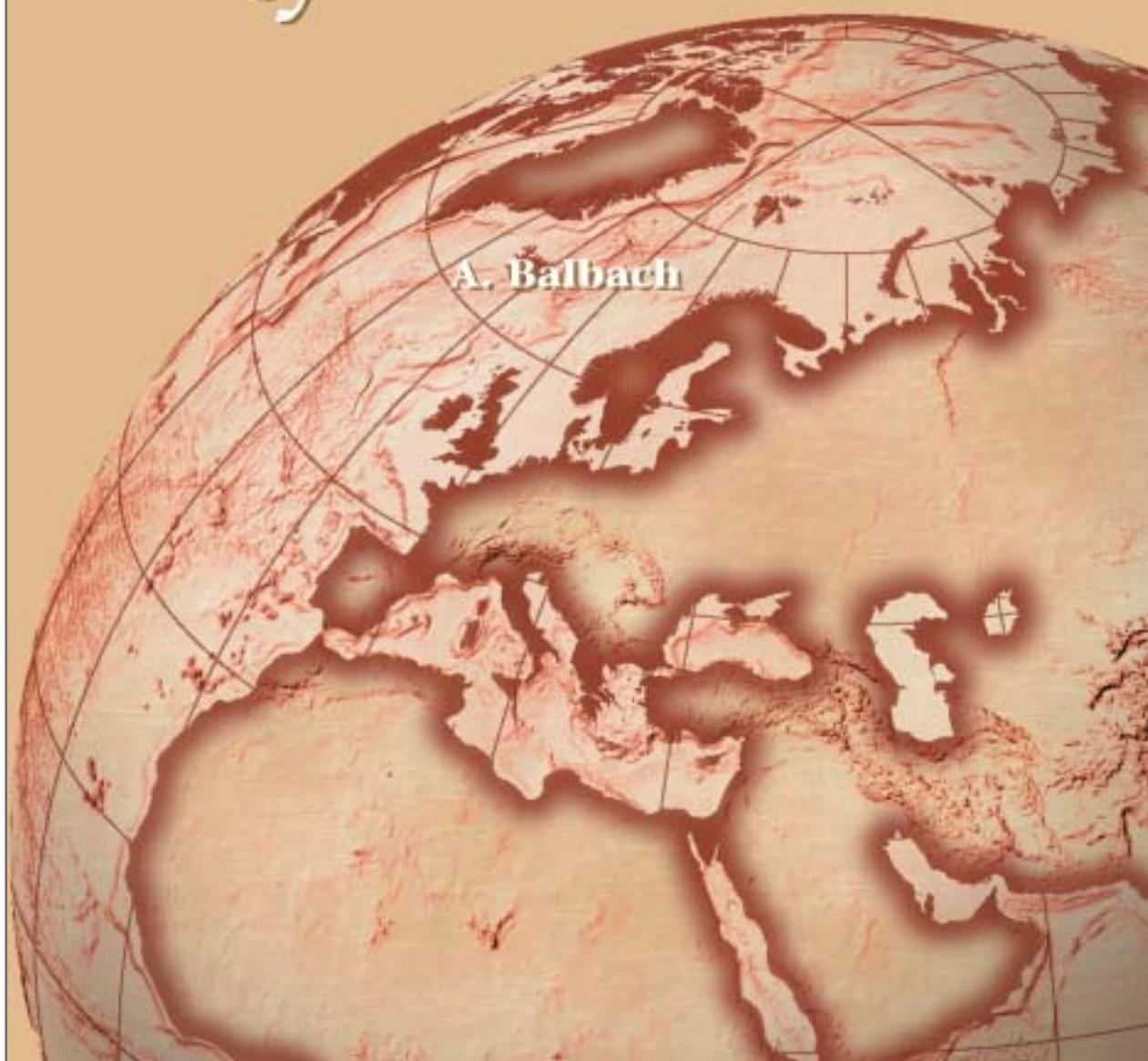


The History of the
Seventh Day Adventist
Reform Movement

A. Ballbach



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Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement
Roanoke, Virginia, U. S. A.

PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to enable our members to become better acquainted with the history of our church since its beginning and to answer questions often asked by our Adventist brethren, such as: when, where, why, and how did the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement come into existence?

You may have heard or read something about, or perhaps more likely against, the Reform Movement. What was said in the days of the apostles can also be said today: "For as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against" (Acts 28:22). But this is not enough. No one can have a true knowledge of the facts unless he listens to both sides. How much could anyone today know about E. G. White, and the pioneers of the Advent Movement, or Seventh-day Adventism in general, if he had listened only to bigoted Sunday-keepers? How much could a Catholic know about Luther and the Protestant Reformation if he had listened only to the Romish priests? And how much could a pious Jew know about Christ and Christianity if he had listened only to Annas and Caiaphas? Only when we listen to both sides and weigh all the evidence can we have a balanced picture.

The existence of the Reform Movement cannot be clearly understood unless the subject is studied from three standpoints: prophecy, doctrine, and history.

1. Prophecy — Does prophecy say: (a) that the SDA denomination will go right through to the end as a victorious church? and (b) that there is no room for a faithful Adventist remnant to stand separate from the official organization? If the answer is Yes!, then we need not waste our time with this Reform Movement. But if the answer is No! (5T 210, 211), then we should examine the prophetic picture with a view to finding the Reform Movement in it. Further information on this point is given in the booklet entitled *The Church and the Remnant*.

2. Doctrine — Far from claiming to have received new light, we believe it is our sacred duty to uphold the teachings and principles

that were revealed to Sister E. G. White and to the pioneers of the Advent Movement. Therefore, we have had serious disagreements with the leadership of the SDA denomination on important points such as compromise with worldly governments (especially in restricted countries); service in the military (especially in time of war) in the light of the law of God; true Sabbathkeeping; association with ecumenical councils and other steps in this direction; unity with the world (such as worldly policies for the institutions, involvement in politics, participation in labor unions, excessive toleration of worldly fashions); controversial attitude toward the Spirit of Prophecy (we hold the writings of E. G. White to be inspired); divorce and remarriage even for the guilty party; health reform (what discipline does the church apply to those who pay no attention to the principles of health reform?); church discipline (how far should open sinners be tolerated as church members?); new doctrinal points (some of which are in conflict with historic Adventism and are hot controversial issues within the ranks of SDAs today). We gladly supply publications on these different topics.

3. History — It cannot be denied that the presentation of the message of Christ's righteousness in 1888 was the beginning of a reformatory movement among the Adventist people. And we honestly believe that this Reform Movement came as a result of that small beginning.

As the title of this book suggests, we will here discuss the origin, early experiences, and development of the prophesied reformatory movement.

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INTRODUCTION

Many years have elapsed since the SDA Reform Movement came into the open during the early days of World War I. And it is not an easy task now to write the history of this Movement after nearly all our pioneers have been laid in the grave. As a matter of fact, very few have survived until now who are able to give us some details about the beginning and early experiences of this prophesied revival and reformation.

In our search for information, we have approached many brethren who, we believed, were in a position to help us directly or indirectly, and we take this opportunity to thank them for their valuable contribution. With their help we were able to gather a good number of items such as old photos, booklets, magazines, letters, and reports containing the essential facts of our history as a Movement. Our next job was to sort out the most useful information, classify it, and put it together in a logical order and chronological sequence.

In our effort to compile data for the writing of this book we gave much consideration to our martyrs. The history of the Reform Movement is a history of persecution and suffering, imprisonment and torture, and in not a few cases even cruel death. In restricted countries, where there was no religious liberty, our faithful brethren decided to suffer and even to die rather than renounce their faith or compromise their principles and act contrary to their conscience.

The information about our German and Polish martyrs during World War II was obtained mostly from the book *And Follow Their Faith!*, by Hans Fleschutz, to whom we owe words of appreciation for his compilation. Regarding those who suffered for the sake of the truth in other countries, we received written and verbal reports from different brethren who were acquainted with them.

Also, before we started putting together the historical facts that form the contents of this book, we examined many anti-Reform materials. With much patience we read and reread a good number of articles, booklets, and books with distorted accounts about the division between the two Adventist companies. Not before we had a balanced picture of the events that transpired did we start working on a factual report about the origin and development of the Reform Movement.

Although we have to state also unpleasant facts in order to write a true history, we do not mean to hurt the feelings of our Adventist brethren or of any groups or individuals who have had disagreements with us. We love them all and, in spirit, we are one with those who stand for the truth as it is in Jesus and who know why they are sighing and crying (*3T* 267).

Although we included much information in this book, the reader will realize that much more is still needed before our people can have an all-embracing narrative of facts before them.

In this book, where certain details are still subject to further investigation and confirmation, especially dates and names of places or persons, we put question marks. In the chapter *1921—International Conference in Wuerzburg*, we put question marks where the words were not very legible in the old and damaged magazine.

The reader will notice that in this book we have also included names of people, even pioneers and leaders, who have not remained in the Reform Movement. Nay, some of the men mentioned in this book have turned into our bitter enemies. But we can learn something from them while they were with us. Also their experience is part of our history.

Someone has said that the history of the SDA Reform Movement is a history of struggles and victories. Therefore, the following description from Sister White applies not only to the experience of the Adventist Church in her early days, but also to our experience as a Movement:

“Satan holds under his control not a few who pass as friends of the truth, and through them he works against its advancement. He employs them to sow tares among the people of God. Thus when danger was not suspected, great evils have existed among us. But while Satan was working with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, stanch advocates of truth have stemmed the tide of opposition and held the word uncorrupted amid a deluge of heresies. Although the church has at times been weakened through manifold discouragements and the rebellious element they have had to meet, still the truth has shone brighter with every conflict. The energies of God’s people have not been exhausted. The power of His grace has quickened, revived, and ennobled the steadfast and the true. . . .

“Until Christ shall appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, men will become perverse in spirit and turn from the truth to fables. The church will yet see troublous times” (*4T* 594).



The delegates to the 1888 General Conference session pose in front of the Minneapolis Seventh-day Adventist Church.

*“Be thou faithful unto death,
and I will give thee a crown of life”
(Revelation 2:10).*

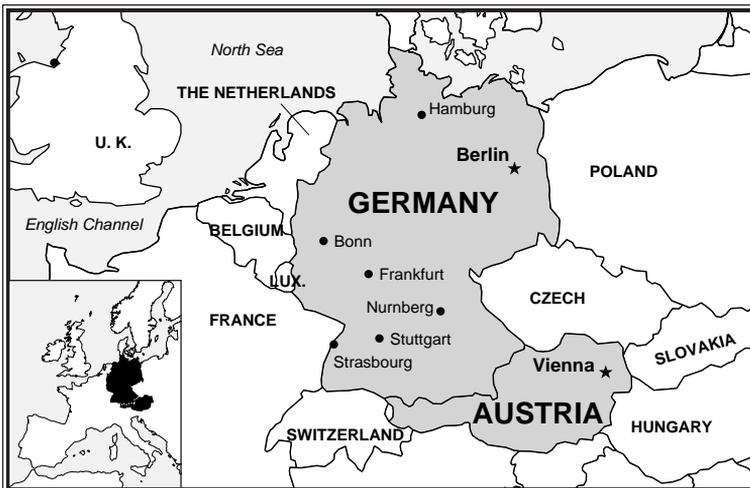
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Germany and Austria

I — Beginning and Early Experiences

At the beginning of World War I, under the pressure of political circumstances, as pointed out before, not only the leaders of the work in Germany, but also Guy Dail, secretary of the European Division of SDAs, and Louis R. Conradi, president of the European Division, issued official declarations saying that German Adventists should serve as combatants. From Jacob Michael Platt's thesis, *The History of the Advent Movement in Germany*, pp. 256–258, we quote:

“Since the German government did not recognize the original position of the church, the German Adventist leaders, [L. R.] Conradi, [H. F.] Schuberth, and Guy Dail sent a petition to the War Ministry in Berlin in July 1914, requesting that the Adventist men be free from all military duty on Saturdays. The request was refused by Emperor Wilhelm, who himself wrote on the margin of the petition, ‘No pardon for Adventists.’



“Consequently, these Seventh-day Adventist leaders in Germany, seeing no way out of military service for their young men and swayed by the surging spirit of nationalism and political propaganda, assumed the authority to notify the government of the church’s support of the national military effort. Nationalism took such a strong hold on these and other Adventist leaders, as well as most of the lay members, that they became blind to the basic principles of the denomination. . . .

“In August 1914, Conradi stipulated that under the emergency the German Adventists could perform military service, bear arms, and work on Saturdays.

“Schuberth emphasized this same stand in a letter to the War Ministry in Berlin on August 4, 1914. . . . This pledge to the German government was a complete reversal of the historic position of the denomination. . . . An overwhelming majority of the members of the church accepted the position of Conradi and Schuberth.”

Jacob Michael Platt adds some interesting details on pages 270, 271 of his essay:

“More than two thousand Seventh-day Adventists, including scores of missionaries, were among the millions of soldiers in the German army from 1914 to 1918. This number represented about ten per cent of the total Adventist membership in Germany. . . . Of these two thousand German Adventists engaged in the war, 257 were killed in action.

“German Adventist soldiers performed many different kinds of tasks in the military service. Because of their religious beliefs, most of those conscripted during the first year of war requested service in the medical corps. Comparatively few of these requests were granted on induction if the soldier was physically fit for combat duty. The army endeavored to treat all enlisted men alike and to show no favoritism. Furthermore, the emperor, the government, and the army did not recognize conscientious objections. . . . Many, including ministers, performed combat duty without apparent twinges of conscience. The action of their religious leaders had made it easy for them to violate their previous convictions.”

Two weeks after sending out his circular letter of August 2, 1914, to the churches, Elder Dail told of the effect of the conscription on Seventh-day Adventists:

“Here in Germany about 2,000 of our brethren had to join the army, among them quite a number of Conference presidents, ministers, and colporteurs. All of our brethren in Hamburg that had to join

the army had a special meeting, both elders presiding. Here opportunity was given them to express their willingness to do their duty faithfully as soldiers, in the fear of God toward their country. A number of Nazarenes in Austria-Hungary who refused to do military duties were shot at once. In these countries it is not what I like to do, but what must be done. Here it is different than in America, where only volunteers are in the army.”—Letter from G. Dail to W. C. White, August 16, 1914 (*The Beginnings of the “Reform” Movement in Germany*, by D. E. Robinson).

