“Footprints of God in my Life”

Memoirs 1875-1936

Friedrich Heinrich Otto Melle

S.D.G. - Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God alone!)

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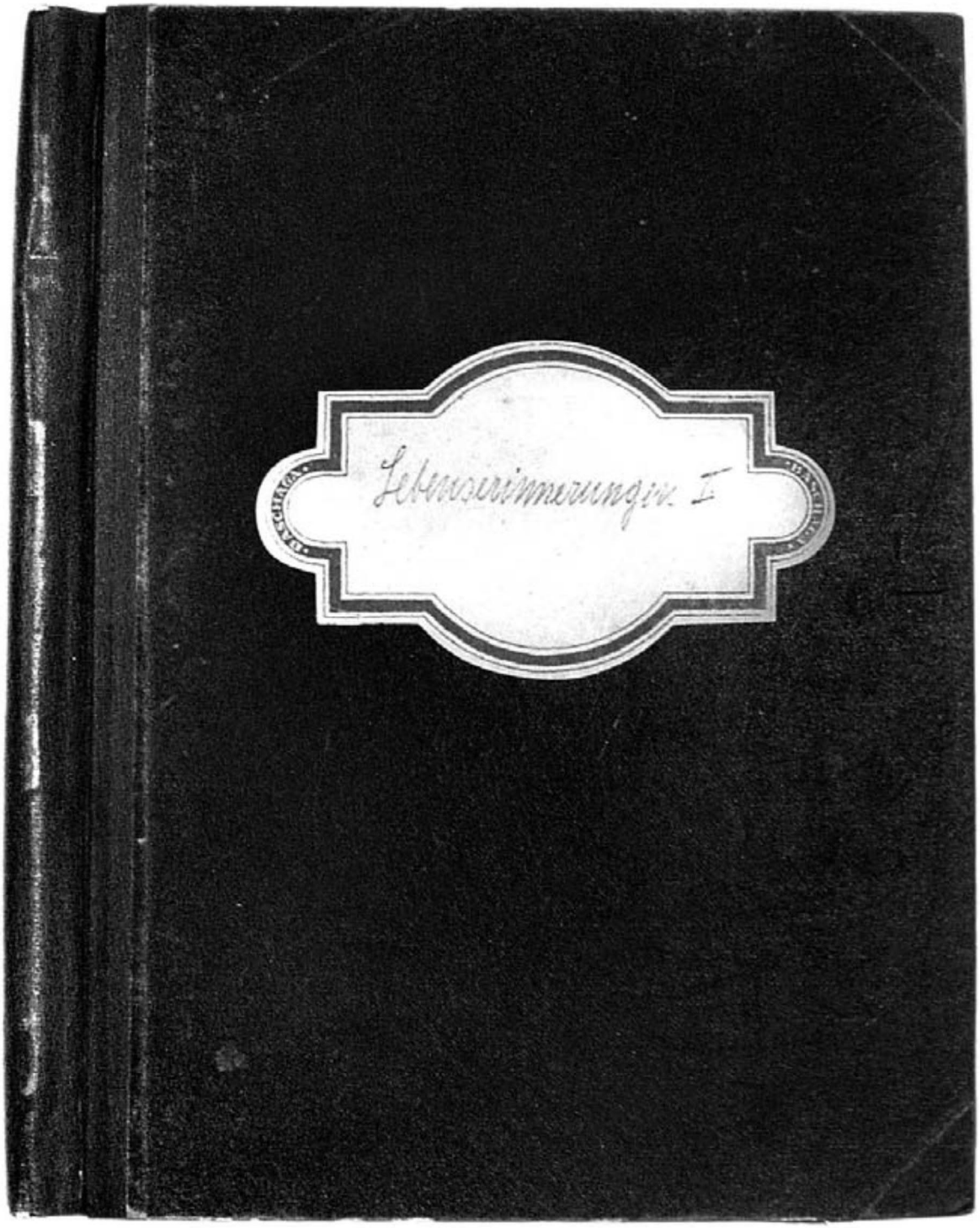

Memoir Book of F. H. Otto Melle, 1875-1936

Preface for English Translation

Here is the completed English translation of “Footprints of God in My Life,” a memoir of Bishop Friedrich Heinrich Otto Melle, the brother of my great-grandmother, Anna Melle. Originally transcribed from his journals into German by Klaus Scheider, his grandson, and father to my cousin, Roland Schneider Schon, who still lives in Cologne, Germany, Klaus sent a copy to my brother Tim Melle and to me. This project is dedicated to Tim, as he tried to do some early translating with the translating tools available at the time.

In 2019, my husband and I visited Germany. We made arrangements beforehand to visit Liebengrün and Liebschütz where descendants of the Melle family still lived. We were going to meet up with Klaus Schneider, who would be coming from Stuttgart with his sister Ingrid Schneider, but unfortunately, he had heart trouble just before the trip and could not make it. Sadly, he was to die not soon after we returned home and I will always regret not knowing him.

When I returned from Germany, energized to start and complete this project, my main goal, of course, was to find information about my ancestors in the small German towns of Liebengrün and Liebschütz in Thuringia, Germany through the eyes of my great-great uncle. The vivid descriptions of his village and his parents helped me to see and imagine them far beyond the facts usually stored up in a genealogical family tree. I learned how great a chef my great-great grandmother was, how my great-great grandparents met and started a family, a little about what they were like as people, and even how two of my ancestors fought against both Napoleon I and Napoleon III.

I undertook this project as I said with my brother about ten years ago. The only tool we had was Google Translate, which at that time, was in a rudimentary development stage. In the intervening years, many other aids have been developed along with Facebook pages devoted to helping people translate documents to further their genealogical research. With the advent of new and better AI translator sites, as well as genealogical translations site, I have finally accomplished this task. But it is still an AI generated work. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Barbara Melle Johnson, 2024

Original Preface

In the last years of the Second World War (1943/44) F. H. Otto Melle, based on his diaries, handwrote his memoirs in retrospect. Growing up in the small village of Liebengrün in Thuringia, as a child, he experienced his parents' conversion and entry into Methodism. Liebengrün and the Methodist Episcopal Church (BMK) became the foundation of his life.

The description of his life begins with his enrollment in school at the age of four in 1879 and goes through childhood and adolescence as the eldest son in a large family, led by parents who were firm in their faith and active in the community. Otto soon becomes an employee in the Methodist church and, beginning at an early age as a Sunday school teacher, held nearly every office in the Methodist Church in his life— choir director, exhorter, lay preacher, assistant, deacon and elder, missionary to Hungary, congregational preacher, superintendent, and director of the seminary. His written record ends in 1936 as Bishop of the BMK in Berlin, Germany. He describes the phases of life that shaped him, and in doing so he himself shapes many chapters in the Methodist movement in Austria-Hungary and Germany, and beyond. By way of example, the founding of the Methodist congregation in Dresden during his own recruit training or the development of the Methodist church in Hungary, beginning with the Danube Swabians in the Bácska to establishing the church in Budapest.

During this time, he establishes international contacts within and outside the worldwide Methodist Church, especially in the USA, in order to get financial support, and to be able to acquire church property. During and after World War I, he organized relief actions to fight famine and raise funds to establish children's homes. Very early on, he seeks contact with personalities of other churches and is active in the alliance movement as the longtime chairman of the Blankenburg Alliance Conferences, as well as the "Association of Evangelical Free Churches". Equally cross-denominational is his fight against alcohol abuse in the collection of a total of over 3 million signatures for the so-called congregational right to vote.

Through the establishment of connections with a whole number of theological faculties of various universities and well-known regional church and free church theologians, he opens up the preacher's seminary in Frankfurt am Main beyond the Methodist Church and thus also expands the range of courses offered. The "Theological Courses" become highlights in the seminary's teaching program. To secure the financing for the seminary, he initiates the establishment of chairs named after American personalities of Methodism and receives donations for this from the USA, which ultimately leads to the founding of the "Methodist Mission Aid", which still exists today.

In a total of 10 trips to the USA, he tirelessly endeavors to improve relations between American and German Methodists, and to increase understanding in America for the plight in Germany, Austria, and Hungary. Especially after World War I, he hopes for the support of the worldwide Methodist Church in his fight against the effects of the Treaty of Versailles. Historical contexts, the structure of the worldwide Methodist Church, organization in national and international conferences, basic questions of training and calling to be a Methodist preacher are other topics in this memoir. It is not a continuous description of his life, but predominantly a description of situations, moods and very personal experiences of faith. A common thread running through all the chapters is the guidance of God in his life, which he experienced again and again. Particularly in retrospect, he recognizes in part long-standing connections as the "footprints of God in my life."

Since he wrote this memoir during World War II in Berlin, serving as bishop of a church with special ties to America, he was subject to constant surveillance by the Gestapo and was therefore correspondingly cautious in his writing. The original text has been taken over almost unchanged —except for minor corrections. In the extended table of contents, I have tried to add an abbreviated version of the chapters in order to make it easier for the reader to select individual topics. A chronological timeline at the end illustrates the historical context in which Otto Melle's life must be viewed.

Klaus Schneider, Autumn 2005 (Bishop Otto Melle's grandson, 1943-2019)

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Wo der Schöpfer die Erde geküßt.

Meine Wiege stand in den sagenumwobenen Bergen des Thüringer Landes und ich habe als noch sehr kleines Kind einen Ausspruch gelernt, gehört. Und es hat unvergeßlich und unauslöschbar eingeprägt, bis mir Zeit des Lebens anhaften, und für den Rest, der über unserem Leben und unserer Handlung waltet, bewußt, uns den Weg zu stellen, den Charakter zu bilden, den Sinn zu nähren und uns entsprechend für die uns bestimmte Aufgabe. Wenn ich jetzt - nahezu 70 Jahre alt - auf mein Leben und unsere Arbeit zurückblicke und nach den geheimnisvollen Fäden suche, die von einer Aufgabe zur anderen sind zusammen gesponnen worden zu einer geschlossenen Einheit, so steht mir als Letztes immer die Heimat vor der Seele, die Heimat mit ihren steilen Bergen und lieblichen Tälern, ihren düsteren Wäldern und wogenden Feldern, ihren weltoffenen Menschen und ihr für das deutsche Volk so bedeutungsvollen Rasse Gestalt.

Über die Entstehung Thüringens hat das Volk eine alte Sage, die ich als kleines Kind immer gern erzählt. Als der Schöpfer die Welt vollendet hatte, fehlte ihr noch eins, wie es im Thüringerwald heißt, sondern etwas ganz Feines. Da fiel ihm ein Stück Himmel in sein weites Reich, das er gerne behalten wollte, das er aber einem Kind geben

Chapter 1 Where the Creator Kissed the Earth

My birthplace was located in the legendary mountains of the Thüringen country, which I have always seen as a privilege and a sign of God's regard. If there are inalienable and irreplaceable hereditary gifts, which we receive with the homeland, and which the gentleman, who watches over our life uses in order to steel the body, to form the spirit, to feed and equip us for the task, that determines character. If I look back now - almost 70 years old - on my life and my work and look for the mysterious threads woven together by an invisible, but wise hand that produced my life, then as the first the homeland before the soul, the homeland with its blue mountains and lovely valleys and dark forests that widens into fields, its world-open inhabitants and its rich history so significant for the German people always stands out for me. About the emergence of Thuringia, the people have an old legend, which I told on my journeys abroad gladly: When the creator had completed the world, he found it not only very good, but also very beautiful. In his joy over it, he could not help but to give the earth a kiss. Now, where his lips touched the country, the beautiful Thuringia came into being, the green heart of the Germany. We sang a song as children in elementary school: "*Oh, is it possible then that I can leave you, where my cradle stood, my homeland. If the mountains smell blue, if I show up afterward, my heart becomes so full of blessedness.*" Hardly another part of Germany was praised because of its lovely beauty more than Thuringia. From Walther von der Vogelweide (1), this verse comes: "*The praise of others withers like the clover, Thuringia's flower shines through the snow!*"

And Victor von Scheffel (2) sang: "*Anyone who found this young fount once, does not drink from any other, Thuringian Forest, Thuringian Country, only here I want to hike* "! Who could say how many wanderers, the little pack on their back and stick in hand, have repeated enthusiastically like him. Whether coming from the west past Oberhof and Ilmenau along the Rennsteig to wander east, visit Eisenach and the Wartburg (3) - a hiking destination for many - whether you go from Bad Blankenburg next to the gently rushing Schwarza River, the fir magic of the Thuringian Forest makes a pilgrimage to Schwarzburg and then from the Trippstein, the indescribable view of the Schwarzburg Castle (4), the deer meadow, and the idyll of the town in the green valley that you can enjoy, called the pearl of Thuringia, or whether the remote upper Saale valley -or whether you visit closer to my home - near Ziegenrück, Burgk Castle, Saalburg: Everywhere the glory of God in nature confronts one so urgently that the receptive mind with the old psalmist exclaims: "*Lord, how are your Works so great and many, you have arranged them all wisely, and the earth is full of your goods.*" On the Trippstein with the black castle I found the following words, whose poet remained unknown to me in a little bark house: "*If the bark gate opens for you after a lot of hard work, do you have notes, do you have words for looking into the forest green? I saw a tear shine bright and pure in your eye: So, may your view of the hereafter be at the limits of life!"*

The same words could be said from some places in the Thuringian region: from the Ochsenkopf near Oberhof, or from the Kickelhahn near Ilmenau, where Goethe one evening wrote down the words: "*Above all summits there is peace'. You hardly feel a breath in any of the treetops. The birds rest in the forest. Just wait, soon you will rest too!"* Or from the Inselsberg; from the Wartburg; from the Hemmkoppe near Ziegenrück; from Castle Burgk on the Saale; from Heinrichstein near Ebersdorf. Is it worth mentioning that one grew up in the forest and in the mountains? Each landscape does not only have its own character, it also exercises on the character formation of its inhabitants an influence which cannot be excluded. On a journey from the Hungarian lowlands to Germany once, a friend, who had grown up there, accompanied me, where far and wide no mountain was to be seen, no hill. Our first stop was the Saxon Switzerland, with jagged mountain forms, which rise steeply at the Elbe, and I expected a deep impression on my friend, before we visited Dresden with its art treasures. It was a wonderful summer day. I was delighted to be once again in the mountains and could not tire of seeing the well-known, half romantic and half idyllic landscape. My friend remained silent. I felt that he struggled internally to find his impressions and put them into words. Finally, he said: "*The Bácska* (5) *is more me. There the eye can curve into the distance, without being handicapped by a mountain. The sun cannot hide itself each instant behind a summit, and I do not need to*

have the feeling that these mountains can break suddenly or pull together and crush me. It seems to me, one is safer on a plain, more farsighted and freer." So, the friend feels.

Influence of the landscape! I can understand the attraction of the plain very well. As I felt well in the Bácska, and enjoyed the days in the North German lowlands at North and Baltic Seas, or in the prairies of the Americas. But I was always drawn to the mountains again and again, mountains that point upwards with magnetic force, which, in their force and power, the people consider a constant reminder of the omnipotence of the Creator and exhort a person, who so loves to rise, to humility. In the mountains, most of all I wanted to relax and found myself there in silence, God's thoughts sunk in, and when I see the other German forests, even though I always preferred the Thuringia forests, I stayed in the Black Forest, for example, the loftiest and mightiest forest of the German fatherland, or in the high mountains of the Allgäu near Hohenschwangau and Füssen in the Bavarian Alps region, I always had the image of the Thuringian mountains accompanying me. The conviction has never left me that Heavenly Father gave me with my mountain homeland a precious gift; that my life and my service to God will be fruitful and substantial. I became acquainted with some of the areas mentioned and famous places of Thuringia only late in my life, although the wish to see them was there in my boyish heart. Perhaps it was good that I had to hope and wait before I could finally see them so that the Upper Saale Valley, where I grew up could impress me more deeply.

My home village with the poetic name Liebengrün lies on an elevation of 550 m above sea level (1640 feet), in the south of Thuringia, where the foothills of the Thuringian and Franconian Forests meet. The village is round and is often referred to as the “City on the Mountains.” You can see it from afar. When you step out on the village street, let your gaze wander into the distance. The Saale River flows past half an hour away in the valley, but in the quiet at night, you can hear it roaring. It was quite an event for me as a child when I first saw Ziegenrück Castle from a hill when accompanying my parents on their way to this district town on the Saale. Still today that eight kilometers long trip appears to me as one of the most interesting and most impressive I have ever made. There it went through Liebschütz, where my maternal grandparents lived, and I can still see the large owl at the gate in front of me, of which I was told that it was my grandfather (**Friedrich Krause**) who shot it, being a forester on a so-called manor. Then we passed an old crooked tree. Here it was said that in the Middle Ages the highwaymen who attacked merchants traveling from Nuremberg to Leipzig, were hanged. Of course, only if they were caught, which was not always the case in the age of the robber barons. The view is incomparably beautiful to the Hemmkoppe, the towering mountain on the Saale. The road runs along a narrow ridge. On the right, rushing down below, the Saale, flows to Ziegenrück. And on the left, even lower down, also the Saale, which now, after it left Ziegenrück and, with the help of some weirs, put factories and mills into operation, and continues to flow in great meanders between the steep mountains to the north through Saalfeld, Jena, Naumburg, Halle, and to the Elbe too.

And the Hemmkoppe (6), towering above the other heights, dominates the picture of the city. It did not leave me in peace, until I climbed up to the summit to take a closer look at the ruins of the old robber barons castle, that comes from a darker time in German history. What a time that must have been, when here and on many other mountains in the Saale such robber barons stood and the women in the castle watched, how the robbers on the road collected their booty. It is good, if we do now and then look at a history book. It was always a mystery to me how little the church did that. but then as an equal, unified and influential power alongside the weak, inwardly torn state, was able to maintain the conscience and sharpen the ideals of Christianity in the thought and action of the people. Also, the Ziegenruecker Castle, in which today the district court and a prison are, go back to that time. Yes, go back! Go back to the Saale! How am I to describe it? I can only recommend to the reader to visit this small town once. It, even if you have travelled the world, will surprise you to find in this remote place such a pearl of natural beauty. Coming from Leipzig after approximately one hour travel between the stateliest young spruce forest the road goes into a tunnel. It takes a few seconds to adjust to the comprehensive darkness, and then we come again into the light and suddenly the road goes along a steep mountain, close to the mountain stand the houses covered with red bricks, which appear like gingerbread in the fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel, so that the

traveler goes over a bridge built by fairy hands over a fairy tale city. Over there on the right side is the legendary castle, the landmark like a thing from A Thousand and One Arabian Nights. Down on the streets, the wagons of the farmers stop to get their groceries or to do business or at the district court, and up ahead, not far from the train station, before it turns in a bold sweep to the north, hampered by a weir, the Saale rages hissing and roaring. It is easy to imagine the thunder that will sound here when, in spring, the famous but dreaded glacial drift piles up the ice masses until they have finally cleared the way for the onward journey with unbridled nature. And next to it beckons in sublime peace, mysteriously, ghostly the Hemmkoppe. But we hear the old folk song sung by the youth, whose melancholy melody is sung with pleasure everywhere in Thuringia: *Castles stand proud and bold on the bright beach of the Saale, their walls are crumbling, a cool wind sweeps through the halls, clouds drift overhead*. Is it memories like those expressed in this song that make the Thuringians thoughtful, suggesting to them thoughts of the transitoriness of the earthly and give them a philosophical touch? I have found many a philosopher among the Thuringian farmers and craftsmen.

Ziegenrück is located 7-8 kilometers north of Liebengrün. Equally romantic and charming, the view to the south and east from the Liebengrün Heights. On the road to the south - Remptendorf, Ebersdorf, Lobenstein - lie the splendid coniferous forests, which supplied us with such beautiful Christmas trees. Of course, they always had to be fir trees. And what firs grow there! There is the Streitwald (Argument/Contention Forest), which may have its name from protracted battles or lawsuits that princes have fought over its property. It belonged to the Prince of Reuss, the Younger Line. Bordering on it is the Burgk Forest, which with its rich timber and game was the much-envied property of the Prince of Reuss, the Older Line. On bright days, we could clearly see the mountain church of Schleiz, hours away, a church with many sights from the good old days, and about halfway between the mountain church and Liebengrün, in the middle of the beautiful forest, on a hill on three sides of the Saale, the old castle of Burgk, one of the most beautiful possessions of the princes of Reuss, Older Line. If the princely family was not there, the castle could be visited. It formed the destination of Sunday excursionists from far and wide. So sometimes some of us young people from Liebengrün joined together, marched through the summer Burgkwald (forest near Karolinenfield, eastern Thuringia, Germany), made a small picnic on a mossy spot with a pretty with a nice distant view, descended the mountain, took off our shoes and stockings, waded through the river Saale to save the detour over the bridge at the iceberg, let our feet dry in the sun and then climbed over to the steepest part of the mountain to the castle. What was there to see! The knights' hall with the collection of old weapons and the old tournament and battle armor, which had a long history in the German past. The castellan knew not only how to give dry figures of the years from which the individual objects came from, but to weave in gripping episodes and anecdotes from history, and we boys would have stayed for hours, and would have loved to build huts. In this castle the second Wilhelm II's second wife, Hermine, spent a large part of her youth.

The small residential town of Schleiz also plays a role in my memories of golden youthful days. Even the mountain church, which we saw shining in the sun, exerted an attraction. What else happened in Schleiz – its princely theater, its higher educational institutions, its parks - did not interest us. Even less political lectures. In Liebengrün, we were Prussian-minded because we belonged to Prussia together with the district of Ziegenrück and therefore did not care much about what was going on at the small princely courts and their residence towns. Schleiz, however, was the center of a large rural district. In spring and fall, large markets were held here—the Heinrichsmarkt and the Wiesenmarkt, which were important for the exchange of livestock. Farmers came from far and wide to bring their cows, oxen and horses or to look at and buy other livestock suitable for their purposes. Thus, on such days, the roads leading to Schleiz were filled with people and animals of all kinds. Also, there were many other economic and household items on offer at the market. So Liebengrüners visited these markets, and I still remember clearly how my father (**Johan Heinrich Friedrich Melle 1847-1905**), at my insistence, took me with him to see a larger city. Schleiz had, I think, 5,000-6,000 inhabitants. But when, on the way back through the forest, my little legs could not stand any more, my father took his boy on his back, where he fell asleep calmly. Even today, when I think about it, I still have a feeling of satisfaction and security filling my heart there on my father's back in the dark forest.

In this way, the love of the homeland, of mountain and valley, of forest and field was awakened and nourished, and imagination and interest in history were stimulated. Even in our sleep we dreamed of the ruins of the knights' castles, of the dwarves who scurry scampering through the forest, of the devil who, unrecognized, hiding his horse's foot, on the banks of the river Saale. Names of conspicuous formations in the river or in the in the mountains reminded of it. There is a devil's pulpit and a devil's weir, which tell of how the devil roamed the area in order to bring the souls under his power. However, in these sagas it is always the devil who is duped and bruised. Perhaps the self-confidence of the Thuringians, who believe that they can see through their opponents, are a match for him - even if it were the devil. As it says in Goethe's Faust: "*The people will never notice the devil, even if he has them by the collar."* Incidentally, the Thuringian people seem to have a special fondness for sagas, ghost stories and thus - despite all rationalistic attitudes - for all kinds of superstitions. As far as the legends are concerned, it was none other than Ludwig Bechstein (7), the great storyteller, who published the first collection of Thuringian sagas. Bechstein himself was a Thuringian. For us children, it was too sad to sit on the stove bench in the twilight hours of winter, or even in "hell" (the name of the warm place behind the old-fashioned large tiled stove, which is rarely found today. Grandmother opened the treasure of her fairy tale repertoire and read Hänsel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White and the Seven Good Dwarfs and other more or less lovable characters of the German fairy tale world, while rocking the youngest of our siblings to sleep. But we were not satisfied when, as an encore and a reward for the attentive listening, we wanted a real Thuringian ghost story. For example, about the wild hunter who roams through the forest at night between twelve and one, or of the castle woman dressed all in white, who for hundreds of years on the lonely Hemmkoppe waits for the knight to whom she can entrust her secret and who can then redeem her. Also, on the road to Remptendorf-Ebersdorf, near the "rotary", where the paths cross, is sometimes said to be haunted at midnight. Grandmother even knew a man, whose grandfather - probably a murdered grandfather - probably a murdered forester - had really met him one dark night around Christmas time. At least that's how it was told. It could not be other than that we all moved these stories into our forests, which we imagined populated with such beings. I could not but I cannot say that we learned to be afraid. Fear was hardly aroused, on the contrary, the homeland was made more interesting and dearer to us.

The fact that we, as a Prussian enclave, lay in the middle of the Thuringian dukedoms and principalities, the question of German unity arose early on. Geographical and ethnic ties were too strong for us not to be able to feel the state turmoil in the administration and in the many border posts. Only a few minutes away from the village was the three-country corner, where the boundary stone between Prussia, Reuss, Older Line. And Reuss, Younger Line stood. When we went to the above mentioned Ebersdorf to the mission festival of the Brüdergemeinde (8) - a colony with a widely known educational institute for girls - we Prussians had to first go through Reuss, Older Line. Ebersdorf was in Reuss Younger Line and has the summer castle of a prince. If we walked to Schleiz via Ziegenrück or Walsburg, we passed through an area of the Grand Duke of Weimar, and if we wanted to go west from Liebengrün, we were in the principality of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt in half an hour. In the houses, the forests and fields, animals and people, there was not the slightest noticeable difference. Apart from small differences of the dialect in each village, they all spoke our native language, their hearts were filled with the same love for the German fatherland, the same German blood flowed in their veins. The border post, painted with the national colors, was the only visible sign that we were going from one country into another. But wait, there was something else that made the border crossing visible: when the gendarme met us, he wore a special uniform, the uniform of his country. It went without saying that we avoided political discussions in the congregations of the Methodist Church. This would have promoted neither Christian love nor unity of spirit; for it was a fact that the citizens of a small principality were as attached to their prince with the same love and loyalty that the Prussians had for their king and emperor. But even as a schoolboy I had already racked my brains as to why the legislation and administration could not be the same here in the Methodist Church: our Methodist district, preacher supervised, included communities in Prussia, in Reuss Older Line, Reuss Younger Line and, I believe, in some other countries. This went great, the border posts were simply not there for church life. Like nature and geography,

history also had an impact on my youth. True, we were far from the main arteries. When I left home in my 18th year, there was no railroad that touched our area. It was only being built at that time. But in the small villages of the Ziegenrücker circle, world history had left its traces. Stories from the 30-year war still went from mouth to mouth. Not far from the Ziegenrücker castle a mountain projection carries the name "Schwedenschanze", because from there the Swedes fired on the town.

My great-grandfather (**Johann Friedrich Melle 1797-1885**), whom I still recall very well, was born in 1797, the same year as the old emperor he recalled proudly, still remembered clearly the Napoleonic war and spoke about the French horsemen, the Hussars, road through on the way to the battle of Jena and Auerstedt. They demanded provisions for themselves from the church and fodder for the horses from the population. That was in 1806. Napoleon, who was coming with the main army from the south, had quartered at Ebersdorf Castle. He then rode probably on a more western road in the direction of Jena, where on 14 October 1806 (9), the Prussian army was defeated. Stories still went around among the Liebengrüners. The Frenchmen did not want or eat the round rye black bread and always demanded wheat bread instead. They would have either thrown it away or used the for bowling. When in the campaign against Russia later, the large French army broke down dreadfully, thousands froze and starved, and Liebengrüners took this as a punishment from God for the abuse of good bread. We children were taught, again and again by the example of the French, to respect bread as a gift from God, to protect it as God's gift, and to enjoy it with gratitude to God. Such admonitions always made a deep impression. I believe that even today these teachings have not been forgotten in that part of Germany.

From the history of Thuringia, the time of the Reformation and Luther's stay at Wartburg Castle, stood out for us. Luther and the Wartburg became a household name for me. When I then had the opportunity to see this historical site, I was initially disappointed, because in the history of the Wartburg, St. Elizabeth, the Singer's War, and many other things occupy a much larger space than the relationship to Luther and the Reformation. But the visit to Luther's room, the bed in which the Reformer slept as Junker Jörg (10), the large oak table at which he worked and translated the New Testament into German, not to mention the ink stain on the wall, deeply touched me. The question of whether Luther saw the devil in a vision, so that he could throw the inkpot at him, or whether it was only an inner struggle in those difficult days, which, with his strong emotional life sought and found in an external act the resolution of the inner tension, did not interest me. But it became clear to me that in the service of God and his Christ we do not have to fight with flesh and blood, as Paul says, but "*with princes and mighty men and with the evil spirits under heaven*," and that as God's instruments, the greater the tasks to which we are called to, the more difficult tests of faith and the greater inner crises we have to struggle through brings us to an understanding of the temptation of Jesus, as told to us in the synoptic gospels. All this came to me in Luther's little room at the Wartburg Castle and has since inspired my theological thinking and my spiritual life.

Several times I have also given tours to American travel companies, whose tours usually took them only to Berlin, Cologne, then up the Rhine and to Heidelberg, Eisenach and the Wartburg with the Luther room and always found that here was for these foreigners one of the most important keys to understanding German history, German essence and German mission in the world. I still wonder today why we have not made more use of it. Alongside Wartburg Castle and Eisenach, Weimar has its own place as the center of the intellectual work of our classics. Who would not like to see the place where Goethe and Schiller created their immortal works, where Wieland (11) sang his songs and Herder (12) preached? A stream of new thoughts and inspiration has flowed from here into the German people. Although born in Thuringia, it was a long, long time before I was granted my wish to visit the classical sites of Weimar. I had lived for a long time and I had lived abroad for a long time. When I was visiting the Fatherland, there were so many other tasks to fulfill with sermons, lectures, conferences, and meetings, that there was not enough time to make such educational trips. One particular service always took over from the other. In the fall of 1922 - I had been sent to the preacher's seminary in Frankfurt am Main. The German Association against Alcoholism took place in Weimar. Professor Gonser, the efficient general secretary of the association, had asked me, who was proposed as a member of the board, to give a lecture on "*The Methodist*

Church and the Fight Against Alcoholism." Thus, I came to Weimar on business, so to speak, and in addition to the stimulating meetings of the association, in which there were always a lot of rich lectures, I was also able to visit the places where Schiller and Goethe had worked. I was most captivated by the Goethe Museum. Thuringia knows what it has in this museum. The professor who guided us through the collections was a Goethe connoisseur who didn't leave any question unanswered, whether it was a question of art, of the metamorphosis of plants, of the theory of the theory of colors, or the relationship of any of Goethe's sayings in his works. Immediately there was the reasoned, factual, exhaustive answer. Non-experts are usually captivated by the purely personal aspects of such personalities. With me it was something apparently external: When the society of our association, which for the most part consisted of professors, physicians, state insurance institutes, police officers, retired military officers had finished their tour of the various rooms, I joined the next company once again, but asked for permission to remain completely alone in the poet's office during the tour. What is there to see there? Very little. This room is kept as simple and unadorned as one could ever imagine. An adjoining room contains the library that Goethe used. There was not a picture, not a saying, not a vase or bust or any other object of art. At the simple table without any decoration or cloth covering at which Goethe created his immortal works, there is a wooden chair, to which a support for the head is attached, to rest for a few moments by leaning back. The only comfort is a cushion on the table, on which the sage of Weimar used to rest his elbows when he dictated to the secretary sitting opposite him. Goethe is considered a bon vivant. He has told Eckermann (13) about the reasons for the simplicity of his study. Comfortably furnished rooms with mementos of his travels and art studies, as we find them in the reception rooms of his house, which were equipped with all Goethe believed that comfortably furnished rooms, are not necessary for intense though. He found it beneficial if nothing disturbed him, nothing distracted him from the thoughts occupying him and struggling for expression. I did not think of a discussion of Goethe's religious position and world view at this time. But I saw in this way of working of the great German poet a reminder to fight against the temptations of distraction and to concentrate on one's work. How much time is wasted, how many precious opportunities are missed because one simply lets oneself go. At the same time, it was as if the "worldly child" Goethe had given me a new understanding for Jesus' instruction: "*When you pray, go into your closet and close the door behind you, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you publicly*." But the real reason I mention this visit to Weimar in my memoirs, is that Weimar became for me the starting point for a strengthened faith and hope at the thought of the collapse, misery, leaderlessness and despair of the Fatherland. Let us not forget that the year was 1922.I had received an invitation to perform on the following Sunday in the Saalbau in Frankfurt am Main at the Singers' Festival of the Frankfurt Circle of the Christian Singers' Association. We were in the middle of inflation. The value of money was melting away like snow in the sun. What cost millions yesterday, today it cost billions. The task of delivering a "festive speech" in such a desperate situation was not easy. The pressure of nightmare that settled on my soul was only intensified when I saw that the program began with the song:

Praise the Lord, the mighty King of Glory,

Praise him, O soul, united with the heavenly choirs.

Come ye in multitude, psaltery and harp awake,

Let the praises be heard!

In my depressed mood, I was still winding up the last item of my program, a visit to the princely crypt where the two great poets were laid to rest. How long I stood there at the two coffins, I do not know. I only know how before my eyes appeared a picture of the time in which those men lived. It was the time of the French revolution, the time of the Napoleonic victories, the time of the defeat of Prussia at Jena and Auerstedt, the time of Germany's disgrace. Yes, and what happened then? Goethe also lived through the time of the wars of liberation, the German uprising. Could we as Germans now hope for something similar? As these thoughts passed through my heart, I suddenly looked up, as if driven inwardly, and my gaze fell on the Bible word above the door. It is from

the 126th Psalm: "*Those who sow with tears will reap with joy!"* Then it was as if a ray of light from the upper world fell into my heart. I had the text and also the thoughts for my speech on Sunday in the Saalbau. It may be easy to speak in this way, I said, when a difficult time is over, the hardship has been solved, the wonderful help has been experienced. "But that belongs essence of faith, which God works in our hearts through his Spirit, that even when the tears are still flowing, when the situation seems hopeless and the need becomes greater and greater, he turns his gaze to him to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given, who said: *"I am with you all days! Who lives in this faith, can already sing the praises of the harvest in the midst of the sowing of seeds. So, it is quite appropriate that we began our singing festival with a song of praise. To let this faith strengthen us, to strengthen it through us in others, that is one of the great tasks of the children of God in the present time."* The response to this singing service showed how, in many hearts, hope was rekindled and faith was wonderfully strengthened.

(1) Joseph Viktor Scheffel von Bushel, (1826 – 1886) German author and writer, “Ekkehard; A Tale of The Tenth Century” by Joseph Victor Scheffel von Bushel

(2) Walther von der Vogelweide (c. 1170 – c. 1230) was a Minnesänger who composed and performed love-songs and political songs ("Sprüche") in Middle High German. Walther has been described as the greatest German lyrical poet before Goethe; his hundred or so love-songs are widely regarded as the pinnacle of Minnesang, the medieval German love lyric, and his innovations breathed new life into the tradition of courtly love. He was also the first political poet to write in German. “Under the Lime Trees” is most famous poem.

(3) Wartburg is a castle originally built in the Middle Ages. It is situated southwest of and overlooking the town of Eisenach, in the state of Thuringia, Germany. In 1999, UNESCO added Wartburg Castle to the World Heritage List. It was the home of St. Elisabeth of Hungary, the place where Martin Luther translated the New Testament of the Bible into German. Wartburg is the most-visited tourist attraction in Thuringia after Weimar.

(4) Schwarzburg Castle—Walk in the footsteps of Schwarzburg nobility, one of Thuringia's oldest noble families, discover the fascinating architectural history of the magnificent complex on the way from a fortified mountain spur to a residential palace and its decay. The armory forms the heart of the princely worlds of Schwarzburg Castle. Begun as the central weapons depot of the Schwarzburg County in the 16th century, it developed into a valuable collection of German weapons history in Thuringia.

(5) Bácska is a geographical and historical area within the Pannonian Plain bordered by the river Danube to the west and south, and by the river Tisza to the east. It is divided between Serbia and Hungary.

(6) Hemmkoppe is a summit in Thuringia at 1 483 feet elevation.

(7) Ludwig Bechstein (1801 – 1860) was a German writer and collector of folk fairy tales such as, *Deutsches Märchenbuch* (German Fairy-Tale Book, 1845; 41st ed., 1893)

(8) Brethren Movement is free church movement that emerged in 19th century, local congregations of which are fundamentally independent, but closely connected in terms of teaching and practice. Around the world there are about a million people in movement; in Germany the number of followers around 40,000 to 45,000.

(9) On 8 October 1806, Napoleon's troops first entered Prussian territory and battles took place on the banks of the Saale between the forces of Napoleon I of France and Frederick William III of Prussia. Napoleon spent the night of 8 October in Schloss Ebersdorf. This (a precursor to the Battle of Schleiz on 9 October and the Battle of Jena-Auerstadt on 14 October), was the first battle of the War of the Fourth Coalition.

(10) Martin Luther disguised himself as "Junker Jörg" at Wartburg, Junker is term of nobility, As part of nobility, many Junker families had prepositions such as von or zu before their family names without further ranks.

(11) Julius Johannes Weiland (ca. 1605 –1663) was minor German composer, singer and harpsichordist at the Wolfenbüttel court at the time of Augustus the Younger, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. With Johann Jacob Löwe (1628–1703), organist at Eisenach, he published *Zweyer gleichgesinnten Freunde Tugend- und Schertz Lieder* (1657).

(12) Johann Gottfried (after 1802 von) Herder (1744 – 1803) was German philosopher, theologian, poet, and literary critic. He is associated with the Enlightenment, *Sturm und Drang*, and Weimar Classicism.

(13) Johann Peter Eckermann (1792 – 1854), German poet and author, is best known for his work *Conversations with Goethe*, the fruit of his association with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe during last years of Goethe's life.

Chapter 2 Liebengrün: Family Home-Primary School

In one of the smallest houses in Liebengrün, which belonged to the family Melle, I saw the light of day on 16th August 1875, while outside in the fields, the grain harvest was still in progress. At that time the village had about five-hundred inhabitants and a hundred houses, which fell into two sharply divided parts; the seventy houses of the old hereditary established farmers who were invested with many privileges. For example, they had common fishponds and extensive woodland, the yield from which was shared among them every so often. These farmers were the patricians of the village. On the newer side, the smaller part of the place, which bore the name New Market, the craftsmen and workers lived. Since privileges were connected with the houses in the older part, New Market strove to help people acquire houses, if they had economically advanced. My father gradually achieved this goal. But into the farmhouse in the "old part of town" I came only later. That house was acquired when I had already been out in the world a long time.

My youthful memories attach to the small house at the New Market. There it stands today, some minutes away from the other and statelier one, right next to the high, idyllic cemetery surrounded by a simple wooden fence. In the little room, which I was allowed to move into after I was dismissed from elementary school and which also served as a guest room when I visited, I could see the cemetery's mortuary stones gleaming in the moonlight. A ghostly beautiful sight. As I write these lines, I remember how I was once sent to Liebschütz as a boy, in the dark of night. I could have chosen the busy village street or taken the lonely country lane that led right past the cemetery. When I felt something like a sense of dread at the thought of the dead lying there, I decided to fight the fear by taking the cemetery path and, whistling a little song, walking very slowly past the many gravestones. Nothing happened to me. Father praised me more than a little, and this exercise contributed much to making a small brave boy out of me.

The house was really small—only one ground level. The barn and stable were attached to the house which, apart from a cart wright's workshop, where father usually worked with journeymen and apprentices, and the narrow small room already mentioned, had only a hallway and a living room with three windows on the road side and one facing the yard. The room was heated from the hallway by a powerful tiled stove connected to a baking oven. Between the tiled oven and the wall in the room, directly over the baking oven, "hell" was to be found, the warmest spot in the house, where it was comfortable to rest and dream on cold winter's nights. In my childhood, this place was regularly occupied by great grandfather, who was generally called "the old Melle." He reached 90 years of age. There was a superb view from the windows, which no house in the patrician's part of the village could have had; away over the orchards on the west side to Liebschütz [the neighboring town], and the Saale valley near Walsburg all the way to Essbach, whose inhabitants Gustav Schröer (1), in his many Thuringian novels, has so strikingly portrayed with a wonderful empathy- he himself is from Silesia. This room was used for cooking and sewing, eating and drinking, reading and learning; here the women congregated with their spinning wheels and their songs; here visitors were received, and also worship meetings, evangelism and festivals were held. Many a famous church orator preached here and not infrequently talented singers let their serious and joyful melodies resound here—just mention the name of the singer's father, Ernst Gebhardt (2), who has often preached and sung here. And when I recently met up again with a school friend, who had sat with me at a school desk, but who had then moved away from Liebengrün—we hadn't seen each other for over fifty years—he immediately reminded me of the cozy times we had spent in this room as children, coddled and controlled by happy parents. I did not have my own bedroom. We six children, three boys and three girls, and also great-grandfather, grandmother (whose husband was dead) and our parents slept under the clay tile roofing on the floor. It was cool and airy in the summer, but in the winter, it could become quite uncomfortable. If the wind and snow came from a certain direction, it blew the snow through the bricks into the inside. We discovered then in the morning that a white coat had spread a snow cover over our beds and the way to the stairs was covered with snow, by which we, laughing and singing with naked feet hopped into the living room. This didn't harm us at all. Just the opposite, our bodies became body

against the change in toughened up to changes in the weather, and jokingly I said sometimes, if minister Kneipp (3) had seen that and had observed the effect in a healthy family, then a similar procedure as a cure for his guests to Woerishofen (3) would have probably introduced.

Liebengrün in 1900

My parents often told how they met and fell in love at a patriotic festival in Liebschütz and then got married without having anything other than their healthy hands. But they were young and strong, full of a zest for life and an enterprising spirit, and so they took on the struggle associated with starting and raising a family with courage and confidence. In addition to the handicrafts in the workshop, they tried to do some farming themselves in order to get bread and potatoes for the hungry mouths. They started with a goat, later they were able to buy a cow, and when I said goodbye to home at eighteen, there were already two cows whose milk was an important part of the diet. For, if you include the journeymen and apprentices, the large table in the corner of the living room was almost always occupied by 10-12 people who invariably had a good appetite. It brought great satisfaction that gradually grain could be grown on our own fields in addition to potatoes. The fact that we were sometimes short of provisions did not detract from the pleasure.

Father was a capable craftsman, industrious from sunrise until late in the evening, and mother was brilliant at preparing new dishes from the potatoes which grew particularly well and floury in Thuringia's stony fields. So, we usually ate potatoes 3 times a day, morning, noon and evening, but always prepared in a different way, so that we were not really aware of the monotony at all. Mother soon gained the reputation of a culinary artist. Into her old age she was called on as chef at weddings, funerals and other occasions that made special demands on the kitchen of a farmhouse. I still remember well from a family pow-wow, how much had to be saved; it may have been in my 9th or 10th year, one day a teacher who was friends with my parents offered to give me an hour's piano lesson each week for the low remuneration of 50 pfennig per hour. However much my parents wished that their maturing eldest child could learn something useful, and were convinced that such an expenditure would certainly be appropriate- sober consideration led to the conclusion that they could not risk the sum of half a Mark weekly. Perhaps the thought that, in order to be fair, every child should be granted the same privileges, also played a part. The household budget could not have stood that. So, the piano lessons had to be omitted. I can't say that I really understood this decision. The goal to learn a lot always tempted my mind. But even this great disappointment of my childhood only served for the best. It taught me early to understand the position of my family, awoke the feeling of responsibility and the eagerness to help my parents and, thus, all of us. At the same time, it formed the resolve in my heart, when external circumstances were unfavorable to my drive for education, to stand

on my own feet despite the hindrances, and to take every opportunity which presented itself to learn for myself. I soon went to a harmonium school somewhere, learned notes and keys and received permission to practice on the parish harmonium, and could soon accompany the singing in the Sunday school and parish. Since this time, I have read with special fondness biographies about self-made men.

We children looked up to our parents with the greatest love, respect and reverence. Father had a manly appearance of superior calm and strength. I do not remember that I ever saw him nervous and distracted. His eyes were clear and penetrating, and mildness and kindness were stamped on his face. His step was sure and firm, his gait upright in his younger years, reminiscent of the former soldier. Mother often told us how, at a Sedan celebration—it was in the years after 1870—she saw the dapper Friedrich Melle, wielding a drumstick, marching ahead of the music corps of the warriors' association, and immediately lost her heart to him. He had taken part in the 1870 Franco-Prussian War (4), fought at Beaumont and Sedan (5), captured Napoleon III, as he said, and had then been with the occupying army in France until peace was concluded, i. e., for a little more than half a year. He must have had a good talent for languages; for he was able to converse to some extent in French until the end of his life. His judgment of people and conditions were clear, his gift for storytelling not slight, and he had a wealth of images and parables at his disposal, an ability which later served him well as a lay preacher. He was considered a friend of teachers and pastors, was a member of the board of the warriors' association and was gladly drawn into conversation by traveling officials of the district, such as the district administrator, the district judge, and so on. Mother came from Liebschütz, was the daughter of the forest supervisor, Friedrich Krause. She must have been a beauty in her youth. Old letters from relatives and acquaintances to father praise her over and over again— what a beautiful wife he got as "mine". She dressed simply in village fashion; new clothes could seldom be purchased in the poor conditions. But when I compared her with the other women in her clean, dark Sunday dress, with a colorful shawl draped over her wavy brown hair, and her lovely face, she always seemed to me like a queen among them. In intelligence she surpassed even her father. What she had once read, heard in a conversation or a lecture, that stuck, that she processed independently and, what was strange, she could often reproduce it almost verbatim after many years. A small episode from later times may illustrate this right here: In her 80th year, she once visited the Blankenburg Conference, at which I had to give some lectures. I wanted to have dinner with her one evening in the hotel but asked her to wait a little on a bench in front of the hotel until I had quickly gone to the hairdresser. When I returned, I found my mother in conversation with a judicial councilor from Berlin, who congratulated me on such a "mother" and added that she had given him an insight into the Blankenburg Conference in the last half hour, characterized the speakers, reproduced the most important thoughts of the lectures, that he was now completely able to understand better. He did not believe that any studied reporter could have done a better job. But I do not want to anticipate. At this point it is about the mother of the childhood. There is still a scene before my eyes that should not be overlooked: Once again, a military ball was to take place. The sound of drums resounded in the street. I, too, as a little boy, ran after the sound. There I saw a young, handsome tambour, with the drum around him, beating the drum head and then inviting us to the dance. An older woman who recognized me asked, "Well, little one, do you know who the tambour is?" Of course, I had recognized him. I smiled a little mischievously and said, "That's my mother." It was confirmed to me again and again later that one could not think of funny events without the Melles, Friedrich and his Wilhelmine, being involved.

Something must also be said of the elementary school in Liebengrün. One can hardly have too high an opinion of it. Our teacher Geitner, who for 50 years guided the youth of Liebengrün on their first steps into the realm of knowledge, and his original educational system, still inspire me with admiration. I had the privilege of attending this school for nine full years. It happened like this: When I was four and a half years old, we were visited one day by the teacher. He talked about the new start of school after Easter and mentioned the names of the boys and girls who would now be coming to school and what fun it would be when these children received a sugar cone on the first day of school, as was customary. This sugar cone undoubtedly helped to make the journey to school sweet. I think I can say in all modesty that it was not the sugar that attracted me. It was more the thought that the boys, whom I played with every day, now had something ahead of me, that they should learn to read, write, and

calculate, while I would still have to wait a very long time until the sources of wisdom could open up for me, too. So, I plucked my mother by the apron, pulled her aside and asked her to ask the teacher if I could come to school now. My mother made the request, and the experienced pedagogue said, "Why not? If you want, there is nothing to prevent it. I am ready to accept the little one. I will not strain him. If he learns to sit still, that will be enough for the first year. He will then go through the first grade twice, which will give him a good foundation for further development." So, I started school at Easter. The fifth birthday followed in August. As the youngest, I was given the last seat on the last bench. But the school had grown on me from the first day. With a true thirst for knowledge, I paid attention to everything there was to learn. The first lesson was devoted to visual instruction. Above the blackboard hung a large picture of two dogs—what children wouldn't be interested in that? - Spitz and Pug. The two quadrupeds didn't seem to trust each other very much, and it was a pleasure to find out, with the help of the teacher's hints, that the Pug would have liked to know where the Spitz hid his beautiful bone. Pug kept searching and smelling until he found the bone. A great satisfaction filled the little crowd when they heard that Spitz did not put up with it, but grabbed the thief by the collar and shook him so that he screamed bloody murder. Today I could still reproduce almost every word that was spoken in that hour. Looking back, however, it is clear to me that visual instruction, the pictorial memorization of abstract concepts, even religious truths, is of great importance not only for children in the first year of school.

I was also fascinated by the other subjects. It was easy to memorize the letters and put them together to form words, it was fun to draw them, and I must not have been a bad student in spite of being too young to learn. Before a few months had passed in the first year, the teacher had moved me up from the last to the first place in the class. And it remained so until the end of my school years. After 1870 the saying was made that the German schoolmaster had won the war. A word that expresses a deep truth. The teaching profession occupies a respected position in Germany. Fathers and mothers in the city and in the countryside know what they owe to the school. Nevertheless, I believe that the service rendered and to be rendered here is simply not yet recognized in its full significance. It is generally demanded that teachers be academically and pedagogically up to date. But they must also have character, be morally stable and strong, and exemplary not only by what they teach but by what they are. They need to have subtle tact and gentle empathy to refrain from making errors in any conflicts in religion and worldview between the family home and school, which warp the children’s mental development, lead their perceptions onto a wrong track and thus, instead of helping them with a gentle, sure hand, leave them standing helpless at the crossroads of life.

The teacher does not seem to have thought much of too much memorization or homework. It was quite rare that we had to do an essay at home, except for arithmetic problems, which had to be worked through according to a printed booklet. Here we had to apply the rules we had learned at school if we wanted to get the right result. Essays were usually written in one lesson after the topic had been set at the beginning. This prevented parents from helping, although copying was unavoidable. But that was a circumstance that had to be accepted. I myself would not have been able to copy. I was too independent for that, but it gave me satisfaction when the rich peasant children looked over my shoulder and copied their written work verbatim from my example. When it came to memorizing, there was only one failure in my memory: in the religion lesson, the teacher, completely against his custom, started to check with me once, instead of at the bottom of the bench, whether the Bible verses I had been given had been learned, which I had not learned and I received the usual punishment I deserved. These were the so-called "Handschmitzen". The two inner palms had to be stretched out in turn, and then, depending on need and merit, the hazel or willow stick would come down on the hands two, four, sometimes six times with a dexterity acquired through long practice. These strokes were very painful. One could not protect oneself against them as one could against the blows on the back, where a notebook slipped underneath served to ward off and mitigate the pain. Perhaps the strict schoolmaster had discovered this trick with one of his hopeless pupils and therefore preferred the safe and disastrous "hand mitts." The fact that the I, the later Seminary Director and Doctor of Theology had to take such hand mitts during a religion lesson, of all things, is probably one of the ironies of history. As

painful as the punishment was and as much gloating as it may have caused among my schoolmates, I myself felt it was just and deserved.

In natural history, geography, German literature, history and whatever else there was, we had no textbooks at all. The teacher replaced them with his lectures. In natural history we didn't get far beyond the plants and animals of our homeland. Now and then we went on a hike. Then we roamed through woods and fields, picked flowers in the meadows and then had to bring a rye ear, a cornflower, a dandelion, a daisy, or a thistle for the next lesson. The plant was properly examined and explained, which took about ten to fifteen minutes, then it was said: now you have the remaining time of the lesson at your disposal to write an essay about what we have just discussed. Under the fresh impression of what we had heard, this work went easily. Paper was spared. Such essays were written on the slate, where they were reviewed at the end of the lesson and then wiped off. We could not take the lessons home in black and white, but they were even more memorable. For geography, our good cantor again had his methods gained from rich experience: First he had the rivers of a country written down or a small map made, on which the main rivers were to be drawn with thick lines, the tributaries with thinner ones. A circle marked the town where the river flowed into the sea. Then the mountains were drawn in large lines, and only finally the inhabitants with their history and customs. We always waited anxiously until the lessons had progressed so far. For now came the most fascinating part: description of the population, the races, the religions - here some mission history was woven in - their language and way of life, spiced with anecdotes from their history. It is not much that the curriculum of a primary school can achieve in this field, but carefully selected and impressively presented, much can be offered in the short time available that will bear fruit for life.

But our good cantor was only in his true element when the history lesson came. We always looked forward to these lessons in particular. What Rudolf Kögel said of his old cantor in a nice poem: "And nobody can tell stories like you! Whether he made the biblical figures take shape before our eyes or introduced world history, the presentation was always impressive, vivid, emphasizing the essentials, rich in color, interwoven with small, gripping anecdotes, so that the main moments were memorized without us having to learn a lot of dry numbers. The major events were grouped in such a way that there was always one important personality at the center. Once we had grasped this, it was easy to gain an overview of the epoch and to bring coherence into the events. The ancient Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians, even Greeks and Romans were briefly dealt with. The teacher always hurried to get to the Germans. The character portraits of the great men of German history that he gave, of Charlemagne, Otto I and others were masterpieces of the art of representation. That we could state exactly in which year Charlemagne was born or when the battle on the Lechfeld took place did not seem to be important to him, but that the thing itself and its significance for German history were grasped was taken care of.

I must mention one more event which was brought back to me by my youth friends during a recent visit to my homeland, and which also suddenly stands before the soul again and again as a reminder: In the school in Liebengrün we learned gymnastics very well. Since the teacher could not demonstrate the exercises himself at his age, it was again an honor when he picked out a good gymnast and had him demonstrate on the high bar and parallel bars. This encouraged emulation and brought good results. After all, we were almost all healthy, strong boys, full of self-confidence and enterprise. There were no other sports, if you don't count the snowball fights in winter, which were then treated literarily in a separate history lesson among us in a "Chapter from the Great War" mostly written by me. The hardening and steeling of the body was ensured by the really sufficient exercise in fresh air, the work in fields and forests in all seasons. Ha, what winters those were, when the east wind blew over the heights, snowdrifts as high as houses lay in front of the buildings, blocked the roads, and you still had to go out. In summer, however, swimming was practiced. Next to the brickworks, not far from the Streitwald, was the "big pond", which supplied the 78 farmers of the old village with carp for the festival in autumn. A path led over its dam, along which the forest workers returned home in the evening and the farmers drove home with their carts. The young people liked to swim here and had their swimming skills admired by the corona(?) on the dam. There were no lessons in swimming. That had to be learned by oneself. I was one of the privileged ones who had practiced and

learned to swim from my earliest years as a boy, romping around ponds and streams according to my father's descriptions. My father had served with the pioneers in Magdeburg and sometimes told us about their exercises in the Elbe. In the summer, after the day's work had been done and supper had been eaten, I liked to go to the "big pond", sometimes alone, more often accompanied by other boys who wanted to learn to swim, to take a cooling and refreshing bath.

One day it had become a little later than usual. When I approached the pond, the sun had already set. I suddenly heard cries for help and was told that a 20-year-old young man had just gone down at the deepest part of the pond. "Come," they called, "come quickly; perhaps he can still be saved." I might have been between 16 and 17 years old and was known to be a good swimmer. I tore off my clothes, jumped into the water, asked for a description of the place where the young man had last been seen and began to search for the submerged body. A crowd of people had already gathered on the embankment, giving good advice and following every move to rescue him. It also took only a few moments to discover the sunken man, so that I could swim to shore with him under my arm and hand him out. We made every conceivable effort to pump the water out of the lungs, to stimulate the respiratory organs and heart to resume activity and thus to call back life. But all efforts were in vain. Death had already come. The young man came from Ziegenrück and had worked for a few days as a temp for a craftsman friend. He was the only son of his parents, a family also known to my parents. The father's grief was shocking when he came to collect his dead son. He sought me out to thank me for the service I had done. But I will never be able to forget the look he gave me as he squeezed my hand and said, "If only you had come five minutes earlier, people all say, my son would have been saved." Yes, how much is often in five minutes! My plea to God since then has always been, "O Lord, guide me so that my service to save a soul may never be too late!"

(1) Gustav Schröer (1876—1949 in Weimar) was a German writer. Most of his novels had heroes rooted in the countryside. His work can be called bourgeois realism. It sometimes shows strong nationalistic features.
(2) Ernst Heinrich Gebhardt (1832—1899) was a song writer and Methodist preacher.
(3) Kneipp spa resort in Allgäu, birth place of famous natural healing methodology, which was honored as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO 2015. Its creator, the famous priest and therapist Sebastian Kneipp,
(4) Franco-Prussian War or Franco-German War, often referred to in France as War of 1870, conflict between Second French Empire (later Third French Republic) and North German Confederation led by Kingdom of Prussia. Lasting from July 1870 to January 1871, conflict caused by France's determination to restore its dominant position in continental Europe. The war had lasting impact on Europe. By hastening process of German unification, it significantly altered balance of power on continent; with new German nation state supplanting France as dominant European land power.
(5) Battle of Sedan was fought in Franco-Prussian War from 1 to 2 September 1870, resulting in capture of Emperor Napoleon III and over a hundred thousand troops, it effectively decided war in favor of Prussia and allies, though fighting continued under a new French government.
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Chapter 3 When Holy Winds Blow

The most important and fruitful event in the parental home in this golden age of childhood was the contact with the Methodist revival movement. It was the end of an old epoch and the beginning of a new one in the history of my parents and the whole family, even into the more distant branches of the kinship. One could literally say with the apostle Paul: "*Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*" Idle is what would have become of me, what direction my life would have taken without the influence of the Methodist communities. I have become firmly convinced that the religious experiences my parents had at that time, when the winds of revival were blowing through the countryside, which also took hold of my youthful heart, became of decisive importance for me and gave me not only my ideals, but also the path to these ideals, and also showed the way to the sources of inner strength. I see them as footprints of God in my life.

Sometimes I have been asked how the Methodists came to Liebengrün. To be honest, this is a mystery to me. If anyone had worked out a plan for the evangelization of Germany or, in the narrower sense, Thuringia, the remote region of my homeland with its small villages would not have been envisaged as a strategic starting point. But with regard to the expansion of his kingdom, God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. The Savior of the world was born in small, inconspicuous Bethlehem and grew up in the almost disreputable Nazareth, far from the places of traffic, education and culture. When Paul was called by the Lord from Asia to Europe, he was not sent to the world capital Rome, but to the provincial city of Philippi, where he preached in the first service to a few women and God opened the heart of Lydia from Thyatira (1). It is also said there as in the rebirth of the individual: "*The wind blows where it wills, and thou hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going.*" But there is one who knows, who guides the clouds and the air and the winds, who sometimes carries the seed of the gospel into an unnoticed corner, and takes root in silence and bears fruit thirty-fold, sixty-fold and a hundredfold.

The emergence of the Methodist communities in Liebengrün and the surrounding area is related to the beginnings of Methodism in Thuringia and Saxony in general. The first established congregation was a manor called Rüssdorf, romantically situated on the Elster, in the Weimarschen, close to the village of Waltersdorf. From that manor, one of the sons, Ehrhard Wunderlich (2), went to America around the middle of the last century in order to make a new existence there. Around that time the Methodist revivalist movement in the United States had taken hold of the German immigrants, some of whom had left the Fatherland for less-than-ideal reasons. It must have been a wonderful movement. From New York to San Francisco, German congregations were formed everywhere, in which the “half” Germans – half adventurous and half homesick – found not only an intellectual and spiritual home, but also something that would have given them that churches in Germany, which were largely under the influence of rationalism, had not been able to give them--the delicious pearl of the personal experience of salvation in Christ and of living in communion with him that Ehrhard Wunderlich also experienced. A strong inner urge to tell his loved ones back home about what he had experienced, which was even stronger than homesickness, drove him to visit his homeland in the early sixties. He was traveling home from Leipzig on a Sunday. Nowhere was there anything of a Sunday rest and religious mood to be felt. Somewhere there was a fair. When he arrived in Russdorf, the butcher had been ordered to slaughter a pig. Nobody thought of going to church. That was like a nightmare on his soul. He prayed to God for light from above. When he did that, his older brother Frederick grabbed the rifle hanging on the wall and went off hunting to show his aversion to such "raptures." But lo! "*The word of the Lord does not come back empty.*" After his mother, to whom the Lord opened her heart, Frederick was converted to God after a hot inner struggle. He was to become a chosen armor of the Lord to carry on the fire kindled by the Lord of the Church.

Ehrhard had begun to hold meetings in several places. Struggles and persecutions were so great, however, that he returned to America. Frederick, the owner of the manor, continued the work. Ecclesiastical Authorities backed by the police warned of bans--Ehrhard had already been thrown into prison and did not pay the fines because he

was a witness of Jesus Christ. The cows from the stable which were pledged to him were pawned. But all the harassment could not silence him. With Peter he said: "*We cannot refrain from speaking of what we have seen and heard*." Rumors of the events in and around Rüssdorf gradually spread to Schleiz, Remptendorf and Eliasbrunn. That a man preached who had not studied theology and without being paid for it, indeed, that he had preached so much even that he endured so much for the sake of his faith, with joy. Finally, some courageous and demanding young men set out to attend a Methodist service in Dörtendorf, which was probably the closest. When I say "closest," please do not misunderstand me. From the mouths of the old Methodists who were there, I have heard it described how on Saturday, after the week's work was finished, they set out, all night long, eight hours of walking without the necessary breaks in between on Sunday, attended the meetings, marched home again on Monday night to take their scythes to mow the hay in the morning at sunrise. And they did not – it was added-- show any signs of fatigue while working. This is how the movement came to Eliasbrunn and Remptendorf. And from Remptendorf, Reuss-Altere Linie, which is only three quarters of an hour away, to Liebengrün. At first it was my mother, who with two or three women friends went to a festival of the small Remptendorf community. In order to give the get-together a sociable character, tables were set with coffee and cake. This was appropriate, because some of the invited guests had traveled hours to get here. That little party, the first contact with a Methodist community, must have made an immensely strong impression on my mother for, up to a ripe old age, those hours remained vivid in her memory, and whenever she was inspired to do so, she gladly recounted them, not forgetting any of the details: that she felt an atmosphere of fellowship and love that she had never found anywhere before; how uplifting, even electrifying, the fresh singing was, songs about Jesus and his work, and about the salvation he brings us; how heartfelt and moving the songs were from the heart without any prayer book; how convincing the short speeches and testimonies were, what the brothers and sisters had experienced. Especially the song from Woltersdorf was unforgettable for her: "*I know it, I know it and I will keep it, As God's hands still rule the kingdom, as sure as his sun still shines in the sky, as sure as I, a sinner, have been forgiven*." She felt that here she was singing about an experience that she had not had. Where had she ever heard of such an assurance of salvation? She searched and asked and prayed, and it was not long before she was able to rejoice: "*O wonder of grace: he saved me,* he *also said to me: I pardon you! In the faith of the Word I can now rejoice, for I do not merely hope, no, I know; he is mine*." From that moment on, her life belonged to the Lord. Worldly pleasures had lost their appeal. Her greatest joy was to walk the narrow pilgrimage to life and to show others the way. It was not so fast and easy with my father. The great change that had taken place with his beloved wife he could not deny. Her prayers surrounded God's Spirit went to work on his heart. But the bonds that held him were strong. He played dances as a musician blowing the clarinet. At all such events he played a part. Yes, what would his friends and comrades, what would the priest and teacher and the many acquaintances in the other villages say? The most bitter thing was the mockery. Oh, how the Thuringians can mock! Since I am a Thuringian myself, I may well say that I have hardly anywhere else in the world have I found such biting ridicule and scorn. It was already painful enough, when now the participating friends asked, "Is it true, Frederick, that your fun-loving Mine has become holy?" Then he would talk his way out of it and say, "Let her have her joy; it will soon be over." But himself? That was too much to ask. But the invitations and the pleading and begging of his wife did not cease, so one day he promised her that he would come to a meeting in Remptendorf on Sunday. By no means, however, did he go with his wife on the beautiful Streitwaldstrasse. Then everyone would have known where he was going. His wife left much earlier, alone. He took the road in a different direction and, asked where he was going on Sunday: "To Eliasbrunn." He has always, always felt that this was a denial of the Lord, and when he later preached about Peter, he could not help but use his own behavior as an illustration. The word gripped him powerfully in the first sermon. He saw his lost condition, was ashamed of his fear of man, and like Nicodemus, he came to Jesus only at night, when no one could see him. So, between desire and doubt, good intentions and inner indecision, he was for a year and a half. He used to remember of this time of repentance, of searching and struggling, by quoting the Psalm passage: "*I wash my bed at night with my tears. I walk crooked and very stooped. For your hand has been heavy on me day and night.*" But at last, the sun of grace broke through the darkness of his soul. The peace of God entered his soul, he came forth with an open confession, and immediately joined the small, despised

congregation; for he would rather bear Christ's disgrace than to enjoy the perishable treasures of the world. The bridges behind him were broken. There was no turning back. My mother, who had prayed and wrestled with him, now shared in his joy, and when we spoke about it later, she used to say that she had been almost more joyful about father's conversion than about her own, for she had felt it was an answer to prayer, for which she would offer God praise and thanksgiving in for eternity.

The turnaround in our way of life was tremendous. Perhaps my younger brothers and sisters, who never knew the "old life," will not know much about it. For me, as the eldest, it all happened at the time when one begins to observe to observe adults keenly and to form one's own judgment. Of course, we had noticed the change in the mother. The light was not under a bushel, but on a candlestick. She told us Bible stories, taught us the new revival songs she loved to sing, and folded our hands in prayer every evening and morning. Who can describe it, what an indefinable and inexpressible blessing came from a mother praying with her children and for her children! All this happened quietly, in the closet. But when father took the decisive step, the whole family life, and not only the family life, but the work in the workshop and in the fields, the meals with helpers and guests, and even the tone of the conversation took on a new tone. Father always emphasized that one must "*look at a Christian man from the outside and from the inside. What kind of spirit animates his heart*." Clearly the scene before me, how one morning, before the coffee was poured, he had the Bible brought to him. Until now, he said, his life had been without God. But now grace had befallen him, and he had taken the Bible word as his motto: "*But I and my house will serve the Lord*." Part of that, he said, is family devotions. Then he sang a hymn verse, the mother fell in with her bright soprano voice, and we children tried to sing along as best we could. Then he read a passage of Scripture, and the whole family got down on their knees in prayer. The devotion did not last long, a few minutes at most, except on special occasions when father was seized by a deep fervor and prayed a little longer. If father was not there, mother fulfilled the duties of the priestly house duties. Every single member of the family and their needs were remembered. The guests who were present were also lifted up to the throne of grace, and certainly many a one who intentionally or unintentionally came to the home service received a blessing of lasting value at such moments. Through these devotions spread a consecration over the day and its work that was clearly noticeable., it should be noted for a better understanding of those times, that in the families something like home devotions and family prayer was something completely new. There was no such thing before. It is no wonder that this innovation caused a sensation, the subject of discussion in the villages and probably beside much mockery but also serious reflection. That the renewal of the heart would and must also show itself in outward behavior was certain in those community circles. I could not say, even from the point of view of my present knowledge, that there was a legalistic nature, which Methodism has been accused of from time to time. There was, of course, a certain type of true Christian according to which the judgment was formed--an outwardly perceptible difference between a man of the world and a man justified by faith was the general conviction, which was not shaken. But all of this was from so high a moral conception that I do not remember, at least not on the part of my parents, that the so-called right or wrong were taught to us as biblical. Right and wrong were given to us as biblical commandments. The renunciation, the abandonment of habits appeared as fruit of the new life, as an expression of life., as an expression of the freedom given by grace. So, it was with swearing. To work with the cattle without swearing was considered to be impossible. A converted farmer once asked in amazement if the oxen could also be converted. His oxen now followed without cursing.

It was the same with drinking and smoking. Father had been a heavy smoker. When he had decided for Christ, the beloved tobacco pipe, which he called his idol, flew into the fire. When he was teased, "Gelt, Friedrich, smoking is forbidden among you Methodists," he would reply to a heavy smoker, "Not at all. But you see, you can't live without your pipe, you have to smoke, you are bound with a chain, and if you haven't smoked for a few hours, then it is as if someone pulls you by the chain to the pipe, until you have lit it, put it in your mouth and with it pollute the air. Look, I don't need all that. I could smoke, I don't think it's a sin, but I don't want to; Christ has set me free. He saw it as a power of love, for the Lord's sake and the brethren to be an example to them and to show

the way to freedom, to renounce such things voluntarily. At the same time, they were for him an exercise in self-denial and self-control. With this attitude he managed without ever giving me a reminder that I remained a non-smoker from my youth to old age. I will always be grateful to him.

In the same category belongs my father's abstinence from alcoholic beverages. It was the custom of farmers and craftsmen to keep a bottle of liquor on the table, even if not every day, during strenuous work. For cutting wood, digging out sticks, for heavy hauling, for threshing the grain- one threshed at that time still with flails – one could not miss the Schnapps. Beer was not drunk so much. The population seriously believed that the brandy was cool in the summer, warm in the winter and an indispensable source of strength. Since the day when father first, whatever work had to be done in the Melle family home, there was no longer a bottle of liquor. Father also gave up drinking beer. There was some of the banter and teasing at lumber auctions and other occasions in pubs when I accompanied my father, when instead of a schnapps or a glass of beer, he would order a mineral water or a coffee. This always gave him the opportunity to tell anecdotes and comparisons. That father had a special reason for his relentless fight against alcoholism, I learned only much later. His father, whom we never met because he had died before I was born, had meant to warm himself with brandy in the forest on a cold winter day, but he had stayed too long in an inn and then got lost in a terrible snowstorm. He was found the next day as a corpse. That I myself became a sworn enemy of alcohol, I owe partly to this story, but even more to my father's example.

It was something similar with the Sunday sanctification. Was there an obligation here? Whether the father used to go to church regularly on Sunday mornings before his conversion, I am not able to say. I only know that as soon as church was over, the peasants went to the church with their knives, which they needed for chopping, and then would come to our workshop. There was a large grindstone. Father tied a blue apron over his Sunday suit, and the farmer in question turned the stone, and now it was sharpened until mother's call rang out from the living room that the dumplings were ready. Because on Sunday there is in every decent house "green dumplings". Some Sundays the workshop was almost completely filled with men working on the grindstone. It went one after the other. But those who had finished usually stayed, and the others liked to work. For that was a time when one could politicize to one's heart's content, rehash stories from the Seventies War, and also pour ridicule on such movements as that of Methodism. Then came the turnaround. The next Sunday, the "knives were sharpened once again," but in between there was a private sermon on the sanctification of Sunday, with the caveat that from now on father would gladly continue to do the work for his customers, but not on Sunday, only during the week. For this day, he said, belonged to the Lord. And he urged his customers to use Sunday mornings to attend church services.

The meetings of the Methodist community were first held at the very top of the end of the village, in a house whose low windows looked out from the Steinbühl, since there were no curtains. A journeyman of my father's took me with him one evening, protected by the dark night, to observe the brightly lit interior. That was still before father's conversion. We watched and enjoyed ourselves watching the people singing, how they knelt in prayer, how one of them preached about a Bible text in a serious manner, while the people listened intently. But already at this first glimpse, I felt the desire to be there and to understand what was happening, to understand what the preacher was saying. For Judging by the faces of the listeners, it must have been interesting. Suddenly, in the middle of the sermon, the door opened, and the huge gendarme with a saber at his side entered. He did not forbid the meeting, but he took out his notebook and wrote down the names. Obviously, this was meant to be a scare to the audience, intended to discourage them from such gatherings in the future. In the rest, Prussians were of a certain generosity. The tradition of old Fritz, that in his country everyone could be blessed according to his need continued to have an effect. For us Methodists, this made the Prussian state and its religious freedom advantages and made it dear to us Methodists, for example, than Reuss, Ä. L., where people were much more narrow-minded in this respect. The visit of the gendarme was the order of the day, there were all kinds of harassment, so the celebration of Holy Communion was forbidden. But this did no harm because the members

walked through the Streitwald to the communion celebration in Liebengrün, singing their cheerful salvation songs, which were only made more moving and impressive by the participation of the out-of-town guests. My father soon became the leading personality of the circle. He led the Sunday school, which was again something completely new in that area, and he taught children Bible stories and the basic truths of the Christian faith. What wonderful hours they were! What events for children and parents were the Christmas celebrations, where children, both young and old, recited poems and conversations, and all this in such a free and easy way that even the older generation's hearts were warmed. Today, when the Sunday school has become common property of all Protestant churches, it is hard to understand how this institution, instead of being exemplary and encouraging imitation, was the cause of conflict between the national church and the free church that grew and developed into fierce battles. From the pulpit, thunders were hurled against the congregation and Sunday school, and in the elementary school the teacher had to ask on Monday who had been to Sunday school. Then followed a digression on the "false doctrines" of the Methodists. They did not dare to punish us. We only had to stand in front of the whole school for a while. But we accepted that quite cheerfully. The compassion for the "misguided" sheep, which they tried to arouse, was transformed in the hearts of the children to pity for those who did not know what they were doing. Yes, it seems to me that such conflicts are necessary, sometimes in one form, sometimes in another. so that the new life may prove itself in storms and weather, be strengthened in temptations, and thus be strengthened for greater tasks.

The ruling church, especially when it was connected with state power, seldom understood how to make the new life, when it broke the old forms, serve its task. Even the word of a man like Prof. Christlieb, that the church must work methodically if it wished to make Methodism superfluous, was not generally understood and taken to heart. It is not to be wondered at, however, how, because of such struggles. some who earnestly wanted to be Christians left the national church. In addition to Sunday School, my father soon served in the Word meetings. His innate talent for storytelling, the gift of pictorial representation and a strong need to communicate enabled him to do so. His deep religious feeling, the overwhelming experience of his conversion, the daily research in the Scriptures, and the ever-new experiences he had in the fellowship with Christ and in his conversations with Christ and in his conversations with friends and opponents always gave something fresh and gripping. If a thought or a new page in a Bible word or a Bible story captivated him, the connections to the lives of his listeners flowed to the lives of his listeners. Thus, he was gladly listened to, and gladly he often wandered on a Sunday for two or three hours to hold a meeting. If I was allowed to accompany him as a boy, it was a feast for me, and many a good word from the father's mouth made an impression on this child's heart.

Methodism has pioneered the use of lay people in preaching and pastoral care, perhaps one of its best contributions to church life in general. Next to father from those days are the lay preachers Louis Spindler from Remptendorf and Father Zschhach from Eliasbrunn stand before me as figures who adorned the teachings of Christ, who lived what they preached, and who could say with Paul: "*Follow me as I follow Christ*." Father had two special charisms: to work for the drunkard's rescue and visiting the sick. Just a few weeks ago, I met a schoolmate who, in the joy of seeing him again and in the surge of a feeling of gratitude to my father, told me about an event of his youth that he had kept locked in his heart in memory of his mother, who had long since gone home. He might have been about four years old. His mother was again carrying a child under her heart, but his father, bound by alcohol, sat in the pub night after night. All pleading, all references to the growing flock of children, all tears were of no avail. Again, she had asked him on a Sunday evening to stay at home. But he left right after dinner and was not back at midnight. Then the mother took the four-year-old boy by the hand and said: "*My good boy, I can't take it anymore. My strength has run out. We'll go together to the big pond*." On the way there, a man came to meet them. It was my father, who was coming from a preaching service in Eliasbrunn. They hid behind a bush, but were noticed and asked the reason for this nocturnal wandering. Father comforted and accompanied them home. The next day he spoke to the man so forcefully, that he signed a vow of abstinence, started a new life, joined the Methodist church and became a friend and co-worker in the Lord's vineyard. It is

characteristic of Father that he did not tell this story to his family, or to me either. If someone was seriously ill, or even approaching death, they would send to Friedrich Melle to ask him to visit. Father became the pastor of the suffering and dying. How many a soul he showed in the last hour the way to faith. Only eternity will reveal how many souls were shown the way to faith in the Savior who died for our sins and was raised for our righteousness. Much too soon, Father passed away in his 57th year. He had been working at setting up a new heavy machine in his workshop. After the evening devotion, in which he had read a passage from his favorite devotional book, *Gossner's Schatzkästlein*, which spoke of patience and suffering, the death of Jesus Christ, and our hope of eternal life, he was overcome by severe pain. According to the doctor, it must have been it must have been a bowel obstruction. He asked my brother Bruno, who had taken over father's workshop, to pray with him. Several times he exclaimed: "*My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to pass from me, let your will be done*." After a few hours he had fought it out. The soul had left the mortal coil to be eternally with the Lord whom he had loved and served. I was stationed in southeastern Europe at that time, in 1905. Fourteen days earlier, on the occasion of the North German Annual Conference, I had visited my parents and sat with Father for several hours, and he had blessedly laid his hand on my head as a farewell. When I arrived in the Bácska, I received a telegram that my father had died. I took the train for two nights and a day and came home just in time for the funeral. I could no longer see his expressive face. The coffin was already nailed shut. A large crowd attended the funeral. The funeral oration was done by an old friend of our house, Superintendent Edmund C. Anner. Someone said to me after the funeral: "*The stone that the builders threw away has become the cornerstone*." According to the order, he received his grave—his mother was buried 30 years later at his side—directly at the door of the cemetery, on a small elevation, thus the corner place of the cemetery. On his tombstone we had the words written: "*This one was also with also with Jesus of Nazareth*." Like life, death still became a blessing. Those who were far away, who we did not know had come into contact with Father, came and told us what he had been to them. All of them remembered some help that he had given them, some word of comfort or admonition that he had said to them, the example he had been to them. Without announcements, the prayer room was filled with eager listeners, to whom I preached the gospel night after night, as long as I could stay with examples from Father's life. The blessing of my parents – of my mother I will speak later – has accompanied me everywhere. To their teachings, their example, their prayers, I owe the best of my life, including the path to communion with Christ. When I preached for the first time as a young seminarian in the small Huguenot town of Friedrichsdorf, one of the brothers asked me after the service whether I had pious parents. When I asked him to tell me how he arrived at this question, his answer was: "While you were preaching, I got the impression that there were praying parents behind you, and I just wanted to make sure that I was right." My parents were praying parents. They believed in answers to prayer. And it was really astonishing how the relatives, both on my father's and mother's side, came to the Savior one by one. All six children followed in the footsteps of the Lord. Father often prayed that God would give him the joy of being able to say on that day, "*See here the children you have given me*." Bruno in Liebengrün, the successor in the business, is a lay preacher like his father. The youngest brother, Hermann attended, the preacher's seminary in Frankfurt am Main and has been blessed as a preacher and evangelist in Hungary, Rodewisch, Bremen, Kiel and Aue. Of the sisters, Anna has found a home in America, while Lina and Lydia serve the Lord closer to home. In a Christian college in America, a professor once gave his class the task of writing down five names of people they considered to be true Christians. Not one of the students brought the five together. I believe that I would hardly be embarrassed by the same assignment. But I know that if we six brothers and sisters were to write down which true Christians we had known --many, many names would be put down—but the two names that would be in the first place: Friedrich and Wilhelmine Melle.

Friedrich and Wilhelmine Melle

(1) Lydia of Thyatira is a woman mentioned in New Testament who is regarded as first documented convert to Christianity in Europe. Several Christian denominations have designated her a saint.

(2) Ehrhardt Friedrich Wunderlich (1830 Rüssdorf, Thuringia—1895 Pittsburgh) was a German Methodist missionary and song poet. He went to the United States in 1849, where he converted to Methodism under the influence of his uncle. In 1850 he returned and began to build Methodist congregations in his home region, where he met fierce opposition from church and state authorities and was imprisoned several times. In 1853 he was sent back to America by his church because of this pressure. He reported on his experiences in the book *Glaubenskampf, or Freud 'und sorrow of a missionary in Germany*, which was published in Cincinnati. He wrote several sacred songs. His German adaptation of *Nearer, my God, to Thee* found widespread use.

Chapter 4 Can Children Be Converted?

At a theological course attended by representatives of the national churches, free churches and the community movement, the debate rose to a discussion of child conversion. It was argued that children are mostly emotional, easily carried away in times of religious movement, but that their knowledge of biblical truths is not deep enough to make lasting decisions. On the other hand, it was emphasized that many important and successful men in the work of the Kingdom of God had already made their decision for Christ at an early age and for this very reason were protected from some corrupting influences and could be prepared for their future task. Zinzendorf confessed that from childhood on he had loved the Savior and had been in communion with him. I can contribute nothing better to this question than to tell how the good shepherd sought me out and found me at a very early age, and how he then led me "on the right road for his name's sake."

