are other, more common issues related to the name changes occurring within the ACCN Western conference. As one member of the Lakeside Christian Fellowship (formerly Vesper Lake Bible Fellowship, formerly Vesper Lake Apostolic Christian Church) commented, a number of people in the Akron area confused their congregation for Pentecostal churches with a similar name.<sup>81</sup> Doug Rumbold, youth pastor at Northfield Christian Fellowship, Tremont, Illinois (formerly Apostolic Christian Church of Tremont), commented that part of the decision to change their congregational name came about because of the abundance of ACCA in the area, which shaped popular conceptions of what is normative for Apostolic Christian means.

Thus the name change was in part to distance from such an association. Nevertheless, what both instances indicate is a desire to move beyond an ethnic and exclusive identity which alienates, rather than attracts, those outside of that tradition or heritage. This is also an issue with which other “ethnic” churches have been dealing with for years. One such example is Mennonites of a variety of branches, which found themselves in the 20<sup>th</sup> century also dealing with such issues of disjoining religion from ethnicity.<sup>82</sup> As most cases of this reveal, however, it is easier to agree on the need to move beyond the past than it is to agree on where that should go.

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<sup>81</sup> Comment by Dan Pfeiffer.

<sup>82</sup> For the case of the Mennonite Brethren, see Loewen, 90-93.

### *Trends within the ACCA*

Although the ACCA has been the most conservative and ethnically isolated churches, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has shown a greater degree of participation on their part toward engaging in World Relief and other social services, such as counseling. They too are continuing to be challenged by the increasing urbanization, and transition in many ways to a more complex urbanized society.<sup>83</sup>

### *Conclusion: A Movement in Need of Renewal*

The late 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen the “Western” Conference of the ACCN continue in the progressivist vein that had been set into motion with the denomination’s founding in the early 1900’s and carried through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This has led to a gradual loosening of sectarian identity and a transition into more of a Free Church denominational identity, following the pattern of the ETG conference in Switzerland. This is exemplified in the changes and shifts in forms of piety and dress, as well as the strong emphasis and involvement in foreign missions. This has often been to the risk, however, of losing the unique identity of their historical tradition.

The “Eastern” or Conservative ACCN Conference has been the locus of much of a “Sectarian Resurgence” to use Kniss’s phrase. However, it too shows signs and strains of modernization, finding in itself the need to balance. As many the first generation American immigrant elders that led to the formation of the conference continue to age and pass on, a new more Americanized generation tends to push in directions that mirror the trends taken by the “Western Conference” a generation earlier. Thus the pattern is

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<sup>83</sup> This confirms Darrel Sutter’s sociological analysis of transitions from simple rural to complex societies in his Masters Thesis, “The Anabaptist Apostolic Christian Church of America.” (M.S. Thesis, Illinois State University, 1968). 77-78.

repeated, and tensions are found within this conference as well, between those who advocate a decided, though careful and critical, approach to agents of change and modernization, such as missions, and those who tend to reject such innovations altogether.

Such tensions continue within the ACCA, though manifesting in differing forms. The ACCA has consistently been a generation behind the ACCN in its modernization, to the degree where they are just now finding a place for involvement in missions.<sup>84</sup> Charity, Relief and development work continue to be “safe” options. This group has also taken on the task of historical preservation of the Fröhlich legacy, and seems most committed to the task of publishing such historical materials. Like the Conservative ACCN, they also tend to draw from the conservative Mennonite-Anabaptist sources as a means of their own identity renewal, set against mainstream American evangelical and fundamentalist movements.

What is common to all of the above movements, in their experience in the American context, is that their identities are challenged, whether consciously or not, by the accelerating forces of globalization, and global modernization. All groups have by now faced their need to relate to the wider global world in some meaningful way. How these bodies become conscious of a global Apostolic Christian identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and they are to relate to that out of their own particular American experiences—in many ways quite common, as different as they are from each other—will be essential to achieving an adequate contextual identity renewal that is relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>84</sup> See Klopfenstein, *Marching to Zion*, 683-690.

## **CONCLUSION: Between Remnant and Renewal**

Throughout its history and diverse contexts, the Apostolic Christian/Neutäufer/Nazarene movement has exhibited most of the same characteristics of other Neo-Anabaptist movements as they occur in history. This is the ongoing struggle between the inherent characteristics of Anabaptist movements: radical renewal and reform, and faithful remnant.

As a nineteenth century Neo-Anabaptist renewal movement, the Apostolic Christian movement represented a fresh new contextualization of a radically renewed Anabaptist message for its time. This enabled it to appeal in a contextually relevant way to a broad audience. Not only did it serve as a catalyst Anabaptist renewal among those from older Anabaptist groups—the Mennonites and Amish in Europe and America—it also provided for a new form of Anabaptism that would appeal to the mainstream populace in a variety of contexts and cultures.

However, as with other Anabaptist and Neo-Anabaptist movements, there is a strong communal tendency toward an identity of preservation and separatism, and of seeing their essential identity as set against a corrupt and fallen world. This invariably has led, as has been the case with the other Anabaptist and Neo-Anabaptist movements studied, to struggles of identity confusion when social changes invariably come about.

Having emerged out of fresh radical renewal movements of their time, the Apostolic Christian Churches, as with other Neo-Anabaptist movements, now find themselves in tension between a radical heritage to which they seek to be faithful, and new renewal movements. The two identities of remnant and renewal thus find themselves in tension with each other, and only the most careful and deliberate discernment can keep

the two elements in dialectical and creative tension. As the Apostolic Christians around the world look to the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they will find that the elements that often divide them from one another are the same elements that their forbears were able to hold together into a dynamic new synthesis.

It remains to be seen how a new generation of Apostolic Christians hold in tension the elements of remnant and renewal identities that formed them. Will they be able to “domesticate” the new renewal movements in a creative and dynamic new way, or will fissure occur, leading one group to a “generic evangelicalism” and another to isolationist sectarianism? The essential question will be: What does it mean to be both in the world, but not of it? Only time will tell how a new generation shall answer these questions.

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