In the *Zions-Waechter* (SDA church paper in Germany) of September 21, 1914, Conradi, European Division president, explained that in time of peace church members were given freedom of conscience when there was compulsion affecting the Sabbath (attendance at school, military service). Each one was responsible for his own procedure. “However,” he continued, “a time of war is a time of need. . . . In the light of the Bible, it should become clear to everyone that in such a time of need the Lord permits us to perform actions that would be punishable in time of peace.”

At the beginning of 1915, Elder Dail wrote to Willy C. White, asking if there was any advice that could be helpful in the difficult situation that the church was facing in the world war. In his reply (April 11, 1915), W. C. White said there are no positive statements of E. G. White concerning the stand that the Advent people “should take toward military service in the European countries.” We cannot understand how W. C. White could give such an answer, when he knew that there is a positive statement in *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 361. The contents of his letter were made known in all Adventist churches in Germany.

Another declaration, stating that the Adventists were prepared to do military service

Hamburg, den 23. August 1914.

An unsere Lieben Geschwister!

Den 23. Psalm zum Gedächtnis!

In dieser für Europa schwereren und ernstern Zeit möchten wir eine Bitte an Euch richten.

1. Als Nachfolger Christi sollten wir in diesen Tagen durch die Kraft Gottes uns als treue, gehorsame, zum Dienst bereitete Untertanen unseres Landes zeigen. 1. Petri 2, 13, 14, 17.

2. Sollten wir, soweit wir im Meer stehen oder ins Meer eintreten müssen, unsere militärischen Pflichten freudig und von Herzen erfüllen, so daß die Vorgesetzten in uns tapfere, treue Soldaten finden, die bereit sind, ihr Leben für ihr Heim, ihren Landesherren und ihr Vaterland einzusetzen. Unser Schicksal liegt in Gottes Hand. Giebt es in Kampf und Tod, so laßt uns daran denken, daß unser Leben verborgen ist mit Christo in Gott. Kol. 3, 3. Soeresspflichtige dürfen auch nicht verkennen, daß in Kriegszeiten jedermann voll und ganz seine Pflicht zu erfüllen hat. Aus Jesus 6. ergeben wir, daß die Kinder Gottes von den Kriegswaffen Gebrauch gemacht und auch am Sabbat den Kriegsdienst versehen haben. In einer Sonderversammlung der *„Lutherischen Kirche in der Provinz Pommern“* am 1. August 1914, an welcher die meisten die meisten heresepflichtigen Weiber teilgenommen haben, sind wir auf Grund dieses Absehens einstimmig zu dem Entschluß gekommen, in diesem Sinne zu handeln.

3. Soweit wir zu Hause bleiben, wollen wir uns den Nächsten gegenüber stets als edelbetende von Christi Liebe erfüllte Menschen zeigen, sowie auf jede Art und Weise bestrebt sein, den Schmerz und Kummer unserer Mitmenschen zu lindern, und den Kranken, Verwundeten, Armen, Wittwen und Waisen zu helfen. Wir dürfen den Mut nicht verlieren, sondern müssen auch in Trübsal geduldig sein, und wie Moise, dessen Lied wir ehrent singen möchten, uns an den halten, den wir nicht sehen, als wären wir ihm. Ebr. 11, 27. Laßt uns in Gottes Wort: *„Wißt ihr nicht, daß die Heiligen (1. Tim 2, 22)“*, unsere Versammlungen nicht verjäumen. Vor allen Dingen das Gebet nicht vernachlässigen und besonders der Gebete (1. Tim 2, 2) und unseres Herzes vor dem Thron der Gnade gedenken.

4. Wir müssen uns allezeit unserer Aufgabe als Boten Christi bewußt sein und an dem Werk der Seelenrettung nach Kräften arbeiten.

Euch alle der Gnade Gottes empfehlend, bin ich mit herzlichen Grüßen

Euer Bruder im Herrn
G. Dail.

also in time of war and on the Sabbath, was signed by L. R. Conradi, Division president, H. F. Schuberth, Union president, and P. Drinhaus, State Conference president (dated March 5, 1915).

“The official Adventist organ, *Zions-Waechter*, cited Martin Luther to justify the position taken by the church in Germany. Luther had indeed justified the bearing of arms in the defense of one’s home and family; the sword and war, he had asserted, were instituted of God to punish injustice and protect the just. The German Adventist leaders taught that under the existing conditions participation in the war was no violation of the sixth commandment and that war duty on Saturday was no violation of the fourth commandment, since war was a work of necessity, allowable on the Sabbath.”—Jacob Michael Platt, *The History of the Advent Movement in Germany*, pp. 261, 262.

It was evident to many Adventists in Germany that the change from “no participation” to “absolute liberty to serve” the country, “at all times and in all places, in accord with the dictates of [one’s] personal conscientious conviction,” changed the position of the church toward the law of God from loyalty to disloyalty.

Strife, Division, Trials

This compromise brought strife and division among the Adventists in Germany. The majority, as we already know, accepted the combatant stand, but a minority understood that a “Thus saith the state” cannot be put above a “Thus saith the Lord.”

“There were no members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who refused induction into the army on grounds of conscience. There were several, however, from the reformed group of Adventists who refused induction, and in some cases they went into hiding to escape army service. Most of them were apprehended and court-martialed.”—*Ibid.*, p. 274.

“About two per cent of the membership . . . condemned Conradi’s stand and refused to abide by it; their persistent refusal resulted in dismissal from the membership of the church and the development of an opposing movement.”—*Ibid.*, p. 258.

On the day after the dissolvment of the congregation at Kray (a town in Germany), the police raided several homes of those conscientious objectors and arrested some of them as deserters.

Some, when called to bear arms, refused to go beyond their convictions, and were put into prison. Here is a typical example:

“Friedrich Wieck and Adolph Czukta . . . were drafted into the

armed forces during the first days of the war, but they refused to bear arms on grounds that they could not violate the [fourth and the] sixth commandment. Both were allowed to serve without weapons for several weeks until the time of their departure for combat. Then, for the first time, they were placed under arrest for fourteen days because they refused to be vaccinated. They were warned that if they continued their resistance they would be executed by a firing squad. Just before the departure of their unit for the front, they deserted and hid in Berlin, from where they sent their uniforms back to their unit. . . . They were eventually arrested and were examined on their religious stand. . . . They were sentenced to five years imprisonment, a penalty which other Adventist 'reformers' also received when they refused military duty. The health of all suffered because of lack of heat and proper nourishment in prison, and five died shortly after their release."—*Ibid.*, pp. 269, 270.

Protests and Appeals

A. Stobbe, a church elder in the SDA denomination, wrote an *Appeal to the Last Church*, May 1915, as follows:

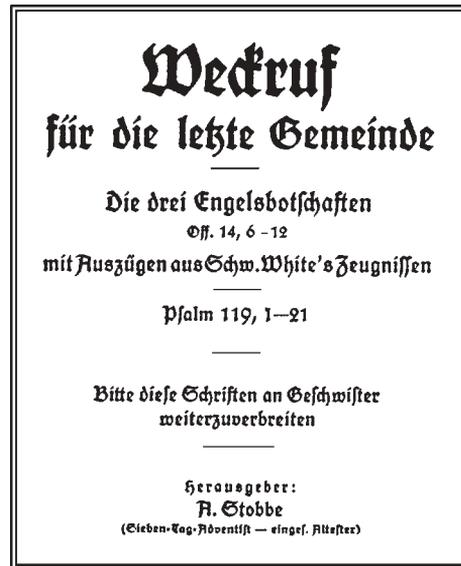
"How come, my dear brethren, the people of God have fallen so deep and are running along with Babylon, after the Lord has led us out of her in such a wonderful way (Revelation 14:6–12). Since 1844 the Lord has rejected Christianity as a church and has been calling His children to come out of spiritual Babel. If we as God's children are free to join them in everything, then we could have remained in Babylon. . . . He wants those who are complying with His holy precepts to be a separate people. . . . As we all know, a split took place among the Seventh-day Adventists when the war broke out. One portion believes they may go along with Babylon, while the other portion adheres to the threefold message and wants to remain loyal to the commandments of God under all circumstances. And, according to God's law and the testimonies, this is the only right position.

"A unanimous decision was taken in many places on Sabbath, August 1, that we would not go along with Babylon. Bro. Staubert (an ordained minister) gave a public lecture at Bremen-Altstadt, Sunday, August 2. During the short prayer meeting that followed, Bro. Staubert said, among other things, that it would be especially difficult for us Seventh-day Adventists, because we as children of God cannot kill and because the commandment says, 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.' It was stated that God will be with us if we stand true

to Him and keep His commandments. The author of this appeal is still of the same opinion, and, together with many others, he has experiences in this connection (Revelation 22:14; Psalm 19:8-12). However, when that writing (namely, G. Dail's circular letter of August 2, 1914) arrived from Hamburg, it caused confusion in the churches, because the holy law of God was trampled underfoot and the present truth was placed under a bushel (Isaiah 58:12, 13; Matthew 5:15, 16; Isaiah 40:9; 62:6, 7) If we consider the writing from Hamburg and compare it with

the law and the testimony, we may confidently reject it, because it is a human precept. (The intention may be good, but it is not according to the touchstone—the law and the testimony.) All doctrines, even those that are accepted as truth, should be brought to the test of the law and the testimony. If they cannot stand this test, there is no light in them. . . .

“The sixth commandment gives the servants of God no permission to transgress it. In the Sabbath commandment we find no clause exempting us from keeping it in this confused situation. If we consider the prophets, besides the testimonies of Sister White, we find no evidence that we are now free to practice these abominations. On the contrary, we find dreadful threats of punishment in case we forsake the Lord our God, disdain His law, and even teach others how to violate it, as was done through many circular letters issued by many of our leaders. I remember one in which it is written that it would be insanity not to go along with the others. The word of God says, Blessed are they that do His commandments (Revelation 22:14), and here the circular letter says that it is madness to firmly adhere to the commandments now in time of war. State Conference leader Brother M says among other things: Necessity knows no law, and it is all right to make exceptions during the war. Elder G (a minister) says: We should not kill the enemy, but only wound him.



*A. Stobbe's Appeal to the Last Church
(facsimile reproduction of front cover).*

“Things have gone so far that the members who are not willing to submit to these [human] rules have been disfellowshipped. This is how the church at Kray was dissolved (May 1915), and 40 members have not been received back into the church. Also, some souls were disfellowshipped in Essen and Bremen. In Bremen-Neustadt, where we have a church with about 75 members, two members were disfellowshipped by only 13 votes. Then, three weeks later, five more souls were disfellowshipped by only seven votes. And contrary votes were not called.”

Another SDA church elder who stood up against the new position taken by the Adventists in Germany was W. Richter. In the latter part of 1915 he wrote in his Protest:

“As we share the mind of our Saviour, in the sense that we want to live peaceably with all men, we propose that a general gathering be called, where both parties may express their opinions. We make a friendly appeal to all churches and ministers of the SDAs: In this most important question of faith, which has come up in such an earnest time as this, please support this proposal and, according to your possibilities, attend the requested meeting, where the well-being and the woes of the church of Christ are to be discussed. If this proposal is not accepted by the ministers and leaders, and if no assurance is given us, at this time, that we have freedom of conscience in religious matters, then we will, just the same, live up to our principles according to the Holy Scripture, without fearing the consequences and false accusations. Our prayer shall be: ‘Lord, give us leaders like Moses, who chose rather to suffer reproach and persecution with the people of God than to go along with Egypt.’

“If we are dragged before the authorities, or if we are brought before the Sabbath Schools for recantation or for disfellowshippment, or if we are threatened with suspension from the colporteur work, we will say with Luther: ‘Here I stand; I can do no other; may God help me. Amen.’ ”

Oscar Kramer Tells His Experience

One day, when Oscar Kramer was only 11 years old, he noticed people crowded around billboards in great excitement. He himself read, *Mobilization*, and he saw the signature of the German emperor Wilhelm.

What people had expected finally came! The war quickly developed into a worldwide conflict.

Some brethren thought that the final test, the Sunday law, was

right upon them, and that, in order to carry the distinct earmarks of the remnant church, they must keep God's holy law under all circumstances and follow the instructions of the Spirit of Prophecy. And this is what they did.

The Adventist Church in Bremen had a fine young local elder, Wilhelm Richter. But he was not present on the Sabbath after the mobilization. He had withdrawn himself after receiving a draft order to join the German armed forces. Since Germany had no provision of any kind for those who conscientiously opposed war, those who refused were court-martialed and shot to death, or were sent to hard military prison for obeying the law of God rather than obeying the laws of finite men. Anyone joining the army could not possibly keep the commandments of God. So Brother Richter did the only thing that was left for him to do—he fled overnight.

In the absence of their elder, Brother Staubert, an ordained minister, spoke to the congregation at the 11:00 o'clock service. And what a wonderful service it was! He admonished all to stand faithful to God's holy law, to which the church seemed to agree.

The following week brought a series of German victories, which fanned the patriotic spirit of the people and enthused many church members. When Elder Staubert spoke to them again the following Sabbath, things had visibly changed, but not for the better. In a rather reluctant voice he turned to Old Testament stories of warfare in the time of Israel, trying to excuse and defend the waging of war and the involvement of God's people in it. For a moment the conscientious members, true Adventists, sat horrified as he tried to entrench himself behind the texts, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man," and "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." He compared our time, when spiritual Israel is scattered all over the earth, to the time of Theocratic Israel (which was both a church and a nation). There were, nevertheless, enough earnest and staunch-hearted believers in that meeting who dared to vindicate the honor of God. They promptly rose to their feet, protesting aloud against such perversion of truth. But they were then informed that this new stand was not taken by the minister alone; it was now the position of the entire German Union. To this effect, the leaders had sent word to the German government on August 4, 1914.

On that second Sabbath, when the minister tried to force the new viewpoint upon the church in Bremen, this caused a storm of protest from a group of brethren. There was much confusion at that meeting, the service was completely disrupted, and the church was virtually divided between two opposing opinions.

After a rather excited week, they gathered again for the next Sabbath meeting. This time, because of the threatening circumstances, the Field president appeared. He reiterated the new standpoint of the leadership very forcefully and condemned the position of the few protesting brethren as the "Rebellion of Korah."