Before that, a remark about conversion. We Methodists are often accused of placing far too much emphasis on conversion, and from the name we bear, that it is a special method, according to which, in our opinion conversion must take place, otherwise it is not considered genuine. It is also necessary that the day and hour of the conversion can be stated. As for the name, it has nothing at all to do with a method of conversion. It was given to Wesley and his friends as a mocking name, when they were still working in a legal manner, such as Luther in his penitential exercises and mortifications, tried by their own works long before they had been made aware of Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans and men like Zinzendorf and Peter Böhler.

Also, as far as the day and hour of conversion are concerned, I have never encountered this as a requirement. Not even in the small circle of my homeland, where everyone knew the other, where the path from darkness to light that the individual had taken lay open before the eyes of the whole community. The diversity of God's ways was always emphasized. Could someone specify the day and hour of the encounter with Jesus as the first disciples did, or the powerful intervention of God, as with Saul on the road to Damascus, or with the jailer of Philippi, people rejoiced over such experiences and took them as a sign that Christ was still working on hearts through his Spirit in the same way today as in the time of the first Christians. But there was never placed importance on the external circumstances. What mattered mattered: The main thing was and remained that everyone had a personal experience of salvation, found forgiveness of his sins and thus became certain of salvation in Christ. As a sign of the experienced and received salvation Martin Luther, "Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and blessedness." It was always sharply, very sharply emphasized in the crusade speeches that we are justified before God without the works of the law, by faith alone and that the answer to the question: "*What must I do to be saved*?*"* is still today: "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved*."

These were the thoughts that were at the forefront of interest in those revival days, and, strangely enough, also interested us children. Wonderful it is how God's Spirit works on hearts. Indirectly and directly. It is the pull of the Father toward the Son that is felt, and it is important that the heart surrenders to him, that this pull is not suppressed by a wrong education. What impression the conversion of the parents made on me; I have described in the previous chapter. Such conversions took place again and again. There was a drunkard, already abandoned by his family, who repented, found forgiveness and the strength for a new life. There was a carpenter who dreamed he went into the woods on Sunday to set the birds. [missing text in original] him and asked if he did not know that such cruelty to animals, and on Sunday at that, was a sin. When he awoke, he received an invitation to a meeting where a foreign preacher would speak. He went and was frightened, because he saw the man before him, who had appeared to him in the dream. That evening he decided to follow Christ. There were women who told him that they were like Lydia, whose heart was opened by the Lord, so that she believed while Paul was speaking. Everything was so natural, the joy was so great, and the love for one another was so warm, that even in the children the desire was awakened to become as joyful, as grateful, as happy through Jesus as these Christians were.

When I was asked, which Bible word or sermon gave me the most powerful impetus for the most important decision of my life, I would not know how to answer it. I cannot remember a particular sermon or any other word, although I was of course constantly under the powerful influence of the word. But whenever such questions come up, I always think of the example of these men and women, their friendly nature, their love for the people expressed in word and deed, their love for God and for the brethren, their testimonies of what they have experienced in Christ and were experiencing daily, their salvation songs that rang out so joyfully - in a word, their happy, childlike relationship of trust with the Father in heaven. These people were poor. Of earthly goods they possessed little. All of them had to struggle with hardships and worries, but they did not complain. No dissatisfaction with their lot was felt. No envious squinting at those who were better off. Thanksgiving and praise filled their souls for what God had done for them in Christ, and when they sang the song: "*We are all in need. I am so glad for the comfort that God gives, that he loves me infinitely and warmly*..." you could tell they were serious about it. This was not just singing with their lips. It was an expression of the heart. If I am looking for an illustration of Jesus' words, "*I have come that they may have life and be fully satisfied*," or to Paul's: "*Rejoice in the Lord always*," that circle of revival stands before my eyes.

The year I am thinking of now, I can no longer specify. It must have been in my eleventh or twelfth year. Perhaps an earlier year comes closest to reality. The small community in Liebengrün celebrated the general week of prayer. Since there was no other church or community with which to pray, they met for themselves every evening. The sections of the prayer program were read, the objects of intercession were lifted up to the throne of grace, and much was prayed for those who were seeking but had not yet found. The air of revival was also present in these prayer meetings. We children, who were not taken along, heard how some souls had again come to the certainty of salvation. It was then that the question arose: Can only adults have such an experience? Didn't Jesus make special promises to children? Because the desire, worked by the Holy Spirit, was there to give one's heart and life to he who died for us on the cross, who loves us as no one else can love us, and who is ready to make us into people who become something to the praise of divine grace. I said these thoughts to two of my schoolmates who had believing parents like us. In the evening -I think it was Saturday- the parents were at the prayer meeting again. So, we came together in my parents' house, discussed the question I had suggested and then knelt down together at the stove bench to ask the Savior to accept us, to give us his grace and to give us a heart that loves Him and will always walk in His ways. Was this just a childish game? No, it was not. We were in holy earnest. And when we prayed in this way, our hearts were so moved that the tears flowed abundantly and we were so happy and it was as if we felt the closeness of the one who came "*to seek and to save that which is lost*." Did he not first say this wonderful word about the purpose of his coming in connection with sayings about children? Will he accept us? Will he also give us the same joy and certainty? Someone - I think it was grandmother who had stayed at home – had informed the parents of the three boys about what was going on in the house at the cemetery. Unnoticed by us, these parents came into the room, knelt down next to their children, prayed with us, prayed for us. While we were shedding tears of pain, the parents were shedding tears of joy. Had not God heard their prayers and drew the hearts of their children to Himself out of goodness. And when father intoned the well-known verse from a Gerhardt song:

O doubt no longer, O believe for certain

You have nothing else to do.

Your Jesus, he also stepped into the crack for you,

In him you can rest blissfully,

It was as if we suddenly understood the essence of faith. Faith! Isn't that taking God at his word? Trusting in Him completely? Trust in the infinite love that he has manifested in Christ, who has taken away all our sins. Did he not say, "*Him that cometh to me I will not cast out*?" We have come! He does not push us out! He wants to accept us. Does he? In this moment, something of the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit could be felt, how he awakens and

creates faith and does not leave us hoping, but leads us to blessed certainty. Does he want to accept us? Faith rejoiced: "*Jesus accepts sinners, He has accepted me too!"* Joy and peace filled the soul, and fervent prayers of thanksgiving went up to God. I do not know whether the joy of the children or that of the parents was greater. In any case, there was great joy among them all. It doesn't matter what you call this experience. I think in general; it is dangerous to schematize the religious life. In my studies of the Scriptures, I have come to realize that God's thoughts are far too great and His revelation is too rich for us to be able to put philosophical and theological concepts into a well-rounded system. The content will always flow beyond the earthly human vessel. Concepts like "being born again", "having come from death to life", "to live in Christ," "to take the step from darkness to light," and some others do not mean a successive ladder of the Christian life of experience, but rather they express the one central experience, seen from a different angle or in a different image. When John speaks of those who are born of God, he means the same thing, What Paul describes under justification by faith. *Man cannot be justified without being born again*. But what matters is the right relationship of the sinful man to God, the removal of the partition between God and man, the reconciliation through the blood of Jesus Christ, and the transfer into the child state, into the kingdom of his dear Son. This coming into the right relationship with God is a personal matter for everyone. It is important that the objective grace acquired on the cross, which is available to sinful people and which is offered again and again through the gospel, becomes a subjective possession. This is the purpose of the proclamation of the Word, the goal of evangelization. It seems to me that a special task of the Methodist revival movement has been to bring these thoughts of the personal experience of salvation, which had receded very much in Germany, into the light again. This was the sound that made the string in the heart vibrate, the awakened longing and drew more and more people to the cross. Of course, we did not care about such dogmatic arguments. The new life was there, and it was having an effect in me; you have decided for Christ, you have laid yourself on his altar, you belong to him and must be a letter of Christ that can be read by others. The delicate hints of conscience were seen as a reminder of the Holy Spirit, who could not be grieved. In the case of temptations to unkindness, untruthfulness, to betray one's parents, the best weapon to overcome them was to look to Christ. If, in the case of a shadow on the relationship with the Savior, we prayed for forgiveness and purification until the sun of grace smiled kindly upon us again and the desire for prayer with the Lord was again the former strength. The doctrine that forgiveness and acceptance with God must be followed by walking in sanctification as the fruit of the new life, exerted a powerful influence. It was the time when the sanctification movement took hold of people's minds, and I remember very well how I, too, not only read the edifying articles in the "Evangelist," but also articles in the “Guide to Sanctification" with interest. The conception was adapted to the childish understanding; it may be that the high ideals of that movement, of having died and risen with Christ, went beyond the comprehension of children. The conviction, however, that the essence of sanctification consists in the inner following of Jesus Christ, in the striving to become more and more like him and transfigured into his image, to make possible the growth of his spirit in us was already impressed on my mind at that time and has been clarified and deepened by later studies, but hardly changed. The consciousness that from that hour in the parental home a new phase of my life had begun belonging to the Lord, has also helped me in the many crises of my inner and outer life, and the memory of it makes me regard that experience as the decisive turning point of my life which shaped the ideals of life, and gave direction to my thinking and my will. In the view of Christ and in the fellowship with him I had found the standard which guided all decisions, be it the choice of a profession or a life partner, the questions of education and culture, on society and the state, even on war and peace. These thoughts were admittedly only present in a germinal form, but they must have made themselves felt; for when, as a soldier, I once went with some comrades to the home of a well-known graphologist - he was the director of a of a grammar school - he ascertained from my handwriting that I must have a very definite goal in life that dominates me. I was the only soldier in whom he found this out, although my handwriting, in my own opinion, was not yet "written out" at that time.

For the further development after the aforementioned decision, that was the life and fellowship of the small Methodist congregation. What a treasure of general education, sharpening of one's observation and judgment of

people, nations, and times imparted by the study of the Bible. The sublime thoughts of divine revelation, the insight into God's activity in history, the truthful description of the characters with their strengths and weaknesses, the reference to the struggle that every human being has to fight with the powers of even Jesus could not escape, the biblical eschatology with its outlook on the completion of the work of Christ and the solution to all the problems of the individual and of the history of the nations: all this must have been the reason to make the view wide, the heart firm and the faith strong. It builds character, makes us grateful, and lifts us above ourselves, above the circumstances of our time, and beyond this world into the sphere of eternity. I remember the sermons and Bible studies, and especially the exchanges of ideas with those brothers and sisters with joy and gratitude. That in this recollection, not only the influence of the Bible on the Christian life, can be read between the lines. Of special importance for me became the intercourse of the preachers and evangelists in the parental home. Before a separate space could be rented, the meetings also took place here. In the small room with the window facing the cemetery, the guests stayed overnight. After the service they usually had a cup of coffee or tea and talked. Some of these clergymen had traveled far and wide in the world. They spoke of their work in the capital of the Reich, of crusades in Switzerland, of evangelistic journeys in the various regions of the German Reich, even of trips to the United States of America. That was interesting! The elementary school boy pricked up his ears, and if his parents would have liked to have put the boy to bed, he usually had a little schoolwork that had to be done, in order to have a reason to stay up and be there until the end, which often came after midnight. Those were quite delicious hours for me, even if I was not allowed to mingle in the conversation. One of them had recently seen the emperor and Bismarck in Berlin; another had had the privilege of hearing Kögel or Frommel; yet another reported what he had read in missionary writings about the progress of the mission. Incidentally, father saw to it strictly that once a month in Sunday school a mission story was to be told. Current books that have been the subject of much talk were also mentioned and judged. The experiences in the work of the Methodist Church were not lacking and thus turned the eye again and again to the mission of Methodism. What a great event it would be if it were possible to bring about such a community life, as was to be seen in our case, in all churches! And I remember how, in the final prayer before leaving, the thoughts expressed in the conversation were made the subject of heartfelt intercession. Thus, it came about that quite unnoticed the respect and love for the clergy of the Methodist Church grew in our hearts and the task of this church seemed greater and greater. Yes, I recognized it as a a privilege to have been placed in this church and to be allowed to work here.

So came the time of religious education. For me it was not a question whether I should receive this instruction in the national church or from a clergyman of the Methodist Church. These changed often; the transfer system did not allow them to stay longer than three years. Many, especially the young men, often stayed only a year. But the successor usually adapted quickly into the new circumstances and knew how to water where his predecessor had planted. In addition to the Bible stories, we talked through the catechism of Dr. Wilhelm Nast, which contains 364 questions. The children of three or four villages were taken together, since it was not possible for the clergyman, given his district, to hold classes in every small place. Then we, four or five, moved from Liebengrün in one afternoon to Remptendorf. On the way, the questions and answers given were listened to by each other, so that, even if we had not had much time to prepare until we arrived on the spot, the workload was done, as if it had been poured in with the Nuremberg funnel. The lessons lasted a whole four years. The 364 answers had to be learned four times. Perhaps some of the old Nast's formulations are a bit cumbersome, over the heads of the children, but they usually hit the nail on the head. We had to give a summarized presentation of the basic biblical truths, and settle in the memory as seeds that will bear fruit in their own time. It has sometimes been fun for me to realize that I can still find almost all of the 364 answers in an examination today, without any further review from my head, or let us say, from my heart. Once, the singer's father Ernst Gebhardt (1), the then head of the Leipzig district, came to Liebengrün. In the middle of winter. Grim cold and driving snow had made the three-hour journey from Schleiz to Liebengrün exhausting. Gebhardt had taken off his overshoes and changed his footwear. He wanted to dry off and warm up. Outside, the winter weather raged on. So, I told "Uncle Tu-es-gern," [Do it with pleasure] as he was called, that in a house at the other end of the village religious instruction was given by the sick

clergyman of the district. Immediately Gebhardt put on his overshoes again, trudged with me through the freshly fallen deep snow and then gave us a delicious lesson on the 10 Commandments, which were just coming up.

Gebhardt's visits, songs, and sermons deserve special mention. When it was said: "*Gebhardt is coming*", no pub could hold the people. Everyone came, even the opponents of the gospel. It was Gebhardt's gift, the revivalist song, whether in translations or in his own creations, in Germany. When he published his first hymnal, "*Die frohe Botschaft*," at first no publisher wanted to take the risk. Finally, a Swiss publishing house took it over, which brought out, I believe, 150 editions. His songs, in language and tone in a popular vein, easily imprinted on the memory and often - and I have heard this myself among the ethnic Germans in southeastern Europe - soon after they first were heard by the entire youth of a village. In his doctoral dissertation published in the "*Greifswalder theologischen Forschungen*" (Greifswald Theological Research), Pastor Lic. Dr. Walter Schulz attributes the wide spread of the "Reich lieder" partly to the inclusion of so many of Gebhardt's songs. But this is only in passing. Gebhardt attracted the people. He was an imposing appearance with a mighty patriarchal beard. He usually wore a black robe, which was made after the cut of the of the interim robes of our former officer corps. On his head a silk cap. We children stood around the harmonium to watch every movement. Gebhardt brought his own hymnal in which he had written his own new songs on the empty pages at the front and back, which he then performed in his full-sounding, far-carrying baritone voice. He did not seem to need sheet music. Also, in his sermons the poetic gift was noticeable, in apt comparisons and in songs. Once he wanted to illustrate the idea that bad company corrupts good morals. He told the story of a farmer who had to feed his young geese, who wanted to teach them something better than "pieg pieg". He bought a canary with a wonderful voice and put him with the geese. But the geese did not learn the tunes of the good singer, but after a short time, the canary only sang "pieg pieg". The comparison went deep and was not so easily forgotten.

The most important thing, however, that the Methodist community in the home district contributed to my further development, was that it put me in service and gave me the opportunity to exercise the abilities that lay dormant in me. As a 14-year-old boy I took over the leadership of the Sunday school in the aforementioned Eliasbrunn. Wasn't I too young to be a teacher? Perhaps the service as an assistant teacher in the elementary school had helped to strengthen my self-confidence. Whether someone approached me to take over the Sunday school in Eliasbrunn, or whether I myself expressed the wish, I do not remember. But I think back to those days with joy. After the Sunday morning service and the usual meal of dumplings, I went every Sunday, usually alone, the 2 hours through the forest to Eliasbrunn. Soon every time 20-30 children came to meet me 15 minutes away and told me, even before we arrived at the chapel, their week's experiences. Then I talked through the lesson with the children and taught them one song after another. It was not long before almost all the children of the village were gathered in the Methodist chapel for Sunday school, so that one Sunday the teacher came and reproached me for my activity, but fortunately without being able to take away the joy of the Sunday school from the children.

The Thuringians are a people who love to sing. Music is cultivated, and the folk songs resound in the summer in the fields and meadows and in the winter. Community life cannot be imagined without singing. Thus, the Methodists' love of the songs of salvation corresponded to a need of the people. Inspired by Gebhardt and other poets and composers, singing and music choirs were formed even in the smallest Methodist congregations. Despite my youth, I was appointed director of the mixed choir in Liebengrün, and we sang through almost all of Gebhardt's songbooks. I also founded a men's choir, which extended its singing excursions as far as Langenwetzendorf, and one winter we briefly decided to bring some violins from Markneukirchen, with which we formed a string quartet However, when we played our first performance at a festival in in Schleiz due to the nervousness of the players, we realized that we had neither musical talent nor the time available for practice in this art and gave up the attempt. The choirs, however remained in bloom for a long time, and it was part of the annual program in various villages that the "Liebengrüners" with their young conductor came in one of the dance halls and had a singing service with pieces of music, songs, declamations and speeches. Also, with the songs to preach the Gospel seemed to us a beautiful task. Soon I was even involved in the preaching service. I held my first sermons in my confirmation robe.

That happened in this way: The supervising preacher of the district usually made a schedule for each month in which all lay preachers were included. On this schedule for one Sunday, my father suddenly fell ill and therefore asked me to go to Remptendorf and to ask Louis Spindler whom he thought was at home, to stand in for him. When I arrived, I learned that Louis Spindler was out of town. I passed on my order to his son Hermann, who agreed to take over the meeting if I would promise him that, after his short introductory speech, [missing text from original] Our negotiation took place in view of the waiting, numerous congregation. Trembling, I agreed to the condition. Hermann Spindler sang, prayed from his heart, and then spoke a few words over the text: "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*." He spoke awakeningly about the necessity of repentance for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. When my turn came, I pointed out that repentance was not only important when entering the narrow way as a narrow gate, but also that those who have become believers also need to examine themselves again and again in the mirror of God's word and to repent. I then pointed to the requirement of the exalted Lord to the churches of Revelation to repent and do the first works again. That we two young people had spoken in the congregation spread like wildfire throughout the district. Also, to the supervising preacher, Robert Neupert, who was confined to his room because of an illness and was therefore doubly grateful for any cooperation, was told about it, probably in an appreciative way. For I soon received a request from him to conduct the service in the afternoon on one of the following Sundays. How, could I of all things in Liebengrün before parents and grandparents, the playmates of my youth and schoolmates, try to preach a sermon? That seemed too much to ask. There was an inner struggle. At another station it would have been easier. Father and mother encouraged me, promised to pray for me. I myself, according to my habit prayed and received the inner joy of the Lord's help, to whose guidance I had entrusted myself to dare the difficult. While searching for a text my eye fell on Jesus' words John 6:40: "*This is the will of the one who sent me, that whoever sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*" When I was looking through the Scriptures from that time, I discovered the notebook in which I had made my notes for that first sermon. I was astonished to discover that since that attempt my method of sermon preparation has actually remained the same. I had written down a few pages and then spoke freely the way God has marked out for our salvation: to look to the Son and believe in Him. The initial shyness and timidity gave way to great joyfulness during the speech, the audience praying for the youthful preacher was a receptive ground for the preaching, and in the prayerful communion that followed, many gave thanks for the rich blessing received. This was a great encouragement to me, and I think it was connected with that solemn and great hour for me, that the desire, which until then had only lain dormant in my soul like a faint anticipation and hope, took on a definite and conscious form: "*I would like to be a preacher of the Gospel one day in the church where I found the Lord, in my dear Methodist church.*"

That was in my sixteenth year. Soon I received a permit for exhorters, and later for local preachers. Preacher Robert Neupert, to whom I owe much as a fatherly friend, whose lessons, introduction into the history of the church, also into literature, as well as his selfless help in all questions concerning my further education, I will not forget. He placed me from now on in the front line of his co-workers. Almost no Sunday passed when I did not have to serve somewhere in the Word. Those were beautiful, stimulating, busy, but fruitful years. What did it matter that one had worked oneself to death during the week? When Sunday came, all tiredness disappeared. Then it was time to go to Remptendorf, Eliasbrunn, Helmesgrün or Schleiz, Oschitz, Görkwitz, 2-3 hours over hills and valleys or even further and to break the bread of life to a waiting crowd. Mostly I was accompanied by the male choir or a small mixed choir, composed of the youth. The Methodist youth were lively, ready to serve and not to stand idly by the wayside! Oh, how beautiful these walks through field and forest, to the various stations, in the circle of young people, who sang one song after the other, so that the echo was often heard in the forest. And we sang almost always by heart. The best-known songs of the hymnal, especially those of the love of God in Christ and the songs from Gebhardt's books were so firmly in the memory that there was no faltering. In between, experiences were discussed or new plans for future Sundays. Most of the time a visit from us became a singing service or a testimony meeting. The catchphrase for such gatherings was: "*The Liebengrüner Junge comes and preaches!*" On the way home, we usually sang from the impressions we had gained *"A day's work for the Savior, that is worth the*

effort!" Once, when I made the remark to someone who knew me very well that I was sorry that I had not been able to sit on a school bench from the age of 14 to 17, the answer, which surprised me, was: "*A better school to prepare you for your later ministry God could not have given you than the opportunities in the service of the Master, as they are to be found in the Methodist communities of your home district*."

F.H. Otto Melle, 18 years old

(1) Ernst Heinrich Gebhardt (1832—1899) was a German *song poet* and *Methodist preacher*. After attending grammar school, Gebhardt first studied chemistry and pharmacy, then agriculture and forestry, and in 1851 emigrated with relatives to Chile, where he worked on a farm. In 1856 he returned to Germany. After experiencing a revival, he entered the Methodist seminary in Bremen in 1859. In 1879 he was one of the founders of the *Christian Singers Association*, and editor of the *singer's salute* from the *Christian Singers Association*, and editor of the Methodist church newspaper *Der Evangelist.* He came to Methodism through his bride and later wife. He married at the age of 28 and had nine children. For his parlor meetings and evangelism, he had a small portable harmonium with him, which is now with his great-granddaughter in Bietigheim.

Chapter 5 In the Village Pulpit

On the village pulpit here, I have to weave in a small experience that characterizes my youth in Liebengrün with its conflicts and, at the same time, shows how they were solved. Our cantor was not only a teacher for the growing crowd of children, he was also an organist and sexton, whose duties included making sure the bells rang and the tower clock was set correctly. He was not able to do either one or the other himself. In the morning, of the three bells, the smallest rang for school, exactly a quarter of an hour before school began. This was the task of the 1st (top) class of boys, who shared this service among themselves and carried it out conscientiously. The ringing of the middle bell at noon was also done by the school, if there were no vacations. If all three bells were needed, for example for the ringing for funerals and for the call to the service on Sunday morning, then strong peasant boys, who had been practiced in ringing bells since their school days, helped out. That the right beat was brought in for the harmony of the tones, belonged to the art, which needed to be learned. Ringing the large bell required special practice and skill. The clockwork was connected with the bells. It struck every quarter of an hour. The full hours were given by strikes of a hammer on the large bell, while the quarters were announced by the middle one. There was no clock face at that time, as it was installed on four sides of the tower of the church of Liebengrün after the World War. So, one had to rely entirely on the striking of the clock. The movement ran a little longer than a day; the rule was that it was wound up every 24 hours. This was not so easy, because the weights were heavy. They had to be turned up from the very bottom of the tower with the help of a gear train. If the clock had stopped, it was fun to let all the hours that had fallen behind strike out, i.e. to make up for it, until the correct hour was reached. For the work of ringing the bell at noon and setting the clock, the teacher also chose boys from the first grade. This service was also a special honor, since it required skill to ring the middle bell at 12 o'clock and at least some knowledge of the complicated clockwork. Every mistake was made in front of the widest public, so to speak.

If, as sometimes happened, the clock struck 12 at 8 a.m., or if the weight of the strike got stuck in one place and then, when counting the full strokes of the hour, one came to 22, because 10 and 12 rattled off one after the other, it was by no means the clock or the clockmaker that was blamed, but the fools and doofuses who had wound and weighted the clock. So, the teacher was careful in his selection to choose the most intelligent, trustworthy and reliable boys of the 1st grade for the delicate service. As a result of my early entry into the school, I was the first in the 1st grade for two years, I possessed, despite the opposition because of Methodism, the full confidence of my cantor, who, among other assignments, also designated me for the service of the clock and bell at noon. He used to look at his watch a little beforehand, call me and say, "it is now 15 minutes to 12, go up to the tower and set the clock and ring at noon." One was allowed to choose one's own assistant from one's classmates. Then one went slowly through the church to the tower, wound up the clock, let it strike 12 and then started ringing punctually after the last strike. At least that's how I always handled things. A few minutes too early or too late did not matter. There was no radio or telephone to check whether the clock was really correct. The punctual ringing off the clock after the twelfth stroke, however, gave the impression of exact punctuality, and the opinion arose among the population that since I had the clock in my hands, it was doing its job more precisely than ever, so that one could absolutely rely on it. I calmly accepted the undeserved laurels.

One day, however, a whirlwind hit this idyll, which not only swept me away from this post of honor, but also brought me a severe punishment at school. Whether it was deserved, the reader may decide for himself. It may have been connected with the fact that some opponents of the Methodists observed with sour eyes how the teacher favored and distinguished me in spite of the fact that my parents belonged to the Methodist community. Perhaps it was also a thorn in the side of some that I should be first in school for two years; the opportunity to overthrow me from this post came then. One fine summer day, sent again to the tower for clock-telling and ringing, I chose as my companion a comrade from the Sunday school. I knew that we had some time. So, I used a few minutes to show my comrade the church, possibly also that I wanted to impress him with my expertise up to the sacristy, so I led him into the

I went to the sacristy, where the priest used to stay before climbing up to the pulpit, showed him the old books from long ago periods of the history of the parish and then climbed the stairs to the pulpit. This always appeared to us from below as a work of art. A kind of roof over the pulpit was decorated with gold, and between them hung a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Without thinking anything bad, I took a step forward so that I was standing directly at the place where the priest used to preach, and in my childish mind I could not refrain from trying to gesticulate with my hands as the priest used to do when he got into a fervor during his sermon. But whether I said anything, any Bible word, I don't remember. Only at that moment, when I was standing up there on the pulpit with my arms spread out, the door opened, one of the gentlemen from the church council looked in and saw me standing in such a pose. Furious, he slammed the door and disappeared. But I suspected that a storm was gathering over my head, set the clock, rang the noon bell as usual, then waited anxiously for things to come.

The next morning, we were punctually at our places in the school. I was the first to fulfill my duty of keeping order until the teacher arrived. When the door opened, however, the teacher did not seem to be alone. With him came Father S., the school inspector, whom we had hardly ever seen in our school. I expected an interrogation and was ready to answer, to explain the whole incident in a natural way as it had happened. But in this I was mistaken; no question came that could have been answered. The strict school inspector made the following speech: "*It has been reported to me that Melle and B. were in the pulpit of our church yesterday. They seem to have no respect at all for our house of God, they probably learned that in Sunday school. Since I cannot let such a thing pass unpunished, and as a deterrent example to others, I am putting each of these two down a pew.*" I thought to myself, if he wanted to put down everyone who had ever been in the pulpit in church, boys and girls, what an upheaval that would give. But noticed, of course, that the point of the action was really directed against the Sunday School and the Methodist community. So, I took my books and notebooks and sat down. My Sunday School classmate did the same. That the teacher slowly let me move up again after only a few weeks, always skipping a person in front, is only incidentally noted. The purpose was initially achieved. The story was debated not only in the families, but especially in the inns, it penetrated far beyond the borders of the native village and may even have contributed to making the Sunday school student, who had been lowered a bench in school, more known than would have been necessary. That they would have increased the sympathies of the people for the young pugnacious pastor, I would not dare to say. Unfortunately, my path never brought me together with him again, since he was soon transferred and we thus lost sight of him. If I had to close here, I would not have told the story, it might then give the impression that a thorn remained in my heart from that action of the school inspector, which still hurt. But that is not the case at all. I learned to look at that episode as something that had not harmed me or the Methodists. The conduct of the pastor and his hostile attitude against the Christianity of the community circles was an aberration that should not be blamed on the entire pastorate. When I had become a preacher of the Gospel, studied theology and traveled widely in the world, I was often teased by schoolmates during my visits home: "*Do you remember how you were demoted a whole grade in school because you had been in the pulpit, there was something of a pastor in you after all.*" During such visits, the people of Liebengrün usually rented one of the large dance halls, and many people from neighboring towns always came to hear Melle’s Otto - as I was generally called - when he preached or gave a lecture on a current topic. The pastor and superintendent usually attended these events as well. Then came the world war, the collapse. I had been called to Frankfurt a. M. as director of the Methodist Episcopal Church's seminary for preachers and had made a trip to the United States as one of the first Reich Germans after the World War. There I made a short visit to Liebengrün to spend a quiet Sunday with mother and brothers and sisters. Even Sister Anna had come from America to visit. Therefore, I had telegraphed that we should refrain from special events so that I could spend a few short hours undisturbed in the circle of the family. I arrived at the station in Liebschütz on Sunday morning at about 11 o'clock. To my surprise, I was expected with wagons and horses and a number of schoolmates. The spokesman was Günter's Karl", actually Karl Herold, one of the most original personalities of Liebengrün. For a while he had been a schoolman, now he had made it to night watchman and sexton. It was he who now set the clock in the church tower and was responsible for ringing the bells. He announced important events or decrees of the authorities by sounding his

night watchman's horn through the streets and then announcing the contents of his order in his powerful voice, which could be heard from afar. From 10 o'clock at night until 3 o'clock in the morning he announced the hours: "*Listen, you lords, and let us tell you that our bell has struck 12*". If there was a joyful event in a house, a wedding, a christening, the visit of a relative from afar, then it was usually referred to at 12 o'clock in the saying of the night watchman. If a death had occurred, then a comforting word of the Holy Scripture sounded with corresponding personal application. Through acquaintance and friendship with my parents and the Methodist community he had a salvation experience and also experienced something of the power of Jesus to make one free from the bonds of alcohol. He knew all the families of the village and knew how to advise and help. In his story "*Neue Mannesehre*" Gustav Schroer (1) has written a monument to him. He was a member of the church council and because of his knowledge of all family matters he became an indispensable advisor to the pastor. If I came to Liebengrün for a visit, he was with us every free hour, had questions answered about events in the world and recited to me the chronicle of Liebengrün of the past years. He was also the one who usually walked through Liebengrün and Liebschütz armed with his horn and a mighty stick and invited people to my lecture. The field-gray military coat he wore in the line of duty and the worn soldier's cap, as well as the brass horn that shone in the sun as if it were of gold, served only to put his original personality in the light. No sooner had I taken my seat on the wagon and the horses started to move than I began to be puzzled. I had the impression that something was planned to my surprise. Günter's Karl started the conversation: "*You telegraphed that we shouldn't plan any special events, because you want to spend the day with your mother, but look, that's really not possible, you have to give a lecture. Your mother will also be there, and she will be even happier if the others also get something out of your visit. We have therefore immediately after your* [missing text in original] *beating the advertising drum in Liebengrün and Liebschütz*." "*I thought so*," I replied, "*but let's leave it at a meeting. Where do we meet, in the upper inn or in the town hall?"* At first there was an embarrassed silence, the schoolmates looked at each other sympathetically, then Günter's Karl continued: "*Actually, this shouldn't be said yet, but it has to come out now: You'll be surprised about our program. After the arrival of the telegram that brought us the news of your visit, we went to our present pastor, Professor R. We told him about how many years ago you had been lowered a whole pew in the Liebengrün school because you had allowed yourself to go into the pulpit of the village church. That had been a great injustice that had to be made good. We wanted you to give us a sermon from this pulpit. Our pastor immediately agreed, saying that he would be happy to welcome you to the church. So, a service is now set for 2 o'clock in the Liebengrüner church*." This was really a surprise and a joy for me. The time until the service was short, a few minutes before 2 p.m. the pastor came to pick me up at the home of my brother Bruno. Father R. had been a professor at a high school for some time before he entered the parish ministry and was generally addressed as professor. He had his heart in the right place, understanding the tasks of the church of Jesus Christ in the new age, and I had many a beneficial discussion with him about theological and ecclesiastical questions. But now there was no time for conversation. When we stepped out of the house arm in arm to go to church, all the bells began to ring - conducted by Günter's Karl - and the population of Liebengrün and Liebschütz streamed together from all sides, also from Remptendorf (2.5 miles) and Eliasbrunn (8 miles) people were there, even from Schleiz (11.5 miles) some had come to experience this hour with us. The priest told me afterwards that he had never seen his church so full. For my mother they had placed an extra chair in front of the altar, where she sat with folded hands, her face transfigured by the expression of inner joy, while tears of gratitude shone in her eyes. Among all the images of mother that live on in my memory, this image is one of the dearest to me. That service in the church at Liebengrün seemed to me, after all the conflicts between the national church and the Methodist community, like the sign of the rainbow in the clouds after the days of the great flood. That it seemed to me, as I climbed the pulpit stairs again.

It is easy to understand why the dove, which reminded me of the Holy Spirit, warmed and softened my heart. Down in the nave sat the women and girls in their Sunday best, on the two galleries the men, among them the schoolmates who had sat with me on a bench, who had learned and practiced with me, who had also witnessed that punishment intended as humiliation. Next to them were their sons, some of them already with grandchildren,

some of them decorated with the awards for bravery in the World War. There were still a number of the old friends who had known me as a child, there sat on the 2nd gallery, surrounded by school children, Cantor Straube, the capable successor of the capable Geitner, getting the best out of the old organ that it could give, and there also sat on the 2nd gallery, where the staircase goes to the doors and to the clock, Günter's Karl with his keen eye. He would, I knew, ponder every word and perhaps years later still be able to reproduce the train of thought of the sermon, as he did to me of many sermons he had heard. There was an atmosphere of tension that reminded me of the passage in Cornelius' house, "*We are all present here before God, to hear what is commanded you by God*." What preacher of the Gospel does not know of the feeling of responsibility that grips the heart or makes it beat faster when he goes before his congregation to deliver the message that God has commanded him. The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians, gives us some idea of his feelings in preaching when he speaks, "*And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in great trembling*." Spurgeon (2) related that he never entered the platform to preach without a trepidation connected with the question whether he would really be able to be an organ of the Holy Spirit in that hour. Blessed is the preacher who retains this feeling into old age. It is not a question of being well prepared and of being able to bring something interesting to the audience, not at all a question of letting one's own knowledge and ability shine. Wherever the devil succeeds in gulling such goals before the soul and letting it be captivated by them, it is already said that "*they have their reward there*". Rather, it is necessary to be ambassadors in the place of Christ, to ask: "*Let yourselves be reconciled to God*" and as a dying man to speak to the dying, to bring them the one who can redeem from sin and death. Such a sense of responsibility gives a certain tension, which also communicates itself to the receptive listeners. I will gladly confess that in that hour the sensation described above was particularly strong in me, was particularly strong, and I am not ashamed to say that looking at my little mother down at the altar, whom I knew was praying for me unceasingly for the spirit of anointing from above, brought me a special strengthening.

It is easy to preach to such expectant gatherings. My goal was to proclaim salvation in Christ, as the apostles preached it, as the first Christians experienced it, as God wants to give it to every believer today. My classmates had said, "*Don't think today that you have to be too short, you come so rarely that we are setting up for a longer sermon*." The liturgy was short; by the time the clock above us - the pulpit is just below the tower - struck half past two, I was ready to begin the sermon. I thought that I could preach until a few minutes after it struck three, so that the whole service would not take much over an hour. I assumed that it would be a joy for me to see my homeland again, whose image had accompanied me everywhere. Often, especially during important tasks of my life in faraway countries, in Austria and Hungary, in Italy, in England, in France or over the ocean in America, homesickness suddenly entered my soul and transfigured the golden days of my youth in Liebengrün in my parents' house, school and youth friends. Most of all, however, I would have always thought of the corner place at the cemetery, and even now my first visit was to the grave of my father, who had not only told me about salvation in Christ, but had exemplified it to me. When I thanked God again for the blessing he gave me in my homeland, for the joy he gave me in seeing my homeland again, it occurred to me that there is such a homesickness also among people who have the privilege of always being allowed to live in their earthly homeland and to sit on the soil inherited from their fathers. This is the homesickness for God, for fellowship with him who is our Father, for the eternal homeland which he has prepared for us, for therein consists the greatness of the thoughts revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, that it lifts us human beings above ourselves, above our time, yes, above the earth and earthly life, shows us that we are created and called, even if one day the clods of the cemetery fall on our coffin, to enter into the eternal light. In order to make this possible for us, the heavenly Father sent his only begotten Son into the world, who showed us the way to salvation through his teachings, his life and suffering, his death and resurrection. It was self-evident from the examples I gave from the New Testament and from the experience of the church of Christ, how this is shown.

In the end, I lingered over the thought that I had grown fond of, that Christ not only forgives our sins and makes us children and heirs of God, but also graces us to become proclaimers of his salvation. It was a great thing that Jesus forgave Peter's denial, was it not even greater that he reinstated him in the apostleship and

commissioned him there by the Sea of Galilee: "*Feed my sheep, feed my lambs*". My heart was warmed. I had heard the clock strike half past three, but then I thought that in my eagerness I must have missed the next stroke of the clock. When this did not come, I looked at my pocket watch and discovered thereby that it was already half 4. So, I had already spoken for 5 quarters of an hour and now hurried to the end. As usual, we sat together afterwards at the mother's house with a cup of coffee. The service was discussed and testimonies were given about the impression of the heard word. I remained silent for a while. Then I felt compelled to ask whether the church clock was in order, as it seemed to me that it had stopped striking during the service. That was the moment that caused great merriment, which gave vent to a merry laughter. Even the uninitiated should have noticed that this was a well-done prank. Of course, the comrades were all in on it, only from me the secret had been kept. Finally, the sexton and night watchman took the floor: "*You shall know everything*," he said. "*When you began to preach, I remembered how, as a schoolboy, you often took care of the noon ringing and set the clock; the clock setting was your undoing, for there you went into the pulpit and were then put down. He will think of this now when he reads his text and begins to preach, he will not need to put his pocket watch on the pulpit, but will pay attention to the striking of the tower clock and think, after it has struck half past three, that it is time to hurry to the end. Then it shot through my head like an inspiration, that can be prevented. When the clock struck half past two, I quietly left my place on the second gallery - you didn't notice that in the crowded church -, climbed up to the tower and stopped the thick pendulum of the clock, that's how the clock stood. Only after the service did I set it in motion again. I then went back to my seat and was royally pleased to find that my thoughts were correct and the prank could be called a success. Our preacher got into the excitement like this, that he forgot the clock and the time, and from the fullness of his heart he distributed to us the word, as it says in Scripture, 'abundantly. "We rejoice in this and thank God that this has succeeded*." The resolution that this time that I would give only one lecture, however, could not now be carried out. The mother had nothing against it, and sometimes I thought whether she was not even one of the driving forces behind the scene, because first the pastor asked to hold a lecture in the evening in the church in Liebschütz - the seat of the parish office; electric lighting had been introduced in this church not long ago, so that the evening hours could be well utilized. What could I do, I agreed, and it was not only just as crowded in the church in Liebschütz in the evening, but also just as warm as in Liebengrün in the afternoon. On Monday evening I accepted the invitation to speak once again in Ziegenrück (4 miles), in a public hall presided over by the superintendent of the regional church. That evening I spoke about my trip to America, the impressions I would have received over there, and the lessons we would have to learn from our collapse in order to be able to strengthen the faith in our part as Christians and to cooperate in the reconstruction of our collapsed nation. I consider the detailed report that the Ziegenrücker Zeitung brought about that evening to be one of the best articles written about one of my lectures. I did not find out who the author was, because I had to leave again on Tuesday morning for new service in the preacher's seminary in Frankfurt am Main. I then preached in the village pulpit in Liebengrün several more times, for example at the death of my beloved mother and on my first visit home after being elected bishop. Each time I felt the service in the small church as a privilege and a special mission, compared to which some of the great opportunities for a testimony in assemblies of thousands pale in memory. But what still shines brightest for me is that first hour, desired and arranged by my schoolmates, as a kind of rehabilitation for a punishment in elementary school, that hour when, while I was standing in the pulpit delivering my message, the church clock stopped.

(1) Gustav Schroer German folk writer 1876-1949 Most of his novels had heroes rooted in the countryside. His work can be assigned to bourgeois realism. It sometimes shows strong nationalistic features.

(2) Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834 - 1892) was an English Particular Baptist preacher. He remains highly influential among Christians of various denominations, among whom he is known as the "Prince of Preachers". He was a strong figure in the Reformed Baptist tradition.

Chapter 6 Assistant's Time (1893—1895)

The assistant system is a peculiar institution in the Methodist Church in Germany: In addition to various examinations and recommendations which a young man must pass through before he can be sent to the seminary for theological training proper, one or more years of work as an "assistant" are required. That is, when he has proven himself in service to his home congregation, and has received from the quarterly conference, after an examination to be made by the supervising preacher or superintendent, a certificate of permission to serve as an exhorter or lay preacher, he may be employed as an assistant to the preacher in a larger district where such assistance is desired or appears necessary from the standpoint of management. He shall then assist as such under the direction of his supervising preacher in the Sunday schools and youth circles and in religious instruction. If he is musically and vocally gifted, he takes over one or the other choir and practices his pastoral skills with the sick and other home visits. But he also has Bible lessons to give and preaching to do. In this way he learns about the many duties of a preacher and shepherd of the congregation, so that he can test himself "*whether he has it to lead out*." Equally important is the other side, perhaps even more so: a congregation headed by experienced brothers and sisters has an opportunity to get to know him, his character, his spiritual equipment, his gifts, and on their recommendation at the end of the assistant's time it depends entirely whether the Annual Conference, in which each individual case is thoroughly dealt with, recommends him for study in seminary and thus paves the way for him to enter the traveling preaching ministry of the church. The assistant is a lay preacher, subject to the same rules as the other brethren who, in addition to an earthly profession, serve in the preaching of the Word on Sunday or even during the week; but the assistant has already given up his profession, devoting all his time and energy to congregational service with the intention of becoming a full-time salaried minister of the Church. The thought underlying this order is this: For a preacher of the Gospel, the first and foremost requirement is the inner, divine calling. Neither state diplomas nor certificates from a higher school can replace this calling. Perhaps one can be a merchant, a civil servant, a lawyer, etc., while the inner inclination is actually more directed towards music, poetry or anything else.

There have been Christians, for example, who, as civil servants, conscientiously and punctually fulfilled the duties of their position, but as soon as their term of office was over, used every free moment to work as writers. This is not possible with a pastor, a preacher of the Gospel. There is no such term of office. 8- or 10-hour working days cannot exist there at all; he is always in the service of his heavenly King. A holy love for the souls entrusted to him must fill him, urge him to preach the glorious Gospel, and there must be no greater joy and no higher satisfaction for him - on or off the pulpit - than to win souls for his Lord and Master and to lead them further along the path of life. Questions of income, of the prospects of a pleasant position and provision are of no consequence. If I do it gladly, I shall be rewarded; if I do not do it gladly, yet the office is commanded me; "*woe is me*," said the great apostle to the Gentiles, "*if I preach not the gospel*." The prophets of old spoke of it being like fire in their bones, which would have consumed them if they had not obeyed the Lord's call to be his messengers. Men who have similarly become certain of their calling will have a firm hold in the storms of temptations, will not despair in disappointments which no one is spared, and will also possess the gifts which justify further training. The time of assistance should serve to ensure that personalities to whom this vocation applies and their suitability for the preaching ministry are recognized in time or recognize in themselves. Perhaps the best way to shed light on this institution and to highlight its shortcomings and advantages is to describe the most important experiences and observations of my own time as an assistant. The experiences described in the previous chapters, and especially being thrown into the practical work of preaching and pastoral care at such a young age, led me to consider the question of whether God wanted to lead me into the preaching ministry. Goethe says somewhere that our desires are inklings of abilities that lie within us and strive for development. I nurtured the desire to become a witness of Jesus Christ and a preacher of the Gospel very early. Soon after that decisive childhood experience in which I chose Christ as the Lord and leader

of my life, this desire became stronger and stronger. It was nourished by my contact with the numerous preachers who frequented our house or whom I heard preach. I was very careful not to express this desire, and I had no idea that my mother had been harboring the same desire in her heart since her conversion and prayed for its fulfillment almost daily.

The thought of becoming a pastor of the national church never occurred to me; the struggles and also the mocking nature of Pastor S., by whom I had been belittled in school, had probably contributed to this. The image of the Methodist preachers, on the other hand, stood in bright colors before my soul, and as I gradually became acquainted with the mighty evangelists of the Methodist revival movement, who in a time of religious torpor (as in Ezekiel's face the field full of dead men's bones) awakened new life by their call to repentance, the ideal of my future ministry was formed ever more clearly and firmly. The reception of my little testimonies, the edification of the communities and the desire of more and more circles for my ministry were encouraging and clearly pointed in the same direction. I talked to my God about it, asked him for guidance, but closed my desires deep in my heart, firmly believing that if God wanted me to be a pastor, he would pave the way and give his impulse from outside. I was almost afraid to give any impetus by any step on my part to discuss the question of whether I might not - when older - first be called upon to serve as an assistant. In reality, I was already doing the full service of a helper, even if only as a sideline, but the desire locked in my heart grew stronger and stronger. All other goals lost their attraction, and it became a firm certainty to me that the Lord, who bought me with His blood, had set me apart and called me to His service of the Gospel. I still remember clearly how I once - that must have been before I was called to preach - hiked all alone up the steep, lonely, legendary Saalesteig from the mill in Walsburg to Liebschütz, letting my thoughts run free. At first, I was impressed by the magnificent nature, then came the legends of the region and its characters, and finally, at the thought that one day I would have to leave this beautiful region, I had a kind of vision: I felt transported to distant lands, saw myself in a large hall, surrounded by thousands of listeners, to whom I enthusiastically preached in a foreign language. At that time, I must have been thinking of serving in the outer mission. That vision was so strong that I knelt down in the forest behind a bush and renewed my surrender to God. At the same time, however, I felt that this experience could be interpreted as vanity, as "striving for high things," and I made up my mind not to tell anyone about it, not even my mother.

Later, much later, decades later, when I stood before mass meetings, such as the World League Against Alcoholism convention in Winona Lake, (1) or the Methodist Ecumenical Conference in Atlanta, USA, (2) where that vision was literally realized on an even greater scale, the memory of it often came to me suddenly, like a flare. Today, for me, it belongs to the mysterious work of God, through which He selects and prepares His instruments "from the womb". The story of how Peter was sent to the Gentiles has always been before my eyes. The apostle had a vision: a cloth with four-footed and crawling animals was lowered from heaven and a voice called out, "*Peter, get up, slaughter and eat*" Peter replied, "*Lord, I have never eaten anything common or unclean*", to which the voice replied, "*What God has cleansed, do not make common*". While Peter was thinking about what this face might mean, there was a knock at the door downstairs, three men had come from Caesarea, sent by the pagan centurion Cornelius to call Peter to Caesarea to answer seeking pagans' questions about Christ there. Only now did it become clear to the apostle what God had wanted to tell him through the face. One such knock on the door for me in the summer of 1893 was the surprising request from the district superintendent, Gustav Hempel, (3) whether I would be willing to go immediately to the Zschopau-Dittersdorf district in the Erzgebirge Mountains of Saxony as an assistant. The supervising preacher there was Hermann Böttger, a fellow student and classmate of our preacher Robert Neupert, my fatherly friend, teacher and advisor. I assume that the two of them had talked about me, that I had been recommended by my preacher, although he did not like to let me go in the revival time in which we lived. It would also be possible that he held out the prospect of my initiation into the ministry for later, when I had grown a little older and more mature. For Böttger's district, however, which urgently needed a helper, no one else could be found right away. So, they came back to me and decided to send the "boy" from Liebengrün, who still had 2 months until his 18th

birthday, to Dittersdorf. Of all the people, I myself was the most surprised by the experiment, and even though I rejoiced in the depths of my heart when I saw the fulfillment of my wishes so close, I also seriously considered whether I was not too young for the task set. More than once I read through the first chapter of Jeremiah; the prophet tries to avoid responsibility by the excuse: "*I am not fit to preach, I am still too young".*

But the Lord answered, "*Do not say I am too young, but go wherever I send you and preach what I call you to preach; do not be afraid of them, for I am with you*." It was also a joy to my parents to see their eldest called to the gospel ministry. But they did not think that this would happen now, since all the other children were still small. I was the only one who could help in the struggle for daily bread, and I had already helped; in the workshop I provided help, in the field I could represent my father even better. In that year, the construction of a railroad from Triptis via Ziegenrück to Lobenstein was in operation, which meant opportunities to work and earn money. I had also made myself available and brought in 80 to 100 Reichsmark earnings per month, had already saved up for a suit, a pair of boots and - what an achievement this was - my own pocket watch. Children, who until the end of their years of study have all these essentials bought for them by their parents, will hardly be able to feel what such a poor village boy feels when for the first time in his life he can walk down the street in such a self-earned habit and silver pocket watch with chain. You are smiling, dear reader; to strengthen self-confidence and the spirit of enterprise, it was definitely a proven means for that. The parents breathed a sigh of relief at this turn of events, because in addition to what I bought for myself, I gave mother half of what I earned each week, which was very much needed in the budget of the household. I did have to get up at half past 4 every morning, since I had to walk an hour to get to work, but that didn't matter. It was nothing but an hour's walk each morning and evening through the woods and fields. The work brought interchange with workers from all parts of Germany, which gave me a good insight into the psyche of the working classes, for which I was afterwards quite grateful, and it in no way prevented me from doing the Sunday service in church. Wouldn't it be better to wait at least a year or two before I was employed? That would have meant something economically for the family. But these considerations were put aside, the doubts were overcome. In a solemn family service, God's blessing was invoked on my path. Mother packed me a little satchel for the journey, and father accompanied me a long distance on the way to Schleiz to the railroad. My chest filled with hope, but also with some fear, I drove towards my destiny.

Already on the way, I noticed that my youth was a cause for concern. The people back home, who had known me since childhood, were used to it. But what should people from far away expect from such a "boy"? Father Sch. in Plauen, to whom I was introduced, examined me from head to toe, like the leading officer of a training commission of the future recruit, and said apprehensively: "*Well, it remains to be seen whether something will become of the little fellow.*" That didn't sound very reassuring to my ears. Father Weigel in Zschopau exclaimed when he saw me, "*So you are to be our new assistant*?" He called all the assistants “you”. I arrived in Dittersdorf, I think, on Friday. On Saturday I went to the barber to get shaved for Sunday. I then learned that the barber had said to a member of the congregation, "*But you got a very young assistant preacher this time*." Probably he had found that there was still to little to shave off. And yet the Jeremiah word always echoed in my heart, "*Say not, I am too young; I will be with thee*." My predecessor was still there, Arthur Voigt, older than me by at least 5 years. He was taking his leave to go to the preacher's seminary. On Sunday morning we held the service together, I the inaugural sermon, he the farewell sermon. The choir sang a joyful welcome song to me, and a farewell song to him. I spoke about the words: "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God that makes blessed all who believe in it*"; he on the text "*Where your face does not go with me, I will not go up*." Seldom have I been more encouraged after a sermon than on that quiet Sunday morning in Dittersdorf, when for the first time, the members of the congregation, assembled in the lovely little chapel, pressed my hand so cordially, one by one, saying in their unaffected, simple, affectionate manner, in which there is no falsehood, "*We pray for you*." With Brother A. Voigt, however, warm friendship has bound me since that day. My supervising preacher was Hermann Böttger, who was probably the most popular preacher in the Ore Mountains at that time. His whole personality radiated love. In his sermons he was evangelistic, simple and captivating. He had an abundance of apt illustrations at his disposal. His gift was to interpret and apply even lesser-known texts of the Bible in an exciting way. The popularity, however,

was still related to his treatment by the authorities. It was the time when in Saxony the conflict between the national and the free church had reached its climax.

New harassments against the Methodists were invented all the time. For example, there was a decree that only persons who had left the church were allowed to take communion with us. Among Böttger's communion guests in Burkhardtsdorf was a woman who had not taken the step of leaving the national church. Someone had reported this, and the preacher had to go to jail for a few days. This was the most stupid thing that the opponents of the Methodist movement could have done - for Böttger and the Methodists this jail time proved to be a means that promoted the work. I myself, of course, had to deal with such harassment. One always had to be prepared that in a meeting, especially in places where the work was new, the gendarme appeared and supervised the meeting. One time preaching was allowed, but not praying, another time the blessing had to be omitted at the end under threat of fines, so that the meeting would not "appear" as a church service. Probably in no other part in Germany did the Methodist work have to struggle with more difficulties, hostility and persecution than in Saxony, and strangely enough, nowhere did it spread more quickly and become more deeply rooted than here. The struggle welded hearts together, the injustice suffered drove into prayer, and the commitment to remain faithful to the Lord were means of growth and strengthening. Observations and experiences that were very beneficial to me, the young assistant. The district had 12 or 14 wards. The assistant had to preach as often as the supervising preacher: three times every Sunday - the appropriate routes from one station to another in between - and then a weekly meeting every evening for two weeks, except on Sundays. The following 14 days were then a little easier, as it was the turn of the clubs. If you ask me today what I preached then, I am amazed at the patience and devotion of the dear brothers and sisters. Not to forget that the air of revival was blowing. The newborn children were, as Peter writes, "*eager for the milk of the Word of God*". Conversions took place throughout the year. The home visits brought out the questions and worries and needs of the listeners, the Bible was read diligently by all, so that there was actually never a lack of material. In addition, I read every biblical treatise that somehow came into my hands, and it was often enough to read a devotion in Goßner's "Treasure Box" to get the thoughts for a sermon or Bible lesson. All in all: It was a beautiful time, and when, one evening in a meeting in which I had called in a childlike simple way to follow Jesus, it happened that a young man prayed at the end deeply moved for forgiveness of his sins and came in faith to the certainty of salvation, and my joy was full. It was brother E.R. from Herold. I have always regarded this conversion as a seal of the Lord on my calling to the preaching ministry.

In Dittersdorf, where I had to preach on a Sunday morning, there were some older, experienced lay preachers who were well versed in the Scriptures and to whom I owe much. Dear Mother Frank, with whom I lived, and her son-in-law Robert Bretscher with his Gustel showed me much love. How nice it was when I came home from a week's tour, that we sat together here in the cozy little room and I had to talk about what I had experienced. There false judgments were corrected in a careful way, reports were given about sermons and Bible lessons they had heard during my absence, and experiences were exchanged about the inner life. I often found that simple people who had educated themselves on the Word of God possessed a psychological knowledge and empathy for the souls of others that many a great psychologist could have envied. There was Mayer Ernst, who lived in the apartment above the chapel, excellently gifted musically, a clear head and captivating speaker. How sometimes we had done homiletic exercises together. And there was Brother Langer, whom I called my thermometer: In the service in Dittersdorf, he usually sat on one of the first pews. A mighty pair of glasses adorned his thinker's face with the high forehead, from which could be read whether an object captivated him, aroused his applause or his displeasure. If he did not agree with an execution, if the thoughts presented seemed too general, too smooth, his forehead wrinkled and his eyes looked gloomily down at the floor under his glasses. If the preacher captivated him with a gripping thought, illuminating a new side of the text, then he moved his glasses to his forehead, his eyes lifted up to the man in the pulpit, and he could then look so approvingly, gratefully and encouragingly that one felt lifted and strengthened. His sermons took him three times as much material as others because he spoke terribly fast; "it's" a sister once said, "like pouring out a sack of potatoes." In spite of all the effort he made, the natural disposition always had an effect. I cannot think of the year as an assistant in the Zschopau - Dittersdorf district

without feeling a sense of gratitude to those brothers and sisters who, through their love, trust and example in the Christian walk, have been much more to me than they were aware of.

One Sunday morning, when I had just read my text, my supervising preacher appeared and sat down in the back pew. He had not yet heard me preach, and I thought that he had come to see what his young assistant was doing in the pulpit. I had chosen as text the Epistle to the church in Laodicea and had made my train of thought without any suggestion from somewhere by sinking into the passage completely independently. I spoke of what the Lord acknowledges, and then stopped at the "*But I have against thee that thou shouldest trust in first love."* Then I reminded the listeners of the time of their first love in following Jesus and concluded with the question where the reason might lie that it was no longer so. My supervising preacher did not say a word about the sermon. I thought I had said nothing other than what every Christian could say to himself when reading the passage. But Brother Langer's glasses were raised to his forehead during the sermon. He must have sensed what I was thinking. Then, as we sat together at lunch, he said: "*You need not be despondent about this morning's sermon, Brother Böttger was able to hear it too, just preach like that all the time, the congregation will thank you for it*." That judgment of the great hosier - the people of Dittersdorf almost all worked in the large hosiery factory at the train station - meant more to me than later criticisms during the homiletic exercises in the preacher's seminary. At the 1894 conference I was transferred to the Zwickau district in Saxony. My assistant colleagues, who had entered at the same time as I, all came to the preacher's seminary. In my case they said, he is only 18 years old - the conference will have been in June - he can well wait another year, especially since a replacement is not to be had now. So, I tied up my bundle and said goodbye to the field of work I had grown fond of and moved first to Zwickau and later to Planitz. Zwickau was a city parish, the mother parish of Methodism in Saxony. The supervising preacher was Wilhelm Schütz, a man like Stephen, full of faith and the Holy Spirit. The thick black hair and the equally black beard gave his face a serious appearance, but from his eyes shone kindness, gentleness, the love of Christ. In the difference between my first and second supervising preacher, the richness and diversity of the gifts given for the evangelistic ministry appeared before my eyes. If Hermann Böttger was the born evangelist, the popularly captivating speaker, the congregation saw in W. Schütz the connoisseur of the Scriptures who knew how to dig deep into the shafts of the Word, the shepherd who nurtured the won sheep so that they grew and strengthened, the father in Christ who was concerned to lead the congregation to the goal of perfect manhood in Christ. He also dealt a lot with eschatological questions. I usually had to come to him on Monday mornings to show him the drafts of my Sunday sermons, which were then discussed. He was also happy to give me plenty of advice for my work, which gave me many ideas. The fact that I differed from him in some theological views despite my youth did not disturb the fraternal relationship in the least; indeed, sometimes I felt as if mutual love had only grown through such discussions. For a few weeks I lived in Zwickau. W. Schütz was suffering badly and had to spend an extended vacation in Switzerland, the home of his wife. So, I was alone for almost two months, able to work out plans and do as I pleased. Since it was vacation time, some of the families were in the countryside, but that was not noticeable at the services in the not exactly beautiful, but cozy old chapel in Richardstraße. It had a capacity of about 400 people, and on special occasions about 500. Then, however, every standing room was occupied. Some neighboring districts, which now have their own chapels and preachers, were still connected to Zwickau. On Sunday morning, brothers and sisters from Reinsdorf and from Planitz walked to the main service in Zwickau, from Planitz alone often 40 to 50 men. The evening meeting was always advertised especially in Zwickau. So, there was almost always a full house, and it was a joy to preach to such receptive hearts. That in spite of the summer and the absence of the beloved preacher the services were not less attended filled my heart with praise and thanksgiving. I accepted it as a grace from the Lord. During the week I diligently made house calls, soon got to know all the members and friends, and made the discovery that the same spirit of brotherly love and fellowship prevailed in Zwickau and Planitz. The same trust towards the young assistant was also evident, as I had experienced in the Dittersdorf district, from which it had not been easy for me to say goodbye. Only 20 years later an old brother told me, when we came to talk about that time, that it seemed to many at that time, as if something like springtime blows went through the community. When W. Schütz returned from Switzerland recovered and invigorated, two

brothers from Planitz came one day with a handcart, loaded my boxes with the few belongings and brought me to Planitz.

Planitz is a mining town. At that time, almost all the men worked many hundreds of meters deep in the earth every day. Day and night shifts alternated. It is a hard job. When the men came home in the evening, blackened by coal and exhausted, having given up their last strength in work, so to speak, I often thought that any higher interest must also have been consumed by the treadmill of the hardest day's work. But as soon as they had washed off the soot and fortified themselves with a meager supper, they appeared as renewed people, mentally and spiritually interested, receptive to all great thoughts, and it did not even occur to our brothers that they could be absent in the evening in the Bible study, in the singing choir, in the music lesson, at the meetings of the brother circle. They were there, were at it, were ready for any service for the Lord and His kingdom. Miners have played a part more than once in the history of Methodism. Could not the miners of Planitz and Zwickau be called to a similar task? The first weeks I still walked every Sunday morning with the Planitz crowd to the church service in Zwickau. It did the young assistant good to hear a rich, well thought-out biblical sermon every week. But I discovered that only the younger men and women could make the one-hour trip through long Planitz, around the Swan Pond, to the church on Richard Street in Zwickau. Many who would have liked to have a Sunday morning service had to do without. Should we not also meet in Planitz in the morning? No sooner had I voiced the suggestion in the circle of some brothers than it was decided to send a deputation to the supervising preacher and ask him to give his approval. W. Schütz was not immediately enthusiastic about the idea. He feared that the absence of the Planitzer on Sunday mornings in Zwickau would leave too big a gap. But he saw the need and included morning services in Planitz in the work schedule. Already the first service had twice as many listeners as usually made the pilgrimage to Zwickau, and the further course of events proved that the new order was a step in the right direction. Recently - I am writing these lines in 1943 - when I made a visit to Planitz and had the privilege of preaching in the magnificent new church on Sunday mornings to 800-1,000 people, I was suddenly reminded of that first Sunday morning service many, many years ago. "*Know*," it sounded in my heart, "*that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*."

I do not remember any special evangelistic meetings that year. We believed that every meeting was an opportunity for evangelism. As a rule, the supervising preacher and his assistant alternated in serving the various stations. I also preached twice a month in Zwickau, while Brother Schütz was then in Planitz. We took it as a rule that souls decided for Christ. A Sunday evening service from those days is deeply engraved in my memory. After the sermon I had the impression that there were souls there who would like to take the decisive step of their lives. We joined in a community of prayer. Then one noticed how holy winds were blowing, and when I gained the inner freedom and joy to ask if there was someone there who had decided to follow Jesus and wanted us to pray for him, five or six of the miners, one or two of whom had been known as opponents until then, stood up, came forward to the altar and, with the intercession of the whole congregation, received the testimony of the Holy Spirit that the Lord had accepted them. This was the beginning of a movement that continued to spread. Those hours contributed a great deal to making me even more certain of my calling to the preaching ministry. I tried to work on my further education as much as I could. The truth of the word "If thou wilt learn, teach" dawned on me. In my studies of history, I came across the fact that our old teacher in Liebengrün had treated ancient history too stepmotherly. Here was a sensitive gap that had to be filled. Enthusiastically, our brothers agreed to found a young men's and men's club, in which we would discuss all kinds of current issues on a weekly basis and I would introduce them to world history. I prepared thoroughly and then gave lectures on Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. We didn't get any further than that, because such a year is short. And it was self-evident that some variety had to be provided like other topics of interest. Not only I, but some of the brothers who are still alive today, as they told me, still like to think back to those hours. The Friday afternoons that I was allowed to spend in Wilkau with Preacher Neupert and his kind wife offered me much stimulation. R. Neupert had been transferred from my home district to Wilkau, where we have a beautiful little church and a lively congregation. I gladly accepted the invitation to spend one afternoon each week with dear friends. After lunch I walked the short hour from Planitz via Reinsdorf to Wilkau. In the summer we sat in the garden, in the winter in the cozy,

warm parlor. The time was strictly divided: Three quarters of an hour of French lessons given by the preacher's wife, her husband and me; for she came from a Huguenot family and spoke French as her mother tongue. Then three quarters of an hour of English. Here Brother Neupert was the teacher, his wife and I the pupils. Then coffee was drunk, opening the debate about our experiences, about time conditions, about the work we were at, about books we had read. It was a delicious give and take, and the older friends did not mind listening attentively to the "boy" from Liebengrün, whom they knew well, when he gave, for example, his impressions about books, biblical, theological and others, because he was one of those people who have the need to share found treasures of new thoughts with others. Perhaps such a need to share is part of the equipment of a future preacher. Thus, I had once bought Goethe's *Faust* in a popular edition in Zwickau and read a large part of it on the way to Planitz, along the Fuchsgraben. Up to that point, I had only become familiar with judgments about Faust; the work itself had not yet come into my hands. It fascinated me so much that I read it several times, underlined important passages, memorized parts, and when I came to Wilkau on Friday, I gave a lecture on "*Lessons for the Sermon from Goethe's Faust*". I especially recited the passage from the prologue: "*If you do not feel it, you will not hunt it down, if it does not penetrate from the soul and compel the hearts of all listeners with primal pleasure. But you will never create heart to heart, if it does not go to you from the heart*!" Are these not truths that even a preacher should take to heart? The echo that my remarks found in Wilkau helped to pursue the thought further, and as a teacher of homiletics I also always interspersed a lecture on "*Homiletic Suggestions in Goethe's Faust*." I had not yet read the history of preaching. The names of the important pulpit orators, if they were not otherwise prominent in church history, still remained unknown to me. Then I saw a cart on the street with antiquarian books on it, among them a book of sermons: "*Elijah, the Thisbiter*", by F. W. Krummacher. Price 60 pfennigs. This seemed cheap for the thick book and corresponded to my very modest budget. We assistants received a monthly salary of 50 marks. But if there was a deficit in the conference treasury, which was always the case during my time as a helper, 10% was deducted to pay off the deficit. Well, we got by all the same. I acquired the Thisbiter and started reading. No novel or biography had ever captivated me like that. A man "*as if hewn from the rock, as if baptized with fire from Horeb*." The connection of the story with New Testament thoughts, the descriptions of the individual scenes carried by a bold imagination, the brilliant, pictorial, ravishing language captivated me most powerfully, and I could hardly wait for Friday afternoon to tell my Wilkau friends about my new find and to read them some samples. Some years later - friend Neupert will forgive me if I insert this - I passed through Zwickau, where he had meanwhile been transferred. There they told me about the wonderful sermons they were now hearing. Their preacher continuously treated the life of Elijah the Thisbiter, and it was so exciting that they could hardly wait until the next sermon. I myself did not dare to treat the life of Elijah in a series of sermons until about 10 years later down in Southeastern Europe. I would like to add a small experience from my time as an assistant, because I believe that it contributed a lot to influencing my homiletic way of working. I went around to all kinds of stations, talked a lot with people, especially about what sermons they had heard. This gave me insight into their judgment, sometimes thoughts for my own preaching. Now there was a dear preacher who was not known as a thinker in his own right, but whose sermons were very famous. He could treat the strangest texts, such as the story of Samson who found honey in the carrion of the lion he had torn apart a few days before, or Solomon's dromedaries, and the like. This naturally aroused admiration, also on my part, when I heard the reports, until one day I had to spend the night in his study and discovered on this occasion that the strange texts with the interesting applications were all taken from the famous Baptist preacher Ch. Spurgeon's sermon books. Spurgeon, whom I first met through this encounter, was popular at the time. His sermons, which he preached on Sundays in London to a congregation of 5,000-6,000 people, were reprinted by newspapers and translated into many languages. I do not know whether so many sermons have been printed by any preacher as by him. He himself humorously talks about how he heard one of his own sermons in a village church during the vacations, and I have nothing against it if a preacher in the urge of work uses the good thoughts of one of his colleagues in his sermon. That is not at all the reason why I mention the matter. It only raised the question in me at that time whether I should not also use a little more sermon material from others in order to become more thoughtful, more captivating. Then I met again with that brother who knew Spurgeon so well. He asked me about my text for the following Sunday. I told him that God had given me a

most wonderful word: "*I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined with fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest put it on, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not revealed; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see*" (Rev. 3:18). I had never heard preaching on this word of repentance, nor had I read a sermon or treatise on it, but had come across this verse while reading the Scriptures. It had gripped me, and I was so full of the thoughts it contained that I gave the gist of my sermon as forcefully as I could without any inhibition. After a few days I arrived at the place where that brother had preached on the Sunday in question. Without daring to ask, the last "wonderful sermon" was described to me: "*The preacher spoke more forcefully than ever. His thoughts were new and fresh. We have long to feast on this sermon*." I suspected that it would again be thoughts of Spurgeon. When I asked what the text was, I learned to my greatest surprise - the expression is really in place there - that the text had been, "*I counsel thee to buy gold of me*...", from Revelation John, chapter 3. I could also tell that the train of thought had moved substantially along the lines that I had worked out. I did not reveal why I had to smile a little, did not make any other use of what I had experienced. But that a sermon of mine had been preached after, that it had been received and praised by the listeners in the same way as a sermon by Spurgeon, yes, that it, as I had to assume, had really made a deep impression and had become a blessing, this strengthened the young preacher's self-confidence and showed him that he need not strive to become, say, a Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Krummacher, Kögel, or Frommel, but that his aim must be to awaken and cultivate the gifts which God has given him and no one else. Then he will be able to use him to be his messenger. I would not like to miss the time as an assistant in my career. It is a valuable link in the chain of rich experiences of God, through which a wise hand guided me into the service of my Master.

(1) World League Against Alcoholism was created in 1919, the new organization cooperated with temperance groups in over 50 countries on six continents. It provided assistance including speakers and educational materials to advance an international temperance movement. The World League Against Alcoholism not only sought to prevent alcoholism but any consumption of alcoholic beverages. Otto Melle attended the convention in Winona Lake, Indiana in 1924.

(2) Methodist Ecumenical Conference Otto Melle attended some of these conferences in the US.

Chapter 7 In the "King's Uniform" (1895-1897)

Whether I should devote a chapter to military service in peacetime? Our generation, which has lived through two world wars, can scarcely summon up any understanding of the idyllic soldier's life as we led it then. What are the drills of those days in the barracks yard, the field service retreats on the grounds near the garrison, the target practice on cardboard targets, the royal parades and imperial maneuvers, compared to the Battle of the Marne, the fight for Verdun, the advance in Poland, or even the gigantic struggle for Stalingrad? But my memoirs cannot be a description of the war in this or any other form. The soldier does his duty in peace or in war without philosophizing about peace and war. However, in the book of my life a page would be missing, which is essential in my development, if I wanted to pass over that time. Like the air of revival in the communities of the homeland, like the service as an assistant in Dittersdorf in the Ore Mountains and in the coalfields of Zwickau and Planitz, the years of soldiering in the beautiful city of Florence on the Elbe form stations on the path that God led me, stations whose milestones indicate not only periods of time, but experiences and observations that give meaning to the work and struggles, the striving and also some disappointments. Just as I would not want to miss my time as an assistant, my service in the military has also brought me imperishable fruits that probably could not have grown and matured for me - and for others - in any other way.

In the spring of 1895, it was announced that all young men born in 1875 had to present themselves for military service. So, there was a prospect for me of 2 years as a soldier, unless I asked to be deferred so that I could first attend the preacher's seminary and perhaps then make it possible to serve one year, although it was clear that I could in no way expect the necessary financial means from my parents. But was it not possible that I would be deferred for a year anyway? My studies were to begin in the fall, and the rest would be determined then. As much as I would have liked to put on the King's Uniform - so they said at the time - a year's time gained for my future profession would have been worth a lot. It was also very tempting to join the army only when my theological studies were behind me. In addition, my colleagues who had joined me as assistants had already completed a year of their studies. I was seized by the desire to spend at least some more time with them in the seminary and began to present all these wishes, thoughts and plans in prayer to the Father in heaven, as I was accustomed to do. Thereupon, a calming of my inner being occurred, which was based - without my becoming aware of it - on the hope, corresponding to my own desires, that I would be put back in any case. In this hope I went to the medical examination.

I was Prussian and could have enlisted in Prussia back home. But there I could have joined a garrison where we had no community. In Saxony, the outlook was better. So, I stayed in my place and went to Zwickau for muster. I was one of the first to take my turn. The examination was short. The doctor on duty declared: "*fit*," and the officer immediately determined: "*2nd Grenadier Regiment Kaiser Wilhelm, King of Prussia, in Dresden. About turn!*" I was blindsided. No idea of deferring. And then Dresden! In all the other garrison towns of Saxony, the Methodist Church had beautiful congregations with many an opportunity to practice in the service of the Master, even in the King's Uniform, and to cultivate the delicious fellowship of faith and love. Dresden, of all places, was the only garrison where the Methodists had not yet gained a foothold, indeed had not yet made the slightest attempt to begin a work. So, a dash to the bottom! A double disappointment. A new illustration of the word: "*My thoughts are not your thoughts*". I had no idea what God's plans were, nor did I know that through such disappointments God wanted to teach me to trust Him fully, and that trust in His guidance must prove itself precisely when His ways are contrary to our ways and His plans contrary to our personal desires. To be true, I must confess that the way from Zwickau to Planitz was not easy for me that day. Before I told my parents and friends at the seminary about the decision I had made, I wrote a poem that reflected my inner struggles. Here are a few stanzas. The poem was to go to the friends in Frankfurt:

It is done! The die is cast,

I am a soldier, a grenadier at that

To Saxony's beautiful capital city I shall go,

There the king's sword shall be clasped upon me

and I shall babble the alphabet of war.

Hey friends, rejoice with me! How envious you are, my brothers!

Free as the eagle in the ether's heights

You can feed the spirit on the heights of wisdom,

In theory and practice prepare yourselves

For the spiritual battle we once want to fight,

And I as a soldier must now stand guard.

Are there not golden oases?

Does no new future open up for me?

Oh, they all disperse like soap bubbles,

The plans I had dreamed of.

Still, I cannot grasp the ways of God

And let my tears run free.

But this mood did not last long. The struggle from doubt to victorious trust in God was fought out as the poem flowed from the pen. It went on to say:

So today I sit in my room,

thinking about this stroke of fate

and I see that I am making the bad worse,

if I only look pessimistically.

Therefore, from now on I'll never brood,

so that in my heart it will be day again.

Why complain so unnecessarily,

When it's God's will after all?

With undaunted courage to bear what is imposed,

Not to despair in any hour of life,

To give thanks even to the Father for the hardest things...,

Is the mark of a true, genuine Christian.

Therefore, I gladly go to join as a warrior

In our world-famous, brave army.

Already I hear drums and trumpets,

Soon with sword and musket I'll drill,

As Christ's warriors diligently pray -

and the seemingly difficult will then not be difficult at all.

When I met my supervising preacher, Schütz, and told him the result of the muster, he said, "*I am glad that you are coming to Dresden. It has been on my heart and on the hearts of some other brethren for a long time that we should have a congregation in the capital of Saxony. So far it has not been possible to start there. Perhaps God is now leading you there to do such a ministry in addition to your military duties. That would be well worth delaying your entrance into the seminary.*" I looked at the beloved and cherished man uncomprehendingly. Wasn't this fantasy without any real reason? As a soldier, whose time is taken up from morning till evening, still able to evangelize and gather a congregation? Only a man like W. Schütz, who himself had not been a soldier and, in my opinion, had no idea about military life, could speak like that. That is how I thought at those moments. But the hope that spoke from the words of my dear Schütz, the certainty with which he expressed them, did not remain without effect and gradually made Dresden and the task God had given me there appear to me in a new light. Quietly, very quietly, the belief also began to germinate in my heart that God, with whom no thing is impossible, would carry out His thoughts in His own way in Dresden against all human misgivings, in spite of all the difficulties. "*He will behave in such a way that you will be surprised*," it sounded in my heart.

Before joining the military, I spent a few weeks of vacation with my parents in Liebengrün. Then I was ordered to report to Erfurt, from where the transport of Prussian recruits to Saxony was to leave. I traveled a day earlier than necessary to see Erfurt: the cathedral, the old churches, but especially the former Augustinian monastery with the hermitage, where Luther performed his mortifications and fought his battles of the soul over the question: "*How do I get a merciful God?*" until the light dawned on him: "*The righteous will live by his faith*." The receptive mind feels in such places something of the atmosphere that personalities spread around them and leave behind, from whom a force emanated that helps others. Although the recruits' time ahead of me filled my mind and did not really allow a silence to arise for gathering and immersion in history, that visit nevertheless became a strong stimulus for me to never forget, in everything that may come and approach me, that the central point of life is the right relationship to God. Everything else was secondary for Luther. It should be the same for me. This is what Jesus meant when he called out to his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you*!"

In the recruit service, actually only the first Sunday was difficult for me. Instead of going to church as usual or holding a church service ourselves, we sat all day in our team room, about 20 men under the supervision of a sergeant and the corporal. On Saturday, we had taken our drill and drill suits, had our helmets put on, had our boots fitted, which in Dresden had the characteristic name "Elbkähne" (Elbe barges), and had received our leather gear with side arms. On Sunday it was now necessary to arrange the locker (cupboard) according to regulations, to put each piece in its place, to clean the buttons and the leather gear and finally to clean and mend the suit received. Watching the recruits fiddle with needle and thread must have been amusing to the supervisors, for they sometimes smiled at each other in understanding. Many of the young men, farmers and craftsmen from the countryside, merchants, civil servants, musicians, locomotive drivers and whatever other professions were represented, had probably never threaded a needle or used a rag before. Some people thought of their mothers back home. I felt as if here and there something wet appeared in the eyes and homesickness spread through the heart. It was something completely different here than at home with mother. When we were asked to sing a song for work, it didn't quite work out. "*The harps were hanging from the willows*." And then not to take a step without permission! Whoever wanted to leave the room for a few minutes had to get the permission of the corporal. For dinner we were led into the dining hall in a closed group, and even while we were eating the meal, the non-commissioned officer on duty stood next to us with his sidearm strapped on. One had to get used to that.

In the afternoon there was a change. We were ordered to write our curriculum vitae. The captain wanted to see what kind of guys were entrusted to him for training as fatherland defenders. This is probably common practice everywhere and was not a specialty with the Saxon grenadier regiments that made up the Guard. I was soon finished with my work, although I described my course of development in detail, did not leave my religious convictions unmentioned, and stated the service of a preacher of the Methodist Church as my chosen profession. The non-commissioned officer who looked through the CVs said that this was not necessary, because in the military it was the outward appearance that mattered. I let it stand, however, and was soon to become aware that these remarks had been read. The next morning, when we had moved to the barracks yard for drill, Captain von Sch. came riding up. We had already practiced the "Good morning, Captain." It sounded so militarily strong that we could clearly observe a smile of satisfaction on the face of the father of the company. Captain von Sch. was a straight, energetic, true soldier's nature. His eye seemed to penetrate to the bottom of things. His voice, more tenor than bass, was penetrating, making it easy to drill to his command. He gathered the company around him and made a speech of paternal goodwill, which was really capable of scattering the dismal mood of Sunday. He said that we would probably not be entirely comfortable with some of the discipline required at the beginning, but that this would soon be overcome, and we would realize that even the smallest exercise, the integration of the individual into the whole, and above all obedience, were essential elements in maintaining the German army, which had such a glorious history, at its height and making it an instrument, if need be, for war or for the preservation of peace. By the way, we should consider it a special honor to belong to a regiment whose chief is His Majesty the Emperor. And who comes to Dresden every year on the Saxon king's birthday, then places himself at the head of this regiment and presents it to the king. He hoped that we would learn so well that he would honor us on this occasion, which would come in the spring. These were beautiful, fitting, encouraging words. A comrade commented afterwards, "*We seem to have the best captain in our 3rd Company.*" Indeed, he had won hearts.