The secret police came repeatedly and inquired about the brethren who had "dodged" the army and were now in hiding. The leaders assured the police that they would have to deal with these people. And then a shameful thing happened: The president took a slip of paper from his coat pocket and read off a list of names. Elder Richter and Sister Kramer were included. These, he said, were considered disfellowshipped from the church. At this point there was much crying and heart-rending anguish. All protesting was in vain. Prayer meetings followed which lasted all night through. The disfellowshipped ones kept on attending the church services regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, and ignored the command to stay away. Their tithes and offerings were still faithfully sent to the Hamburg office.

Soon they heard that in nearly all churches in Germany scores were disfellowshipped for the same reason, against their vehement protests. The church at Coblenz was completely turned out, elder and all, for opposing the new position of the leaders. Then the faithful few heard that the same thing had occurred in Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria. After the armistice with Romania and Russia, they learned that hundreds had been disconnected there also for no other reason than their protest against open violation of the law of God. Even in neutral countries a number of members were taken off the church records for sympathizing with the faithful few.

Thus, against their own wish, a new Seventh Day Adventist Church was born within the Adventist mother church and was left stranded. The minority had no desire to start a new movement, but the leaders would not reconsider their actions; they even took pride in the disfellowshippment, according to declarations made through the press. Right after the uncalled-for separation, Elder Richter appealed for a hearing, but his appeal was denied by the leaders. Sad to say, ministers delivered their brethren up to prison and death. Brother Kramer says that at least twenty brethren sealed their steadfastness with their blood as faithful martyrs after they had been betrayed by their ministers. Therefore, the faithful few decided that, under such conditions, they could no longer support the leadership with their tithes and offerings; so they began to give their dues to

those who, as faithful ministers, stood against the apostasy even when in danger of their own lives.

In conclusion we quote Brother Kramer's own words: "This experience shows why there are two distinct Seventh Day Adventist Churches today." (Condensed from *The Sabbath Watchman*, January 1950.)

Temporary Organization

When the church at Kray was dissolved (May 1915), the disfellowshipped believers (of Kray and other nearby places) and others who joined them voluntarily as an expression of protest formed the nucleus of the dissident movement in Germany. They had their center in Kray until the beginning of 1919, when it was transferred to Wuerzburg, Germany.

By the middle of 1915, there were several groups of faithful Adventists, besides a certain number of isolated members, outside the SDA Church in Germany. A general gathering of these conscientious objectors took place at Wermelskirchen, in August 1915. In that meeting they agreed to distribute on a large scale the pamphlet, *The Last Message of Mercy to a Fallen World*, not only in Europe, but also in America.

The second conference of these believers, who later became known as Reformers, was held at Gelsenkirchen, in November 1915. At that gathering, a committee of seven members was elected to represent the protesting minority. Five workers were sent out to look after the scattered flock. Churches and groups were organized. Treasurers were appointed to receive tithes and offerings. This temporary organization made it possible for them to begin the publication of Sabbath School lessons, a church paper entitled *Waechter der Wahrheit* (Watchman of the Truth), as well as pamphlets and tracts. Colporteurs began to work.

The leaders of the Adventist Church were concerned about the growing influence of the dissident movement. Written warnings against these dissenters were given repeatedly, both through the church paper and through pamphlets. In a circular letter (May 22, 1916), G. Dail stated that the "present movement of apostasy" can be identified with a former movement started by Brother Garmire. In answer to this warning, the separated brethren published an *Open Letter to All Seventh-day Adventists* (June 1916), signed: The Disfellowshipped Members. In this letter they proposed reunification on the following conditions:

1. The previous relationship between church and state to be restored (separation of church and state).
2. No one to be called a traitor of the country or a fanatic because of refusal to render military service on grounds of conscientious convictions. On the other hand, those who, under pressure, do military service in the war, and that also on the Sabbath, would not be condemned either.
3. Persecution, denunciation, and slander to be labeled as unchristian.

The well-meant proposal of these believers was ignored. In a pamphlet entitled *For Clarification* (July 1916), the church leaders explained that Adventists, as loyal citizens, have nothing to do with the "movement of apostasy."

Struggling Against Deception

As the so-called "movement of apostasy," which was actually a movement of reformation, was gaining ground rapidly, Satan devised a plan to hinder the work of the reform-minded brethren. He introduced among them persons with wrong beliefs, fanatical ideas, and unbalanced minds. In 1915, Karl Hossfeld and Samuel Elsner, two former Seventh-day Adventist workers, fled from service in the armed forces and took refuge among the church members in Bremen, where they received protection and financial support from some of the believers. They were quick to take advantage of the dissension in the church concerning the question, "Should Adventists take part in the war?" and began to circulate their ideas among the Advent people, claiming that their work was only a protest against the new stand taken by the leadership of the church. With their protest, however, they mingled some of their wrong ideas, such as date setting. In their tract entitled *Signs of the Times* they asserted that the end of the world had begun in 1914 with the outbreak of the war. In 1916, Hossfeld stated that the second coming of Christ would occur in 1918. As they refused to heed the counsels and warnings of the committee, the Reform brethren, disclaiming the writing of those two men, soon declared that they had nothing to do with them. They were not able to cause much damage in our ranks.

The most harmful blow that Satan was permitted to strike against our church in those days came through a false prophetess, Gertrud Kersting of Lippstadt, who claimed to have received visions like Sister

White. She stated (September 1916) that the latter rain would not come unless the feast of tabernacles was celebrated. Although she never belonged to the Reform Movement, one third of the members plus nine workers fell under her influence and had to be disfellowshipped from our midst (December 1916).

That was not all. The powers of darkness sent us a few more false reformers at that time—such as Herms, Stenzel, Langstaed, Fratz, Fischer, Bach, Tecklenberg, Beck, Heine, Gersonbeck, Portzek, Schamberg, and others—but error was unmasked and the truth was triumphant.

The struggle against fanatics and apostates is evident also from a circular letter issued before the end of 1919, in which our people were warned:

1. That it is wrong to reject organization.
2. That Isaiah 28 is more than a personal gospel.
3. That there is no ground for the prohibition of all pictures and photos.
4. That the teaching about the so-called “millennial kingdom on earth” is not according to the Bible.
5. That we are not required to celebrate the feast of tabernacles, the day of atonement, or other feasts.
6. That the rejection of the writings of E. G. White is not according to the plan of God.
7. That the “views” maintained by some concerning marriage, health reform, and other points, cannot be substantiated.

The group formed by Joseph Bach and his adherents (1919–1920)—the International Missionary Society of Seventh Day Adventists, Third Part, Zechariah 13:8, 9; Revelation 14:12—gained a number of followers not only in Germany, but also in some of the neighboring countries. These people were called “Iconoclasts,” because, based on Exodus 20:4, they were very much against the use of pictures. Julius Wolz and Willi Maas were with them at the beginning, but left them in 1920 and returned to the original Reform Movement, with headquarters in Wuerzburg, Germany.

Peter J. Balbierer, controlled by a spirit of independence, began to create great difficulties in Germany towards the end of 1921 or beginning of 1922. Much greater difficulties were caused by Philipp Waldschmidt, who was the leader of the North German Field. At the conference held in Bebra, 1924, he had a serious disagreement with

the leadership of the Union Conference. Because of their rebellion, these two leaders, Balbierer and Waldschmidt, were disfellowshipped soon after the General Conference session held at Gotha, Germany, 1925. Later, Balbierer returned to the Reform Movement and married a daughter of Otto Welp. But he was not restored to the ministry. Waldschmidt continued in his rebellion for a few years, until his group decreased to a point where he was left alone.

As the early disciples were tested when many missionaries left them (Luke 10:1; John 6:66; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 392); as Luther and his companions were tested when they saw Wittenberg, the very center of the Reformation, “fast falling under the power of fanaticism and lawlessness” (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 186–192); as the Adventists were often tested through the presence of false leaders and fanatical movements (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 99, 100, 117, 122, 229, and so on), this type of test also came to the Reform Movement. The enemy, once again, “attempted what he has attempted in every other reformatory movement—to deceive and destroy the people by palming off upon them a counterfeit in place of the true work” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 186). Nevertheless, in spite of these troubles, the work of reformation kept advancing from victory to victory.

II — Persecution During World War I

The time of war (1914–1918) was a time of persecution. Quite a few Adventists, who were conscientious objectors, suffered imprisonment, tortures, and even death (martyrdom). In many cases these honest believers were betrayed to the police. Here are just a few examples:

When the church at Kray was dissolved (May 1915), the police searched the homes of the believers and arrested some of them. About the same time Brother Portzek, of Essen, was denounced to the authorities by a church leader. A Belgian countess accepted the truth and was put in prison. Towards the end of 1915 (October or November), there were some more police raids and arrests. At the instigation of two church leaders (Brethren Genz and Schick), the police arrested Brother K. Hossfeld and Sister E. Reuss.

Brother Hossfeld, who was liable for military service, was sent to prison on his refusal to bear arms.

Sister Reuss, a Bible worker, was arrested on a public street, in Cologne. A brother, who happened to be present at the scene, strongly objected to the minister's procedure, that this is not the way for a Christian to act. Nevertheless, the minister took no notice of the

protest. To make it harder for her, her own sister appeared in court as a witness against her.

In one of their pamphlets, the SDAs tried to justify themselves as follows:

“The war came, and Sister Reuss, siding with the movement of apostasy, began to work against us with the greatest zeal, not because she felt constrained by the Spirit of God to work for the salvation of souls (she could, of course, have done this before, but did not do it), but because, in her resentment, she wanted to harm us.

“Similar reasons, also, were the main underlying cause that got many others involved in the separation. . . .

“Miss Reuss and others were working underground, very fanatically, under our name, promoting antimilitaristic propaganda. The authorities were not able to catch the culprits, who were known as former members of our church. And it came to the knowledge of the police that these people had found a hideout in the homes of our members, who are not actually familiar with the whole situation. So, as we are in the rightful use of our name, the authorities said to us that it was our duty to disclose the whereabouts of the evildoers. Miss Reuss had become a very dangerous element to the church, and the police were after her; therefore, the local minister had her arrested. Had these people been honest, not working under our name, we would never have done anything against them.”—*Wer sind die wahren Traeger der Adventbotschaft?* (Who Are the True Bearers of the Advent Message?), pp. 24, 25 (1928).

Among those who were put in prison at the end of 1915 was Brother Hollmann. Others, such as Brethren Richter and Geselle, were incarcerated in 1916.

In 1917 our people suffered police raids in Hamburg, Ulm, Stuttgart, and Berlin, and some were arrested. In Berlin, on one occasion, the police surprised the brethren during a public lecture after sunset. Somebody, however, cut off the lights and no arrests were made. Directly or indirectly, Adventist leaders always tried to raise suspicion against our people in the eyes of the world and of the authorities. So, for example, before the end of the war, the SDAs published the following declaration in a local newspaper, *Stuttgarter Neues Tagblatt*, September 26, 1918:

“In August of this year there appeared in most of the daily papers in Wuerttemberg a news item about a police report from Hechingen (Hohenzollern) according to which an Adventist lady was arrested because of antimilitaristic activities.

“This must have made the impression on outsiders that the members of the religious denomination of Seventh-day Adventists here mentioned are not loyal citizens. The undersigned desires to state here that this is not so. This is well known to the government and the authorities.

“As citizens of our state in which general conscription exists, the young men among us, since the foundation of our denomination, have fulfilled their military duties with the agreement of the whole denomination. But at the beginning of the war there were individual members who, because they lacked a spirit of solidarity or because of an exaggeration of the same, did not want to do war service. These then began to spread their personal conscientious hesitations by word and literature within the denomination in order to induce others to do the same. They were admonished by the denomination, but because of their stubborn persistence and because they were a menace to internal and external peace, they had to be disfellowshipped. It sometimes happens that the authorities arrest such agitators who do their work in secret. Because they continue to bear our name, against which we can do nothing, suspicion always falls on the said denomination. We consider it our duty to bring this before the public so that we may not come under false suspicion. E. Gugel, minister and president of the denomination in Wuerttemberg.”

Towards the end of the war, our brethren were closely watched by the Adventist ministers and by the police.

November 11, 1918, the war came to an end, but the persecution did not cease completely. Still in August 1919 two brethren were sentenced to death.

Wilhelm Richter Tells His Experience

Brother Richter, who barely survived the horrors of long-term imprisonment, wrote a report in 1920, narrating his experience:

After four months of interrogation (1916), he was sent to prison in Spandau, for a five-year penal servitude, because of his faith in Christ in connection with the threefold message. Seven days later he was transferred from Spandau to Fort Glatz, where he arrived just before the beginning of the Sabbath. Sabbath morning, he, together with other prisoners, was led out into the yard for duty. He reported himself to the prison authorities and requested to be excused from duty as he was an Adventist and observed the Sabbath. With laughing and scoffing, his request was denied. When ordered to go to work, he

refused, and was consequently led back into his cell. At 10:30 a.m. he had to take a walk with two death candidates around the morgue, keeping within ten paces from the morgue. He had to walk with his hands on their backs; the other prisoners were allowed to walk in pairs out in the garden. This, he says, instead of weakening his faith, tended to strengthen it.

On the fourth day, as they were taking their walk, Brother Richter was filled with joy as he recognized a prisoner that had just been brought in as a brother and companion that he had become acquainted with while in Guben. They rejoiced together in that they were, like their Lord, coupled up with murderers. Their faith did not weaken. There they stayed together for nearly three years.

Pastors were often sent to them, to visit them in their cells, with the mission of discouraging them in their faith, but without success. As the prison warden could not by any means prevent them from observing the Sabbath, he made them sweep up leaves on Sunday. Though this was intended to be a punishment, to them it was a pleasure. They were out in the open and, besides, they were able to encourage each other.

In this prison, Brother Richter's companion had two years added to his term for persistently refusing to work on the Sabbath.

In December of 1916, Brother Richter was returned to Spandau, and his companion, Brother Geselle, was sent to Danzig. In Spandau, Brother Richter found Brother Hollmann, who had already served one year of his sentence.

After some time the two were sent to prison at Marienburg, where the treatment of Adventist conscientious objectors was so horrible that it cannot even be described. There, the two brethren had to endure close confinement three, five, and seven days at a time, since they would not break the law of God.

As they refused to peel potatoes on the Sabbath, they were given only lukewarm water for dinner. Deep down in a valley, in a basement where neither daylight nor fresh air ever entered, they had to reside. There they suffered, because obedience to the law of God was very dear to them.

Since they preached the message to the prisoners, they were deprived of the Bible; but the Word stored in their hearts could not be taken from them.

Beginning February 1917, Brother Hollmann was transferred to another place, and a few weeks later Brother Richter was sent back to Spandau. There he was subjected to more severe punishment because

of his "disorderly conduct," which consisted in his refusal to obey human orders which were in conflict with the commandments of God and in the fact that he talked to other prisoners on the subject of the second coming of Christ.

From Spandau, Brother Richter was sent to a penal colony.

While in the train he presented the message to some, and, for this procedure, he was reprimanded and threatened and was told to stop observing the Sabbath; otherwise he would not live long.

Sabbath morning, when three companies of convicts were lined up for work, Brother Richter reported himself as an Adventist, and asked most respectfully to be excused from work. There were about sixty non-commissioned officers present who had lined up with guns abreast. These roared at him like lions, "Fall into line!" This skirmish continued about twenty minutes. The captain had given orders that any prisoner refusing obedience after three commands was to be bayoneted. So they rushed toward our brother, but at about two meters they stopped short. Here the brother had an opportunity to appreciate once more the promise of God in Psalm 34:7. He could see that the enemy, be he man or any other power, must first pass the cordon thrown about the servants of God before he can touch them.

When that conflict was over, a fiercer test came. The three companies had moved away, and two young prisoners who were there for theft and robbery received orders to compel Brother Richter to empty a cesspool on the Sabbath day. As he refused to do this because it was the Sabbath, one of the fellows poured a pailful of excreta over his head. They then tore his coat from his body and into pieces, threw him down, kneeled on him and hit him with their fists until he began to bleed. After that he was forced to stand on the drill ground for two hours at a freezing temperature. While he was standing there, they put over his head a straw mattress on which the night before someone had died from typhus. They remarked sarcastically, "Let this Adventist resurrect the dead man."

Brother Richter says that in that penal colony there was another brother onto whose shoulders the tormentors bound heavy pieces of iron in order to compel him to work on the Sabbath. As he sank down under the load, his fellow prisoner, being chained to him, was obliged to lie down also. Then they separated him from the other prisoner, strapped him fast to a railroad tie, and left him there for the rest of the day. Under unbearable tortures, this brother perished while in prison.

After ten days of conflict, Brother Richter was again sent back to Spandau. When he arrived there for the fourth time, in March 1917,



These front pages show the periodicals that were published by the SDA Reformers in the early days of the message of reformation.

he saw Brother Geselle, who was brought from Danzig. And also Brother Hollmann came. Through the efforts of Brother Geselle, a young prisoner accepted the truth while in prison and began to observe the Sabbath. It was altogether too much for the enemy that in prison he should be robbed of his prey. So the authorities determined to make a clean sweep with the Adventists. One Friday noon the four were brought before the captain. He addressed them as an "Adventist pack," and affirmed, "We are Christians also." He said he would give them time, until the beginning of the Sabbath, to consider giving up the Adventist faith. If they still resisted, he would apply any and every means to compel them to give up their "imbecile faith." He listed the methods that would be employed: the straightjacket, hunger, deprivation of a bed, feet and hands in irons, and so forth. To the question as to whether they were ready, they answered him not a word.

As the Sabbath began, the captain entered Brother Richter's cell and struck him with a cherry cane. At seven o'clock sharp the four were brought into the racking-room. Two of the brethren were compelled to lie down on the table in the jackets, and the other two had to stand by and see how their companions were abused. They were mellowed so they would renounce their faith. And they were also put to the torturing machine. At this time there were present one captain, two colonels, and four non-commissioned officers. Also three fur-

nacemen, who were prisoners, had to help with the torturing. One of these men was there for theft and for falsifying documents. Nearly always they chose desperate criminals to help in the torturing.

While lying on the rack, the straps were drawn so tight that the four upper ribs were forced down into the lungs, so that the victims could not breathe. One of the officers kept watch of the pulse, and when he feared strangulation he would order loosening up a little to prevent death.

During the second ordeal Brother Richter became unconscious. When he regained consciousness, he was asked if he was now ready to give up his "idiotic belief" and work on the Sabbath. As he declined, the former proceedings were repeated. Helpless, he was thrown over onto his face and fettered. Two of the bandits then leaped on the table and kicked him while the officers belabored him with their arms. The torturing continued for about a full half-hour.

On several Sabbaths their cells were intentionally flooded with water so that the brethren would be compelled to break the fourth commandment. On another Sabbath Brother Richter was kicked for not working on the seventh day. Because he refused to clean windows on the Sabbath, the sergeant major beat him with the cell keys, injuring the sixth and seventh joints in his back. He had to have part of the fourth rib removed on account of injuries received.

The four brethren shared joy and sorrow until Brother Geselle, a faithful witness for God, succumbed through the tortures of the rack. He was physically vigorous and about 38 years of age. His chest was crushed in when he was put into a straightjacket because of his faithfulness to the commandments of God.

In January 1918, Brother Richter was placed into solitary confinement for twenty-eight days with only bread and water and no



Convention of SDA Reformers (German Union Conference) with the presence of GC delegates, Gotha, 1925.

light. There was now some relaxation of cruelties. His body was so mangled that he could not endure much more and live. The other two survivors were in a similar condition. Thus the days dragged wearily along. But the peace of God was with them. To the question, How were they able to bear so much torture? there is only one answer: By the grace of God. Often they recalled how God's witnesses in the Dark Ages were strengthened by the Spirit of the Lord to suffer for ten, twenty, or thirty years in dark dungeon cells, slowly pining away.

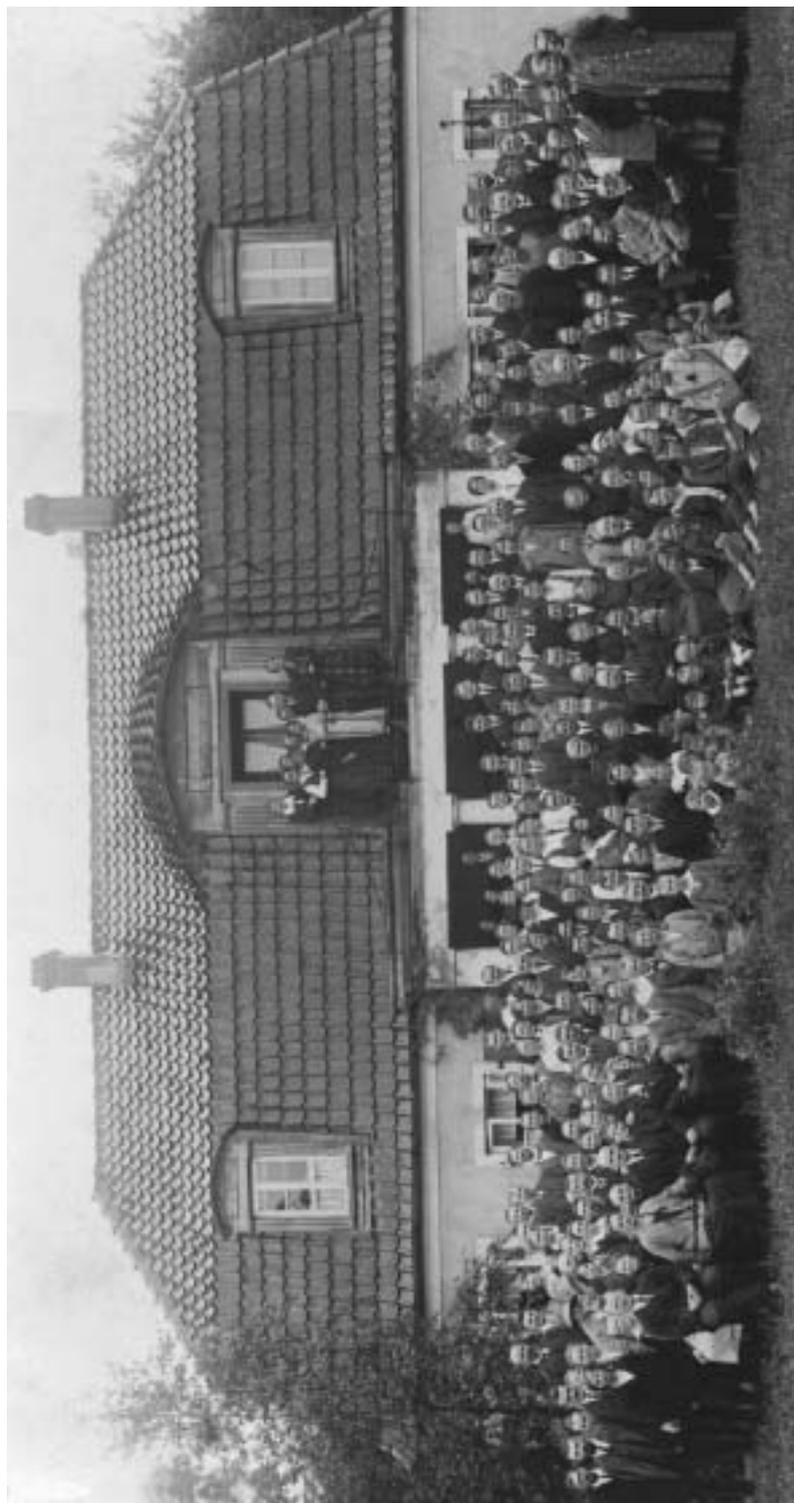
Addressing those who have backslidden or become lukewarm, Brother Richter drew their attention to Isaiah 31:1-3. These were his closing words, "When nominal Christians despise us and scorn us, let us remember the words of Jesus: 'Ye will be hated of all men for My name's sake.' "

III — Later Developments

Before the end of the war, the Adventist Church in Germany published a declaration in the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* of August 24, 1918, and in other papers, stating that: (a) Adventists have fulfilled their military duties in time of peace. (b) Military service was accepted also in time of war. Therefore, thousands of Adventists are in the armed forces. Many have fallen. Others have received distinctions and promotions. (c) "Individual members . . . who failed to openly confess their scruples of conscience to the authorities, and secretly evaded their duties, and went from place to place to influence others to take the same stand, by word of mouth and through publications . . . were



Ministers and Bible workers attending a seminar at Isernhagen, 1927.



Convention of SDA Reformers (German Union Conference), Isernhagen, near Hannover, 1927.

disfellowshipped.” (d) These people, however, have refused to adopt another name, and are working under the name of SDAs. (e) “This is causing confusion. And, for the sake of protection, we are making this declaration. Signed by L. R. Conradi, H. F. Schuberth, G. W. Schubert.”—*Die Geschichte der Sogennanten “Reformations-bewegung” der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten* (the History of the So-called “Reform Movement” Among Seventh-day Adventists), p. 17.

Every time we read an anti-Reform publication, we think of Catholic prelates narrating the history of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. The truth is generally distorted, but some of the accusations made expose the accusers. See example in Acts 5:28.

The end of the war was the beginning of a time of relief and renewed activity for our brethren. They held their first post-war conference at Erfurt, January 31 through February 2, 1919. According to their reports (December 31, 1918), they had at that time 1000 members organized in 80 churches and groups, 9 ministers, 7 Bible workers, 4 part-time workers, 1 colporteur leader, 19 colporteurs.

The German Union Conference was organized, with seven Fields, under the name International Missionary Society of Seventh Day Adventists—German Union (Internationale Missionsgesellschaft der Siebenten Tags Adventisten—Deutsche Union).

The second post-war conference of our brethren in Germany was held at Magdeburg, September 27, 1919. The name of the Union was slightly changed to International Missionary Society of the Seventh Day Adventists—Standing on the Old Platform of 1844—German



Seminar for Bible Workers, Schwabisch Hall, Germany, 1932.

Union (Internationale Missions-gesellschaft der Siebenten Tags Adventisten, Alte seit 1844 stehengebliebene Richtung—Deutsche Union). And the Union was incorporated under this name in Frankfurt, December 23, 1919.

Towards the end of the year the German Union published *The Main Principles and Doctrines of the Seventh Day Adventists—Standing on the Old Platform of 1844*. Among the 35 points brought up in this writing, they stated:

1. That our church members should not let their children attend public schools on the Sabbath.
2. That any attempt to set a date for the second coming of Christ is unbiblical.
3. That remarriage of divorcees is unbiblical.
4. That all flesh foods should be rejected.

IV — Persecution Under the Totalitarian Regime

Under the Nazi government in Germany, religious liberty was suppressed step by step. It was evident that the Reform Movement would soon be prohibited, that our people, especially the workers, would soon be outlawed, and that our properties would be confiscated by the state. Therefore, while there was still a chance, in 1935, the properties of the German Union were sold. The mission house at



A group of Reform brethren in Austria, 1934.

Isernhagen, near Hannover, together with the print shop, which had been our main missionary center, had to be turned over to outsiders for a low price. However, the furniture, the equipment, the files, the books, and the like were moved to a rented house in the vicinity of the former church premises. From there the brethren were able to operate for a short time only. When the expected prohibition came by a decree, the police confiscated everything that they found in that house and sealed the doors. Of course, the Union funds, documents, and literature had already been put in safety.

In April 1936, our church was forbidden in Germany through the following ordinance (April 29, 1936):

“On the basis of the decree of 2.28.1933, paragraph 1, which was signed by the president of the Republic for the protection of the people and of the State (Federal Law Journal 1, p. 83), the sect called ‘Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement’ is dissolved and prohibited all over the federal territory. Its properties are to be confiscated. Any infringement of this decree will be punished according to paragraph 4 of the decree of 2.28.1933.

“Reasons:

“Under the cloak of religious activities the ‘Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement’ pursues aims which are in conflict with the ideology of National Socialism. The followers of this sect refuse to do military service and to employ the German salute. They publicly declare that they know no fatherland, because they are internationally-minded and regard all human beings as their brethren. Since the attitude of this sect is apt to cause confusion among the people, its dissolution was necessary for the protection of the people and of the State. Signed for R. Heydrich.”

On May 12, 1936, our German Union was declared “dissolved” by the Gestapo (secret police).

After a mutual consultation, the leaders of the SDA Reform Movement decided to hand in a written petition to the responsible officers applying for a verbal negotiation. At the second meeting in Heydrich’s office, our three brethren were told that the whole issue depended on us as a church. The men in authority asked about our position as regards military service and the German salute; our brethren responded: “We must decline a salute involving a political confession.” As far as killing is concerned, they said: “We follow the words of Christ in Matthew 5:44: ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.’” Heydrich answered: “Then,

by all means, you people refuse to do military service." Our brethren said: "We abide by the word of God and must reject requirements that are in conflict therewith."