Before he rode off again, he examined the front with his expert eyes and then suddenly called out: "Recruit Melle, step forward. I stood on the right wing, I think as the second, and took a few steps forward. He waved me closer to him so that the others could not hear what he was saying to me. Only the officers and the sergeant - the mother of the company - were standing nearby. Apparently, they were supposed to be witnesses to the conversation. "*I have seen your curriculum vitae; you want to become a clergyman*?" "*Yes, Captain!*" "*Does your faith forbid you to take a rifle?*' Then I realized that he had probably confused Methodist with Mennonite and was afraid of getting into trouble with me. I answered as clearly and forcefully as I could, "*No, Captain, I am not a Mennonite, but a Methodist, and I look forward to being trained to be a capable soldier and defender of my country*." And I could now say a few things about Methodism. "*Does your church have a congregation here in Dresden?*" he went on to ask. When I had to answer that in the negative, I immediately ventured to seize the opportunity and ask to be allowed to attend the services of other Protestant churches and especially those of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Old Town, Neue Gasse. This apparently pleased him quite a bit. He nodded and added: "*Melle, of course, you cannot go out alone yet. But*," - and he waved at the sergeant -, "*see to it that he can go to his church services as early as next Sunday, accompanied by a sergeant*." Then he turned his horse and galloped away. This was a favor to me that I had not expected. It probably contributed to my being treated with a certain reserve, not to say respect, by officers and NCOs. And when I was picked up early the next Sunday morning by the non-commissioned officer commanded for the service, probably as the first and only recruit in a dress suit specially obtained for this purpose from the chamber, while the others had to line up for a boot roll call, some comrades looked after me with envious glances. But I had a new illustration to the words: "*Godliness is useful for all things and has the promise of this life and the life to come*." On the following Sunday the sergeant reported that the recruit Melle was so intelligent and made such strong statements of honor that he could be let go alone.

I soon reconciled myself to my fate and became more and more grateful that God had led me into the barracks. Even the captain thought I looked a bit pale compared to the other boys. It was possible that the mental work I had done very intensively in the last two years had not exactly been good for my health. The training of the body had come too briefly. Now it was necessary to give the mind a rest for a while and to take care of the body.

The grenadier barracks in Dresden were new and hygienically modern. Light and air were provided everywhere. There were plenty of rooms for showering and bathing, and the rations were substantial. What did that mean for us 20-year-old young men, that we had to be in bed every evening at 9 p.m. sharp! Each company had its own spacious, ventilated dormitory. The sergeant on duty, who patrolled the rows, made sure that we were not allowed to read or chat in bed. A few minutes after 9 o'clock, the recruits had already slumbered gently. The only disturbance that arose from time to time, which even the duty officer could not prevent, was the too loud snoring of individual comrades who were gifted with this characteristic. Then sometimes a pillow flew on the face that the snorer became awake and turned on the side. At 5 o'clock in the morning came the wake-up call. Then it was time to get out of the straw sack and into clothes. For the last ones had the dubious pleasure of being called upon by the sergeant on duty to do all sorts of necessary but not exactly pleasant work in the corridor, wash house, etc. So, quick dressing became the norm. Everyone wanted to be first rather than last. At 6 o'clock we had coffee. At 7 o'clock the instruction hour began and at 8 o'clock mostly the drill and marching in fresh air. It was really a pleasure to steel all the muscles so systematically. There was running and jumping, lying down and standing up, knee bends and arm stretches, with and without rifles, practicing single marches, swimming in the Elbe, marching out to field exercises in the lovely surroundings, and thus training the body for ever greater efforts and performances, as they were then required at the end of the year in maneuvers. I clearly felt how this did me good and had no desire for any work in the precinct or in the typing pool. I felt most comfortable with the troops. I didn't want to get sloppy; I didn't want to fall behind anyone in the company in terms of stamina and performance. I don't know whether I would have maintained my physical freshness and mental strength in the same way into old age without these years as a soldier.

Even more important, however, was living together with one's comrades, the spirit of the national community, the insight into the thinking and will of the most diverse classes, and the military discipline that governed soldiering. That every healthy German, whether rich or poor, educated in all schools or provided with only the most meager instruction, whether professor or peasant, artist or street sweeper, is obligated to serve the fatherland as a soldier, ready, if need be, to sacrifice blood and life for its existence, freedom and future, is a thought of tremendous, community-building power. It shows what a man is and what he can do. No one else stands up for him, he stands there on his own, all alone! In the community of service, one gets to know each other, to look into each other's hearts, to respect each other. I also know the dangers connected with such fellowship and the temptations that arise from it. But it also reveals the solid character that stands firm in the current of this world, becomes an overcomer and a support for his comrades. And then the military discipline! How easy it is to notice men who have not gone through this school! He who has not learned to obey is not suited to command. Integration into a large organism, trust in leadership, fulfillment of duty in the smallest and most trivial things, self-denial in putting one's own person and one's own desires aside, these are soldierly virtues, as they were cultivated in the German army even in that time of peace, and I saw that no other educational institute could awaken and cultivate them in the same way. My fortunate predisposition to see beyond the sometimes dull reality to the big picture and the ideal goal, even where individuals failed, helped me easily overcome small difficulties. Thus, I got beyond the recruit period, became a private, trained one-year-soldiers and once again recruits, became a non-commissioned officer after the first exercise and finally vice sergeant. The stay abroad prevented further exercises. However, the impressions of the soldier's life in the community with the comrades and the common service for the beloved fatherland have remained with me forever.

Many an interesting experience of the guards in the city or in the royal castle, of standing guard in a helmet with a horsehair bush, in midnight services in the Catholic court church, where we were ordered to go without distinction of denomination, or scenes from the maneuvers could be reported. But that would lead too far. I only want to mention that I, like many other comrades, always took great pleasure in my vacations. To Liebengrün I only went, as I remember, probably once. On the other hand, I often visited the nearby districts of my time as an assistant. My dear Planitzers had specially donated the means for a smart uniform of their own and were now glad and proud to see their former assistant in the dark blue uniform, with crimson collar and cuffs with shiny white

braids, in the pulpit. I must have also visited most of the stations in the Dittersdorf district as a soldier. I had been specially invited to a youth festival in the Chemnitz church. I was surprised to meet some older brothers and sisters during a trip through the Saxon Ore Mountains in the winter of 1942, who remembered meetings that the present bishop in grenadier uniform had held at that time. One sister even claimed to still know the text on which I had preached at that time. It was really true. I spoke about the words, "*Take your delight in the Lord, who will give you what your heart desires*." Once I preached in Plauen, I think it was during a maneuver. The preacher of the congregation, Engelbert Wunderlich, a conservative and very patriotic man, was so childishly happy about it that he tried to persuade me with all his might to strap on the side rifle during the sermon as well. He had not been a soldier and therefore could not understand why this should be forbidden. Finally, he was satisfied that I left the rifle and the cap in his apartment. That the meetings, in which a preacher spoke in the King's Uniform, were always extraordinarily well attended, we found out only later.

But back to Dresden. It may have been towards the end of the first year of military service that some Methodist soldiers met one Sunday in the "Großer Garten" in Dresden. These are quite splendid parks, which in the warm season are the destination of thousands of walkers and excursionists. Well-kept grounds, shady trees, magnificent paths give the "Great Garden" a peculiar charm. We sat down on a bench: an artilleryman from Vogtland, an infantryman from Plauen, a grenadier and, I think, a rifleman. We talked about our home communities, about our experiences in the garrison, about the tasks God had given us. Suddenly the words of the dear preacher W. Schütz resurfaced in me, which he had said to me after the muster: "*Who knows why God is leading you to Dresden of all places, whether he doesn't want to use you to make a start for a Methodist church there*." And it felt to me as if the hour was right to think about it. Four soldiers who belonged to the Methodist Church and still had a year ahead of them in Dresden, they filled a whole bench of the Great Garden. We knew that the two brothers K. and E. Reuter from Herold were working in Dresden and had rented a room. Then the two of them approached us. There were six of us. Some sisters from Methodist congregations were in position in Dresden. That would bring our number to ten, maybe twelve. "*Can we answer for it, brethren*," I said, "*when we are brought together in such a wonderful way in Saxony's beautiful capital, if we do not found at least one Methodist class den and thus make a beginning for a future congregation*?" The word sparked. Ah, youth is still enthusiastic about great goals. The soldiers stood up. We shook hands that we wanted to work shoulder to shoulder for our Lord. Before anyone could raise the problem of the place, it was already solved. The Reuter brothers had rented a larger room and invited us to join them the next Sunday. As if we had experienced a historic hour, joyfully moved and ready for action, we parted.

Then on Sunday the planned class meeting took place. Although formally the instructions of the church order had not been studied - we did not know them - I always regarded this meeting as the actual founding meeting of the Dresden congregation. I was asked to be class leader, and I also immediately entered the names of those present in a class book. We also elected a treasurer. Then it was decided to meet every Sunday, to give our contributions to the treasurer, to advertise our meetings, and I took it upon myself to report to Preacher W. Schütz. I did this as best I could and was convinced that my letter would bring much joy. It did, though my attention had to be called to the fact that I would have needed the approval of a preacher and a quarterly conference - something I had not even considered - for all these proposals. The future professor of the history of Methodism and church discipline had proved that he knew little of church discipline. Nevertheless, the matter turned out well and had a beneficial effect. It is good when life is so strong that it creates its own order. Of course, all our proposals were confirmed, the preacher of the Zschopau district was appointed as supervising preacher and Dresden was registered as a branch of this district. At the same time, several hundred marks from the conference treasury were granted so that we could rent and furnish our own premises for our meetings. A suitable apartment with 2 rooms and a kitchen was found in Rohrbachgasse. Our church services were now held there on Sunday afternoons. There was room for 30 to 40 people in these rooms, and the place was often filled to capacity. The grenadier (Melle), now already a corporal, preached, in front of him always sat a crowd of soldiers from all units, so that it often looked as if it was a military service; the civilians sat on the back benches. A young married couple, the Preuser

siblings, who had moved to Dresden from Berlin, joined the circle and formed the first Dresden Methodist family. After the service, tea was prepared in the kitchen, so that the hungry soldiers could quickly enjoy something and were not compelled to stop somewhere before we set out for the common walk to the Great Garden.

What sermons I gave in this circle I can no longer say. Notes about it are not to be found in my papers. There was no time for thorough preparation because of the many and exhausting services. But I had worked diligently during the two years as an assistant and had collected a treasure of thoughts in my notebooks, which I could fall back on. My method was, if possible, to choose text and thoughts for the next Sunday already on Sunday evening, when I came home from the service. With all easy and faithful memory, what I had once thought through and written down was immediately vividly before my eyes again with little effort. When I had written down a sermon, I could deliver it almost verbatim without having to read it through again. Having thus found my subject from the reservoir, I moved it in my heart during the week - on the way to the shooting range, during the practice marches, and sometimes in the middle of the night, until the thoughts grew, new comparisons and illustrations arose, relationships with the listeners emerged. Then, when Sunday came, I often could hardly wait for the time to come before my listeners and bring them the message given by the Lord. If a new member was to be admitted, if a communion celebration was to take place, or if a special feast was to be held, Preacher Oskar Lindner from Zschopau would usually come and form the official bond that connected us with the other congregations in Saxony. He then told us how things were going in the work here and there, and also took our experiences with him for the stimulation and encouragement of others. When the end of my military service approached, Dresden received its own preacher in Brother R., who succeeded in finding a better and more suitable hall in Wettiner Straße, until after much wandering back and forth, only shortly before World War II, the beautiful property in Wettiner Straße very close to the Great Garden could be acquired by Preacher Fürstenau. Thus, the congregation had found its, as we hoped, permanent home near the Great Garden, where at that time the first seeds for its future becoming had been sunk into the ground.

Who will believe it? I had been afraid of serving in the King's Uniform, and it was not easy for me to take it off again. With the barracks, with the city, with the small community the most intimate ties connected me. When, in the second year of service, the soldiers began to sing reserve songs too early, they were forbidden to do so. One evening I decided to compose a suitable reserve song myself, against which there could be no objection. I chose a well-known melody as a base. The song described the soldier's life and concluded with the verse: "

"We will never forget you, you beautiful regiment!

Do not forget the company called the Third.

Long live the captain who leads it, and who puts on the service, the colonel high,

who commands, high the reservist."

And I experienced the satisfaction of hearing how the song was sung by the whole brigade, perhaps also by other regiments, and if on the march the singing did not really get going, the captain only had to say: "*Sing the Melle reserve song*", then it went. A small experience from a Kaisermanöver (1), which gave me a lot, should close this chapter: We had a rest day on the march to the maneuver area. I think it was in Riesa on the Elbe. I was billeted with a family whose little 4-year-old son did not want to part with the soldier. It was also too interesting to look at the rifle and sidearm, helmet and knapsack. When I had to make a visit in the afternoon, the little fellow wanted to come along. The parents allowed it, and the little one stomped bravely by my side. On the way back I had to pass through a dense forest. For me, surprisingly fast, the darkness fell. A path was not to be seen, I had to direct myself after a weak light between the treetops. I became a little anxious, because of the boy. I put him on my shoulders, took one of his hands in my hand, with my other hand I slowly felt my way forward. The little boy was quiet as a mouse. "*Karl*," I said after a while, "*are you afraid?*" "*No*," was the calm reply, "*you have a saber with you*." Wasn't that a wonderful illustration of the verse in the 23rd Psalm, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the*

shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"! The time is far past when I served in Dresden with the grenadiers. Some of the interesting experiences of the soldiers may lie dormant below the threshold of consciousness. The childlike trust that the little boy expressed to the soldier has remained with me as a reminder, as a consolation, as a promise, as a certainty of the guidance of the good shepherd and his shepherd's staff - even if it goes through the dark valley.

(1) A Kaisermanöver during the time of German Empire, was most important and most extensive military maneuvers, which took place annually in presence of the emperor. Such large-scale exercises were also common in other European countries at that time, such as the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Italy or Switzerland.

Chapter 8 Academic Years (1897-1900)

After the Kaisermanöver 1897 came the day when we reservists had to hand in our equipment and say goodbye to the barracks. An evening of farewell in the circle of the congregation, which let me go with prayers and blessings, with the hope that after the years of study I would be accepted into the conference as a traveling preacher and come as a preacher. I had the same wish. It was to come true.

For the time being, however, I had to devote myself to my studies with seriousness and zeal. In Frankfurt am Main, on the Röderberg near the Ostbahnhof, we had a preacher's seminary that served exclusively to train future preachers of the Methodist Church. Soon after Methodist work began in Germany, in the middle of the century, it had been founded in Bremen and moved to Frankfurt a. M. in 1869. The older generation of German preachers - including a number of foreigners - passed through this school and retain a grateful memory of the institution. In 1914 it was moved from Röderberg to a new and more appropriate building. For more than 4 years, I had envisioned the seminary in the most ideal and desirable images. Friends who had joined the seminary at the same time had enthusiastically told me about the life and work there; I had always read the reports about the beginning of the school with the list of students with the greatest attention, and had also heard a lecture about it from time to time, so that over time an ideal image of the seminary had developed, which I had to fear would not correspond to reality. But I was not disappointed. The house at the Röderberg with the beautiful garden, in which there was a second smaller building containing the library, became for me a place of joy, of intimate spiritual and working fellowship with the colleagues and the teachers, and an arsenal from which to fetch equipment for the future struggle. Who wants to describe how many blessings flowed out of that dear house into the congregations in the North and South, across the seas into distant countries to the German people and into the peoples of the mission areas, even into the world!

But that does not belong here now. What does the seminary mean for me, for my life and ministry? I arrived only 4 weeks after the opening of the semester. A flood in the Ore Mountains had made the deployment of the military necessary, and the lot had fallen on my battalion. Brother Wilhelm Meyer, next to whom I was to sit on the same school bench for 3 years, had had a similar fate. So, we had to make up for 4 weeks of lessons. Whether young people, who had to take the usual route via elementary school and high school, i.e., going on and on with their schooling, and then moving on to university, can understand how we, how I, felt when, after a long, long wait, after the practical work of the assistant's time and the service in the King's Uniform, I was finally standing at the place where I would have no other task than to learn, to study? When the dinner bell rang, the feet could be stretched under the table, and there was no need to ask and worry where the bread came from. 5 to 6 lessons a day, on Sunday the opportunity to hear spirit-filled and eloquent preachers, a garden house, a library with treasures from all areas of literature, but especially theology and history of the Methodist revival movement, as well as general church history - and in addition about 24 colleagues of the same age, with whom one could discuss stimulating questions in the breaks between the lessons or during walks in the garden. That was simply great, even marvelous. But life in the boarding school, the strict division of time, the necessary discipline, without which there is no orderly living together, for men of 20 to 25 years and sometimes above, also has its downsides, but I found it wonderfully suitable for the education of preachers and have not changed my judgment about it, even since I myself was director of the seminary for 16 years. The close living together, the consideration for the brother that goes with it, the fellowship at meals, at home devotions, at prayer, the work to be done together, are, in addition to the actual studies, true means of grace for the formation of character. And it has always been held in the Methodist Church that Christian character comes before scholarly equipment in a preacher of the gospel.

I soon became aware of the difficulties of this close living together at a class meeting - the Methodist fellowship hour - which the director himself led. He asked the seminarians, including the new ones, to speak openly about their experiences in the inner life during the first weeks of the school year. To my great surprise, some of

the brothers told me that unfortunately they had to confess, although they could hardly explain it, that they did not feel the same joy and strength in the seminary as they did outside in the congregations, where they had been allowed to preach to their hearts' content and had been carried by the forces of congregational life. This is easy to understand psychologically. Outside, they were men who, after all, stood at the head of the congregations, to whom many people looked up; here, they stood in rows, learned that they knew little or nothing, saw from day to day how much they still had to learn in order to be able to preach edifyingly and really well. Then, instead of the uplifting feeling of being able to proclaim a message of the Lord to many listeners, there came the awareness of weakness, of smallness, and in view of the daily growing ideal of a true preacher, the question: "*Who is capable of this?*" In any case, a necessary reaction to the uplifting hours out on the precincts. I later experienced similar depressions and count them among the challenges that are salutary. In that class meeting I did not understand my colleagues, and I could not help saying that it was impossible for me to join in such laments. I came from the barracks, the other brothers from the direct community work. In the barracks I would not have had a prayer chamber, no silence to read my Bible undisturbed, now the seminary seems to me like a foretaste of paradise. People sometimes teased me about the comparison later, but it really expressed my mood at the time.

Our teaching staff consisted of three men who complemented each other well. Each had his own character or his own basic tone in character and thinking, but this gave the harmonious triad that set hearts vibrating. The leadership was in the hands of Director Dr. Paul Gustav Junker. In his youth, while still in high school, he had been taken by Christ and then entered the preaching ministry of the Methodist Church. His talent for writing and his rich knowledge led him first to the editorial office in Bremen, where he edited the "Evangelist", the "Kinderfreund" and the "Bannerträger" for a long time and published several books. Appointed director of the seminary, he was able to develop his theological knowledge, his pedagogical talent and his talent for organization. He stood before us students as the type of a true German man, a ravishing preacher whom we listened to again and again on Sundays, even if we had heard him in 10 or more lessons during the week, a scribe who knew how to introduce the thoughts of the Bible in a masterly manner, one of the best experts on Methodism and its order. The ideal of sanctification with the goal of complete love for God and man seemed to come close to realization in him. We students, who had not been able to go through a German grammar school, naturally had to catch up a lot in the German language, in literature, in history, in the ancient languages, to name only a few subjects. I pick out one of these subjects to show Junker's manner and method. He took over the Greek language in our class with the aim of getting us to the point where we could read the New Testament in the original language. He used Haarbeck's grammar for this purpose. We had quickly acquired the alphabet and would have liked to rush forward. But Junker started from the beginning in every lesson. Again and again with the alphabet and the first rules. Even when we were already at the paradigms of the conjugations, almost half of the lesson was always used for repetition, as boring as that might seem to us strikers and pushers. Junker knew what the basis means in such a language, and how no penetration of the mind and right understanding is possible at all if the first rules do not sit. I think it was the first time Junker gave Greek, for the other classes wondered not a little at our slowness. But this slow progress had paid off. Even the less gifted had come along, and when at the end of two years of instruction in Greek, after having read parts of the 1st Epistle of John, the Gospel of John, the Acts of the Apostles, Matthew, we were able to treat the 5th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans in the exam to the greatest satisfaction of the teaching staff - without any aids - with written translations not only from Greek into German, but also from German into Greek, then we realized that the method of our director had sense and was worthwhile.

Without going into more details, I must mention the biblical subjects in which the revered director gave me - and I think all of us - a lot. He gave New Testament. In 2 hours a week, for 3 years, it is not possible to go through all the New Testament writings. Some of them have to be shortened. Paul's letter to the Romans, however, was so close to his heart that he stayed with it a little longer. This was the first New Testament lecture that I heard from him. In a detailed dictation Junker gave some information about the introductory questions, then the train of thought of the letter was sharply worked out up to the applications in the 2nd part. When the dictation was finished, the exegetical explanations of the individual chapters came, in which the individual terms were worked out

on the basis of the original text, and justification and sanctification were forcefully presented. That we must not understand justification by faith so narrowly became clear to me then. The forgiveness of sins is not the end, but the beginning of God's ways; the goal is walking in the Spirit, as presented in the 8th chapter. Those who appropriated the dictation and took copious notes on exegetical remarks had a good self-made commentary of great value. It was similar with the Epistle to the Romans, with the Gospels, with the Acts of the Apostles, with the other Epistles. It was only always affirmed that the time was too short.

The second lecturer was Dr. A. J. Bucher, a native of Switzerland, who had been a preacher in a German-speaking congregation in the United States for some time and had become an American citizen there. He was an Old Testament scholar and enjoyed moving through the writings of the prophets. Eschatological questions so captivated him that he was easily distracted from his subject by any intervening question about the Second Coming of Christ, the Millennial Kingdom, the Rapture, First Resurrection and Judgment, a weakness that was often exploited. Even if we could not follow him in his reasoning - Junker's sober, logical manner, based less on individual biblical passages than on the context, made a stronger impression - it was all very interesting to us. Among his other subjects, ethics stood out, which was talked through according to the excellent textbook by Prof. Paulus. Unfortunately, this book is out of print. It may also be that new problems have come to light that would necessitate a complete rewrite. But I know that for that time there could not have been a better introduction. A vicar who was about to take his theological exams and got hold of "The Christian Life of Salvation" by Paul, said that if he had known this book a little earlier instead of the many lectures on theological ethics he had heard, he would have had a much better insight. It should be noted in passing that Dr. Bucher also gave English lessons. He was also popular as a preacher. He did not come close to Junker in depth of thought, but he surpassed him in his presentation, which was rich in pictures. Bucher was emotionally inclined, had a vivid imagination, and was also musically gifted. His poetically far-reaching, melodious baritone voice, accompanied by himself on the grand piano, gave us many a pleasure. He was popular as a singer and speaker at singing festivals and thus became known - like his father-in-law Ernst Gebhardt - far beyond the circles of his own church. He was also an energetic campaigner in the anti-alcohol movement and editor of the "Christlicher Abstinenten" (Christian Abstainer). Even before World War I he followed a call to America, where he was editor of the "Christian Apologist" until the end of his life. How often, after the World War, during my travels in America, I visited his hospitable home in Cincinnati, where in the evening hours old memories of the seminary in Frankfurt a. M. were refreshed. He was always pleased when he could introduce me as his former student, and it was a pleasure for us when, for example, after a lecture I had given in English to an interdenominational pastors' conference, he showed me on a piece of paper mistakes I had made. I would then say with a smile, "so much like Frankfurt".

But I do not want to anticipate. The 3rd teacher at the seminary was Preacher Richard Wobith, called to the seminary directly from serving the congregation. As I write these lines, Brother Wobith is living in retirement in Friedrichsdorf, Taunus, as one of the seniors of our church, but still active, serving the district, preaching every Sunday. In the seminary he taught, I believe, 12 years before taking charge of the Stuttgart district. Mr. Wobith was a quiet, no-nonsense nature. Always thoughtful, always ready to do some kind of service. In the seminary, he was initially assigned a number of elementary subjects, in which some had a lot of catching up to do: German, literature, world history, German essay. From the theological subjects he took over the doctrine of faith. We still used the dogmatics of Dr. Sulzberger as a guide. I will gladly admit that this dogmatics has outlived its usefulness with time. It was written in the third quarter of the last century, when certain theological questions of our modern time were not yet current. However, I do not have to give a review of the book now from today's point of view, but from what this book meant to us students at that time under the skillful guidance of our teacher. When I think of it, I could write a chapter in honor of old Sulzberger. How well Preacher Wobith knew how to introduce us to dogmatic thought! Was it not immensely stimulating, enlightening, captivating to memorize the main content of a whole chapter in the first, albeit ponderous, sentences, then to go through the explanations as justification, and at the end to find immediately indicated what changes the subject matter under discussion had undergone in the history of dogma? It was then easy to get further information in denominational doctrines or histories of dogma.

The main thing was that the truth of Scripture was clearly brought out, with emphasis on the Methodist distinctives. After all, we wanted to become preachers of the Methodist Church, and as such we had to recognize our task and mission not only in studying the history of the Methodist revival movement and its influences on other churches and overall Protestantism, but especially in considering the truths of salvation. Where Sulzberger had omitted something, it was added. Recent books that could shed light on the question in question were consulted in brief dictation and valuable marginal notes were made. Thus, Sulzberger actually became quite dear to us. Or was it Brother Wobith who became dear to us? We rejoiced that Methodism had produced such a work, memorized the train of thought, researched and dug further, and thanked our teacher for every new lesson he gave.

Brother Wobith also offered much as a preacher in the pulpit. It was not so much bubbly eloquence that was to be listened to, for he was averse to beautiful formulations and even phrases, but he was concerned to fill the sermon with biblical content, to illustrate it with carefully selected examples, and to really impress the thoughts on the listeners. People used to say that when Wobith preached, you had something to draw on for the whole week. Later, as the editor of the "Evangelist," his short articles on the spiritual life, prayer, the walk of sanctification, brought help to many readers, which was gratefully acknowledged. He was one of the men of whom it could be said that the people heard him gladly.

Perhaps the director's homiletics lessons (1) and the homiletics exercises he led still deserve to be mentioned. Here Junker gave his best - as in pastoral theology. Based on the textbook of his predecessor, the well-known Dr. Ludwig Nippert, he treated the wide field in free lectures, which always showed his own practical experience. When he spoke in this way, thoughts flowed to him in rich abundance, he dealt with every question down to its root with all its ramifications and had the small weakness that he had difficulty finding the thread for the end. Whether he picked out figures from the history of the sermon and characterized them, or had us apply the rules we had learned according to the texts presented, it was always impressive, and the young men were enthralled. Of course, we strove to emulate his example in our exercises and to attain his satisfaction. This, by the way, was not easy, as lenient and mild as he usually was, taking the beginners into consideration. Sharp, factual criticism, which put the knife to unhealthy growths, was regarded by him as a necessary, healing and curative medicine, even if it had a bitter aftertaste, which could not be removed by any "candy".

That is why the so-called "homiletic exercises", which took place on Saturdays from 8 to 10, were always eagerly awaited. They formed something like a climax in the timetable of the week. The night before, often already on Thursday, one of the seminarians had preached a sermon in front of teachers and students and the house congregation, which was now discussed. One of his classmates had to introduce the discussion with a presentation, then anyone who thought they had something to say could speak up. The discussion was concluded by the words of the director, who, if the person in question had been too harshly criticized, softened the blow, so to speak, and who, if the criticism had been too superficial or indulgent, could also point out weaknesses and errors quite sharply. He wrote his overall judgment in red ink under the sermon submitted in writing. Under the last sermon I gave in the seminary he wrote: "*Quite good! Only the author must make more of an effort to be brief. Brevity is spice.*" The sermon took more than 45 minutes to deliver.

The spokesmen of the criticism - as tradition demanded - were the colleagues of their own class. Everyone had only one turn during the year, and there was only one opportunity to show colleagues their shortcomings and mistakes. While I was looking through old documents from that time, I found a notebook in which I had written down the results of a critique of one of my sermons. I could not have reproduced it from memory. I had preached - it was in the 2nd year - about the Pharisee and tax collector. Based on Jesus' words, "*He who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted*," I had chosen the theme, "Higher up!" I then showed by the two men so vividly placed before our eyes by Jesus, how the Pharisee, who wanted to rise so high, sank to the depths; but how the publican, who humbled himself and repented, was exalted by Jesus, and that for himself personally and as an example of the right way for all time. My understanding of the text seemed to me exegetically correct and practically full of good thoughts.

My diary notes say about that hour: "*Brother Goebel's sermon had been discussed before me. But it seemed as if they had been waiting for my turn to speak. One after the other came to speak, I myself could hardly come to reply. Too many images, too many flowers, too much imagination. One of them said that I had to keep my imagination in check, otherwise it would run away with me. The Pharisee got off too well, claimed the other, the doctrine of justification by faith should have been emphasized, the third. Brother T. even stooped to the opinion that I had held the listeners to the best because I had promised in the introduction to lead them "higher up," but had then gone low with them. It was like firing a machine gun. Loud criticism. Only one of the brothers seemed to disagree. He confessed that for him the sermon had been so captivating that he had already put down his pencil after the 2nd sentence and listened with great attention until the end*."

Then my notes continue: "*That my sermon, whose shortcomings I know much better than was pointed out, would be attacked so sharply, I would not have expected. Surely there must have been something in it that gripped; for what does not attack, one does not usually attack*." In my reply, I said that as far as the form of the sermon was concerned, I would have tried to apply the visual lesson, as Jesus did when he placed Pharisees and tax collectors so vividly before our eyes, painting them with a few brushstrokes, that the image had to be indelibly imprinted. As far as imagination was concerned, I would strive to heed the good admonitions. But I had always wanted to emulate the greatest preacher of all times, the Savior, in images and parables. The sermon itself, as I had written it down and submitted it, I unfortunately no longer possess in order to be able to review it now. The memory of the "hours of criticism," however, even if in overzealousness we sometimes missed the mark, has probably remained with all of us as an incentive not to tire in the work of sermon preparation. Junker's closing words were objective, they led back to the essentials and were on the whole not rejecting, but encouraging.

Looking through my diary notes, I find that of the seminar excursions we used to make once a year, the visit to Büdingen, Gelnhausen, Ronneburg, Wetterau and Herrnhag must have made the strongest impression; I find there a long and detailed description with the historical data from the Middle Ages, descriptions of the gate in Büdingen, which is said to have been modeled on a gate in Jerusalem, the legend of the founding of Gelnhausen by Emperor Friedrich Rotbart, and the story of the founding of the Brüdergemeinde colony Herrnhag. The visit to Ronneburg, where Wesley, coming via Frankfurt, met Zinzendorf and felt for the first time the pulse of the spiritual life beating in the congregations, the quiet minutes in the little cemetery, where we sang a few songs of the hope of eternal life, awakened in me the desire to pursue still further the relations between Wesley and the Brüdergemeine. I then, little by little, worked through Wesley's detailed diaries about his visit to Germany, especially also to Herrnhut, and gained the conviction as I have set it down in the chapter: "German Influences in Wesley's Life" in the "Walten *Gottes im deutschen Methodismus*". The roots of the Methodist revival movement lie in the German Reformation and in Pietism. Methodism is the greatest gift of the Reformation to the Anglo-Saxon world. From this I also formed the special tasks we have as Methodists in theology and church organization in the German Fatherland. These thoughts were nourished and deepened by many a conversation I had with Director Junker, who was also concerned to grasp and present the mission of German Methodism. The impressions of that seminar excursion to Ronneburg can still be felt in my opening address to the Central Conference in 1940, to which I gave the title: "German Methodism and the New Era."

A peculiarity of the Methodist system of education for its clergy is the combination of theory and practice. Each student is assigned a district near Frankfurt where he has to help in preaching and pastoral care. With us it was so that we had to preach regularly every 14 days. In this way, what we had learned spiritually during the week could be immediately translated into practice. Mostly we went, as Jesus wanted his disciples to do, "two and two". On the way back, a "homiletic exercise" was held. In the first year I had to serve the Hanau district (Hanau - Niedermittlau, Roth); in the second Seckbach; in the third Friedrichsdorf in the Taunus. When I made the first visit to the Hanau district, meetings were to be held in Roth and in Niedermittlau. Niedermittlau had been memorized. But with Roth - I had forgotten to note the names - as I strode on from the train station that evening, I suddenly became uncertain. It was a color. But which one? I thought it was green. No one could tell me where the village

"Grün" was, until I finally landed in Roth. The Sundays in the practical service were no strain, but recreation. I also like to think back to the service in Friedrichsdorf during the last school year. Friedrichsdorf is a Huguenot colony, named after the Hessian Landgrave Friedrich, who took in the Huguenots who had been expelled for their faith. The colloquial language at that time was still French. In the Reformed church of the town, the sermon was also still in French. The Methodist congregation, however, held its services in German. The wife of our director came from Friedrichsdorf. She was very popular as our housemother, but because of her close ties to her hometown, the seminarians sometimes feared a little that judgments about their service in Friedrichsdorf might reach the director or the teaching staff via the housemother. So, I accepted my appointment to Friedrichsdorf with somewhat mixed feelings. But it was to be a wonderful year for me! What a wonderful walk it was on Sunday morning from Bad Homburg through the forest to Friedrichsdorf In spring, when the deciduous trees were resplendent in fresh green, the feathered singers let their songs ring out and the young life showed itself everywhere, one had to get into the right mood of joy. In Friedrichsdorf we had attentive, Bible-knowledgeable, thinking listeners in the morning and evening. In the afternoon we went with the young men to the Saalburg (2) or "Zum Wilden Mann" (The Wild Man, perhaps an inn?), and in connection with dinner with the preacher's family Walz or with Foucars, there was still time enough for stimulating conversation about the events of the day or questions of Christian life and work in the Lord's work. Was such a Sunday exhausting? The youth did not notice, but they drew new strength for service and sacrifice from the delicious fellowship, from the echo that sermons and lectures found, and from the encouraging encouragements.

During the short Christmas vacation and the long summer vacation, we usually helped out in one or more districts. If a preacher took a few weeks' vacation in the summer, he was happy to have a seminarian from Frankfurt come to fill in. I had the privilege of being invited to Halle right at the first Christmas, where Preacher Wiesenauer, who was very suffering, needed help. In the time that followed, I spent most of the vacations, several months in the summer, in Halle, serving the small congregation and attending lectures at the university on the side. In this way I had the opportunity to sit in with one professor or another, to take classes with others, and to pursue questions that preoccupied me. The colloquial language at that time was still French. In the Reformed church of the town, the sermon was also still in French. The Methodist congregation, however, held its services in German. The wife of our director came from Friedrichsdorf. She was very popular as our housemother, but because of her close ties to her hometown, the seminarians sometimes feared a little that judgments about their service in Friedrichsdorf might reach the director or the teaching staff via the housemother. So, I accepted my appointment to Friedrichsdorf with somewhat mixed feelings. But it was to be a wonderful year for me! What a wonderful walk it was on Sunday morning from Bad Homburg through the forest to Friedrichsdorf! In spring, when the deciduous trees were resplendent in fresh green, the feathered singers let their songs ring out and the young life showed itself everywhere, one had to get into the right mood of joy. In Friedrichsdorf we had attentive, Bible-knowledgeable, thinking listeners in the morning and evening. In the afternoon we went with the young men to the Saalburg (2) or "Zum Wilden Mann", and in connection with dinner with the preacher's family Walz or with Foucars, there was still time enough for stimulating conversation about the events of the day or questions of Christian life and work in the Lord's work. Was such a Sunday exhausting? The youth did not notice, but they drew new strength for service and sacrifice from the delicious fellowship, from the echo that sermons and lectures found, and from the encouraging encouragements.

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as well as in their basic theological attitude opposites, offered just because of these opposites much material for cooperation, for the discussion of current problems.

Old Warneck read about mission. His knowledge of the mission fields, the various mission societies and their working methods, as well as all the problems connected with mission work, was enormous. It just bubbled out of an overflowing treasure of knowledge. Brother Wiesenauer told me how he had visited him some time ago with Dr. John R. Mott, the American missionary teacher. Warneck had jokingly told Mott, "*You Americans have changed the Great Commission of Jesus. Instead of 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,' you read 'Go ye into all the world and teach all nations the English language*.'" Mott, a missionary of international renown, did not know German and probably well understood the allusion of the first professor in Germany to hold a chair in missions. The lectures by Professor Uphues were also very gripping for me. I learned that Uphues had formerly been a Catholic clergyman, then converted to Protestantism and was now a professor of philosophy. However, his biblical faith was clearly noticeable also in his treatment of philosophical problems. Unfortunately, I could only take the introduction to philosophy with him, whom I visited several times. Since this was a subject for which we had no room in the seminar - it was included in the lesson plan only later - the presentations of the basic philosophical questions fascinated me most. His method was to lecture freely, without manuscript, for about 30 minutes, and then in the remaining 15 minutes, summarizing the main ideas of the lecture, dictate a few sentences to carry home in black and white. It was also true that his positive Christian faith, especially the person of Jesus Christ, was evident in his thinking. A philosopher who was a devout Christian formed for me a point of attraction of its own. Uphues helped me over some difficulties that the study of dogmatics (4) had put in my way. The strongest impression, however, I received from Kähler, the successor of Professor Tholuck. I had read Tholuck's life. Several volumes of his sermons delivered in academic services were in my possession. Kähler's lecture on "The so-called historical Jesus and the historical, biblical Christ," in which he argued with Beyschlag and Ritschl, had caused ripples from which we were not unaffected in the preacher seminary in Frankfurt a. M., either. We were pleased about the biblical, or, as Kähler used to say, “biblicalistic” attitude of this theologian, and it naturally formed an attraction for me to get to know him and to hear him. I visited him in his office hours, where I also met his colleague Haering. Kähler expressed his pleasure that I knew some of his work and advised me to listen to his lecture on theological ethics, which he had just started. Some students warned me. Kähler was not easy to understand. You need a whole semester before you get used to his terminology, his sentence formation, his manner. Only then could one follow him with pleasure. There was some truth in these sayings. But it was not quite that bad. Like many independent thinkers, Kähler had acquired his own way of expression. However, once one had become somewhat accustomed to it and had the guide published by him in one's hand, one not only soon understood him, but he became a true guide into the secrets of divine thoughts. So came the conclusion of the years of study in Frankfurt. At the end of the semester, the director presented us with our leaving certificate with a few pertinent reminders. We sang once again as a seminarians' choir a song about Christ and his work. Then we, who had learned and taught, hoped and strived together for years, thankful for what we had been able to enjoy, our chests swollen with high ideals and hopes, joined hands in farewell. Would we ever meet again? Where would God's call take us? Some to Switzerland, others to countries outside the German-speaking conference. Where? We would only find out at the conferences that would soon convene. We all wanted one thing: to fill the place that God's hand would assign to us through the leadership of the Church, for the glory of our Lord and the salvation of immortal souls. And we hoped the weapons sharpened during years of study would prove themselves in battle!

(1) Homiletics is that branch of theology that studies the composition and delivery of a sermon or other religious discourse. It includes all forms of preaching mainly through the sermon, homily and catechetical instruction

(2) Saalburg is Roman fort located on the main ridge of the Taunus, northwest of Bad Homburg, Hesse, Germany. It is a cohort fort, part of the Limes Germanicus, the Roman linear border fortification of the German provinces.

(3) Exegesis is the critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture.

(4) Dogmatics characterized by or given to expression of opinions very strongly or positively as if they were facts.

Chapter 9 “Here I am, send me!" - Call to Southeastern Europe

Where the conference was held in the summer of 1900, I do not remember. At this conference I was accepted on a trial basis. It was not necessary to be present. Probation meant that now the actual examination and probation would begin with a four-year course of study and two examinations each year by an examination board of the conference before ordination as an elder would take place. As is well known, we have two ordinations in the Methodist Church. One is usually after a two-year probationary period in the conference. It is ordination as a deacon. The second ordination to elder is to take place after a course of study has been happily completed. Ordinations are made by a bishop, upon recommendation of an Annual Conference.

However, after leaving the seminary, we were not very concerned about this prospective path. We were not afraid of the conference exams, and there was time for ordination. On the other hand, we were waiting with great anticipation to see what kind of work the so-called "appointment list", read out by the bishop at the end of the conference, would show for the young preacher waiting for his ministry. During the conference I represented my fatherly friend, R. Neupert, at his district in Zwickau in Saxony. There I awaited the decision of the leadership of the church on my district. It is possible that one is placed as a 2nd preacher at the side of a supervisory preacher on a large district or that one is immediately given the supervision of a congregation. In seminary we had sometimes discussed the question of which would be preferable. To be able to work independently, some thought, was the most desirable. Others would consider it an honor, a sign of trust, if they would not have to take over a small congregation where the work is in its infancy, but would come to one of the larger congregations where there is a church, so that they could preach to large congregations on Sunday right at the beginning of their work as preachers. It seemed to me that the apostle Paul's point of view was the right one, that he would prefer to preach where Christ's name was not yet known. To start somewhere new, or to use his power where only a weak beginning has been made, then to see how the gospel proves to be God's power, how people are led to Christ, how the Lord adds daily to those who are saved, how the church strengthens on the inside and grows on the outside, that was an ideal I had in mind. I had no wishes about the place or the region. It could be East Prussia or West Germany, Austria or Saxony, it should be all right with me. In my last test sermon in the seminary, I had spoken about trusting God and also used the transfer system as an illustration. We ask for God's guidance, the churches also ask for it. If a decision is then made that does not correspond to our wishes and plans, is it then proving ourselves in trusting God if we become dissatisfied or even complain? Should not he who clothes the lilies, without whose will no sparrow falls from the roof, who prescribes air to clouds and their course to winds, know best where our foot may go, our work be done? The occupation with these thoughts had strengthened my faith and filled my soul with deep calm.

Then came the news that I had been designated for Dresden. The preacher there had been transferred; I was to take his place. This was in line with my wishes, even though I had not thought it possible to fulfill them. A few years of service in a university town - Halle, Berlin, Königsberg - with opportunity for further studies, would have been very welcome to me. But the Lord, to whom my life belonged, sent me with a great, beautiful, even enviable task to Dresden! I received from all sides: from my parents, who assured me that their prayers would accompany me; from the seminary from the preacher's seminary, where they studied the transfer lists of the conferences with interest; from my fellow students, one of whom wrote: "*You really seem to have fallen into the sweetest of lots; Dresden is a field of work that so completely corresponds to your ideals and inclinations*."

A few weeks later I made my move into Dresden. The boxes packed in the seminary were conducted to Dresden. The welcome from the small congregation, which had been joined by several other families in recent years, was extremely warm. My inaugural sermon was on the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus, where it says at the end, "*When they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus alone*," and I spoke of how it was my wish and prayer that I could preach in such a way that after every sermon, after every home visit, after every work we

had to do together, we could say, similar to what we did there, "*They saw no one but Jesus alone!*" As Jesus alone is the reason of our salvation, he should be the archetype for our spiritual life and also the goal of our church work. Whether people are satisfied with us is completely beside the point, as long as he alone is our guide whom we obey. Therefore, we wanted to look to him alone and consider the first service that we now celebrated together as preachers and congregation as a reminder to consecrate ourselves anew to him and to him alone. The greater he would become to us, the stronger would also become the attraction of the congregation. For what gives strength to our work is not us with our gifts, but Jesus alone. After that hour I had the feeling that my Lord could not have given me a more beautiful task than here in Dresden, and I already saw in my mind's eye a large congregation with beautiful property. Is it not pleasant for youth to dream a little?

It was not difficult to settle in Dresden, the members were soon visited and new contact made. It was summer, and the lovely surroundings of Dresden enticed to walks to the White Deer, to excursions on an Elbe steamer to Saxon Switzerland or to enjoy the lovely picture in the evening hours, when the setting sun gilded the domes of the castle church, as it presented itself to the eye on the Brühl Terrace. Then there were the museums with their art treasures, the collections of the "Green Vault" (1) and the Zwinger. (2) If I had worked intensively from the early morning, I often spent an hour before lunch in the picture gallery with its treasures of old and new masters. When I got a headache while wandering through the various halls and looking at as many paintings as possible, with feelings of fatigue, I formed my own system for such visits, which I have kept to this day and have also maintained when visiting the great galleries of Rome, Florence, Naples, as well as other cities: I chose one of the most important pieces according to the catalog, sought it out and let it affect me for some time. I realized after some time that I had a real profit from it. In the Zwinger in Dresden I was fascinated by the Sistine Madonna by Raphael. The picture: Mary in the clouds with the two well-known lovely angels at her feet, impressed me strongly. Often, I did not look at any other painting, but went to the cabinet, where this masterpiece of Raphael's art stands as the only painting, sat down opposite it on the bench and contemplated the artistic lines, wonderful color harmony in the faces and clothes, the supernatural in the appearance, the tender breath of the clouds. Then one day it was as if I discovered an angel's face among the gossamer clouds. Correct, that was so. Then a second one. A third. And finally, I discovered that the whole cloud formation consists of nothing but angels' heads, but you can see them only after looking intensively. What a change of scenery! The clouds are angels carrying Our Lady, up into the glory of heaven. Can there be a better illustration of the word: "*We know that sufferings of this time are not worthy of the glory that shall be revealed in us"?* The sufferings and disappointments, adversities, hardships of the time seem to be nothing but clouds bringing rain and storm, veiling the sun and the blue sky. But the longer we look in the light of God's Word, the more the dark, the sinister, the frightening disappears, and the sufferings become messengers of God who carry us up to the place of eternal bliss prepared for us.

The work in the community gave me great pleasure. There was really "everyone at work and always at work". We had good voices in the singing choir and held a monthly singing service. For one Sunday, we even swung into action to have 500 invitation cards printed and distributed, announcing a talk on the theme of "Excelsior." I spoke about the thoughts that my colleagues in the seminary had so sharply criticized and found that quite a number of strangers had come. We continued to advertise the next Sundays in a similar manner, and it came about of its own accord that these evening meetings became evangelistic meetings in which souls decided to Christ. The importance of singing for the cultivation of congregational life and for evangelism really became clear to me in Dresden. There are many people for whom a lecture on religious or biblical questions has little appeal. Their desire for spiritual food has not yet been awakened. But spiritual music appeals to them and sets tones of the heart vibrating. Thus, through a song, many a prodigal son in a foreign land has been reminded of his father at home, and homesickness awakened until he came to the decision, "*I will arise and go to my father.*" Even though I was not exactly musical - I lacked a fine musical ear - I had mastered the technique to some extent, including conducting, and was thus able to lead the choirs. In the process, one thought was constantly impressed on my mind: Choral singing in the service as well as in the congregation must have the clearly

grasped goal of showing seeking souls the way to the Savior, that is, to call the lost sheep to their shepherd and to gather this flock around the good shepherd, to lead them to the green pastures to the fresh water of divine thoughts. To this belongs the adoration, the glorification of God, who thus loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son for it, that now everyone who believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. The content of the song must be gospel. The purpose of singing, which should be grasped by every single contributor, must be to proclaim God's thoughts. It goes without saying that only the best is good enough for this. But art must only be a means to an end, never an end in itself. It seemed to me that this was the power of the performed songs, that the singers had also experienced the content, were enthusiastic for the great divine task connected with the singing of the eternal truth, and that they put their love and their heart into the performances. I also had to ward off temptations for the small choir to venture into pieces it was not up to and preferred - as choral songs - simple songs with lyrics rich in content. An observation from the last weeks of the seminary time had strengthened me in this: On a festive occasion I heard in the Katharinenkirche (3) in Frankfurt a. M. What the pastor preached; I could not say today. Even the text has not stuck. But the impression was unforgettable when, after the Amen, a mixed choir with wonderfully formed voices sang the "Good News" song on the gallery opposite the pulpit: "*Closer my God, to you, closer to you"!* I wonder if we have an even simpler song in our hymnal? Whether any of our choirs would deign to present such a familiar, simple song to the congregation at an annual festival, a hymn service? But that church choir, I suppose at the request of the pastor, had chosen this song, had rehearsed it well, the pronunciation was masterly, not a word was left ununderstood, the harmony uplifting, and the purpose had been achieved: in the hundreds of listeners the desire had been awakened to come closer to God. In any case, our singing services in Dresden were a blessed means of evangelization, and I believe that the experience I gained there was of important service to me for the work in Southeastern Europe, to which I was assigned without knowing it.

A special meeting during this Dresden period became the decisive turning point in my work. In October, the district assembly of the Leipzig district was held in Leipzig, the first I attended after graduating from the preacher's seminary. It was presided over by the head of the district, the esteemed and popular preacher Gustav Hempel. Brother Hempel was an irenic nature: quiet and deliberate, without making many words, he led the extended district with his loving heart. We young candidates took our conference exams at such gatherings, papers on theological and ecclesiastical questions were discussed, and the exchange of ideas on experiences in spiritual life and work served to cheer and strengthen the fraternal fellowship. If one has recently joined the Work, one finds such hours doubly delicious. They are a need for our preachers and a strengthening for the congregations. I mean, not only for the congregations where the preachers meet, but for all congregations whose preachers usually return to their field of work refreshed, encouraged, newly strengthened. The district leader of the Berlin district, Preacher C. Schell, had also come over to examine the Saxons and Thuringians. Brother Schell was known as a sharp thinker who liked to deal with philosophical problems and to present them somewhat differently than in the usual way. He was gladly listened to by the younger preachers, while the older ones often disagreed with him. This time he did not give a lecture, but at the end he asked to be allowed to tell something about the work in his district. He said that his most interesting district was Hungary, in the narrower sense the Bácska (4). As is well known, Preacher R. Möller, miraculously led there by God, had begun to evangelize among the ethnic Germans of Bácska. During his visits there, preacher Möller had at first had powerful meetings, but now resistance had flared up, churches and authorities sought to prevent the work, and the young preacher from Vienna, who had been sent there after completing his studies in the seminary, had had to leave Bács Szenttamás (now Srbobran, Serbian city) and Verbász (now Vrbas, Serbian city) as well as the country at the instigation of the "chair judges" - these chair judges were the actual kings of the country. This might not have been so urgent, but that young man was just a timid nature, not steeled to fight, and the friends there had been very intimidated. For him - the Methodist work in the Dual Monarchy was under C. Schell's supervision - the question was now, which he discussed in detail with Preacher Möller as well as with the bishop, whether the work that had begun so hopefully had to be abandoned because of the difficulties that had arisen

or whether the attempt to gain a foothold there should be repeated. They agreed, however, that appointing someone to work in Southeastern Europe was out of the question. The work would only be continued or taken up if a young preacher volunteered for it, in other words, received a divine call for Southeastern Europe. Then he enumerated the qualities that such a young man must possess. They were so strongly drawn that the listeners almost had to get the impression that the speaker was not at all serious about finding a candidate for that district, but rather about soothing his conscience if the work had to be given up after all. In addition to mental and spiritual equipment for such a task, C. Schell continued, the young preacher must first of all be healthy, because the ministry will require many strains of all kinds and much self-denial. Secondly, he must be single and must not think of marrying soon, because the means are not sufficient to maintain a married man. And thirdly, he must not be afraid of difficulties. His life would be a life of struggle. He would also have to put up with disgrace and persecution, as Jesus had promised his apostles when he sent them out.

After this speech the interest for everything else had dwindled. There was only talk about the Bácska and who could sign up for it. It was obvious that Preacher C. Schell had come to Leipzig to recruit someone from our ranks. Who could come into question? An older colleague asked me directly, "*What do you think, Brother Melle, don't you want to volunteer?*" I took this for a joke. "*No*," was my definite answer. "*Where are you thinking? I couldn't possibly exchange beautiful Elbflorenz for a remote little southern Hungarian village surrounded by gypsies*." Somewhere I had read that there were many gypsies in that area, some of them wandering, but also resident. I said this, however, not out of dislike for the Gypsies - my interest in them even moved me to make special studies in their history and customs - but out of my love for Dresden and out of the conviction that a great task had been set for me there by God, from which I could not run away. This settled the matter for me for the time being, and I went back to Dresden, hoping in silence that one of my colleagues, who would be better suited and could get away more easily than I, would answer the call and come forward. That the work could not be abandoned because of such difficulties was, I think, clear to everyone. But it was strange: I could not get rid of the image of Hungary. When I got home, I searched my library for everything I could find about the country and its people, history and language, geography and customs. The most useful was Meyer's *Konversationslexikon*, (5) which my father had bought in installments and given me for my birthday. I found that such a work was a treasure trove for a preacher's library, from which many treasures could be drawn. I troubled the great Meyer much. He also had a large map of Hungary, I saw how the Danube, coming from Vienna, flowed through Budapest and Belgrade towards the Black Sea, I finally found Bácska, that fertile stretch of land of the Hungarian lowlands, and finally even Bács Szenttamás, the Serbian village where the future preacher was to live and begin his ministry among the ethnic Germans living between Hungary and the Serbs. I began to ask God to choose the right man and to put it in his heart to say, "*Here I am, send me*."

So, a few days passed. I did not mention anything about Southeastern Europe to my congregation. Then, I think it was on a Monday, Preacher R. Möller came through Dresden from Vienna. I was very happy about this visit in the loneliness of my bachelor apartment. Brother Möller was on his way to Berlin for a preachers' meeting and had taken a few hours to see something of Dresden under my guidance. When I asked a question about the Bácska, it was as if the eloquent man had been waiting for it for a long time, for the floodgates of his gift of speech opened, he could not stop and went on and on, until he boarded the train to Berlin, about Hungary, about the providential way that had led him to Hungary, about his visits to Verbász and Bács Szenttamás and about the desire of those ethnic Germans to hear the Gospel and to learn the way of life. It was obvious that he had grown fond of Bácska, and I did not doubt for a moment the sincerity of his words when he said, "*Brother Melle, if I were an unmarried young man, I would go there at once*." It also really sounded like a chapter from the Acts of the Apostles, how the Methodists had come to Bácska: A Bácska schoolteacher, threatened by the shackles of alcoholism, in order to preserve himself and save others, had founded Blue Cross clubs. Looking for songs for the club hours, Ernst Gebhardt's "*Frohe Botschaft*" (Good News) fell into his hands, and they sang the Methodist revival songs in the club hours, without knowing anything about Methodism. They continued to look for reading material. In some way - I have not been able to find out how this happened - they received a number

of the "Christian Apologist" published in German in Cincinnati, USA. The teacher immediately ordered the paper. That was what they were looking for! In each number excellent articles on temperance, but also many other things that were useful and wholesome to read: treatises on conversion, regeneration and sanctification, news from missions and church history, reports on the Methodist Church and its work in almost all countries of the world. There arose a desire to meet the Methodists and to hear a Methodist preacher preach. When they found in an issue of the Apologist the address of Preacher R. Möller in Vienna, Trautsohngasse No. 8, they invited him to visit them in the Bácska, and when they had heard him, the desire grew stronger and stronger to have a preacher constantly introducing them to the Scriptures, showing them the way of salvation, and leading them further along the narrow path.

That night I fought one of the decisive battles of my life. Before going to bed, I once again bowed my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I could not help but ask again, "*Help someone to come forward for Southeastern Europe*." That I could come forward, that I could be meant, I still did not think of that. It often takes a really long time for us humans to understand the voice of God, loud and clear as it may be. After all, we are used to thinking of others when it comes to duties. Suddenly it flashed through my soul like a ray of lightning: "*You pray that someone else may go - but what if you yourself were meant? If God, to whom you have consecrated your life, to whom you have promised and often confessed to serve, wanted you, you of all people, who feel so at home in Dresden, there in Bácska, in that village which you discovered on the map after a long search? Do you hear the Lord calling: Whom shall I send, who will be our servant?*" The battle inside me was on and had to be finished. There was no longer any sign of sleep. I walked up and down the room until long after midnight, considering all the pros and cons. Yes, I had not thought that God could have it in for me. Why had I not thought of this idea until just now? Yes, why? This led to a self-examination before the face of Him who has eyes like flames of fire and examines hearts, and I know today that it was the hand of the Holy Spirit that opened one layer of my heart after another and let me see how much of my own selfish, unholy nature was still hiding there. I discovered that there was still a shyness of struggle and self-denial, that I - now a preacher in a large city congregation - actually thought myself too good for the work in such a village; yes, that I hoped, even if the thought had remained unspoken, that in a city like Dresden it would be easier for me to gain recognition. Was that really so? I had to say that the painting was true. God's Spirit had shown me his own heart. Then I was overcome with bitter shame. I could have covered my head and wept. Before my Lord and Master, I threw myself on my knees and said, "*Forgive, O Christ, forgive. Who on the cross shed your blood for your enemies, even for me, forgive me if my surrender to you was not genuine. Cleanse me. Forgive if I have ever been shy of struggle, of suffering, of sacrifice. Forgive if I have ever sought myself. If you ask me, as you did Peter, 'Do you love me?' I can now answer: 'You know that I love you! Just give me the certainty that you want me in Southeastern Europe, in Hungary, in Bácska, and I am ready to go. Do you want me in the German fatherland, I will gladly stay. Do you want to send me to Africa? I am ready. And do you ask me with the thought of the Bácska, "Whom shall I send*?" My answer is: "*Here I am, send me!*"

Then a joy entered my soul and a peace such as I had never felt before, not even on the day of my decision for Christ. It was as if the Father above opened the windows of heaven and wanted to pour the riches of his grace into my heart. I could have rejoiced and exulted and regretted that there was no one near me with whom I could have shared the joy. There was no longer any doubt about my calling to Hungary. That very night I wrote to C. Schell how I was doing and volunteered to join the Bácska if I could be used. The answer came by return of post that he had the bishop's approval, and that I should immediately pack my things and prepare for the transfer. A short visit to the parents. A farewell sermon in Dresden, where they did not want to understand that I had left them "voluntarily". Biblically speaking, there was "much weeping and lamenting" among them, but the dear brothers and sisters saw that it was so God's will and said: "*It is the Lord, he does what is good in his sight*." It hurt my heart like a wound when I had to tear myself away from the beloved church, but I have never doubted for a moment - not then and not until today - that that decision falls under the word: "*He leads me in the right*

way for His name's sake." What would have become of me if I had disobeyed the call from above in that hour, I dare not even think.

(1) The Green Vault (*Grünes Gewölbe*) museum located in Dresden which contains largest treasure collection in Europe. The museum founded in 1723 features a variety of exhibits in styles from Baroque to Classicism. The Green Vault is named after the formerly malachite green painted columns of the initial rooms. It has some claim to be the oldest museum in the world; it is older than the British Museum, opened in 1759, but Vatican Museums date their foundation to 1506.

(2) Zwinger is palatial complex built in 1709 as orangery and garden as well as festival area in Dresden. Designed by architect Matthäus Daniel Pöppelmann, it is one of most important buildings of Baroque period in Germany and one of most famous architectural monuments of Dresden. The Sempergalerie, opened in 1855, was one of most important German museum projects of 19th century and made it possible to expand use of the Zwinger as museum complex.

(3) St. Catherine's Church (Katharinenkirche) is largest Protestant church in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, parish church in the old city center near one of the most famous city squares, the Hauptwache. The building was completed in 1681 in a Baroque style. After being heavily damaged in 1944, the church rebuilt in the 1950s in a simpler style. St. Catherine's has a long tradition as a center of church music, starting from the days when Georg Philipp Telemann was director of the city's music. It hosts a regular concert series around the Rieger organ, installed in 1990.

(4) Bácska is geographical and historical area within the Pannonian Plain bordered by the river Danube to the west and south, and by the river Tisza to the east. It is divided between Serbia and Hungary. Most of the area is located within the Vojvodina region in Serbia and Novi Sad, the capital of Vojvodina, lies on the border between Bačka and Syrmia. The smaller northern part of the geographical area is located within Bács-Kiskun County in Hungary.

(5) Conversation Lexicon (Konversationslexikon), German encyclopedia begun in 1796 by Renatus Gotthelf Löbel and C.W. Franke. It was the forerunner of the Brockhaus encyclopedias. The encyclopedia included history, biography, natural history, art, science, and political affairs.

Chapter 10 Christmas Puzzle/Riddle (1900)

In the Advent season of 1900, one Saturday in Dresden, I boarded the express train Berlin - Vienna, which was to take me first to the old imperial city on the blue Danube. In Vienna a few days stay was planned in the home of preacher R. Möller. There was much to see in Vienna. We must not forget that Vienna was a foreign country in those days. The black and yellow turnpikes formed the border of a different world: different currency, instead of marks, guilders and crowns, different uniforms of the police and the military, different laws, different customs. With Möller's children I spent an afternoon in the Prater (1), saw the main guard at the Hofburg (2) being raised in front of Franz Josef, with the music of Haydn, which we have in the Deutschlandlied, playing the Austrian national anthem: "*Gott erhalte Franz, den Kaiser*" ("God keep Franz, the emperor"). Then I made a visit to the Capuchin Crypt, where the Habsburg rulers sleep their last sleep, and looked at the picture of Vienna from the Chapel Hill.

On Sunday, preaching in the Trautsohngasse in the morning was C. Schell from Berlin, and in the afternoon, I had the privilege of ministering to the congregation with the Word. The insight into the work of preacher R. Möller, especially into his youth circle, was valuable to me. This evangelistically gifted, enterprising man was at the zenith of his life. He was considered one of the best evangelical pulpit orators in Vienna, his sermons, which were always Christocentric, were gladly attended by all circles of the evangelical population, and in the congregation in Trautsohngasse the air of revival was blowing. Admittedly, it was not easy for the Viennese, who had grown up in the Catholic Church and were otherwise easily moved, to become inwardly free and convert to Protestantism. The problem of evangelization among Catholics came to me. It has continued to occupy me ever since. In a nutshell, it was: *How is it that the evangelical proclamation no longer has the impact it had in the days of the Reformation? Applied to our own church: Is our evangelization powerful enough to reach people raised in Catholic doctrine and tradition*?

I was deeply impressed by the Sunday School to which Baroness von Langenau had invited me and which took place in her spacious apartment in Dorotheengasse. It was forbidden in our hall. Another person would probably have been forbidden by the police to hold such children's classes in his apartment, but one had to turn a blind eye to the Baroness, who had been a lady-in-waiting to Empress Elisabeth and was personally acquainted with the highest rulers. She had found peace for her soul under the work of Brother Möller's predecessor, F. Rösch, in the Methodist congregation, had immediately joined the despised and persecuted little congregation, bought it the house in Trautsohngasse, and now spent much time and energy on the children in her home. She had recruited a squadron of helpers whom she trained in preparatory lessons, and it was really a joy to see how she knew how to make the Bible stories understandable to the 100 or so children. After the class I had to address the children, who all seemed to be receptive to the message of Christ, and after Sunday school all the staff were united for an hour of socializing in the parlor, where the Baroness herself served the tea and told many a captivating story from her rich life. The eyes of the young people lit up most when she shared some of her memories with Empress Elisabeth, who had been assassinated in Geneva a few years earlier. As beautiful as these hours were, as uplifting as the meeting was in the evening, there was still an anxious worry on my soul: *When would I have a congregation with such life and such co-workers in Hungary?* However, it was very faith-strengthening to be reminded of the indescribable difficulties through which the congregation had had to pass and how, in spite of everything, the work had grown and strengthened. Of course, no one could have imagined that the Hungarian congregations would outnumber the Austrian ones in a relatively short time.

The days in Vienna passed quickly, and toward the end of the week Brother Möller, accompanied by the faithful lay co-workers Öchsle and Fischer, took me to the East Train Station, where the train to Budapest left at 10 o'clock at night. Already in the waiting room there was a pure mixture of peoples: Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, Chrutines (3), Magyars, all languages were buzzing around. It was winter, after all, and most of them had their thick sheepskins on, which also served them as a base in the train compartment, partly on the floor. There was not enough time to

get off in Budapest. I changed trains in Ferenzváros to the south and arrived in Verbász around 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

Two brothers, P. u. K., met me at the station, they had recognized me quickly. Verbász is a village or town of 10,000-12,000 inhabitants. Actually, there are two villages, Old and New Verbász. In Old Verbász the Serbian population predominates, in New Verbász the ethnic Germans. The actual Hungarians, the Magyars, are in the minority. Verbácz is considered one of the most beautiful villages of the Bácska, and I was anxious to take a look at the main street. The two brothers, however, led me away from the station around the back, between fences and hedges, where I saw nothing and, as I soon realized, could be seen by no one. When I asked what that meant, I learned that the "Stuhlrichters" (4) had told them that if they ever picked up a German preacher again - it was generally said to be a "German preacher" - he would have him picked up by the police and they would have them locked up lock, stock and barrel. "*Then we thought*," was the opinion, "*it would be better if people did not find out that they had come*." That's a nice outlook, I thought. How am I to evangelize if my coming is not allowed to be known? That evening we had a small meeting in the back room of a farmhouse, "*for fear of the Jews*," so to speak, like the disciples on Easter Eve in Jerusalem. It seldom became so difficult for me to speak, and that night I slept little, but talked all the more with God. The next day Brother Julius Jakob picked me up with wagon and horses to Bács Szenttamás. Here in the house of the dear Jakob family I had a room at my disposal. Because it belonged to another chair judge district, there was no prohibition; here I would even enjoy the protection of the authorities. The number of ethnic Germans in this place was, however, small, together with all the children about only 300 souls, so the main field of work had to remain Verbácz. But I had a reasonably safe place of refuge in Bács Szenttamás and - what was immensely valuable in the difficult situation - friends and advisors who, as civil servants, knew the circumstances and laws and were thus well able to assist me in word and deed. I had obtained the Hungarian law on religion of 1895, in which freedom of religion was guaranteed. All the paragraphs of this law were discussed, translated into German, and I was advised what I could do in the Verbácz situation.

My decision was soon made: I wanted to present myself personally to the chief magistrate of Kula, to whose district Verbácz belonged. When we wanted to go to Kula to meet the powerful man, we met a four-horse vehicle: the chief magistrate was going to Verbácz. So, we turned back, and I sought out the stern gentleman in the municipal hall of New Verbácz. But before I could find out who the chief magistrate was, he jumped up, took a few steps towards me and said in German in a military commanding tone: "*Herr Melle, I have been informed of your coming. You would like to preach here, as others have done before you. But I verbally forbid you once and for all to hold services in my district, because we have enough religion here and don't need a new one*."

Since he had emphasized the word "orally" and the somewhat unpleasant greeting had probably thrown me a bit, I could think of nothing to say but the question: "*Just orally, Mr. Chief Magistrate?*" Now, there is a provision in Hungarian law that one can demand a written prohibition, which, however, I did not know at all. The chief magistrate, however, had the impression that the young "German" had already informed himself and replied: "*I also want to forbid you in writing, but for that you have to submit a written request*." "*Thank you, Mr. Chief Magistrate, I will do that*". That was the end of the first conversation.

It was a few days before Christmas. In the Religion Law, we had found a paragraph which stated that foreigners who did not belong to any of the religious societies recognized in Hungary could hold their religious services, but they had to register them beforehand with the 1st official of the municipality. In my case, this was the Chief Magistrate of Kula, Dr. Sz. My petition, which was translated into Hungarian by one of the Jakob brothers, the notary L., translated it into Hungarian and put it into a form that met the requirements, read something like this: "*I, the undersigned, a foreigner (a German citizen of the Reich) who does not belong to any of the religious societies recognized in Hungary, most humbly ask the Chief Magistrate to take note - on the basis of § 31 of the Religions Act - that on December 25, in the evening at 7 o'clock, he will hold a church service in the house of Kis Josephuka 432 in Neu-Verbácz according to the rules of his, i.e. the Methodist Episcopal Church.* The time until December 25 was very short. Those familiar with the customs of officials at the chair magistrate's office said that my request would

probably be settled only after the holidays. This would be favorable insofar as I would then have held my meeting and would have become known to the population, which would probably feel moved to stand up for me. With that, much would be gained.

This calculation was made without consulting the host. The request must have arrived in Kula on the first holiday. But the chief magistrate found the matter important enough to write a ban himself, to have one of them ride to Verbácz with it, where the police received the order to find the preacher Melle, to hand him the ban and to prevent him from holding his service. I was in Szenttamás in the morning. In the afternoon I walked the 14 kilometers on the road to Verbácz. It was a wonderful winter day, the plain covered with snow everywhere. The salash (type of traditional Hungarian house) houses, scattered here and there, seemed to me like sugar houses lost by the Christ Child on his flight through the country, the mulberry trees along the country road like Christmas trees glistening in the sun. My heart was filled with the glorious thoughts of Christmas, and I looked forward to preaching on the word: "*It is ever certainly true and a precious word, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*."

Arriving near Verbácz, I saw two brothers coming towards me. Their faces already revealed that something was wrong: the police had been looking for me all afternoon, asking about me here and there, where I could be expected to have entered, and telling me that the chief magistrate had forbidden me to preach. If I did not comply, I would most likely be escorted across the border. This was, of course, the best publicity that could have been given to the congregation. No advertisement in a newspaper, no drumming out in the streets would have had a similar effect. Whoever heard it wanted to be there. One told the other. And when I came to the house of the dear Frank family in Kis Josephuka, I found an overcrowded house. The kitchen, through which one had to pass, was filled with people. In the courtyard they were standing. And inside in the parlor intended for the service, literally every seat was taken, really every seat. Boys were sitting on the windowsills, even on the "Swedish stove" (5) - it was heated with straw from the outside. Only with difficulty could I make my way to a very small table on which there was just enough room for a Bible. On the side of one wall were two beds. Inventive as the dear Bácska people are, they had quickly cleared away the feather beds and placed boards over the bedsteads, on which about twenty people had found comfortable seats. A joker had also already found a name for this seating: it was the gallery. It remained in the future, and some of the audience came a full hour early to get a seat in the gallery.

In the meantime, I had been handed the document with the handwritten ban. What was I supposed to do? Just send the people home again? I felt that this would not be the beginning, but the end of our work. Rebel against the ban, hold the service anyway? That would give the chief magistrate legal grounds to intervene against me with all means. This evening hour, as the burden of a historical responsibility lay on my soul, would be of decisive importance for the future of the work, not only in Verbász, but in Hungary and probably in Southeastern Europe in general. I could do nothing but look up in the silence of my heart to the One who had sent me and given me the commission, and as I did so, the word of Jesus came vividly, impressively, strengthening faith in His presence before my eyes: "*Do not worry about what you will speak, it will be given to you in time and hour*." This made me completely calm, and the further course showed that the Lord fulfilled his promise.

There was a great tension in the assembly. What will happen? Will the young man - I had reached the age of 25 - set aside the ban and then be led away by the police? After all, it would have been a "chase" for some. I began: "*Dear friends! As ever, I was looking forward to holding a service today. But you have already been informed that the chief magistrate has forbidden me to do so. I believe that there must be a mistake here and that the matter will be cleared up, because according to the law there is freedom of religion in Hungary - in contrast to Austria. But I am, like that centurion in the Gospel, a human being, subject to the authorities, and will consequently submit until an appeal to a higher authority is decided*." A murmur went through the crowd. To submit so quickly was not right according to the mind of the free Hungarian citizens.

"*I think, however*," I continued, "*since we are together in such beautiful numbers on this Christmas Eve, it will not be necessary for us to go home immediately. Perhaps we can do something that is not forbidden. Unfortunately, I*

do not know Hungarian yet, so I can see for myself what is forbidden and what is not forbidden. Who can translate the ban into German for me?" After all, it was all Volksdeutsche who were together here. Karl Pfeiffer, one of the brothers who had picked me up and met me on the road to Bács Szenttamás, came forward. Under his roof I had slept, or not slept, the first night after my arrival.

"*Please*," I said, handing him the ban, "*tell me if it is forbidden to sing*." It was not, so I made the suggestion, since it was Christmas Day, to sing a Christmas carol. Whether they knew the song "O du fröhliche, o du selige Weihnachtszeit" (“O Merry, O Blessed Christmas Time”)? Of course, they knew it, and the congregation enthusiastically joined in. Perhaps this carol has been sung more purely and sonorously, but more heartfelt, more enthusiastically, more powerfully, resounding far and wide through the silent winter night, I do not think it has sounded anywhere since the angelic choir rang out there in Bethlehem's corridors on Christmas Day. "*Now see if it is forbidden to pray*," I said to Brother Pfeiffer. He adjusted his glasses and read the letter carefully, tracing the lines with his index finger. "*There is nothing in it about praying*," was the report in his unadulterated Swabian-Bácska dialect. "*I expected that*," I said, "*who would want to forbid praying in Hungary, too? I am used to praying not only in church services. So, I ask that we become silent for prayer*."

A solemn silence fell, and I prayed as I would have prayed before a church service, only with the difference that the prayer, due to the peculiar circumstances, became not only more serious, but also longer, because many objects of prayer came to my mind, which could not be overlooked on this occasion, for example, the Kingdom of Hungary, its authorities, all the authorities; also, for the presiding judge, the guidance and the blessing of God was invoked. Nobody thought about leaving.

"*Now*," I took the floor again, "*let us be informed exactly what is forbidden*." Brother Pfeiffer translated:

"It is forbidden for you to hold a church service." "So, we don't hold a church service."

"It is forbidden for you to preach." "Then I will not preach today."

"It is also forbidden for you to give a lecture." "Of course, then I will not give a lecture."

With that, the prohibition seemed to be exhausted. To reassure myself, I asked again if there was anything to the effect that we could not give each other riddles. This, of course, was not the case, and I suggested that we should engage in guesswork, to which neither the gentlemen of the police nor the chief magistrate himself, if he were present, would probably object.

The first riddle I asked was what was the most beautiful thing about the Christmas story. A merry guessing back and forth began: "the angel's song", "the baby in the manger", "the message of the angel who announced the great joy of Christmas" were the answers and many others. I shook my head after each answer, a sign that, in my opinion, the right thing had not yet been hit, until our dear Kathy Frank - the Bácska people all remember her - became impatient and asked: "*Now don't keep us in suspense any longer. Tell us what you think is the most beautiful thing about the Christmas story*."

"*Gladly*," I replied. "*In my opinion, the most beautiful and important thing is actually not in Luke's account, chapter 2, but is contained in a saying of the apostle Paul in his first letter to Timothy, chapter 1, 15, where it says*: ‘This is certainly true, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’" So, I was at the text I would have liked to preach on that evening! "*Why do I think this is the most beautiful thing? When I was driving down from Vienna to the Bácska, there was a young girl sitting in my compartment with a book in her hand, in which she was reading incessantly. It must have been a captivating story, because sometimes the girl started laughing out loud. Then again, tears could be seen rolling down her reddened cheeks. So, the fate of the characters drawn in the book was very close to her heart. I noticed that it was a novel she was reading, that is, a story that originated in the imagination of a poet and has now been given shape by his artistic hand. But that is not how the story happened. On the other hand, look at the Christmas story! There are people who also consider it as such a novel, a fairy tale, a legend. And I confess that if it were so, I would consider the poet from whose imagination this story originated to be*

the greatest writer of all times. Even if it were only an invented story, it would be a beautiful story, the most beautiful story of all times, the most beautiful story of world literature. Just watch how the eyes of the little ones light up when you tell it, and how the old people want to hear it again every year, because otherwise there would be no Christmas for them. But what would we get from such a fairy tale? A pleasant sensation of the mind, perhaps, nothing else. We would soon have to say to ourselves: Alas, alas! The story is not true. Then Paul comes and exultantly confesses: 'This is certainly true, that Jesus Christ has come'*. He had not only read or heard it somewhere, but experienced it himself, there on the way to Damascus, that this Jesus was alive, that he came to him, that he forgave his sins and made him a child of God and heir of eternal life. That had actually become his Christmas for him*." And I spoke for about three quarters of an hour about the truth and reality of the gospel; how joyful and thankful we should be that we too can experience it today, just as Paul did in his day: "*This is certainly true*."

I thought to have one more song sung and to close. Then a voice sounded from near the stove, "*The riddles are interesting. We would like to keep guessing, don't you know another riddle to give us*?"

"*Good*," I said "*If the assembly agrees, let's continue a little more. In your opinion, what is the most important letter in the German alphabet*?" Yes, which letter? A and B, C and D, K and P, even Y and Z were mentioned. Z because it was the last letter and meant: *All's well that ends well*. I shook my head again in the negative and made the listeners wait a bit until I named the letter M as the solution to the riddle. "*That's what I thought*," I heard from the second row of the gallery, "*probably M, because your name begins with M*." "*No*," I said, "*the importance and meaning of the letter has nothing to do with my name. However, I am happy to explain the riddle and its correct answer, and only ask for your judgment at the end, whether I am right*."

"*What the letter M means was brought to my attention only before, when I came from Szenttamás to Verbász. There I saw a beautiful new house over the canal. It must have been built this year. I like such beautiful houses, I stopped involuntarily, looked at it from all sides, rejoiced in it. But then it popped into my head: It's a pity that you can only say: a beautiful new house. There is not the slightest relationship to you. But how different it would be if I could say the letter M in front of it. Then it would mean: My beautiful new house. M just expresses possession, denotes what belongs to me*." A few more examples from daily life were given. Then I came to talk about Christmas: "*It is similar with Christmas, which we celebrate today. Many who call themselves Christians can only say,* 'A Savior is born.' *They may doubt the fact, consider it true, because they heard about it at home, learned about it at school. But they have no personal relationship with this Jesus who was born in Bethlehem. And yet Jesus wants to become our personal possession. These are the right Christians and Christmas people who can put the letter M in front of* 'a Savior' *and say: My Savior, my God and Lord, my Savior*." And I led the hymn book song:

For a long time, I lay in sin and night

And thought I would not be brought to the light;

I heard from Christians how merry they were,

And I wish, I wish their Savior were mine.

I heard the word of the Lord's grace,

I read it and heard it often and gladly;

I thought: Is it possible that Jesus could be yours?

At last, I dared and hoped that the Savior was mine.

O miracle of grace: He saved me,

He said also unto me, I pardon thee.

In the faith of the word, I can now rejoice;

For I hope not only, but know that he is mine.

I had talked about the second riddle again as long as about the first. We sang another Christmas carol and parted edified.

When the people went home, one of the women said to her neighbor: "*It is a pity that the man did not preach*. The other one answered: "*Let it be, I think the riddles are just as good as sermons*".

I am of the same opinion. Subsequently, I have preached many more sermons in the same place and in other places, some of which have certainly been richly blessed by the Lord. But whether one or the other of these sermons will be remembered, I do not know. They have had their effect and then, as far as the content is concerned, they have sunk below the threshold of consciousness. The Christmas riddles, however, sank deep into the memory, they were carried from house to house, from place to place, they found their place in history, and I could almost write a book about how God used them to pave the way to my heart here and there.

At first, they also had an outward success, which neither I nor any of the participants of this strange meeting thought of that evening: They made the young "Deutschländer preacher" known far beyond the circles of the closer community. Even at the regulars' tables of the inns they formed the subject of conversation. I suspect that the chief magistrate also heard about them and was probably teased by his colleagues: "*How could you, as a lawyer, forget to forbid the riddles*." It is possible that even the official to whom I submitted my appeal against the judge's ban found out about it and smiled. In any case, he felt moved to recognize my petition and complaint as justified and to order the ban to be lifted. The story of the Christmas riddles may also have moved many a Nikodemus soul to visit the Methodist meeting once in a dark evening hour. For me, the story of the Christmas riddles belongs to those signs and wonders reported in the Acts of the Apostles.

But the most beautiful one actually remains to be told: The Christmas meeting became the starting point of a revival. The souls were deeply touched by the Gospel, one by one they came to the certainty of salvation. We came together for prayer fellowship, and I set up a class in which, among other things, I answered questions about the Methodist Church, its history, its institutions and rules. Some people have said that the name "Methodist" sounds foreign, has no appeal, is an obstacle for many to join. If this were really the case in Germany, it would have to be doubly difficult in a country like Hungary, where people had never heard of Methodism. But I never found that. Just the name gave reason to ask and to answer the questions. In Bácska I had the same experience as in other places: one did not need to persuade or coerce to join, the awakened souls themselves felt the need to unite with us and could not understand if their preacher hesitated to accept members into the church. The souls who had found the Savior with us felt that they belonged to the church, that they had been added by the Lord. But the joy that I felt when, taking into account the wishes of these dear brothers and sisters, I was able to organize a special celebration of acceptance into the congregation already around Easter time, this joy, experienced in a new place, as it were as first fruits in the vineyard, I would like to grant to all my young colleagues. The request of the first members - there may have been about 20 or a little more brothers and sisters - which I entered in the new and first church book of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Hungary, seemed to me like a holy pledge of God, a monument of his faithfulness that he will not let his word be bound by anyone, and a shining promise for the future.