Our brethren renewed their petition and received the following answer dated August 12, 1936:

"The exposition contained in your writing of July 27, 1936, also gives me no reason to suspend the prohibition of the sect, 'Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement.' Signed R. Heydrich."

Under the Hitler regime all our religious activities were proscribed. Our young men were brought into severe trials when called to bear arms because there was no provision for conscientious objectors. And parents had real problems with their school-aged children in connection with the Sabbath. They had tests upon tests. For ten years, until the end of World War II, our brethren worked underground. During this fearful time of distress, many of our brethren had to face imprisonment and even death.

Tests came upon the SDA Church also, but they found an easy solution which our people could not endorse.

In a circular letter dated June 3, 1936, for instance, E. Gugel, a state conference president, sent out the following instructions to his church members:

"To be read aloud in all churches on Sabbath, June 6th:

"Dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ: On May 18, 1936, the competent Departments issued a regulation, an extract of which is as follows:

"The Minister of Science, Education and National Instruction deems it no longer possible to maintain the special position hitherto granted to Adventist children on Saturday. Accordingly, all regulations of exception with regard to the attendance of Adventist children on Saturday are abolished. (This refers to the regulations of February 1934 as well as the former regulation.)

"In reply to a question directed to the Department of the Interior as well as to the Department of Public Worship with regard to making a new application on our part, I was told that this decision was irrevocable. It must be left to Divine Providence as to whether there will be another possibility in the near future to make another application, but we shall leave nothing untried. As we see no possibility whatever for the time being of bringing about a mitigation of this regulation, we must define our attitude. In America and England, as a rule, there is no school on Saturdays. Therefore, this difficulty does not exist there. Until 1919 and 1921, respectively, we had no problem as far as manda-

tory school attendance on Saturdays. Individuals among us succeeded here and there in obtaining it. Some did so by sending their children to private schools. The poorer ones had no possibility of doing this. However, in the future, private schools will not be able to make an exception. Nevertheless, for 15 years we enjoyed a privilege which our brethren and sisters in many European countries did not have. Unfortunately, some among us did not appreciate it so much. In free Switzerland the authorities have been unyielding on this question. Although individual parents paid heavy fines and went to prison now and again, they gained nothing and finally had to yield. In Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, etc. . . . our brethren and sisters there are also good Adventists as we are (may the Lord grant) here.

“As we have now tried everything, I do not believe that the Lord will consider the attendance of our children at school on Sabbath as a real transgression of the fourth commandment. If this were the case, then we would have to condemn all our brethren and sisters outside Germany, who, under the laws of the land, have had to submit, which is regrettable. This we will not and cannot do. . . .”

“You will understand that I feel a heavy responsibility before God and the denomination in this difficult matter. I have therefore sent a circular to all our presidents asking their opinion on this question, so they may carry this responsibility with me. Their answer for the most part is that it would not be wise to bring unnecessary difficulties upon the work by rash actions because of this restrictive regulation. Therefore, we must submit to the new position. . . .”

This circular letter shows how the faith of the Adventist people was tried also with reference to school attendance and Sabbath observance. We think that, under the test, the leadership of the Adventist Church in Germany should have encouraged the believers to comply with the requirements of God instead of succumbing to the antibiblical demands of the state. On this point, the light received through the Spirit of Prophecy reads:

“Our brethren cannot expect the approval of God while they place their children where it is impossible for them to obey the fourth commandment. They should endeavor to make some arrangement with the authorities whereby the children shall be excused from attendance at school upon the seventh day. If this fails, then their duty is plain, to obey God’s requirements at whatever cost.”—*Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the SDAs*, p. 216.

When religious oppression in Germany had reached a climax, God intervened in behalf of His people. After almost ten years of pro-

scription and persecution, our German brethren were thankful to God that the opposition was finally over, in 1945, and that they were once more permitted to breathe freely and assemble in peace. Their first district gatherings after World War II were held in Solingen (Sept. 14–15, 1945) and Esslingen (Oct. 26–28, 1945). In their paper *Der Adventruf* (The Advent Call) of December 1946 (first issue), they reported:

“The experiences of the brethren (during the time of the war), according to the testimonies borne of them, show that the Lord led His people in a wonderful way through the difficult years. Tribulation, imprisonment, and persecution brought the brethren closer together. We praise our Lord and Saviour for His great help. . . .

“Ten years of oppression and persecution are behind us. The Lord did not consent that His people be annihilated. . . . Many brethren lost their lives because of their faith—Brethren Hanselmann, Schmidt, Zrenner, Brugger, Blasi, and many others about whom we have no news. We only know that they remained faithful unto death. Many young and old brothers and sisters had to suffer in concentration camps, prisons, and penitentiaries, where they were tormented by inhuman torturers.”

What a terrible day that will be when men will be called to render an account of the innocent blood that they have shed!

Hereunder we narrate a number of individual experiences which will show how much our brethren had to suffer, especially during World War II:

Gheorghe Panaitescu

Brother Panaitescu was working in Germany when Hitler came to power (1933), and he tells us what he and some other brethren had to go through from 1933 to 1939, when World War II broke out.

As a Bible worker, it was his duty to visit our churches, groups, and isolated members, together with the president of the Northern Field, Brother Joseph Adamczak. Officially they could not work as missionaries. So they used to travel as agents for a nursery, selling transplants of fruit trees, of vegetables, of flowers, and others, and also seeds. They were not able to work under this form for long, because they were betrayed. They had serious difficulties with the authorities, who found out that the real purpose of their traveling was missionary work in connection with a proscribed church.

Although our church meetings were forbidden, the brethren, two or three families, would come together on Sabbath, in private

homes. One Sabbath they had, exceptionally, a bigger meeting. About 35 members assembled in the home of Brother Adamczak, in Hannover, to celebrate the ordinance and to fellowship a brother who had been baptized a few days before. On that day they went through an experience which should remind us of Paul, who was often in perils among false brethren. They were betrayed by a sister who was “lame” in the faith. As a consequence, all those who were in the meeting—two ministers, the union treasurer, several workers and canvassers, and lay members—were cited to appear before the court, January 9, 1937. All were sentenced and sent to prison—the ministers and union treasurer for one year, the Bible workers and canvassers for six months, and the lay members (including Sister Panaitescu) for two months.

At that time Brother Panaitescu escaped to Switzerland and from there he immigrated to Argentina with his family, where they enjoyed the blessings of religious liberty.

Johann Georg Hanselmann

Brother Hanselmann was one of our faithful leaders. As a delegate for Germany, he attended all our General Conference sessions held before the time of his imprisonment and death.

The Reform Movement in Germany was declared illegal in April 1936. So, there was only one possibility for our brethren in harmony with the will of God. This was to work underground and take the consequences. For acting in this way, Brother Hanselmann, the leader of our East German Field, was arrested in September 1936.

January 27, 1937, the secret state police issued the following communication about Brother Hanselmann:

“In connection with the prohibitive measures taken against the leaders and ministers, as well as colporteurs, of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement Church, the present leader of East Germany, Johannes Hanselmann . . . has also been taken into custody for investigation. . . .”

Soon after, a warrant for his arrest was issued (March 23, 1937) under the following accusations:

“He (Johann Hanselmann) drove through the following territories with his car—Saxony, Brandenburg, Pomerania, Silesia, and East Prussia—visited the followers of this sect, held Bible studies, celebrated the Lord’s Supper according to the rite of the prohibited sect, and accepted monies that had been gathered.

“Also the accused says that because of his religious conviction he avoids secular discussions as a matter of principle and on every occasion gives a free and open testimony for God’s word as written in the Bible.”

For these “crimes” he was tried and held in prison until October 2, 1937.

Being arrested again shortly afterwards, he was tried at Halle/Saale. At this second trial he was accused and sentenced to two years in prison for the following “reasons”:

“The accused was formerly a minister of the sect of the ‘Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement,’ which was prohibited in all of the Reich by decree of the Assistant Chief of the secret police on April 29, 1936. This sect, with its headquarters at Isernhagen, separated from the large Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1914, because the Adventists, against their principles of faith, have given their followers permission to do military service. The Reformers were of the opinion that the Adventists were not authorized to give their members this permission. The contrast between the Adventists and Reformers became still greater after the national revolution. While the followers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church placed themselves without exception behind the National Socialist Government, gave the German salute, took their children to the National Socialist organizations, and performed military service, the adherents of the Reform Movement maintained their old principles of faith. Under cover of a religious movement, they pursue goals that are contrary to the world vision of National Socialism. Therefore they refuse to do any military service, do not agree with the German salute, do not support the National Socialist organizations, such as NSV, RLB, and WHM, and are internationally oriented, because they know no fatherland but regard all people as their brethren.

“The Reformers take the view that they can obey a law only insofar as it does not contradict the Bible, because they are to obey God rather than men.”

When the two-year term was over, Bro. Hanselmann had to stand before the court again. The night before the final hearing he could not fall asleep; he was frightened. Toward the morning, overtired as he was, he finally went off to sleep, and he dreamed he had to go through a thick darkness which caused him great fear. Then he heard a voice speaking to him, “Johann, fear not; I am with thee.” Right after this he woke up. All fear had disappeared and he felt encouraged to die for his faith. His pocket watch and some of his personal belong-

ings were sent to his wife. In a letter to her, he wrote very briefly: "Now the worst is yet to come. I am being transported to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen."

In May 1942, Sister Hanselmann received official notice that her husband had fallen sick of dysentery and died in the concentration camp. A fellow prisoner, however, later reported that, because Brother Hanselmann had refused to work on the Sabbath, he was pulled up by the hands, which were tied behind his back, and this caused him to choke to death.

Gottlieb Metzner

Brother Metzner was very active as a witness for the message of Reformation. Through his activities, several souls accepted Christ. Among them was Brother Gustav Psyrembel, a dear and courageous contender for the faith, and one of the first to die as a witness for the truth defended by the SDA Reform Movement. Another precious soul that was brought to the truth by Brother Metzner was Sister Kiefer, whose husband raged terribly and ran with an axe into Brother Metzner's house in an attempt to kill him. Sister Kiefer was arrested on a Sabbath, put into prison, and mistreated; yet no force was able to prevent her from accepting the truth. After her release she sealed her faith in baptism. As a result of this, Brother Metzner had to suffer again: In 1944 he was transported to the Esterwegen concentration camp near Osnabrueck. The fact that Brother Metzner had a large family to provide for as well as other factors may have contributed to his release after a half-year.

During his absence, his four school-aged children were taken to school by force, by the police, his house was searched, and the family was continually fined, which put a heavy burden upon their meager income from a small farm.

As these methods failed to discourage Brother and Sister Metzner, he was cited for questioning many times. All their children were taken away from the parents' home, in 1939, and placed elsewhere to be educated. Brother Metzner was arrested for the last time on October 19, 1944. At the secret police office in Breslau, a declaration of renouncement of his "crazy faith" was placed before him. He was assured that after he signed it his four children would immediately be permitted to return home. A police officer who was present reported later: Brother Metzner stated that he had believed the truths of God's Word for many years, and now that he saw everything fulfilled, and

saw the complete breakdown of totalitarianism, he could not and would not recant his faith and deny his God. That is the last testimony we heard of Brother Metzner. As a true witness for Christ, he stood "faithful unto death" in prison. Also, the only son of Brother and Sister Metzner was imprisoned and never returned. Such a tragedy only a mother's heart can comprehend. Only when the dictatorial system broke down in 1945—a system which was guilty of so many cruelties—did the mother recover her three daughters through the wonderful leading of God. (Summarized and adapted from the book, *And Follow Their Faith!*, pp. 7, 8.)

Gustav Psyrembel

Brother Metzner was instrumental in bringing a young man from Karlsmark, Brieg County, in contact with the Reform Movement. This was during the time when the totalitarian power of the state in Germany rose and the military machine required every German citizen to take a positive stand in defense of the fatherland. As a result, this young Brother, Gustav Psyrembel, was soon called for military service. When the draft call came, he had not been married very long. Brother Psyrembel refused to perform this military duty because of his belief in the gospel of peace which Christ gave. He declared in short and clear terms that he refused to participate in any military training for the war effort, because it is irreconcilable with the spirit of the gospel according to the Sermon on the Mount given by Christ. He was fully convicted that all people who believe this gospel are bound into one international body and that their main task is "to seek and save that which is lost." Therefore, with those of like faith, he could not conscientiously agree to participate in the blood-stained warfare of nations and all that was connected with war.

He was arrested, and after fruitless efforts were made to change his mind, he was brought before the military court at Berlin. On this occasion he was told that he was to account for his actions before a military court, not before a church council. They tried to convince him that every man should be subject to and obey the government. But Brother Psyrembel testified courageously that the kingdom of God is not of this world and therefore the followers of Christ cannot fight for worldly kingdoms. Then a lengthy letter from a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was laid before him, recommending the defense of the fatherland as a Christian duty. But the young man, standing before a high war tribunal—betrayed by the ministers

of the Adventist Church who claimed he had erroneous views—declared firmly that he could not serve two masters.

In his conviction, only an apostate Christendom could hold the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other. He believed that any church which acts like that does not have the power of godliness but only a pretense.

Thus our young Brother Psyrembel was condemned to death by the court. In a detailed letter to his wife, he expressed how it hurt him that an Adventist minister in a letter to the court had betrayed him and placed his stand in a false light. But even this betrayal could not discourage him. In a lonely prison cell he waited for the day of the execution of his sentence. What was in the heart and mind of this soldier of the cross during those gloomy days and hours only the Lord knows, but his last farewell letter shows that the Spirit of the Lord had lifted his thoughts above all deprivations, suffering and need. His eyes were directed upward, far above a world that was in conflict with God. He possessed the peaceful certainty that “whosoever takes the sword shall perish by the sword,” a fact which was fulfilled literally in history in 1945, five years after his death. The cities and places where he was led into prison for his faith—where the military court sentenced him to death and where his blood was shed—were destroyed by a devastating hail of bombs. And we were once more reminded that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Condensed from the book, *And Follow Their Faith!*, pp. 9, 10, 13, 14.)

These are Brother Psyrembel’s last two letters to his wife:

“Berlin NW 40, March 12, 1940

“Dear . . .

“The peace of the Lord be with you!

“I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to write you a few lines, because every new day that dawns may be the last one for me. . . . Therefore, we will not yield in the hour of decision, for this is the right way and the truth. It is His work, and He will not let it perish. It is very regrettable that many of our fellow believers [in the threefold message] stray from the right way, leave our Leader and banner, fall away from Him, begin to doubt His divine love and guidance, and thus grieve Him. Someday they will bitterly regret it and acknowledge their wrong, but then it will perhaps be forever too late and there will be no help or salvation. They do not realize that they are betraying those who hold fast to God and that they are making their battle unspeakably heavy. When a case such as mine comes up before the

war tribunal, [the officers] say: "The other [Adventists] are all convinced that they are doing their duty without violating their conscience and without breaking God's commandments; why can't you do the same?" It is very, very hard in such a case to defend the truth, to explain our stand to the authorities and say that we cannot do otherwise. Another reproach came upon me because of my "unteachability" and "stubbornness." These [compliant believers], especially the ministers, have managed to deceive the people. Through their false representations of the truth, they depict us as criminals and say we are deceived. Not content with avoiding conflict and trying to find a way around the difficulties, they also try to justify their wrong actions through statements and examples from the Scriptures that are not at all relevant. I have seen this in a long, seven-page letter from a minister who used arguments which are supposedly confirmed by the Testimonies. But all this should not shake us. The truth remains the truth, and what is right will remain right; and the future will reveal on which side it can be found. . . . In the faith that there will be a reunion, I will now close. The Lord be with you. Receive my many cordial greetings and kisses from deeply loving Papa.

"Best greetings to all those who always think of me. Your Gustav."

"Berlin NW 40, March 29, 1940

"Dear . . .

"Greetings with 2 Cor. 4:16-18.

"I have just learned that tomorrow, the 30th, at 5:00 a.m., I am to be executed. Once again I had the opportunity to strengthen myself with the Word of God for this last journey. The New Testament was brought for me to read. (But I got less food to eat.) The portions of bread are much smaller here, and in general everything is much stricter, than at Ploetzensee; but I have borne everything gladly and patiently, for I know for whom I do all these things and I am not the first nor the only one to be apportioned this lot. The Lord says: 'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' 'Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.' These words and precious promises keep us going in our heavy but wonderful battle. The Lord has promised His power and protection, and He is also prepared to grant it to His children when they are in need of it. I have experienced this in all the years of my battle up to this very hour. The Lord be thanked and praised! He has kept me healthy in body and soul and has given me His joy and love in a rich measure. He will not leave me in the last hour. We shall not be sad,

but happy, and regard it a privilege to suffer and die for His sake. 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' He has promised, and with faith in this power and salvation I will depart from this life in the hope, my dear ones, that we shall see each other again in His kingdom, to be forever with Him who has loved us until death and has always had good intentions toward us. There we will live in the undisturbed and inseparable happiness and peace for which we have longed so much here. We shall be as such that dream and will hardly be able to comprehend the happiness that will be the portion of us sinful, unworthy creatures, who have deserved death and punishment. What a precious privilege it is to know and believe all this. And you, dear Mama, do not permit this precious treasure ever to be taken from you; trust in the Lord in all the circumstances of your life, and He will be at your side and never leave you; overcome the pain and finish the race; be comforted and of good cheer.

"I would not give up this faith for all the world. He who loves Christ can never leave Him. The Lord will grant success to all His children who endeavor to keep His commandments. It will also be a comfort to you that I will be dead before I am buried, and will not be buried alive. I hope that the Lord will sustain you. May He bless and keep you; may He let His protection and grace be over you and grant you His peace! This is my last wish and prayer. Amen.

"Once again, and for the last time, very heartfelt greetings from your dear Papa. Best greetings also to Mother and all our dear brothers and sisters in the faith, as well as all our relatives on both your side and mine. Gustav Psyrembel." —*And Follow Their Faith!*, pp. 10-13.

Anton Brugger

The following information was obtained from Esther, Anton Brugger's fiancée:

Baptized in the Woerthersee (near Klagenfurt, Austria) in 1922, Anton was a lively and active member of the Reform Church.

At the outbreak of the war in 1939, he succeeded in fleeing to Italy, where Esther met him when he came one Sabbath to the large Adventist Church meeting at Trieste. He presented to her the truth as advocated by the Reform Movement, which Esther transmitted to others. With God's help, Reform groups were established in Trieste and Milan.

Brother Brugger went to Genoa, where he tried (Italy having not yet entered the war) to get a ship to the United States. However, this was

not to be his fate. During a short stopover in Milan, where Brother Mueller had come to instruct a group in the message of reformation, Anton was arrested by the police and, after being held in custody for one month, he was returned to Austria (then under German rule).

In Austria he was employed as a baker for several months, with a gloomy foreboding upon his mind. As he expected, one day he was drafted. As he refused to do military service, he was called before the military court at Salzburg and was condemned to spend two years in a concentration camp.

At the end of two years, he was drafted again for military service. As he refused, giving a clear testimony for the present truth, he was taken before the war tribunal in Berlin, where he was condemned to death as a conscientious objector. (Adapted from the book, *And Follow Their Faith!*, pp. 40, 41.)

Hereunder we transcribe two of Anton Brugger's letters written from the prison of Brandenburg-Goert, on February 3, 1943:

"My beloved, dear Mother!

"I ask you not to be downcast but to be strong and of good courage when you receive these, my last farewell greetings. I received your last lovely letter and it gave me great consolation. Your well-meaning efforts for a parole will probably be in vain anyway. Even if it had results, it would be too late, because today is my last day. Yes, it has now really become serious. At 6 o'clock this evening my sentence will be carried out. Alas, dear Mother, how my heart aches for you, that you still have to go through all this terrible grief and terror. As much as I desired to have spared you all this, I cannot act otherwise than to obey my conscience. Gladly would I have made your faithful, maternal heart happy in your old days and beautified and eased your life. But since it has been thus decreed, let us not be downcast but also take this burden patiently from the hands of God. Because of being in continual need, it was not granted us in our lifetime to really be together very much. Therefore, dear Mother, comfort yourself in the blessed hope that we will someday be joined together forever with the Lord. This certainty and hope is my strong comfort and strength in this hour of severe trial. I know that my gracious and merciful Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the faithful God, who has redeemed me and stood with us up to now, shall also give me power and strength for the last grievous walk. I pray you, do not despair. Trust in the Lord; He will help and comfort and not forsake you. Do all in your strength to serve Him, so that we may see each other again.

“I ask you to put forth special efforts to put out of your heart all hard feelings against everyone who has done you harm during your life. I think in this regard especially about the relatives at Saalfelden. Forgive them with all your heart and forget all the evil done. Remember what the Saviour said; if you do not forgive, you shall not be forgiven. God treats us as we do our neighbors.

“Always petition the Lord to give you strength to overcome, and do not become weary in the struggle against sin, for then the Lord will give you the victory. Always remember that everything is at stake, even eternal life, and this we can obtain only if we overcome ourselves and follow the Saviour in meekness and lowliness. My last prayer and supplication to the Lord will be the petition that you may be saved for time and eternity. I hope you have received my former letters too.

“And now, concerning my funeral, I have one more request: I would like very much to be placed in the community cemetery at Salzburg. When I am there, then you can all visit me now and then. For this, you must, of course, send a petition to the municipal police department of Brandenburg-Havel, requesting them to send to Salzburg the urn of your son, who died on February 3, 1943, in the prison of Brandenburg. Then the urn will be sent to the police department of Salzburg against payment of expenses (which will be very little). After that, the funeral will be permitted. Go to the dear Bliebergers, let them get the information from the police at Salzburg, and handle everything and do the last service of love for me. May the Lord bless them and their children abundantly.

“I greet also all dear ones everywhere. The Lord bless you and keep you! With the deep love of a son, I greet and kiss you in the hope of seeing you and all dear ones again in the Lord’s presence. Your Anton.” —*And Follow Their Faith!*, pp. 48, 49.

“My dearly beloved Esther, cherished treasure!

“Unfortunately it has not been granted us to see each other again. Alas, how I desired to see your loving face once more and to speak a few words with you. Your lovely picture I have always kept with me. In the back of my Bible is your picture before me. Now take the Bible as a remembrance from me. I hope you have also received my last letter. When you go to my Mother, she will give you these letters.

“We would never have thought that we had seen each other for the last time at Niederroden. Still I always had a certain feeling that a

great, severe test would yet come, but I would not tell you of it so as not to frighten you. Now the very thing which I feared so long, and which I expected to come to pass, has actually become a reality. Oh, how gladly I would have lived on to work and to do good unto others. How nice it would have been, I imagine, to work together with you in doing good. There could have been no more perfect happiness for me than this.

“The thought about all the grief of my dear, good Mother is especially painful. Oh, please take good care of her and give her comfort. Alas, dear Esther, I know it will strike you very severely also. But be not dismayed and comfort yourself in the Lord. We also have to take this sad fate patiently from the hand of the Lord. He knows why He has permitted all this. There is no other way to choose, because it is impossible for me, according to the conviction of my faith, to partake in war. I could be free only if I would commit myself to carry out unreservedly every command of the government, and this I cannot do without coming into conflict with my conscience. I will, therefore, rather suffer the death penalty, which shall be carried out today, on February 3, 1943, at 6 o'clock in the evening. Although it is hard, the Lord will have mercy upon me and help me to the end. Since our hearts' desire to be united together here on earth is now made impossible by this sad thing, we shall simply comfort ourselves with the precious hope of seeing each other again by the Lord. I trust in the grace and the mercy of the Saviour, that He will accept me and graciously pardon my sins. Be also faithful to the Lord Jesus and love and serve Him with all your strength. Be not dismayed and be comforted. After the Lord's coming no one shall separate us anymore, and no suffering and pain can then fall upon us.

“Greet all dear ones from me. My heart has always been with them. Especially give my best regards to your dear parents and your dear brother. . . .

“I would have gladly been buried in the earth, but all those here are burned at the crematory. I have already requested my Mother to ask permission to entomb the urn with my ashes in Salzburg; that is the best place. I hope I have not lived in vain.

“Now, Darling, my beloved, may the Lord bless you and all your dear ones, and protect and help you graciously so that we may see each other again forever beside Him in His glorious kingdom of peace. I love you dearly to the end. Farewell, Darling, auf WIEDERSEHEN! Your Anton.” —*And Follow Their Faith!*, pp. 49–51.

Arnold Seelbach

One day, in 1938, when Brother Seelbach had just been released from prison, he was walking toward the railway station and meditating. Thinking back upon all that he had lived through, he wrote that it appeared to him now as a dream that he should again be at liberty. How often had he been placed against the wall in the concentration camp to be shot to death! Daily his life was in danger. Once they even wanted to bury him alive, he said. Also, it had not been long since they had locked him up in an icy cell—so dark that he could not see his hand before his eyes—where he survived, by the grace of God, only on a little portion of dry bread and some water. How great was his joy when on the 9th day the bolt was pushed aside and the door opened. But alas, his joy came too soon. When he came out of that horrible cell, what a feeling took possession of him when he saw 300 prisoners lined up and 350 armed SS men (Schutzstaffel, Nazi elite guard) at the gate. The commander, standing in the middle of the court, called his name. Then they threw him upon a table, hands and feet securely tied, and the order of the commander had to be carried out. Two SS men took their horsewhips and struck him upon the seat and the back 15 times, until he lay half dead. As his body was writhing in indescribable pain, they cast him again into that horrible cell. Alone, without human help, he lay there upon the cold, stony floor. No one was there who in that hour would speak words of comfort to him. On the contrary, a rope was handed to him by the SS men with the remark that he would never get out of that dungeon alive. Under those circumstances he remained in that dark cell for 21 days.

But now all this suffering was over. So he thought. He was free again. From the distance he beheld the depot. Was it all a dream? He pinched his hand and his face, thinking he might be asleep. But no, it was not a dream; it was a reality. At 2 o'clock in the night he stood before his house. A family reunion! What a joy!

Sad enough, the joy did not last long. The family tie was to be torn apart anew. Brother Seelbach was to present himself on November 2, 1938, to carry out a demand of the government which was against his conviction. There was but one thing for him to do, and that was to remain loyal to God whatever the cost might be.

On October 24 he bade farewell to all that was dear and beloved to him. Oh, how hard it was for him, he says, especially as he held the trembling hands of his parents for the last time. He saw their lips

move, and although they did not utter a sound, he understood what they were about to say. Once more he waved to the parental home from the distance. When should he see it again? he thought.

The future lay before him dark and uncertain. After a long journey he arrived at the Luxembourg border. Before him lay the river Sauer. It was about 11:30 p.m. when he stepped into the cold water. The rocks were very slippery; the current was so strong that he felt he could hold himself no longer; and the baggage and everything that he had with him became soaked, but he was happy to reach the other bank of the river. The first thing he did was to thank the heavenly Father, who had helped him cross the border into Luxembourg. The following day he passed, again illegally, the French border. But what a sense of fear came over him when he saw a police officer heading toward him. He cried to God for help—and what happened? The police officer turned around and started in another direction.

In France Brother Seelbach actually experienced Christ's promise in Matthew 19:29: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother . . . for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold." Yes, there he was received so cordially by all that he could not thank God enough for it. But the devil did not desire to grant him joy and peace. Wherever he settled down he was betrayed. But the Lord helped him in such a way that, a few hours before the police arrived, he was at a different place.

Finally he was compelled to leave France, by way of Luxembourg and Belgium, to Holland, in May 1939.

On December 29, 1939, all German refugees, including Brother Seelbach, were interned in a camp, because of the war. They lived through terrible hours when the Germans took over this camp with 350 Jews and 25 deserters on May 14, 1940. The deserters were shot to death at once. Brother Seelbach was also condemned to die. But a miracle happened. The Omnipotent God made it possible for him to flee.

After his flight from camp Hoek in Holland, on May 18, 1940, he was in hiding in the homes of brethren, but the devil was not pleased with it. Again betrayal. This time it was an anonymous card which was sent to the police. Again he was chased as a wild beast. Thus it went on from month to month and often he had to hide out for days and nights in woods and caves in the bitterest cold.