With the feast of the reception of the members, the first "love feast" was to be celebrated. This is an institution inherited from ancient Christian history. “Agapes” is what the first Christians called such gatherings. In the beginning of the Methodist revival, bread and water were served as a sign of fellowship and communion. The outward signs were later dropped, but the testimony of salvation experienced with Christ remained. So, I told my people that after the reception I would give the opportunity for short testimonies, and I would be glad if the new members could tell how they had come to the Lord and to the church and what they had found. I was now very curious to see whether my dear Bácska people would overcome their shyness in front of each other and be able to speak publicly. It is already difficult to pray aloud in front of others. It is even more difficult to bear witness to Christ in

front of one's own household, neighbors and acquaintances. And then, doesn't it take a certain amount of practice? Or at least an example? They had not seen or heard anything like it. When the hour came and I gave the opportunity to speak, the first to come forward was Brother R., who had translated the Chief Magistrate's document for me. One felt that he was pressed to give his testimony. "*I believed I had always been a good Christian*," he said. "*Did I go to meetings and read my Bible, too*? *But when our preacher was not allowed to preach at Christmas and posed riddles, it became clear to me, especially with the second one, that I could not yet put the letter M in front of* 'a Savior,' *could not yet say* 'my Savior.' *Suddenly I realized what I was still missing. I went home, threw myself on my knees and asked God to give me the blessed certainty that Jesus was mine and I his. Thanks be to God that He heard me. Today I may use the M with joy: Jesus has become my Savior, whom I now want to serve all my life*."

The beginning was made, the ice was broken. The other testimonies gushed forth from overflowing hearts. The hearts were filled with the love of Christ, and whose heart is full, his mouth overflows. The surprising thing for me was that all of them, one after the other, confessed that it was the Christmas riddles that had given the impetus for the thorough self-examination and the final decisive step. But I was reminded of the word of the wonderful God who makes all things work for the good of those who love him. Whether my sermon would have been just as fruitful without the prohibition of the chief magistrate, that is, without the will of our opponents to prevent the work? Only with bowing and amazement we can think of his rule!

(1) The Prater—large public park in Leopoldstadt, Vienna, Austria.
(2) The Hofburg is the former principal imperial palace of the Habsburg dynasty.
(3) Chrutines—some sort of nationality, unknown.
(4) “Stuhlrichters”—Noble or chair Judges—Hungarian districts were led by *noble judges* (German: *Stuhlrichter*).
(5) “Swedish stove” is built with bricks so they are covered with tiles – some plain, but many with beautiful and expensive molded or decorated tiles - stoves are often extremely elegant, designed to be used in best rooms.

Chapter 11 In the “Bácska“(1900—1905)

For five years I lived in Bácska, and for another 15 years (20 years in total) I remained in official relationship with the congregations there as superintendent of the Methodist work in Austria and Hungary. They clung to me with love and trust, regarded me as their spiritual father and carried me on arms of faithful intercession. When I think back to the first years there, they seem to me to be a time of first love in the preaching ministry. It is true that at first I had become 2nd preacher again, under the supervision of R. Möller in Vienna, because in the appointment list of the conference Hungary belonged to the district of Vienna, but that was only an advantage. I had an older Kingdom of God worker who shared responsibility with me, to whom I could turn for advice in crucial matters, and who visited me several times in my pioneer ministry. Those were always days of special encouragement. Incidentally, this relationship lasted only until the next conference, at which, to my great regret, Brother Möller was transferred from Vienna to Kassel and C. Schell also resigned as head of the Berlin district to which we were affiliated. He took over the leadership of the Bethany Association in Hamburg and Berlin a little later. Thus, I was placed entirely on my own. When I wrote to brothers in Germany for advice when difficulties arose, I soon realized that they were hardly in a position to judge the situation correctly from there. The political, economic and social conditions were different from those in the German Reich, and the ecclesiastical position had to be sought independently. I felt like someone who had been thrown into the water and now had to swim if he was not to sink.

I felt that adapting to the changed circumstances, empathizing with the souls of people whose educational foundations were completely different, was a necessary and healing task for me. Two small experiences showed me this in a vivid way: Coming from Vienna, where I had seen the castle guard raised, I sat down one day at the harmonium and played Haydn's melody to the Austrian national anthem, which we have in the hymnal for the song "Herz und Herz vereint zusammen" ("Heart and Heart United Together"). It has also become the melody of the German Songs. Then a brother stormed into the room all excited, snatched the sheet music away from me and instructed me that it was forbidden to play the melody in Hungary. If anyone heard it, there would be an unpleasant repercussion. I then learned that this melody had been played in 1848, when the Hungarian generals, the so-called Arad Martyrs (1), were executed for their participation in the struggle for freedom against the Habsburgs. Since that day, every Hungarian has detested this song, and it is quite impossible that the melody could be sung in a meeting. So, I said to myself, it is necessary to study the history of Hungary in order to be saved from similar mistakes. The execution of this decision not only enriched my knowledge and brought to life a part of the history of the southeast, which is closely connected with the events of the German people, but it also introduced me to the thinking and feeling of a heroic, brave people, who clung tenaciously to their nationality, and the more I got to know them, the more I liked them.

The other was an attempt by me to teach German to the young people in Bácz Szenttamás. I found in the Bible lessons and in the exercises of the singing choir that some could well use German in the colloquial language, but that they were far from mastering it, indeed that it was a trouble for them to write a German letter without mistakes. My suggestion that the youth take a few hours together was enthusiastically received by parents and children. Whoever was free, up to 18 years of age, came to the lesson, I could only marvel at the zeal with which the young Bácska "Swabians" practiced declension, conjugation and sentence formation and how they made an effort to read according to the example of their teacher, to declaim poems and to write small essays which were discussed in class. Selected passages from the Bible were included and treated as an exercise in language. This was at the same time an introduction to the Holy Scriptures, an encouragement to read them diligently. One day I was called to the notary. The notary is the highest official of such a place and is responsible for its entire administration. The notary showed me a request from the Ministry in Budapest about my activity. From Szenttamás itself - I also learned the names of the originators - a petition had been sent to the Ministry accusing me of pan-Germanist activities and was working towards my removal. The notary had already answered the request, acknowledged my activity for the blessing of the German-speaking population in a praiseworthy way, but gave me the advice to stop

teaching and to confine myself to religious matters. The incident showed me that there were opponents of my work, who tried to set traps for me even in Szenttamás, where I stood in the best relationship to the authorities. It is necessary to walk carefully as servants of Jesus Christ, "*not as the unwise, but as the wise*." Whoever wants to sow the seed of the Gospel in a distant land, so that it grows and bears fruit, must be able to say like his Lord and Master: "*My kingdom is not of this world*." The Bácska ethnic Germans are an amiable people. When Joseph II wanted to cultivate the marshy area of the Hungarian Plain, he brought in settlers from Württemberg, Hesse, the Palatinate and other parts of Germany. Each family was given a piece of land to cultivate, tax concessions for a certain period of time, and a house with all the furnishings, including tools for working the fields. In the stable there was a cow. These simple houses were gradually replaced by magnificent farmhouses, but you can still find "Joseph's houses" here and there. The settlers, who came from different parts of Germany, formed a new community and also formed their own dialect, which still strongly bears the features of the language spoken by their forefathers when they lived in Germany. The old Luther Bible, not yet revised, was well understood here. The distinction of *zween* for masculine persons and objects, of *zwo* for feminine and *zwei* for neuter, for example, is still used in colloquial speech, and I found that even children who did not yet go to school never confused things. churches and their pastors, who were limited to performing the official acts and preaching a sermon on Sunday. There was nothing of community life, cultivation of the inner life of the individual, or emphasis on the personal experience of salvation. A wide field of work opened up for me.

In Bácz Szenttamás, where I lived with the Jakob family, I sought to gather the few ethnic German families around the Bible. If at all possible, I held the Sunday morning service myself. In the first meeting there were only a few people. But little by little they came with pleasure, the old and the young, I invited the children to Sunday school and formed a singing choir with the youth. In the second year we had to enlarge the hall. A carpenter made us excellent pews - they still do their job today, I believe - and the Word of the Lord grew. If the revival here did not take such tumultuous forms as in Verbász, the work of the Holy Spirit was clearly felt, and one soul after another experienced its Damascus hour. The Germans had no pastor, and they were not particularly satisfied with the small elementary school that had been established for them, so they felt the ministry of the Methodist preacher to be a privilege for which they became increasingly grateful. The Serbs called me the "Schwabski Pope", the Swabian priest. I was called to funerals even by the families who did not attend the services, and it happened that people who were known as our opponents expressed as their last wish on the deathbed that they would like to be buried by me. As soon as the funeral procession started to move, the administration of the Greater Serbian parish would ring the bells as if it was one of its members.

Men predominated in the church services. Once, when the editor of the Alliance Journal, B. Kühne, made a trip through the German-speaking communities of Hungary and also came to Szenttamás, he told me that nowhere had he seen so many men in his meetings as here. Looking through my notes from that time, I myself marvel at the spiritual food that could be offered to the listeners. The memory of the impression that Krummacher's "Elijah" had once made on me gave rise to a series of sermons on the mighty prophet, and I realized how historical material captivated. As a counterpart, I ventured to talk through the Epistle to the Romans in the weekly Bible study, certainly not light fare. However, I prepared myself thoroughly for each Bible lesson, even writing it down verbatim beforehand.

But the main station (2) was - and it became more and more - Verbász. Here were not only individual German-speaking families scattered among other nationalities, but an ethnic German population that formed a cohesive unit. I came over from Szenttamás twice every week, mostly "per pedes apostolorum" (by the feet of the apostles). The railroad, on which one can now comfortably cover the distance in half an hour, had not yet been built. So, it was necessary to use the feet. It was 14 to 15 kilometers (8 to 81/2 miles), and it never became too long for me. For such a hike in winter in the flat snowy landscape, in summer between the waving wheat and corn fields was something uplifting. How well one could meditate on one's sermon or memorize the vocabulary of the languages one was studying. Since seminary days, I had made it a rule to copy the text from the Greek New Testament on my

sermon notes. On the lonely road I then learned these texts by heart, which always gave me new thoughts as well. Now and then a wagon would take the hiker, or Father Jakob would have his horses harnessed and provide the carriage. Sitting in it while the fleet-footed Hungarian horses sped along, I felt like a prince. Of course, walking on foot also had its downsides: When I went home at night - it took at least two and a half to three hours - I often passed a camp of wandering gypsies, who followed the lonely wanderer with their glances. However, nothing ever happened to me from such fellows. In the second winter, Brother Häuser - a brickyard owner - put his horse at my disposal, a two-year-old mare named "Dama". Ha, what a pleasure it was! I wanted to ride! The rider had probably served in the infantry, but had never been on a horse, and Dama had never been reined by a rider. She was a young, nervous and very shy animal, and she had no sympathy for riding. Even to fasten the saddle was a feat. If she then noticed that someone wanted to swing into the saddle, she began to dance around, kicking out with her hind legs. Two men were needed to hold her. But if one was in the saddle, then she shot off as if stung by a tarantula, one galloped for about 10 minutes, best through the deep mud, as it formed in rainy weather on the soggy Hungarian paths, until she had calmed down. In three quarters of an hour, one was in Verbàsz. However, I also learned the truth of the verse "*This is not a good rider, who only kissed the sand*", and the dear friends in Szenttamás always found something to do in Verbász after all, so a second man had to accompany me. So, a wagon was taken and the young preacher was taught not to ride. But I still think fondly of those rides through the Bácska.

Apart from Verbász, the following stations were gradually taken up and served: Kuczora, Feketehegz (in German Schwarzenberg), Szegkegz, Kis-Ker, O-Kér, Ujvidék, the beautiful town on the Danube, opposite the old fortress Peterwardein, and Tisza Kálman-Falra. I mention only the stations from that time.

There were already things to do. When the weather was nice and dry, even the long walks were a pleasure. It was like walking on a soft carpet. But when it rained! Then the wheels drove up to the axles in the mud, the horses sank up to the knees, and it happened that the pedestrian, if his boots or shoes did not literally fit like a glove, got his footwear stuck. Once there was such a rainy day. I had a meeting in Verbász. It was impossible to get through in this weather. "*I don't think our preacher will come today*," was the opinion. "*Betting*" said a voice, "*he is coming after all*." And he came. Henceforth they did not bet, but took it as a fact that the Methodist preacher was not afraid of the weather.

However, these small strains and difficulties could not dampen the joy of the work. What sublime services they were, in the narrow rooms of Verbász, of Feketehegz, of Kuczora. The air was often so thick that the kerosene lamps would not burn. In the summer months we very often held church services outdoors. The preacher would then stand on the porch in the courtyard, the listeners would take their seats around him all the way out into the street, and the singing would resound down the street, far, far out into the stillness of the night. I do not remember any disturbances. The families in the neighborhood had their windows open or were sitting on the benches in front of their houses, listening to the songs and the Word proclaimed. And the Word was proving its divine power. We were standing in a time of revival, without me really being aware of it. Whether I held week-long evangelistic meetings in those first years, I hardly believe. I do not remember it. There were too many wards for that and the winters were much too short. But almost every meeting became an evangelistic meeting. In the classes, in the Bible study, in the prayer meetings, conversions were expected. What delicious times those were, when, as it says in the Acts of the Apostles, "*the Lord added daily to those who were being saved*." Several times it happened in Verbász that when I was invited to a family's house for lunch and had resolved to speak pastorally and pray with them after the meal, even before the soup was served, someone said, "*Won't you pray with us before we eat*?" And again, before I could pray myself, the dear souls began to plead for mercy, for forgiveness, for the peace of God, until God's Spirit assured them, "*You are forgiven of your sins, go with peace*." The image of Jesus entering Zacchaeus' house and saying: "*Today salvation has come to this house*" was always in my mind.

In those Bácska years, the understanding of the Acts of the Apostles dawned on me. Yes, I do not hesitate to call this the most important theological or biblical yield for me. Until then I had regarded the Acts of the Apostles

more or less as history, a wonderful story of great deeds of God, which nevertheless belonged to the past. It certainly is, and it is necessary that we consider that epoch, when the Holy Spirit was poured out and the church of Jesus Christ was founded, as a historical fact that belongs to the foundations of faith. But the Acts of the Apostles is true. It wants to show not only how the Holy Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem on Pentecost, but how this same Holy Spirit worked in Samara, in Antioch and in Philippi, in Corinth, in Rome. Only at that time? Did His work end when Luke put down his pen after writing the 28th chapter? Certainly not! He worked through the centuries, worked at the time of the Reformation, worked at the outbreak of the Methodist revival movement. Is he no longer active today? We felt his activity, with which he accompanied the proclamation of the Gospel, and I experienced this activity as new chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

A large part of Luke's account is taken up by descriptions of conversions. There are the 3,000 at Pentecost, the conversion of Paul of Tarsus, the being filled with the Holy Spirit in the house of Cornelius, the testimonies of the heart-transforming power of the Gospel on Paul's missionary journeys. In Philippi, the Lord opened the heart of a Lydia to believe while Paul was speaking; with the jailer, it took an earthquake before he asked the question, "*What must I do to be saved*?" Jews who had walked blamelessly in the Law, Gentiles who had served idols and come out of the den of vice, they experienced the saving power of Jesus Christ, became new people, joined the church, and now praised God by following Jesus. We experienced similar experiences of God's grace. Not everyone experiences the turn from darkness to light in the same way, our God does not work according to the template, he loves diversity, but where the move of the Father to the Son reaches its goal, the person himself notices something of it, and the others notice it too.

There I think of that original man whom the old evil enemy had badly entangled in the slave chains of drinking. He was a robust nature, could take a little, but when the limit was crossed, he could not control himself. What his wife and children suffered under him I will only hint at, not describe. He comes to the meeting one evening with a fellow innkeeper, stops outside because he does not want to be recognized. Inside they sing song No. 1 in the "Good News", which begins: "*Come home, O wandering soul, from the Father's house far away, nowhere a star shines for you. O lost child, come home, come home.*" The refrain is. "*Come home, O come home*!" The melody is simple, but in keeping with the text, inviting, pleading, poignant. The man stands spellbound. He has never heard anything like it. A few tears of remorse bead down over the haggard face at the thought of his past life, he plucks his drinking companion by the sleeve and sighs, "*They mean you and me to go home*." And in the hard, seemingly stifled heart, the resolve is awakened: I will arise and go to my father and say, "*Father, I have sinned before heaven and before thee*." How often the dear brother told me this story.

Or I think of Fritz Bácsi, whose story belongs here. He had co-signed the letter to the ministry by which they wanted to have me expelled. Now it happened that his dear wife and daughter found the Savior in our congregation and asked to be accepted into the church. There was an outburst of anger from the father. It must have been very bad. He declared that if the German preacher should dare to visit them, he would throw him out the door in such a way that he would break his neck. Mother and daughter therefore asked me not to visit, but I promised them to pray with them daily for the conversion of the father. One day I felt inwardly urged to visit the family in spite of everything. Father had just come home from the field with his wagon and horses and was tending to the stable. Now he had probably imagined that the preacher, when he came, would talk to him about conversion. But the preacher did not preach, he talked to him about horses and cows and field work. He did not expect that the "Schwabski Pope who came here" would know anything about cattle breeding and farm work. He became communicative and even went into the parlor with his wife and daughter to continue the conversation. The next evening - it was a pitch-dark night, and Szenttamás had no street lights - he came to the Bible study, armed with his big storm lantern, and it was not long before Saul had become Paul. Every time I came to Szenttamás and we had a testimony lesson, the old brother told how he, like Saul, had persecuted the congregation and me. But mercy had been shown to him. When I was there again - Fritz Bácsi had already grown quite old - one of the brothers said that I should tell the story, but it was not necessary to tell the story, which they all knew by heart, every time anew.

Something else was the melting together of those grasped by Christ into a living holy community united by the love of Christ. The ideal we had in mind, even if it was not achieved, was: one heart and one soul. The community formed one family. Each one felt: we belong together as disciples of Jesus Christ, as children of God. Admittedly, there were temptations, much opportunity for patience and forgiveness and bearing in love, but the inner strength of the Spirit always triumphed. The contrast with the world was there. The brothers and sisters encouraged one another to pursue sanctification. Whereas before the conversion not even grace was said, now there were regular home devotions, and Sunday belonged to the Lord. One felt transported to the days of the first Christians, and the preacher recognized it as his task to ground the congregation in Scripture in such a way that it would also be equipped for coming crises, temptations and challenges.

Would lay workers also be found? Where conversions take place and life from God is manifested, charismata of the exalted Christ are also awakened and manifested. Not long after, we had a splendid class leaders and stewards meeting and also a quarterly conference. For a while, I mimeographed some suggestions or a particular theme for each month. For example: "Characteristics of being born again", "the prayer life of Jesus' disciples", "the pursuit of sanctification". Bible passages were given for them. Usually, after the treatment in the classes, I promised to preach on the same subject on my next visit. This proved to be very stimulating and served to impress and illuminate the truths considered from the most diverse sides.

I also learned the value of having my own independent church organization during this work. The desire to celebrate the Lord's Supper in one's own community came out strongly. And still, when I recall those hours, I feel something of the seriousness, of the consecration, of the sense of God's presence that was upon the congregation when we first gathered to proclaim the Lord's death in the Lord's Supper! It was similar in Verbász and Szenttamás and in all the stations. There is a very special blessing in the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the circle of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

In the second year of the work, I learned that Bishop J. L. Vincent, who lived in Zurich, would travel to Bulgaria to hold the conference there. I invited him to visit Bácska while traveling through Hungary. He agreed. In his company was Brother B. Burt, superintendent of the Methodist work in Italy. It was a weekday when the bishop came, but our Bácska people did not need a Sunday. In the families of the Methodists and their friends work rested that day, we had a full house in SzentHamás in the morning and in Verbász in the afternoon, and since the bishop had not brought a translator, I had to willy-nilly gather my English knowledge and serve as an interpreter. This forced me to continue in the study of English. I worked through Toussaint-Langenscheidt's textbook, and if I was later able to give lectures in this language in England and America without any effort, then I owe this - as strange as it may sound - to a large extent to the stay in the Bácska and the hikes from Szenttamás to Verbácz, Feketehegz, Szegkegz, Kukzora. In the future we had a bishop's visit to Hungary almost every year in connection with the conference in Bulgaria.

This bishop's visit had another significant fruit for the work: the 70-year-old bishop, one of the most popular educators in the USA, asked me exactly about my field of work. When I described the stations to him and remarked that it would be good if I could get an assistant, but that the means were not available, he immediately promised to pay for the salary if a suitable young man could be found. In this way, at the next conference, I received Hugo Georgi as a helper, who shared the work with me in joys and sorrows for two years. He was given an apartment in Verbász, on the main station, while I stayed in Szenttamás. If at all possible, we spent a whole day together every week. We then discussed the work, I gave him lessons in Latin and English, otherwise the favorable location of the Jakob family house on the Franzenskanal was taken advantage of for physical exercises and some sports. In the summer we swam and went paddling, in the winter we skated. The body was trained and hardened. In the warm nights of July and August, we sometimes slept outside in the open air, among the logs of a lumberyard, by the water, doing some astronomy. By looking at the constellations, we could tell exactly what time it was.

The Jakob family offered the most beautiful fellowship and stimulation. There still lived the father, with his long patriarchal beard, a master builder and timber merchant, who had seen much of the world and had formed a rich judgment. The eldest son Julius had brought his young wife, the amiable Marie-Néni from Slavonia a week before my arrival in Szenttamás. I was then a table companion in the family all the time. There were the other sons: Karl, the engineer, Lajos, the notary, Johann, the pharmacist, Gustav, who helped at home. After lunch we used to read German classical plays together for half an hour with divided roles, and if time permitted, there were animated discussions about all sorts of current problems. Julius became one of the first lay preachers, and it was an extraordinary joy for me that I was able to ordain him as a deacon during my visit to Bácska in the war year of 1942, as one of the first lay preachers in Hungary. Johann (in Hungarian Janosch, abbreviated Jani) made a decision for Christ, felt the call to the preaching ministry, and I was able to send him as the first Hungarian Methodist preacher to the preacher's seminary in Frankfurt a. M. for training in 1906. Before that he had rendered me valuable services as a translator into Magyar in Hungarian meetings. In short, the Jakob family played a role in Divine Providence to help spread Methodism in Hungary and to strengthen the hands of the first preacher and his associates for their ministry. This will remain unforgotten.

Some details would still have to be told, also all kinds of struggles. Almost in every station where we started there were the same difficulties as in Verbász. Perhaps one will be able to publish the most interesting files about it. For my recollections, what has been said suffices. The other German co-workers sent by the bishop can also only be mentioned by name: Robert Schuldt, Ernst Voigt, Martin Funk, Hermann Melle, Alfred Mehner, Otto Hänel, Albert Reinsberg, A. Ohlrich, Hermann Mann and others. I owe a lot to all of them. They have used their strength, borne the burden and heat of the day, fought many a hard battle and produced many a fruit. As soon as we meet at a conference, the conversation turns to the Bácska, and they all consider the years spent in the Bácska and in Hungary to be among the most beautiful of their lives.

Shortly before Hugo Georgi left for the seminary, I made a somewhat longer trip to Southeastern Europe, Slavonia, Serbia and Romania. We spent a day in Belgrade, where a soldier who had stood guard there the year before during the assassination of King Alexander and his wife showed us the old Konak, the castle of the Serbian kings. Then we went down the Danube through the "Iron Gate", the most magnificent stretch of river on the European continent, to Orsova and Herkolasbad. Of course, we visited the island of Ada-Kalek in the Danube, which still belongs to Turkey. It was simply forgotten at the Congress of Vienna, now continues to wear the crescent and live according to Turkish laws and customs. Then we sought out the Coronation Chapel, a significant place from Hungary's history. When Ludwig Kossuth had to give up the fight for freedom in 1848, he took the Hungarian royal crown, the crown of St. Stephen, with him when he fled. Only the one who has been crowned with this crown can be recognized as the king of Hungary. Kossuth wanted to prevent a Habsburg from being crowned. After Hungary came to an agreement with Austria and the Habsburgs, the crown was nowhere to be found. Nobody knew where Kossuth had hidden it. Then an old man near Orsova remembered that many years ago, on a stormy night, he had helped a stranger bury an iron box. With his help the treasure was discovered, Francis Joseph could now be crowned as King of Hungary, and in memory of this he had a beautiful chapel built on the site where the crown had lain in the ground.

Via Transylvania we drove back to the Bácska. I wrote three articles about this trip for "Haus und Herd", a splendid German-American family magazine, and not only earned the expenses for the trip, they also made me acquainted with the editors Dr. Munz and Dr. Albert J. Nast and thus helped, what I could not think of at that time, to prepare my way to the United States and to the service I had been assigned there.

Before I part from Bácska, which has become so dear to me, I must mention Verbász once again. It was my privilege to hold the Hungarian conference in Verbász in 1942. At the request of the youth, one evening I told the story of the Christmas riddles on December 25, 1900. The village now has a beautiful church with a high tower. The tower is said to be even a little higher than the towers of all the other churches. It was built with the help of a special donation from the Methodists in America. Then it was vividly before my eyes again how we acquired the

house which now contains the preacher's residence. A. Drumm was now the pastor, and the site where the imposing church now stands had actually been my first action as a preacher to secure a church property for the future. I was offered the most beautiful site in all of Verbász, right on the border between Old and New Verbász. It was not cheap. In a side alley, we would have come to a property much cheaper than here on the main street. There was a long struggle. Finally, with faith in God, I decided to take the step. I said to the brothers: "*I hope, even if we will hardly see it, that one day there will be a church on this square, where a lively and numerous congregations will celebrate its services*." As I said, I myself hardly hoped to experience this, because we were only at the beginning of the work at that time, had to fight continuously for our existence and were, although rich in faith, nevertheless poor in earthly goods. But it has always been like this in my life and work: if I thought I was so bold in my expectations that my friends sometimes called me an incorrigible optimist - God has always given more than I asked for, exceeded my greatest expectations and given, as it says in his words: "above asking and understanding".

Methodist Church Community in Verbász

(1) Thirteen Martyrs of Arad were the thirteen Hungarian rebel generals executed by Austrian Empire on 6 October 1849 in Arad, then part of Kingdom of Hungary (now in Romania), after Hungarian Revolution (1848–1849).

(2) Station in the Methodist church is a pastoral charge comprising only one local church. This is in contrast to a circuit, which contains two or more local churches.

Chapter 12 Beginning in Budapest (1905)

In the Lord's work, the beginnings are always particularly significant and captivating. Whatever may happen later, the first threads that were woven, the first steps that were taken, the paths that God's Spirit took to reach a city or a country, remain an object of attention and study for all distant generations. The story of how Paul was led at Troas to sail across the sea to Europe, the narrative of his first experiences at Philippi and the founding of the church there, is of vital importance for all times of European church history, unsurpassed, I would say, by any chapter on the great church councils that later took place on European soil. That is why I have narrated in detail that meeting of the "Christmas Riddles" in Verbász, and that is also why I intend to dwell mainly on the beginning when describing the work in Budapest.

From Bácska in the south of Hungary, not far from the Serbian border, on every trip to Germany I had to pass through the capital of the land of the Holy Crown of St. Stephen, famous for its magnificent location on both banks of the Danube. Whether I was traveling north, in the direction of Berlin, or west via Vienna, the route always led through Budapest. Hungary's railroad system was set up in such a way that you could not save money or time if you wanted to bypass the capital. As in the Roman Empire all roads led to Rome, so in Hungary all lines led to Budapest. The capital was also supposed to be the center, the heart of the kingdom, in terms of transportation. When traveling to the kingdom, usually every summer for the conference, I used to take the night train from Ujvidék (now Novi Sad, Serbian city) or Verbász, arriving at the East Railway Station in Budapest at about 6 o'clock in the morning, take a bath in one of the wonderful baths, then look around the city during the day and continue my journey by night train to the north or west, depending on whether the conference was held in Berlin or Pomerania, in Saxony or, say, Kassel.

On the return trip, I went almost without exception via Vienna and used one of the comfortably equipped Danube steamers from here, on which all clergymen had a price reduction. The steamer took a whole day. In the morning at 7 o'clock it left Vienna at the Reichsbrücke, in the evening about 9 o'clock it arrived in Budapest. Usually an international company was encountered on these steamers: Diplomats, merchants, scholars, artists, people looking for recreation, people who had been to Germany, France or England for study purposes and were now returning to their homeland in Southeastern Europe, or others who wanted to get to know the Balkans, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. Many valuable acquaintances were made. One day I got into a conversation with a professor of the Serbian seminary in Karlowisz, Slovenia, who had studied in Berlin and Heidelberg, was well versed in German church history and theology, and whose invitation to visit him and his seminary I gladly accepted. My colleagues, whom I took to Karlowisz on the occasion of a district meeting in Ujvidék - I think it was in connection with the consecration of the chapel there - where the aforementioned professor gave us a lecture on the Serbian Church, will probably not have forgotten that excursion.

The steamer sailed calmly on the majestic river, carried by its waves. The scenery on the banks changed like in a kaleidoscope. One passed by Bratislava, the old coronation city of the Hungarian kings. The scene came alive how here Maria Theresa, her little son, the future king, in her arms, with tears in her eyes, begged the assembled magnates of Hungary to help her against Frederick; how they drew their swords and swore: "*Blood and life for our king Maria Theresa*." Admittedly, in reality they could not help, for Frederick's power was greater.

Towards evening we passed by the Grán (1), the romantically situated castle of the Primate of Hungary. Seeing this fortress rising from the Danube, surrounded by the most important buildings of Hungarian Catholicism intended for administration and education, one got an impression of the wealth and power of the Catholic Church and its privileges. Everything that could be seen on the way, however, was surpassed when, after the shadows of night fell, the ship approached Budapest. Actually, it was scheduled to arrive at 8 o'clock, but it was usually still light then. Therefore, probably the captains arranged it so that they were regularly late in order to give their pas-

sengers the magical sight of entering the sea of lights of Budapest. The closer Budapest got, the greater the excitement. All were on deck. Bishop Vincent, who had made a trip around the world, told me that the steamer's entrance into Budapest and the impression the picture had made on him eclipsed anything he had seen on his trip around the world: At first, everything is still dark. Then the Danube makes a bend, and thousands of lights appear in the distance, lining the stream, becoming more numerous and larger the closer we get. On the left, in the glow of the lights, the large hotels stand out, in front of which gypsy bands play their melancholy tunes in brightly lit cafes, and between them, like a shadow image, the parliament building, a symbol of self-confident, upwardly striving Magyarism (2). Over to the right is Swabian Hill with its villas of wealthy Budapest residents, then the castle, the magnificent seat of the king when he is in Budapest. The Fishermen's Bastion, named after its builder, leads up to it, probably one of the most beautiful staircases with various artistically arranged viewpoints in between. Like everything else, the castle and the Fishermen's Bastion are framed by a wreath of lights. Still further down, the legendary Bloxburg greets us, where in Turkish times a pasha with 3 horse tails (3) had his seat. The eye turns to the right, then to the left, but then gets stuck on the five Danube bridges, some of which, like the Hallenbrücke and Elisabethbrücke, span the mighty river without pillars, only on the bank, floating in the air, as it were. Their lights break in the waves so that they glitter and dazzle, and the brightly illuminated streetcars whizzing across them appear like little chains pulled back and forth by invisible fairy hands, studded with stars that are reflected a thousand times over in the rushing waves. This is Budapest! Few cities have been able to use and embellish a location given to them by nature in such a way.

Is it any wonder that one gets spellbound there? I could not get the beautiful city out of my mind. As a preacher of the Gospel and representative of the Methodist revival movement, the thought kept coming to me how beautiful it would be if we could have a headquarters of our work in Hungary, not only in Bácska, but also in other parts of the country, but especially in the capital, in Budapest. I was struck by the importance of this city, which was a center of attraction for the whole of southeastern Europe and which, by virtue of its location and size - it had almost one million inhabitants - seemed destined to play an ever-greater role in the future in intellectual life, in politics and in the economy. Shouldn't it be possible to do a lot for the evangelization of Southeastern Europe from here? As Paul visited Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, as he was drawn to the old city of Rome, so he would certainly, if he worked here, consider Budapest as a center and starting point for further activity. But how could that be possible for us? I had no acquaintances in Budapest. Life here was not as cheap as in Bácska, rents very expensive. Where would I get the money? The thought, however, would not leave me, and while I was once again arriving in Budapest by steamer from Vienna, in order to continue my journey that same night on the same ship to Ujvidék, and while I was standing on the deck, letting the fairy-like image of the city take effect on me, thinking about the problem that had been hinted at, it was as if I heard the same voice that had also spoken to Paul in the face of Corinth: "*Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not be silent; for I have a great people in this city*. "

Arriving in Szenttamás, I sat down at the desk and wrote a memorandum about the Methodist work in Hungary, from which I deduced the importance and the necessity of staffing Budapest with a preacher. Proposals about the approximately necessary means for the first years, for salary, apartment, hall and its furnishings were enclosed. I sent the memorandum to my bishop, the venerable Dr. W. Burt in Zurich, whom I knew to have a warm heart for missionary, evangelistic and pioneer work, and asked him that if he agreed with my idea and could endorse it, to forward the submission to the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. When the letter was put in the mail, I had a feeling of reassurance, as if I had done my duty, whatever the result. From Bishop Burt I received an enthusiastic letter about my proposals, he also promised to do all in his power to support it, but in order to guard against disappointment, felt he had to point out that with the many demands that would be made on the Missionary Society, we would have to be prepared for years of waiting. Well, it did not have to be right away. This also gave time to think about who could be considered as a pioneer for the work.

At the beginning of the year, I received a surprising answer that my request that an amount for the beginning in Budapest had been granted. At the same time the bishop informed me that at the conference, which usually

took place in the summer, I would be transferred to Budapest. On his way to Bulgaria, Bishop Burt stayed in Budapest for a few days. The then district leader of the Berlin District, Brother W. Schütz, also came. In a room of the former Hotel Elisabeth, where the bishop used to stay, we met, discussed the plans for the work, and together bent our knees in prayer to implore the Lord's guidance and blessing upon the city and the work in view. A visit to Franz Kossuth, to which Bishop Burt took me, served to acquaint me with the leader of the opposition of those days (the son of Ludwig Kossuth (4)). The conversations were conducted in English, which Kossuth had an excellent command of. What he hoped for proved to be well founded. The opposition soon came to the helm, and Kossuth became a minister.

In August 1905 I moved to Budapest. I was accompanied by Jani Jakob, who was on his way to the seminary. If I were to describe the first two months of my stay in Budapest, I would have to tell of many, many disappointments: For example, when I was looking for an apartment - I don't remember how many times I moved in those few weeks - it didn't work out anywhere. And trying to find a hall! If there was a suitable location somewhere, as soon as I mentioned the purpose, the door was closed again. Finally, finally! In October, I succeeded in renting a lawyer's office, which had been vacant for some time, at 48 Elisabethring, i.e. on one of the best-known and busiest Ringstrasse streets. A lawyer said that a better location and a more popular number - 48 in memory of the Hungarian struggle for freedom - could not have been found at all. A small hall with about 40 chairs was furnished and the room next to it was taken for me as a bachelor apartment. The mood I was in at that time in beautiful Budapest is reflected in a postcard I wrote to the Jakob family in Szenttamás:

I was transferred to Hungary's capital,
to perform the highest duty.
I left with pleasure, but in the end
I would have preferred to stay in Bácska,
where in the past, laborious years
I experienced many a struggle, but much more joy.
I feel as if I were all alone
in this soulless crowd,
and while in the evening sunshine
I hear the sound of bells on the banks of the Danube,
I feel a soft tremor painfully blowing,
like homesickness through the depths of my soul.
In such a mood I send this greeting.
And because I know that you love verses,
And I must write poetry in weak hours,
So, I have written it in poetry.
I sat quietly on the shore for a long time
And forgot all my homesickness, all my sorrow!

Now we had a hall. The chairs were ready. It was clear to me that we had to begin in German and gather a congregation; the movement would spread into Hungarian by itself. But how to gain listeners? I introduced myself to the editors of the leading German daily newspapers and asked them to include a note in the editorial section: "*The ceremonial opening of the new prayer hall of the Methodist Episcopal Church will take place on Tuesday, ... November in the evening at 8 o'clock (for this purpose the street name) will take place. Preacher F.H. Otto Melle will give a lecture on the subject: 'What did Jesus want?*" My intention was to describe the coming of Jesus and the

purpose of it as expressed in the words: "*The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost*." An evangelist very well known in Budapest, whom I had met, drew my attention to the fact that the newspaper notice would probably not have much effect. It would be advisable for me to have invitation cards printed and distribute them myself - but preferably in frock coat and top hat. This was, let it be freely known, a bitter pill for me to swallow. Up to now, I had had a number of enthusiastic friends everywhere, if not a large congregation, who beat the advertising drum, distributed invitations and tried to fill the hall. Now I was supposed to do all this myself and, on top of that, advertise my own lecture? That seemed too much to ask. The invitation cards were soon procured. I stood at the corner of Erzsébet-Körut and András-Uth to see how other flyers were distributed and how they worked. There I saw that at least half a dozen servants were busy distributing them. Ha, I thought, you can still risk the few guilders and let such a servant do the work that is unpleasant for you. My observation of a quarter of an hour taught me, however, that this would serve no purpose. It was mostly advertising slips for a store that were handed out, but most of them were not read at all. The wide sidewalk was virtually paved with such notes. The evangelist who had given me the advice knew his stuff. So don't be afraid of a distribution service! Went home, brought out the black frock coat and top hat, put on a white tie, and boldly, with a polite bow, handed over the invitation. Really, I had the satisfaction of seeing how the invitations, offered in such an extraordinary manner, were at least gratefully received and read. Whether they had much success, we shall see. But I thought in every hour with something like a feeling of envy of the dear colleagues in the German Fatherland who only had to formulate their themes, announce their events in the pulpit, or point out invitations at the exit to set hundreds of lips and hands in motion. But I also found that tasks like the ones I was given and such experiences are salutary for a preacher of the Gospel. There one gets to know oneself, one's needs and weaknesses, and one can look up to the mountains from which help comes.

The evening came when the "ceremonial opening" was to take place. At the entrance of the house and on the stairs to the 1st floor there were signs in Hungarian and German showing the way to the prayer hall. An old Hungarian woman, the Rozsa-nini (Grandmother Rose), had put the hall in order and acted as gatekeeper. My tension can hardly be described. How will the evening go? Will anyone come? What if no one came at all? And what other questions come up in such a situation. Then it struck 8 o'clock at the nearby church. First the four quarter, then - I counted exactly - 8 full hour strokes. But next to my room in the hall nothing moved. Five more minutes passed, which seemed infinitely long to me: In the hall it remained silent as in the grave. 10 minutes past 8! and not the slightest sound to be heard. Already the hand was approaching quarter 9 - there, was it true? The door was opened and footsteps were heard. May I confess how these footsteps excited me? The door of my living room was directly opposite the entrance door to the hall, and I could not bring myself to look through the keyhole to see who was the first visitor. It was a Lutheran pastor and missionary to the Jews. Then the second came: the head of the Bible depot, with whom I had talked a few times. Now I am very fond of the dear colleagues from the Lutheran and the other churches. Bonds of friendship and love, as well as common work connect me with many of them most intimately; after all, I have always been an alliance man. But if you want to form a Methodist congregation, they are not the right audience. So, my heart was not lightened. Then the door opened again and I saw 6 to 7 German-speaking masons and carpenters enter. In the afternoon I had met them on a new building and given them invitation slips. They had gruffly declared that they were social democrats and no longer believed in the humbug about the church and the Bible, but the conversation must not have been without impression, for behold, they had come to hear a lecture about what Jesus actually wanted. Will it be believed that a stone fell from my heart? A draught of joy passed through my soul, a look of thanksgiving upwards, then I opened the door and entered the hall to begin the service. Eighteen people had gradually gathered, and it was now not difficult for me to talk about the coming of Jesus. I thought of Luther's saying that when he preached, he was not thinking of the learned Magister Philipp or his other colleagues at the university, but of Hans and Gretel. The pastors and kingdom ministers no longer bothered me. I only saw these men who had declared church and Bible to be humbug, and described to them, starting from that gout-ridden man whom 4 men had lowered through the roof in front of Jesus, how there were many people who lacked something, but they, like that sick man, did not know what it was. His sin had

caused him much more distress than his gout. Jesus saw this with his sharp eye. Therefore, at first, he did not say a word about the physical illness, but said, "*Your sins are forgiven*." Because that is what Jesus wanted, and what he still wants and can do today - I showed this by example - to free us from the misery of sin, to bring peace to the heart, to bring us into fellowship with God, to whom we are created, and to make us citizens of eternal life. If I rented this place and preached here regularly now, this ministry would be based on only one desire: to lead souls to this Jesus who is the same today as he was then. My heart was warmed, it seemed to be the case with some of the listeners, and I had the impression that God had already given me some friends in this hour who would take the work of distributing invitation cards off my hands.

At first, I spoke only every Tuesday evening. From week to week, the number of listeners increased. Alone, it was a really mixed audience. Depending on the subject I announced, the participants changed. Once I had chosen an eschatological subject, and the hall was filled with Swedenborgians. I suspect that the retired Dr. H., with whom I met often, and who was much concerned with Swedenborg's ideas, had called his acquaintances' attention. The topic "*The Art of Becoming Rich According to the Teachings of the Bible*" brought a completely different audience, and when I spoke about the right of suffrage given to every human being during a powerful political movement for universal suffrage (to choose God or the world) even politicians had come. After all, it was in that very meeting that some young men were seized by Christ, as they later confessed, and "stuck."

Could I dare to hold evangelistic meetings for a whole week to such a mixed assembly, which always dispersed immediately after closing, without seeking closer contact? That was the question that was on my mind. God gave me a wonderful answer. One Tuesday evening I returned - quite late - from a trip to the Bácska in Budapest. The hall was filled with listeners. I did not even have time to look through my mail. A big surprise awaited me in the hall: there, next to the small table where I used to speak, was a beautiful, brand-new harmonium. I said that I had no idea where the instrument came from, but in any case, it was here for use. I sat down at it, played a few pieces and then accompanied the singing. How the dear people of Budapest sang that evening! It was really uplifting. When I opened my mail after the service, I found a letter with the following content: "*Dear preacher! The new harmonium donates to your work a soul who would like to be reborn to eternal life*." No name. No address. No signature. To this day, the secret has not been revealed. The instrument has really served us well. But the most important thing for me was that souls were there who wanted to be "born again to eternal life". Certainly, I was now allowed to dare to hold an evangelization week.

What topics I dealt with in that week I no longer remember. I only know that I had planned to show the way of salvation in the simplest way. I spoke of Jesus' love for us that drove him to the cross, of the salvation he brought, of repentance and faith that he set as a condition, of the new birth, of the fruits of the new life. And it was strange, similar to what I had experienced in Szenttamás, in Verbászs and the other places: the Gospel proved to be a power of God "that saves all who believe in it". Already in the first after-meeting a quiet movement went through the rows, the souls began to pray, to pray for forgiveness of sins, for God's grace, and before the week was over, a holy joy filled the assembly, and it was as if we heard from something of the singing of the angels when they reach into the strings of their harps and sing a song of praise to God's glory "over a sinner who repents."

Actually, that week of evangelization was the turning point, if you will. For now, a community of intimacy, love and strength had come again. The need to pray together, to exchange experiences in a closer circle, to help each other in the struggle for sanctification and to learn from each other became more and more evident. What a beneficial institution the Methodist classes are, I have been able to observe again and again, but especially in times of revival when a congregation is being formed. In the beginning, of course, I had to be the class leader myself, and it was delicious hours when we sat together in such an informal way, the brothers and sisters reporting on their struggles and victories, on the strengthening they received from reading the Holy Scriptures, on the answers to prayers, on the opportunities they had to testify to relatives and acquaintances about what they had seen and heard. And again - just as in the Bácska - the union, the connection to the Church, came about all by itself. It was the Lord who added it. The name "Methodist", which was completely unknown until then, was not an obstacle for

anyone. Yes, I even noticed that lectures on the Methodist revival movement, as I gave them from time to time, met with strong interest, and how the ideal of original Christianity and congregational life, which Methodism has in mind and gives it its character, as well as its great organization, found much understanding and exerted an attractive force. After that week of evangelism, we also established Sunday services, received the revived souls into the church, celebrated Holy Communion together, in short, we led the life of a congregation permeated by the Spirit of God and held together by a certain order.

About a year after the beginning, dear Bishop Burt visited me and found that the hall had already become too small, a singing choir was singing splendidly, and I could tell of an active youth group and of a men's association of about 20 members. He was very pleased and encouraged me in his fatherly way only to continue in "doing great things" and not to grow weary. I also know now that an enthusiastic article he wrote about Budapest for the widely circulated periodicals of the Methodist Church in America helped to pave the way for me to the United States, which was to become of special importance for my later work. But he hardly thought of that, least of all I. It is only in retrospect that points of connection for such threads become apparent. Vividly, too, the visit of old Bishop Cranston to Budapest still stands before me. He came with his wife from somewhere in the Near East, I think from Palestine, and spent a Sunday with us in Budapest. Cranston was one of the leading bishops in the United States, known as a sharp, no-nonsense thinker in whom reason, not emotion, prevailed. He had read Bishop Burt's article on Budapest, and I noticed how he seemed to be critical. We had organized a singing service and let solos, duets, pieces of music resound alternately. This impressed him. The choir included a number of very good soprano voices and some musically gifted men. One of these men later went to New Guinea as a missionary and got a job teaching music in Sydney during the World War. The choir first sang a song in Hungarian, a somewhat melancholy tune in a minor key appropriate to the Hungarian character. I saw how it powerfully gripped the bishop. Then, a little later, the same choir sang a song in German, which I love very much: "*Unterm Kreuz ist Friede, tiefe, tiefe Ruh*" (Under the cross is peace, deep, deep rest). I translated the text for our guest. When the choir came for the third time and sang in English Charles Wesley's wonderful song: "*Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly*", a song that has become common property of all Methodist churches on earth, the good bishop was so overwhelmed by his feelings that he, I will say it as a quiet critic, seemed to forget his principles of objective judgment. He stood up and said that the surprise with this song was one of the most beautiful experiences of his world trip, and he had to remark - he would also tell this in America - that he had never in his life heard this magnificent song sung more beautifully, more impressively and - this was of course the climax of the compliment - in a better English. Yet most of the singers had had no English lessons and had practiced the English pronunciation of the text only according to a designation I had recorded. They were and are almost all gifted in languages in Southeastern Europe. I, however, enjoyed the recognition, as did the people of Budapest, and the young singers, who have now become grandmothers and grandfathers, will certainly remember those hours with pleasure. Bishop Cranston went home soon after. I did not see him again. His significantly younger wife, however, survived him by many years. In 1939, at the great Unification Conference in Kansas City, Kansas, along with the other bishops, I, too, was introduced to a lady over 80 years old, Mrs. Cranston. When she heard my name, she looked me in the eye and asked, "*Are you really the Otto Melle my husband and I once met in Budapest?*" I answered in the affirmative. Then she pulled me out of the row, a little to one side, into a corner where two armchairs stood, and now she raved all evening about Budapest and Vienna, where I had accompanied the couple as an interpreter.

The further development of the work in Budapest and Hungary can only be hinted at. Although there are still many interesting things to tell, I have to push back the thoughts, because I fear that my memoirs would swell to thick volumes. Also, I do not want to write a history of Methodism in the various countries, but only try to show the footprints of God in my life. Thus, many a name must remain unmentioned, which deserves to be mentioned and which will one day appear in a detailed history. But this much shall be said, that God in His grace blessed the work abundantly. A beginning was also made in learning Hungarian, which I had already begun in Bácska, Szenttamás and other places, in Budapest and Kispést. There was no lack of brothers who could serve as transla-

tors, and after some time I could even dare to preach a few times myself in the beautiful, somewhat harsh, but sonorous language, which is not easy for us Germans. When "Jani" had completed his theological studies in Frankfurt a. M., he joined me in Budapest. This was a big step forward, because he mastered both languages equally well, so that it was easy for him to preach in German as well as in Hungarian. How we came to have a central building in Budapest will be told in a later chapter.

It was a sign of insight into the needs of the work that Bishop Burt left the management of the entire work in my hands, without my having made any suggestion. He did not want the threads of fellowship and trust to be loosened by our transfer system, which has important advantages, but also dark sides. When he transferred me from Bácska to Budapest, "Hungary" still remained a district. I was the supervising preacher with two or three or more staff members in the Bácska. And that was fine. I officially had to travel there from time to time, visit the congregations, attend the quarterly conferences, and make important decisions. This was also beneficial in that the Bácska congregations, through the connection, kept abreast of the progress of the work in Budapest, which they accompanied with their intercession, and the young congregation in Budapest, in turn, felt connected to the older "sisters" and always eagerly awaited what I could report after a visit to the south. The custom was formed at that time that I had to tell something of my impressions almost after every trip, whether it was a feast in the Bácska, the funeral of one of our co-workers, or participation in a conference in the Reich. Sometimes, instead of a sermon, I would give a travelogue, as the apostles did in Antioch when they returned from their missionary journey. This allowed the congregation to participate in my experience and obliged me to share with my brothers and sisters something of what God gave me in the way of suggestions and insights. For God never gives his gifts for selfish use. "Our none lives to Himself" the charism comes from the Lord and is destined for the building up of the church. In 1907 the conference - we belonged to the North German Conference - formed 3 independent districts in the Bácska (Verbász, Szenttamás, Ujvidék) besides Budapest, but Austria-Hungary became a separate district with me as district superintendent. Thus, my responsibility grew, but also the opportunity to get to know the needs of the congregations thoroughly, to promote the independence of the work and to adapt it to the circumstances. I founded a monthly magazine in Hungarian, the *Békeharang* (Peace Song), for our Hungarian members and friends, whose editorial office I took over, and after detailed consultation with the most diverse offices, I also founded a bookstore, the *Keresztyén Könyves Ház* (Christian Book House) in Budapest, a cooperative with limited liability, to which our increasingly numerous properties in Hungary, but also in Austria, was subsequently registered. The cooperative fulfilled this task even until the annexation of Austria to Greater Germany, then we transferred the property there to the Methodist Episcopal Church in Germany, a corporation under public law.

In other ways, too, the stay in such a beautiful and lively city as Budapest offered a young man much opportunity to broaden his knowledge, to get to know all kinds of people. Bishops, theologians, evangelists from Germany, America and England visited me. That my ministry in Budapest was the occasion for inviting me to interdenominational and large international church meetings, such as the Sunday School Convention in Rome and the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, will be discussed in the coming chapters. But even in Budapest itself there was no lack of contact with the current of public life. The difficulties with authorities in the Bácska - there were the old fights in every newly admitted ward-, forced me more often to appear before the ministries, where soon whole batches of files were created under my name. My old friend Dr. Hagara, with whom I sometimes met at the club of the Liberal Party, of which he was an ardent member, usually served me as an intermediary and advisor. He knew all the leading statesmen of Hungary personally, and it was a pleasure to listen to him when he characterized them down to their religious position. Thus, our cause came before the great Andrássy, who administered the Ministry of the Interior; I met the Secretary of State, Count Hadik, and I had several audiences with Count Albert Apponye. The latter was without doubt one of the most interesting personalities of official Hungary. Apponye was considered the best speaker in the Hungarian Parliament. When it was known that he would speak, I gladly went to hear him. His knowledge of the language was enormous. He could express himself in French and Italian just as easily as in Hungarian, he mastered German like his mother tongue, and a report in The Times about an international congress - probably of the interparliamentary union - said that Count Albert Apponye had been

the best speaker in the English language. Perhaps my stay in Budapest also contributed a little to awaken the national interest and understanding of the political problems of the day; for there will scarcely be another people in Europe where the policy of the government is so generally followed, discussed and criticized as among the Hungarians. At important parliamentary proceedings, the verbatim speeches of the representatives of both the government and the opposition, from the magnate on down to the shoemaker's boy, were virtually devoured. One had to inform oneself a bit. In addition to the content, these speeches also captivated me in terms of their formality, for the Hungarians are born orators and have many a master of speech to show.

And now a reminder before I close the chapter on Budapest. Some of the happiest years of my family life were connected with the city and the community. I had come to Budapest as a bachelor, but I soon realized that now, in my thirty-third year, it was time to look for a helpmate and start a family. For some time, my thoughts had been directed towards Hanna Eckart, the daughter of the merchant Paulus Eckart in Zwickau in Saxony, who was widely known and esteemed in Saxon Methodism. Since my aide days I had been acquainted with the Zwickau congregation, which could not have understood if I had passed through without preaching. Most of the time I was asked to give a lecture about Hungary as well, and it may well be that there is no other congregation in Germany where I had to give away my whole repertoire of Hungarian knowledge and experiences in such detail as in Zwickau. So, I often came to the Eckart family, and if it is true that marriages are made in heaven, then here a heavenly hand must have slowly formed the fabric that gradually spanned and entwined the hearts without a word being spoken about it. Each of us felt that we belonged to the other, that the other belonged to them, only neither knew whether the other thought the same. When one of my fatherly friends advised me in all seriousness not to wait too long with the marriage and then, in order to find out who could be the chosen one of my heart, also mentioned the name of Hanna Eckart, perhaps also having noticed that I was not indifferent to this name, he added: *"That would, however, cause a difficulty, because the parents would not want to let their child move so far away, least of all to Hungary. "Then*," he continued, "*you just ask the bishop to transfer you to Germany*." That these words would cause a hot struggle in my heart, the dear friend had no idea. As always with important decisions in my life, I made the matter an object of prayer, and it turned out that the worry was unfounded. What I could not have known was that the whole family, but especially Hanna, had followed the development of the work in Hungary with undivided attention from the very beginning. The reports of the district superintendents and my own lectures had kept the interest alive and deepened it. And when I was once again in Zwickau during the Zwickau Autumn Conference, in the late autumn of 1906, I found a wholehearted "Yes" to my question as to whether Hanna was willing to share her lot with me and move with me to Hungary, and the same was the case with her parents. In February 1907, on Hanna's birthday, we officially became engaged, and in September we celebrated our wedding in Zwickau with the liveliest participation of the community. A dear friend from our youth, Superintendent Edmund C. Anner, gave the wedding sermon on the word: "*Rejoice in the Lord always!*", and my classmate from the seminary, Preacher W. Meyer, performed the wedding ceremony.

Even the honeymoon was connected with service. Hanna learned - and she was happy about it - that her husband was a preacher whose time and strength belonged to the church. We spent one day in Dresden, two in Prague, then we had to hurry to Vienna, where I had to hold the quarterly conference on Saturday evening and preach on Sunday. In Vienna some sights were visited, then we went by steamer to Budapest. Hanna was overwhelmed and delighted with the picture the city presented as we entered. I had rented an apartment at 28 Josika Utca. The furniture was a long time coming, and the first days without it were not exactly comfortable, but soon we were able to unpack and settle in. One evening I invited the members of the congregation to a small post-wedding celebration, where we were presented with a well-done large copy of the famous painting by Munkácscy: "*Christ before Pilate*". This painting adorned our apartment for 30 years, until it was - unfortunately - badly damaged during a move. I had to put it on the floor in Berlin, but every time I see it, it always makes an impression on me and at the same time reminds me of the beautiful happy first time of our family life in Budapest, which reached a climax when our Otfried (son) was born in November 1908. The young preacher's wife was received and

cared for by the congregation with such love, and our son was considered a child of the congregation, so to speak, so that it was not difficult to feel at home. And I think I may reveal it: when the hour struck in 1911 when we had to say goodbye to Budapest, there were many bitter tears not only on the part of the congregation, but also among the preacher's family and especially the preacher's wife. But when she gave her husband her hand in marriage for life, she knew that he was a Methodist preacher. On the engagement evening in Zwickau, she had sung to him: "*Where you go, I will go, where you stay, I will stay, your people are my people, your God is my God, where you die, I will die, I will be buried*." The song still echoes in my heart today, and my dear Hanna kept her word. She gladly - even if not always with a light heart - went with me wherever God led me, felt at ease everywhere and stood by her husband in his difficult tasks, encouraging and strengthening him - but no one will hold it against her that even today, in quiet evening hours, when the memory of past years is awakened, she feels something like a faint homesickness for Budapest.

Hanna Eckart and F. H. Otto Melle in 1908

28 Josika Utca today. Budapest, Hungary

"*Christ Before Pilate*" by Mihaly Munkacsy (original painting sold for 5.7 million dollars 2015 to Hungarian government

(1) Gran (German) or Esztergom (Hungarian) is a city in northern Hungary, 29 miles northwest of Budapest. It lies on the right bank of the Danube, which forms the border with Slovakia there. It was capital of Hungary in 10th to mid-13th century. It is the seat of the primate of Roman Catholic Church in Hungary.

(2) Magyarism was a national movement of the Magyar tribes or Hungarian clans which were the fundamental political units within whose framework the Hungarians or Magyars) lived, until these clans from the region of the Ural Mountains invaded the Carpathian Basin in the late 9th century and established the Principality of Hungary.

(3) "pasha with 3 horse tails" —A pasha is former title for Turkish officer of high rank. There were 3 grades of pashas, distinguished by number of horsetails they wore: three tails indicated a rank corresponding to commanding general; two to a division general; one, to a brigade general.

(4) Ludwig (Louis/Lajos) Kossuth was Hungarian nobleman, lawyer, journalist, politician, statesman and governor-president of the Kingdom of Hungary during the revolution of 1848–49. With the help of his talent in oratory in political debates and public speeches, Kossuth emerged from a poor gentry family into regent-president of Kingdom of Hungary. As the influential contemporary American journalist Horace Greeley said of Kossuth: "Among the orators, patriots, statesmen, exiles, he has, living or dead, no superior." Kossuth's powerful English and American speeches so impressed and touched famous contemporary American orator Daniel Webster, that he wrote a book about Kossuth's life. He was widely honored during his lifetime, including in Great Britain and the United States, as a freedom fighter and bellwether of democracy in Europe. Kossuth's bronze bust can be found in the United States Capitol with the inscription: Father of Hungarian Democracy, Hungarian Statesman, Freedom Fighter, 1848–1849.

Chapter 13 In the "Land Where the Lemons Bloom" (1907)

How it came about, I cannot say. Whether it was in a geography lesson of our teacher Geitner at school, or whether somewhere else, maybe Goethe's words, which he has Mignon say, the longing for Italy had already been awakened in the boy's heart. More than once, when I stood alone on the Steinbühl (Stone Mill) in Liebengrün and the shadows fell directly to the south at noon, I declaimed aloud to myself: "Do you know the land where the lemons bloom, glowing in the dark foliage like golden oranges?" Then the wish rose, how beautiful it would be, if I like so many others could wander once to Italy, the sunny shores of the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian Sea, as well as get to know the cities, in which so often German fate was decided. And what a stimulus it would be to see with one's own eyes the monuments of more than two thousand years of history from the time of the old Roman Empire and the art treasures of the picture galleries, the Vatican Museums, the collections in Naples, the excavations of Pompeii. No other country stimulated the imagination like Italy. But it seemed as if this desire had to be postponed to a much later time in life. Also, life and work in Hungary, with all its scenic attractions and interesting types of people, pushed back the thoughts to the southern countries of Europe.

Then, around the time of my engagement, that is, in the winter of 1907, I received quite unexpectedly from the Executive Committee of the World Sunday School Convention, which was to meet in Rome from May 19-25, 1907, a gracious invitation to attend this convention as one of the representatives of the Sunday School work of the Methodist Church. In kindness, even the travel and lodging expenses for the days of the convention were promised. Wasn't that like a gift from heaven? The doubts I had about leaving my young congregation in Budapest for a few weeks were dispelled by my bishop, Dr. W. Burt, at whose suggestion, as I later learned, the invitation had gone out, and by my district superintendent, B. Schütz, so that I was able to accept with joy. Yes, it soon seemed to me a duty to take advantage of the opportunity that had been given. In my diary notes from that time there is the remark: "*I am not going for pleasure, but I consider the journey as work and task. I want to keep my eyes open to see, to increase my knowledge of foreign lands and peoples, to sharpen my judgment, to learn from the history of a bygone era for the present; I want to open my ears to hear, and I most definitely hope that I will bring home not only intellectual but also rich spiritual profit for my ministry as a preacher of the gospel*." What I hoped for when writing down these considerations then happened in abundance.

On my departure from Budapest, there was a small interlude: I had left my pocket watch behind, so I went to get it. Upon returning, as I approached the East Railway Station, I discovered on the large clock that the time for the train's departure had come, and I was already struggling inwardly with the thought of having to sacrifice a full 24 hours of the planned journey, when a resourceful porter, recognizing my problem, agreed to lead me directly across the tracks and still get me on the departing train on the wrong side. The feat really succeeded, so that after the night journey by train the next morning I already had the blue Adriatic Sea in front of me and could board the ship to Italy.

Is the Adriatic really blue? I had always doubted it. I thought it was the same as the much sung about blue Danube, which I have never seen blue at any time of the year, neither in Germany, nor in Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria. It is different with the Adriatic Sea. It is indeed blue. Bluer than one usually thinks, as blue as the southern sky reflecting in its waves. "*Ho thallasa*" (ancient Greek: sky), I exclaimed as we drove toward our destination. "*You are particularly lucky*," said a ship's officer. "*The mischievous Quaterno is seldom as calm as it is today. Usually, seasickness claims all sorts of victims here. Today, however, the sea is as smooth as a mirror*."

We landed in the evening in Ancona on the Adriatic, a fortress that used to belong to the Papal States. The sight, the first Italian landscape and cityscape I saw, is deeply etched in my memory. It embodied for me the charm of the Italian countryside and Italian cities, which I was soon to come to know in its manifoldness. On the

right, on a conical mountain, surrounded by strong walls, lies the actual fortress. On the left, just as high, the cathedral looks out to sea, and between the two, standing back a bit, the lighthouse that shows the way to the harbor for the sailors. The houses rose amphitheatrically from the shore upward to the top of the mountains. It may be that the thought of seeing the first Italian city had a strong influence on my mind. The fact is that the charming little town, about which one finds little or nothing else in travelogues, made such a deep impression on me that I must stop with it for a few moments in my memories. Even if one is not an architect and lacks the expertly educated eye for the forms and styles of architecture, one senses something of the values that have been stored up for artists when looking at such a city, in which architecture and landscape are closely connected, even grown together, so that they form a complete unity. It was also as if I learned something in Ancona about how his Italian journey could mean so much to Goethe.

Naturally, when we came to Rome, the first interest for me had to be the meeting of the Sunday School workers. It was held in the central building of the Methodist Church on Via Venti Settembre, which contains a large church hall for the Italian services and a smaller one for the American and English services. When I arrived, the closing sessions of the Italian conference were in progress, with Bishop Dr. W. Burt presiding. Three of the German delegates had been asked to give addresses: Preacher L. Peter was to speak on Switzerland, Dr. A. Sulzberger on Germany, and I on Hungary. Dr. W. Clark, who had been a lecturer at our preacher's seminary in Frankfurt a. M. for some time, and Preacher Dardi from Trieste, which at that time belonged to Austria, served as interpreters. In the evening all the Methodist delegates from Germany had a social evening with Dr. Clark. This American had acquired a good knowledge of the German language in Frankfurt a. M., which he continued to cultivate in Rome. His wife, a well-known writer, was of one mind with him in this. They sent their children to the German school in Rome. That evening it was announced that only German was to be spoken. From the whole conversation it was noticeable how deep roots of love for Germany had taken root in the heart of this American family, and I feel an obligation to take this opportunity to recall that a little over a decade later, when America entered the war against Germany, Dr. Clark did not survive this turn of events. He died, I am told, of a broken heart. But that German evening in Dr. Clark's family in Rome left deep impressions and showed me - what I later found confirmed again and again - how we as members of the Methodist Church had the opportunity to a great extent to make friends for the German people and the German Fatherland through our speeches and actions. These thoughts were seeds that were later to ripen into beautiful fruit, without my having thought of such effects when I went to Italy. Many a bond of friendship was forged in Rome that has retained its strength even beyond the World War.

As a congress city, Rome is not to be recommended. The city, with its history, its buildings, its churches and museums, offers so many attractions that it is difficult to find the necessary calm, collection and patience for long sessions with discussions on all kinds of problems. So, it was wise that the program was not overloaded with too much. After all, there were many good things. What remained of it? I think of the sermon of our bishop Hartzell on Pentecost Sunday morning about God's plan with mankind, of a speech of F. B. Meyer about the unity of believers, of a lecture of C. Morgan about Jesus' word: "*Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them*", and of a learned lecture about the footsteps of the apostle Paul in Rome. Some of the thoughts have stuck with me to this day, even if some of them escaped me because of my knowledge of the English language at that time.

One experience I will never forget: Guided by Dr. Clark, one morning we drove through the busy streets of the city and out to the catacombs on the Via Appia, the road on which the Apostle Paul had made his entrance into Rome. If my memory does not deceive me, it was the catacomb of Domitilla. There are quite a few underground burial places like this. Flavia Domitilla was an imperial princess who owned an estate, parts of which she gave to other people for burial purposes. Her co-religionists also experienced her love, as evidenced by the largest Roman communal cemetery, the catacomb named after her. The construction of catacombs was usually started from the surface. A shaft was dug into the ground and then a main street was followed in a horizontal direction, from which secondary streets branched off again, interconnected by transverse passages. The tombs were placed on the wall surfaces of the streets. If the wall surfaces of a catacomb were covered with tombs, first the floor was lowered, and

finally, if there was a danger of collapse, a new floor was obtained under the first one. In this way, in the Callist and Domitilla catacombs, five complexes were gradually created at different levels, the lowest of which is located with its floor more than 82 feet below the earth's surface.

Here, in these underground burial grounds, Christians gathered in times of persecution for worship and communion, sometimes at the midnight hour. What kind of services must have been held here. A monk led us through the dark corridors - each participant received a small light in his hand - to a kind of chapel that received some light through a shaft from above. Here we gathered around a small table, we sang, I don't know in how many languages, a song of Christ, "*the King who gives blood and life to the life of his people*", then we united in prayer for the spirit of the first witnesses. I have seldom attended a more serious and moving prayer meeting, and the photograph I managed to take of it is one of the most beautiful souvenirs of Rome.

It goes without saying that the time was used to the best advantage to see quite a lot of Rome. However, there are only a few pieces that one can pick up during such a short stay. The Danish sculptor Thorwaldsen is said to have been asked once by an American how many days one needs to get to know Rome. The answer was, "*They'll have to ask to someone else, because I've only lived here for 20 years*." Nevertheless, I managed not only to see all kinds of monuments of the past from ancient Rome and the art treasures of modern Rome, but also to process some things inwardly. It helped me a lot that I wrote a detailed letter to Hanna every day about what I had experienced and promised to write a series of about a dozen or a little more "*Travel Letters from Italy*" for the "*Christian Apologist*" in Cincinnati, Ohio. The latter not only brought me the extra expense with which such a trip is associated, it also required me to look thoroughly at and think through what was to be described.

First, I took it upon myself to see as much as possible of ancient Rome, the Rome of the heyday of the Roman Empire and the first Christian centuries. What tremendous monuments of a great time these are! As we wandered from ruin to ruin, looking at the remains of events that happened two thousand years ago, we went into a historical frenzy. In fact, any teacher of Roman history should have studied ancient Rome. We climbed the Palatine, where Nero had once built his golden house, in whose gardens he had Christians covered with pitch burned as torches at his lavish festivals during the time of persecution; we immersed ourselves in the religious situation of that time on the Roman Forum at the sight of the ruins and temples of the gods, when the message of the Gospel of Christ was brought into the Roman world; we climbed the Capitol, We stood before the gigantic ruins of the Circus Maximus and the Baths of Caracalla, the triumphal arch of Titus, erected after the victory over the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem, the triumphal arch of Constantine, which he had erected after the victory over Maxentius, and we thought of Jesus' word about the speaking of the stones. If anywhere in the world, it is in Rome that the stones speak. "Sic transit gloria mundi!" Thus passes the glory of the world, I have hardly anywhere in my life received a stronger impression of the transience of the earthly and the power of this world, but also of the greatness of our faith in the eternal, unchanging and unfading kingdom of Jesus Christ, of which he said to a Roman official, the procurator Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world."

These thoughts had an immensely fruitful effect on my life and work. Perhaps it was just what God wanted to send me through the Italian journey. One afternoon, after having been to the Mamertine prison where Paul is said to have lived, I visited the Pantheon, a temple dedicated, as the name suggests, to all the gods. There they still stand today, the elaborate statues of the deities in which the peoples believed at that time, to whom they offered their worship, to whom they built wonderful temples everywhere, including in Rome. I had just walked across the Roman Forum and studied the ruins of some of these temples. The guide explained to me that the Pantheon was probably the only building that stood in the same form as the time Paul came to Rome. In any case, I said to myself, Paul, chained to the Roman soldier, will have passed by here more often then, as well as the temples on the Roman Forum! What message did he bring to this world? Then I came to understand the words he wrote to the Romans: "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God that saves everyone who believes in it*." I imagined how perhaps once some of the highly educated, enlightened senators of Rome caught sight of the strange prisoner and inquired about his offense. Someone might have reported to them: "*This is a strange man.*

He believes and proclaims that a prophet crucified by the Roman state at the suggestion of the Jews will bring salvation and will one day be king of an eternal kingdom." How they will have laughed at such stubbornness and folly! To proclaim such ideas in the face of the Pantheon, the Roman Forum, the power of Rome and its emperors? It took, as another Roman official, Festus, would have expressed it, much frenzy. But who was right? I went back to the temple ruins. I thought of the decline of the old religions and the triumph of the Gospel. How wonderful it all is. Yes, certainly, the message of Christ, crucified and risen, was - and still is today - a dynamic of God!

This strengthening of faith was deepened by looking at the Colosseum, which attracted me again and again. It is a mighty structure built of bricks in an oval shape. As the well-known pictures show, some parts have collapsed, but what remains of it is still overwhelming in its size and architectural beauty. There was room for 40,000 people, so they could watch the fights of the gladiators that took place in the wide space inside. An evening hour in the Colosseum remains unforgettable to me. Shall I call it a devotion? We had attended a meeting of the Sunday School Convention until 10 p.m., it was a bright night, and as we were on our way to our boarding house, I suggested to my teacher from the preacher's seminary, Dr. A. J. Bucher, that we should take another walk to the Colosseum. How would this building look at night? Dr. Bucher immediately agreed. The moon peered curiously between restlessly wandering clouds and shone into the half-ruined building. In the archways we ventured into, there was deep darkness, but the large square in the center lay in the glow of the moon. Up there in that gallery, also dilapidated, was the seat of Nero when he watched the battles in the arena. "Morituri te salutant," (They who are about to die, salute you) the gladiators greeted him. But there were other dying people, condemned to death. Now we entered the entrances to the dungeons where predators were kept, destined to give a rare pleasure to the bloodthirsty Nero. Christians who would not deny their Lord were to be thrown here to the hungry beasts of prey who had not been allowed food for several days before. They were led into this arena, watched by 80,000 eyes. Old men with white hair, men and women in the prime of life, tender maidens and youths barely out of boyhood. They are asked once again if they want to deny Christ. When the answer clearly renews the confession to the one who died for them on the cross of Golgotha, the emperor gives a sign, the doors of the cages open, lions, tigers, wolves, etc. rush out, and in a few minutes these Christians are crushed by the teeth of the hungry beasts. Their blood soaks the arena to the applause of the crowd. But more than die here come forward the next day as followers of the Nazarene. The blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the Church, and it proves the truth of Jesus' word about his Church, which the gates of hell cannot overpower. That image of the Colosseum has accompanied me through all the struggles and crises of the work.

Modern Rome with its art buildings, museums and art treasures was also visited, as much as could be done in the short time available. What treasures lie in the Vatican Museums alone, in the Sistine Chapel with Michelangelo's gigantic ceiling painting, in the picture galleries, in the 400 churches, especially in St. Peter's Church. Of the painters, I was especially captivated by Michelangelo, who distinguished himself as a sculptor as well as an architect and painter, and Raphael, who had become familiar and dear to me from the Sistine Madonna in Dresden. Remaining true to the principle I had established when I visited the collections of the Zwinger in Dresden, I gladly let my traveling companions wander from one museum, one gallery to another, in order to see and enjoy as much as possible, while for myself I returned again and again to the Sistine Chapel, to Raphael's stanzas in the Vatican, and - I ask my Protestant readers not to take offense at this - to St. Peter's Church. There will have been few days during my stay in Rome when I did not spend at least half an hour in this masterpiece of architecture. No one will expect me to attempt a description of the building, any more than I will of the other objects of art. I wonder, however, since the memory of those hours has been awakened, what it was, in fact, that so attracted and captivated me in St. Peter's Church. I find only one answer: it was the perfect harmony of style, lines, and colors, present here in the highest conceivable way. The church is a pinnacle of Italian architecture, if not of architecture in general.

Now it was strange: in order to enjoy this art at least a little, I had to forget that I was in a church. I also took part in the service, even heard an early Mass of Cardinal Rampolla on one of the Pentecost days, but my soul had nothing of that. The pomp expended in the clothes of the priests, as well as the art of singing and music, left me

cold, because I had to make comparisons between the wealth and poverty of Christ and his apostles unfolded here, the meeting places of the first Christians back and forth in the houses in Jerusalem, and this magnificent building and work of art of the 16th century, resplendent in gold, silver and marble. It was only when I forgot that this place of art was supposed to be a church that the art affected my mind. But there was something else that attracted me. That was the question, stimulated in me by St. Peter's, about the right relationship of Christians to art in general. Despite all the lectures on theological ethics, this question had never come before my soul as forcefully as it did here. If what I feel when contemplating this rare work of art is true, how is it that the heyday of art coincides with the greatest fall of the church? Was it not the money needed to build this church that caused Pope Leo X to send Tetzel through the German districts with the indulgence box? The Catholic Church has known how to use the treasures of the world and its glory to spread its power, but has it forgotten its real task? Is it not a fine trick of the enemy to use the noblest gifts that man has received from God to turn away from the worship of God in spirit and in truth? Does it still have anything to do with worship of God and divine service when the visitors to St. Peter's Church almost completely kissed away the bronze statue of Peter's brazen big toe? Must then, I asked myself again and again, the highest earthly art always lead to idolatry or to alienation from God? Then it would be nothing divine, but something devilish and those zealots would be right who want to have removed all art objects from the house of God. How will Paul have judged the works of art of the eternal city when he came to Rome? Didn't art reach its prime in paganism, and don't we see an inclination towards paganism in people who are artistically inclined, such as our classics? - It was necessary to find an answer to these questions. In doing so, it became clear to me that the right position towards art depends on the right position towards Christ. It is wrong to want to solve such special problems for oneself. The fact is that the nobler a gift is, the more dangerous it can become through its misuse. Thus, the creation of God in nature can distract from the Creator. So also, art, detached from God, can lead to idolatry. But if Christ, in whom and through whom all things are, has become the center of our life, of our thinking, feeling, willing, even art, which certainly comes from heaven - let us think here, for example, of music - will, in communion with Christ and under the guidance of his Spirit, be allowed to serve only to draw us heavenward. It must not be left to the world and the devil for exclusive possession. Will not the completion of the Kingdom of God also bring the completion of art, of all true art? I planned to preach on one of the next Sundays in Budapest about the city with the golden streets and the gates of pearls according to Revelation John 21:26: "*And the glory and honor of the nations shall be brought into it, and there shall not enter into it any vile thing that worketh abomination and lying*."

The end of the Italian trip was an excursion to the south. Naples, Sorrento, Capri, and also Pompeii were to be visited, in order to let the beauty of paradisiacal nature affect us after the historical studies in Rome, the impressions of masterpieces of art, and the theological and pedagogical suggestions of the convention. We went by train to Naples, from there by ship to Capri. The journey to Capri the very next morning gave us a glimpse into the life and activities of the cheerful Italian people. At the side of the ship, a passenger throws a lira into the sea. A black-eyed very sweet boy jumps after, dives under and brings up the silver piece, showing the flashing find in his hand. On the ship is a company of Italian singers singing *Addio Napoli* with violin and guitar accompaniment. The gestures they make to it, the facial expressions that accompany their words, the expression of their black eyes like the singing in the melodious Italian language are well worth the few soldi (Italian coin) thrown into their hats.

We drive along the Gulf of Naples. An unforgettable picture! So, it is to be understood how the saying could originate: "*See Naples and die*!" On the left, Vesuvius appears with the whitish-gray cloud above it, as we know it from the pictures. To describe the colors of the sea is hardly possible. I will only repeat what I said during the trip across the Adriatic Sea: it is really blue. And not only when the blue sky appears. On this day there was nothing to see from the blue sky, because it was hiding behind whitish-pale clouds. The sea, however, was blue like blue ink, soon turning more greenish and soon darker.

What a splendid place is this island of Capri, washed by the waves of the Mediterranean Sea and exuding all the magic of the southern landscape. We stayed at the Hotel Pagano. I had written until midnight in the evening

and was about to go to rest, tired as I was, when Dr. Bucher knocked on my door and called me out onto the balcony. He simply could not part with the delightful picture. Vis-à-vis lay the main building of the hotel, the white walls shining, ghostly highlighted by the moon, which just above Monte Solaro, lonely like a dreamy wanderer, takes its way towards the sea. In front of our house a garden with southern flora: wonderfully fragrant flowers, orange trees hanging full of yellow, ripe fruit, and in the middle, a royal palm tree. To the right the view of the sea. To the left the steep mountain cone, on which emperor Tiberius had built himself a castle. A band is still playing on the street. Otherwise, silence near and far. Not a breeze stirs. A solemn mood lies over nature, reminiscent of the lost paradise. In the afternoon we had climbed the mountain to the villa of Tiberius. Actually, not climbed, we rode on donkeys, our seven: Dr. Bucher, Wilhelm Meyer, Immanuel Mann, Koch and Huenefeldt from Cincinnati, Pastor Klar from the German Reformed congregation in Budapest, and me. I met Pastor Klar again after many years as Superintendent in Kreuznach, and we were riding donkeys in Capri after a few minutes, so vividly have those scenes been remembered. It was the same in Cincinnati. It was also too droll to see this "cavalry of Capri," as one wag called them. One always had to laugh at the other. In any case, it was more exhilarating for us to visit the ruins of the castle where Tiberius lived, driven about by fearful dreams and delusions of persecution, than it might have been for his surroundings at the time. However, a beautiful spot he had chosen for the last years of his life. But also, the most beautiful landscape can bring just as little as external power to the conscience rest and peace.

A lasting impression, with which I want to conclude this chapter, was made when we entered the famous Blue Grotto on the coast of Capri. It may have been exactly 12 noon when we arrived in front of this wonder of nature. A whole fleet of gondolas was waiting for us. The gondoliers - magnificent figures, worth a painter's brush. You board one of these little gondolas and then ride through a five-foot-wide opening into the grotto that the sea has carved into the rock. There is not much room above the water level, so you have to bend over shallowly for the barge to glide through. As soon as the opening is passed, one finds oneself as in an enchanted fairy realm, of which otherwise one can only be told in fairy tales. It is a cave, about 165 feet deep and 50 feet wide. The vaulted arch above us appears in a blue color, so speaking reflecting the Italian sky and the sea, as no painter can put on canvas. All shades of blue are woven into a wonderful unity. The boat floats on a tide glowing with blue fire. The oars dipping into the water become silvery-blue, and like pieces of silver the water drips from them. The son of a gondolier throws off his light robe and jumps into the blue tide for the lira we throw him. He swims between the boats. The limbs under water also seem bluish-silver. It is as if everything that comes into contact with this water is enchanted. Where might this miracle come from? The fact that the cave has lost none of its color since 1826, when it was discovered by the painter Kopisch, shows that it is not a temporary phenomenon. Physicists explain the miracle to us with the technical term "total reflection". The light enters the water from below at an angle, refracts at the bottom of the water surface and is reflected back, so that the light rays cannot leave the water at all. The miraculous effect of the cave comes from a second opening in communication with the sea, the upper edge of which is some feet below sea level, but still reaches down 49 feet deep and is 40 feet wide. Through this gate the light enters, refracts in the water and now enchants everything that comes into contact with the water. In any case, it is wise calculation that the visiting time for the grotto is moved to noon, when the light shines the strongest.