When the English troops were fighting to free Belgium in September 1944, the storm was beating most violently in Holland. Everywhere SS men were running about in search for victims to butcher. In order not to fall into their hands at the last minute, our

brother stole through the front into Belgium on September 14, 1944. Now, against his expectation, he was interned by the English. But the Lord comforted him with John 13:7: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Although he was sad at first, yet after all these struggles he was happy because there he was permitted to be a witness for Christ. Often he was able to proclaim before 300 to 400 men the message of God for these last days. Once even the auditorium was filled with over 1,000 men when he spoke on the subject, "What Does the Future Hold for Us?" Many stretched forth their hands, weeping, and promised God to accept the truth. Three of those people already began to keep the Sabbath with him in the camp.

In that internment camp Brother Seelbach also met a well-known minister of the large Adventist denomination who, as a soldier of Hitler, was there as a prisoner of war. He also had believed in the ultimate victory of the "Fuehrer," but now, disappointed in his hopes, he was ashamed of himself.

After 15 months of internment, Brother Seelbach was called for a hearing. The devil was working against him when the officer in charge, who had authority to release him, would not consider the evidence of his innocence. In view of the situation, the whole church was earnestly praying for him. And he himself spent one whole night wrestling with God in prayer. The following morning he was once again called for a hearing. Full of faith he looked up to our heavenly Father and petitioned His help. And what happened? Without a single word spoken by him he was set free. Brother Seelbach closed his report saying, "The name of Jesus of Nazareth be praised for all eternity!"

Alfred Muench

One day, during a canvassing campaign, Brother Hans Fleschutz sold the book *Auf Gottes Wegen* (In the Ways of God) to an elderly woman of Hassloch. As she noticed that he was an Adventist, she asked him if he knew a certain Brother Muench. He said that he knew his wife and children very well. She then asked where he was, and Brother Fleschutz told her that, as a martyr for his faith, he had perished in a concentration camp. When she heard this, tears welled up in her eyes, because, thirty years before, Brother Muench had given this lady Bible studies. As Brother Fleschutz went on down the street, he thought of Brother Muench, who had gone from house to house down the same street many years before, and he thanked God that He had given this dear brother strength to endure to the end.

Hereunder is a letter from Sister Muench, dated October 4, 1964, showing how much she and her husband suffered under the totalitarian regime:

“My dear brethren and sisters in the Lord! Peace be unto you!

“I would like to relate my experience to the dear believers who fought the fight of a good conscience during the time of the German Hitler regime. First of all, I would like to praise and honor God, who has so marvelously kept us in all the days of severe trial. You may have heard many experiences concerning our brethren who were in prison during the last two World Wars. Now I would like to acquaint you with the experiences we sisters had to bear. In previous days we as sisters had not believed that we too could go to prison so easily. This is why it struck us twice as hard. And this was even harder when brethren, in a critical moment, became turncoats and made our lot so much more difficult by giving up their faith.

“In our village there was a woman interested in the Truth who visited us quite often and whose husband was with the SA (Sturmabteilung). Her husband became so angry about her visits that he brought the matter to the attention of the party. It was not long before my husband was arrested and taken away, while my children, who were then ten and five years old, cried so hard at the separation that my heart almost broke. For nearly two weeks we could hardly eat because of this terrible event. The Gestapo demanded that I furnish all the addresses of our fellow believers, and since I refused to give them this information, they left with the remark, “We shall keep your husband until you will give us the other addresses.” This was in November 1936. On April 19, 1937, a trial was held before a special court at Mannheim. We were then sentenced (there were 15 of us), and the longest prison term, seven months, was received by our church leader and my husband. . . .

“The sentence for us was solitary confinement. A new struggle began in prison in regard to the Sabbath and to the food that was served. Because he did not work on nine Sabbaths during the two months, my husband got 26 days of confinement. He received only bread and water and was led into an even darker cell with only a wooden bench to sleep on.

“They made it somewhat easier for the sisters. Since I did not work on the Sabbath, I received two days of confinement, was led into the darker cell, and had to take off many things, such as my apron, shoes, hairpins, and so forth—things with which one could commit

suicide. This was on Sabbath and Sunday. Now, my dear brethren and sisters, how do you think I felt? Wonderful! One becomes accustomed to anything; and as I was not permitted to sing aloud, I sang softly, 'I have peace within my heart, which makes me very happy,' and another song, 'Cutting loose from all the earthly things, and being filled with things eternal, I find here the blessed peace that satisfies the soul's desire.' The experiences I went through, although hard and severe, were wonderful. It was difficult to resist these mighty powers, yet I would not have missed these experiences for anything. When I was first taken in, the supervisor, a lady, scolded me terribly when she discovered that I belonged to the Adventists. She said that on Sabbath there was work to do, and I had to obey or I would never return home. I was very downcast as I stood there deathly pale, while tears rolled down my cheeks. But when she finished the words, 'There are two more of your people here, and they are my best people in the whole house,' the sun appeared again and laughed into my heart. I stood solidly in my conviction, saying quietly to myself, To these believers I belong also. She will not see me give up the Sabbath.

"Since I was faithful in standing up for the Sabbath, the supervisor said after several weeks, 'You are a real communist!'

"I answered her, 'Miss Boehler, since when do communists believe in God?'

"She turned around without an answer and went out the door. From then on neither she nor anyone else troubled me. She only came on Sabbath to take me to the prison cell. After my prison term expired, my husband and I could at least be together again, even if under difficult circumstances, such as police observation.

"The battle began again when my husband received his draft papers at the beginning of the war in 1939. He ignored them, although he received six orders to appear. In March 1940, he was again arrested. The reason given was that he did not respond to the Hitler salute. After spending two months in prison pending trial, he was taken to the concentration camp at Dachau. He bore everything heroically; at times he wrote to me, and I could gather from various phrases how he was; for instance, he would write, "We hope that the severity of the winter will soon be past." I knew the meaning of these words. From Dachau he was transferred to the concentration camp at Neuengamme, near Hamburg. From there he wrote letters full of joyfulness in the Lord, and he always hoped to meet again with his loved ones. In every letter his chief concern was his children. I received the last word he wrote at the end of February 1945, shortly before the

Americans marched into Mannheim. Our hope and his to have him among us again ended after we waited for news about him, which never came. I never received an official statement. In 1948, I heard from a man, who supposedly was with him to the last, that he died of starvation. Eternity will reveal it. May the Lord give me strength to endure unto the end and then experience the blessed promise of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. . . .

“I greet you all cordially as your fellow pilgrim to Zion. Sister A. Muench, Mannheim.” —*And Follow Their Faith!*, pp. 34-36.

Sister Muench, who fell asleep in the Lord in November 1965, wrote in her last letter: “I lay everything in the hands of the great Physician; the way He leads is good. I thank Him alone, for He has led me wonderfully, and has cared for me up to this day; and I am sure that He will do it until the end of my life. May God bless you! This is the wish of your ever grateful and loving Sister Muench.” (Adapted from the book, *And Follow Their Faith!*, p. 37.)

Leander Zrenner

From the *Munich Evening News* of April 25, 1955, we take the following report:

“Sixteen years ago his father was executed as a conscientious objector; he too will never take a weapon in his hands!

“ ‘Cause of death: Execution’ is written on his father’s death certificate, which 19-year-old conscientious objector Werner Zrenner holds in his hands. A military court condemned his father to death in the summer of 1941 because of his refusal to do military service. On August 9 of that year, assistant and soldier Leander Zrenner fell before a volley of rifle bullets at Brandenburg/Havel. The deeply religious man paid with his life for his conviction against armed service. As a devout Adventist, he declared he could never lift up arms against other people.

“Yesterday [April 24, 1955], 16 years later, Zrenner’s son stood before the Examination Committee for Conscientious Objectors at the Selective Service Office, Munich 1. He also refused, like his father, to take a weapon in his hands for the war. He will never have to do it, for the Committee recognized him as a conscientious objector. ‘Human life is untouchable; therefore I cannot conscientiously kill innocent people,’ Werner Zrenner declared before the members of the Examination Committee. ‘I probably will have to bear the consequences just as my father did 16 years ago.’

“In addition to his mother, three other witnesses testified for the 19-year-old youth. In full agreement, they declared that Zrenner had expressed himself as being against military service—before general conscription came. The president of the Examination Committee, Attorney Friedl Fertig, said yesterday, ‘The violent death of his father was the reason for the young man’s thoughts concerning the pros and cons of military duty.’ The members of the Committee recognized Zrenner’s opinion as based upon his conscientious convictions.” — *And Follow Their Faith!*, pp. 37, 38.

As religious liberty—the most important of all human rights—was instituted in West Germany after the end of World War II, Werner did not have to share the fate of his father.

Maria Maritschnig

This sister was the widow of a tailor, and Brother Ranacher managed the tailor shop after her husband’s death. In the home of Sister Maritschnig, Brother Ranacher became acquainted with the truth of the Reformation, which he accepted with all his heart. At the instigation of Brother Ranacher’s relatives, the authorities accused Sister Maritschnig of having led Brother Ranacher to this faith and brought her to court. At the trial, Sister Maritschnig was so roughly addressed and accused that she fainted and had to be carried out of the courtroom. The believers looked for her in the hospital, believing she had been taken there, but they were mistaken. Soon the report came that she had been transported to Munich. After cruel tortures, she was sent to the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp, where she died. (Adapted from the book, *And Follow Their Faith!*, pp. 38, 39.)

Dr. Alfred Zeyhs

This brother was locked in a prison where he was often beaten black and blue due to his refusal to violate the law of God. Because he could not be moved to yield his position—for he did not want to become unfaithful to his Lord and Saviour—he was transported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he laid down his life for his faith in 1940. He was survived by his wife and three children. (Adapted from the book, *And Follow Their Faith!*, p. 33; and from an article published in the magazine, *Der Adventruf*, December 1946.)

Willi Thaumann

Brother Thaumann was brought to the truth through the canvassing work. He owned a hardware store. He had a pure and sincere character. He lived up to the truth without any compromise. He saw it as his duty to confess his stand very publicly, and in spite of a well-meaning warning from a friendly policeman, he kept his business closed on Sabbath. On the door of his store he had the Sabbath commandment attached. His faithfulness to the fourth and sixth commandments led him to the concentration camp at Oranienburg, where he was murdered in 1941 because of his stand for the truth. (Adapted from the book, *And Follow Their Faith!*, p. 33.)

Three Faithful Russian Sisters

Among the laborers that were forcibly taken from Russia to Germany during World War II, there were three young Russian sisters who proved to be heroines of the faith when tested with reference to the fourth commandment.

“We will do in five days the work apportioned to us,” they said to the officer in charge of the camp.

And they actually did more than that. No one was so highly praised for the work accomplished as that little group of believers. But Satan was not happy about it. In those days the motto was: “Work! Work! Work! We must win the war.” The other laborers shouted full of envy:

“If these people can have two days [Saturday and Sunday] off, we want to have the same privilege.”

A serious personal crisis was looming up before the three sisters.

The boss tried to calm down the crowd, telling them that these three people were doing the best work, completing their six-day task in five days.

“We too can do that,” they shouted.

Then the boss addressed the little group of believers:

“As you see, I can do nothing. You have to come and work on Saturdays also; otherwise there is no doubt that you will be shot. We are at war, and such an attitude as yours will be regarded as an act of sabotage against the people and the country.”

Dark clouds of anxiety were gathering over the heads of those faithful sisters. The next Sabbath the boss became furious when he found them in the middle of a Bible study. He said to them:

“You know that I like you and that I would gladly give you Saturday off, because I esteem your good work; but you can see the tumult among the laborers. On top of that, the appearance is given that I protect the Jews. I beg you, do me a favor: Come and work.”

The answer of the three sisters was:

“We cannot put the commandments of God under the commandments of men. If our Saviour wants us to die, we are ready to die, too. He first died for us.”

Since they would not yield, they were led away for physical punishment. Once again they were asked if they remained determined in their position, refusing to change their minds, and they firmly declared that they would rather die than be separated from Christ. Then something terrible happened—a scene that belongs to the Dark Ages: They were mercilessly flogged on their naked backs until the weals began to bleed. On reaching their cells, they washed each other’s wounds and praised God that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus.

After another week of labor, another test came, greater than the previous one. The boss again found them reading the Bible, according to their custom.

“Today is your last chance,” he said. “Don’t you believe that you will be shot?”

“Yes, we know that we will be shot, and this is what we are waiting for,” they bravely answered; “because we have nothing to lose by leaving this world; besides, our conscience tells us that we do not deserve to be mistreated.”

The three were lined up before a machine gun. The major called a halt and began to count. As the sisters stood very firm, without the slightest sign of wavering, the major said:

“Let them go and keep their Sabbath. Never in my life have I seen such a thing.”

After that, whenever that man had a chance, and when he was not being watched, he came to that little group of believers while they were holding their Sabbath worship, to spend at least a few minutes with them. Also, he often brought them some extra food and other things. Those sisters said they had no feeling of hatred or revenge toward that man. On the contrary, they called his attention to the love of God and His wonderful works, the plan of salvation, and the threefold message of Revelation 14. Only God knows what happened to him after that.

Many Others

In addition to these martyrs, there were many others who suffered hardship and persecution, and even death, during World War II. Ernst Koerner, tortured to death in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen in 1944; Robert Freier, murdered in a concentration camp in 1940; Brother Hermann, declared dead in prison at Breslau (1941?); Josef Blasi, tortured to death in the concentration camp at Mauthausen in 1943; Brother Ranacher, sentenced to death by a military court during the war—these also belong to the long list of heroes of the faith.

A newspaper report published in the *Voelkischer Beobachter* (People's Observer), Austria, throws additional light on the cruel persecution to which our brethren were subjected. The report reads:

“Kaernten District,

“Klagenfurt, August 20, 1943

“Ten Years to Reflect in the Penitentiary

“Adventists in the Service of the Opponents

“Personal Reports of the People's Observer

“Accused before a special court at Klagenfurt were 48-year-old [Josef] Blasi, 48-year-old Maria Krall, both from St. Donat; 37-year-old Matthias Weratschik and his 28-year-old wife Maria of Tiemenitz. Under the influence of the Adventist folly, the four had created an atmosphere of refusing to bear arms, quoting sayings from the Bible, and tried to lead drafted countrymen into resistance. . . . They wanted to leave the defense of the Fatherland to the Lord God. In order for us to ward off worse calamities, such stray elements must at least for the duration of the war be rendered harmless. The four were declared guilty by the special court. Josef Blasi received a penitentiary sentence of 10 years; the three others were convicted only of the crime under Paragraph 3 of the Ordinance for the Protection of the Defenses of the German people—opposing the law in an anti-military connection—namely, Maria Krall received 5 years, and Matthias and Maria Weratschik each received two years in the penitentiary.” —*And Follow Their Faith!*, p. 52.