When I set out to describe the grotto in one of my travel letters for the "Apologist," I became quite aware of how language - with all the richness and splendor that our beloved German possesses - does not have the means of expression to describe, as it does the wonders of nature, the deepest experiences of the soul's life. Even if one were a poet and a seer, one would feel that. Hence the continuous struggle in language, painting, sculpture and music for the right means of expression. No wonder, I said to myself, that we do not easily understand John's revelation. He saw on the lonely rocky island on Patmos so much of a heavenly world that no eye has yet seen, heard what no ear has yet heard, felt what has yet come into no man's heart. He knew that his description of the glory into which he was granted a glimpse could not reach reality. That is why he spoke in images taken from the human imagination. Thus, the blue grotto became for me an illustration for preaching and pastoral care. And when I returned to the place of my work in Budapest via Rome, Florence and Venice, I felt that God had given me rich

suggestions for life and work through this journey, which were a beautiful task to process and apply - and to let my congregations participate in it.

Chapter 14 England and the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh (1910)

The thought that I would later be the director of the preacher's seminary in Frankfurt a. M. and as such would have to give lectures on the Methodist revival movement in addition to other tasks, did not occur to me at that time. The ideals and goals of my work were closely connected with Southeastern Europe. But what I did not see and suspect was known to Him without whose will no sparrow falls from the roof, and whose hand also ruled over my life and showed it its path. For my service as an educator of young men for the preaching ministry in the Methodist Church in various countries of Europe, it was to be of special value to get to know Great Britain and Wesleyan Methodism there at a relatively young age - I was 35. Also, for the future lecture tours in the United States of America, a visit to Great Britain and the historical sites from the early days of Methodism should do a piece of necessary preparatory work. So, it was the prospect of seeing the places that first occupied my mind and expectation when I received the notification that I had been appointed as one of the representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church to the World Missionary Conference. The Methodists in Germany did not have their own missionary society at that time, so they could not delegate anyone themselves. As far as I remember, only the two lecturers from the Preacher's Seminary, Dr. A. J. Bucher and Dr. Emil Lüring had been designated as German representatives of the great Methodist Missionary Society. They had decided on me - or so I assumed - because I lived in Budapest and represented in a certain sense the work of the Methodist Church in Southeastern Europe. I had been in active correspondence with the leading men of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church in the United States for some time, and my interest in the outer mission, its aims and its problems, was known to them. Thus, I was privileged to represent, with many other colleagues from all parts of the world, one of the largest and most successful evangelical missionary societies at one of the most memorable missionary meetings ever held.

A few days in London served to get to know the cosmopolitan city, which at that time was, so to speak, at the center of the world in politics and economics. I met Dr. Friedrich Munz, the editor of the German-American magazine "Haus und Herd" (House and Hearth). We stayed in the same hotel and together made our forays to the main sights of the cosmopolitan city: the Thames bridges, the proud Parliament building, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, the Tower, St. James' Palace and Hyde Park, where on several evenings we listened to the various speakers spout their political, social and religious ideas, also making sharp opposition to the government, while policemen stood quietly by and saw to it that order was not disturbed. The company of Dr. Munz helped me a lot. He, the staid Swabian, endowed with a rich gift of mother wit and humor, had prepared proficiently for the visit to London, was aptly versed in English history and literature, and could help out with his command of the English language where my knowledge of the language failed me. Munz was a great lover of Shakespeare, spoke fondly of his art of character portrayal, and saw it as the goal of his trip to England to visit Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford on Avon. If I subsequently resolved to read the works of the great English poet not only in translation but in the original, Dr. Friedrich Munz deserves credit for the rich benefit this brought me. I was sorry that Munz could not travel with me to Edinburgh. His leave had expired. He had to return to his editorial office in Cincinnati, but on leaving he did me a good turn by asking me to write him a "not too brief article" about Edinburgh and the World Missionary Conference for "Haus und Herd".

The cityscape of London did not make a deep impression. I came from Budapest, knew the Ringstrasse in Vienna, and had not long ago been to Rome, Naples, and Venice; London seemed too massive, matter-of-fact, dry, and unpoetic. Nevertheless, the cosmopolitan city, which at that time had not yet been surpassed by New York, was impressive, and it was as if one felt the pulse of the political and economic heart of the world when one walked past Charing-Cross or stood opposite the magnificent Parliament building on the Thames, or saw the

guard go up at St. James' Palace. The massive traffic, guided by calm, self-confident policemen, sure of their cause, was impressive, as were the old historic buildings, which brought to life the past periods of a great history, either as a reminder or as a warning. I soon realized, however, that with the short time available it was not possible to get a feel for the essence of this city - this had to be saved for later visits - and that I had to limit myself to an overall impression and the study of a few objects. After the World War (WWI), I visited England several times and kept this system, i.e., each time I set myself a special goal to achieve: an insight into the immense treasures of the British Museum, an overview of the state and political development of the Empire, a visit to the historical sites of the Methodist revival movement, or an increase in my knowledge of church life, both Anglican and Free Church. Dr. F. Munz shared my opinion. So, we wandered around London from morning to evening, visited the British Museum, were at Hyde Park towards evening, were shown in the Tower the places where the children of Edward IV were murdered and the inner courtyard room where the heads of some of Henry VIII's wives fell, and spent several hours in Westminster Abbey.

It was Westminster Abbey that did it for me. I felt the same way as I did in St. Peter's Church in Rome. I had to forget that services were held here, that it was supposed to be a place of worship and edification. That would not have made an edifying impression on me. But if I let the building as such take effect on me, with its styles and forms, but above all with its monuments, I felt something of the magic of architecture and the power that history exerts on the present of a people. Westminster Abbey is built in the shape of a cross. The towers are actually unfinished. But the proportions inside are magnificent. The height of the naves, windows and other parts of the building are three times the width. The chapels of Edward the Confessor and Henry VII are masterpieces of architecture. In the main nave of this chapel this king is buried, in two side chapels rest the bones of Mary Stuart and her opponent Elizabeth. What captivated me most were the many monuments set up inside the church. Regardless of whether the outstanding figures of English history had a relationship with the church or not, whether their worldview was in accord with that of Anglican Christianity or opposed to it, if only the bearers of these names meant something for England, its influence and its fame in the world, they were given a place of honor here. We saw the statues of the famous statesmen beside the ecclesiastical leaders, the philosophers beside the writers and poets, the High Church men beside the pioneers of Free Churchism (1). The two Wesleys (2), John, the eloquent evangelist and organizer, and Charles, the poet and singer of the revival movement, have also found here a monument recognizing their work among the English people, bearing the beautiful and telling inscription, "*God buries his worker, but continues his work*." I have not found in any other country anything like Westminster Abbey, where among these monuments of the past one hears rivulets of present life rushing on every side, where, as it were, the whole history of a people from its first beginnings to its climax impresses a thinking man as if united in one focal point. And if I were asked today - that first visit to London was 33 years ago - what I gained from those days in the great city, I would immediately answer: it was the realization of the importance of history for education. The past with its great epochs and figures is the root from which the people's life unfolds, it is the teacher for the present and the future. This is also the case in Christianity. The Gospels of the life and death of Jesus, the Acts of the Apostles with their accounts of the coming into being and growth of the church of Jesus Christ form forever the basis of our preaching and the standard for our judgment in Christian and spiritual matters. The fact that English history was concentrated in a vivid and cohesive way in one church also gave food for thought. In any case, since those days I have also placed greater emphasis on history for the ministry in my church, in religious education, in the building up of the congregation and in training for the preaching ministry, and in my own studies, I have always tried to trace the footprints of God in the lives of peoples, churches and individuals.

Of the two Sundays I spent in London, the first was for an English service at Wesley Chapel in City Road and a singing service at the German Methodist Church. Wesley Chapel forms a meeting place for Methodists from all over the world. That morning, all manner of languages could be heard in front of Wesley's monument, which stands in front of the church. Americans, of course, were especially numerous. But there were not only the repre-

sentatives of Methodism on the continent, but New Zealanders, Australians, men from the South Sea work, Indians, Chinese, and Japanese, some in their picturesque costumes. The whole thing under the sign of the world-wide influence of the Methodist revival movement. At my side that morning sat Dr. Emil Lüring, who had returned to Germany only a few years ago after 20 years as a missionary in the Far East, to work as a lecturer at the Methodist preacher's seminary in Frankfurt am Main. I was astonished to meet him walking to church in a top hat. Since he knew English customs well, he had brought his top hat with him for Sundays. The English love to make Sundays stand out from the weekdays and already distinguish them by solemn dress. But I was even more amazed when, after the service, Dr. Lüring introduced me to many of his acquaintances from America, India, Borneo, China and Japan, and conversed with them in their native tongue. He was a linguistic genius, and it was almost the same for him to carry on the conversation in German, English, French, or, say, Greek, Sanskrit, or a Chinese dialect. Preaching that Sunday morning was the Reverend Dinsdale Young (3), one of the best known and most eloquent preachers of the Wesleyan Methodists. Dr. Young was a man of old Methodist stock who fought many a battle against modern trends in theology and church, and served a congregation and retained his appeal well into his old age - I think into his 80s. I last heard him in 1930 or 1931, when, nearing 80, he was still a preacher in the great Methodist Central Hall near Westminster Abbey, still drawing as many as 3,000 people every Sunday, enthralled by his expositions of biblical truths. That Sunday before the World Missionary Conference, I got to see in Wesley Chapel (so called because Wesley himself built it and furnished it according to his ideas) a really beautiful, tastefully decorated house of worship and a strong impression of the power of Methodism that is still felt today in the places where the movement originated.

Wesley Chapel—situated in the St Luke's area in south of London Borough of Islington

Next to the church is the house where John Wesley lived, from which he led the ever-growing movement. Are not the places where the chosen instruments of God lived and worked consecrated in a special sense? As in Luther's little room at Wartburg Castle, I felt something of the spirit that once prevailed here, of the battles that were fought here, of the admonitions that speak to us today from those events. I let Wesley's life pass before my eye as I stood in the room, beside the table at which he used to work. The cabinets contained his library, especially the works he wrote himself. What a busy life this man, an evangelist by the grace of God, led! The number of sermons he preached has probably not been equaled by anyone else after him. One speaks of 40,000, even 42,000! At the same time, he was almost continuously on the road. One of his biographers says that it is difficult to understand how a man could have traveled so many miles with the means of transportation of that time, even if he had done

nothing else. But what all he did on the side! As a rule, he preached three times a day. Mind you, not only on Sunday. He usually preached the first sermon as early as 5 o'clock in the morning. Then there was his literary activity. His writings amount to over 100 volumes. A contemporary, the German pastor of St. Mary's parish in London, divided Wesley's writings into poetic, philological, historical, philosophical and theological. In addition to the sermons and a commentary on the New Testament, he published a "Christian Library", which was to contain in 50 volumes the most important writings of all times and countries or at least excerpts from them. He by no means limited himself to edification literature. Among his writings are excerpts from scientific and medical works, for example, on electricity, a collection of home remedies for all kinds of diseases, a dictionary of the English language, a history of Rome, a guide to logic, a Hebrew grammar, a Latin exercise book, and so on. There on the desk is the inkwell Wesley used, the goose quill he wrote with. How often I have told my students this! Wesley had no secretary to dictate to, no typewriter girl to do the dictations in fair copy. He lacked all the modern aids without which we think we cannot cope. And yet this enormous amount of work. So, it can't be because of these aids if we can't accomplish more.

Next to the study is a small chamber, also partly filled with books, which made the deepest impression on me. When I wondered what the secret of this fruitful life was, the guide opened the closet and told us that Wesley used to retire here to pray. Whenever there was an important decision to be made, whenever joyful or sad news arrived from the work, whenever the devil raged against the little flock, whenever temptations and temptations came to his own heart: then he withdrew to speak with his God. In prayer communion with God, the sources of strength opened up to him. Were not all the successful instruments of God men of prayer? Jesus himself preceded us as a man of prayer. Peter and Paul, the first Christians in Jerusalem and Antioch, Martin Luther, and Wesley and his associates knew the mystery and power of the life of prayer, and we men of another age must ask again as the disciples did there, "Lord, teach us to pray!"

In the afternoon of that Sunday, I think it started at 6 o'clock, there was a singing service in the beautiful Peter Böhler Church of the German Methodist congregation. Unfortunately, this church had to be sold later; the membership of this German congregation declined, as was to be expected, during the World War (WWI). It did not recover from this blow. At that time there was a lively congregational life. In the middle of London that evening we had a German service, which I estimate was attended by about 500 people. The pastor was August Rücker, our singer, poet and composer, whose choir sang quite beautifully. Members of the World Missionary Conference served as speakers: Dr. Emil Lüring, Dr. A. J. Bucher, Dr. A. Simons, Superintendent of the Methodist Work in the Baltic States and Russia, and yours truly. It was an uplifting and inspiring evening, long remembered by all of us, and at the same time a hopeful outlook into the future for the work among the Germans of London. None of us thought that the storm of the world war would soon sweep over the world and also bend these blossoms.

But we must hurry to get to Edinburgh for the World Missionary Conference, which was the real destination of this, my first trip across the Channel. Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland, and one could not have chosen a more beautiful and better place for the conference. The Lord Provost - in London it is the Lord Major - said in his welcome address that he considered Edinburgh the most beautiful city in the world. Perhaps not only all Scots share this opinion, but also some other people. I heard the remark that Sydney, Dresden and Edinburgh are the three most beautiful cities in the world, but that Edinburgh deserves the prize. Whether that is true or not is for others to decide. The fact is that this city has its own charm. You can go wherever you want; you will always see something new. No uniformity and monotony. In the middle of the city there are mountains and valleys, magnificent wide streets with modern buildings, small narrow streets with old venerable houses, here an avenue of neat villas, each of which, surrounded by a well-kept garden, looks like a jewel box, there on the hillside a narrow street formed by tenement houses. What a picturesque picture one has from Princess Street, if one lets the eye rest for a while on the old castle, which rises beyond the gardens on a steep hill and looks out like a sentinel on high over the whole city and its charming surroundings to the Firth of Forth, the sea. And then at every turn the monuments

of a rich history. There is the castle where Mary Stuart resided, the house where John Knox lived, the old churchyard with the curious stone on which the earnest, faithful old Scots signed the covenant with their own blood. In front of the Assembly-Hall of the Presbyterians stands the statue of John Knox, by which every conference-goer had to pass. The mighty preacher, whose prayers Mary feared more than all her enemies, seemed to exhort every day anew to resoluteness in the struggle against sin, while the monument of another Scot, the missionary and African explorer Livingstone, pointed out to us that love for the heathen and grace to deny oneself are chief requirements of a missionary wherever God may assign him his field of labor.

Great was the reception of the delegates by the city, the churches, the university and the population. The Lord Provost gave a reception in the Municipal Museum, attended by about 5,000 people, the guests with their lodgers. Among funerary monuments and sculptures depicting the periods of splendor of the ancient pagan empires, the tables were set on which refreshments were prepared for the missionary workers who had come from all parts of the world. The Lord Provost, in his picturesque Scottish costume, extended his hand to each of the participants, a piece of work worthy of all recognition. On arrival we found in our quarters an invitation from the university to a ceremonial meeting at which some distinguished members of the conference were to be awarded honorary doctorates. The rector gave a speech on the importance of the mission, then he put the doctoral hat on a number of conference delegates, namely DD (Doctor of Divinity) or LD (Doctor of Laws). Among the honored were three Germans: Rev. (later Professor) Julius Richter, Licentiate J. Warneck and Professor Meinhof. Among the others were an Indian, a Japanese, the Archbishop of Canterbury, an ex-Governor of New York, and the President of the World Missionary Conference, Dr. J.R. Mott, whom I saw for the first time on this occasion, and with whom I was later to meet more often.

My quarters were just outside the city in a stately villa with lovely surroundings. About 8 missionaries shared with me the privilege of being guests in this distinguished house. Each of the guests had his own room. We had 4 or 5 bathrooms at our disposal. However, I believe that the most beautiful room was mine. Heavy Persian carpets covered the floor, the walls were decorated with original paintings of old masters, mostly Dutch, on one side a wonderful tapestry. Dr. Bucher was billeted nearby, and we usually made the trip to and from the conference hall together. At first, I didn't know why he didn't allow me, as the younger one, to pick him up, but that he always came to me. Then he said - those who knew him know that he could sometimes rave quite a bit - "*You know, I like to come to your room for a quarter of an hour and enjoy the art that is here. And when I'm sitting in this recliner, letting paintings and carpets affect me, I don't feel in the least like it's even a little too good for me.*" At that point, I made no more attempt to pick him up. My host belonged to the rich and distinguished society of Edinburgh, was an exceedingly active member of his church, and told me how he had several times taken part in the Kiel Regatta (4) at the invitation of Emperor Wilhelm.

Of course, I cannot go into details of the conference in my memoirs. Some things (remember that it was in 1910, 4 years before the outbreak of the World War) that were said and suggested at that time have survived, some too hasty and too optimistic judgments about the possibility of "evangelizing the world in this generation" have been impressively corrected by God through the events of the following decades, let this be admitted at the outset, but the overall impression was nevertheless a powerful one. Some 1,200 official delegates from 160 different mission societies and denominations had gathered to speak on Jesus' Great Commission: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." There were about 3,000 seats in Assembly Hall, where the official sessions were held. For the many other guests, missionaries, friends of the mission, who had taken the trouble to travel to Edinburgh without being delegates, meetings were scheduled at the same time, in which the best-known mission workers gave lectures on their mission fields. These meetings were held in Synod Hall, which held as large an audience as Assembly Hall. Vividly, even today, the opening session stands before my eyes. The very fact of bringing together all these people from so many tribes and even more denominations into one unity of spirit and purpose seemed significant, a wonderful harmony seemed to prevail which was not disturbed by any murmur. But

I could understand how some were reminded of the day of Pentecost. In the aforementioned inaugural meeting, in the president's chair sat Lord Balfour of Burleigh, who concluded his speech with the pithy words, "*It is my deep conviction that the unity of the Church begins on the mission field, but will not end there*." Next to the president's chair sat Principal Whyte of the Scottish Presbyterian Church, who offered the opening prayer; on the other side sat the Archbishop of Canterbury and John R. Mott, a Methodist. Then in the circle came peacefully side by side High Church Anglican archbishops and Methodist bishops, Lutheran pastors and professors beside Baptist preachers, brethren from Russia beside Japanese, Germans and French beside English and Americans. Indeed, it seemed as if the Holy Spirit had succeeded in moving his congregation one step forward on the road to unity. After the prayer, a message from the King of England was read. A similar telegram had arrived the day before from the Colonial Office in Berlin. Thus, it can be understood how the waves of enthusiasm were high that evening and how the conviction of the importance of the mission and the faith in its victorious course were strengthened.

Seldom has a meeting been better prepared than the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. For two years the leading men of the various missionary societies had spent much time and energy compiling the reports. This system was later used at other world conferences, but here it was introduced in the most thorough manner. Eight large commissions had been formed, each of which had a particular subject to deal with. I mention these topics in order to give an insight into the rich and varied material that was presented, which covered all areas of missionary work - I believe I may use the term - in an almost exhaustive manner:

1. bringing the Gospel message to the peoples of the non-Christian world
2. the Church in the mission field
3. education and Christianization of the national life in their relation to each other
4. the mission message and the non-Christian religions
5. the preparation of the missionaries
6. the relationship of the churches in the homeland to the mission
7. the mission and the governments
8. common work and the idea of alliance

On each of these topics, the commission drafted a number of questions, sent these questions to the mission societies and to hundreds of missionaries from the various churches around the world, and then processed the answers into a report that was sent to the delegates several weeks before the conference so that everyone could prepare thoroughly for the proceedings. When Report No. 2 came up, the chairman of the commission presented eight thick folders containing the correspondents' responses to the questions posed. One missionary had written at the deathbed of his spouse, another on his own deathbed, from which he had been called home in the middle of writing. And who would be able to count the prayers sent up to the throne of grace by thousands of prayers in all five continents? Where there was so much prayer and so much work, there could be no lack of the Lord's blessing.

The conference lasted 10 days. On Sunday we had the opportunity to hear the most prominent missionaries preach in one and a half hundred churches in the city. During the week we met three times a day to discuss the reports at hand. The chairman of the commission in question, if I remember correctly, had 20 minutes for his introductory remarks. Then any one of the delegates could speak as a discussant. 7 minutes were allotted for these speakers. After 6 minutes the bell sounded as a kind of warning signal, at the 7th minute the second time, and, no matter whether the speaker was the ex-governor of New York or the archbishop of York, the well-known Methodist bishop Bashford of China or a simple missionary, the bell knew no difference, and if on the first day some speakers had to struggle hard to be able to stop in the middle of the stream of speeches, they soon got used to the strict order and broke off in the middle of the sentence. Then the American Bishop Brent of the Philippines gave one of his brilliant addresses. "*What is a luxury to me may be a necessity to you, but.....* - " he must break off here. At the request of the assembly, the chairman lets him complete his sentence, "...*luxury is the ungentlemanly*

use of God's gifts." The bell, by the way, was not handled by the chairman himself, but by a man whose only task was to watch the clock in front of him and to give the signal on the second. The strict order was certainly necessary and salutary in such a body, it protected against digressions and forced the speakers, leaving aside the incidental, to stick to the matter and the essential. Someone in Edinburgh made the remark that the seven-minute speech reveals the man. The Englishman begins by pointing out how 7 minutes is not enough to cover the subject exhaustively and continues until the time is up. The American, on the other hand, begins: "*In the first place, I would like to point out that...*" and is already in the middle of the matter at the first sentence.

It was amazing how much some speakers were able to say in the 7 minutes allotted to them. Most of them had written down their thoughts beforehand in order to be able to highlight the most important things in the short span of time. Methodist Bishops Bashford of China, Robinson of India, Harris of Korea and Japan, Thoburn, also of India, intervened more often in the debate. One of the best speeches was by Bishop Bashford on China. Unforgettable to me is a remark by Bishop Thoburn, one of the most successful missionaries in India. It was about the training of missionaries. Much, much good had been said about the need for thorough philological, theological, historical, etc. preparation. Preparation had been said. One could not help applying the most rigorous scientific standard, as is the case in such debates. I don't remember today what all was demanded. But I can still feel the movement that went through the large assembly when the little old man stood up and said: "*Brothers, what you are demanding is all very good. But do not forget the main thing. If you recommend to me two young men, one of whom has all the diplomas of your universities but lacks the inner calling and love, while the other has fewer spiritual gifts but a heart full of love for Christ and for erring human souls, I will choose the second without hesitation. The main equipment in missionary service, at home as on the mission field, is love*." Deep silence reigned. Everyone felt that the old man on the platform, with the kind eyes from which Jesus' love seemed to shine out, was touching the main point that the others were in danger of forgetting. And I felt as if I heard from more than a thousand hearts the plea going up to God: "*O God, who for love of a lost world gave Christ to death, give me this love, without which I am a sounding ore and a tinkling bell, without which all my work is in vain*."

It was of particular interest to me to hear the so-called continental delegates give their contribution to the conference in English. The German, Swedish, and French accent can seldom be avoided by anyone, however well he may otherwise master the rules of grammar. The English and Americans, however, were very impressed that so many foreigners were able to express their thoughts in good English. Professor Mirbt of Marburg gave a lecture with German thoroughness on the German missionary undertakings, and of the others it was especially Dr. Julius Richter whose rich knowledge, clear judgment and lecture rich in content made an impression. It was also gratifying to see how our brethren from the national church in Germany recognized the widespread missionary work of the free churches, of which some in Germany have no idea. Thus Dr. J. Richter said in a speech on the subject of "Missions and Governments": "*We German missionary societies are unfortunately weak and often do not have the weight and authority vis-à-vis the governments of the great societies of England and America, and therefore ask the same to give us their help*." But I was always preoccupied with the question: would such a conference be possible in Germany? Why not? Do our German churches perhaps not have the same elasticity and the same thrust? The free-church thought in my soul received new nourishment through the Edinburgh impressions.

Of the various negotiations, one is still deeply impressed on my mind. It was the one in which cooperation, joint work on the mission field and at home was discussed. It was an Indian who brought the beautiful illustration of a boy carrying his baby brother on his back. An acquaintance asked him if the burden was not too heavy. Then the boy replied, "*It's not a load, it's my brother*." A Chinese man received strong applause when he asked that the churches should unite in the homeland so that one of the greatest obstacles to missionary work among the Chinese would be removed. At a meeting with some Chinese Christians, he asked which church they belonged to. Then, he said, one said he was an Anglican, another said he was a Methodist, the third was a Baptist, and the fourth said he was a "Scottish Presbyterian." Are you going to China, he asked, to lead souls to Christo, or to make

Scottish Presbyterians? We were in a Presbyterian Hall, but the storm of applause showed that the speaker had been understood, and the Christians from the Far East found receptive ground when they asked, "*Your differences at home are of little interest to us native Christians. We want to be Christians and belong to the Christian Church. Give us an example of unity and oneness in the native churches*."

A highlight was when the large assembly inserted a prayer session into these discussions about unity and common work. An old, venerable veteran of the mission field led it. He had gathered Bible passages from the unity of the church of Jesus Christ. The assembly bowed for silent prayer. One minute of perfect silence. Then, as if spoken by a voice from another world, the words of Jesus from the High Priestly Prayer, spoken slowly and solemnly, rang through the hall: "*That they may all be one, even as you Father are in me, and I in you. And let the world know that you have sent me, and love them as you love me*." Thus, the World Mission Conference also helped to nurture me in the alliance mindset.

I have already pointed out that God has corrected some of the hopes raised in Edinburgh by the events of the time. The reports published by Dr. W. Schreiber, Director of Missions, under the title "The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference" have also been regarded here and there in Germany as too optimistic. The splendid booklet, however, gives a good picture of the mood of those days and shows what the German delegates felt and received. In any case, the whole missionary work of the Church received a new impulse. The circle of vision was widened, the sense of responsibility sharpened, the joy of work and the will to sacrifice revived, the faith in the victorious presence of Jesus Christ strengthened. I myself noticed only in Edinburgh that Jesus' solemn promise "I am with you always" is connected with the Great Commission "Go into all the world". Whatever happened afterwards because of the war, the disappointments we German missionaries experienced, the tremendous rift that has been going through Christianity since that time, and the serious problems brought up by World War II in connection with missions: I would not like to miss the memory of the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh, and the report on the conference, published in nine volumes with the "Mission Atlas", in which every mission station is entered according to the state of affairs at that time, still forms one of the most valuable parts of my mission library.

(1) A free church— Christian denomination that is intrinsically separate from government, as opposed to a state Church). It does not define government policy, and does not accept church theology or policy definitions from the government. It also does not seek or receive government endorsements or funding to carry out its work. An individual belonging to it is known as a free churchperson or historically, a free churchman.

(2) The two Wesleys— John Wesley is considered to be father of Methodism. His brother, Charles, became one of the most prolific English-speaking poets, composing more than 6,500 hymns. With no intention of separating from the Anglican Church, the brothers were founding members of small Oxford University reform group that eventually spawned the second-largest Protestant denomination in America.

(3) Dinsdale T. Young—Wesleyan local preacher who said: "*It seemed to have been for ever settled in heaven that I was to be a preacher. From my earliest childhood, I regarded it as my destiny. So, my father, and mother, and all who knew me, seemed to regard it … certainly I never had any other idea. … I preached and conducted services in my nursery, preached in various rooms of the house in dawning boyhood, preached in the houses of relatives and friends; dreamed of preaching – and all this was surely prophetic of, and preparatory for, a life of preaching*." Crowds went to hear him preach at the Central Hall, where he reigned as a prince of the pulpit for many years. He presented himself well wearing a frock coat and silk hat as he moved among the people in the communities. Loved and respected for his Bible ministry and natural warm personality. Long white flowing hair gave the appearance a conductor of an orchestra. He was a minister of the old school, in his theology and preaching, and he gloried in the title. When some people hinted at his narrowness, he was ready to quickly reply that he could claim to have studied both sides more thoroughly than those who were supposed to be modern.

(4) Kiel Regatta— was established in imitation of Cowes Week, which had been first sailed in 1826. Kaiser Wilhelm II began to race a yacht each year at Cowes, England, while at the same time visiting his grandmother, Queen Victoria. He decided that Germany should have an equivalent regatta, so in 1895 an annual local rowing and sailing regatta usually held at the end of June was converted with royal patronage into the Kieler Woche (Kiel Week).

F.H. Otto Melle – Memoirs 1875-1936

Chapter 15 Transferred to Vienna (1911)

The transfer system in the Methodist Church, like all human institutions, may have its downsides, but on the other hand, it offers so many advantages that preachers and congregations are quite satisfied with it and there is no inclination to part with it. Admittedly, it is always painful when intimate bonds of friendship and love, as they entwine themselves around preacher and congregation, especially where a preacher of the gospel has been allowed to gather a congregation, must suddenly be severed. But even this painful parting has its good. The congregations are educated not to be attached to men but to the Lord; they soon learn that through a change of preachers other gifts of the exalted Christ are made serviceable to them, which prevents one-sidedness, and for the preachers it is certainly a blessing that they get to know different congregations, that they have to learn to adapt to new circumstances. I, too, was affected by the transfer system, and in the summer of 1911, I had to leave the congregation I had grown fond of in Budapest and move to Vienna.

Perhaps it will help us to understand our system if I describe how it came about. My transfer was not only a surprise for the people of Budapest, but also for me. The goals I had set myself: a central building in Budapest, the expansion and cultivation of work in the Hungarian language, if possible, also among the other foreign-language tribes, were well known and had become common knowledge in our circles. Budapest was to become the center for extensive evangelistic activity in Southeastern Europe. Vienna could not be considered at all because of the religious laws, which forbade any free work under the pressure of the Roman Catholic Church, as we will see. Why go to Vienna after all?

In the 1910/1911 conference year, an urgent call came to us to send a preacher to Graz. A member of our church from the Rhineland, a retired factory director, had found a connection with the congregation in Vienna and met our preacher there, H. Bargmann. And now he had no greater wish than to see a community formed in Graz (1), the beautiful Styrian capital. Brother Kraus wanted to come to the conference in Vienna and present his request to the bishop, who at that time was Dr. W. Burt. I knew the bishop much too well not to know that he would pull out all the stops to get a base in Styria, from where the call: "Come over and help us!" came so clearly and strongly. I myself had been concerned for a long time that we could not gain a foothold anywhere outside of Vienna due to the legal difficulties in Austria. The Graz wish seemed to me like an answer to prayer. Much, of course, depended on my judgment and suggestions. The means and the right man had to be found for the new place.

In addition to this, in 1911 we were to be organized as an independent "Missionary Conference of Austria and Hungary". This would mean that we would cease to be a district of the North German Conference and would be able to regulate our affairs independently, including the employment of preachers and their admission to the Conference, as well as the financial questions connected with this. This was, ecclesiastically speaking, a great advance, and it must naturally be our endeavor to make the "room of our lodge" larger and to stretch the ropes further. Thus, after struggling and wrestling in prayer, I came to the conviction: It is God's will that we dare in faith to go forward and occupy Graz.

But who to send to Graz? For a new work the best man! That has always been my principle. Our transfer system also allows this, since we pay the same salaries to all, following the Civil Servants' Salary Act. It makes no difference whether a preacher is sent by the bishop to a large or small congregation, his salary is arranged according to the scale adopted by the conference. Thus, without financially penalizing the individual preacher, the church is

able to place the appropriate man in a strategically important post. For Graz, there was really only one man to be considered, Preacher Hinrich Bargmann, at that time the preacher of the 1st congregation in Vienna. He had established relations with Graz, was a friend of Brother Kraus, and in his character as well as in his evangelistic and pastoral gifts had the equipment needed for such pioneer work. He had come from Königsberg to Vienna five or six years ago, had earned the confidence of the Viennese congregation to a high degree, and had so settled in Austria that he could be considered a true Austrian. I decided to propose Brother Bargmann to the bishop for Graz.

There was hardly anyone left for the congregation in Trautsohngasse (street in Vienna, site of missionary project), so I took it over myself. I knew that the bishop intended to appoint me superintendent and treasurer of the new mission conference. The management of the work would remain in my hands. I would have to visit Budapest and the Bácska regularly and thus remain in close contact with preachers and congregations, having the opportunity to get to know Austria with its problems on the spot, which could only be favorable for the future work in the double monarchy. For Budapest I would suggest Preacher Martin Funk and then - after a few years - return to Budapest, meanwhile keeping in mind the goal of a central building in Budapest. The bishop immediately and wholeheartedly agreed to these proposals, and the transfer became a reality.

This all happened at the first conference we celebrated in Vienna in the summer of 1911. Each Annual Conference in the Methodist Church is significant. Besides the preachers, on whom rests the chief responsibility for the work of their district, each district sends a congregational representative. The superintendents, the seminary for preachers, the publishing house, the hospitals, the homes, the various commissions give their reports; it is ascertained whether progress or regression has been made, and plans for the work in the new conference year are discussed. Finally, the bishop reads the list of fields of labor, for each Methodist preacher is given his field of labor for one year at a time. The preacher does not have to be transferred, he may stay in one place for a very long time, but he knows when he goes to the conference that the appointment list may bring surprises. If every conference already arouses much interest, our first conference for Austria and Hungary was of course a special event in the history of European Methodism. Bishop Burt was pleased with the development the work had taken, the conferences in Germany and Switzerland chose delegates to bring us their congratulations, from Italy Dr. Clark had come, and although I am no longer quite sure, I believe that the superintendent of the conference of Bulgaria was also among us to celebrate the feast days with us. So, I cannot well pass over this conference. All who experienced this week with us will have remembered it for a long time. Enthusiastic reports were written and sent to the Methodist press in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Scandinavia and the United States of America. At first, we feared that as a small conference, with as much time at our disposal as the larger ones, we would not have enough to do. But this worry was unfounded, the young preachers - we were all young, I as the senior in our circle was 36 years old - worked with devotion and enthusiasm. We had enough time to let the foreign delegates have their say, and the bishop gave us many suggestions from the rich treasure of his knowledge and experience.

Rarely have I been able to write a report with more joy than the report for this conference. It seemed as if a new era was dawning for the work in Austria. The Hungarians had outnumbered the Austrians, but Graz was to become a new district, the Italian congregation in Trieste with its eloquent preacher Dardi had been affiliated with us, and the Czech congregation in Vienna was to receive a preacher trained in the preacher's seminary in Frankfurt a. M. So, we had congregations of Germans, Hungarians, Czechs and Italians and felt the responsibility to lay a good foundation in all these languages and tribes so that we could continue to build on it. At my suggestion, we decided to publish our own magazine, the "Evangelist for the Danube Countries", and willy-nilly I had to take over the editorship. On the side, I also published the Hungarian "Békeharang" (Peace Song), and for the Keresztyén Könyres Ház in Budapest (Christian Book House), which had been founded shortly before, they made me the director. As I laughed at this title, for the new cooperative, which was mainly for securing church property and had nothing more than a filing cabinet, Bishop Burt remarked in his humorous, quick-witted way, "*Brother Melle, never*

be ashamed to be director of little things, but see that the little things grow!" All work in the kingdom of God, after all, begins as small as a mustard seed. But the small beginning will grow when there is real life.

Perhaps this is the place to say a word about Bishop Burt. He was of Scottish descent, came to the United States as a child, where by his work with his hands, he earned the means to attend college and university. In the Methodist Church he had had a lively experience of salvation, and feeling the call to the preaching ministry, he entered one of the American conferences, where he served several large congregations until he made himself available for evangelistic work in Italy, of which he soon became leader or superintendent. He had a deep love for the Italian people, penetrated, as is seldom found in an American, their history and customs, and learned to speak and preach Italian fluently. Besides the American church in Rome, which he served, and which did good work among the many Americans of all denominations who visited Rome, he devoted himself especially to evangelistic work among the Italians. He succeeded in raising handsome funds for a church property through his vivid reports from friends, and the high school for girls in Rome, which was under his supervision, was considered one of the best educational institutions for girls in the new Italy. The King of Italy received him in audience several times and awarded him a medal, but as far as I know he wore it only on festive occasions in Italy. In 1904 he was elected bishop by the General Conference and entrusted with the direction of the work in Europe as Dr. Vincent's successor. It was not possible for him to learn all the languages spoken in his diocese, but he had acquired some phrases from them, and in German he could follow the debates at the conferences without a translator. Although still relatively young, he had snow-white hair that attracted attention everywhere. His face was youthfully fresh, and from his eyes radiated something of the kindness that only people possess whose hearts are filled with an inner happiness. His sermons were evangelistic, practical, spiced with apt illustrations, so that the sentence-by-sentence translation into German hardly detracted from the effect. What especially attracted me to him was his noble Christian character, his understanding of evangelism, his clear, sure judgment of people with whom he had often been only a few moments, and his insight into the importance of Methodism in Germany for the whole work in Europe. The seminary for preachers in Frankfurt a. M. he would have liked to expand for the education of future Methodist preachers from all European conferences, and the work in Austria and Hungary, of whose romantic beginning and steady growth he liked to tell in his lectures in other countries, had a warm place in his heart. These were common ideals; I esteemed and loved him like a father, and as he discussed with me in an open manner problems of Methodism as a whole, as well as of the churches in general, during his visits, and liked to know my opinion, from the German point of view, he contributed perhaps more than any other personality in these years to broadening my horizon and forming my ecclesiastical judgment. Most of the time he asked me if I had read one or another book in English and thus helped me to increase my knowledge and to awaken my interest also in American problems. I owe him much and kept up a stimulating correspondence with him until the end. His admonitions and warnings, as well as his encouragements, were equally valuable. Perhaps that young man in Hungary characterized him correctly, who remarked after a visit of the bishop: "*We were all electrified*". Much blessing has come from this man.

Conference Sundays are always a highlight in the Methodist Church. On that Conference Sunday, however, I experienced something else special with the bishop: in the morning he had preached one of his penetrating sermons in Trautsohngasse, translated by me. In the afternoon, we wanted to be a little more public. But we were only tolerated as a free church in Austria, possessed by law only the right to hold family devotions, and therefore would not have received permission for a service or singing service in a public hall. So, our brothers had fallen for the idea of registering a concert of the singing group "Immer Fröhlich" (Always Happy) in the Architects' Association Hall. This was approved without further ado, because there were plenty of events of this kind in Vienna, which was a city that loved singing. An official from the police used to come at the beginning to check whether everything was in order, and also to inspect the program, but then, believing that he had done his duty, he disappeared never to be seen again. In the program, however, neither a prayer nor an address was allowed. Everything went according to the program. Since we were used to such things in Vienna and saw nothing extraordinary in them, I had forgotten to tell the bishop. He sat by my side during the singing recitals and studied the program. When he found no speech or recital, he asked me, "*Am I expected to say something, too?*" "*But of course*," I replied. "*What*

number on the program?" "*No. 7*," I said. The bishop replied: "*That's not true, No. 7 is a declamation*". Then it dawned on me what I had missed. I smiled and said: "*It is true, we expect a declamation from you today*". Then I explained the matter to him, and he gave one of his short and gripping evangelistic speeches. He himself enjoyed this experience very much. For me, however, it was to acquire another value that I could not think of at that time. During my lecture tours in America, I often had to speak before preachers' meetings. The Americans love it when a speaker spices up his address with an anecdote. If one brings an old story with a long beard, he immediately loses the interest of his listeners, and even the best he then says does not make much impression. When I told how we in Vienna - probably the only time in the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church - put a bishop on the program with a declamation and he did his thing really well and to everyone's satisfaction, this was of course something new and not only met with undivided applause, it also served to arouse interest for my further remarks.

After the conference, the first thing for me was to say goodbye to Budapest. Hanna was with the children in Zwickau in Saxony with her parents, and I asked her to stay until the move was completed. There was no lack of friendly hands to help me both with packing and unpacking. However, I learned that the proverb: "To move twice is as much as to burn down once" has some truth. The parting from the community was not easy, but it was softened by the promise that I would regularly hold the quarterly conferences and also otherwise come to important events and maintain the relationships. To this day, the bond of fellowship that unites me with the dear Budapesters has actually not been loosened, and when last year (1942), on the trip to the conference in the Bácska in Budapest, I stepped into the hall where both congregations, the German and the Hungarian, were gathered, I had the feeling as if I had never been transferred and as if we still belonged together. The "communion of saints," as it is called in the Apostles' Creed, is not an empty delusion, it is a blessed reality.

Another decision for me, which was somewhat connected with the transfer, I cannot leave unmentioned: Dr. C. Schell, the superintendent of the Berlin district at the time when I went to Hungary in 1900, had meanwhile become inspector of the Bethanienverein (Bethany Association) in Hamburg and Berlin. From small beginnings this blessed deaconess work had developed in a wonderful way. In Hamburg we had a spacious hospital with a nurses' home, and in Berlin the ward for private nursing had made such progress, that there were plans to establish a clinic here as well. Dr. Schell often came to Vienna to visit the deaconess station there, and already in the Budapest period I had liked to schedule the quarterly conferences in Vienna so that I could meet with him. He was one of our best known and most popular German preachers, a sharp thinker, much occupied with philosophy, and at the same time an efficient and practical administrator. In the leadership of the Bethanienverein, he was in a place where he could develop his rich gifts in all directions. However, he felt that the growing tasks made an assistant necessary and would have liked to have a younger man at his side who could take over a good part of the work and later take his place. Every time I met with him, he would bring up these favorite thoughts of his and try to get me to promise him that if I were elected by the Board of Directors at his suggestion, I would accept the election and return to Germany with my family. One of his arguments was that after the Missionary Conference was organized, they would probably appoint an American as Superintendent, which would certainly not make my position any easier. In the Deaconissenwerk (Deaconess Work) in Germany, I would find an independent position and a beautiful life task. Now I have always been a warm friend of the deaconess cause. I have often said in speeches that I consider our deaconess work to be the most fruitful branch on the tree of German Methodism. Also, a move to Hamburg would have brought all kinds of comforts for my family. But the work of the deaconesses was somewhat beside the church at that time, and I felt that I was obligated to devote my strength to the work in Southeastern Europe. It also seemed to me that it would be easier to find a suitable man for the work of the deaconesses in Germany than for Southeastern Europe. As for the other point, it was my deep conviction that it was the special task of German Methodism to preach the Gospel in Austria, Hungary and the other Danube countries and to build up congregations in a similar way as we had done in Germany. My leaving, however, would probably have made the question of an American superintendent and treasurer acute. So, I decided to ask my dear old friend Schell to refrain from my candidacy. And I do not doubt in the least today that it was God's will that guided me in this decision. I was to keep my eye on the overall tasks of the Church, of which social activity is only one side. The

right man for the Bethanienverein was soon found in Brother Heinrich Ramcke. However, I believe that I have also been able to help the deaconesses' association in my position as superintendent, seminary director and bishop, and I am still happy every time I can serve the dear sisters or take part in the consultations about the tasks of the deaconesses.

In Vienna I found a station of the Bethanienverein, which belonged to the motherhouse in Frankfurt am Main. The sisters lived on the 3rd floor of the same house, and there was a lively intercourse between the preacher's family and the sisters' home, where the growing children were welcome guests. Head Sister Lucie knew how to make the home very attractive, and visits from Germany, Switzerland and other countries, of which there was no lack in Vienna, often assured that they had seldom felt so comfortable in a large city as in Vienna in the Sisters' Home in Trautsohngasse. Every week I held a Bible study for the sisters when I was at home. They loved it that one looked at a book of the Bible with them continuously and often participated quite lively in the discussion. The questions they asked, the remarks they made, showed the problems they were dealing with or the temptations they had to wrestle with in their often difficult and self-denying ministry and, besides helping the sisters, often gave valuable ideas for a pastoral sermon the next Sunday. Thus, those hours became a rich benefit for myself. When the president of the Bethanienverein and Deaconess father, Heinrich Mann, came to visit from Frankfurt, for example, for the annual celebration of the association, these were festive days in which the whole congregation took part. The Deaconissenwerk has grown out of the congregations, it has its lifeblood in the congregations and will flourish the better the more intimate the relationship between the two is. I would have liked to see a hospital built for Vienna by the Bethanienverein. There was a strong need for it. Outstanding doctors, who could not praise enough the service of our sisters, would have advocated its implementation. The Sisterhood, with whom I had discussed the plan, was enthusiastic. But my dear friend, President Mann, felt he had to advise against it. He had completed the beautiful building in the Prüfling in Frankfurt am Main only a few years before. A not too light burden of debt lay on the same. So, he feared that the Vienna plan would be too heavy a burden. If one had known that the world war would break out only a few years later and that building would then be impossible for many years, one might have dared to do it. But I still hope to see the day when a hospital of the Methodist Deaconesses' Association can be inaugurated in the old imperial city on the Danube, which has now returned to the empire.

Another problem happened because of the transfer to Vienna. In the set-up of our church, it has proven successful to leave the district superintendents without a congregation, so that they can devote themselves fully to the district. In the case of the superintendent of a missionary conference that encompassed the entire Danube Monarchy, these reasons seemed even stronger. When I had become district superintendent in 1907 (we still said “Vorsteher” ‘Head’ at that time), I had asked to be allowed to keep the congregation in Budapest as well. But would this also be possible in Vienna after the organization of an independent conference, the spiritual and financial leadership of which was entrusted to me? And besides that, the various administrative tasks? But I would have felt it a lack to no longer be in direct relationship with a congregation. I have always considered the service of the church preacher as the ideal of the work in the kingdom of God, and I could not understand it if some brothers aspired to be released from the church work. To win souls for Christ and then to feed these souls like a shepherd, to build up a church that strives toward the goal of the New Testament Church, to nurse the sick, to strengthen the weak and to put the healthy to work and to see them develop into perfect manhood in Christ, that is a profession that surpasses all others. What a joy when the congregation grows not only inwardly but also outwardly, when the rooms in which it meets become too narrow and have to be enlarged, and when souls come from all sides and say, "*We will go with you, for we see that God is with you.*" How easy it is to preach to a congregation of which one knows every single member with his joys and sorrows, his needs and worries, when all come to the place of worship on Sunday with the expectation of hearing what their preacher is commanded by God to say. So, I took over the dear congregation in Trautsohngasse, preached as often as I could also in the 2nd congregation, and I would probably have maintained this kind of combination of leadership of the whole and service to a single congregation even longer, if the World War had not come, which called almost all our preachers in the Dual Mon-

archy to arms, so that I could very rarely be at home on a Sunday. Already in the second year of my service in Vienna, I received a capable co-worker in Heinz Mann, the son of President Mann, who had just come from the university, and who also represented me in the best way during a 6-month trip to America. These were years of beautiful joint work on the fulfillment of a great task.

I found the change from pioneer work in Hungary to pastoral care for an older congregation that had grown out of its infancy very healing and beneficial for me, and I later realized that I had probably been unconsciously influenced in my decision to come to Vienna by the feeling that such service would fill a gap in my career and education. Apart from the dependent years as an assistant, it had always been my task to do real pioneer work. I evangelized in areas where the preaching of repentance and faith, the emphasis on regeneration and assurance of salvation, the personal decision for Christ and the demand for a life of following Jesus were almost unknown. The proclamation of these truths struck the conscience, the consciousness of sin was awakened by the Holy Spirit, there were thorough conversions and surrenders to the Lord. The souls came to understand that faith is not the acceptance of certain dogmatic propositions or membership in a church, but, as Luther so aptly says in his preface to the Epistle to the Romans, not the human delusion and dream that some take for faith, but a divine work that transforms us and gives us new birth out of God and kills the old Adam, makes of us completely different people of heart, courage, mind and all powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. So, something that is not exhausted in hanging on to tradition, but a personal work that God does in the soul. The people who experienced this miracle in themselves considered themselves as little children in Christ and me as their spiritual father, and it was a joy to teach them now, to guide them, to see them grow and become more and more complete. The authority of the preacher was great. It was different in Vienna. I came to a congregation in which almost a dozen preachers had already worked; the decision for Christ lay decades in the past for some of the members; the brothers and sisters, who for the most part came from Catholicism, had to struggle with special challenges and temptations, and the suppression of the Gospel that had prevailed since the Counter-Reformation had resulted in a different state of mind than in free Hungary. It soon became clear to me how important language is as a means of expression for thought, and how it is not only important to say a truth, but to say it in such a way that the listener also understands what is meant. Thus, in a sermon I had once spoken of whole Christians as opposed to half Christians, without explaining the term "Christian." After the sermon I heard how Catholics present, for whom the term "Christian" was synonymous with "Catholic," were very edified because they thought I had properly read the riot act to the Protestants.

But it would be wrong, for example, to go off the deep end against the false teachings of other churches. I have never thought much of such polemics in Catholic and also in Protestant countries, just as I could not understand it when evangelists castigated the phenomena of the times with all means of satire and ridicule. It is necessary to proclaim the positive truths of Scripture, as clearly and forcefully as possible, and leave it to the Holy Spirit to "convict of righteousness, of sin, and of judgment." I see a great advantage in the free choice of texts. There one can deal with dogmatic doctrines, ethical problems, historical material or character portraits to one's heart's content, adapting to the needs of the listeners. My endeavor was to draw from the sources of the Holy Scriptures, to offer as much variety as possible in the presentation of the Word, to speak for the congregation on Sunday morning and to evangelize in the afternoon. In the morning, dear believing friends from the various Viennese churches usually came. Not infrequently one could see one or another university professor, but always students of the theological faculty and the leading brethren of the YMCA and other circles oriented toward serious Christianity. This called for careful study of the Scriptures, widened the bonds of fellowship, showed something of the closer union of Protestant denominations than was usually the case in Germany, and made the morning services a kind of alliance meeting. I always awaited these hours with a certain excitement and still think back to them with pleasure. The general meeting, however, was always in the afternoon. Many of our members and friends could only come once because of the distance. They then came in the afternoon. In these meetings, which were attended by many people from far away, it was a given to speak evangelistically. The preacher was also not so bound to time, he could elaborate on the thoughts a bit more, and the following meeting of the youth was always

lively, stimulating and attractive even for older people. But it was most beautiful when we could hold follow-up meetings and show searching souls the way to salvation.

If anywhere, in Vienna I came to appreciate the value of the Methodist institution of a probationary period for membership. This gives the congregation an opportunity to get to know the people who want to join, and is intended to give the new members time to become acquainted with the church, its doctrines, history, and order, before they decide to join and take on the responsibilities of membership. I have always considered it a privilege to belong to a church in which all its members have joined of their own free will, voluntarily after thorough examination and prayer. This gives the congregations a strong congregational consciousness, because the members know that they have been added by the Lord. When 15 to 20 people in Vienna, who confessed that they had come to faith, came forward to be accepted into the congregation, I formed a trial member class with them, as I was accustomed to doing in Hungary, which I led myself and as a weekly meeting. I discussed with them the basic truths of the Holy Scriptures as represented by the church, the "General Rules" which actually replace a compendium of ethics, gave an overview of the history of Methodism, its origin, spread and tasks, and sought to introduce something of the church order. The course was intended only for probationary members. But after the first hour, some of the older members came forward and asked to attend. The number of these older Methodists grew from week to week until a large part of the congregation united in the "trial member class." The exposition of the simplest truths, which I had assumed had already become second nature, met a great need, and I myself learned more for "practical theology" in those meetings - I may well confess - than from many a thick book on the subject. I learned that life is also the best teacher for church work, and the letters of the apostles, especially those of Paul, which had their cause and their goal in the questions and needs of his congregations, opened up their understanding to me more and more. So, it will be understood without further ado that I think back with joy and gratitude especially to the Viennese trial member class.

In this context, I want to mention that as a preacher of Vienna, I also came to know the blessing of the Union. The congregation in Vienna had been founded in 1870 by the Wesleyan Synod. Its preachers had been Wesleyans until 1897, when the union with the Methodist Episcopal Church took place. Some Wesleyan institutions had been retained by the congregation. For example, Holy Communion was celebrated on the 1st Sunday of each month, which is not done so regularly in the "Episcopalian congregations," and two collections were taken at this celebration, the second of which was for the poor, an institution that I liked very much, and which I believe has been maintained to this day. We sang from the Wesleyan hymnal, which was richer than ours, until the old books were used up. The union did not mean a break with tradition, but an organic development, and it has been wonderful how beneficial the union has been in the fellowship of preachers among themselves, in the growth of congregations, in the sharing of gifts given by the Lord to the church, and in the new impetus for work on the tasks set before us. I believe that from these observations God used the Viennese time to also nourish the idea of unification in my heart. How blessed it would be if a union with the sister church, the Evangelical Fellowship, could also come about!

(1) Graz is the capital city of the Austrian state of Styria and second-largest city in Austria after Vienna. Styria is the second largest state in the southeast of Austria.

Chapter 16 " There Is Only One Vienna": Viennese stories

When I came to Vienna, I did not come to a city that was foreign or new to me. Since 1900, when I took over the work in Hungary, I could seldom make a trip to Germany without touching Vienna, and I usually used the opportunity to take a look at one or the other sight of the old city, whose foundation is traced back to the Romans. There is a difference, after all, between spending a day now and then in a city on a visit, and living in it, sharing joys and sorrows with its people, breathing in its atmosphere and thus becoming a piece of it. I was to have some of the most faith-filled and beautiful experiences of my life in Vienna, but also to go through the most difficult years of it with my family, the years of the World War (WWI). This created a bond whose memory still vibrates the strings of gratitude. But of that later. I must first tell you a few things from the time before the World War.

Lueger was mayor at the time. He had brought the Christian Social, i.e., the Roman Catholic Party, to power, and his influence therefore extended far beyond Vienna. Lueger had many opponents. But he had the Viennese population on his side, not least because he always emphasized the beauty of Vienna, its culture, its history and importance like hardly anyone else before him. In almost every speech he gave, he quoted or concluded with the well-known phrase: ""There is only one imperial city, there is only one Vienna." Even the poorest, most miserable living people felt proud to be Viennese. The power of a slogan could be studied in Lueger's speeches.

So, I couldn't help but study the peculiarity, the tradition, the view of life and the world of the old imperial city. I do not mean to say that Lueger first gave me the idea. Even without him, it would have been my principle to penetrate the essence of a city that was assigned to me as a field of activity. But to Lueger, without passing judgment on him, I will give the credit for having strengthened me in my endeavors. If at all possible, I tried to follow the advice of my teacher and friend, Dr. Paul Gustav Junker, to allow myself a day of rest on Monday after a strenuous Sunday, or at least half a day, and then either to take a hike in the beautiful surroundings of the city, in the Vienna Woods, or - which also brought me relaxation - to spend a few hours in the inner city and let the cityscape have an effect on me. The Vienna Ring (2) with its historic buildings deserved a chapter in itself. On one of his visits, Bishop Burt, who had been accompanied by one of his sons, also brought with him a former Catholic priest from Rome who, having become aware of Methodism through reading a biography of Wesley, had come to the knowledge and experience of the justifying faith and had then decided to engage in evangelistic work in Catholic countries. I do not know to which ward he belonged. He knew a large part of the world. Since I myself had no time to devote to this man, I hired a Viennese *Fiaker* (horse-drawn cab) for him and Mr. Burt junior for that afternoon and instructed the coachman to drive the gentlemen through the Ringstraße, past the Burgtheater and the University, the Votivkirche (3), the City Hall and the Parliament, the two museums on Maria Theresia-Platz, the Hofburg and the Opera to the Prater where they were to drink a "melange" in the "third" coffee house. As a guide, they had the English Baedeker in their pocket. Meanwhile, I had meetings with the bishop until they returned for dinner. I had never seen anyone so entranced by the picture of a city until then. The former priest and current evangelist exclaimed one over the other, " *O Vienna, o Vienna! what a wonderful city*!" That was the impression strangers received. And what else was there to see! Outside the gates of Vienna, in an incomparable park, there was Schönbrunn Palace, where the emperor spent most of his time; in the center, not far from the unfinished Hofburg, there was St. Stephen's Cathedral; then the Court Church, where the choir and orchestra of the opera sang mass on Sunday at noon; the Capuchin Crypt, where the bones of the rulers of the Habsburg dynasty rest; and a host of old churches in a wide variety of architectural styles. German architecture, German style, German history, German culture everywhere. How did it happen that this country was so strictly separated from the German Empire? - I sometimes enjoyed climbing the Kobanzl to the Kahlenberg, from where one has a fascinating view over Vienna. It

brought back memories of the many wars fought around this city. There lies Wagram, where Napoleon forced the emperor to his knees, so that the proud Habsburg had to give his daughter to the Corsican as his wife. Or even further back in history: aren't those places over there above the Danube the places from where Suleiman commanded the Turkish troops in their siege of Vienna? What course would the history of Europe have taken if those armies had triumphed and spread Mohammedanism by fire and sword? I could sit for hours on the Kahlenberg, and while the eye flew over the landscape and looked for the individual towers and public buildings up to the Ferris wheel in the Prater as landmarks, I had to ponder over the mystery of the divine power that lay over the history of this city, this country and the Habsburg dynasty. Had not the Reformation gained a firm foothold here as well? How was it that the Counter-Reformation succeeded in destroying the flourishing life of faith? I received the strongest impression of the power of Rome, however, when I saw the old emperor, whom the doctors usually guarded against every draft, walking bareheaded behind the throne chair of the cardinal-prince-archbishop during a Corpus Christi procession, with the burning candle in his hand. The unfortunate Empress Elisabeth, the tragedy of Crown Prince Rudolf, the political struggles of the present, the discord of the population - how will it all end? What kind of task will be given to the Gospel here in the future?

There is only one Vienna! This could also be said with regard to the difficulties with which the evangelization work had to wrestle. I do not know if there is a second congregation anywhere in the world in our time that has had to go through the same or similar harassment on the part of the authorities through such sufferings and struggles as the congregation in Vienna. It is the custom in the Methodist Church for the superintendent preacher to submit a quarterly written report on the state of membership and other events in the work. These reports are kept with the records of the church. Since they are read at the quarterly conference, which is presided over by the district superintendent and attended by the leaders of congregational life, they have the character of official, audited documents. Moreover, at a meeting the outgoing preacher is in the habit of entering an account of his tenure in the congregational book. While in my former congregations I first had to create these institutions, i.e., make a start with them, here in Vienna I found in the books of the congregation the files of a forty-year varied history, filled with worries and struggles, disappointments and wonderful help from God. Working through this material was one of the first tasks I set myself, and the hours I spent on it gave me more for my own spiritual life than I can say. I saw in the history of the church something of the mystery of God that does not reveal itself to the inquiring mind, but does to faith. Is it not part of the nature of the church of Christ to be surrounded by enemies and to have to struggle with difficulties as long as it is on this earth as a small flock? The Via Dolorosa of Jesus and that of His Church form an inseparable unity. Later, when I preached about the church that the gates of hell will not overcome, the history of Protestantism in Austria, which includes the history of our Viennese congregations, always stood as a vivid illustration.

In the context of my memoirs, of course, I must not speak too extensively of the history of the Viennese communities that predates my coming to Vienna. That would go beyond the scope of this book. Here, however, belongs the mention of the gratitude that rose in my heart for the work of faith and love done by those men and women who often sowed here in Vienna in tears without experiencing the harvest of joy. How many sacrifices had to be made, how much self-denial practiced, how many disappointments overcome! How patience and faith were severely tested! Here are just a few key words that I took from the reports: In January 1870 the first Methodist preacher, Ch. Dieterle, came to Vienna, but it was not until July 1875 that he dared to hold the first public meeting. Under the preachers Ch. Beutenmüller and Johann Rück, Sunday school and church services were banned and only home services were allowed. And yet the Lord added blessings like "fires saved from the fire"! And what an experience it must have been for the struggling, persecuted congregation when, under Friedrich Rösch in 1890, Baroness Amalie von Langenau, widow of the Austrian and Hungarian ambassador in Petersburg and former palace lady of Empress Elisabeth of Austria, showed the way to Christ in our small, hidden meetings, which took place in a narrow room on the 4th floor. She joined the congregation in overflowing joy over the salvation she had found and soon after donated the house at Trautsohngasse No. 8 to the congregation for its services! And then, under Rösch's successor, our preacher Robert Möller, equipped with a rich evangelistic gift, there was a sweeping

revival which, despite all obstacles, spread to various parts of the city and led to the formation of a Czech and a second German congregation! The co-workers and successors of brother Möller should also be mentioned at least: P. Dietze, J. Rasmussen, Theophil Mann, Reinhold Hagenloh, Paul Wenzel, Gottlieb Jetter, Hermann Nedtwig, Heinrich Bargmann, Albert Reinsberg, Robert Schuldt. Some of them may have felt as if they were fighting a losing battle. No wonder that voices were raised here and there who considered the work hopeless and would have been ready to give it up. When reading the reports, it often seemed to me as if I still sensed something of the struggle of lonely servants of the gospel with God in the sense of the apostle's words: "I also labor and struggle". But they persevered, did not give up the struggle, and God blessed their ministry - blessed also in me. I thank God for the example He gave me through these dear brothers. Thank you, brothers, I want to call out to them for eternity.

But what was it like in my time? The restrictive provisions in the law for unrecognized religions still existed. Who would have dared to change the religious laws in the old Austria under the power of the Roman Catholic Church? The two larger Protestant churches, the Lutherans and the Reformed, the Evangelical, Augsburg and Helvetian confessions, as they called themselves, had been recognized after centuries of struggle, but their theological faculty had still not been admitted to the university, despite the outstanding scholars it possessed. Fearful vigilance was exercised to ensure that the unrecognized religious societies did not expand their work. For example, we were not allowed to put up a sign outside on the street, the inscription of which could have drawn the attention of a passer-by to the religious services. There was no indication that there was a prayer room inside the house. Those who wanted to attend the services had to know their way around. At the entrance to the hall there had to be an inscription: "Only invited guests have access", which the police took to mean that everyone present had to be able to show a personal invitation from the leader of the service. In general, police control in the old Austria was not too strict, but from time to time there were checks, which deterred some people. Accustomed to the generosity and freedom in Hungary, I dared to make a move against the regulations. When the tightening of the regulations was announced, I addressed a petition to the Minister of Culture, and even, as the Baroness von Langenau had done at the time, I addressed His Majesty Franz Joseph II through the Cabinet Chancellery. Almost more interesting than the matter itself was the preliminary work and preliminary discussions. Various lawyers whom I consulted were of different opinions, as is almost always the case in legal matters. One Reichsratsabgeortneter strongly advised against the matter, since it was completely hopeless. Another, on the other hand, said: "*You have to pull out all the stops in Austria to get something done, and if it doesn't help - it can't get any worse than it is*." The Minister of Culture, with whom I had an audience on the matter, was immensely friendly - the type of Austrian civil servant - and promised to look into the matter thoroughly. I noticed, however, that he did not want to be bound by any promise, because he himself was bound. So, there was not much to be achieved. Lawyers assured us that we Methodists enjoyed much more freedom than the law allowed, because "house services" did not mean services in a house without a public character, to which like-minded persons could be invited, but services with a family, and it was not even certain whether the limits would not be exceeded if a guest or a house help participated. So, everything remained the same. Perhaps, however, so much had been achieved that the local authorities, instead of looking for reasons to intervene, closed their eyes more easily when they saw the assembly visitors streaming into Trautsohngasse or Künstlergasse. We had to continue to help ourselves without a sign at the entrance, and on the door of the prayer hall was emblazoned until the collapse of the old Austria in 1918 the inscription: "Only invited guests have access". I do not know who tore down this sign - it may have been the janitor - I only remember that when I passed by the day after the outbreak of the revolution, the inscription had disappeared.

So, there was nothing left to do but to renounce advertising activities to the outside and to continue working in the previous silent way as I have indicated in the previous chapter. In order to be able to organize something in a public hall from time to time, I founded the "Excelsior Self-Education Club". Associations were flourishing in Vienna, and it was not difficult to get approval for any association statutes, provided that no religious activity was intended. For association statutes - like many other things - had to pass through ecclesiastical authorities before they were approved. I myself was neither a member of the association nor president - "Obmann" was the official

term - but of course I was often called upon to give lectures by the Obmann, our brother Öchsle. The purpose of the association was to promote the further education of its members and introduced friends "through lectures, reviews of new publications on the book market, introduction to problems of social life, etc.". In order to make the aims as varied as possible, there was a section on old and new literature, one on philosophy, another on linguistic studies, one on history, and it was really delicious to see how enthusiastically my Viennese men immersed themselves in the proposed studies. One of the first lectures I was invited to give was at a meeting organized by the Literature Department on "The Bible in World Literature." It naturally became a series of lectures. The annual association party in the Architects' Association Hall became a highlight of the year's work. Students from the university volunteered to help, and it can be assumed that this association, adapted to Austrian conditions, would have developed quite well if the World War (WWI) had not put an end to this activity in 1914.

The fellowship with the brothers and sisters from other evangelical and believing circles was very beautiful in Vienna. Let us call it the Alliance. The centuries of oppression of the Protestants by the House of Habsburg had an effect in a feeling of unity that I did not often find in the Empire. In the consciousness, there was still the memory of how thirty years after Luther's death nine tenths of the population of the country was Protestant, how under Ferdinand II the Counter-Reformation forced the return to Catholicism by all means of violence, how even under Franz Josef I, the 60,000 copies of the Protestant Bible depot were loaded by the police and taken across the border to the country of the Old Fritz together with the director of the depot. Even if the two prominent Protestant denominations now took a different position, they still had an understanding for the sufferings and struggles of the free churches, and even felt solidarity with them. There was, for example, the “Oberkirchenrat” (Chief Church Administrator) Professor Dr. Wilz-Oberlin, in my time pastor of the Reformed congregation in the inner city. I became acquainted with him soon after my transfer to Vienna, and he declared himself ready, as he had done under my predecessors, to take us as Methodists under his wing, where it should be necessary, as in the case of baptisms and marriages. Certificates of religious instruction also had to be issued by a recognized church. Dr. Wilz-Oberlin was a native of Alsace and liked to point out that his family tree was connected with the well-known pastor Oberlin. His sermons were interpretations of Scripture in the true sense of the word. He liked to preach continuously on biblical books. The sermons on the two Epistles of Peter have also been printed. I often gave a lecture in his church. Indicative of his alliance spirit is the following incident: A member of my congregation, a Miss S., had become engaged to a Reformed pastor from Switzerland, and the wedding took place, of course, in the Reformed church in Dorotheengasse. I had been away for some time and found, when I returned, that I had just enough time to get to the wedding in time. The church was well attended, for the marriage of a minister from Switzerland to a Viennese woman was arousing interest. Someone must have noticed me, however, because when the prelude of the organ was already beginning, the sexton came and asked me to come quickly to the Oberkirchenrat in the sacristy. "*Actually*," he said, "*you should perform the wedding ceremony, since the bride belongs to your congregation. As you know, this is not possible because of the law. By the way, I wanted to talk to you these days, but I heard that you were out of town. Now I suggest: You will give the eulogy and I will perform the ceremony. Do you want to speak in a gown or without a gown*?" He already had a gown in his hand, which he wanted to put on me. I thought about the fact that my congregation was represented in large numbers, who had never seen me in a gown, and would therefore be distracted by the unfamiliar appearance of the preacher. So, I said, "*If it is all right with them, I prefer to speak without a gown*". So, without a robe, I gave the eulogy, he performed the wedding in a robe, and after a few days he called me to tell me that he was being congratulated from all sides, that they had not had such a beautiful wedding in a long time.

Dr. Wilz-Oberlin shared with me the inclination to take a leisurely walk in the woods and fields on Monday. He was a good hiker, and we made many a tour together. Usually, when he knew that I was home on Sunday, he would send his sexton to the end of my afternoon service, but he usually came early enough to hear the sermon. Then he usually handed me the card from the Oberkirchenrat with the laconic note: "*A suggestion: can we meet tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock at the corner of Mariahilfer-Strasse-Ring at the stop of line so and so for a Monday outing*?" I then wrote on it, "*Deal*!" Then we drove out into the Vienna Woods, hiked for a few hours, had

lunch somewhere in a forest restaurant, and made the pilgrimage home again in the evening, refreshed in the healthy air, strengthened in body and soul. Dr. Wilz liked to chat. He told about his years of study, then philosophical and theological problems were discussed, also the ecclesiastical events in Protestantism, so that the hours flew by. Such exchange of experiences, especially when it also relates to the inner life, is a means of grace of our God and falls under the word of "maturing to love and good works."

In a narrower sense, there was a quite active Alliance circle, whose chairman during the first years of my stay in Vienna was Pastor W. Becker. This circle met monthly at the home of one of the preachers. Coffee and cake were served to make the meetings as comfortable as possible. As a rule, the host preacher introduced the meeting with a biblical reflection, followed by a lively discussion. The ladies, who were happy to attend, also participated actively. Prayer fellowship and sharing of thoughts on Scripture are the best means of bringing hearts closer together. Each year an "Alliance Conference" was held, but of a somewhat different character than the edifying Alliance Conferences held in many cities in Germany. Public meetings with biblical lectures, to which the members of the various congregations were invited, were held only in the evening. During the day, the kingdom ministers met together. Brethren from Hungary, Bohemia, Lower and Upper Austria, and sometimes even from Germany came to speak on all kinds of current issues. It was a kind of training course for the Kingdom of God Ministry in Austria and Hungary. When I attended this conference for the first time - still from Hungary - I was struck by how small the difference between the struggles, the challenges, the obstacles and victories of the workers from the different denominations actually is. They all serve the one Lord, have stepped onto the narrow path through repentance and faith, have received their commission from the head of the church, and are all fighting against the same old evil enemy. Only one with a quite fine-tuned theological emotional life was able to hear in the discussions - at the echoing of dogmatic propositions - whether a Lutheran, Calvinist, or ecclesiastically minded, Methodist, Baptist, Community Man or Congregationalist was speaking. Indeed, all of these denominations were represented. I learned something of the blessing of the Alliance in these meetings, and I assume that the other participants felt the same way.

Similar alliance thoughts were at work in another ministry I was drawn into in Vienna, the Christian Student Union, which in those years was trying to gain a foothold at the universities of Vienna and Graz. It had sent to Vienna a capable secretary in S. Phildius, whose enterprise and courage of faith were very congenial to me. He was convinced that there were many students at the great University of Vienna who could be won for Christ and His Gospel if they could be given the opportunity to get to know Christ during the university years, which were so decisive for their later lives. Lectures and conferences, excursions and free time were organized and a quite tasteful student hostel was set up in Vienna for the regular meetings. Mr. Wilder, well known from the Volunteer Student Missionary Movement, which was making strong waves at the time, gave a series of lectures in Graz and Vienna, to which they had me come from Budapest as a translator. In Vienna a meeting took place in which even Dr. J. R. Mott, the president of the World Federation, himself participated. It is understandable that with the mixture of peoples that prevailed in the old Austria and consequently also at the Vienna University, the discussions could not avoid the national question. Even if differences of opinion sometimes arose, it was always agreed anew that the unity to which the mind and heart aspire and to which history must lead is to be found only in Christ and his church. If someone should think that in such meetings a washed-out internationalism was cultivated, he would be in a great error. Clearly, I remember how in the presence of Dr. Mott someone raised an ethnic, nationalistic question in its relation to Christianity. The answer could have been dynamite. But Mott calmly remarked: "*Be careful not to condemn someone because of this attitude. National consciousness is something sacred and should be respected as such*." Perhaps it is not superfluous to note that this remark was made some time before the World War.

Two men come to my mind to whom I owe much when I think of this work. First of all, there was Professor Haberl, Protestant professor of religion at the Viennese grammar schools, chairman of the YMCA in Vienna, with which we Methodists were in close contact from the beginning, since it had been founded in our locality. Wherever the idea of the unity of believers and their common work was somehow realized, Professor Haberl was there.

Providing services to the students was his special joy. How many times we sat together somewhere in Vienna, when it was necessary to overcome newly arisen difficulties, to examine the possibility of a new work opportunity. He was a born Austrian, loved his fatherland, but also knew the history of Austria, especially the position of the ruling forces against the Gospel and the dangers of the people's character too well to be deceived by superficial judgments. His faith in Christ was deep and strong. You could tell when he spoke, and especially when he prayed, that Christ had become his life. From him came the suggestion to call the loose student union the "Christocratic Union." In addition to his abundant workload, he enjoyed helping with the ministry of the Word in the various churches. At the aforementioned alliance conferences, he usually gave a talk, and my congregation was always happy to see him in the pulpit with us. He was not what one would call a brilliant speaker, the sentences sometimes came a little haltingly, because he was searching for the best expression for the thought that moved him, but his thoughts were so original, so Christocentric and yet so true to life, gained from his own experience in fellowship with Christ and observation of others, that the listeners hung on his words as if spellbound. Together with Phildius, we both represented the Vienna Christian Student Union at the World Christian Student Conference in Lake Mohonk, USA in 1913. When I preached my farewell sermon in Vienna in 1920, Professor Haberl was still present, alive and well. In his original manner he said at that time that he was sorry that I was leaving Vienna, but that he was glad that there was now one more friend in the German Empire whom he knew would pray for Austria. After some time, he went triumphantly to the rest of his master.

The other name is university professor Dr. Leopold von Schröder, the well-known Indologist. His subject was not suitable to make him known and popular in the widest circles, and the Protestant Church A.B. (Augsburg Confession), to which he belonged, did not particularly understand how to let such a force come somewhat into the public eye. However, this is not meant to be a criticism, I am just stating facts, because without the CSV I probably would not have heard anything about him. However, he was very attracted to the task of introducing students to Christ. L. von Schröder was, as far as I know, a bachelor. But when he invited a circle of students to a social gathering in his scholars' room, he was able to make the evening as comfortable as even the best housewife could not have done otherwise. If I had been a painter, I would have drawn him, as he, the patriarchal man with the white, flowing beard, walked between the small tables, the teapot in his hand, filling the cups and encouraging his fellow students to just take it. In between, he read out little verses that he, the linguist and Sanskrit scholar, had written especially for the evening. Sometimes I had to admire his skill in keeping the conversation flowing until the moment came when he opened the floodgates of his heart to give the most important advice to his young friends, answering their questions. At a conference he gave a lecture on the subject: "Calling God in my life", which has also left an indelible impression on me. Both in content and form it was something masterful. He described how the living God had followed him, the Baltic, from his youth on, calling him again and again through his word, through other people, through difficult fates, until he found him. It was a testimony of special power from such a mouth. When the world war broke out, he hoped that the German victory would lead to the liberation of his homeland from the Russian yoke. He was not to live to see this liberation. Once, after the collapse of Austria, when I returned from Southeastern Europe, where I had accompanied a commission, my wife told me that Professor Dr. von Schröder had been there to visit me. He gave the impression of a man who had something special on his mind that he would like to discuss with me. I immediately decided to visit him the next day, but when I was about to carry out my decision, I learned that Professor Leopold von Schröder had died. Even today, when I think of it, the question occupies my mind: What must have been on the dear man's mind? No one can give me the answer. But I will receive it when I meet the faithful deceased in the eternal light.

With regard to the Alliance, I cannot fail to mention the general Week of Prayer in January 1917. It had a special character. The misery in Vienna had already risen to the highest level, hunger was wearing down the nerves, and the forces pulling the Habsburg Empire apart could be clearly felt. A mood of doom. Serious Christian circles were preoccupied with the apocalyptic images of Revelation. Should not those who earnestly wanted to be Christians come together for serious prayer? Would it not be possible to win over the pastors of the two Protestant denominations in Vienna, who were still distant from the Alliance, for cooperation? I asked my friend Haberl to send

a corresponding appeal to the pastors, since this would have a better effect than if the name of the Methodist superintendent were written under it. "*They overestimate my influence there*," he said with a laugh. "*My name would count for even less. But wouldn't Dr. Wilz perhaps sign it*?" That was a good idea. I put my proposal to Dr. Wilz. "*We'll do that*," he said. "*Here they have the addresses of the pastors, compose the appeal, get everything ready, and send me the package. I will then sign the letters myself and have them taken to the post office*". This is what happened. I do not remember whether all the pastors participated. This much is certain, the general week of prayer had never been celebrated in Vienna with such lively participation. Every evening we were in a different church or prayer hall. The meeting places could hardly hold the crowds. The preachers of the congregations took turns in leading the hours, as is customary in the Alliance, so that the Lutheran spoke at the Methodist, the Baptist at the Fellowship, etc., and thus something of the unity in the Spirit was expressed. But what especially pleased all of us was the fact that in these prayer meetings there was not only talk, but real prayer. Is it not often the case that need teaches to pray? The most difficult request in such times may be: "Thy will be done," but many a heart, in that week of war, when the clouds gathered ever more gloomily and darkly over our heads, regained a confidence in the God and Father without whose will no sparrow falls from the roof, and was strengthened to bear its cross. But a reporter could have written of some of these gatherings as Luke did in the Acts of the Apostles: "*And as they prayed, the place was moved*".

(1) The Ringstrasse is a circular grand boulevard that serves as a ring road around the historic Inner Town district of Vienna, Austria. The road is located on sites where medieval city fortifications once stood, including high walls and the broad open field ramparts, crisscrossed by paths that lay before them. It was constructed after dismantling of the city walls in the mid-19th century.

(2) The Votive Church is a neo-Gothic style church located on the Ringstraße in Vienna, Austria. Following the attempted assassination of Emperor Franz Joseph in 1853, Emperor's brother Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian inaugurated a campaign to create a church to thank God for saving the emperor's life.

(3) Counter-Reformation also called the Catholic Reformation, or the Catholic Revival, was period of Catholic resurgence initiated in response to Protestant Reformation.

Chapter 17 First trip to America: "Where the Rainbow Touches the Earth" (1913)

At the 1912 General Conference, Bishop Dr. Burt was recalled to America. Bishops, too, are subject to the transfer system and are assigned to their dioceses only for a certain period of time, that is, from one General Conference to another. They may be sent back to the same diocese, but may also be sent to any part of the world if the needs of the work require it. Bishop Burt, who had served in Europe for 26 years, 8 of them as bishop, was given the bishopric of the Buffalo area in New York State. He was replaced in Europe by Bishop Nuelsen, who, like Bishop Burt, was also an American citizen, but was born in Switzerland, had received his main education at German universities in addition to the American schools, and consequently had a perfect command of the German language. Bishop Burt, however, took his love for the work in Germany and in Europe with him across the ocean. One of his daughters married a German engineer, and his grandchildren became German citizens.

On one of the first visits the new bishop made to Southeastern Europe - I believe it was in connection with the conference at Ujvidék on the Danube, opposite the old fortress of Peterwardein - we talked at length about the country and its people, about the history of our work, and about the tasks for the future. I explained my plans to him and described especially forcefully the need for a property for Budapest, which as a central building should form a focal point for the work in southeastern Europe, perhaps with a preaching school for the training of young men for evangelistic ministry in the various countries and peoples of the East. For Ujvidék, the most important town in the Bácska, on the border of Slavonia and near Serbia, I had in mind a daughter school like the one I had seen in Rome and like the one we had in Loretsch, Bulgaria. Mrs. Wenzel, who had been a teacher at this school for several years, had told me several times about her experiences in educating girls in the Balkans and about the blessed influences that had flowed from it into many families. Then the bishop suddenly said, "*You should also go to America sometime, to develop your thoughts there and to arouse interest in Southeastern Europe in the great church over there*." "*Yes*," I said, "*this suggestion would already meet my own wishes. But where to find the means for the trip, and - above all - how to find an occasion that would not label me as a beggar from the outset*?"