V — After World War II

After the second world war, our brethren in Germany were able to hold two conferences in the same year (1945) in which their liberty was restored.

What a joy to be able to come together again as brothers and sisters in the Lord, in freedom, after ten years of oppression! Only those who have been afflicted and tormented under the hand of tyranny can praise the blessing of relief. Many of our brethren were moved to tears when they heard the extraordinary experiences of those who had suffered for the sake of the truth. Here is one example. Brother Hans Herbolsheimer wrote (April 7, 1947):

“Our merciful God had compassion on me also. He saved my life from destruction. Today I can see that the Lord vindicates the case of those who have suffered under the power of unrighteousness. Therefore I praise His name. All those that have known me say to me: ‘For a wonder you are still alive.’ Yes, from the hands of tyrants and murderers I escaped alive. ‘Nor was a hair of my head singed.’ Although I defied the iron rule of despotism, the Lord saved me. I was arrested by the terror-inspiring Gestapo (secret police in Germany during Hitler’s regime). They raided my house five times in 1941 and found a lot of materials which were weighty for them; nevertheless, after seven weeks of detention pending investigation, I was released. But they interned me in a mental hospital in Winnenden for three months. There, also, the protecting hand of God was upon me, and they were not able to do me any harm. I was often arrested and kept in prison for three days, five days, ten days, or fifteen days, but, I must say again, the Lord saved my life from destruction. If we fear Him, the Lord does not treat us according to our misdeeds, but according to His mercy. He said: ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay.’ So, many of those who were our persecutors are now being persecuted.”

The First Two Conferences After the War

As soon as the war was over, A. Mueller, the General Conference president, who had taken refuge in Switzerland, was back among the brethren in Germany. Here is his report:

“In the first place”—he writes—“I visited the brethren in the south of the country. It was a great joy to see each other again, after a long time of oppression. By the grace of our merciful God, our brethren have stood firm in this holy and glorious truth that He has given us. He allowed them to go through painful experiences. But the love of the truth triumphed over prisons and concentration camps. Many standard bearers died as martyrs under the horrors of persecution. But they left a living testimony which will continue speaking to those who have survived. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Gospel.”

“The first official meeting that I attended was a committee meeting of the German Union, in the home of Brother Johann Frick, in Mannheim. Besides the committee members, many other brethren were present. Under the difficult postwar circumstances, one would say that it would be practically impossible to hold such a meeting. But, in His mercy, the Lord made it possible.

“The leadership of the German Union is in the hands of Brother Joseph Adamczak. The publishing work and the treasury are under the responsibility of Brother Otto Luft. Both of them spent time together in the same prison, and for a limited period even in the same cell. There they received permission to read *The Great Controversy*. They suffered together, and, now that they are free, they are working together.

“We have one great aim for our work in Germany—to promote the work which Christ commissioned to His followers, to build up the kingdom of God, and to educate especially our young people in the truth. For this purpose, a seminar of long duration (several months) is to be organized soon.

“During the Sabbath meetings we felt the presence of the Spirit of God with us. There was much joy among the brethren who came together from near and far. The experience and thanksgiving meeting brought comfort to all. We heard many wonderful reports. The brethren who suffered under the hand of tyranny had evidence that God lives and is present with His people also in time of persecution. More than half of those that attended the meeting had spent weeks, months, or years in prison. We also heard about those who left their lives in concentration camps.

“Then we had a district conference in Solingen (September 14–15, 1945). That is where the German Union had its office, in the home of Brother Gustav Birth, during the difficult days which are now behind us. The conference brought much joy to all those that were able to attend.

“Another conference was held in Esslingen (October 26–28, 1945), near Stuttgart. This was the first Union Conference session after the war. On this occasion, the German Union was reorganized. Here we had a larger assembly than in Mannheim or in Solingen. Again, many brothers and sisters, young and old, who had suffered in prisons and concentration camps, told their experiences. When tribulation is over, there is joy. This is what we all felt. And we still thank the Lord for having made us happy by our deliverance.

“About the new conditions prevalent in Germany I can only say that the word of the Lord has been fulfilled. ‘God is not mocked; for

whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' (Galatians 6:7). After twelve years of oppression, the proud monument of tyranny and cruelty collapsed.

"Now many people, especially the youth, in Germany, are taking interest in the truth. They had fought for a lost cause; now many seem to be willing to fight for a triumphant cause.—Your brother in Christ, A. Mueller."

Other Developments

In West Germany, soon after restoration of religious liberty, our brethren resumed the publishing work. *Der Adventarbeiter* (The Advent Worker), which had been interrupted for some time, reappeared; and a new church paper, entitled *Adventruf* (Advent Call), began to come out, as well as the *Jugend-Reformer* (Youth Reformer). Publications for the colporteur work were also prepared.

In 1947 the Union office, together with the publishing department, was established in Esslingen. The colporteur work had already been reactivated under the leadership of Brother Wilhelm Frick. In those days, when people were still terrified by the wanton political storm that had just blown over, there was much interest in religion and our colporteurs could distribute many pieces of literature.

The building where the Union office was installed was big enough to accommodate also a small missionary school, which was



A group of our brethren, with visitors from overseas, in Austria, 1951.

started May 1, 1947. With the help of four teachers, classes began with 21 students. Many of them were later appointed Bible workers and some were ordained to the ministry.

A Risky Venture

The end of the war (May 1945) brought liberty only to our brethren in West Germany, not to those who lived in East Germany. Germany was divided. East Germany became the DDR, short for Deutsche Demokratische Republik (German Democratic Republic), which, according to some Germans, was neither a Democracy nor a Republic; it was a communist state under the thumb of Moscow. Our people there had passed from one form of oppression to another form of oppression. Religious liberty did not exist. And many people fled to the West while they had a chance. Others, taking great risks, tried to escape after the infamous Berlin Wall was erected (1961). Brother Bruno Sobeck, one of our ministers, was one of those who escaped. In a report he tells how God helped him gain his freedom.

It was October 8, 1961, he says, when he boarded a train headed for Berlin to see his wife and children who were across the border. He could not come close to them because the heavily guarded borderline or borderland separating the East from the West was about 300 yards wide. Using their binoculars, they could see each other and wave their hands to each other from a distance. No further privilege was granted them. While Brother Sobeck was there, he spotted a place where, next time, they would be able to come a little closer to each other. One week later, when he returned to Berlin, he had no access to that particular spot because it was interdicted. But they found



Convention of Reformers, Esslingen, Germany, 1967.

another place which permitted them to see each other while standing about eighty yards apart.

When he waved his family farewell, at 4:30 p.m., he had already made up his mind to see them in their home, by the help of God, the next day at six o'clock in the morning.

About 130 yards from the border there was a graveyard where our brother spent some time, with his binoculars, beholding the sentry boxes and the guards on sentry duty, observing the position of the searchlights, studying the topography with everything that belonged to it (such as walls, ruins, ditches, trees, and bushes), and watching for an opportunity to escape. His first maneuver was to climb over a 4-yard-high wall. On the other side he found a good hiding place among the uprooted trees, but not far from there was a guard. It was only by the grace of God that he was not detected. There he remained from 8:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m., praying and watching for an opportunity. He also prayed that he would not have to sneeze or cough, as the guards were doing, because the night was chilly. And God heard his prayers in this particular also. He asked the Lord to point out to him also, exactly, where and when he should venture the contemplated flight across the border.

When it was 2:00 a.m., he felt as if an inner voice was speaking to him: "Now, go in the direction of the debris of the demolished houses and proceed toward the tree." Right behind the debris was the barbed-wire fence. To his surprise, it was a double fence, one about twelve inches apart from the other. He reached the tree and, right there, he worked his way through the first fence and, after a while, through the second fence. It was not easy. His coat was badly torn in different places, but he was happy. He was on the other side.

Suddenly the border guards heard his noise. He had no time to run. The only thing he could do was to lie down stock-still beside the fence. With the help of the searchlight, the guards detected him immediately. He heard one guard say, "There he is," while another guard commanded, "Point the guns at him and be ready to fire." He remained calm, with the peace of God in his heart. "Stand up!" one of them shouted. "Hands up! Come over!" He stood up but did not put up his hands. In a second he jumped over a ditch and fell flat among the reeds. And there he stayed for a while—motionless, noiseless, as if he were stone-dead.

A reinforcement rushed to the scene with powerful searchlights. Brother Sobek's continual prayer was, "Lord, Thou hast helped me until now; I trust that Thou wilt help me to the end." The searchlights

were directed farther beyond the ditch, and they were not able to find the refugee. Finally, realizing that their efforts were in vain, they gave up their pursuit and returned to their posts. He tried to get away from the fence but got stuck in the swamp. So he still had to crawl along the fence until he found a place where he could move away without hindrance. When he realized that he was out of danger, he knelt in prayer, thanking the Lord for such a wonderful deliverance.

At 5:30 a.m. he knocked on the door of his family, surprising his wife and children. The first thing they did was to thank the Lord for having wrought one more miracle in behalf of those who fear Him and keep His commandments.

As long as Brother Sobeck lived, he was a great help to the work in West Germany.

Our Missionary Center

In 1968, our Union Conference established its headquarters in Hofheim a.T., near Frankfurt. In the same building a little print shop

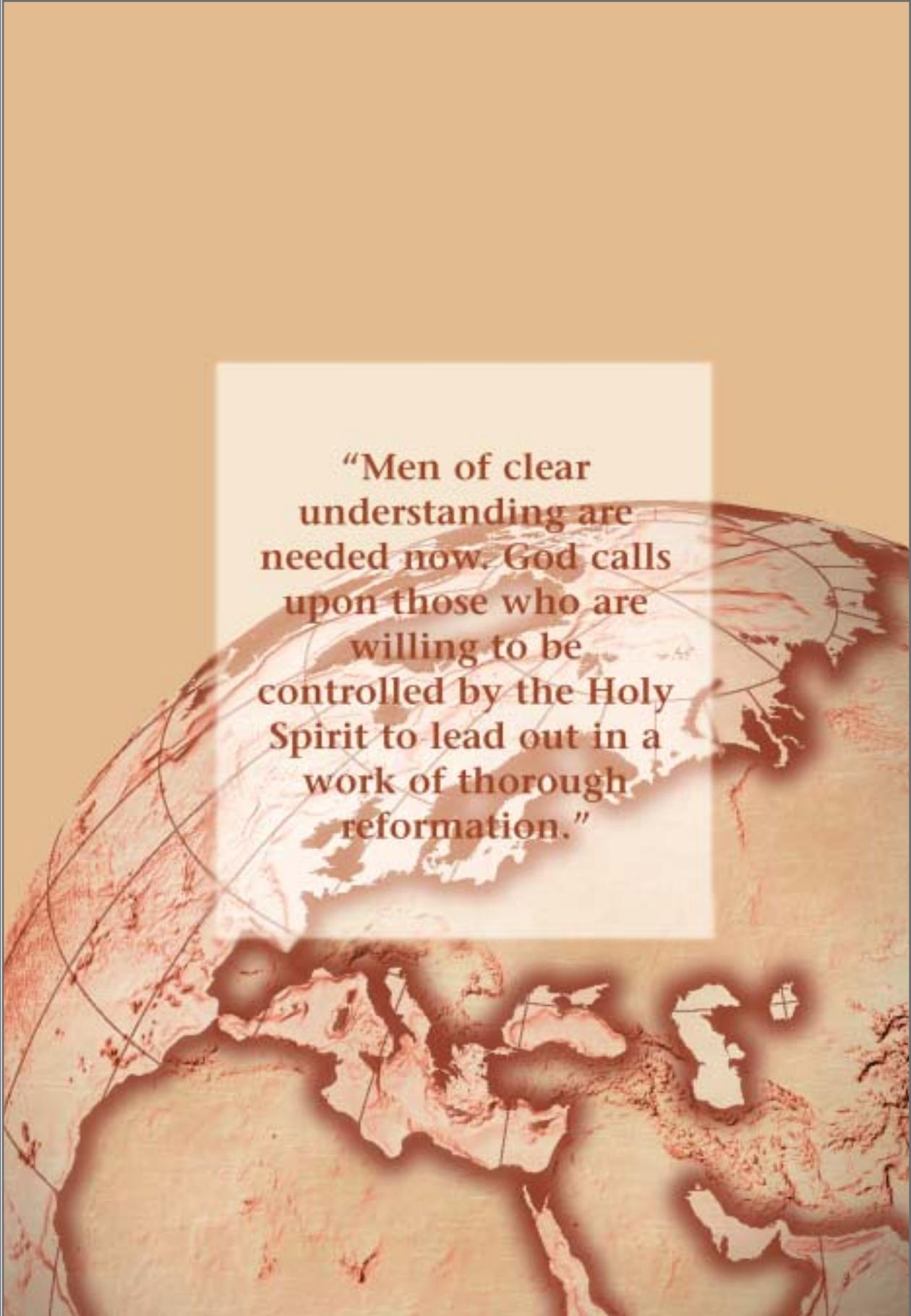


Headquarters of the German Union, Hofheim, near Frankfurt.

was also installed. Our official paper in Germany is entitled *Herold der Reformation* (Reformation Herald).

As it happens in other countries, it also happens in Germany and Austria: We have a number of elderly brethren who need care, and the church feels a responsibility towards those who cannot depend on their relatives, if they have any. So, for several years, part of the building in Hofheim was used as a convalescent home, where good care was provided for our elderly brothers and sisters. When the remodeling of the house became an urgent need, a better arrangement was made to accommodate our elderly folks: They were distributed and placed in the homes of church members who opened their hospitable hearts and doors to them. We praise the Lord as we see that the Bible principle—"Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10)—is a reality in our midst.

One of the notable things about our brethren in Germany and Austria is that they have always been ready to make sacrifices in order to extend help wherever it is urgently needed. Their willingness to follow Christ's lessons of altruism (Matthew 25:40; Luke 10:30-37) has been instrumental in establishing and supporting new missions in Africa and Asia.



“Men of clear understanding are needed now. God calls upon those who are willing to be controlled by the Holy Spirit to lead out in a work of thorough reformation.”