The springboard for a trip to America among Methodists in Germany was usually the General Conference. Each Annual Conference had the right to elect one or more delegates. The election of such a delegate was considered a high privilege, since it sometimes involved a trip to the Pacific Ocean. For me, such an election was out of the question, because since the organization of our "Missionary Conference" we had made a great step forward, but our independence meant that we could not elect delegates to the General Conference and could not be elected ourselves. We would not receive this right until the number of our preachers who had passed their exams and had been duly admitted to the Conference had grown to at least 25 and we had thus attained the status of an Annual Conference. By the way, the General Conference had just been held. Shyly I asked, "*And if an occasion for the trip had already been found, where would the travel expenses come from*?" I silently hoped that the bishop would be able to provide me with at least a part of the expenses, let us say the price of the ship ticket, from some fund. But this hope was also deceived. He calmly answered: "*Unfortunately, I have nothing available for such a purpose. They would have to see for themselves how the matter could be financed. Once they were over there, they wouldn't need to worry about the rest*." With that, the plan seemed to be shelved for the time being. I was once again, as so often in my life, on my own feet, and I could do nothing else and nothing better than to discuss the suggestions with my Father in heaven, deeply convinced that he, who "gives way, course and path to clouds, air and winds," would also prepare the way for me to America, if this were in accordance with his will. This made me calm and confident.

Then in the late fall of 1912 - it can't have been long before Christmas - Mr. Phildius, the general secretary of the Christian Student Association (1) already mentioned in the previous chapter, visited me. He informed me that a world convention of the fraternity would be held in Lake Mohonk, NY (2) in June and that the Austrians were entitled to send three students to it. He was busy, he said, writing a little pamphlet about the student work in Austria to be distributed at Lake Mohonk, and knowing my interest in the evangelistic work in Southeastern Europe, he wanted me to give him some thoughts for the planned pamphlet. What I said to him in reply I would not dare to write down from memory if I had not found the notes about the conversation in my diary. I reproduce them as they stand there: "I developed my thoughts on Southeastern Europe, as I have for years in reports and addresses:

1. That Austria-Hungary was the key to the evangelization of all Southeastern Europe;

2. That in my opinion Southeastern Europe had been neglected by the Protestant churches;

3. That the Balkan war has drawn the attention of the whole world to the political and economic problems in that part of Europe, and that it is therefore time for us to study the religious situation;

4. That I therefore consider the time has come when the 'call from Macedonia' coming from those countries should be heard and followed.

5. Edinburgh signifies a landmark in the history of the Gentile mission. Lake Mohonk should set its sights firmly on evangelization work in countries which are Christian in name but feel little of the life forces of the Gospel. I consider the Christian Student Union to be particularly suitable, firstly because of its academic character, and secondly because it is not concerned with recruiting members for a new denomination, but with leading seeking, educated people into fellowship with Christ, so that they can then become light and salt for their peoples."

And now came the surprising thing, and it may be important if I also reproduce this with the words from my diary notes: "Mr. Phildius seemed to be grateful for my suggestions and then said that he had refrained from having younger students elected for the meeting in Lake Mohonk, who neither understood enough English to be able to follow the negotiations, nor had sufficient knowledge of the local conditions and the necessary authority to make an impression at such a world conference. The main task of our delegates will be to draw attention to Southeastern Europe. Therefore, it had become a matter of concern to him that Professor Haberl and I could walk next to him. Finally, we bowed our knees together before the Lord, and Phildius prayed heartily that "God may direct the heart of my bishop, that he may give me the necessary leave for a journey to America. Of course, the bishop gladly gave his consent. He thought that to come to America as a delegate to this conference was an occasion for the trip such as one could not wish for better. Already at the beginning of the year 1913 I occupied a place on the "Caronia", which was to set sail from Fiume, the Hungarian port on the Adriatic Sea, for New York in the last week of February. I had to choose this way because I wanted to visit Budapest on the way to the New World and to hold the quarterly conference and the general assembly of our Keresztyén Könyves Ház (Christian Book House) there.

So far, everything had gone smoothly and wonderfully, and my heart was glad at the thought of the great opportunity that was to come. But there was still to be a bitter drop in the cup of joy and expectation. About 8 days before the appointed departure, we celebrated my dear wife's birthday. At lunch there was a sudden crack in my mouth, and the examination revealed that two of the front incisors had broken off. The dentist explained that a so-called "bridge" was necessary, but it would require the removal of at least half a dozen other teeth, or tooth roots. So good advice was at a premium. Should I return the boat ticket and postpone the whole trip to a more convenient time? I had already registered in America and announced a program of sermons and lectures during the Passion season. The student convention would not take place until June, but I wanted and was supposed to get to know something of America and of Methodism before then. A board of dentists and technicians discussed my case in detail, and finally the chief said they were willing to risk the work within 8 days, provided my nerves

could stand having my teeth worked on for not minutes but hours each day. Some days it was 6 to 7 hours. I mustered all my strength, endured everything, and the night before I was to leave, I came home with the report: "*Finished*". The boss of the dental studio told me when I left: "*No one can do that so easily. But the word* 'finished' *must be put in quotation marks.* First of all, some of the sounds I made when I spoke sounded so strange that I could not dare to speak in public; on the ship I had to do long speech exercises in German and English. Secondly, already on the journey to Budapest I noticed how one side of my face became thicker and thicker until I could no longer see out of one eye. At the same time the severe pain. Finally, on the Adriatic, my cabin mate, an American doctor, cut open the lump with his pocket knife, whereupon relief came. My body was so exhausted, however, that after the unusual operation I slept through the night for a full 12 hours and again for 2 hours the following noon. After that I had the feeling of being reborn. After a few days my face showed its normal shape again, and my speech exercises had made such progress that I was able to declare myself ready for the 2nd Sunday on the ocean to preach in the ship's service. Such obstacles, however, as they were usually connected with important experiences and meaningful tasks in my life, I learned to appreciate as weights that God hangs on the clock to keep the gears turning and to normalize them.

Despite all this, I enjoyed the trip on the sea to the fullest. It was my first ocean voyage. The Caronia, a passenger steamer of about 24,000 GRT, took, I think, 14 days from Fiume to New York. That was wonderful. Later, I preferred not to use the big fast steamers, but the smaller and slower ships, in order to spend a few days longer on the sea. One is closed off from the traffic of the world, no letters arrive that one has to answer, one lets the wind blow through one's body on deck and breathes in the refreshing, invigorating sea air. As a rule, I can read and write more on the ship than if I were sitting at my desk at home. Looking through my notes, I still marvel at the workload I completed on the Caronia: I read a novel by Jokai (3) for practice in Hungarian - there were many Hungarians on the steamer - wrote down a German sermon for the planned shipboard service and several English lectures, in addition to the theological reading I had taken with me. The entries in the diary fill 200 pages.

How beautiful was the trip on the Adriatic Sea! I became very fond of this blue sea, which was as smooth as a mirror. The delay of a full day in leaving Fiume gave me time to make a detour to the lovely seaside resort of Abbazia. Then we drove along the Dalmatian coast until it disappeared from our view and we passed the Strait of Messina. On the left the lovely shores of Sicily, on the right the Calabrian coast with its picturesque heights and bays. The setting sun proved to be a wonderful magician, making the whitish-gray clouds that hung over Mount Etna, the shimmering green slopes of the mountains, the dark blue sea, and the ruined site of Messina appear in a kind of blue light or flare, producing a play of colors that no painter could put on canvas. Isn't that like paradise? But it is precisely this paradise that an earthquake a few years ago turned into a field of rubble. In the most glorious places lurk the doom of threatening powers! Man, pay attention!

In Naples there was again another delay so that I could visit the National Museum, whose greatest treasure is probably the Farnese Hercules. The objects from Herculaneum and Pompeii inspired a contemplation of the cultural ideals of that time, when the mentioned cities perished in the fiery lava of the Vesuvius; likewise, about the influence of Christianity on the people's life. I was also able to make an excursion to a place where one has a magnificent panoramic view over Naples, the coast, Vesuvius, all the way to Capri. In Gibraltar, we admired the fortifications that the English created here, and I made a note: "*The people seem to be right who consider Gibraltar an impregnable fortress.*" I wonder if it can withstand modern weapons? With Gibraltar, we said goodbye to the continent of Europe and headed out into the wide, wide Atlantic Ocean.

The trip going to America was to bring me a great disappointment. Already from Fiume on, 300-400 Hungarian emigrants were on board, about half of whom were ethnic Germans who knew the German language as well as Hungarian, the others were Magyars. Among them was a Reformed pastor, a fellow believer with whom I enjoyed talking. Mr. Farkas - that was his name - was united with me in the thought that we should hold a service on the 2nd Sunday at sea, in which I would preach a German sermon, he a Hungarian one. Wherever we gave a hint of

this, there was enthusiastic agreement. The very variety associated with such a service arouses interest in the monotonous life on such a ship, and many a person who may not care much for church at home is nevertheless happy to take part in the service on such an occasion. I had often heard how on the German ships the captain always made sure that on Sunday one of the traveling pastors served with the word of God. On my later voyages with the North German Lloyd or the Hamburg American Line, I found this confirmed. There, as soon as my profession was known, I was almost always asked to conduct a service either alone or in conjunction with other clergymen. With the ideas I had about the "Christianity" of the English, there was no doubt in my mind that our wish and suggestion would find a joyful echo with the captain. I sought out the purser, because I was told that this was the way to go, and asked him to present our suggestion to the captain. Saturday passed without an answer. On Sunday morning I got up extra early to write a sermon on the text: "*Command the Lord your ways and hope in him, he will do it well*". At breakfast I met my Hungarian friend who, like me, was in an exalted mood at the thought of being able to render a service - perhaps for eternity - to these dear people, most of whom had left their homeland to establish a new existence in the new world, through words of Scripture. Then the purser came straight to us and declared in short, choppy words, without any apology or justification, in a commanding tone, such as we both were not used to, that permission for a German-Hungarian service could not be granted. At 11 o'clock, however, there would be an English service in the 1st class salon, to which everyone would be admitted! He said it and disappeared. We looked at each other and thought: Did they refuse our request because we wanted to speak German and Hungarian? Or did they not agree with our denomination? I do not know. An English service was then properly held in English, but very few passengers attended. There was no clergyman. One of the ship's officers read sections from the Common Prayer Book. No sermon, no word adapted to the circumstances and needs of the listeners. How very different it is on German ships! But if these lines should fall into the hands of Pastor Farkas - one knows how that sometimes goes - they will remind him of an experience which certainly did not leave him, as it did me, with joyful impressions and did not increase sympathy for English ship companies.

In New York I was met by Rev. Dr. B. Schneider (Brooklyn), in whose home I found for the first few weeks an affectionate welcome and a brotherly hospitality which placed me forever in the debt of this dear family. Brother Schneider and his amiable, educated wife did all they could to make the stay in the land of opportunity as pleasant as possible for the homesick stranger, to help me empathize with the foreign country and people, to further my knowledge of the English language, to introduce me to their friends, and also to help me become acquainted with the sights of New York from the Statue of Liberty in the harbor to the Chinese Quarter. Dr. Schneider had been a professor of systematic theology in Berea, Ohio. He had written a dogmatic treatise that was respected far beyond our own church and included the modern directions of German theology, a significant achievement by American standards. But when the number of German students at Berea began to decline, he resigned his professorship and took over the German-speaking congregation of the Methodist Church in Brooklyn, Green Avenue. I preached my first sermons and evangelistic lectures in America in this congregation, from which I also received the first gift for the work in Austria-Hungary. Later I hardly ever visited America without spending a Sunday or at least an evening in this congregation.

As far as the gigantic city of New York was concerned, the newness and novelty, the skyscrapers reaching up to the sky, the noisy elevated train and the fast, convenient subway, the grand, long, straight avenues and streets, the hustle and bustle of Times Square, 5th Avenue and Broadway were so overwhelming that I had to get used to them slowly before I could come to an inner opinion and process them. I put off thinking about it for later and first sought to study the questions connected with my task. One - seemingly incidental - but in view of the following years not uninteresting event of my first weeks in New York has remained deeply in my memory. Dr. Schneider's two splendid sons attended the College of the City of New York, one of the best schools in the giant city. The American educational system is structured somewhat differently than the German one. One can compare these colleges with our high schools, even if they do not generally prepare only for the university, but often already lead beyond the preparatory studies and take on the workings and rank of a university. It seems almost like a dream to

me today when I think of it: this college in the city of New York, which was under the protectorate of the Lord Mayor, celebrated a so-called "German Day" every year, because the management was proud to give the German language, history and culture a special place in the curriculum. Since the "German Day" took place in that year just during my presence, I gladly used the opportunity to gain an insight into the life and activities of such a school. The young Schneiders were pleased to be able to show me their school. It was really an impressive festive gathering! Several thousand students with their parents and friends, guests from the universities, other educational institutions and the city. The German ambassador gave a speech that was received with great applause. The philosopher Eucken, who was in America at the time, sat with them on the platform and spoke - in English - in his crowded style, each sentence packed with thoughts, in a short address on German philosophy. Most ravishingly, however, spoke - in a 5-minute speech - the multimillionaire Carnegie, who was probably invited because he has made endowments for the library here as well as in many other places. There you saw the real American. He said, "*I've just come back from Europe, where, as Solomon once said, I stood before kings. In America, we don't have monarchs. But let me tell you something, my young friends: When I look at the students of this college, I know that I am now standing before three thousand kings of America*." One can imagine what a storm of applause this caused. Old Carnegie had no doubt taken the cake on the college's "German Day."

Before the student conference, I visited some churches in the East, near New York, and then made a side trip to Buffalo to visit my fatherly friend Bishop Burt. Already in Philadelphia I had dared to give a short address of a few minutes in English at a conference presided over by Bishop Berry. That I had been understood was shown by the immediately following invitation of the pastor of a large congregation to give a talk in his men's club. In Buffalo, Bishop Burt had already arranged for me to preach in one of the English churches on Sunday morning and to give a lecture in the evening in a Down Town Church, a church in the inner city, with my photographs of Austria and Hungary. By myself, I would hardly have dared to do that. But after the program was announced by the bishop, and he knew me and my language skills well, I had no choice but to obey. I felt like someone who was thrown into the water and who was forced to swim if he did not want to sink. The bishop's family was among my listeners and assured me afterwards that they had understood every word. Some listeners said they would have liked to listen longer. This was a great encouragement to me and helped me to gain the confidence to speak in English, which was to make me known far beyond the circles of German-American friends.

The next morning the bishop suggested that we take a trip to Niagara Falls, which is very close to Buffalo. It was a beautiful spring day as we drove toward the greatest natural wonder of the United States of America, and I want to remark right here that no other scenery of the country rich in natural beauty has gripped me more strongly and captivated me more permanently than the falls of Niagara. Yes, it is so that in my imagination, when I hear the geographical term USA, I always immediately think of this grandiose spectacle. Niagara is the connecting stream between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario on the border between Canada and the United States. In a stretch of 58 km, it falls 100 meters. The stream, which is 1,200 meters wide at its outlet at Lake Erie, gradually narrows to a few 100 meters and splits into 2 arms, which then plunge 50 meters at the town of Niagara Falls on the American side and the village of Clifton on the Canadian side, causing a thunder-like roar. Hence the name Niagara, i.e., Indian: "thunder of the waters". Actually, there are 2 falls, separated by an island (Goat Island). The falls on the American side are 322 meters wide, on the Canadian - here called Horseshoe Falls - 915 meters. The magnificence of Niagara Falls consists not only in the height of its fall, but also in the immense mass of the falling water, which amounts to 425,000 cubic meters per minute, 9/10 of which goes over the Canadian falls.

You can descend behind the falling masses of water on both sides and thus see the spectacle up close, if you dare this adventure in the rubber coats available. In sunshine, this gives a play of colors that cannot be described. The visitor stands in the dark behind the falling water, the thunder of it is in his ears, but although the eye cannot penetrate the falling masses of water, it sees how the breaking rays of the sun throw all the colors of the rainbow iridescent and glittering. Naturally, I expressed the desire to go down there. We did it on that first visit to the

American side. There, down below, as we passed a path washed by the spray of the falls, and on a rocky slab that seemed to lie in the middle of this rain, I had a strange natural phenomenon: we were surrounded by a crowd of rainbows, soon approaching, and soon running away. I remembered how my grandmother, when I was a little boy, told me something about the rainbow in response to my curious questions. She was big on fables. I had watched the rainbow as it came down out in the field at the edge of the forest. "*Yes*," she said mysteriously, "*where the rainbow touches the earth, that is where happiness is to be found*." Now I waited eagerly for the next rain, and when properly the bow appeared in the clouds, I began to run, which the little feet could only endure. But the more I ran and the farther I got, the farther the rainbow also moved out of my sight, so that I had to give up the race disappointed. Then, when Grandmother had long since gone home, I thought: your grandmother was a philosopher and wanted to show her bright grandson that, just as the place where the rainbow touches the earth cannot be reached, there is no true happiness to be found on this earth.

While the childhood dream was thus passing through my soul, suddenly - I suppose - a little cloud moved away, a breeze drove a new spray from the falls over to us, and - what a miracle! - I stood in the midst of the most glorious rainbow I have ever seen, and it touched the earth just at my feet! This gave me a wonderful illustration of the thought that, though not at Niagara Falls, nor in America, yet at Golgotha, where Christ died for us out of love, took away the guilt of sin and established communion with the Father in heaven, the arch of peace touches the earth, and there is to be found the true, the lasting, the eternal happiness of which Jesus says: "*I have come that they may find life and full satisfaction*". Niagara Falls, however, despite the thunder-like sound that can be heard day and night far and wide, became for me a place for quiet gathering, rest, strengthening. On each of my trips to America I tried to make it possible to spend a day or two here, to refresh myself with the works of creation and, thinking of the abundance of power that unfolds here, to draw new strength from the source that never runs dry.

At the beginning of June, I went back east, to Lake Mohonk in New York State, in the Catskill Mountains, for the student conference. And I must say that they had chosen a beautiful place for the meeting. We were picked up in the valley at Poughkeepsie - Indian names everywhere - by cars that took us up a serpentine mountain, on top of which stands a lonely Quaker-built and run place, surrounded by a variety of mountain vegetation and a lovely blue lake that invited rowing and swimming for the recreational hours. Nowhere in the vicinity human settlements. I did not note how high Lake Mohonk is, but it will be well over 1,000 meters, perhaps even 1,500 meters. It reminded me of Semmering near Vienna, except that it has an even more romantic setting of mountains in the Alps. But Lake Mohonk seemed to be made for gathering, deepening in God's Word, fellowship of faith for young people who had come from all five continents. Certainly, God's blessing is not dependent on where we are. Sometimes we experience it nearby in the noisy traffic of the big city as well as in a quiet Bethany. For extraordinary gatherings, however, where the mood of the heart should be, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears," such secluded places, as free as possible from distraction, have much going for them. Jesus himself liked to go to the silence of the mountains. Much emphasis was placed on the fact that the mountain silence was also really used for edification. The so-called "morning watch," half an hour or a quarter of an hour, was devoted to Bible reading, prayer, meditation, and was to be held before breakfast. There were a lot of instructive and edifying speeches and discussions throughout the day. It is easy to be tempted to cut short the time for private devotion, thinking that it can be replaced by the common worship exercises. This is a great mistake. As valuable as corporate prayer and worship are, Jesus' admonition in the Sermon on the Mount, "*When you pray, go into your closet and shut the door*," remains true even for such conferences. What a blessing it would be for our churches if our members and friends could be led to keep such a morning vigil!

Another problem with such international conferences is getting to know each other, cultivating fellowship. The leadership of the conference had found an original way to mix up the conference guests. All meals were taken together in a large dining room at tables that had room for 8 to 10 people. At each table there were 2 people who,

let's call them table elders, always had to be at the same place and had the task of keeping the conversation flowing. The rest of the table mates were constantly changing. The system required that at the next meal you sat with someone else, never again with the same person. So, at breakfast you sat between a Brit and an Indian, at lunch next to a Chinese and an Indian, at dinner with a Japanese and a Filipino. The next day it was Europeans or South Americans and Australians. Not once did I sit next to a German, and if representatives of Austria or Hungary wanted to speak to us, we had to meet on another occasion. The table for intellectual food was also amply set. Dr. Mott gave a detailed report of his activities during the past years. The Association in 1912 numbered 2,305 Associations with 156,071 members, had 67,730 Bible Circles, a staff of 132 Secretaries, and extended over almost every university in the world. Miss Ruth Rouse reported on the work among women students.

The evening hours, as the program stated, were devoted to the consideration of "great religious objects." Professor D.S. Cairns of Aberdeen delivered two lectures on "Our Lord's Revelation of God" and "His Revelation of Man. Dr. R. S. Speer, the well-known Presbyterian, spoke on "Christ Our Example" and "Christ Our Redeemer." Anglican Bishop Ch. H. Brent of the Philippines preached an impressive sermon on Sunday morning on Revelation John 4:1: "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven; and the voice said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must come to pass after these things." He sought - after the days of Lake Mohonk - to focus on the tasks ahead, which now had to be tackled joyfully, obediently, ready for commitment and sacrifice, in faith in the Lord, His promise and His presence. During the daytime hours there were lectures on the individual countries represented: France, Germany, China, Russia, etc. In between there were discussions in smaller groups about the problems connected with the work on students. Germany was represented by the students Fräulein Caspar and Hakenberg, the students Fritz Keller and Schluckebier, as well as Pastor Kieser, Pastor Le Seur and lecturer Theophil Mann.

Why am I describing this meeting in detail? The world war that broke out a year later probably destroyed the ideals and hopes that had been set up. But nobody knew or suspected that at that time. For me, however, participation in the conference in Lake Mohonk meant more than just the occasion for a trip to America. Apart from the acquaintances made, the bonds of fellowship and friendship forged, the knowledge of the psyche of students and of peoples, and the widening of the circle of vision that resulted, the strong emphasis on personal decision for Christ in the preaching of the gospel was to me a lasting stimulus for my own work. The importance of institutional church life and some dogmas coming from the time of confessional struggles took a back seat to the life and the power of life emanating from the present Christ. Actually, I received nothing through the Christian Student Union but a renewed confirmation of the Methodist view of the necessity of personal experience of salvation. It was not so much the question of a theoretical clarification of the essence of Christianity that occupied me. Here, too, theory is gray. Rather, in practice, that is, in preaching, it was more and more important for me to recognize the peripheral as such and to place the living Christ always and everywhere, but also really everywhere, in the center, and not to regard him only as another historical personality, but to reckon with him as a present reality. Paul's words appeared to me in a new light: "*I did not consider myself to know anything without Christ alone, the Crucified*"; likewise, the other: "*He who has the Son has life*". On the last evening, after the serious, impressive closing words of the General Secretary, when we united once more in common prayer, I asked the Lord - and I am convinced that many did the same - that in my life and in my work, now and always, in America and Europe, wherever I am sent, the motto for me may be: "All and in all Christ!"

(1) Now, Methodist Christian Student Federation: global community of Student Christian Movements committed to dialogue, ecumenism, social justice, peace and to empowering students in critical thinking and constructive transformation of our world by being a space for: prayer and celebration, theological reflection, study and analysis of social and cultural processes and solidarity and action across boundaries of culture, gender and ethnicity. WSCF's founder, Methodist layman and YMCA worker John R. Mott (1865-1955), promoted Protestant unity in 1895 as an organization joining youth from all Protestant churches to dedicate themselves to “evangelization of the world” in this generation.

(2) Lake Mohonk Conference: Mohonk Mountain House was begun in the 1870s as a small resort for family and friends and became so popular that it was enlarged many times. The area around the hotel was treated as an integral part of the attractions

of the resort. Much of this area was planned as an experiment in conservation of the natural environment, and as an educational tool for the study of botany, geology, and outdoor living. From 1883 to 1916, annual conferences took place at Mohonk Mountain House. The conference cited in this passage took place here.

(3) Mór Jókai (1825—1904), one of most important Hungarian novelists of 19th century. His collected works (published 1894–98) filled 100 volumes. Early works such as *Hétköznapok* (1846; "Weekdays") show the influence of French Romanticism, but his mature novels are more concerned with reality and personal experience. *Egy magyar nábob* (1853–54; *A Hungarian Nabob*) and *Az arany ember* (1873; *The Man with the Golden Touch*, or *Timar's Two Worlds*) are among his most important novels dealing with 19th-century Hungary.

Chapter 18 Among the German-Speaking Methodists in America (1913)

Count Albert Apponyi, the famous Hungarian politician and statesman, said after his trip to America, when Bishop Burt asked him about his impressions: "*It was like a new revelation to me*." He said this with such emphasis that I, who was present at the conversation, got the impression that this is not just a flattering phrase towards the American, but expresses what the well-traveled statesman, the European coming from relatively small Hungary, felt in the United States. I felt the same way. In this country with its inexhaustible natural resources, its infinite fertile arable land, which has not yet been cultivated for a long time and which offers space and food for many millions of people, with its optimistic population, which dares to do everything and considers it possible, and which is constantly growing, a development is taking place for the history of mankind, a power is coming on the scene which we must reckon with. It is indeed a "new world" that Columbus discovered, and one must revise one's European concepts somewhat, add to them, deepen them, expand them, in order to be able to grasp the new.

It was like this with American Methodism: as an example, let me give you a little experience connected with what was probably the first English address to the Philadelphia Conference, mentioned in the previous chapter. After this address, one of the pastors invited me to give a talk on Southeastern Europe at his men's club on Sunday afternoon. He gave me a piece of paper with the name of the church and the street where it was located. Punctually at 3 o'clock I was on the spot. But I saw in the whole street only one large church built in the English church style, which reminded me of the largest ecclesiastical buildings in Germany. But there was nothing to be seen of a Methodist chapel, as I imagined it. So, I asked a policeman coming along the way if he could tell me where the Methodist church was. The man must have noticed from my accent that I was a real "greenhorn", a foreigner who had just arrived from Europe, because my question seemed so funny to him that he couldn't help laughing. Then he pointed to the magnificent church building and said dryly, "*You are standing in front of the church and you don't see it*?" So, I saw that I had to expand my mind. I also had to do that with reference to the men's hours. Think of a hot Sunday afternoon, such as is common with the rapid change from winter to spring in the American continental climate. Will the men still come to a special meeting at that time? My surprise was great when I found about 250 men in a tastefully decorated smaller hall next to the large church hall and the equally large Sunday school hall, who were very interested in hearing something about the conditions in the Balkans, but especially about the evangelization work there. At the end of that conference, I received a letter from Pastor D. Reisner - the German name should not deceive, he is a real American who did not speak a word of German - asking me to telegraph him whether I could preach in his church on the following Sunday. Although I had committed myself to my German congregation in New York for the evening of that Sunday, I was free for the morning and agreed. I prepared for a sermon in English, perhaps it will be forgiven if I remark, with German thoroughness. For by sermon, I understood precisely the interpretation of a text from the Holy Scriptures. But who can describe my astonishment when I entered the church and found a poster announcing that Dr. Melle from Southeastern Europe would preach about the Balkan War. I was shocked to the core. What was there to do? Already the organ began its prelude, and the choir - all dressed in the same robes or gowns - began to sing their way into the church, which was filled to capacity. After the liturgy, I was introduced. I read as a text a passage from Acts 16, which tells how Paul heard the call, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Then I related, as I had sometimes done in conversation, that I had been in Belgrade some time ago and had witnessed there the mobilization of the Serbs who were going to the Balkan war. This war had its cause in the dispute over Macedonia, which both Serbs and Bulgarians

claimed for themselves. If this war had directed the interest of the world to those countries, we should not forget that Macedonia was the country where the first European Christian community was founded. How would the history of Christianity, the history of Europe, even the history of the world have developed if the apostle Paul had not struggled in a holy battle of faith for the peoples of those countries, had not brought them the gospel of Christ? Then I told some things about the Kingdom work in today's Southeastern Europe. Afterwards, the pastor said that it was a good biblical sermon about the Balkan war. We Germans do not like such advertising for church services. We consider the dragging in of all kinds of topics that have little to do with God's Word to be an aberration, which produced discouraging blossoms especially during the World War. But I have become more lenient in my judgment through this and similar experiences. Even if we must not imitate everything that other peoples do, we should also recognize the ways of other peoples. Perhaps, I have said to myself on many occasions, the American psyche requires somewhat different means than the German psyche for its awakening, education and guidance. The most orthodox doctrines may be preached in the wrong spirit, and issues such as the "Balkan War" may encourage spiritual life. "The letter kills, but the spirit makes alive!"

Although there were small excursions into English-American Methodism, on that first visit my attention was directed to German Methodism, which seemed to me like a new revelation when I got to know it not only from books, but eye to eye. What a tremendous contribution the German people must have made to the development and cultivation of this vast country - I said to myself - if, despite all the influences of the American melting pot, there are so many people who understand and speak German that they have innumerable associations, clubs, schools, magazines, churches. In New York alone there were 10 or more German Methodist congregations besides about 200 English ones. In Chicago I learned that there were 13. Everywhere in the large cities, from New York to San Francisco and Los Angeles, but also in smaller places and in the countryside, in Buffalo, in Cleveland, in Toledo, in Indianapolis, Boston, Lawrence, Cincinnati, Louisville, to mention only the best-known names, I found congregations that were glad to hear the message of the cross in the familiar, dear German mother tongue. Only in a few places did people ask me to speak English for the sake of the youth. And what uplifting gatherings those were sometimes! I think of the Sunday in Sea-Cliff, not far from New York, in the last days before my return to Germany, where the brothers and sisters of the East German Conference - that was the name for an area that stretched from Baltimore in the south through Philadelphia and New York to Boston - had rushed here to edify themselves for a few days by deepening in God's Word and praying together. Now and then one of the popular English speakers, a bishop, university president or secretary of the missionary authority, would speak. But that was considered an interlude, so to speak; the main lectures were in German. Or I remember the "camp meeting" of the Chicago German congregations. I think it was in July and very hot. Many men therefore took off their shirts and sat there in shirtsleeves. But the spacious "Tabernacle" was filled to capacity. We had about 1,000 people at each of the three services that Sunday. During the great revival period, outdoor "camp meetings" had been introduced. They have survived in a somewhat different modernized form. In beautiful places on the Pacific Ocean, on the great lakes between Buffalo and Chicago, in the charming parts of Wisconsin, etc., small towns have been formed for camp meetings. In the center is usually a large open tabernacle. Around it are the bungalows or summer villas where families spend their vacations. In the time when they cannot be there themselves, they are rented out. Hotels have also been built to accommodate guests who can only be there for a short time. These "camps" are managed by the churches, so everything is tailored to religious, church life. The meetings always reminded me of the Blankenburg conferences. That camp meeting in Camp Berger near Chicago was the largest, most impressive German meeting I experienced in the United States.

There were 10 German conferences in the United States at that time with more than 60,000 adult members! The conference with Cincinnati, Ohio, as its center, called the Central German Conference, numbered over 100 preachers, so it was equal to our present Southern German Conference. There were two conferences on the Pacific Ocean coast, one also in Texas. Everywhere were German congregations, German sermons, German songs, and, only in the Sunday schools, the English or, as some liked to say, the American language slowly

penetrated and foreshadowed how the further course of development would be. At that time, however, I began to understand the great importance of such church work for the preservation of the German language and its cultural values. I was surprised that this factor was not better recognized and that it was hardly acknowledged, especially in Germany. When I pursued these thoughts, I could not help but notice that the view in some church circles in Germany was based on a quite inadequate knowledge of American conditions, including the Methodist revival movement in general. One made it easy for oneself by speaking of Methodism as a "foreign growth," pointing to the relations of the Methodists in Germany to their co-religionists in America with a disdainful shrug of the shoulders, without having any idea of what opportunities and tasks were there for the German mother tongue. Admittedly, I cannot absolve the Methodists - not excluding us in Germany - from the reproach that we, exclusively occupied with the salvation of souls and the building up of congregations, and accustomed to waste no time in refuting erroneous or malicious attacks, have paid too little attention to this side of our work. I do not want to say that I felt the responsibility to jump into it myself, but during my stay in the United States and in the rich experience of those days I felt the desire constantly growing that it should be given to me to be able to do at least educational work here. I have also tried to do this in articles and lectures. For with all the recognition and gratitude for the suggestions we in Europe - I came from the Southeast - had received from the American Methodists, the conviction grew and matured that we, having gradually come of age and equipped with knowledge and experience such as only the history of the old continent could impart, should now be able to give something to our brothers in America. Paul would say to "communicate to them something of spiritual gift." Yes, that perhaps through the channel of German-speaking Methodism over the Atlantic Ocean, we might be able to play a mediating role between German and American thought, German and American Christianity, German and American theology. Perhaps this realization, though initially planted in the soul only in small seeds, was, along with other fruitful impressions, the real result of my first trip to America.

Time flew by on this trip. I didn't get beyond the Midwest. From New York via Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit to Chicago, Illinois, I went north via Milwaukee, Wisconsin and across the lake to northern Michigan, then via Warrenton, Michigan, Cincinnati, Ohio, Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Philadelphia back to the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, from where a Lloyd steamer was to take me back to my field of work, Austria and Hungary. It would fill a whole book if I only wanted to mention the individual cities and towns, as well as the dear families I got to know, whose hospitality I was allowed to enjoy. Of course, my nerves had to endure a lot. The trip went at a real American pace. Almost every preacher with whom I could spend a Sunday gave me the well-meant advice not to overexert myself and rather to refuse some invitations than to expect too much of my body. When I then asked the advisor about his program for the day, he said: "*Today, however, there is little time to rest. At 10 a.m. there is Sunday school, where we ask you to speak, and at 11 a.m. there is church service, where you preach. We have arranged for you to have enough time to carry out your thoughts. At 1 o'clock we gather at family X for a common lunch, to which all the families of our preachers are invited, and you will of course have to give a table talk, at 4 a meeting at a side station, and in the evening all the German congregations of our town come together to hear a lecture*." I usually showed light pictures in the evening. If the night train didn't leave at 11 or 12, the host family had a more intimate ice cream party, where the guest had to talk about the "old fatherland" until late at night. I still remember how I fell asleep in my chair on such an evening with our original and learned Dr. Hiller after more than three hours of discussion about all kinds of theological questions, so that he had to shake me properly to get me awake and to bed. But what delicious hours of fellowship they were! I got to know captivating biographies. What would there be to tell if I had transcribed the conversations and saved them for further use. I think of that young Swabian who arrived in New York with 10 cents as his entire fortune. For 5 cents he had himself shaved, for the other he bought a corner of sausage, and when he wanted to ask for a piece of bread in a baker's store, the baker's widow, who owned the store, immediately proposed marriage, so that he hurried away. Or I can think of Father L. in Louisville, who was 70 years old at the time and with whom I lived. How captivating his storytelling was! As a 13-year-old boy, his parents had sent him from somewhere in Hesse to Kentucky to a relative who was married there. Before

the journey began, his father had a new suit made for him, but he was not to put it on until he landed in America. He followed the advice faithfully. But when he went to put on the so carefully guarded new suit when the ship arrived in the port of Hoboken, it had disappeared. A sailor, to whom he confided his secret, had stolen it. It sounded quite novelistic how he then found the aunt, looked for work and prospered. A year or two before my visit to Louisville, he had been in Germany to see the old country again. On the trip to Berlin, he had made the acquaintance of an officer on the railroad who was so interested in the German-American's story that he invited him to dine with his family so that he could tell the children about his adventurous life. It turned out that the friendly officer was the Minister of War! And then the wonderful experiences, how these ethnic Germans, who had usually thrown their native faith overboard with their emigration from their homeland, came to the knowledge of salvation and to a personal experience of salvation in the services of the Methodists, how some of them felt the call to the service of the Gospel and entered the preaching ministry. This was really more than entertainment, it warmed the heart and proved faith in the activity of God in the life of the individual and in the victorious power of the Gospel. And at the same time, I noticed how these conversations and all my lecturing activities also helped me formally, contributed to the training of the gifts given to me. That I gained an insight into the life story of so many Germans, that I was able to increase my knowledge of the country and people of the USA, its history, form of government, its economic and ecclesiastical life, I will mention only as something incidental. For my ministry, however, it was of particular value that I had to force myself to speak in a conscious way, in a simple, descriptive manner, based on facts. I soon realized how many visitors from Germany had failed, simply because they had preached their best sermons and lectures, but had forgotten that their audience did not have the connection with the spiritual life in Germany to the extent that one could assume in a German city, that they were occupied by the American education and environment with other problems, which had to be taken into consideration if the interest was to be aroused and maintained. In sermons it was necessary to limit oneself to the basic truths of Scripture, to leave aside the speculative, the problematic, the philosophical as far as possible and to take the images, comparisons, metaphors out of the circle of vision of the listeners. And I think that I had to learn to tell stories, because it was strange, people always wanted to hear about my experiences, observations and conclusions from the work in Southeastern Europe. So, when I had to speak in a city three or four times or even more, I was not allowed to say everything I had on my mind in one lecture, but had to distribute the material, which of itself led to describing the individual experiences and observations in somewhat more detail, interweaving descriptions of the country and its people, of language and customs, of history and the present. And I found that this form of presentation was always captivating and represented a vessel into which the content of many a thought could be poured in an impressive manner. The openness and fraternity, with which in the circle of dear colleagues after a lecture - in my presence - what I had said was discussed again with all the remarks that the audience had made about it, helped me a lot. I learned to eliminate what was not understood and to emphasize what struck the heart. In any case, the lecturing activity of my first trip to America seems to me to be a course in language, speech and oratory that cannot be valued highly enough, and which was a great privilege for me to go through. It gave me insights that no theoretical study could have given. And when I let my thoughts wander back to that time and let the images of those dear brothers and sisters whom I met pass by my eye, I feel impelled to thank the Father in heaven for the enrichment of my life that he gave me through this journey.

Of the many places I visited, and which I cannot name all, I must, however, name and emphasize two or three, because they formed centers of German Methodism in America: First, there is Cincinnati, Ohio. It took me more than three months to reach this city. Cincinnati is to the German Methodists over the ocean about the same as Wartburg Castle is to the Lutherans (Luther translated the Bible here) or City Road Chapel (Wesley's Chapel) in London is to the English Methodists. Cincinnati is the birthplace of German-speaking Methodism in the United States. It was here that Dr. Wilhelm Nast began his evangelistic work among Germans in the 1840s. Nast was a contemporary and fellow student of David Friedrich Strauss, the well-known nationalist at the University of Tübingen. He wanted and was supposed to become a pastor. But he was like many of his fellow students in that time filled with a spirit of decomposition, criticism and the rule of reason: He lost the

foundation of faith under his feet, saw that he could not become an honest servant of the Gospel and decided to emigrate to America. There he wanted to look for another, a new existence. He became a professor at several high schools, and for a time at the famous military academy at West Point. Through a Methodist family he became acquainted with the services of the Methodist Church, came to a gospel meeting and was so moved by the simple presentation of salvation in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit that he experienced a conversion like Saul of Tarsus in Damascus. He joined the Methodist Church and soon began his work among the Germans in Cincinnati. It was not easy for the German academic to find his way to the hearts of the German people. The tracts he wrote and distributed, the invitations to evangelistic meetings, the sermons on the necessity of conversion to God were met with biting derision. For these Germans no longer had any religious or ecclesiastical interest, and were well on the way to losing their inner support in the struggle to get by, in the pursuit of wealth and pleasure, in a frenzy of materialism. Nast had to endure many humiliating experiences. But looking into the plight of his compatriots only increased his love for them and deepened his conviction that God had given him a great task here. Although the first year of his work was not very successful and not at all encouraging, the Lord crowned the faithfulness of his servant after some time with a glorious revival. A "class" was able to be established in Cincinnati, thus planting the seed for a church. Soon Nast had a district of several dozen stations, especially in the Ohio Valley, which he used to visit monthly on horseback - the saddle he used can be seen in the museum in Cincinnati - souls were added daily, young men were seized by the Spirit of God and made themselves available to him as co-workers. The class became a district, the district became a conference, until the work had grown to 10 annual conferences, as I have already indicated.

The most important step Dr. W. Nast took was the founding of a German-American journal, to which he gave the name "*Der Christliche Apologete*" (the Christian Apologist). In 1839 he had started the work in Cincinnati. Already on January 4, the first edition appeared. It was printed in the format of the large American dailies. It appeared weekly at the time I came to Cincinnati with a circulation of about 20,000 copies. Dr. W. Nast was the ideal editor. A thoroughly educated theologian, he wrote on the most important biblical questions, combated erroneous views, brought news from church life in America and Germany, called Germans in the U.S. to reflection, mediated between German and American thought, between German and American, say Methodist, theology. His struggle was primarily against nationalism. In addition, he wrote several theological works, including a commentary on the Synoptic Gospels. The commentary on the Gospel of John remained unfinished. We Methodists have always considered it a gracious guidance of God that at the head of the German work there was a man of such comprehensive general and theological education, whose writings became an arsenal for spiritual equipment not only for the constantly growing membership, but especially for the preachers. Dr. W. Nast made Cincinnati the literary center of the German work. He edited the "Apologist" for decades, and when he laid down his prolific pen at an advanced age, his son and associate, Dr. Albert Nast, took his place. The "Apologist" had also played a role in my life. Through one of its issues, Methodism had come into the Bácska. I had been in correspondence with Dr. Albert Nast for a long time. It was he who provided me with the paper for brief notes on my impressions in America and my lectures, so that it will be understood if I looked forward to the visit to Cincinnati with special expectations. In addition to the Apologist, the illustrated family magazine "*Haus und Herd*" (House and Hearth) was founded, whose editor at that time was Dr. A. J. Bucher, one of my former teachers in the preacher's seminary. Both editors, Albert Nast and A. J. Bucher, met me at the train station in Cincinnati, vying with each other to make my stay in Cincinnati as pleasant as possible. There were social gatherings, a full work program for me with German and English speeches, and Dr. Bucher promised me, as he was accustomed to do at the seminar, to note down any errors in emphasis, pronunciation, and sentence formation and to correct them afterwards. This was a help for which I could only be grateful. Dr. Nast, who was very well known in the city, even in English-speaking Methodist circles, put me in touch with many leading personalities and did all he could to make the guest from Southeastern Europe known. He edited the "Apologist" in a pro-German manner until America entered the World War in 1917; he could not make the turn to an anti-German attitude, so he was induced to resign. This was bitter to him. When I visited him, he was at the height of his activity and influence. With him I also visited the Museum of German

Methodism housed in the "Bethesda" Hospital, which contains many mementos of the pioneer days of the German Methodists in America, including all the literature in German published by the Methodists in the United States. Anyone who wants to get an idea of the tremendous contribution that has been made here to the perpetuation of the German language must spend a few hours in this collection. Later I made the suggestion that this collection be given a place in the Preacher's Seminary in Frankfurt am Main. The trustees of the museum agreed. The only thing missing was the means of transport. Perhaps after the end World War II, it will still be possible to save this valuable object from destruction by bringing it over to Germany.

Then Cincinnati became the center of German Methodist social activity. I spent a lot of time with Dr. Christian Golder, the father of the Methodist deaconess work in the United States. Dr. Golder was a man of faith, love and action. Inspired by the Protestant deaconess work in the "old fatherland," he and his sister Luise Golder began to train deaconesses (1) for the ministry of love to the poor, to the sick, to needy people of all kinds, including ministry to congregations. A conversation with Brother Golder gave me a glimpse into a life of devoted work, a life filled with a great idea, a life of prayer and answers to prayer. Wonderful how the work grew and grew from its mustard seed-like beginnings until it reached its present expansion. Actually, one should be able to bring some pictures that also make visible to the eyes what has happened here under the blessing of God. The spacious hospital is equipped with all modern facilities, the maternity hospital is considered the best such institute in the city, and the Dorkas School has equipped hundreds and hundreds of young girls for future service as housewives, mothers and community helpers. Visitors are also gladly shown "Scarlet Oaks," a sanitarium, a few miles from Cincinnati in the mountains, in lovely scenic surroundings. No stranger would suspect a sanatorium in this castle-like building. In Germany, one would have thought of the castle of a prince, in America of the home of some Croesus. That is what it was. A cranky rich American had taken it into his head to build himself a castle on the European model. Whether the original is in Germany, France or Italy, I don't know. In any case, the architect was obliged to work exactly according to the original. The result was a building that is really something to behold. Outside imposing in pure forms of style, inside adorned with magnificent paintings of old and new masters. How do you think Dr. Golder got this property? The rich American got other quirks and offered the castle for sale. A German Methodist, who greatly appreciated Dr. Golder's work and was especially interested in the Deaconess Work, brought to Brother Golder's attention that Scarlet Oaks was for sale and agreed to provide the funds. It was Brother Huenefeld who had come to America as a young man, poor in earthly goods, had found the delicious pearl in the Methodist Church, and who now, out of gratitude for what God had done for him, gave such splendid property to the Deaconess Work. When Dr. Golder went home, Dr. Diekmann, his former co-worker, took over. Dr. Diekmann was again the right man in the right place. He is one of the most eloquent preachers in both German and English, a brilliant organizer, a consecrated personality, and something of a genius in bringing together resources for great ends. Already on my first visit - and subsequently again and again - I was a guest at the Sisters' Home in Cincinnati, and it was a special pleasure for me each time to hear from him again and again new stories and anecdotes from the history of German Methodism in America. One of these, which occurred during the World War, may be reproduced: After the American declaration of war on Germany, two secret policemen appeared one day and demanded to see the office of Dr. Chr. Golder, who was out of town. They were told that Golder had a picture of Bismarck hanging on the wall, which they would have to confiscate. Diekmann led them into the room, whose walls were covered with all sorts of photographs. "*Where is Bismarck*?" Diekmann was asked. Answer: "*I was born in America and don't know my way around the statesmen of Europe. But here are the pictures, pick out Bismarck yourself*!" Then one pointed to a somewhat frowning face: "*Thats the fellow*!" (that's the fellow). "*Good*," said Diekmann, "*then take him with you*." Proud to have done their duty, Wilson's men departed. But was this really the dangerous Bismarck? It was the picture of the Methodist Church's resident bishop in Cincinnati, Bishop Walden, now probably consigned to the flames. Bishop Walden is said to have laughed heartily at this mix-up. Wherever Diekmann told this story, there was resounding merriment, and at the same time it threw - without comment - a telling light on the war psychosis prevailing at the time.

From Cincinnati I went with Dr. Nast, his sister, Mrs. Fanny Gamble, and some other brethren to Berea to the German Methodist college. I had also previously made a side trip to the other college at Warrenton, MI: one was for the eastern, the other for the western side of the United States. Both schools were flourishing. Both were associated with theological seminaries. Both had excellent faculty. At the head of Warrenton College was Dr. Otto Kriege, whose textbook on the history of Methodism we also used in Frankfurt. President of the "German Wallace College" in Berea was Dr. Arthur Breslich, a man of true grit, far-sighted, enterprising. Associated with the college was the "Nast Theological Seminary" founded by Dr. William Nast or in his honor. Professors Riemenschneider, Beer, Hertzler, Schneider, Cramer, Nuelsen, Völkner and other well-known names had worked or were still working at this seminary. Berea celebrated its 50th anniversary that year, and Dr. Breslich, hearing of my coming, invited me to give one of the ceremonial speeches. A new music hall with a magnificent organ was dedicated. Bishop MacDowell, one of the best-known educators in the Church, and other leaders from the English-speaking camp were on the program. Those of the former students, now in influential positions, who could make it possible, had come to take part in the feast, and the tide of enthusiasm ran high. It literally went, as it says in an old song, "from one festival to another." I was very impressed when on Sunday morning, the President, the College of Professors and the graduating classes, all in gowns, filed into the church and Dr. Breslich preached an impressive sermon. I need not remark that such a school is entirely under the direction of the church, does not receive a cent from the state, and thus, like the life of the Free Church in general, is built and sustained by voluntary gifts from the congregations. Of course, I had prepared for the festive meeting in the evening and wanted to speak about a religious topic related to the example of Jesus. In the afternoon, friends from Cleveland and Toledo, from Cincinnati and the Ohio Valley, from New York and Philadelphia came to me and asked me not to talk about a general topic, but to talk about the beginning of the work in Hungary and not to forget the story of the "Christmas riddles". "*But you have all heard them already, I can't bring something so familiar on this occasion*!". "*First*," was the answer, "*many hundreds who are here, especially the students, have not heard this story. Secondly, we do not want to hear a learned lecture in the evening; we have already been abundantly provided with that these days. And thirdly, all of us who already know the story like to hear it again*." So, I let myself be persuaded to put aside the prepared speech. I am no longer quite sure, but I believe that Dr. Breslich asked me to speak English in consideration of the many guests who did not understand German. I proceeded from my impressions of the festive days, congratulated the professors and students on the privilege of teaching and learning here, brought greetings from Methodism in Germany and Southeastern Europe, and then said that, convinced of the importance of faith in Christ and His work in our personal lives and in the work He entrusts to us, I would like to say something that will strengthen faith. Then I talked about the means God used to lead us to Hungary and about the expectations of His help. That evening, I felt myself carried in a special way by the desires, the experiences, the receptivity of these listeners, and I myself had the feeling that God had given open hearts to the Word.

After the meeting there was a hearty handshake, accompanied by many words of thanks, the evening would not be forgotten. But I was most surprised when the dear Dr. G. Hiller, a member of the board, - Trustee Authority they say over there - took me by the arm, led me a little out of the stream of people and opened up to me that they had to elect a new professor for systematic theology. They were concerned to get a man who would uphold the German Old Methodist tradition, who would be able to maintain a connection also with theology in Germany and whether, if they chose me, I would accept such a call. Of course, I would be given time to prepare myself for the new task at German and American universities. Was it a real call? Was it a temptation? Was it a new great opportunity? But I needed only a few moments to decide. An inner voice told me: your place is not the university, but the pulpit. For such a professorship they will find a man who can probably do the task better than you. But you are needed in Hungary, in Austria, in Germany. I thanked dear Brother Hiller for his request, which honored me, but told him firmly that I would have to decline, since I would feel that by accepting such a call, I would be unfaithful to my actual vocation. Dr. Hiller understood me. The next morning, I had to leave for the Lake Mohonk Conference. But before the end of this conference, I received with a kind letter from Dr. Breslich, the diploma as DD (Doctor of Divinity) and the warmest blessings

for my further work in the Fatherland and in Europe. And that I should consider the college in Berea, if I should come to America again, as a kind of American home.

Would I ever come to America again? When I said goodbye to Bishop Burt, I remarked that I was grateful to have known the USA. But that would probably be the first and last time. Then he looked at me with his friendly, penetrating eyes, extended his hand in farewell and said with a smile, "*I have the conviction that this visit will not be your last in America*." I left for home in August 1913. A year later, the World War broke out. How grateful I was that I had not stayed in America. Yes, it is true: "He leads me on the right road. ‘

(1) Deaconesses are laywomen called by God to be in a lifetime relationship in The United Methodist Church for engagement with a full-time vocation in ministries of love, justice, and service.


PRÆSES ET PROFESSORES

GERMANI COLLEGII WALLACIENSIS,

DIPLOMA

Salutem in Domino,

Notum sit, quod nos, Collegii Präses et Professores, F. H. Otto Nelle

ampla pro auctoritate nobis commissa, consentientibus honorandis Curatoribus,

Titulo Graduque Doctoris Divinitatis

adornavimus, eique contulimus omnia insignia, jura, privilegia, honores, quae ubique gentium eundem ad gradum pertinent.

In Cujus rei Testimonium

quarto mensis Junii MCMXIII

CXXXVII

Arthur to Burtch, Praeses.

Diploma of "Doctoris Divinitatis" awarded 1913 by German Wallace College, Berea, Ohio USA

Chapter 19 A Quarter of a Million Crowns for a Property In Budapest (1914)

We need to take another look back at the work in Budapest. In an earlier chapter I described how a congregation of the Methodist Church came into being there and what difficulties it had to contend with. The time in Budapest was a time of inner and outer struggles for me, but also of faith confirmation and the experience of wonderful help from God. Already the search for an appropriate hall for the services had taught me that rented halls in such a city can be quite unfavorable for the work. When, after a year of festive events, the hall proved to be too small, the question of a property for the work became for me more important, and I began to consider the matter in my heart. I do not want to say that I studied it. I hadn't gotten that far yet. But I began to think about whether there might be a way to get ownership. Little by little, the thought gained so much space that I was already checking the individual districts to see in which location would be the most suitable. Finally, I looked at houses that were offered for sale and places where a chapel with a corresponding residential building could be built. An architect friend of mine then drew up plans as to how such a building site could best be used. It was my idea to invest the capital in such a way that the incoming rents could finance the hall and the preacher's apartment.

The strange thing was that every project that I somehow considered could not be had for less than 250,000 crowns. If I liked a house that could be arranged for our purposes and asked for the price, it was always a sum around a quarter of a million. If the architect made a plan for the erection of a suitable building on an available building site, the estimate - I no longer expected anything else - provided for a sum that varied between 250,000 and 300,000 crowns. I still clearly remember how a dear friend from Germany once visited me. Again, my architect came with such a beautiful plan. It must have been before 1910. He listened to our discussions, was visibly moved by the plan and the enthusiasm with which we discussed it, but I could tell by the way he, who was used to thinking realistically, could not believe in the possibility of implementing such a plan for Budapest. When the architect had taken his leave, the friend asked me in a worried voice: "*Where are you going to get the means to realize such a plan*?" Then I said in a joking tone - but it was more than a joke: "*I hope that someone from the Methodists in America will give me the necessary quarter of a million*". My friend was silent. I had the impression that he thought I was an incorrigible optimist who could probably only be cured of this disease by severe disappointments.

It was on this occasion that I first expressed the thought that someone could provide me with a quarter of a million for a central building in Budapest. It was not much more than a fleeting wish that became more and more deeply rooted. Of course, in this wish it was irrelevant whether the gifts would come from one or more persons. However, it became clear to me even then that raising funds for the Lord's work is a task that must be taken seriously and that needs the guidance of the Holy Spirit just as much as the preaching of the gospel. It is quite a wrong conception to suppose that for preaching and evangelism above all the inner attitude of the evangelist and the congregation is necessary, which requires much communion with God as expressed in prayer, but that for the raising and administration of the financial resources the business principles are sufficient. These principles are necessary. Where they are disregarded, the consequences are bitter. But they are not sufficient. For the work of the Lord forms an inseparable unity. The preacher of the gospel who thinks that training of the spirit, training of the mind and the gift of oratory, the theoretical study of theology are sufficient for effective preaching, would soon realize what Luther so aptly expresses in the song of protection and

defense of the Reformation: "*With our power nothing is done, we are soon lost. It must come, as with the disciples after their three years of education in the school of Jesus, the power from on high that sanctifies the natural gifts, that imparts new gifts, and that bestows the anointing from above*." It is similar with the ministry of financial resources, without which we cannot do in the present age. As a church representing the free-church principle, we do not count on a subsidy from the state, but on the voluntary gifts offered out of gratitude and love by our members and friends, which, because they are offered to the Lord, seem to us to be sacred. The gratitude and love from which they flow are an effect of the Holy Spirit. They interact with the spiritual life. That is why the examples of August Hermann Francke and Georg Müller have such a strong effect, because with them the financial side of their activity is so closely connected with their life of faith and prayer. Whether it was the biographies of these men of faith or my own research in the Scriptures, whether testimonies from the outer and inner mission made me think about these problems or the situation in which I found myself, I can no longer determine. Perhaps it all works together. I only know how in my thoughts and desires the central building in Budapest took more and more a dominant position and forced me to discuss all questions connected with it again and again in prayer with the heavenly Father. There is something wonderful about prayer! The longer I have prayed, the more I have learned that prayer is not simply asking for something and, when God has given it, giving thanks for it. Prayer is much more. It is, as Luther so beautifully says, "the conversation of the heart with God". This means that we talk to God, who has become our Father in Christ, as a child talks "to its dear father". That we ask him for advice, that we discuss not only our worries but also our wishes and plans with him. In the discussion with him desires mature into goals, there we recognize where selfishness, personal interests, own honor interfere, in other words, where foreign fire wants to penetrate. Striving comes into the light of eternity and thus into judgment, it must be guided, purified and cleansed, one's own will learns to surrender to God's will, and God's will becomes the content of life and striving. When I thus presented my desires and plans for Budapest to the Lord in prayer, I experienced that the desires and plans did not weaken or appear utopian and burst like soap bubbles, but they became clearer, they became stronger, they moved more and more into the realm of the possible, and it finally became a firm conviction to me that these plans were in accordance with God's will, and that God would give his blessing for their realization. So, when I was appointed as a delegate of the Christian Student Union to the World Convention in Lake Mohonk, USA, in 1913, I took it as a God-given opportunity to work in America for the aforementioned plans. Was not God's guidance evident in the preparation for the trip? Was it not a small thing for him, to whom belong both silver and gold, to make hearts and hands willing? Surely, he would help that the goal would be reached. Of course, I soon had to realize that this was not so easy. Seemingly insurmountable difficulties stood in the way, putting faith and patience to a hard test. I have experienced very often, but especially on this first trip to America, that God's way to his goals does not lead over flowery meadows, but along stony paths and through dark valleys. It is a law of nature in the kingdom of God that first must be sown before it can be harvested, that between sowing and harvesting a waiting period is inserted in which the growing fruit is threatened by danger, and that until the harvest many a drop of sweat is connected with the work. Tests of faith are necessary to purify the gold from the dross. Disappointing experiences should serve us for purification, obstacles that accumulate in the way are there to steel the muscles and strengthen the power. But all this can be seen only afterwards. As long as we are in difficulties, they do not seem to us to be joy at all.

I made my first visit to New York to the corresponding secretary - we would say in Germany, the managing director - of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in his offices, No. 150 on 5th Avenue. I wondered at the number of employees in these offices. The mission literature on hand, the periodicals in many, many languages, the reports from all parts of the globe, the pictures hanging on the walls of missionaries and churches on the various mission fields, of universities, colleges, elementary schools, hospitals, and institutes of manifold kinds, gave me a picture of the magnitude of the work which has a headquarters here. I saw that I was at the center of one of the largest missionary societies in Protestantism. The annual income is given in the World Mission Atlas as $5,426,129.00, to which must be added that of the Women's Missionary

Society, $2,303,225.00. That is over 32 million Marks collected for the external mission and used for the support of the work in the various countries of the world. I need not remind you that these sums have been significantly increased since that time. This in itself requires a handsome staff.

In Dr. M. North I became acquainted with one of the leading personalities of Methodism in the United States. Outwardly an imposing appearance: the high, broad forehead showed the organizer and leader, the penetrating eye betrayed the judge of character. His judgment was based on personal observations and studies in all the continents he had traveled. Although he had not been to Austria or Hungary, he surprised me with his knowledge of conditions there. His correspondence covered the whole world, and I had to conclude that he had also read my letters carefully and had kept the essentials in mind. In any case, it was a pleasure for me to talk with him and to get to know him as a missionary who had much understanding and sympathy for the work of our Church in Southeastern Europe and who gave me valuable suggestions through his questions and advice. I already thought I had found in him a promoter of my plans for a property in Budapest, when he suddenly asked if I intended to seek funds, adding, before I could answer, that it was his duty to inform me of a recent decision in the Executive Committee of the Missionary Society that no missionary, whether from China, India, or elsewhere, not even a representative of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Europe, should be allowed to collect for a special purpose. With the many missionary workers that the Church has in foreign lands, who come to the United States from time to time on a year's furlough, soliciting for special projects had led to a fragmentation of forces and a detriment to the general gifts to the Missionary Society. Therefore, such a decision had become necessary. I was not a missionary of the Society, but this decision also applied to me. I felt as if I had fallen out of all the clouds. Dr. North's message seemed like the first bad news. Would others follow? Wasn't it already difficult enough to direct the interest of the friends of mission and evangelism to Southeastern Europe? Dr. North must have noticed the impression his words made on the young man whom he saw before him for the first time. For when I asked him in my terror to give me at least some good advice as to what I could do under these circumstances, he replied with a smile: "*The resolution does not include that they must not speak of the work over there, of its necessities and possibilities and of their wishes and plans. I give them the advice to do this everywhere, their hearts are full of it, and 'whose heart is full, his mouth overflows'. God will take care of the rest*". I took these words as an encouragement and silently hoped that the decision of the Missionary Society would not be carried out too strictly among the German-speaking Methodists.

That was also the case. No German Methodist reminded me of this decision. But another obstacle occurred: At the East German Conference, which was held in Buffalo, a representative of the Chicago German Conference had also appeared, District Superintendent Mulfinger. The name Mulfinger is well known in German Methodism in the United States. The father was one of the original pioneers of whom many an anecdote is in circulation. The son whom I met here occupied a respected and influential position. Already his figure was impressive: a head taller than all the people, his chest of enormous circumference, his weight was certainly well over 2 hundredweight. This brother Mulfinger took me aside and advised me in a friendly and fatherly, but urgent manner not to travel further west. I should not expect anything from the Collection anyway. Last year there had been the General Conference, with some representatives of Methodism from Germany. They were happy to take up a collection for the brothers in the old Fatherland. But now the willingness to do so has been exhausted. There had also recently been a flood in the Ohio Valley, which had affected many of our German congregations, for which collections were being made. So, in my own interest, in order to protect me from disappointment, he felt he had to advise against a further trip.

Good advice was expensive. Put yourself in my place: there were still more than two months to go before the jubilee in Berea and the convention in Lake Mohonk, for which I had come. How should I spend this time? Going back to Europe was out of the question, of course. After many an hour of inner struggle, I decided to give up the idea of a special collection altogether, as it meant sacrificing a favorite idea of which I had promised myself a great deal. Only in this way could I stick to my plan of visiting Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee, the Wisconsin congregations, and so on. I wrote to the preachers that I would forego a special collection if they would invite me and give me an opportunity to report something of what

God had done in Southeastern Europe, for it just seemed to me a duty imposed upon me to utilize the time until the student convention in June. Perhaps in this way I could do a small service to them and their congregations. How I fared then, I have indicated in the previous chapter. After a few lectures in areas of the Central German Conference, the ice was broken, so to speak. When I arrived at a new station, there were always a number of further invitations, the brothers' district superintendents worked out plans for me that took me as far as St. Louis. I was asked to attend district meetings and other festive events, and there will hardly have been evenings during these months when I did not have to speak. The love that was shown to me was overwhelming, the bond of fellowship that wrapped itself around guest and host was intimate, and I am still sorry today when I think back on those days that it was not possible for me to keep up correspondence with all of them, given the number of new acquaintances I made every day. I had to be content with sending a sign of life and a greeting to dear friends through the "Apologist" from time to time. In my memory, however, the experiences of those weeks stand as shining landmarks of my life. The fact that I had not come to collect was usually announced. Nevertheless, dear friends did not miss the opportunity to convey their gifts to me, and in some places the preachers said that these gifts were higher than any missionary collection had ever been. Nevertheless, the possibility of raising the funds for a property in Budapest became smaller and smaller, and the quarter of a million moved into ever further, misty distances.

And yet, without me having any idea of the "how," God had prepared the way. The visit to Cincinnati was to be of special significance for me. I had preached there on Sunday in the company of Dr. A. Nast in some German congregations. On Monday there was the usual preachers' meeting in the hall of the church bookstore. Dr. Nast was very concerned that I be given the opportunity to speak at this meeting. These preachers' meetings are a beautiful custom which has become established everywhere in the United States. After the varied and strenuous Sunday work, the preachers of the Methodist Church are accustomed to meet on Monday from 10 a.m. to 12 noon for an exchange of ideas. It usually begins with a brief biblical reflection and prayer fellowship, followed by a presentation, which is followed by a discussion. Current theological and ecclesiastical issues are discussed freely. Very often, well-known personalities from other churches are asked to speak. Traveling missionaries and preachers from around the world of Methodism are introduced. In Cincinnati that morning there were about 30 to 40 preachers present, including one or two bishops, the director of the Methodist Publishing House, the directors of the Deaconess Work, some editors of English periodicals, including, of course, those of the German ones ("*Apologete*" and "*Haus und Herd*") and the pastors of the large English churches in the city. The program was very rich in content and scope, leaving only 10 minutes for me to finish. I was somewhat apprehensive about speaking to this illustrious gathering in English, but my dear friend Albert Nast had reassured me about this point.

Perhaps I have seldom experienced such a strong impression of a wonderful opportunity given to me by God as I did that Monday morning in Cincinnati. I was moved in the depths of my heart, and I could not help expressing what filled my thoughts without regard to what I had prepared, and it may well be that my being moved communicated itself to the listeners. Thus, I spoke of the work of God in German Methodism, whose beginnings lie here in Cincinnati, and how pleased I was to become acquainted with the city in which dear Dr. Wilhelm Nast had worked for so long. Who can describe how many blessings have emanated from here! What moved me most in this hour was the memory that here in this building the "Apologist" had been edited and printed, which had been chosen by God as an evangelist to pave the way for the Methodist revival movement in Hungary. Then I told the story of how a Blue Cross association was formed among the Germans in Hungary, how they, looking around for material to read aloud, got hold of issues of the Apologist, thereby became acquainted with Methodism and the desire arose in them to hear a Methodist preacher preach. How they then, when they found Preacher Möller's address in an issue, invited him to visit them, and how in this way the Lord kindled a fire that spread further and further. I described my calling to Hungary, that Christmas meeting where I was not allowed to preach, but instead gave up "riddles" that became means of revival, and I concluded with a reference to the beginning of the work in Budapest and the importance of this beautiful city for the work of evangelization in all of southeastern Europe. I had not looked at the clock. Neither did the chairman, because

he let me finish my thoughts quietly and the Christian Advocate, whose editor was present, wrote: "*It was an hour of keen vision that strongly warmed the hearts of all*". After the address, Bishop Anderson rose, humorously took a tape from his pocket, and measured Dr. Albert Nast's head. When asked what this meant, he said that he had only wanted to ascertain whether, after this account of the influence of his paper to remote corners of southeastern Europe, the apologist's editor would not henceforth need a larger hat number. Bishop Anderson was an intimate friend of the Nast family and could allow himself such a joke.

Dr. Nast had invited me to "lunch" after the meeting, which we had at a nearby hotel. On this occasion he introduced me to his sister, Fanny Gamble-Nast (1), who was a widow living in Cincinnati. Her husband had been the owner of a famous soap factory. She had heard about my address to the preachers' meeting, was full of questions about Hungary, and let me tell her many things from my experiences there. I also had to tell her about my plans for a central building in Budapest. As William Nast's daughter, she had a keen interest in the Lord's work. She gave the impression of a sanctified personality filled with the love of God. While she was talking to me, Lydia in Philippi stood before my eyes, to whom the Lord had opened her heart under Paul's preaching and who then opened her house to the messengers of Jesus Christ. She had read all my articles in the "Apologist". I had to marvel again at the mysterious way in which the invisible hand of God weaves together the threads for our life and work. What appears to us as spontaneous decisions of the will have often been prepared by Him for years. During the short time I was a preacher in Dresden in the summer of 1900, a deaconess from our Bethesda Motherhouse of Cincinnati visited a famous Dresden cooking school. The deaconess was a friend of Mrs. Fanny Gamble-Nast and had told her about my calling to Hungary. To me this sister had said, "*Mrs. Gamble is interested in your work and will certainly be glad to give you a handsome gift for it. Only dare to ask for something proper*". So, it will be understood that my hope was revived to finally receive a larger gift in Cincinnati. And I will confess that my hope rose to a sum of $1,000! That, in my mind, was about the most that could be expected from a gift. In view of the whole situation, would not that be something great? But to ask for so much? To name such a sum? I couldn't bring myself to do that. How would people take it? Wouldn't I lose all sympathy? I also had no idea that for this unassuming woman $1,000 would actually be only a small gift. So, I left Cincinnati without having made a request.

Then came the 50th anniversary of the "German Wallace College" and the "Nast Theological Seminary" in Berea, Ohio. A special item on the celebration program was the dedication of a new concert hall with a magnificent organ. The president of the college, Dr. Breslich, announced that the school owed its new concert hall and organ to a gift of $30,000 donated by Mrs. Fanny Gamble-Nast. Then it dawned on me how many means this dear lady must have at her disposal. I then learned many things about her life. When Mr. Gamble asked her to marry him, he was a poor man, just as she, as the daughter of a preacher of the Methodist Church, had no fortune. While both were poor, they were happy, they looked to the future with hope, and when the young man decided to start a small soap factory, they knelt at the family altar and vowed to the Lord to whom they had consecrated their lives that from the beginning they would set aside 10% of every earning, that is, of every bar of soap they would sell, for the work of God. A "tithe account" was set up in the books of account, which was kept as carefully and as diligently as any other account. The Lord's blessing rested on the business. The business flourished. Gamble soap earned a national reputation. The factories grew in true American fashion of the time. Naturally, the sums held in the tithe account also grew larger and larger, and the temptation arose that it was not necessary after all to give away such large sums for religious and charitable purposes. But the Gamble family remained true to their principles, and after the death of her husband, his widow considered it her sacred duty to manage and use the available assets according to the same principles. Thus, she gave significant sums to the missionary work in China, to the deaconess cause in Cincinnati, and to the school in Berea. How much good can people do with their wealth when they have found their hearts in the right place and the right position toward God and neighbor! The impact of Wesley's rules for the use of money in his famous sermon on the unjust steward makes itself felt in the lives of many Methodists: "1. *Acquire as much as you can*; 2. *Save as much as you can*; 3. *Give as much as you can*."

Unfortunately, I did not get a chance to speak to Mrs. Gamble-Nast again before I left America. At the camp meeting in Lakeside on Lake Erie, where I had hoped to meet her again in July, I learned from her brother that she was seriously ill. So, I did not get to present her with any particular request. I had received neither a smaller nor a larger gift, nor any verbal or written promise. My faith was to be put to the test once again. But it did not last long. In August 1913, I had returned from America. One day in the first months of 1914, I received a short letter from Dr. Albert Nast in which he informed me that his sister, aware that she would not live much longer, had made provisions for her estate. On her behalf, he had just sent the sum of $50,000 in securities to the Mission Authority in New York with the instruction that this money be used for a central building in Budapest to be erected or purchased under my direction. I could hardly believe my eyes. Was it a dream, was it reality? Was there a typing error in the letter that had caused one too many zeros? But no, that could not be, because the amount was written out again in letters: "Dollar fifty thousand" - according to the exchange rate at that time, that was exactly 250,000 or a quarter of a million Hungarian crowns and exactly the amount that we in Budapest, as already mentioned, had determined as necessary for the acquisition of a property. I called my wife, showed her the letter, and we both felt that we were experiencing something of the "signs and wonders" as the Acts of the Apostles calls them. Then we bowed our knees and thanked God for His unspeakable grace. Does he not do above asking and understanding? A few days later, confirmation of receipt of the gift came from Dr. North, noting that the money would be available as soon as I found a suitable property. My letter of thanks must still have reached dear Sister Gamble-Nast. However, she had correctly felt that her days were numbered. Still in winter, she was called home to the upper homeland by the Lord to whom her life was consecrated. She died in faith in Him who had purchased her with His blood and made her an heir of eternal life. "Her works follow her."

My successor in Budapest had become Preacher Martin Funk, whom I now asked to study the question of whether we should purchase land or buy a house. Before the problem was solved, the World War broke out in August 1914, which made building impossible. So, there was nothing left but to look for a house suitable for our purposes. After a long time of searching and choosing, we decided to buy the house Felsöerdösor No. 5. But there arose a new difficulty, which we had not thought of when we left the money in New York. There they were prepared to transfer the money on my instructions, but how was this to be done? Germany and Austria-Hungary were surrounded. The English, French and Italians did not even let letters through, much less money, of course. The director of my Viennese bank advised me to try to get money across via Switzerland. I traveled to Zurich, but the banks there refused to do anything about the matter, out of consideration for neutrality. Then I took a daring step: I went to Berlin, presented my case to the War Ministry and received permission to send a radiogram to New York through the Wehrmacht with the request that the sum intended for me be cleared by radiotelegraphic means to the Wiener Bankverein, which had an account at the National City Bank in New York. It really worked out, the money was taken over by the Wiener Bankverein, through the sale of the securities and the interest the amount had grown even more, so that the price of 307,000 crowns could be reached without having to incur any debt. Thus, we had a debt-free property in Budapest.

I will never forget the first prayer session we were able to hold in the new home. All the rooms were still occupied. After signing the contract of sale, we had only received the key to an old junk room, which was the only room available to us. Brother Funk, some Budapest brothers and I retreated there for a few moments. No light burned in the uncomfortable room, but the light of joy and gratitude for God's help shone from our eyes. I quoted from memory some verses from the 103rd Psalm, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not what good he has done thee!" Then we lifted up our hearts to the throne of grace, each of us prayed in brief words, and if ever a community of prayer felt something of the truth of the promise: "Where two become one, for which they ask, it shall be given them," it was that evening in the rumpus room of Felsöerdösor 5. On one floor of the street front, a larger apartment could be cleared and set up as a hall. It must have been in the 2nd year of the war when we made the inauguration. We combined this festive day with the conference, so that at least the preachers who had not yet been called up could participate. We took care of our conference busi-

ness, heard the reports, discussed the affairs of the work, and celebrated the actual dedication feast on Conference Sunday. Bishop Nuelsen had rushed over from Switzerland and gave us one of his sermons rich in content. In the afternoon was the festive assembly. The choirs did their best. The superintendent of the Hungarian Lutheran Church of the district where our property was located came to convey his blessings to us. I gave a brief overview of the origin and development of the congregation and the purpose of the property. Bishop Nuelsen spoke on behalf of the universal church and expressed the hope that in the new home the two congregations - the German as well as the Hungarian - would now like to grow "a thousand times a thousand". Then the brothers of the conference came to speak: from Vienna and Graz, from Bácska and from the German Reich. Will I be understood if I linger a little at this celebration? Please, do not forget that we were in the 2nd year of the war, and that the burdens of the war were already quite noticeable in the Dual Monarchy. That we were able to consecrate a debt-free property to the service of God in such a stormy time, when one could already feel the foundations of the Austro-Hungarian state structure trembling and people were beginning to fear the things that were to come, filled all hearts with praise and thanksgiving. And along with the thanksgiving came the earnest request that God, having given us the great and beautiful external gift, may also always equip us all with the spirit of joy, peace, discipline, faith, love and strength, so that children may be born to the Lord here "like the dew from the dawn" and the congregation, as the "light of the world and salt of the earth," may direct its service as a witness to the praise of God and salvation for many. I do not need to mention that my faith was greatly strengthened. I will only say that on that feast day the words of the 126th Psalm always sounded in my ears and in my heart: "The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoice."

(1) Fannie Gamble Nast (Franzeska Wilhelmina (Fanny) Nast) was youngest of Nast children, born 1848. Her parents were William and Margaret Nast. William was founder of German Methodism in America. Fanny was first female graduate of German Wallace College, Berea, Ohio, 1866. In 1872 she married William Gamble whose father was one of founders of Procter and Gamble. They didn't have any children. After William died in 1897, Fanny became active in the Methodist Church and other philanthropic endeavors.

Felső Erdősor Street 5, Budapest around 1916

Donor Plaque for Fanny Nast Gamble

F.H. Otto Melle – Memoirs 1875-1936

Chapter 20 World Wars and the Kingdom of God's Work (1914—1918)

In June 1914 I spent a few days with my family at my mother's in Liebengrün. The children enjoyed the Thuringian Forest air to the fullest, Hanna and I took extensive walks and excursions to Waldsburg, Ziegenrück, Burgk Castle, and Ebersdorf. The hay harvest was underway. We helped where we could. Peace and quiet everywhere. How nice it is to be allowed to spend one's vacations in one's homeland! Then, on Monday, June 29, the news came that during his visit to Sarajevo, the heir to the Austrian throne, Duke Franz Ferdinand and his wife had been murdered. In Liebengrün no one thought of war. I, however, was immediately seized with anxiety, the vacation time was cut short, Hanna and the children were taken to the dear in-laws in Zwickau in Saxony, while I hurried to Vienna. Hanna still accompanied me to the Erzgebirge (Ore mountain region of Germany), where I had promised my brother Hermann, who served the Neudorf district, to give a lecture on "Balkan Problems and Missionary Tasks in Southeastern Europe." I would have preferred to talk about another subject now. But the topic had been announced, people knew that I had been in Belgrade not long before during the Serbian mobilization, the assassination in Bosnia increased the interest even more, so that I had to stick to the topic willy-nilly. I spoke of the importance that Southeastern Europe had often had in history - also for Germany - of the onslaught of foreign tribes at the time of the migration of peoples, of the advance of the Turks as far as Vienna, and then pointed out how the Gospel of Christ Jesus had begun its triumphal course over our continent from Macedonia. When I came to the "missionary tasks," the image stood before my soul of how even brothers from my own circles had tried to convince me that we as Germans had no task in those countries, an opinion that was generally shared. Perhaps Bismarck's word still had an effect that the Balkan questions were not worth the bones of a Pomeranian grenadier. That these words were spoken under completely different circumstances was forgotten. In my life, however, the conviction had become stronger and stronger that the South-East of Europe is closely connected with Central Europe, economically, politically, culturally, and that we, as Christians in Germany, are also obliged in a religious respect - I will put it this way - to continue the work of the Reformation. As I elaborated on these thoughts and recalled the murder in Sarajevo, I suddenly felt as if I could catch a glimpse, even if only in the fraction of a second, of the consequences that this murder could have not only for Southeastern Europe, but for the entire continent and especially for the German Reich, and I could not help but exhort in the greatest earnestness to turn to God, to ask him to guide us, to lead us to repentance, to strengthen us with his power, so that we - churches and people - may recognize the time in which we are afflicted. After the lecture, Hanna and my brother Hermann said that they had never heard me speak in such a serious and shocking way. They had felt something of "terrible things" that would come, for which we would also have to prepare ourselves spiritually. But I myself did not yet believe that war would have to come, that war would come.

In Vienna, I found the population still completely calm. Just for July, all kinds of visitors from America had registered with me. Bishop Wilson with his wife and daughter from New York, on a trip to Europe, stayed for a few days in the old imperial city on the Danube. I showed him the sights of the city and learned from him many things about the ecclesiastical conditions in America. He too, like most Americans at that time, was of the opinion that the great powers would succeed in settling the conflict between Austria and Serbia peacefully. Would not a conference of the "World Federation for Friendship Work of the Churches" be held on Lake Constance (situated where Germany, Switzerland, and Austria meet) in the next few days? Would not the influence of the Christian churches

assert itself? This, however, was a view I could not share, and it may interest my friends, who like to call me an "incorrigible optimist," that in those days I incurred the reproach of being a pessimist. My attitude may have been influenced by the fact that I did not have much confidence in the Austrian statesmen to be able to solve such conflicts. Ever since I got to know Southeastern Europe, it seemed to me like a powder keg that could be detonated by a single spark. The assassination in Sarajevo was to be that spark.

After Bishop Wilson, a Dr. H. from Boston, Mass. arrived in Vienna, having traveled in the Far East, Japan, China, India, and I believe also the Philippines, and wishing to return to America via Italy and Southeastern Europe. He spent Sunday, July 26, in Vienna. Suddenly the situation was different. On Saturday, Serbia's reply to Austria's ultimatum had arrived at the Ballplatz (State Chancellor's office) in Vienna. It became known that the government considered it evasive, therefore insufficient. This meant nothing else but war. That the war with Serbia would lead to war with Russia was clear to everyone who had some insight into the situation. Russia was allied with France. And wasn't England on France's side? So, world war! But only some thought that far. The hope of localizing the conflict was stronger than the fear of a world conflagration. The mood of the population was suddenly completely transformed. The streets were filled with large crowds, workers and students, old and young, singing patriotic songs and expecting a victory soon against Serbia. In my diary sheets I find the note: "*I don't recognize my Viennese at all*!" But it was not an enthusiasm for the war that gripped the people. War appeared only as the last resort of politics, which in the struggle of the great powers against each other had become entangled in a Gordian knot that only the sword could cut. It was also known that the old Emperor Franz Josef I, with his ally, Emperor Wilhelm II, had done everything to spare his peoples the sacrifices of a bloody war, but the feeling was general that the crisis, which had existed for many years, would have to find a solution one way or another. There was no declaration of war yet, but - it was in the air. A tremendous tension was making itself felt, and there was only one topic of conversation where people went, at the university and in the coffee houses, in the stores or in the families: Will there be war? Which peoples will be enthralled by such a war?

My American visitor wanted to see Budapest and the Bácska in any case. Thinking that the outbreak of war would be delayed after all, I drove with him to Hungary's beautiful capital on Monday, July 27, and the next day down to Ujvidék. Here everyone was already nervous. Hungarians and Germans on one side, Serbs on the other, who until then had been on peaceful terms with each other, suddenly no longer understood each other. The rift went right through the villages, through the organizations, even through families. However, we did not stay here long, but dared to board a train that continued to the south in the direction of Belgrade. We arrived in Semlin on the morning of July 29. Beyond the quietly flowing Danube shone the towers of the city and fortress of Belgrade, which Prince Eugene, the noble knight, had once conquered from the Emperor. Now a new battle for the old city would begin. It was the first day of the war! At half past two in the morning the Serbs had blown up the Danube bridge between Semlin and Belgrade. Cannon thunder filled the air. On both sides, preparations for defense began. With the last train carrying civilians, we left the war zone and headed north. The American, who had taken pictures from the compartment window, was almost arrested as a spy. Later, as I learned, he made all kinds of publicity in the USA that he had been present on the first day of the world war at the place where the first acts of war had taken place, that is, that he had witnessed the beginning on the spot. In Budapest we learned that Austria had mobilized, in Vienna the mobilization of Russia and Germany was known. The events were precipitating! With great difficulty we were able to put Dr. H. on a train bound for Switzerland on Saturday evening. But on Sunday I preached in my Viennese congregation in Trautsohngasse on Psalm 46: "*Come and see the works of the Lord, who causes such destruction on earth; who controls wars in all the world; who breaks bows, shatters spears and burns chariots with fire. Be still and know that I am God*!"

Although I could not write down that sermon for lack of time, the thoughts are still present to me today, since they were born out of a strong inner excitement, while thinking about God's rule in the history of the peoples gave me a firm Christian and theological standpoint in the war and about the war, which I did not have to alter or

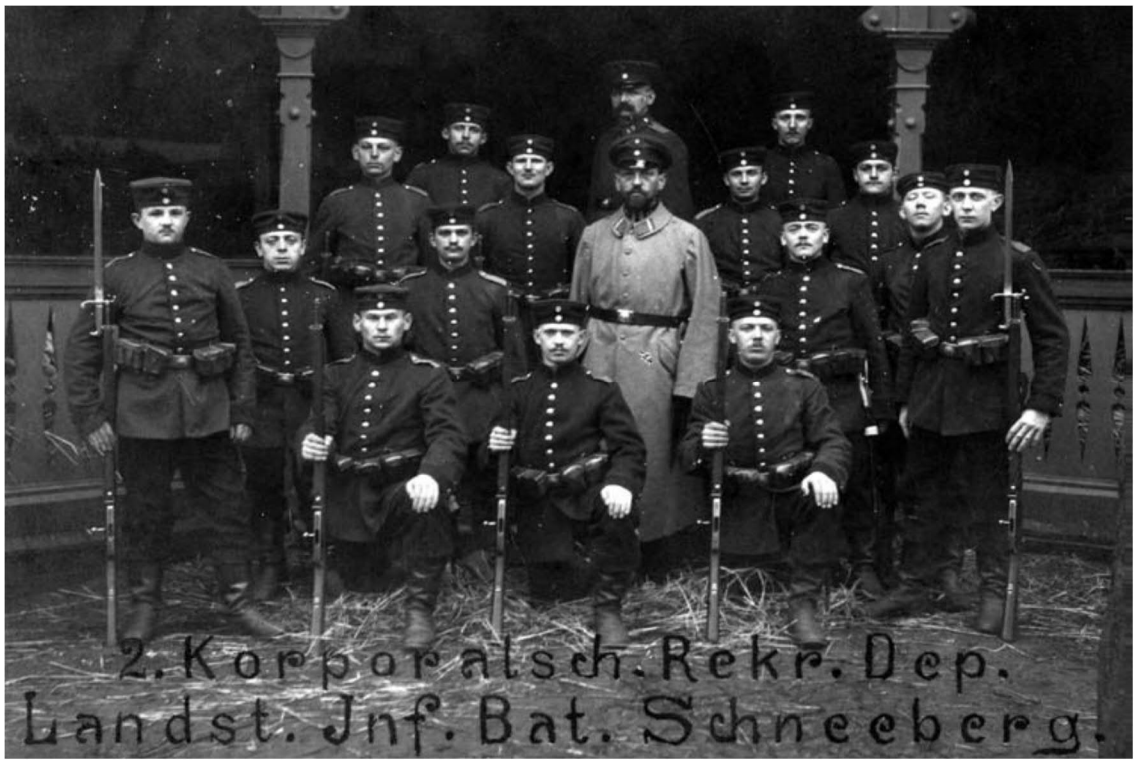
change. Two remarks of the last days had led me to this text. One was from a Viennese friend, Dr. L., and read: "*I would have to despair of God's justice if we were not victorious in a war unjustly forced upon us*." The other came from a personality who was much concerned with eschatological questions and expressed the opinion that the war was an enterprise staged by the prince of darkness, in which exclusively demonic powers unfolded their effectiveness. Against both views it was necessary to put the teaching of the Holy Scriptures into the light. What kind of faith would it be to lose its footing in such a national crisis, when injustice, envy, lies, greed and hatred seem to triumph? Certainly, demonic powers are at play. But in the Psalm, it is not said: "*See what miseries the devil causes*!" but - we must keep this firmly in mind: "*Come and see the works of the Lord, who causes such destruction on earth*". "*Be still, and know that I am God*!" God did not relinquish the reins of world government when war broke out. He who clothes the lilies, who provides for the sparrows, without whose will none of them falls from the roof, rules as over the life of individuals, so over the destiny of nations. Yes, as the story of Job shows, he even lets the demonic powers touch his chosen ones. But these powers may only go as far as he allows them. Probably we cannot always recognize God's plan and purpose; his thoughts are higher than our thoughts and his ways higher than our ways. But we may and can trust him as a child trusts his father, of whose love he is convinced. He has revealed his love most gloriously in the giving of his only begotten Son - how should he not give us everything with him? Therefore, nothing can separate us from the love of God. Even in war, with its vicissitudes, with the sacrifices it demands, with the sufferings it entails and the question marks it inserts into history, the words of the Apostle Paul remain: "*But we know that all things work together for good to them that love God*." All things! This also includes wars and the clamor of wars, and God certainly has something in mind for our people, to whom He has given such a great task in this war, that will serve Him for the best. How rich are the people who have such faith!

At the end of this service, a sister recalled an experience during the vigil night on January 1, 1914. In Vienna, as in most congregations of the Methodist Church, we had the beautiful custom of spending the last hours of the old year and the beginning of the new one in the congregation. After a sermon, Holy Communion was celebrated, then opportunity was given for testimonies from God's experience during the past year and for communal prayer. The last minutes of the departing year were spent in silent prayer, and after the new year began, most of those present drew a Bible verse from a saying box as a motto for the coming year. It was wonderful how the Bible words were often so apt and so appropriate. I myself had drawn the saying, "Fear not, only believe!" When I announced this saying, I asked the congregation to sing the song, "Jesu, go ahead on the path of life, and let us not tarry to follow you faithfully. Lead us by the hand to the Fatherland". On the second verse: "Shall it be hard for us..." I was strongly moved inwardly. I looked at the dear parishioners who were singing so heartily, and the question rose in me: What will they, what will I also experience in this year 1914? Will we "stand firm" when special sufferings, difficulties and tasks come? When the verse was sung, I asked them to pause for a few moments, read the verse again, made a few remarks about it, had the whole congregation read it aloud together, and then sang it again: "*Should we have a hard time, let us stand firm, and even in the hardest days never complain about burdens, because through tribulations here goes the way to you*." The sister's remark brought the memory of that impressive New Year's Eve hour back to life; it was as if we had sensed then what was in store for us this year, and we sang the same song again, now, after the outbreak of the war, in a special sense for the brothers who had to enlist - also for me, because according to the information I had received, I had to go to Germany immediately and report to my troop unit. It was an unforgettable hour of farewell and consecration.

The next morning, I found out at the German consulate that they were not in such a hurry with my enlistment. My co-worker at the same congregation, Preacher Klemens Gläser, left Vienna within the next few hours and put on the uniform of a vice sergeant of the artillery. To my surprise, I myself was already in the Landsturm and as a result had 14 days to spare. So, I did not have to make the trip to the German fatherland until the greatest hype of mobilization was already over. Instead of going to Dresden, I made a small detour via Zwickau to visit my family, who were staying with my wife's parents. This was, of course, a great pleasure. It was delightful to see how the

children experienced the war. Little 3-year-old Edith prayed every night: "*Dear Savior, help us that the evil Russians and French don't shoot our father to death".* She had heard how one night many horses were led past the house "into the war" and now felt especially sorry for these poor animals. The other two children were captivated by the military activity and could hardly wait for the time when they would see their father in uniform. I learned that one could enlist anywhere as a Landsturmmann. So, I enlisted in Zwickau, could be with my family in the quarters with my parents-in-law, until after 6 to 7 months I was given leave for service as a clergyman in Austria-Hungary. So, I can't report any special exploits on the battlefield. I experienced the war only in the garrison and on the drill ground. Nevertheless, serving as a soldier during the war, I believe, was not in vain. I joined the Landsturmbataillon Zwickau, later the Bataillon Schneeberg, and had to train recruits. Besides the drill on the shooting range, the training with the rifle and the combat exercises in the field, I had to hold many "instruction lessons", whereby the colleagues gladly pushed all the lessons to me, which had to do with the soldierly honor, with the testimonies of honor, the character of the soldier, the behavior on leave etc. I was also gladly called upon to give lectures on the war itself, its causes and aims. I did this service gladly and with pleasure, since I could weave in many things to my heart's content about character building, the dangers of alcohol, the various temptations that threaten soldiers at home and in times of war, and I did not fail to point out that fighting oneself is the hardest war, defeating oneself the most beautiful victory. And I knew that these lessons were popular.

Our captain was the 60-year-old Corporal Klötzer, who had already participated in 1870 and earned the Iron Cross there. He was an ideal officer for whom his Landsturm men went through fire. I can still see him coming on his horse and gathering the company, which consisted of thirty-nine 42-year-old men, around him. The speech he gave was a pattern of empathy with the old soldiers' way of thinking and pedagogical wisdom. "*I have just come from the Herr Major*" - we had been given a new battalion commander - he began, "*who drew our attention to the fact that soldiers of the Landsturmbataillon, who had met him on his first walk through the town, had made unspeakably weak expressions of honor, not worthy of a soldier. Do you know what I answered the Major? They were not from my company*, I said, *I am convinced of that. For mine, the first company, knows what is proper, and there is no one among them who thinks that at 40 years of age one can already go limp, for they have an example in their 60-year-old captain*." Then he straightened up in the saddle and added: "*Look at me, comrades! I have already been through the 70 war and was one of the first to report for active duty now. Do you think that I could make a weak testimony of honor? What your company commander, who is about 30 years older, can do, I'm sure you can do just as well*". I looked at the effect of this speech afterwards. Straightened up, straight, with strong steps that showed nothing of limpness, they strode along, and the testimonies of honor were of an exactness that the Herr Major could not have wished for better. There have also never been any complaints about bad honorifics from the first company.



F. H. Otto Melle with recruits of the Schneeberg Landsturm Battalion

One day my captain came and invited me to a social gathering of the officers of the battalion "with a glass of wine". I replied that I did not know whether I would not be a disturbance there, because I belonged to the strange people who drank neither wine nor beer. I was a teetotaler. "*Oh, that doesn't matter at all*," replied the captain. "*Our major will only be pleased about it, he is also half a teetotaler*". So I went, and since there were no hot drinks, I ordered a bottle of mineral water. But then the teasing started, it was a real running of the gauntlet. One comrade in particular stood out, who, as it turned out, was a lawyer in his civilian profession. Whatever ridicule he could muster about drinking water, up to the remark that one gets lice from drinking water, was let loose against the pastor from Vienna, as they called me. The whole group joined in, and I had trouble getting a word in edgewise until the Herr Major appeared and the conversation took a different direction. The Major gave me a special welcome, as it was the first time I had been present in this circle, invited me to take a seat beside him, and when he found out that I had become acquainted with the conditions in many countries through extensive travels, he conversed exclusively with me for almost the whole evening, asking ever new questions, which I answered in little lectures. I even had the opportunity to testify about my position on the alcohol question. It was striking how the glasses made little noise and how interested the comrades followed the conversation. After a few weeks I met that lawyer and lieutenant, who was serving with another company, on the street. He asked me if I had an hour of his time. Then we walked together a few times around the well-known Zwickau swan pond, while the comrade poured out his heart to me. He had enlisted at the front and was moving out the next day with a troop unit to the west. "*You know*," he said, "*I will never forget that evening at our officers' get-together. I had probably already drunk a little too much and thought I could shake your principles with my taunts and teasing. But the longer we were together and the more you talked and expressed your view of life, which was so different from mine, the more I felt the weakness, the insecurity, the wrongness of my point of view. And do you know what desire arose in me? I would like to become free from the dangerous snares of alcohol, which has played many an evil trick on me, and I would like to become as solid a character as you seem to be*." Now I had the opportunity to describe the path to freedom and the sources of strength from which we can draw to overcome alcohol and the other enemies that threaten us. With a warm and grateful handshake, the lieutenant took leave of me. I never heard from him again. It is possible that he died a heroic death for the Fatherland, but I hope that that evening in the officers' circle and the conversation at the Swan Pond have brought some fruit to his life.

Are such leaderships services for the Fatherland, are they for the Kingdom of God? They are both. Perhaps I have never felt this more strongly than in those wartime days. Whether I was moving in the circle of comrades, whether I was exercising with my platoon on the shooting range, whether I was holding instruction lessons or standing in the pulpit on Sunday and preaching, it was a service on behalf of my divine Lord, and I became more and more convinced that the more faithful I was in heavenly service, the more beneficial my work for the Fatherland turned out to be. I do not know if I would have learned this lesson so emphatically and convincingly without the World War period. Beautiful opportunities for service in the kingdom of God were offered on Sundays. I usually stood in the pulpit in one of our churches in Saxony. And I was in uniform, because that was what the congregations preferred. Field gray was the color that dominated the image of war. The preacher in field gray appeared as a symbol of the unity of the fighting troops with the congregation in the house of God and the strengthening through God's word and prayer as a weapon in the fight against internal and external enemies.

In the meantime, almost all preachers of the Methodist Church in Austria-Hungary had been drafted. A. Pratsch, who had been sent as a missionary to the South Sea Islands, was replaced by K. Gläser, who had been called up immediately after the outbreak of the war. But the brothers who had not served in the military also took their turn: Riedinger, Ujvidék; Bargmann, Graz; Funk, Budapest; Mann, Verbácz. Then, on the advice and with the help of Pastor Giebner, the Viennese parishes decided, without my intervention, to submit a request to the General Command of the Wehrmacht for my leave of absence. I myself have not seen a copy of the request to this day, but I believe that the aforementioned emergency and the necessity of pastoral care as a strengthening of the home front, especially in the Danube Monarchy, will have been pointed out. Our battalion was ready to march to the occupation of a town in Belgium. Captain Klötzer had expressed his joy that I was with them, "because," he said, "we will sometimes need religious strengthening." Then unexpectedly - I think it was only a few days before we were to move out - I received a message from the General Command that I was on leave of absence to Vienna "for the duration of the mobilization." I had a strange feeling. On the one hand, there was the desire, which fills every German man's breast, to use his strength for the defense of the fatherland, which is threatened from all sides, like the other comrades, and on the other hand, the feeling that I could also do pastoral service with the troops. I had enlisted as a non-commissioned officer, I had been promoted to the rank of sergeant, and I enjoyed the trust of my superiors to a high degree, so that I definitely felt like a good soldier. On the other hand, the work that had been built up in Austria and Hungary was close to my heart: the care of the congregations, which were like sheep without a shepherd, the publication of the "Evangelist for the Danube Countries", the administration of the church property with its problems, which were not easy in wartime, and - what was of course of current importance - the acquisition of a property for Budapest, for which the means were available. But the decision where my place and service were during the war time had been made in a higher place. The choice was not in my hands. So, I accepted the leave of absence as a providence of God with the request to God that he may give me strength to fill my place in such a way that my work in the unity recognized by me may serve the kingdom of God and at the same time the fatherland. There was only one thing I wondered about - and others wondered about it too - and that was that my passport said: "On leave for the duration of mobilization". At the consulate in Vienna, a general even explained that, in his opinion, this was the first and only passport with such an entry. One is always granted leave only for a certain period of time. However, there was no doubt about the registration, and I was grateful for it, because it helped me to make plans for even longer periods of work with peace of mind and some security.

In Vienna, it was relatively easy to hold regular services, or to have them held. We had such a beautiful alliance relationship that the available forces made themselves available in free exchange for the preaching of the word; the lay co-workers also stepped in, and the members felt the responsibility to be all the more faithful in such times. I also look back with gratitude on the alliance meetings that we had more often. The seriousness of the situation, the concern for the future, the increasing pressure of food difficulties, in other words, the common need drew hearts to each other, and we experienced more and more the blessing of the community of faith, love, hope

and prayer. The wartime prayer meetings grew in attraction and impact. The spiritual strengthening through immersion in God's thoughts revealed to us and through the offering of our petitions in prayer became clearly evident, even among people who had not had any personal experience of salvation. Some Catholics found their way to our halls. In addition to pointing out a word of Scripture, I sometimes used to give a brief overview of the latest war events and read aloud some letters from the brothers on the various fronts. To some of these brethren it was given to find words of faith out of their war experience that served for the edification of the whole congregation. And God confessed to the work that lost sons and daughters found their way back to the Father.

Of course, I was traveling a lot. I had to visit the parishes in Styria, in and around Budapest, in Trieste, in Bácska, to cheer them up, to arrange the plan for the services, to arrange the administration of the finances. In some places, in Sziracz, Tisza, Kalman, Falra, it was even possible to acquire property, as in Budapest. Some brothers, such as Brother Funk in Budapest and Brother Riedinger in Ujvidék, whom I later asked to move to Vienna, were temporarily released from military service (though they were later called back), so that they could be used for church work. We all regarded this time as a special test of faith, for us as well as for the still young congregations. Many anxious questions arose. Will these brothers and sisters endure even if there are no shepherds to feed and guide them? Won't many who have only made a weak start take the opportunity to leave? I do not want to say that these worries were unfounded. The enemy of our souls likes to use such times for special attacks, and, as Paul says, we are not unaware of what he has in mind. But there is something glorious about the mysterious bond that the Holy Spirit wraps around those whom he has added to the church. This bond is stronger than any organizational rule, it grasps and moves the hearts, it draws to the crucified and risen Christ, in whom all have their unity, their strength and their goal, and it is a means of protection against the "cunning attempts of the devil". In those years, with their many hardships and struggles, I came to understand in a completely new way the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit in the community of believers. It is not enough to know theoretically about the work of the Spirit or to read about it in the Acts of the Apostles; one must experience it all in the present. The value of our institution of quarterly conferences also appeared to me in a new light. The fact that the district leader (superintendent) comes from time to time, asks for answers to fixed questions about the state of the work, and can intervene with his advice and help, is already in normal times a beneficial means of promoting the work, but in times of crisis it is even more so, it is a means of grace of inestimable importance.

And something else I learned: the value, the necessity and the blessing of intercession. Again and again, I read the passages in the Pauline letters in which he calls for intercession for himself, and in which he speaks of his prayers for the churches. When false doctrines threatened as in Colossae, when divisions tore the community apart as in Corinth, when there was a lack of strength for spiritual life, when news came of serious battles with flesh and blood or "not with flesh and blood, but with the evil spirits under heaven", then he bowed his knees before God and the Father of Jesus Christ and pleaded for the spirit of understanding, for growth in knowledge, for strength for the inner man, and he had the conviction that his prayers would reach up to the throne of grace. I learned something that I have practiced ever since: Not only to pray when one can formally talk aloud to God in a church service or in a closet, but also on the train, during conversation, on a walk, on the way to a church service, etc. When I traveled like this from one station to another or was at home writing letters, I would present the needs or joys of my brothers and sisters to the Lord in an inner gaze.

It was around that time that my esteemed director from seminary days and friend, Dr. P. G. Junker, visited me for the last time. We went together down the Danube to Ujvidék. At 4 o'clock in the morning we were awakened in our hotel room because a family man who had to be called up that day wanted to speak to me urgently. Then Brother Junker said: "You can really say with Paul: '... that I am approached daily and take care of all the churches' ". And he added: "There it is also necessary to practice intercession like Paul". It seemed to us like a sign and a miracle that our congregations passed the test and came out of it proven and purified. We were also very grateful that we now had the "Evangelist for the Danube Countries" and the "*Békeharang*" for the Hungarian readers. Thus,

we could keep in touch with each other, and the preparation of each issue was a joy for me. I was able to convince myself of the influence of the magazines once during a visit to the Bácska. Almost everywhere I went I heard the rumors of an imminent peace. I was interested in the source of these rumors, which appeared with such certainty. To my surprise, I learned that it was a phrase of the evangelist, not fully understood, which, when read, a brother had exclaimed, "*There will soon be peace. Our Melle wrote it in the 'Evangelist*'".

That our Viennese deaconesses, sisters of the Bethany Association, made themselves available for the service of the wounded was a matter of course. We had a military hospital in our house in Trautsohngasse. Likewise, our sisters nursed in the larger military hospital in the palace of the Duke of Cumberland very close to Schönbrunn Palace. The Christmas celebrations in these military hospitals were beautiful occasions to bring the Christmas Gospel to the wounded soldiers, and I particularly like to think back to a Christmas celebration in the Cumberland Palace, at which our deaconess choir sang and Rev. Dr. E. - later professor at the university and dean of the theological faculty - and I had the privilege of giving the addresses. Our path was to bring us together sometime later - at theological courses and Alliance conferences.

It was during a visit to Bácska, in Obekze, when one morning in the hotel at breakfast the waitress brought me the news: "The king has died" (she spoke Hungarian). Through the window I saw the proof: the flags on the public buildings were hanging at half-mast. Obekze is a small town with predominantly Hungarian and Serbian population. Everything else was forgotten. Even the news from the battlefields seemed to have lost its interest. Everywhere groups of people stood together and discussed the death of the King of Hungary, the Emperor of Austria. In Hungary, people never spoke of the emperor. Here he was the king crowned with the crown of St. Stephen since 1867. General was the mourning in both countries of the Danube monarchy. The love and veneration that Queen Elisabeth enjoyed among the Hungarians had gradually spread to her husband, who in his tender letters to his wife used to address her in Hungarian: "My sweet angel." The participation was especially deep in Vienna. The old monarch, whose sense of duty, honorableness and love for his peoples was well known, enjoyed, the older he became, the more prestige and veneration. He was regarded as the detached regent, averse to all adventures, who had been forced to draw the sword once again only by the enemies of the monarchy. His personality not only held Austria and Hungary together, but it was believed that the centrifugal forces in Austria would also be banished as long as he lived. How much one would have wished that he might live to see peace. Now he was dead! The emperor was his young, inexperienced nephew Karl. What I had felt in Obekze, what was repeated in Budapest, I found to a greater extent in Vienna: uneasiness, terrible forebodings, terrible fears about the outcome of the war and the future were everywhere to be felt. Reality proved these fears all too true. For the allies, the death of Franz Josef I was as much as a lost battle or even more.

F.H. Otto Melle – Memoirs 1875-1936

Chapter 21 A War Orphanage in Szenttamás and How the Orphans Got Me a Trip to Switzerland (1916-1917)

It was towards the end of the second year of the war. I was preaching one Sunday morning in Ujvidék (1) on the Danube, that beautiful little town of the Bácska, opposite the Peterwardein (2) fortress. Shortly before the war, while A. Mehner was supervising preacher of the district, we had built and consecrated a chapel with a residential house there in Prince Eugene Lane, not the first property, but certainly the first chapel built by ourselves. This gave the congregation something of a historical character for our work. During the sermon I saw one of our sisters, a member of the congregation, having difficulty holding back the stream of tears that flowed from her eyes. Some heavy sorrow must have struck her.

"*What happened*?" I asked her after the sermon. " *Haven't you heard*?" was the reply. "*My husband was killed in the Carpathians during an attack on the Russian positions. Now I stand there with my four small children, all alone in the world. I myself am young and strong, could work and earn something, but who would take care of my children*?" and the tears flowed profusely again. The image of that widow at Nain was before my eyes, to whom Jesus said, "*Do not weep*!"

"*Be patient for a few days*," I said, "*I hope you will be able to bring your children to Szenttamás, where we will take care of them in an orphanage. I will travel there tomorrow and discuss the matter*." The sister looked at me with a surprised but grateful look, as if to say, " *Yes, that would be a solution. There I would know my children were in good hands, in proper care and under Christian influence*." It was immediately clear to me that in these children from our own church there was a sign from God that showed us the way to a new activity of love. Our siblings Julius and Marie Jakob, with whom I had lived during the first years of my Hungarian activity and with whom I was closely connected, had sometimes expressed in conversation the thought that they would like to do something special for orphans one day. As I knew from their preacher Paul Riedinger, they still carried the wish in their hearts and would certainly be willing to make an offering for a home for war orphans.

I had not been mistaken in my expectations. The idea of starting an orphanage was received with enthusiasm and immediately proceeded to its realization. Our original brother Johann Häuser, owner of a well-functioning

brickyard, had built himself a smart new villa some years ago. A small, low old house, situated next to his brickyard, stood quite empty, in any case it was not inhabited. Couldn't he put this house at our disposal? Quickly, we paid him a visit and told him about the idea! We found the same willingness and enthusiasm in him and his dear wife as in the Jakob family. I only had one reservation. The Häusers' estate was located somewhat outside the village, surrounded by a gypsy colony. There are settled gypsies with their own small primitive houses and itinerant gypsies whose home is the gypsy wagon and Mother Earth somewhere they happen to be. The wandering gypsy, in his gypsy pride, considers himself the real "Roma", the human being - they have the same word for gypsy and for human being - and looks down exalted on the other people, even their settled comrades, whom they consider fallen creatures. All kinds of attempts have been made in Hungary to bring the Gypsies to a different view of life through instruction and education. These attempts, however, can be considered as failed. Only some of them succeeded. The gypsies, whether wandering or settled, remained gypsies. My concern was whether the proximity of the Gypsies, especially because of their known tendency to steal, could not be dangerous for an orphanage. Brother Häuser reassured us completely. It was certain that the settled gypsies also had no sense for the property of their neighbors. But it was just as certain that they would never steal anything from the immediate neighborhood. For example, he does not think it is necessary to fence his property, and although he is surrounded by Gypsies, nothing has ever been stolen from them.

So, a beginning could be made. The house was soon put in order, the Jakob family, who owned a wood shop, immediately promised to have the necessary furniture for some rooms made and donated to the home; a single woman who had a heart for orphans agreed to take care of them. I have always found that when a step is in the plan of God, the Lord Himself paves the way and opens the doors. Everything went so easily here, so naturally, I want to say without any effort, because even the food for the first months was promised immediately.

We were facing the conference that was being held in Budapest, and I had the impression that it would be good to make the enterprise a conference matter. Perhaps it was the founding of the war orphanage that gave the conference a special character. I presented the plan, many good words were spoken on the matter, and then it was unanimously decided that we would establish a war orphanage in Szenttamás. The plan was that all the churches in the conference would help. Perhaps individual friends would be found who would pledge to give 20 crowns a month for the orphans. In any case, each congregation in Hungary as well as in Austria was to become sponsor for an orphan and raise the mentioned sum. Not a single parish refused. Much love and prayer were woven into the gifts for the "poor orphans", the home developed, God's blessing visibly rested on this activity, the first four children were joined by others, and we were soon faced with the need to look for more space.

But what was to be done? There was nothing to rent. On the other hand, we were offered a suitable house for sale in the middle of the Serbian part of the village, a bit out of the way, but with a yard and a beautiful garden. One could fatten a pig or two here, it was discussed, keep some poultry, and the garden would yield plenty of vegetables for the growing number of hungry mouths. One does not smile at these details. They were very important to us in the meetings and are quite part of the story I want to tell. That our funds were limited and we had to be careful with our budget is only incidental. But the advantages of ownership, as just described, were so striking and the need so compelling that I decided - believing in the Lord's help - to buy the house offered and have it made into a home for our orphans.

We thought we were acting "in faith". But our faith was sometimes based on all kinds of supports besides the living God. I had all kinds of thoughts about how God could help me to raise the sum that the house had cost. Hadn't I been to the United States in 1913? Had I not collected a list of addresses of dear friends from over there to whom I could turn? True, the English and French were not letting letters through to America from the Central Powers area, but I had heard that a submarine was going to make an attempt to break through the ocean barrier. What an event that would be in "neutral America" - I calculated - if my letters describing the orphanage arrived with this submarine! In any case, I would like to collect something and send the money to Bishop Nuelsen in Switzerland. Who knows whether a little more would not be collected than the house had cost. The plan was certainly

quite nice. But here too, as so often in life, it was said: "*Take counsel, and nothing will come of it*!" God threw a monkey in the works in a way I never imagined.

The letters were written, perhaps not entirely clumsily, for they were work of the soul. The submarine also left, but it did not arrive on the American shore. At least that is what I was told. The letters never reached their addressees. In contrast, another surprise came: President Wilson, who had talked so much about neutrality and who had been re-elected in 1916 under the slogan: "*He kept us out of war*," declared war on Germany just as things were beginning to get dicey for England and France. This was the biggest surprise of the war in political terms. We know today that it was decisive for the outcome of the war. For us Methodists in Austria and Hungary it meant a particularly heavy blow. After all, until the end of 1916 we had still received support for our preaching families through the office of Bishop Nuelsen in Switzerland, because the work in the Dual Monarchy was not self-sustaining. That would now automatically fall away. No more thought that help for the orphanage could come. I could not blame my colleagues, however, when they expressed the opinion that their superintendent had fallen in with his optimism, because in addition to the loss of the appropriation from America, there was now the heavy debt burden of the orphanage. The situation was really serious; it cost me sleepless nights and put my faith to a new and hard test.

And so it was in the spring of 1917, when, after returning from Hungary, I saw among the mail I had received a program for the Swiss conference to be held in Zurich under the chairmanship of Bishop Nuelsen. There was no special invitation, but the program sent to me by one of my colleagues could be considered an invitation. Like a flash of lightning, it flashed through my mind, "*Should this perhaps be a hint for you to seek permission to travel to Switzerland*?" When I shared this idea with my dear wife, she shook her head: "*Haven't you read how strict the regulations are for traffic with Switzerland? How suspicious people make themselves who want to travel across the border? Won't you expose yourself to great danger*?" But I just couldn't get rid of the thought, and the next day I went to the War Ministry, where a department for foreign travel had been set up. When I presented my intention, I received from the officer in question, a major, such a brusquely dismissive answer as I was not accustomed to in my dealings with Austrian authorities, despite all the prejudices they had against Protestant clergymen. I must have made a somewhat puzzled face, for before I could make my way back to the door, the stern Major found himself obliged to ask again what I was doing in Switzerland.

"*I have founded a war orphanage, which I am somewhat concerned about maintaining. So, I thought that if I could attend the conference of the Swiss Methodists, they might be willing to help me in the care of these children with a few Swiss francs*." Then the Herr Major jumped up, came toward me, and the tone of his voice was transformed, "*What do you say? A war orphanage? For children whose fathers died in the war? Please sit down and tell me a little more about it*." "*I must*," he added, "*report that to the general*." He asked me to wait a little. After some time, he came out of the general's room and told me that the whole matter was of great interest to them. This was the first war orphanage they had heard of. I should bring them official proof of the correctness of my statements for their files, and then I would receive permission to travel to Switzerland. Then I realized again something of the mysterious threads of God's hand. I wanted to help the orphans, now I saw that the orphans were helping me. Our God is called Wonderful! I immediately sent, still from the War Ministry, a detailed telegram to the mayor of Szenttamás, whom I knew well, and who was informed about the orphanage in all details. I asked him to send me a telegraphic confirmation of my information about the orphanage for the aforementioned purpose. The answer came immediately in Hungarian, which was more than a confirmation of my information; it was an appreciation in high tones of our activity as a church in general and of the beneficial work of the orphanage in particular. Soon I had the visa for a trip to Switzerland in my passport and could start the journey with the best wishes of the officer on duty for a good success.

Despite all this, things did not go so smoothly. I had registered in Zurich and had been asked by the brothers there to give an address at the festive assembly on the Sunday of the conference. This was so important to me that, contrary to my habit, I wrote down the speech that was not to be given for another 14 days. Otherwise, I

used to just make some notes beforehand, ponder the thoughts and then write them down only immediately before or even after the speech. My wife teasingly said, "*If you have a speech ready so long beforehand, I'm worried you won't give it at all,"* and she was right this time. Although I left at the beginning of the week in order to arrive in time in the Swiss conference city, I reached Zurich only on Monday morning, when the festival Sunday had long since passed. It was the rule during the war that travelers who wanted to go from Austria to Switzerland had to wait at the border in Feldkirch for a few days until the news that could have brought them across the border was out of date. So, while the conference was meeting in Zurich, I had a wait in Feldkirch. Feldkirch has a large Jesuit institute, along which I now walked every day. I talked with the boys who went to school here and became acquainted with a method of church work and education that seemed to me exemplary in many respects and revealed something of the causes of Catholic success. The Jesuits prefer to take in gifted boys from the countryside whose parents are too poor to send their children to better schools. These children are cared for here, receive the best education imaginable, the most talented among them are sought to be won for the priesthood, and it is understandable how this attempt succeeds with most of them. Since these men would never have come to study without the help of the Jesuits and the Church, a feeling of gratitude and attachment to the Church remains in their hearts throughout their lives. I had to think about this a lot, deepened the thoughts during later trips and then - after the collapse and the beginning of the relief operations - presented it in a detailed memorandum to Bishop Nuelsen. It became my conviction that we as a Methodist Church needed to give much more attention to children and youth, also in that we should help able poor children, especially including preachers' children, to attend the best schools. In America, our church had recognized the importance of education by establishing its own schools up to universities. Even the German Methodists had done this in their colleges of Warrenton and Berea and some other places. In Germany this would be wrong, since here with our excellent state education system we do not need private schools. But we can help our boys and girls to acquire a good education. And it was natural for me to connect these thoughts with the care for the orphans. The quarantine had not been in vain. It, too, like everything temporal, passed. On Monday morning I was finally able to leave and arrived in Zurich shortly before the end of the conference.

They were pleased to welcome me from the country of war and distress and asked me to tell some things about Austria and Hungary. I told of my difficulties in obtaining a visa, told some of the work in the communities, and concluded with the story of the founding of the orphanage. When I had finished, I experienced something unprecedented: One of the brothers stood up and said that he now believed he was speaking in the spirit of all when he not only thanked me for my communications, which had given a completely new insight into the work of the Reich in a warring country that was a neighbor of Switzerland, but he also made the motion that the conference now immediately take up a collection for the orphanage in Szenttamás. Others spoke to the motion, supporting it, and the collection, I need hardly assure you, yielded a handsome result. But that was not all. The interest was aroused, the love and willingness to sacrifice of the brothers was expressed so strongly that one after the other came and asked if I could not give a lecture in his congregation, he was convinced that they would also like to give me a nice gift for my orphans.

So, I stayed in Switzerland for a few weeks and suddenly became a donation collector. Later, after Austria's collapse, I was in Switzerland once or twice more and experienced the same thing each time. Therefore, I may anticipate a little here and report some of the later collection trips. As a rule, I bought a monthly pass, so that if I had to speak somewhere in the evening, I could also take the opportunity during the day to see something of the magnificent mountain world. Thus, I came to the Bernese Oberland, to Lausanne and Geneva on the lovely shores of Lake Geneva, to Lugano on the Italian border, to the Saint Gotthard and to Ticino. I enjoyed the panorama of the Alps to the fullest, in a country that had been spared from war and lay like an island of peace in the middle of the stormy sea of war. But more than nature, I was captivated by the evening meetings in the churches. Churches and halls were filled to capacity, and people never tired of hearing, nor tired of helping. Some of the relief actions that later began in a generous way were born in those days. For example, after the end of the war, I once described the hunger in Vienna. Afterwards, a few colleagues from the seminary came and told me that they had just agreed to

let my family come to Switzerland for 4 or 5 weeks so that they could recover and eat their fill. I thanked them touched for their love, but was convinced that I could not accept this noble offer unless the other preachers' families, who suffered in exactly the same way, were given the same privilege. I went to Bishop Nuelsen, explained the matter to him and suggested whether it would not be possible to create such a rest in Switzerland for the preaching families from Austria from the support funds of the German Methodists in America. Bishop Nuelsen immediately responded to the idea, his appeal in the "*Apologeten*" found a strong echo, and the result was that not only the Austrian, but also many preacher families from Germany could recover and strengthen themselves in Switzerland for a few weeks. The director of the Christian Association Bookstore in Zurich at that time, Brother Lienhardt, was entrusted with the implementation of this and similar actions, and all those involved will remember him with gratitude.

Of many impressive experiences from those collection days, I will only mention one that I will never forget. It must have been in 1919. I was once again in Switzerland for a Sunday and on the Friday before I called the preacher of our first congregation in Zurich to say that I might be willing to give a talk on Vienna in and after the war in his church on Sunday afternoon. For the newspapers were full of news about the situation in Vienna. "*With pleasure*," he said on the phone, "*but I must ask you not to expect a collection this time, because we have already had special collections three Sundays in a row.*" I myself had not thought of a collection, but saw from the remark that I had already come into the reputation of a collector. So, I replied that he could quietly designate the collection for some purpose, I just wanted to tell him that I was at his disposal for the evening. He announced the lecture in the newspaper, and I found the church full to bursting that evening. After the lecture he told me about our telephone conversation and added that after the described emergency situation in Vienna he could not bring himself not to give his congregation the opportunity to contribute to the relief of the need in Vienna. When he handed me the proceeds, he said that it was the largest collection ever made in his parish for a special purpose. But the gifts were not yet finished, various friends had told him that they would still send something by Monday morning, so I should call on him again. The next morning, he handed me a letter, the contents of which moved me deeply, and which I will therefore quote. It read: "*When you described the hardship in Vienna last night, it was in my heart that I should make a special sacrifice out of gratitude for the fact that we were spared the war. I had set aside 50 francs for my wife as a Christmas present and decided to talk to her about whether she would agree if I gave this sum to Dr. Melle for the needy in Vienna. But before I could present my wish at home, my wife fell around my neck and asked me to forgive her for a thought that had come to her during the lecture. She had saved 50 francs, which were intended as a Christmas present for me for a harmonium, which I had wanted for a long time. Now, however, she had thought whether I could agree that we should make this Christmas gift available for Vienna. When I replied that I had had the same wish with the Christmas gift intended for her, she was very happy. We decided to transfer the 100 francs to you and united in prayer that God may rest His rich blessing on this gift!*" I have had similar experiences with others. How these gifts were used for Vienna will be told in one of the following chapters. However, I felt the need, immediately in connection with the description of this Swiss trip caused by the orphans, to set a small monument of thanks and appreciation to the dear friends in beautiful Switzerland from those days also here in my memoirs. At that time, after the World War, they gave a confirmation of the beautiful word: "*When one limb suffers, all limbs suffer with it.*" And I am convinced that much of the blessing they bestowed has flowed back to their hearts, families and communities.

But now back to the orphanage and to that journey in the war year of 1917. The Austro-Hungarian crown was already beginning to sway precariously and the Swiss franc was rising. When I converted the gifts I received, which were in Swiss currency, into crowns according to the exchange rate slip, I noticed how I was getting richer day by day. I decided not to have the francs exchanged until after I had completed my trip. But who can describe my astonishment when, upon changing the money, I found that I had received in crowns almost in pennies and nickels the sum that we had owed the orphanage! I was able to pay off the entire debt and was able to tell my brothers, " *The orphanage is debt-free.*" Once again, the Lord had done above asking and understanding!

The orphanage in Szenttamás survived the period following the World War [WWI] , when Szenttamás and the whole Bácska belonged to Serbia. The Hungarian name of the place was replaced by the Serbian Srbobran. The town, where the Serbian population formed the majority, took a certain upswing. Even the army road, which was to lead from Budapest to Belgrade via Szabachka and Ujvidék [Novi Sad], was routed through Srbobran at great expense, passing right by our orphanage. The formerly remote home was now located on the main road. Of course, it has gained significantly in value as a result. The inscription remained the same. When we founded the orphanage, it read "Orphanage of the Methodist Church". The name remained the same during the Serbian period. It did not need to be changed when, after the campaign against Serbia, Bácska became part of Hungary again. And when I was able to visit Bácska again in 1941 after many years, I found the same inscription still there, the same house with yard and garden and - this was strange to me - the same number of orphans that I had left to my successor at that time. When the children had greeted me with a German and a Hungarian folk song and shown me their beautiful new toys, the head sister told me the following story:

During the Serbian campaign and after, many German troops passed by the orphanage on the new road. None of them seems to have paid any attention to the inscription on the building. Just before Christmas, however, a car coming from the south and on its way to Germany suddenly stopped in front of our house. Quite a number of German soldiers got out of it. One of them had noticed the German inscription: "Waisenhaus der Methodistengemeinde" (Orphanage of the Methodist Church). Curious about the meaning of such an inscription in a Serbian town, they decided to investigate the matter. The head sister was not a little surprised to see so many military coming in through the small door and was of course happy to greet them in German. Then she had the children line up, and the amazement of the soldiers increased even more when the children sang a German song in their bell-like voices, quite powerfully, as if they were used to it. At the request of the military, they also sang a Hungarian folk song, and the nurse assured them that all the children could speak and even sing not only German, but also Hungarian and Serbian, that is, in three languages. In the meantime, the coffee was ready, which the brave warriors enjoyed with a piece of genuine Bácska wheat bread. This must have been one of their interesting campaign experiences for the soldiers, which they told about back home and which they could not forget. Because when the Christmas leave was over and these soldiers returned to Serbia or Greece, they passed through Szenttamás again, stopped in front of the orphanage and brought a toy from Germany for each of the children. But Jesus' words kept coming to my mind, "*Whoever welcomes one such child welcomes me*."

(1) Novi Sad (Hungarian: Újvidék) second largest city in Serbia and capital of the autonomous province of Vojvodina. It is located on the border of the Bačka and Syrmia geographical regions on Danube River.

(2) Petrovaradin Fortress (Serbian) nicknamed "Gibraltar on/of the Danube", fortress in town of Petrovaradin, itself part of City of Novi Sad, Serbia. It is located on the right bank of the Danube River. The cornerstone of the present-day southern part of the fortress was laid on 18 October 1692. Petrovaradin Fortress has many tunnels as well as 9.9 mi of uncollapsed underground countermine system. In 1991 Petrovaradin Fortress added to Spatial Cultural-Historical Units of Great Importance list of the Republic of Serbia.

F. H. Otto Melle – Memoirs 1875-1936

Chapter 22 Austria's Collapse - Relief Actions—Foundation of the Auhof Children's Home (1918-1920)

In the summer and fall of 1918, hardship in Austria and especially in Vienna had risen to the highest level. The armies still stood at the fronts and fought with desperate bravery against a world of enemies. Even the state edifice was rotten, faith in victory had long since waned, and anyone who put his ear to the ground could hear the rumble of the coming earthquake from afar. That the state with its mixture of peoples would collapse was certain in public opinion. Only - what would follow, nobody knew.

In those days of tension, I visited the Italian parish in Trieste. After the service I held the quarterly conference, at the end of which I asked the traditional question: "*Where should the next quarterly conference be held*?" The answer was, "*In Trieste*." "*But no longer in Austria*," one of the brothers added with a grin. The next morning, I left - with all kinds of difficulties in traffic. Train connections no longer worked, there were excited crowds at the stations, many soldiers forced their way along, dark rumors buzzed through the air. In Vienna I learned that on the same day Italian troops had entered Trieste. So, I had just gotten out before the Italian occupation of the city.

In Hungary, the collapse was most shocking in that the Bolsheviks managed to seize power with the help of Károlyi. Stephan Tisza, one of the most important statesmen of the Kingdom of Hungary, was assassinated. Béla Khun, who had received his training in Moscow, carried out the "nationalization" of the country. I rushed to Budapest to see what could be saved for our communities and found the red flag flying on all the houses - not only on the government buildings - including the property of the Methodist Church in Felsöerdösor. The hostility to religion and Christianity gave vent to the sharpest threats, especially against the clergy. Bolshevists also threatened the leader of our work in Budapest, Preacher Martin Funk, with death. I tried to get through to one of the officials on duty in the Hofburg, where the Bolsheviks had set up their headquarters, but it was impossible with the immense crowd of people who had the same intention. We could do nothing but fortify ourselves in the meditation of the Word of God and in prayer. What serious and moving services we had together in those days, both in Hungary and in Austria! If ever in my life, the Holy Scriptures and the community of believers appeared to me then as a source of strength from which we can draw, every day anew, new strength. The popularity of Admiral Horthy (1), the later imperial governor of Hungary, among the Hungarian people

will be understood by everyone who lived through that time and saw how Horthy, with the use of his personality and determination, saved the country in the most critical hour and with exemplary bravery, and created a new foundation for the reconstruction and future of Hungary.

Austria lacked a strong leading personality. After the detachment of the Czech, Polish, South Slavic, and Italian territories, only "German Austria" remained. Emperor Charles had abdicated. One morning we learned that Austria - rather German Austria - had become a republic. The founding of the republic was to be celebrated by a special event. I believe it was one afternoon at 3 o'clock when the flags of the Republic were to be raised on the two flagpoles in front of the parliament building - it was called the Reichsrat or Imperial Council. The president was to give a speech. The process that took place was characteristic of the conditions at that time. I also wanted to go and see it, especially since the parliament was only a few minutes away from our apartment. Military had cordoned off the square. Many thousands of people had gathered, covering the Ring Strasse as far as the Hofburg on one side and the Burg theater on the other. With my 10-year-old son, I had taken a place close to the flagpoles where I could observe everything well. At 3 o'clock sharp, a signal was given, the flags went up about halfway up the poles, then the string broke. The people near me made their jokes: "*The Republic*," said one, "*seems to be working as badly or worse than the Empire*." Then suddenly on one pole the red flag of the Bolsheviks went up. This, in turn, was the signal for the beginning of a wild shootout. The military, interspersed with Bolshevik forces, fired blindly at the Parliament, probably using the windows as targets, assuming that the leaders of the Republic might be hit there. Panic broke out among the crowd. It is not known how many people were trampled, but it was said to be many, and it took a long time for Bolshevism to be defeated.

A glimmer of light in these dark days was for us the hope that Austria would be annexed to Germany and that an old dream of the German people would be realized. We Reich Germans were already allowed to vote in Austria, just as the German Austrians were allowed to vote in the Reich. Had not President Wilson proclaimed the right of self-determination of the peoples in his well-known 14 points? Had it not been emphasized again and again that one was not waging war against the peoples, but only against the governments? But the trusting Germans soon had to realize that all the fine words and promises were worthless as soon as Germans were involved. In the winter of 1918/19, an American who was otherwise friendly to us passed through Vienna just as a large demonstration for the Anschluss (political union of Germany and Austria) was taking place in front of City Hall. When I described to him the hopes of these masses, he said, "*These people are in an illusion. France and England will never admit that Austria is joining Germany.*" I considered this opinion to be the utterance of a private citizen who was not yet afflicted by the war psychosis. Statesmen would judge differently, Wilson was, after all, obliged before the whole world public to stand up for the given word. But the American was right. From Versailles, the Anschluss idea was decisively rejected, and little German Austria, with its population of only 6 million, one third of whom lived in Vienna, was forced to form a state that was not fit to exist. This was probably the most serious disappointment experienced by the sorely tried people of Austria. Even today, after more than 25 years have passed since then, I feel the movements of the people's soul in Austria from those days trembling.

It is not my intention to describe the political upheavals after the World War. However, this much has to be said in order to understand my attitude to the events and the following remarks about aid activities of our church. What is the task of the church of Jesus Christ in such epochs of history, when states are cracking at the seams, thrones are falling, old systems of government are being replaced by new ones, people see the ground shaking under their feet and look around for guidance, for counsel, for support, for strength? Of course, the preaching of the Gospel, the proclamation of God's love and the awakening of trust in Him. With the old system of government, the legal barriers to our work had also fallen, and we used the new situation as best we could for evangelism. But also, the earthly need forced us to think about whether we could intervene helpfully - as Jesus had done. Faith proves its authenticity when it is active in love. And love seeks to bind up the wounds of the one who has fallen among the murderers. "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*," says the King of heaven on the great day of judgment to

those on his right, while he pronounces judgment on those on his left: "*I have been sick, ye have not visited me; I have been hungry, ye have not fed me; I have been a prisoner, ye have not come unto me*."

That I had to get to know the Austrian misery first hand along with my family seems to me today also one of the divine means of blessing me and preparing me for a special service. There is suffering with others and suffering for others. My wartime experience in Vienna has taught me a better understanding of the words of the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1:24: "*Now I rejoice in my sufferings, which I suffer for you, and make restitution in my flesh for what is lacking in Christ, for his body, which is the church*." The need in Vienna was really great. The food difficulties of Austria had to have an effect especially in the city of two million people. In addition to the scarcity of food, there was also a lack of organizational talent, and I often wondered about the patience of the Viennese. One had to line up as early as 12 o'clock at night if one wanted to get hold of 6 pounds of potatoes after 8 o'clock in the morning, when the sale began, provided that a few wagons had arrived once again. There were no tickets for this. Those who were just there received something. Those who came later were left behind. In order to get two portions after all, I took my 10-year-old boy with me when I was waiting in line at the famous Naschmarkt (2). How happy we were when we got home around 10 o'clock in the morning and were able to bring 11 to 13 pounds of potatoes in our backpacks to our mother in the kitchen. There were people who already in the evening at 9 o'clock sat down with a little chair in front of the gate of the market hall and waited there patiently until the next morning to get once again some fat or half a pound of butter. If a store had received any food again, even if it was only dried vegetables, a crowd of people would gather in an instant, and it would take only minutes to sell the last pound. Once I was walking through Mariahilferstrasse when a grocery store just received a barrel of herrings. Immediately I joined the line, others did the same, the merchant couldn't help but start selling immediately. But he explained that everyone could only get one piece. Nevertheless, the barrel was not enough for all who were already waiting. When I came home with my herring, there was a real cry of triumph in the family.

Bread, which was, however, strictly rationed, became worse and worse. First, the rye flour was stretched with corn flour, then one was forced to resort to more and more questionable substitutes. I don't believe that they even used sawdust, although some people claimed that they did. Every morning we received a certain amount of food for our family of five people. My wife could not help herself but give each person, including the children, their portion. Then I gathered the small crowd, thanked God for the gift sent to us again, and explained that everyone had to make do with his piece. We wanted to see who could manage to have the most left over for supper. This gave rise to a competition to eat as little as possible and to practice starvation. But it was difficult to succeed. And how often it happened that in the evening there was nothing left. Then my good wife came into my study with teary eyes and said: "*The children are crying in their beds from hunger. You know I don't have a morsel of bread left, a potato or a spoonful of flour in the kitchen. We have to wait until tomorrow morning to get some more. Why don't you go into the bedroom and see if you can calm the children down*." What was there to do? I told the kids an exciting story with a cheerful face but bleeding heart, distracting them until they fell asleep. The next morning, we folded our hands and prayed - as we had never done before: "*Give us this day our daily bread*." As it happened to us, it happened to everyone who did not have relatives in the countryside. During my visits to Hungary, the dear brothers and sisters there would have liked to give me something, but Hungary did not let out anything over the quota of food it officially delivered to Germany and Austria. The examination at the border was very strict, and one owed it only to the forbearance of a sympathetic official if one succeeded in bringing home half a loaf of bread or even a few pounds of splendid wheat flour.

After the armistice came the worst time. Vienna, considered a capital much too big for the small country, and often called the *Wasser Kopf* ("big head") by people living in other parts of the country, was completely cut off from its hinterland. The Communists, who were fighting for power, were all the more concerned with embarrassing the new republic. They thought the easiest way to do this was to starve out the city where the seat of the new government was located. They did not allow any food to pass through a ring they guarded. It was not a question of money. I had received a few thousand francs from my Swiss friends in support of the

starving members of our communities. But what was the use of money if you could not get anything for it? We were in the position of that wanderer in the Sahara who, starving, found a bag of pearls which he threw aside disappointedly with the words: "*Woe is me, they are only pearls*!" Day and night I was preoccupied with the thought of what an event it would be for our members if we could get each family a backpack of potatoes. It was a few weeks before Christmas in 1918. But the thought seemed nothing more than a pious wish. Then one day our brother Müller came to me, a Reich German, capable businessman, formerly a member of the Evangelical Fellowship, who had joined us in Vienna. As the manager of a large shoe factory, he had all kinds of connections. He was one of those people who do not despair even in difficult situations and always find a way out. The idea of being able to give our families a special Christmas joy with a backpack full of potatoes grabbed him. I had told him that money was available, and in Swiss currency at that. After a few days he came back, beaming with happiness, saying that he had found a farmer who was willing to bring a whole wagon of potatoes to Trautsohngasse, through the military ring of communists. How he would do that was his business. We did not have to worry about that. On a certain evening he would be in Trautsohngasse as darkness fell.

Immediately our members were informed, because it was certain that the potatoes also had to be distributed immediately. But there arose a new difficulty. Wouldn't people notice that a wagon of potatoes was being unloaded in Trautsohngasse? The danger was great that people would gather around the wagon and storm the potatoes. How could this be avoided? Deciding quickly, I went to the nearest police station, had myself reported to the officer on duty and presented my concern to him. He had, I think, 16 or 18 men on guard. "*You can*", I said " *have 3 sacks of potatoes picked up for your people if you post 2 policemen in Trautsohngasse between half past seven and 10 o'clock in the evening, one upstairs and one downstairs, until we are finished*." This is what happened. The policemen were the first to receive their part. The guard did his duty, and the unloading proceeded without any disturbance. At the hour indicated, our members and friends arrived from all districts of Vienna, all equipped with backpacks. At least 45 to 55 pounds could be given to each family, about as much as a strong man could carry. After the distribution, we gathered in the hall for a short prayer session. Will it be believed that that hour left a particularly deep impression on me? I can still see the dear Viennese brothers and sisters before me, how they thanked God with tears of gratitude in their eyes for this surprising Christmas gift and how they implored His blessing on the dear givers in Switzerland. And it was not necessary to point out to them that we also owe these gifts to Him who gave His only begotten Son at Christmas, "*that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*."

The activity of love took its course once we had begun. The distress in Vienna found its way into the press abroad. I have already told you about my trips to Switzerland in the previous chapter. Pastor A. Bast in Copenhagen, the leader of our "Central Mission" there, sent me a few lines of sympathy for the heavy fate that had affected us in Vienna and asked me for news of how we were doing. He had my reply published in the daily press with the remark that he was prepared to send a wagon of food to Vienna if Danish friends would provide him with the means to do so. The appeal found a strong echo among the population, and it was not long before the first wagon arrived, soon followed by two others, as far as I now remember. The report of this Danish action became known in Stockholm, and the Swedish Methodists did not want to lag behind the Danish ones. Others, especially Free Church circles, joined them. I founded an "aid committee" in Vienna; in which the Alliance circles were represented. The camp was set up in the back building of our house in Trautsohngasse. Preacher Gläser, who had last been active in the soldiers' homes on the Eastern Front during the World War, was completely in his element in the administration of these things, and I myself felt something of the truth of the Savior's word: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*!" One day in the 9th or 10th district of Vienna I saw a crowd of haggard, miserable-looking women standing in line outside a grocery store. Some had their children by the hand, in whose faces one could clearly read the hardship of wartime. Perhaps a shipment of the familiar dried vegetables had arrived and they were now waiting for it. I looked at these women and mothers and wondered how I could best help them out of our relief effort without immediately blowing up the whole camp. Fortunately, I had a notebook with me with many blank sheets of paper that were about the size of a recipe. So, I called a few women to me - one after the other of the others followed, had them briefly

tell me how many children they had, etc., and then, depending on the "diagnosis" I established, prescribed 4 pounds of flour, 1 loaf of bread, 1 tin of canned food or even 1 pound of noodles, with the instruction to show the notebook in the afternoon between 3 and 5 o'clock at Trautsohngasse 8, where they would be given what they had written down. How surprised, and some probably incredulous, they looked at me! Was this supposed to be a joke? But in the end, confidence in my words prevailed; in overflowing joy they kissed the hand of the "doctor" who could prescribe such prescriptions, and in the afternoon these strange checks were all cashed. During the time when the camp was open and I could be at home myself, I often stood at the window and watched the goings-on. It was touching, no, moving to see how not only poor janitors and workers, but house owners, captains of industry, generals of the army, high officials came in person to pick up a package. To have someone pick it up would have meant sacrificing half of the precious food as a messenger's fee. In that case, it was better to go by oneself.

When it was possible to telegraph to America, I felt urged to call the attention of the Church over there to the growing need in Southeastern Europe, especially in Vienna. I did not think long about whether this was advisable. Hoover and the Quakers were about to launch a major relief effort for all of Europe. Shouldn't the Methodist Episcopal Church, which has congregations in most European countries hard hit by the war, feel compelled to do Samaritan work? So, I sent a telegram to Dr. North, the General Secretary of the Mission Board, calling attention to the situation and suggesting that a few thousand dollars be sent to Bishop Nuelsen in Zurich with the request that he buy food for Vienna. This was also done by telegraph, and it must have been in the fall of 1919 that 3 wagons of flour, purchased for the sum transferred, arrived in Vienna. An official of the Swiss Federal Railways, Mr. Morgenthaler from Bern, a member of our local community, took over the transport; Swiss soldiers accompanied it from the border to Vienna, since otherwise we would have had to fear raids, and our relief action warehouse could be filled to the brim. What a joy it was to be able to hand out with full hands! Anyone who has not experienced something similar will hardly be able to understand what such a shipment meant for the Viennese. It was mainly flour, and good white wheat flour, that could be distributed among the hungry. The question of how to distribute it was soon resolved. The words of Scripture came to my mind: "*Let us do good to everyone, but most of all to the comrades of faith*." According to this saying, action was taken. The members of our congregations were the first recipients, and they received abundantly. Then it was the turn of our friends from the Alliance and the free churches, with whom we were in close communion of faith. But that was not the end of the flour in. I had a list made of all the Protestant pastors, as well as the professors of the theological faculty in Vienna, and sent half a sack of flour to each family. Then to the teachers of the Protestant elementary school. Likewise, to the Protestant deaconess house. And finally, something was left over for some municipal and Roman Catholic institutions. The mayor of Vienna sent me a letter of thanks, and the other appreciative letters, including those from the Catholics, were all so heartfelt that I count them among the most beautiful memories of my time in Vienna. The photographs of the arrival of a wagon with food in front of the gate to our house in Trautsohngasse, the reception in the town hall with a Scandinavian commission, the members of the aid committee of the Evangelical Alliance, etc., also form valuable souvenirs that tell of much need and God's help.

Already in the summer of 1917 we had undertaken a small relief action for children. We placed a number of malnourished Viennese children with families in Bácska for four to six weeks. At that time, we did not think that this would develop into a generous and comprehensive relief work of the Methodist Church after the war. The consequences of malnutrition during the war years were especially noticeable among the growing youth. The children were pale, anemic, some emaciated, and the youngest prone to rickets. Doctors issued cries of warning. The danger was greatest for the Viennese children. In response to his appeals in the "Apologist," Bishop Nuelsen received gifts of love, especially from the German-speaking Methodists in America, and thus initially undertook a large children's campaign for the Viennese. Several trainloads of children, who had previously been medically examined and selected only on the basis of need, without distinction of denomination,

were sent to Switzerland and Scandinavia. What a few weeks of proper nutrition, change of air and rest in normal peacetime conditions could accomplish could be clearly seen in these children, whom we photographed before the rest and then after the vacation period was over.

But this kind of help was not only very inconvenient, it was also quite costly, and with the long railroad journeys - think of a trip from Vienna to Scandinavia - it was connected with many inconveniences and imposed a great responsibility on the persons accompanying the children. It also seemed doubtful whether this kind of help could be continued for a long time. I had received all kinds of gifts for "children's aid" from Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and America. Quite touching was an appeal that my old friend Dr. Hiller, who had heard the story with my children as I have told it above, had published in the "Apologeten" and asked the German Methodists in the USA to send money to alleviate the need in Vienna. Many small packages also arrived. The question arose for me whether I should use these gifts in the campaigns for trips abroad for the children, or whether there might be a more practical and suitable way to help. When we preachers got together, the matter was discussed. Finally, everyone agreed to the idea that we should start a children's home for malnourished children. The inconvenience of sending them abroad would be eliminated, and with the financial means available we would be able to procure good and plentiful food, if necessary, from abroad. Another advantage would be the employment of personnel trained for such service, and we would be able to do something also for those children who could not be sent abroad on the basis of a medical certificate, but who needed help even more urgently than the others. We presented our thoughts and plans in solitary and communal prayer to our God and Father, in whose service we knew ourselves to be, and I instructed my colleague K. Gläser, who particularly enjoyed such work, to look around for a suitable object in the vicinity of Vienna.

There was no lack of houses for sale, because with the collapse of the state and the sad conditions under which the new republic had to pave its way, many an existence collapsed. But for a long time, nothing suitable would be found for us, until one day our attention was drawn to the Auhof in Türnitz, Lower Austria, near St. Pölten. The Auhof had served various purposes. As far as I could learn, it had been built by a Frenchman, who probably had it painted red out of enthusiasm for the ideas of the Revolution. At first sight, one was surprised to see a building that shone in fiery red from the foundation walls to the roof. But after all, this was something external that could be easily fixed. On the main front, an imposing farm building with a tower, then two side wings, which were quite suitable for children's rooms. To the property belonged a large garden, a splendid meadow and a mountain with acceptable forest growth, which however had been strongly thinned in a not considerate way. The last use of the Auhof was as a sanatorium, but it had to be closed during the war. The building was empty, and the owner was anxious to get money as soon as possible in order to be able to fulfill his obligations.

My first impression was that it was "made for us," and without discussing the matter, I jumped at the chance. It was April 1920, and I was to leave for America at the beginning of May. The day before departure, I signed the purchase contract and appointed Preacher Paul Riedinger, who was later succeeded by Preacher Klemens Gläser, to set up the home. Food and other useful things were brought from the relief camp in Trautsohngasse to the Auhof in Türnitz, and soon the first malnourished children could be admitted. When I returned from America in June, the work was in full swing. There was a cheerful hustle and bustle. In addition to the children, there were also some adult recreation guests. Every morning a devotion took place in the beautiful hall, which had been arranged as a chapel; during the day light and air and invigorating food were enjoyed; in the evening there was often a Bible lesson or a lecture for the convalescent guests and the inhabitants of Türnitz, and the blessing of the Lord was clearly felt. After returning from my trip to America, I myself was only able to spend a few days in the Auhof with my family before moving to Germany, since I had been called to the Methodist seminary in Frankfurt am Main. It may be that when I said goodbye to the work I had grown to love, it was most difficult for me to part with the Auhof. But I was also able to part with the Auhof without worry. Bishop Nuelsen had taken on the task of developing the Auhof, and he worked at it with his well-known energy. A special bond had been forged between him and the Auhof: When I was in negotiations for the purchase, the bishop was on his way to America for the General Conference, which was held that year

in May in Des Moines, Iowa, in the Midwestern United States. I had nearly collected the sum that the property cost, but knew, of course, that many things were still needed for its establishment, expansion and operation. Whether it would be possible for me to come to America myself was not at all certain. So, I telegraphed the bishop on the ship and asked him whether he could collect 10,000 dollars for my children's home in Austria, given the willingness to help that now prevailed over there. Bishop Nuelsen showed the telegram at the first meeting in which he spoke in New York, telling of the starving Viennese children to whom their father told a funny story in the evening until they fell asleep. The effect was a surprising one. The German congregation of the Methodist Church in New York immediately decided to provide the requested $10,000 for the Austrian children's home. Whether Bishop Nuelsen had already thought of founding such children's homes in Germany, I cannot say. This much is certain, however, that our Auhof in Türnitz and the impression made by the description of its establishment right at Bishop Nuelsen's first lecture in the USA gave powerful impetus to the idea of "Methodist Children's Aid" for Germany.

Thus, the Austrian need helped to launch and promote the blessed children's charity. Bishop Nuelsen received other gifts for the malnourished children. His suggestion that the German Methodists in the United States undertake a special collection for this purpose was enthusiastically received from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But here belongs only my relation to this work. Already during my stay in America in the same year - in the middle of May, when the General Conference had already been in session for 14 days, I only arrived in the USA - I advocated the plan with the children's homes. Actually, as the newly elected director of the Preachers' Seminary, or as they said in America, "president" of the same, I should have aroused interest in this institute. But there was not much interest for that now. People wanted to hear from me about Southeastern Europe, about Hungary, about Austria, about Vienna, about the need there, about the founding of the Auhof. The "Christian Advocate", one of the best-known Christian magazines in America, published my report on the children's home under the headline (written by Dr. Luccok, later professor of practical theology at Yale University). *"The good Samaritan on the way to Vienna*." Even the missionary authority held out the prospect of financial help for the enterprise. The ground was receptive to appeals for a generous relief effort, and funds for other children's homes in Germany came together.

I had moved to Frankfurt a. M. in the summer of 1920. When various houses were offered for sale - there was no lack of suitable objects at that time, just as in Austria - the bishop asked me to look at them and to send him an expert opinion about them and the further steps to be taken. However, I was so occupied by the new task in the seminary, besides the financial responsibility for the work in Southeastern Europe, which still rested on my shoulders, that I could not possibly devote myself to the foundation and expansion of the children's homes. It was clear that this work required the strength of a man especially qualified for this task. After thorough consultation, we came to the conclusion that the then head of the Berlin district, Preacher Heinrich Schädel, would be best suited for this ministry. He was appointed by the bishop and proved to be the right man in the right place. He also succeeded, as I had suggested, in obtaining recognition for the "Methodist Children's Aid" as a "charitable foundation". Soon the homes in Nagold in the Black Forest, Kelkheim in the Taunus, Klosterlausnitz in Thuringia, Blankenburg in the Harz and Elmskrug in East Prussia could be established: In the territory of each conference a children's home. Bishop Nuelsen spent a lot of time and energy for the children's aid, put his heart into this activity of love, found in S. Schädel the predestined leader and earned the gratitude of many hundreds of children and their parents. It has always been a special joy for me to advise and pray on the Board of Directors of the Foundation, and I have always had the feeling that the seeds for this lovely fruit on the tree of Methodism were planted under God's mysterious guidance during the war hardship and the fight against it in Vienna.

The Auhof in Türnitz continued to develop quietly but steadily throughout the years. Director Wendling, who took Brother Gläser's place in 1923, was able to expand the work from year to year. Especially since the construction of the new large building, which could accommodate 300 children, the sphere of activity had become larger and larger. The agriculture connected with the Auhof contributed a great deal to keeping the ra-

tions up to date. In 1938 we owned one horse, 18 cows, 2 draft oxen and 10 head of small livestock, 4 breeding pigs and 20 fattening pigs, 75 chickens. These figures also give an idea of the extent of the work. During the system period, however, the Catholic Church made great difficulties because of the accommodation of the children in a Methodist home. The NSV found the home suitable for all kinds of events. A leisure time for mothers also took place in the Auhof, and a report about it in the "*Völkischer Beobachter*" contains the most beautiful description of the Auhof and its lovely surroundings that I know. Since the Reich, with its NSV relief organization, took care of the children itself, and since the Ministry of Food found the Auhof particularly suitable, we accepted the proposal to sell the home to the government. The final report available to me shows that in the period from 1921 to 1939, as many as 16,482 children and adolescents as well as 8,420 adults found here care, recreation and strengthening, as we may assume, for body and soul. Only eternity can reveal the blessings that have flowed into the people!

(1) Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya; German: Nikolaus Horthy Ritter von Nagybánya; 1868 –1957), was Hungarian admiral and statesman who served as regent of Kingdom of Hungary between two World Wars and through most of World War II – from 1920 to 1944. In 1915, he earned a reputation for boldness.

(2) Naschmarkt is Vienna's most popular market. It has existed since the 16th century when mainly milk bottles were sold (as milk bottles made out of ash wood, "Asch" (German for "ash") led to the name "Aschenmarkt". From 1793 onwards, all fruits and vegetables brought to Vienna with carts had to be sold there, while goods arriving on the Danube were sold elsewhere. Nowadays, one can buy fresh fruit and vegetables from around the world, exotic herbs, cheese, baked goods such as bread, kaiser rolls, torte, meats, seafood. Since 1977, the market extends further to an adjacent area every Saturday, when a flea market takes place there.

F.H. Otto Melle – Memoirs 1875-1936

Chapter 23 Invitation to America—Paris - Louvre - On the Eiffel Tower (1920)

In December 1919 I received a telegram from Dr. North, corresponding secretary of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in New York, asking me to come to the United States as soon as possible to report on conditions in Vienna, in Austria, in Hungary, Yugoslavia, that is, in Southeastern Europe, and to take part in consultations as to what the Church could do to help these countries. How this ecclesiastical relief action for Vienna was initiated, I have told in the last chapters.

To the credit of the leading men of the Methodist Church, let it be said that although the war psychosis was still rampant long after the Armistice and after the collapse of Germany, and the old atrocity tales were still being told and believed, the Church as such felt its responsibility now, without political inhibitions or considerations, to render aid where there was need. It did so in the countries of the Allies, which, like Belgium and France, had suffered greatly from the war; but it also turned its eyes to the plight of Austria, Hungary, the countries of Southeastern Europe, and Germany. It is well known that Bishop Dr. John L. Nuelsen, who at that time was the supervisor of the Central European Branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was very anxious that the countries of the Central Powers should not be forgotten in the generous relief efforts of the American Church. Dr. North had prepared for 1919 the centennial of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the congregations were willing to lay a special offering on the altar of the Lord, and a sum of it, enormous by our standards, was to be used for relief work throughout the world. Dr. North was the right man for such labor of love. Wesley's words, "*The world is my churchdom*," were in a sense embodied in him. In his hand ran together the threads of the worldwide missionary work of the United States Methodist Episcopalians, and in his memory the reports of difficulties and possibilities of church work, struggles and victories, progress and regress, were stored up and arranged as in a file system, so that he had only to tune in to the subject at hand to have at once the material present down to the minutest detail. I had corresponded with him since the

beginning of my work in Southeastern Europe; he had followed the work in the Bácska with interest, the beginning in Budapest was mainly due to his advocacy, and since we were organized as the "Missionary Conference of Austria and Hungary," I, as treasurer of the same, had to write, in addition to the regular detailed financial reports, an annual report for publication in the annual report of the missionary authority. The only strange thing was that this Secretary General had never succeeded in visiting Germany and Southeastern Europe, although he had been almost everywhere else. After the outbreak of the war in 1914 and after my discharge from the army service - shortly before Italy entered the war - Dr. North was in Italy. He asked me even then to come to Venice, and while we took a gondola ride in the Grand Canal, passing slowly the witnesses of medieval history, he had me tell in detail of our experiences in the work of the kingdom of God. Neither he nor I believed at that time that American intervention in the war was possible. Now he wanted to hear from me how we had fared in the war and what plans we had for the future. A second telegram asked me to wait for the visit of a church deputation before leaving.

Dr. North had arranged for the Methodist Episcopal Church to send a deputation to Europe to study the conditions and needs in the various countries. The deputation consisted of Bishops Dr. W. Burt, Dr. J. L. Nuelsen, Dr. W. Shepard, Dr. A. J. Bucher (editor of the "*Christian Apologist*," Cincinnati) and, Mr. Crawford, a New York business man who had studied in Germany and could also use German in public addresses. The gentlemen visited Switzerland, Italy, stayed a few weeks in Germany, and then came to Vienna, from where I was to accompany them on to Hungary and Yugoslavia. We were received by the governments of the time in Vienna, Budapest and Belgrade, and it was certainly more than interesting for me to get my impression of the leading statesmen to whom the task of building new states out of the ruins of the old empires had fallen. For, of course, in addition to the general emergency, the political question was also discussed. I still vividly remember the heart-rending appeal of the Hungarian Prime Minister Huszar to the gentlemen from the USA with regard to the breakup of Hungary. In Belgrade there was a small intermezzo: the new Minister of Foreign Affairs invited the deputation to a dinner. While discussing the invitation, a member of the deputation raised doubts as to whether it would be advisable for me, as an imperial German, to attend the dinner as well. Then Bishop Burt, who had been appointed chairman, explained: "*Dr. Melle is our man of confidence. He has served us as a guide during the entire journey. If anyone from the Serbian government should take offense at the fact that an imperial German is sitting at the table, then we, too, will renounce the reception*." That is how it remained. I was seated next to a gentleman from the Foreign Ministry, with whom I had a stimulating conversation throughout the evening.

Another small incident in Vienna deserves to be mentioned, because it throws light on the plight of that time. I had put up the deputation, which incidentally was also accompanied by Mrs. Bishop Nuelsen, Miss Edith Burt and Mrs. Crawford, at the Grand Hotel. On Sunday morning I was invited to breakfast to take them to the service afterwards. The waiter brought a portion of black coffee without sugar, milk and bread. Bishop Burt asked if they could not have some sugar and milk. Then the waiter looked at him with wide eyes, "*In Vienna there has been no sugar or milk for years*." "*But we can have a piece of bread with our substitute coffee, can't we*?" The answer was, "*There is no bread for breakfast on Sunday*." Still, the company did not go hungry. They had stocked up on plenty of food in Switzerland for the trip. But they had been convinced of the plight of hunger in the city of two million by the little scene at the breakfast table in the Grand Hotel in Vienna more than by other accounts.

By the way, the deputation recommended in a telegram to New York my journey to the USA, if possible, still to the General Conference, which was to begin on May 1 in Des Moines, most urgently, so that I could now think about the necessary preparations. First of all, I had to look for a place for a ship. There were no German ships. So, I first tried to find a way via one of the neutral countries. Twice, friends in Denmark had booked a place on a Danish steamer, but since my entry permit had not yet arrived, I had to let this ship sail without me. I turned to Holland and was almost at my destination when a strike broke out there, making it quite uncertain when traffic could be resumed. An Italian ship would not have taken me across until the end of May, that is, after the General Conference had closed. It already seemed as if I would have to drop this thought. So,

I went once again to Cook's office on Stephan Platz to see if I could not find a way to make the trip somewhere. "*We can't arrange anything*," was the reply. "*But if you want to risk going to Paris, it would be possible to still get a place there on the La France, which leaves on May 1. Because it often happens in our turbulent times that at the last moment one or the other passenger has to cancel for some reason*." So through France? Now after the war? That was exactly what I didn't want. I had been told that the hatred of the French population was great and that one would be exposed to the greatest inconvenience on French soil. But even apart from that, in my mood at that time, I did not feel the slightest inclination to show myself as one of the outlawed "Boches" (Krauts) in the hotels and streets of Paris.

It should be noted that in the meantime the expected entry permit for my passport had also arrived from the authorities of the United States. As I learned later, all kinds of assurances had to be given by acquaintances and influential personalities that I, coming from Hungary and Austria, was not infected by the bacillus of communism, which the United States feared like the plague. Bolshevism was regarded as the disease of defeated peoples and they sought to hermetically seal themselves off from it. I must confess that it would not be easy for me to objectively describe the entire situation at that time, including my own considerations and moods, if I had not kept a detailed diary about those events. For I am writing this memoir in the middle of World War II, in which the United States had formed an alliance with Bolshevism and the latter seemed to have become more than respectable in Washington. How to judge the history of this alliance and what consequences may follow is left for the future. However, for my task of giving an objective picture of that time, it is necessary that I push back considerations arising from the relationship between Germany and the USA and the USA and Russia in 1943. Therefore, I have decided to let my diary, which covers over 200 pages on the trip to America alone, speak for itself in the characteristic passages and mark them with quotation marks.
"*So, through France I was to travel? That was precisely what I did not want. But it was clear to me that I would have to use the last opportunity that presented itself to get across to the General Conference. So it was with very mixed feelings that I set out for the French legation in Vienna, which had already resumed its service. I did not have much hope. To my surprise, however, I was received with the utmost courtesy. The questionnaire I was asked to fill out was less extensive than the one I had to fill out as a Reich German at the German consulate if I ever wanted to travel to Germany, and I must admit that I was more than surprised when, after 10 minutes of waiting, I had in my hands the visa for passage through France. Even if one takes into account that the French officials in Vienna had very little to do at that time and consequently one cannot draw a comparison with the officials of other consulates, who were to a large extent overloaded with work, there was still reason to reflect on the importance of courtesy and obligingness in international traffic*." ...

"*Saturday, April 24 was filled with important meetings. In the morning I was with the notary Ferdinand Beck to conclude the contract for the purchase of the Auhof in Türnitz. First of all, we wanted to take in children who could not be sent abroad because of illness or for other reasons - there is a crying need for this - then the home should serve as a recreation for our people. I hope that in the rural seclusion and yet in the vicinity of Vienna we have found the right place for physical and spiritual strengthening, where in courses for old and young, especially for workers in the kingdom of God, much blessing can be bestowed on Austria. The fact that I have already been able to collect 750,000 crowns for this in Europe itself is proof to me that we are dealing here with a work guided and worked by God Himself, about whose further development we need have no fear*." ...
"*On Sunday morning at 8:25 a.m. my train left. It was not until 4 a.m. that I was ready to go to bed for two hours. I could not think of a plan for the train ride. So, I took the express train to Ostend, intending to change trains in Frankfurt to get to Switzerland. During the devotion before departure, I read the slogan of the Brethren:* "I have been with you wherever you have gone." *Little Edith said*, "That's a good thing for our dad." *We prayed together, I entrusted my dear wife, who had gone through so much hardship in the past years in Vienna's time of need, to God's grace and protection; Hanna and Otfried, as well as the brothers Bargmann, Riedinger and Gläser accompanied me to the train, then we went towards the uncertain and by no means pleasant destination. We all had the feeling that this trip would have a special meaning. The sacrifice that had*

to be made was for the most part on the part of my dear wife, but I knew how inwardly strong and brave she is. God will stand by her." ...

In Switzerland I had conversations with Dr. Grob, the then chairman of the board of the Preacher's Seminary, through whom I had been called to the leadership of this institute, with Th. Spörri, one of the newly elected lecturers, and learned on this occasion that the delegates elected by the German conferences had not traveled to the General Conference. Methodism in Germany would thus not be represented at the General Conference in Des Moines, Iowa. The diary shows the considerations to which this news led in the following sentences:

"*Now I might have thought that under these circumstances it would perhaps be better if I also renounced the trip. I would appear as the only German over there. Even though I was not a delegate to a German conference, I would still appear as a representative of Germany and thus take on a great responsibility. But the thought of staying at home for fear of the responsibility seemed wrong to me. If it has not been possible for any of the German delegates to travel, it is more than serious duty for me to spare no attempt, no matter how much effort and self-denial it may cost, to get across before the close of the General Conference, which begins on May 1 and closes toward the end of the month. It is not only a question of the General Conference, not only of German Methodism or of Methodism in general, but a question of much wider significance. The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, meeting just at the close of the World War - or as I prefer to characterize the period: at the beginning of one of the most significant epochs in world and church history - seems to me like a kind of vanguard in the army of the King whose kingdom is not of this world. The spirit that reigns in it will be felt far beyond America; the decisions it takes may reach far beyond the scope of its own denomination. If the General Conference finds the right word and the right tone, which will resonate not only in the hearts of the Christians of the* "victorious countries", *but also in the countries of the so-called "defeated", it can become a source of immense blessing for the world. That it, that our dear Methodist Church may become this, that is my deep wish. And would it not be possible that as a German you could bring something to the General Conference, even if you were not an official delegate elected by an Annual Conference*?"

(But to the friends who asked me, "*What do you want in America now*?" I answered jokingly, "*I want to show the Americans what such a German defeated man looks like*.")

"*Arriving in Paris, I took a car and drove to Cooks. They had received my telegram. Getting a seat on La France was out of the question. Everything had been sold out for months, and if a passenger should cancel at the last moment, there would be so many reservations that it would be impossible to come along. On the other hand, the American steamer Philadelphia was leaving Cherbourg on May 1, on which I could still get a seat. The American currency was obtained for me by Mr. Bakers in the office of the Methodist Church in France, and the ship ticket was bought for May 1. Later, about mid-ocean, we learned that La France was still in port because of a strike and they could not yet say when she would sail. So, God's guiding hand in grace had again presided over my voyage*." ...

The few hours I had left for Paris were to be used to the best advantage. Dr. Mills, who is also well known in Germany, had hurried over from Lyon with his kind wife to keep me company and to be helpful. He had visited me in Vienna some time ago. Again, I let my diary speak:

"*For a German, especially if he comes from Vienna as I do, life in Paris must be striking. While in Vienna - and probably also in Berlin and in other German cities - one encounters the unfortunate consequences of the war, and many years will probably pass before these cities regain their former splendor, Paris seems to notice nothing of the war and its consequences. The life of the traffic pulsates as before. Already at the train station, one notices the large number of cars ready to drive the stranger somewhere for a cheap price. There is no shortage of food and drink. Everywhere a sea of light. The prices in the shop windows are much cheaper than in Vienna for all items - even if you convert according to the current value*." ...

"*Walking through the busy boulevards, I passed the church of La Madeleine, where I was shown the headless figure of one of the four evangelists on the eastern side. A hit from a German gun had knocked this head off. That was the only reminder of the German shells that I could be shown*." ...

"*Dr. Mills suggested that in the day remaining to me for Paris I should first visit the Louvre, that old, grand building in which the French nation has for centuries sought to store the most important works of art it can acquire. Of course, there was no time for an in-depth visit. I was probably also not in the mood to let the values of old and new masters affect me, to process them inwardly. Art is in a certain way like religion, it requires receptivity. At least I tried to walk objectively and without prejudice through the halls of French glory and to let the old masters, who lived and worked long, long before the war, tell me something. For in the sculpture collection, as in the picture gallery, it is usually the old masters that attract me. So, I stood for a long time in front of a painting by Raphael, depicting the fight of Michael with the dragon, and admired anew the art of this unsurpassable master of colors, whose works one cannot get enough of. And while I was immersed in his work, I thought of the beautiful hours I had spent in front of other paintings by this artist in the Zwinger in Dresden and in the Vatican*." ...

"*What is it, I wonder, that attracts us so much to such art products? In my opinion - I philosophized a bit in the Louvre - it is not primarily the representation of reality and life, as it is grasped by the sharp eye of the artist, but it is - art historians and critics may smile about it for my sake - the lifting of the lasting out of the transient, the eternal out of the temporal. I call him a true artist who, reaching into full life, knows how to lift the values of eternal duration out of the fleeting moments of time. In a landscape the sublime, in a historical event the driving force, in a portrait the soul that remains and lives on, even if the body changes and decays. Is there not a deep meaning in the popular expression of* "immortalizing"? *In the aforementioned painting by Raphael "Battle of Michael with the Dragon", whose colors have lost none of their freshness, immediacy and power through the centuries that have passed, the force of the biblical thought has once again come before my soul, that in spite of all cunning, distortion, injustice and falsehood, truth and justice will ultimately win the day. To this thought my soul was receptive in those days, and I think it will be understood that the continuation of this contemplation in the Louvre of Paris gave the poor German with his tortured heart something of lasting value in regard to church and people*."

"*In the afternoon I walked haphazardly for some time through the streets and squares of the cosmopolitan city, past the Elysée, which has seen many a riotous party, along the sandy paths of the Tuileries, along the Seine, indulging my thoughts. It was a mild spring day, and in the leaves and blossoms of the trees, in the carefully tended flower beds of the squares, in the whole atmosphere there was something of the hopeful mood of May. To set myself a goal, I walked in the direction of the Eiffel Tower, and finding that it was still open and you could go up for 5 francs, I joined a company of globetrotters and rode up the tower with them. There is a restaurant on the second floor and a bar on the second. The tower is a masterpiece of iron engineering, characteristic of our technical age. It stands there like a spider web, wire ropes, girders, arches and bars artfully intertwined. Effortlessly, the visitor reaches a dizzying height and can now let his gaze wander over the city lying at his feet. I thought of how right the artist of life Goethe was, who, in order to get a proper impression of a city, usually first climbed a mountain or a tower, from where he could get an overall picture. To know what Paris is, you have to have been up on the Eiffel Tower. Several times I made the rounds up there. A cool evening wind fanned softly around my forehead. Light, ruffled clouds moved across the light blue sky, the departing sun, hurrying towards the sea, sent its last rays over the sea of houses, dipping a part of the horizon in purple and gilding the towers of the city. Like ants, people ran back and forth down there. The Seine looked like a gray snake, forcing its way between houses and people, reminding us of the temptation, of the danger that lurks just where beauty and joy seek to make life pleasant. For a long time, I let my gaze rest on the picture. Over there Montmartre with its historical memories, there the Invalides Cathedral, which holds the coffin of the great Napoleon, further to the left the massive building of the Louvre, in the background the church of Notre-Dame. The whole, seen from above, a picture of peace and harmony.*" ...

"*And again, I must remember that the nation which proudly calls this city its capital and has striven for centuries to make it a center of civilization and a center of attraction for the world, was until recently at war with us, that the French do not understand us as we do not seem to understand them. Is there really not enough*

room on God's earth for both peoples, for the peculiarities of the French and the Germans? Wouldn't a peaceful competition in all cultural endeavors be possible, without envy and jealousy, without hatred and war, for the good of all, for the good of the world? If only there would be a God-sent man who would be able to find the synthesis for the apparent contradictions, the solving and redeeming word for lasting peace!" ...

"*While I was thus indulging my thoughts, the sun had set, and the shadows of night were quietly descending upon the city. The lights flared up, first individually, then in ever greater numbers. I found it hard to separate myself from the square. But it was not the new image that captivated me, it was the feelings evoked by it in my breast, the thoughts, to speak with the Epistle to the Romans* "accusing and excusing one another." ...

"*If Germany had won* - so it was said in my breast - *and a Frenchman stood on the victory column of the Pariser Platz in Berlin, a fiery French patriot, what would he think and feel? How I would wish that he would think and feel, because thinking and feeling is also an action that creates values for the present and the future. But it went on in my inner being, that is an idle question, how a Frenchman would behave on the Victory Column in Berlin in the case of a German victory. That is idle speculation. But here I stand on the Eiffel Tower, a German patriot whose fatherland has miserably collapsed, a German who belongs to a people against whom the whole world was mobilized until it ran out of breath, to a people which, despite the misery that has befallen it and which it has borne with a heroism unparalleled in history, is still hated, fought against, even despised. Down there lies the city of the victors. Here, the so-called peace treaty was worked out, devised, dictated. They take us for the branded, for the condemned by the forum of history, yes, they take us for the criminals. They, the others, consider themselves the victors, the liberators, the heroes, the righteous. Wealth is pouring into their city from all sides, a national rise is beginning. But we, we Germans, have become poor, so poor that we ourselves have not yet become aware of it. Not only we, but also our children and our children's children and our great-grandchildren are to work for the so-called reparations*." ...

"*What shall I wish in the face of these facts, wish in the deepest corner of my heart here on the Eiffel Tower? Should I wish for the hour when the bitter seeds of hatred that have been sown in hearts in the last few years will sprout, when the volcano will erupt and, in a catastrophe of unprecedented magnitude, bury this city and other cities of the so-called victorious states like Vesuvius buried Herculaneum and Pompeii? Should not such a day be a glorious day for me, for my German people, now bleeding from a thousand wounds, ostracized and oppressed*?" ...

"*Suddenly a scene from the Gospel stood before me, as vivid and telling as I had ever seen it: a town of Samaritans refuses to give the weary prophet from Nazareth lodging for the night. Convinced of the high mission of their Master and the Samaritans' mockery of all human charity, filled with national bias and blind hatred, their displeasure finds expression in the humanly truly understandable question*: 'Master, shall we let fire fall from heaven upon this city, as Elijah did, the mighty prophet of the old covenant?' *And it was to me as if I saw the eye of the Savior flashing in all its sharpness, but also in its infinite love, as he looked at them and asked them, reproachfully, admonishingly, pleadingly*, 'Do you not know whose spirit's children you are? You are not children of that covenant; you are disciples of him who came not to destroy but to save and to make blessed'. *As never before in my life, Jesus stood before me in his unfathomable and incomprehensible greatness. And like a painful renunciation and a blessed reception at the same time, a sigh went up to him from my tortured breast for insight, for healing, for strength to be like Jesus Christ, who, although he was of divine form, did not consider it a robbery to be like God, but emptied himself and took on the form of a servant, was a man, poor, weak, despised and obedient to the point of death on the cross. Therefore, God also exalted him and gave him a name that is above every name*."

"*How would Jesus behave if he lived today, indeed if he were in my place? How would he, the Son of God and Son of Man, feel if he were a German and today stood in my place on the Eiffel Tower and let his gaze wander over the Seine Babel?... I believe that he would weep over Paris, as he wept there over Jerusalem, because the city did not realize what was for its peace. Based on the Gospels, can I get into his mindset? His goal would certainly be and remain to seek and save what is lost. May we not assume with certainty that political events would no more distract him from the one thing that is needed than they did then. And if* 'his people'

were the German people, what would he want for this people? Is external splendor and worldly power the highest, the most desirable goal? Victory can be the beginning of the end for a people, external defeat and deep humiliation can be a point of passage to never imagined glorious future. The goal that Jesus had in mind, for which he lived and died, was the coming of the Kingdom of God, the establishment of God's reign in the souls of men. Whether God has not assigned a special task to us Germans for the establishment of his reign? Whether perhaps the hard school of bitter poverty, hunger, deprivation, humiliation and contempt, through which we must pass, is not to be made a necessary and beneficial preparation for the fulfillment of this task? God grant that the hard time of suffering may become a blessed time of purification!" …

"*And then came the question of whether God would also be able to use me as a German, as a disciple of Jesus Christ and as a Methodist to work on this great task. How many years of my life will be given to me, I do not know. Sometimes it seems to me that the richer one becomes in years and the more one realizes that life is nothing but a single, great, never-recurring opportunity to realize a thought of God in a fleeting span of time and in a narrow, limited space, the faster time rushes away. To recognize this thought of God's will, to surrender obediently and faithfully to it, should be the content of life. If one asks me what I wish for now, what I would ask for, if I knew that only one wish, only one request could be fulfilled, it should be that: I do not desire wealth, not honor, not power, not the comforts and conveniences of life. Outward splendor should not dazzle me, the fickle judgment of the crowd should not bribe me, even if that crowd consisted of churches and conference members. But one thing I want with every fiber of my heart: In the few days or years of my life that God may still give me, to realize the thought of his will in the place where he places me. At the same time, like a soft spring chime, an inkling runs through my mind as if God, in his rich grace, could and would also use me and my strength to show the bleeding, feverishly writhing, death-wrestling, beloved German people the way out of darkness to light, the way to the Savior and to salvation, the way through the desert to a better land of the future. If it were possible to lead the German people to this height, their present collapse could become a blessing for the world and a landmark on the path leading to the coming of the Kingdom of God.*"

"*Below, the lights of the Seine city spread their fairy-like glow. Frivolity, superficiality and sin might hide in their shadow. But to me it was as if I had glimpsed another light shining from above, as if I understood my master better than before, as if he had said something in my ear and given it to my heart that I would never forget and could never forget. And while the elevator of the Eiffel Tower growled and creaked, gently leading me from the dizzy heights between the airy, iron cobwebs back down to the solid ground of earth, the words from the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans kept ringing through my heart, as if sung by angelic voices:* 'But we know that all things are for the best to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose.'" On the Eiffel Tower, I had been given something of lasting value.

F.H. Otto Melle – Memoirs 1875-1936

Chapter 24 Trip to the General Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, May 1920

Of the ten lecture tours that I undertook to the United States of America over time, the first two after the World War (WWI), in the spring of 1920 and then again in 1921, are most vivid in my memory. They deserve a more detailed description, not only because of the circumstances of the time and the tremendous tension that lay over the world at that time in connection with the German collapse, but also because of the importance they had for my inner development and my more distant work. Fortunately, I made detailed notes in my diary during those journeys, to which I can now refer, otherwise it would hardly be possible for me to put myself back into those conditions, those moods and those tasks in the wartime winter of 1943, in which I am writing these chapters. And yet my account can only claim value if it correctly reflects the situation at that time and my thoughts about it.

I sailed, as already mentioned, at the beginning of May 1920 from Cherbourg with an American steamer across the ocean. In Paris I had seen something of the victory mood of the French. The Treaty of Versailles had been signed and sealed. In the harbor of Cherbourg, we slowly passed the wrecks of German warships which had fallen into the hands of the enemy and were now to be either turned against Germany or thrown under the old iron. I had to silently listen to the gloating remarks of the travelers about this. At such a time, when the world seemed to be coming apart at the seams, when the idea of the "downfall of the Occident," as Spengler's famous book put it, was stirring people's minds and the German people were being driven to the brink of despair, while national putsch (coup d'état) attempts on the one hand and communist activities on the other were not allowing any peace to arise, one of the first Germans from the Reich traveled to the so-called victorious states: Then there was no other way than to feel one's responsibility, not merely for oneself and as a clergyman for the congregation and church, but for one's people. I cannot stand isolated in the world. I am fatefully connected with my time, with my family, with my people. The awareness that I am making these journeys now not only as a Christian and a Methodist, but as a German, has never left me even in later times and has helped

to determine my behavior as well as my judgment of political and ecclesiastical conditions. During my walks in the sunshine and storm on deck, I was always moved by the question of whether we Christians do not have a special task in the present world catastrophe. That Christianity, in its sovereignty and power, also has an effect in different ways on the various national characters, and in this reveals something of its exuberant richness, I had had ample opportunity to observe in Southeastern Europe. It was clear to me that in great political crises, such as the world war as one of the most powerful, Christians differ in their judgment because of their ethnicity, and also that it would be foolish to try to bring them all to the same political views on war and peace, victories and defeats, on political mistakes and political necessities. But that from the point of view of faith in Christ a higher level had to be found on which they could not only meet but understand each other, love each other, help each other, so that the pain could be eased and the bleeding humanity healed, that was the problem before us. Can we Christians, we Methodists, can I as an individual also contribute something to this?

Above all, it was the question of guilt that caused me deep pain, as it did so many of my fellow Germans. It was almost like a physical pain that one felt when one had to see how the majority of the people were seized by the delusion that the German government and thus the German people were solely to blame for the war, that their representatives had signed the document of guilt themselves and that therefore their treatment by the Treaty of Versailles was a just one. I saw in this view, which was also shared by many Christians, the Old Testament viewpoint that God in His justice rewards the good and punishes the evil. Applied to the world war, that the defeated were the guilty, the victors the pious, the righteous. This opinion had become almost a dogma of infallibility in the victorious countries, even among theologians who, after Job and Psalm 73, had to know the problem of theodicy (vindication of divine goodness and providence in view of existence of evil), which is not easy to solve. More and more I was occupied with the question how a solution could be found here - the already indicated higher level. I am also not afraid to confess that an inner joy filled me at the thought that God had also given me a task in this direction on the occasion of my visits to the United States through the connections I have as a Methodist, and I asked God again and again to give me from the riches of His fullness the grace, wisdom and strength that I needed for this. From such considerations I decided to avoid the political questions in talks and lectures, or if this should not always be possible, then to approach them from my "higher level", as I fixed my point of view. This seemed to me to be the only possibility of approaching the hearts, as it were the Archimedean point outside the war psychosis, where the lever for insight, self-knowledge, knowledge of guilt, for understanding and thus for bridging the differences could be applied. If I was subsequently criticized, and some thought that I had gone too far into the political field in my lectures, while for others I did not emphasize the political arguments strongly enough, this could not deter me. I had become aware of my position and my task, and even today - 23 years have passed since then, and the world has experienced many changes - I am deeply convinced that it was the right path on which I was led. A small experience on the sea brought me an inner uplifting and strengthening of faith: Shortly before reaching the coast on Sunday morning, we were overcome by a violent storm. We were together in a church service led by a Presbyterian minister from Canada. The ship was tossed back and forth by the waves like a cue ball, it cracked at every joint, and the pastor held on tightly to a round column, but had to stop his sermon and suggested that we sing the widely known hymn by Charles Wesley: "*Jesus, Savior of my soul, let me flee to thy bosom, as the waters rush nearer and the weather draws higher. Birg me in the storms of life, till my course is run, lead me to the safe harbor, then take up my soul*!" I have forgotten the text and the sermon. Perhaps they also contained fitting words that strengthened the heart. The song, however, still rings in my ears today. I see my colleague, the superintendent of Sofia, singing enthusiastically and the others all singing along, deeply moved and believing, clinging to the wonderful thoughts: "*And I have no refuge, I cling to you with trepidation. Do not leave me alone, lift me up, Lord, and strengthen me*. "Thank God! Like that little bird that in a storm, pursued by a hawk, through the open church window found in its distress a safe refuge on the breast of the poet, so we are safe, sheltered in all the storms of life, with Him who said, " *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*."

Arriving in New York, I found the kindest and most affectionate reception in the Mission Office of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Mrs. Jones, the widow of one of our most successful missionaries in the Far East, greeted me at the pier. Dr. Henry Müller, pastor at the German congregation in Brooklyn, accompanied me and helped me to find my way around the giant city. The secretaries and treasurers of the Board of Foreign Missions were at the General Conference, but I was most cordially welcomed to America by their representatives, and my report was heard with pleasure about the impression made by the food and clothing sent from here to Vienna and Southeastern Europe as well as to Germany. The Methodists had been one of the first churches to initiate relief efforts, and I was told how, upon receiving my telegram from Vienna, they immediately went to work organizing the relief effort. There was really no sign of hostility, indeed it seemed as if each had set out to give me a special token of love. Now it is easier for the victor to be magnanimous than for the vanquished to surrender to his fate without grumbling, but I soon realized that this was not merely an act of politeness that covers the inside like a light varnish. Rather, I saw how war cannot permanently transform the heart into the inhuman and unchristian, but how, in those who love Christ, love for the brethren also breaks through again after the events of war, like the warming, new life awakening, laughing sun hidden behind the clouds for a while after lightning, thunder and darkness.

Admittedly, what I experienced there was not the mood of the population in general. When I was brought to the wonderful underground station of Grand Central at 42nd Street, from which I was to start the journey to Des Moines via Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago, Kansas City, my German-American friends advised me to be quite careful on the journey, also not to engage in conversations with strangers. One could find out from my accent that I was a *Reichsdeutscher* (a person from *Deutsches Reich*, official name for German nation state from 1871 to 1943. It translates to "German Empire" and "German Realm) fresh from Germany. But that could easily lead to all kinds of unpleasantness. People blamed the Germans for the war and for all the victims it had claimed. For example, it is still impossible to apologize for the German emperor, who is called the War Lord, the Antichrist, the beast from the abyss of the Apocalypse. A well-known speaker had said not long ago in a public lecture to thunderous applause that he would rather kiss a pig than ever again shake hands with a German, hate grown out of the war psychosis. It needs a chapter by itself, if one wants to deal with the fruits of Northcliff's (1) hatred and agitation propaganda in a little more detail. But as discouraging and depressing as such tales and advice were in and of themselves, they did not frighten me. I had found my position, recognized my task, and was certain that if I remained on my "higher level," God would be with me and would not lack His blessing for my service. In my heart I kept saying, "*Only be confident and very joyful*!"

Arriving in Des Moines, the capital of the state of Iowa, I found the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in full swing. It had been in session for over two weeks and had passed a lot of far-reaching resolutions. The highlight was the election of several new bishops, who were then solemnly consecrated to their ministry the following Sunday. The large number of new bishops expressed the view that it was the task of the Church, after the devastating effects of the war, to take advantage of the great opportunities to proclaim the Gospel and build up the Church through a select, charismatically gifted and aggressive leadership. The Methodist work in Europe, which until then had been led by one bishop - since 1912 by the German-American Dr. John L. Nuelsen - was divided into three bishoprics, headed by three bishops, based in Copenhagen, Zurich and Paris. The Central European bishopric, which included the work in Germany and Switzerland, was given to Bishop Nuelsen. Similar plans were drawn up for India, China, the Philippines, Korea, Africa and South America, and the whole Church was under the sign of a great forward movement. The introduction of Prohibition, for which the Methodist Church was fully committed, helped to increase the prevailing optimism, since two of the most popular leaders in the anti-alcohol movement in America, Dr. C. T. Wilson and Dr. Cherrington (the latter head of the Anti-Saloon League) were Methodists and members of the General Conference. A strange contrast lay between the doomsday mood in Europe, especially among the collapsed nations, and the enterprising, hopeful, optimistic tone of these Americans, who knew no insurmountable difficulties. Again and again, I was compelled to draw comparisons with the mood prevailing in Germany. In community circles,

the Revelation of John was much discussed at that time. The question whether our time did not bear apocalyptic features and thus had the clear signs of the end times was lively discussed. The communist danger suggested the view of the last battles of the Christ with the Antichrist and of the disappearance of the church organizations. In America there was no thought of this. There one saw not the end, but the beginning of a new, better and more glorious time. It cannot be my intention here to deal with the theological implications of both directions or to examine who is right and has the better biblical and historical foundation. One thought, however, has remained firmly in my mind since those days: When considering eschatological questions, it is certainly a mistake for Christians to observe the so-called "signs of the times" only in the narrower circumstances in which they live. What appears as doom and end in one country may mean resurrection and new beginning for another. Incidentally, it would probably be appropriate for our theologians to reflect on whether a "higher level" cannot be found with respect to the contrasting views in German and American theology, for example between the pessimism present in many pietistic circles in Germany and the American, often very superficial optimism. At that time, I was given the opportunity to write down a sermon on the text: "*Hope does not let us fall to pieces*" with the theme "Optimism of the Christian", the basic ideas of which have become an ironclad part of my theology.

I spent very fruitful and busy days in Des Moines during the two weeks of the General Conference. My hotel room on the 19th or 20th floor of a modern hotel, which Dr. F. W. Müller, who was familiar with all the circumstances and also with all the leading men of the General Conference, had arranged for me, offered me the necessary comfort, also the silence, which I needed to process my impressions. In the evening I usually wrote until midnight, while from the window I let my gaze wander over the sea of lights of the city, and I indulged in my thoughts. By day, I was almost always absorbed. Bishops, university presidents, general secretaries of the various boards, editors, pastors and lawyers wanted to speak to me and therefore invited me to breakfast, lunch or dinner, trying to offer the starving Viennese a substitute for the hardship they had endured. One forgot only mostly thereby that, in order to enjoy the rarities, one would have needed also time for eating. I had to talk almost continuously, to answer questions, to explain my thoughts about the "higher level", which, even if they were not discussed, visibly stimulated reflection about the position and task of the Church of Jesus Christ. I remember most vividly a little scene in a restaurant at lunch: I was studying the rich menu and had a friend explain to me the delights listed that were unknown to me. Then it turned out that even in this restaurant my presence as a German had become known - that was something quite different in the Midwest of the States than in New York - because the "Herr Ober" (Mr. Waiter), as we said in Vienna, who had made his remarks in perfect English, suddenly looked at me with a smile and said with a grin in the genuine Viennese dialect: "*But, Herr Doktor, why choose so long. You are my guest today, and I am sure you will be satisfied if I bring you a real Wiener Schnitzel with a side dish. I am Viennese and am very happy to meet someone from there. My relatives live in Favoriten in Vienna*." It goes without saying that the man brought a really genuine Wiener Schnitzel, that it tasted excellent and that the conversation was genuinely Viennese. Very nice was a dinner, a dinner to which Dr. George Simons, the superintendent of the Methodist work in the Baltic States and Russia, had invited the European delegates. There were the Danes, the Swedes, the Finns, the Swiss, the Italians, and from the Americans a number of bishops, board secretaries, etc., who had some relation to the work in Europe. I was the only German among them, and it is well understood that I soon formed - with Bishop Nuelsen - a center of interest. Of the bishops I remember Messrs. Henderson, Burt, Anderson. The usual dinner speeches were made, I had to tell a few things, then suddenly one of the bishops stood up, walked towards me, took my hand, thanked me for my words and my attitude and assured me of their sympathy, their brotherly love, their intercession and their willingness to stand helpfully by our side and work together with us over the ocean in the vineyard of the Lord. There was a visible effort to make me forget the dark days of the past and to testify to me that there really is - also in America and in my church - a community of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which, even if it was pushed back in the war, is breaking through again, must break through, if, as an old prophet once said, "*a new field is to be plowed*".

Most precious and beautiful to me, however, were the hours spent in the circle of the 13th General Conference District. This district included the 10 German-speaking conferences in America, the three conferences in Germany and the conference in Switzerland. Since after the war the German conferences in America merged one after the other - except for the Eastern one - with English-speaking conferences, and the district dissolved as a result, I can only think with melancholy of that lively organization and the hours spent in it. German was spoken here - even at the General Conference in Des Moines. The problems of German-speaking Methodism on this side and on the other side of the ocean were discussed in detail, proposals to the General Conference were worked out, and thus the bond was cultivated which connects the German-speaking work in the United States with that in Europe. From this circle of the 13th District had come 12 years earlier the suggestion that one of them, the then professor at Berea College, Dr. J.H. L. Nuelsen, be elected bishop, in order to have a German-speaking man on the Council of Bishops and for the work in Central Europe. The General Conference of 1900 fulfilled this wish, and the one of 1912 then sent Bishop Nuelsen to Europe with headquarters in Zurich, where he developed an extremely beneficial activity. He contributed a great deal to maintaining the connection between over here and over there. Besides the bishop's well-known and popular personality on both sides of the ocean, it was especially the "Christian Apologist", excellently edited by Dr. Nast, later by Dr. Bucher, who promoted mutual understanding and brotherly love, who even now, after the World War (WWI), placed his columns at the disposal of the promotion of the blessed German-speaking work. Thus, we met more often in the circle of the 13th German District. Several times I had to tell in detail about our experiences. The founding of our children's home at Auhof in Türnitz was very captivating, and Bishop Nuelsen's plan to found five or even more such children's homes in Germany met with lively approval. The representatives of the German-American conferences discussed in detail the question of how much could be raised, say, in the German-speaking communities of America. They agreed on a sum of $300,000 to be attempted to be raised in a campaign, a so-called "drive" in the fall. Bishop Nuelsen was to come himself; they would then arrange large meetings in which he would speak about Germany. If it were possible that I, as the newly elected director of the Preacher's Seminary in Frankfurt am Main, and Dr. Emil Lüring, as a linguist, missionary and professor known throughout the church, could cooperate in the campaign, an extra $50,000 should be raised as the basis for a maintenance fund for the Preacher's Seminary. My readers will certainly understand that joy and gratitude filled me. I could have hugged my German-American brothers. This was once again about asking and understanding, and promised real help in the child misery that lay heavily on all of us, and on the other hand a valuable means of making possible the training of future preachers and thus giving a pioneering direction to the future of the entire work in Central Europe - perhaps in all of Europe. The hour in which these far-reaching plans were considered and the related decisions were made stands in my memory as one of the high points of my experience in the United States, even though the plan of my and Dr. Lüring's participation in the campaign and the $50,000 envisaged for the seminary fell through. The children's homes for Germany, however, came about and dried many tears, alleviated much suffering, remedied much need, and bestowed many blessings until the Second World War, when they became superfluous due to the excellent care of the state. Should these lines come to the attention of brethren who attended those meetings, may they remember that their names and their deeds remain unforgotten in the annals of German Methodism. Without their sympathy, their understanding of my task, their intercession, their responsiveness to my remarks about the present and future of church work in Central Europe, and the encouragements which they gave me and which "strangely warmed" my heart, the ministry ahead of me, which I could only faintly guess at that time, would not have been possible.

However, the impression must not be given that the kindness and love I experienced had dimmed the view of the situation in which we found ourselves as Germans, as Christians, and had no worries. That this was not the case was ensured by the harsh reality. I also experienced a lot of love from the English-speaking Americans, as already indicated. I was not, after all, an elected delegate. The small "Missionary Conference" of Austria and Hungary, did not have the right to send delegates to the General Conference. I was there at the invitation of the Board of Foreign Missions to report on Southeastern Europe. So, I did not have a seat among the

delegates. Nor did I have the right to vote. However, I was assigned a place on the platform where the guests of honor sat next to the bishops, invited to all the social events, I suppose, and asked to participate in the Commission deliberations as far as Europe or the organization of the missionary conferences were concerned. I was particularly pleased to be involved in the discussions of the Commission on Central Conferences, which at that time laid down the basic lines for the further development of this organization, which had become so important for the Church. But - despite all this - they did not dare to present me to the plenum. It was only on the last day, before the final blessing, as it were, that the chairman of the committee concerned, Dr. Eckman, editor of the "Christian Advocate" in New York, introduced me to the conference, so that my name was included in the official minutes. This had to be done, I was told, for the sake of the numerous reporters of the daily press, who feared that in their sensationalism they would have taken up the case of a Reichsdeutscher participating in the General Conference and thus have caused inconvenience to me as well as to the Methodist Church. On the other hand, I was surprised that they printed my quite detailed report on the situation in Southeastern Europe with suggestions for further work almost verbatim in the "Daily Advocate", the magazine that appeared daily during the General Conference. I had submitted this report to the ecclesiastical deputation which visited us in the winter of 1919/20 and then sent it to the corresponding secretary of the missionary authority, Dr. F. M. North. The official treatment of the Reichsdeutscher Methodist, however, showed me how deep roots of hatred had been struck in the peoples, how many misunderstandings had to be cleared away like mountains of rubble before a normal relationship could be established.

Unfortunately, I have to refrain from characterizing individual, strong personalities at this conference, although it would certainly be stimulating for my German readers to get to know one or the other of them a little better. It can only be a question of an overall impression in its effect on me. It was, after all, the first General Conference I attended, at one of the decisive turning points in history. I now saw all the bishops of the Church sitting on the platform and became more closely acquainted with them in multiple conversations. They are in their totality a picture of the unity of the Spirit and the diversity of gifts. Already the faces express whether the sharp mind, the strong will or the intimate emotional life is the dominating factor. Christian life bread they offered in the biblical devotions in the morning, rousing eloquence in lectures in the evening, pastoral wisdom in the committees when it came to appeals of preachers, statesmanlike, legally trained judgments in discussions about financial and organizational questions. In doing so, I could understand the sentiment expressed repeatedly at General Conference that the Methodist Episcopal Church owes much of its success to its leadership, in addition to the clear message of salvation in Christ and the magnificent organization it has become in 200 years under divine direction. Leadership was the word often heard. The Episcopal system is by no means essential in Methodism. The Methodists in Great Britain do not have it. But perhaps, after all, those are right who believe that American Methodism has far outstripped English Methodism for this very reason. Only one must keep in mind that it is not the office in and of itself. It is not the office that makes the personality, but the personality that must make the office. In any case, I have received a strong impression of the men whom God has placed on the command bridge of the church ship. Nevertheless, it is not the bishops who make the mark of a General Conference. The bishops preside, very skillfully or less skillfully, depending on their talents; they speak in sermons or lectures, but they do not have the right to intervene in the debates, nor do they have the right to vote. Therefore, they are not deputies. It is these deputies who make proposals, on whose expertise, initiative and eloquence it depends what the General Conference accomplishes. And I must confess that these deputies can impress one, preacher and layman alike. Each conference, of course, elects the best men it has. I have not noticed in democratic America the democratic principle that a different delegate should be elected each time so that as many as possible can enjoy the privilege of participating in the General Conference. There sit these men: district superintendents, pastors, professors at universities and colleges, big industrialists, bank presidents, doctors, judges, advocates, merchants, artisans, farmers - also women - and work for four weeks, from morning till evening and almost all night through, on the problems of church life with a fervor and devotion that must excite admiration. And what a wide horizon they have! Whether it is India, China, Korea, Africa, one of the countries of South America or Europe, there is always

someone who, out of expertise, can intervene in the debate with advice. And what is equally strange, one listens as patiently to the Korean woman who speaks as to the student from the Philippines in his poor English and to the professor from the University of Chicago known as a brilliant debater and speaker. Thus, the General Conference is a great educational tool to widen the circle of vision, to cultivate fraternal togetherness, to learn to distinguish the essential from the non-essential, to stimulate one another for theology and the Church, and to become enthusiastic for the work of the Lord.

This is not to say that I would have agreed with everything. My German upbringing and the special situation and state of mind from which I came would have had to make many corrections. But the fact that such corrections are possible, that they can be made in normal times, moved me mightily in view of the great Church as represented by the General Conference and the relatively small ecclesiastical work in Germany which had been so set back by the war. What I felt - and perhaps this was one of the strongest impressions with which I left Des Moines in 1920 - can be summed up in the sentences: We have received much from the Church in America as from the Methodist revival movement in general, so that we want to be grateful. Now we have become terribly poor because of the war. But perhaps we are going through something similar to Jesus, who became poor so that others might become rich through his poverty. Our very material poverty may put us in a position where we can give to the great and influential Church in the USA. In these thoughts I was quite strengthened in New York by a conversation with Dr. Eliot, an old friend, the editor of the theologically scientific bimonthly "Methodist Review". Dr. Eliot was well known and respected beyond his church because of his not merely theological but scientific interests and his broad outlook. For myself it was always a pleasure to read his judgments, made from a high vantage point, on illuminating theological problems and contemporary events and their reflection in literature. In the war, as was to be expected, he had taken the stand of his government. However, I did not know the articles about it. To be quite correct, I will note that I am not quite sure whether the conversation to be reported took place in early June 1920 or exactly one year later during my next trip to America. We were standing side by side in the well-known bookstore of the Methodist Episcopal Church at 150 Fifth Avenue. On the tables were piles of war literature: on Serbia, on Italy, France, England, Belgium, America, and, of course, Germany. I looked at the books a bit, then said jokingly, "*You know, Doctor, I can't solve the riddle of who won the war. I was in Serbia with your deputation and heard at a dinner given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs that the victory was due to them; in Trieste and Milan they firmly believe that Italy's intervention tipped the scales; the French do not doubt for a moment that it was their bravery and steadfastness, and now I see the same thing in America. You are all deeply convinced that without the United States the Allies would have been lost. Now you tell me who actually won the war.*" Old Doctor Eliot did not respond to the joking tone. He put his hand on my shoulder, looked me sharply in the eyes for a long time, as he was wont to do when he wanted to express a thought that gripped him deeply, and said, "*Dr. Melle, let me tell you one thing, I believe that neither we nor the English or the French and Italians won the war. Germany won the war. Our so-called victorious states, which are now in a frenzy and believe that they can now master everything, are being led astray in their conceit, their arrogance, their superficial optimism, and their trust in money and gold. I fear great disappointments for the future. The collapsed, impoverished German people will reflect on the true values of life, it will come to the realization of what gives a nation its strength and guarantees its future. It will recover, it will regain its place of honor in the council of nations and, purified by the severe trials of defeat, it will go forward to a better future than you think you see now.*" Like a prophet the old man had spoken. What he gave me through his words I can only hint at, but I know today that he was completely right.

(1) Alfred Harmsworth, the first Lord Northcliffe, was at forefront of British newspapers. He had launched Daily Mirror and bought and sold Observer by 1914 – by which time he was in control of the Weekly Dispatch, the highest circulation Sunday newspaper, the Times and, the Daily Mail. In 1914 Northcliffe controlled 40% of the morning, 45% of the evening and 15% of the Sunday newspaper circulations. No wonder the politicians of the age sought his approval and support during this most uncertain and unpredictable of times. He became “a political and national figure ... a stalwart of the war effort

and a maker and breaker of governments". Such was the tone and frequency of anti-German sentiment in the Northcliffe press that some critics were moved to say it contributed to heightened tensions in Europe which precipitated actual war.

Chapter 25 The Call to Frankfurt Am Main as Director of the Seminary

I could not stay in America longer than was absolutely necessary. The time had not yet come for lecturing in English-speaking American circles; so, I hurried back to Europe as quickly as I could. In New York, there were still detailed discussions with Dr. North and the gentlemen of the Executive Committee of the Mission Authority, as we called the Board of Foreign Missions in Germany. The Committee had one of its decisive meetings. Dr. Downey, the Book Editor of the Church, as such responsible for the issuing of all publications in one of the largest publishing houses in the world, presided. After some time, Bishop Dr. Luther Wilson, who had visited me in Vienna with his wife shortly before the outbreak of the war and knew not only me but also the work in which I was engaged, also entered. One of the issues under discussion was the support of the Methodists in the newly formed state of Yugoslavia, about which they wanted to hear my opinion. Due to the cession of Bácska from Hungary to Yugoslavia, this state had received a nice number of German- and Hungarian-speaking Methodist congregations, which had been under my supervision until then. Then I had already made the proposal to the deputation in winter to undertake a special relief action in distressed Austria. I was given ten minutes to speak about these matters. One had to be able to be concise. I sketched the situation with a few lines and then - moving on to the Austrian project - told how a few days before my departure from Vienna a strange offer had been made to me: one of the most disreputable pubs in Vienna bore the significant name "die Hölle" (Hell). In this establishment, they had heard that the Methodists might want to buy a larger house for social aid work. So, "we offer it, since "die Hölle" is bankrupt and cannot continue to exist, to the Methodists for sale, they decided." "*To me this*," I continued, "*was a strange*

hint, and I decided to put the matter before my friends in the United States. Hell bankrupt! Offered to the Methodists! Yes, what has this terrible war accomplished, it has made a veritable hell of our lands over there, and the offer seemed to me like an appeal to the Methodist Church to help, not that Hell be put back into operation, but that Hell be made a paradise." This was apparently an anecdote that pleased. One of those present said, "*Too bad they can't visit some churches here next Sunday, they would hear the story of the bankruptcy of hell in Vienna from the most famous pulpit orators*." In any case, it had succeeded in arousing interest and sympathy for Vienna - and Southeastern Europe - and thereby also prepared the way for my later visits to the United States.

But it was now time to hurry home. At the end of June, on an English ship and a number of boxes of gifts of love, I sailed via Liverpool - London - Harwich - Holland to Vienna, in order to take my leave and move to Frankfurt am Main as the director of the seminary of the Methodist Episcopal Church there. How had it come to this? The World War had also inflicted many wounds on church life. During four years many of our preachers were in the trenches, a number of them had fallen, and nothing could be done for the new generation in the preaching ministry. In the years 1912-14 our unforgettable director, Dr. Paul Gustav Junker, had the new seminary building in Frankfurt-Ginnheim built and furnished. It is a building that does credit to its builder and its architect, fit for purpose, generously calculated for the future, sufficient for modern requirements. On the second Sunday of August 1914 the dedication was to take place, which promised to be a landmark in the history of German Methodism. Even delegates from overseas were on their way to offer congratulations and share in the festive joy. They came only as far as Paris. On August 1, Sunday, war broke out, the dedication did not take place, the festive sermon to which Dr. Junker had invited me remained undelivered, and the beautiful auditorium of the seminary and most of the rooms were put at the disposal of the army administration as a military hospital. The seminarians - and those who could have become seminarians - donned the field-gray uniform and became defenders of the Fatherland. With the help of a few young men from Switzerland, classes were continued and operations were maintained despite great difficulties and privations, especially during the last year of the war, but the situation was still quite difficult and by no means hopeful. In 1919, Dr. Junker collapsed under the burden placed on him, as did his wife. Both were buried next to each other in the beautiful Frankfurt Main cemetery, and it seemed to many of the friends - in those extremely sad times - as if with the two popular and revered house parents many hopes for the future of the seminary had also been carried to the grave.

After the outbreak of the war with America, Bishop Nuelsen had resigned from his supervisory office over the conferences in Germany. As an American citizen, there was nothing left for him to do. After the war ended, however, the barriers that had separated him from Germany in recent years fell away for him; he was able to correspond again, to intervene with generous relief efforts, to promote the plan for children's homes, and to help in general to rebuild the Methodist work. He made changes in the staffing of the districts, the publishing house, the periodicals, the deaconesses' work, and the congregations, as far as proved necessary. Our members and preachers were encouraged not to despair, but to begin anew in the work of soul winning and church building. In connection with this, of course, the problem of the seminary came very much to the fore. Above all, it was necessary to do promotional work in order to win over young men called by the Lord who were willing to devote their whole lives, time and energy, to the preaching of the Gospel; new teachers had to be recruited; attempts had to be made to expand the seminary in accordance with the demands of the new age and to make it serviceable for the whole church, especially in Central Europe. Dr. Emil Lüring took over as acting director after Dr. Junker's death, but the famous linguist and eloquent teacher felt that in the inflation that was already making itself felt, with all the post-war travails, he should rather devote himself to his studies than to the exciting administrative work. So, the search was on for a successor to Dr. Junker, for a new director.

It was Bishop Nuelsen who thought of me. I myself would not have thought of it. As much as I was convinced of the importance of the seminary and loved the work of educating young men for the ministry of the Word, I considered myself more suited to the practical ministry of preaching, pastoral care, church leadership and admin-

istration than to the academia, and on the other hand my heart to its depth was so attached to Southeastern Europe that it was really a painful process to tear myself away, especially since it seemed as if a new time was dawning for the Gospel in Southeastern Europe. In Austria, with the collapse of the old Habsburg monarchy, the medieval religious laws had also fallen, and in Vienna, for example, one could not only preach to one's heart's content, but even distribute invitations and magazines. What this meant for the depressed and persecuted Protestant circles can only be understood by those who had lived and worked for years under the old restrictions in Austria. In Hungary, the 1920 Treaty of Trianon had caused such pain among the whole people - about 2/3 of the population was lost to Hungary - that the whole nation was on the verge of despair. I myself felt everything intensely and believed that I had access to the hearts of the Hungarians; in Yugoslavia we now had congregations who regarded me as their spiritual father, clung to me with great love and would have liked to have had my advice even further. In addition, Dr. F. M. North, the general secretary of the missionary authority, had sent a telegram with the advice not to accept the call to Frankfurt and to remain in Southeastern Europe. He later added that they would like to see the work in Southeastern Europe continue under my leadership, and it would be easier to find a suitable replacement for the Seminary. In the history of Methodism, he said, my name was linked with the Southeast; that I had become better known in the Church in America than any other German Methodist had ever been was connected with this, and my proposals for the continuation of the work in the various countries had met with the approval of the Board without any qualification.

So again, as when I went to Hungary, I had to fight a battle with flesh and blood, which was not easy. The easier task seemed to me to be the one in Southeastern Europe. Here I was well known. My advice was often sought in other Protestant churches as well. To foreign visitors I was virtually presented as an expert on the pending Southeastern European questions. The brothers in America made me all kinds of promises for Southeastern Europe. In Frankfurt, on the other hand, I was a newcomer, for I had worked abroad for over 20 years and had to expect that my work would be closely scrutinized, perhaps even followed with a certain mistrust. I was not exactly afraid of delving into the subject matter I now had to deal with, since I had always been of the opinion that even as a man of mature years one could still learn a great deal, but I asked myself, would I not have to give up my relations with so many interdenominational and international ecclesiastical works, which, as they say, were dear to me, simply because there would not be enough time? For the continuation of my work in the Southeast, I had no worries. From the beginning, it had been my endeavor to train my co-workers in such a way that they could continue the work without me. Thus, in all three countries that came into question, in Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia, there were colleagues whom the bishop could appoint as superintendents without long consideration and with full confidence. Another consideration came into play: As a young preacher, I once had to deliver a paper at a district meeting on Rudolf Kögel, the court preacher of Wilhelm I and famous pulpit orator. It made a deep impression when Kögel was offered the position of legation preacher in Rome after his university years, which would have suited his literary, scientific and artistic inclinations like no other. At the same time, he received an invitation to take over the congregation in Vakel with - I don't know how many - branches, in the province of Posen. In a letter to Tholuck he described how, after many struggles, he had decided to renounce that which corresponded to his own wishes and to choose that which required the greater sacrifice, the most self-denial, that is, the more difficult. So, I, too, finally chose the harder one for me and accepted the call to Frankfurt. Bishop Nuelsen's reasons helped a lot to make the right decision. Just as Bismarck reminded the king of his duty, the bishop reminded me of the great tasks of German Methodism and of my duty as a Methodist preacher who was bound by his ordination vow to go to the place where he was most needed and where, according to the bishop's conviction, a very important work awaited him. When the decision was made and the election was made by the board of the seminary, my heart became calm; instead of the difficulties that had been in the foreground until then, I saw the beauty and greatness of the new task, which now began to excite me, so that I could now really take the leadership of the seminary in my hands, not as if forced, but with great joy. This was a sign of divine providence for me. And as it is usually the case when the eye is sharply focused on a certain goal, that goal appears ever brighter and clearer, so it was with me. My faith grew from day to day that if I remained under the guidance of God's Spirit, my time in

Frankfurt would also be a rich time of blessing. A friend asked me, "*Did you also set your conditions*?" This surprised me. Because I have always been of the opinion that setting conditions is not part of Kingdom work. Either one is called by God, in which case He makes us certain of our mission and takes care of what belongs to it. Then it goes according to the old word that he makes even his enemies content with him. Or someone pushes himself self-willed and obstinately into a service to which he is not called, usually also not suitable, even if he considers himself the most suitable man. Then all conditions are of no use. There will be a lack of blessing from above. When taking up any service for the Lord, the glorious word of the Sermon on the Mount applies: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*."

I expressed only a few wishes, which were also fully understood by the bishop and fulfilled by the board of the institute: My venerable predecessor Dr. Junker had been director and house father in one person, his dear wife the house mother. Every little thing went through their hands, every decision for house and hearth, for kitchen, cellar and garden had to be made by them. In addition, the director had to give an abundance of lessons, not only in theological subjects, but also in languages and in subjects in which seminarians who had not attended higher schools - there were always those who had - had to catch up. I asked that I be allowed to have the direction of the institute firmly in my hands, but still retain enough freedom of movement for my participation in the overall tasks of the church and for lectures in the congregations, possibly in countries outside Germany. Therefore, I wanted a housemother for the housekeeping and a housemaster for the care and daily education of the young men. Even if the personal union of director and housefather has some merits, since the educational ideals of two men sometimes do not coincide, and thus small frictions in the wheels of the enterprise cannot be completely avoided, the division into two parts in our case was nevertheless a great gain, and I am still sincerely grateful to my dear Bishop Nuelsen that he immediately responded to my suggestions and encouraged the board to appoint the senior teacher J. W.E. Sommer, who until then had been active in the Armenian relief organization, as housefather. W.E. Sommer, who had been active in the Armenian relief organization until then, as house father and Mrs. Völkner, the widow of our deceased preacher Völkner, as house mother. It also became apparent with the steadily growing number of seminarians, that in that period of change after the war, of inflation and economic crisis, our problem of administration and supply could not have been solved in any other way.

Returning from America at the end of June, the first thing to do was to arrange the succession in the three southern European countries and to prepare the departure. Bishop Nuelsen now appointed Preacher Johannes Jakob as superintendent in Yugoslavia, Martin Funk to the same ministry in Hungary, and Heinrich Bargmann for Austria. The monarchy had fallen apart, regular mail and railroad service between the detached areas could be maintained only with difficulty; so, it was better that the Methodist Church develop independently in each country. There was not enough time for me to visit the three countries again. The new tasks were very pressing. Already in August, the opening of the semester was to take place in Frankfurt am Main. Before that I was invited as a representative of the Austrian Protestant Church to take part in a conference in Geneva, which, called by Archbishop Söderblom, was to examine the question of how and where a world conference of the churches for "Life and Work" should take place. The English name was later translated as "Practical Christianity". A few days had to be reserved for the Auhof in Türnitz, which I had bought the day before my departure for America, where there were all kinds of things to discuss and to put in order. Thus, the time had to be used in the best possible way.

A farewell service was planned for Vienna and the three new superintendents were invited to attend as representatives of the former conference and the congregations in Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia. As the programs were printed and the day of the service approached, it was only then that I realized, despite all the haste of the work, how deep was the cut in my life and in my heart that was now to be made. The last 20 years were passing by in my mind. Among the members of our communities in the three countries there was not a single one that I did not know personally. Many of them, perhaps most of them, I had received into the church myself, probably with all of them I had pastoral memories. What wonderful days those had been during the revival in Bácska or the beginning in Budapest, and how the time of need during the war with its hunger and relief actions, the founding of

the Auhof and the community of suffering and work had united hearts. Now, all of a sudden, we were to break away from this bond! Perhaps my dear wife felt all this even more strongly than I did, since she had not been absent as much as I had and was therefore probably even more closely connected with the circumstances and the many friends. I took the farewell address of the apostle Paul to the elders in Ephesus as the starting point of my sermon: "*And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to his grace, which is mighty to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified*." The theological faculty of the University of Vienna had sent Professor Dr. G. Entz as a representative, Professor Haberl spoke on behalf of the Evangelical Alliance, and very beautiful and strengthening words were spoken by the President of the Evangelical High Church Council, Dr. Haase, who did not miss the opportunity to appear in person and express his blessings and those of the Evangelical Church in Austria to the Superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, who was leaving Vienna, for his work in the German Empire. Yes, it was a beautiful relationship that we as Methodists in Vienna had with the Protestant congregations! The common struggle, the common task and not least the common sufferings had welded us together properly. And where brothers "dwell together in one accord", the Lord promises his blessing.

A visit was quickly made to the Auhof in Türnitz. Colleagues Paul Riedinger and Clemens Gläser had set up the children's home as well as they could with the little funds available during the time I was in America. Food shipments - obtained from American friends - from Switzerland had ensured that the children no longer felt anything of a hunger period. What a pleasure it was to watch the hustle and bustle of these merry Viennese boys and girls! They were all undernourished. They had suffered a lot in the last years, when there was no milk, almost no fat, no potatoes and less than a pound of bread daily. The consequences were frightening, especially for the small children born during the war. But one could clearly see how the pale cheeks began to redden again, how the previously dull little eyes became brighter and brighter, how they flashed with joy and delight when playing under the magnificent trees that stood in the courtyard, and how they enjoyed eating the croissants baked from wheat flour, which had now become white again. I had brought several thousand dollars from America for the children's home, which helped to cover the rest of the debts and to make some structural improvements in the property. One evening I gave a talk on my American impressions, which was probably attended by most of the people of Türnitz; by day, in addition to the necessary counseling, much time was spent with the children, several Bible lessons were given to the staff, and in all this something was felt of the truth of the Savior's word: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*." I have seldom felt more joy than during those two or three days in the Auhof, and I have always asked God to equip the Church of Jesus Christ, especially in such times, to practice its Samaritan service. I do not need to mention that in the Auhof the children were accepted without distinction of denomination. It goes without saying that they learned the Bible stories and sang the most popular songs about Jesus and his coming into the world. The preachers Riedinger and Gläser, as well as the deaconess and the entire staff knew that their service to the children was a service to the people, but at the same time to Jesus. Hence the grateful, contented and joyful spirit that prevailed in the Auhof from morning to evening and also communicated itself to the visitors. The Auhof, formerly a sanatorium about which all kinds of spooky stories circulated, had become a place of growing youth, of real recreation and strengthening for young and old, a place of peace, joy, Christian spirit and divine blessing.

Before I could go to Frankfurt, I attended meetings in Geneva, as mentioned, which were held under the chairmanship of Archbishop Söderblom in preparation for a world church conference on practical Christianity. The World Church Conference was then held in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1925. In any case, the preliminary consultation in Geneva was decisive for the realization of this conference. On this occasion I got to know quite a number of leading church men from different countries. As far as I remember, I was the only representative of the Protestant churches in Austria. So, I did not participate as the director of the Methodist seminary for preachers in Germany, but on behalf of the Austrian churches, probably also because of my last trip to America. The outstanding personality of the archbishop made a special impression. On the very first evening, I was invited with some German pastors to participate in the evening devotion that the archbishop held with his Swedish pastors. Söderblom was once not only a ravishing speaker, he was also a good singer, whose voice could be heard, as on that evening in the small circle, also at the larger gatherings. The next morning, Söderblom then laid out his plan in a lengthy speech.

The main language of negotiation was English, but Söderblom spoke German or French just as well. He did not need a translator. His basic remarks were followed by a discussion of the possibilities of a World Conference of Churches, and the conditions under which representatives of the churches in the victorious states and the defeated states could be brought together. I can still see the Belgians and Frenchmen before me, in their speeches, which were accompanied by lively gesticulation, partly in English and partly in French, as they made the demand that the Christians in Germany must first openly confess their guilt in the outbreak of the war and in the invasion of Belgium before they could sit down with them at a conference table. Oberkirchenrat (senior church councilor) Dr. Schreiber of the Foreign Office of the German Protestant Church in Berlin presented the German point of view in a longer speech, translated into English by Bishop Nuelsen. The good Swedish Archbishop tried every effort to bring the "hostile brothers" - in this case the expression may certainly be applied – in line. Of course, it was not a matter of personal enmity. The French and the Germans met here probably for the first time in their lives. It was about the country and the people, about their position in relation to the state, that is, about political questions. I realized that my thoughts during the trip to America and the experiences I had had there had given me an insight into the situation that some of the others did not have. So, I spoke up and in a short speech I pointed out that in order to come to an understanding, in my opinion one must first start from the assumption that judgments about political questions have nothing to do with Christianity and the character of a Christian. It is a fact that a French Christian - at least in the present situation - thinks differently about the outbreak of the war than a German, and likewise a Belgian about the invasion of Belgium. However, the judgments would probably change with time, once the archives of the states were opened. Therefore, I said, it was not appropriate to demand that the Germans confess their guilt. Conversely, according to our well-founded conviction, we Germans would perhaps have even more right to demand repentance on the other side because of the untrue atrocities of which we were accused and the injustices which have now already gone down in history. But this would not get us any further in the present stage of the matter. It is rather a matter of finding now the common ground on which we can meet as Christians, in order to awaken the conscience in this decisive phase of world history, to represent the ideals of our Master and thereby to help that the wounds are healed and the way to a better future is paved. Archbishop Söderblom later said privately that he thought I was going too far in eliminating political questions. That was a misunderstanding. However, I wanted to put aside the discussion of political questions for the realization of a world conference of the churches and to see the negotiations transferred from the political to the Christian level in the conviction that from here the way to understanding and understanding could be found. Above all, however, I wanted to lead representatives of the French and Belgian churches to the realization that - from the point of view of politics - we Germans might have more resounding reasons to demand repentance from them than they had from us. Well, the world conference came about in 1925. By then tempers had calmed down, even the Americans had awakened from their war psychosis, the publications on the outbreak of war issued by various countries had had a clarifying effect, and the voices of objective researchers and historians, even in the hostile countries, supporting the German point of view were increasing; nevertheless, the World Conference had to be satisfied with a compromise on the guilt paragraph of the Versailles Treaty (1).

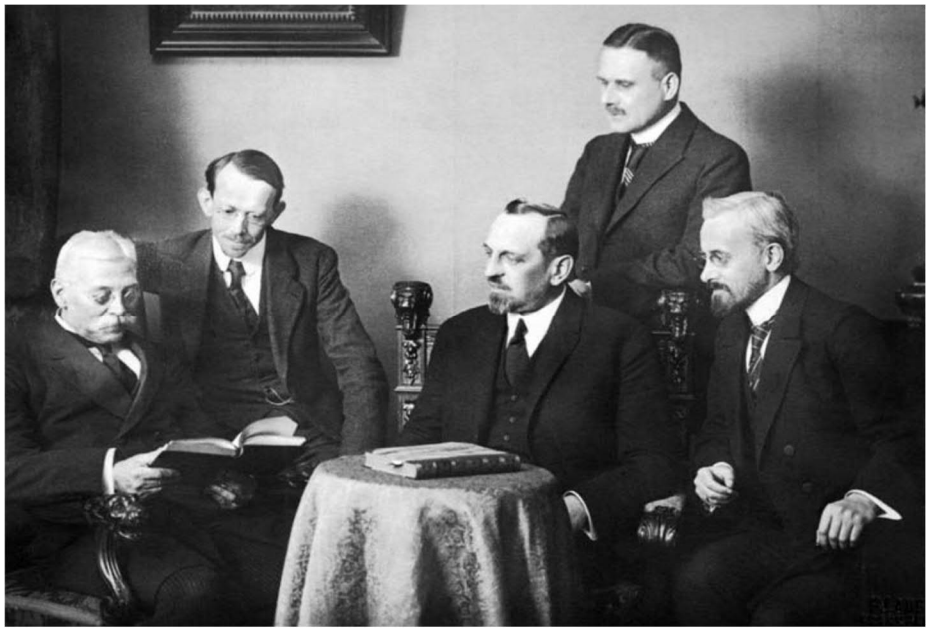
From Geneva I drove directly to Frankfurt am Main, where the opening of the new school year of the seminary was to take place on Sunday. On Friday morning I arrived, had the furniture unloaded and greeted my colleagues. In the evening my family arrived from Vienna, and we prepared for the festive celebration in the church at Merianplatz. Rarely has the church, which had already seen many a historic meeting, had a larger audience within its walls than on that warm August Sunday. The Frankfurt congregations, the districts of Wiesbaden, Offenbach, Friedrichsdorf, even as far as Dillenburg and Wetzlar were represented. Bishop Nuelsen had arrived in the morning, the members of the seminary board from the German conferences and the Swiss conference had arrived in their entirety, preachers and laymen, as well as all the district superintendents. On the front pew in front of the pulpit sat about a dozen and a half young men with whom the work was to begin, and of whom those newly entering were to bear testimony, as had been the custom from time immemorial, of their conversion and of their calling to the preaching ministry. On the right side of the pulpit sat the new teaching staff, with whom I now had to share in

the work of teaching and education. As I reached out my hand to the brothers and looked them in the eye, I could not suppress the thought that God had given us here a circle of men who, in the diversity of their gifts, in the leadership of their lives, as well as in the services they had already rendered in the work of the Kingdom of God in the Church, justified the hope that with them we would succeed in making the Methodist Episcopal Seminary in Frankfurt am Main, as I had said, "*the best Free Church educational institution for preachers of the gospel in Germany.*" There sat our senior on the teaching staff, the language expert, scholar, orator and missionary, Dr. Emil Lüring, known far beyond the boundaries of the church. He had worked as a missionary in India and China for 20 years. He knew his Greek Testament and his Hebrew Bible almost by heart, in about 25 languages he could preach the Gospel and had done so. Was it not a pleasure to follow his lectures, to be introduced by him into the old languages, into the original languages of the Holy Scriptures? And didn't his example of a Christian character filled with the love of Christ, selfless, always ready to sacrifice, have a strong appeal to future preachers? After all, when, after submitting his doctoral dissertation at the University of Strasbourg on the medical expressions in the written monuments of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks - the subject was similar - he was proposed an academic career, certain of his vocation to the preaching ministry, he had replied: "*I will become a preacher of the Methodist Church like my father.*" Next to him sat our youngest teacher, Theophil Spörri, who shortly before had finished his studies at the University of Tübingen and was working on his licentiate (degree/certificate between that of bachelor and master or doctor)–as New Testament scholar and systematic theologian that he was, we could expect from him some fruit of his thinking both in class and with the pen. The new head of the house, J.W.E. Sommer, who had taken his exams at Cambridge University in England and, after a long period of teaching in an Armenian teachers' seminary, had worked at the Bible school in Malche, now joined our ranks as a preacher and was able to draw on the treasure of his knowledge and experience, especially in the fields of the Old Testament, psychology and ethics. My task would be to take on, in addition to the specifically Methodist disciplines such as the history of Methodism and church order, above all the subjects of practical theology, homiletics and pastoral theology. The college was soon to be expanded, however: In Theophil Mann, who had been secretary of the Christian Student Union in Germany, an excellent connoisseur of church history and Inner Mission was added, a "born teacher" whom his students called a walking encyclopedia who always had an answer ready for every question, and Dr. Paulus Scharpff, whom his studies and travels especially qualified to deal with the questions of modern religious narrative and pedagogy. Thus, the teaching staff seemed to be most harmoniously composed, and there was no doubt that it would exert its attraction beyond the candidates for the preaching ministry to the Methodist youth and enrich the Methodist literature.

In his thoughtful welcome address, Bishop Nuelsen took up this idea, pointed out what the prerogatives and duties of teachers are, emphasized above all the need for example, and expressed the hope that the seminary would train men who, with all the equipment of the results of theology and biblical research, would resemble those men of whom Luke says in the Acts of the Apostles that they were full of the Holy Spirit and full of power. It was not difficult for me, following on from these words, to speak to the festive assembly. It seemed to me as if a tension lay over the listeners. I reminded them that, as in the history of our fatherland, of the world, of the Church in general and of our Church in particular, so also in the history of the Seminary we were facing a new chapter. What will it contain? It will have value only insofar as it represents a chapter of the Kingdom of God and tells of the realization of divine thoughts. That this may be the case is certainly the wish of all of us. Then I mentioned that a few days ago a newspaper fell into my hand in which the question was raised - please note that this was in the year 1920 - whether the office of a preacher still fits into our modern times. According to the opinion of the writer, it was an anachronism to still build churches and to deal with religious life. I now pointed out that Jesus' commission to go into all the world with the message of the Gospel is the same today as it was when it was first pronounced, and - according to my notes - I called out to the students: "*You, my young brothers, are not about to go to a lost post. On the contrary, you are called to the most beautiful, greatest, and most important service there is. A wish came to me while reading that newspaper notice, which I prayerfully offered to the Lord today, that our seminary for preachers might in its part give proof of how necessary and beneficial the ministry of an evangelical*

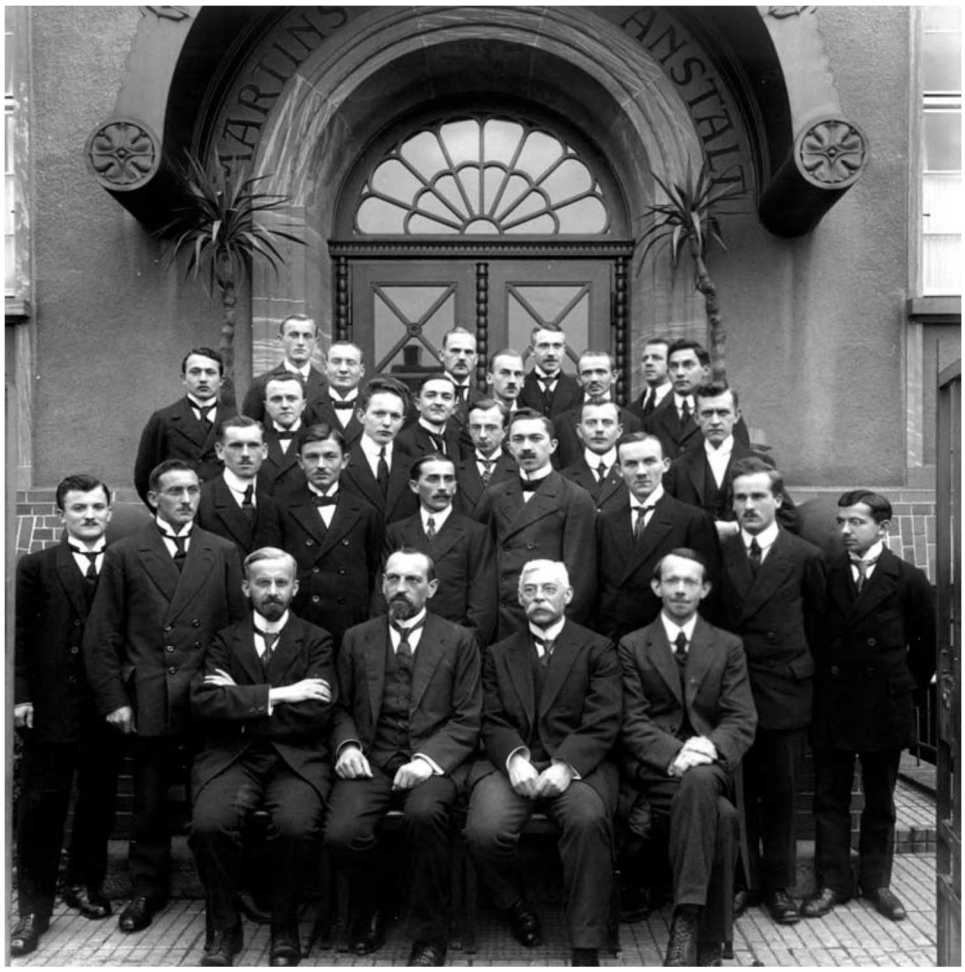
preacher is, and how God Himself chooses, sends, and equips us to be His ambassadors. I thought of the ancient schools of prophets who meant so much to their people in times of religious and national crisis. Then there appeared before my eyes the image of that circle of disciples gathered around the greatest teacher who had come from God, there on the quiet shores of the Sea of Galilee. Did not scholars and influential people of that time think that it was an anachronism? But from that carpenter and his 12 disciples, tax collectors and fishermen, to whom he gave his light and breathed his spirit, went out more forces for the construction and reconstruction of the world than from all effective factors of history together. No tongue can express, no human mind can conceive, what Christ and through him his apostles have become to the world. In their life and in their work, they realized God's thoughts, their history was the history of the Kingdom of God. In their footsteps we want to follow." Then I tied in with the apostle's word, addressed to young Timothy: "*Do not neglect the gift that has been given to you.*" I felt in that hour that it was my task and duty to give a word of encouragement, of strengthening of faith, of hope. The evening then united us, the bishop, the teaching staff, the board members, the superintendents, the seminarians, the guests from near and far, for a convivial gathering. Many a good word, humorous and serious, was offered in the "table speeches." Older preachers refreshed stimulating memories of their own student days, the eminent teachers at the Seminary, Dr. William Warren, Dr. F. Hurst (later Bishop), Dr. W. Clark, Dr. Sulzberger, Director Ludwig Nippert, Director Heinrich Mann, Director Dr. P. W. Junker, Dr. A. J. Bucher, R. Wobith were quoted, and when the next morning we divided the classes, worked out the curriculum, and then with a prayer meeting began the work of the new school year, we were all deeply convinced that the wonderful promise which Jesus made to his disciples, and which was so gloriously realized in their lives, would also be fulfilled in us and in our work in the Preaching Seminary of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Frankfort-on-Main: "*I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*"

(1) Treaty of Versailles signed on June 28, 1919, and officially ended the war between Germany and Allied Powers. The controversial War Guilt clause blamed Germany for World War I and imposed heavy debt payments on Germany. The treaty was a major contributing factor in the outbreak of the Second World War. Apparently, some at the World Conference would not give up on German blame, and so a compromise had to be reached.



The teaching staff at the Preacher's Seminary in Frankfurt am Main (from left to right):

Dr. E. Lüring, Lic. Th. Spörri, Dr. F. H. Otto Melle, Dr. P. Scharpff and J. E. Sommer, M.A.



Dir. Dr. Melle (front row, 2nd from left) with lecturers and students of the class of 1920/21.

F.H. Otto Melle – Memoirs 1875-1936

Chapter 26 In the Service of Understanding and Reconciliation in the USA (1921)

Only a few months into my work at the seminary, it became clear how right I was in my desire not to be too confined to the lectern. The problems of the new building after the World War (WWI), the economic hardships, the penetration of communism into the collapsed nations and the already noticeable inflation made it necessary for me to use my experience in international traffic for the church as a whole. Just when we had held our Christmas celebration in the seminary, which always took place a few days before the feast so that our seminarians could stand in the pulpits at Christmas, I received an invitation from Bishop Nuelsen to visit him in Switzerland during the Christmas vacation. He was with his family in the Bernese Oberland, at the foot of the Jungfrau, and there, in a few days of silence, he wanted to talk through with me the tasks for our church in the new era and our relations with the Methodist Church in the USA. For myself, the trip to the snowy mountains and the magnificent scenery of the Bernese Alps also did me good. In a way, one is removed from the conditions of daily work, gains some distance from the oppressive worries, mind and spirit rest, and in the purer air one usually learns to think more easily and clearly, as well as to make one's resolutions. Every day we walked together for a few hours in the snow, letting the winter landscape take effect on us, exchanging our thoughts on all kinds of questions, only to return again and again to the point that occupied the bishop most. It was about our relationship with America, our relationship with the Board of Foreign Missions. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Board of Foreign Missions, the Board had initiated a major movement. Within 5 years, I believe, $9 million was to be raised for the work of the Church in countries outside America. The money was to be destined, in part, for the extension of the work

in countries such as the Far East, where the doors were wide open, but especially for the acquisition of appropriate property. China, India, Korea, also Africa were in the foreground of interest, but also Europe, so badly hit by the war, should not be excluded from help. The plan, conceived in 1918, was enthusiastically received by the whole Church, and in the first year the income exceeded all expectations. The optimism triggered by the "victory" may have contributed to this result. But by the second year, the enthusiasm had waned, and now in the third, a crisis had been reached that called into question whether the many promises made could be kept. There was also a setback in sentiment toward Germany, as evidenced by the fact that Bishop Nuelsen's action for the children's homes, which he would have liked to carry out independently, was met with all kinds of criticism. The 30,000 dollars, which his plan provided for, had not yet been collected, so that he had already asked me to put the maintenance fund for the preachers' seminary on hold a little, and rather to cooperate now for the children's aid, so that at least one goal would be reached. Above all, however, he asked me to consider the question of whether, under the present circumstances, I would be willing to travel to America again for a few months as soon as possible. However, he said, I should not ask beforehand whether I would be welcome over there. Knowing the brothers as he did, I would be sure to get a refusal, and then the matter would be postponed indefinitely. I would simply have to make the preparations, then announce myself shortly beforehand and take the risk whether it would succeed to eliminate the implied misunderstandings and somehow gain a foothold for further work.

There are often - even then it was the case - quite strange views about such a trip. I was envied by many, and pitied by others who were better informed. One of these wrote to me with the words of Georg von Frundsberg to Luther before the Diet of Worms: "*Little monk, little monk, you are walking a difficult path*." But I knew how much was at stake, and since my bishop promised me complete backing, I could not help but make myself available for the venture after thorough consideration and earnest prayer. Perhaps, because of my disposition, it was precisely the difficulty of the task that appealed to me and which, instead of deterring me, made it easier for me to say yes. Had God not prepared me for such service by my whole way of life? Was I allowed, when my church, when German Methodism demanded an unreserved commitment from me, to refuse to jump into the redoubt, since I myself had to admit that if I did not do it, hardly anyone else could take my place? Returning from Switzerland, I immediately put my passport and ship's papers in order - I had to go to Vienna to do this - got a place on the "Imperator", which left Cherbourg at the end of February. Dr. Paulus Scharpff agreed to take over some of my subjects and to prepare the exams, for which I hoped to be back in July. On February 24, accompanied by the blessings and prayers of colleagues and students, I left Frankfurt. But none of them had any idea what had been going on in my heart before the decision to make this journey matured.

The "Imperator" was one of our proud German ships. Newly built, it had been the largest passenger steamer in the world. In 1913 it had made its voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, and I had witnessed the crowds flocking from New York to Hoboken to see the German wonder. Now the ship was owned by the English. The crew was English, the captain was English, the inscriptions were English. But they had not been able to eliminate the German everywhere, and in the engine room and in its vicinity, one could still read "Imperator" in small letters on steel plates. I experienced once again all the pains of the German concerned about his people and fatherland and suffering with them, but I thought it advisable to keep remain incognito, not to seek acquaintances, not to read much and to leave the ship's library unused, but to concentrate sharply on my task. Concentration and meditation are absolutely necessary to achieve inner clarity and thus also the ability to act outwardly. I thought about German history, about the war and its consequences, about the position of Christians in the present, about Methodism in general and German Methodism in particular. In the process, trains of thought impressed themselves upon my mind, which I have since been able to advocate with more and more joy. Should I get the opportunity to speak to Americans, what would I say? They will probably expect me to thank them on behalf of the German Methodists for their generous relief efforts. Of course, I will not forget that. I will also be able to speak of what we Methodists in Germany and all German Protestantism owe to the Methodist revival movement. I am thinking of the emphasis on personal assurance of salvation, the further training of justification by faith in sanctification by faith, evangelism, the preaching of the laity, and so on. But - I took it upon myself - I would not begin with what we in Germany owe

to Methodism, for instance, but with what the whole of Methodism, and therefore the Church in America, owes to Germany. It was German influence that prepared Wesley's crucial salvation experience, that provided him with Philippian services on his way to Christ, to justification by faith. While Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans* was read to him, he felt his heart "wonderfully warmed" so that he could believe that Christ loved him and had given Himself for him; the Germans Peter Böhler, Spangenberg, Zinzendorf, the congregations of the brethren in Marienborn, Herrnhag, and Herrnhut, which he visited, brought him clarity on biblical questions and many suggestions for his evangelistic activity and the organization of his communities. We Methodists in Germany, which has become so poor, have the firm conviction and also the will as Christians who practice "Christianity in earnest" to live even under present conditions and thus to continue to make our contribution to the building of the church of Jesus Christ. And we are so strong in our faith, so willing in our efforts to walk in the love that has always been a Methodist ideal, that we have the bold hope of being able to give something even to the great and rich church in America. But would such thoughts succeed in winning the ear of the Methodists in the United States?

In New York, my arrival at first aroused surprise. Dr. North devoted several hours to me in his office, he even had a number of visitors ask him to invite me to come back the next day, and even invited me to have lunch with him at his club so that we could discuss everything connected with my visit quite thoroughly. He explained the situation to me in detail, as I already knew it from Bishop Nuelsen, expressed his astonishment about the action of the German-American conferences, which had been undertaken behind his back, without the movement being given "credit" for it, and what the differences were more. The longer we talked, the warmer he became. Finally, he agreed that the relief work for the children's homes should continue, if Bishop Nuelsen - as I had suggested - reported the incoming gifts to the Board, that they could be booked to the income of the "Centenary" (1), but that he was otherwise free to dispose of them. Dr. F. W. Müller, who had come to New York especially to be present at these discussions, contributed a great deal to our reaching this favorable result. It was interesting to me that Dr. North asked several times in regard to my lecturing activities, "*Have you a message to the church*?", a question I was happy to answer. My plan, with which Dr. North was quite in agreement, was to publish only a small notice of my arrival in the "Christian Advocate" and the "Christian Apologist," (2) and then go to wherever I would receive invitations from. Collecting directly, having someone work out an itinerary for that, I did not want to do. I was also not afraid to crisscross, to skip cities from which there was no invitation. In my opinion, this principle has definitely proven itself useful, which is why I have kept it for later trips. It makes a depressing impression to be considered a "collector," to be sent to a community by a bishop, board secretary, or district superintendent, and then find that you are not welcome at all. Even if a collection is taken for the guest, the right joy and inner warmth is still missing. It is quite different when the pastor sends an invitation on behalf of his board, when one has the impression that the visit of the speaker and his lecture will bring something worth hearing and for which one may expect that the house will be well occupied. I always felt in my lecturing activities in the USA that my task must be to bring something wherever I spoke that would help the audience to think back fondly on those hours.

I had conferences and pastors' meetings in mind before anything else. The preachers of the Methodist Church in the USA have the beautiful custom of meeting every Monday from 10 to 12 for a discussion in the larger cities where there are several congregations. These preachers' meetings have become of great importance to American Methodism. When, as in New York, there are more than 200 Methodist churches, it is easy to see how much depends on the position such a meeting takes on the events of the week. Burning issues of the day are discussed, well-known traveling personalities are sought to be invited to speak, and a common will is promoted which very often find expression in the next Sunday's sermons. This is one of the reasons for the great influence that the churches exert on public opinion. It usually happened of its own accord that when I had spoken somewhere in a city on Sunday, I was asked to give a lecture in the preachers' meeting on Monday. This service seemed to me to be the most important of all. It was also one of the most pleasant and beautiful experiences. It is easier to speak to a congregation of listeners who have a certain degree of knowledge about the subject matter than to a mixed congregation, especially in a foreign country, where one must first slowly find the common ground. What was very valuable to me was the discussion that always followed. The questions that were asked gave me the opportunity

to catch up on or clarify things that had perhaps been overlooked in the lecture. I think back fondly on those hours: in New York, Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Chicago, Cincinnati, Kansas City, Pittsburgh and other places. In the latter place, I had probably the largest pastors' meeting I spoke to on this trip. It was just the Monday that the meeting was interdenominational in character. From Pittsburgh and the surrounding area, most of the pastors from all Protestant denominations had come: Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Disciples of Christ, were all there. There must have been some "big gun" on the program, but I have forgotten. I only remember being pleased that the chairman made an insertion in the program and asked me to speak for 15 minutes.

Pittsburgh became a kind of turning point in my speaking career. Rev. Dr. Marsh, whom I had met at the General Conference in Des Moines, did not miss the opportunity to invite me to speak or preach at his church on a Sunday evening. So far, I must have spoken several times to our German-speaking brethren, who were always eager to hear about Germany. On my own, I had not yet come to the true American and English-speaking churches. Here seemed to be a barrier that was not easily broken. Were the stories of war propaganda still alive here? Was the hatred against Germany too deep to allow a German to climb the pulpit now? Was there a fear of mob unpleasantness? I do not know. It was to Dr. Marsh's credit that he was the first of the Methodist preachers who dared to invite me, and that he was not afraid to announce it publicly. Knowing Dr. Marsh, it was not sensationalism that led him, or the desire to see his church packed on a spring Sunday evening, but rather his conviction that as he had extended the hand of friendship and brotherly love to me in Des Moines, so should his congregation prove that they had entered the "higher plane" of Christianity. It should be noted that Dr. Marsh was soon appointed President of Boston University, a position to which he was eminently suited because of his outstanding gifts, scientific knowledge, administrative talent and diplomatic skill. I later visited him several times at Boston University.

But what about the meeting in Pittsburgh? When I saw the densely packed church and the expectant eyes of the assembled people, I became a little apprehensive. I had resolved always to speak in English without a manuscript, so as not to raise a partition between speaker and listeners through the paper in my hand and to lose the right contact, without which the best speech usually comes to nothing. I spoke as I felt in my heart, I told of our difficult experience, but also of the faith that sustains us, and I dared to say: "*The future will not belong to those who hate the most, but to those who love the most. For with his love Jesus had overcome the world*." A few days later, Dr. Marsh sent me a copy of a letter he had received on the Monday after that service, which I will put here without comment. The letter read: "*These lines are intended as an expression of my appreciation for the services in your church which I was able to attend today and at the same time an attempt to learn from them what Dr. Melle's itinerary is. I am on the board of the 6th Methodist Church in Saint Louis, and if Dr. Melle's plan should take him so far west as to come near Saint Louis, I should think it a great harm (the original says a crime) to our people if they had no opportunity of hearing his message, which he brought to us this evening in so abbreviated a form. I have already written to my pastor to this effect, and hope very much that it will be possible for Dr. Melle to speak in our church*." The invitation from Saint Louis arrived promptly after a few days. Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to accept. The few Sundays that were still available to me were occupied. But the letter had its meaning for my inner attitude. It was for me, as for Noah, the dove with the olive leaf, a sign that the waters were beginning to run and that the work for understanding was not in vain.

I had a similar experience on one of the following Sundays in Kansas City. I had spoken in five different meetings that Sunday. In the preachers' meeting on Monday, after my remarks, they drew up a rather beautiful resolution expressing appreciation and thanks for my talk and expressing to the Board of Foreign Missions, for the attention of Dr. North, that in their conviction my message was likely to be of special service to the Centenary. This, to those who know American conditions and the crisis of the Centenary movement, was more than I could have dreamed. The suggestion that lay in the resolution was to keep me in the United States for a longer time in the interest of the faltering movement. After the preachers' meeting, Dr. Spencer, the original editor of the "Central

Christian Advocate" published in Kansas City, invited me to lunch. He had much to discuss with me. It was the first time I had become more intimately acquainted with this outstanding Methodist journalist. He was one of those personalities who deserve a detailed characterization. Because of his loud and unselfish character, his journalistic talents, and his rich knowledge of the whole worldwide mission field of the Church, he was highly esteemed. Every number of "Central" was eagerly awaited, his perceptive, knowledgeable comments on the church situation were read with eagerness - and not only in the Midwest. He was regarded as the type of the genuine, true, never self-seeking, but always seeking the cause, feeling his responsibility for the whole church. At the same time, he was almost deaf. Later he heard nothing at all. His method then always consisted of a lot of loose sheets. If he had asked a question, he handed such a sheet to his interlocutor and asked him to write down the answer in keywords. On the one hand, this made the conversation more difficult; on the other, it served to separate the wheat from the chaff, to eliminate everything unimportant from the outset, to avoid digressions from the subject, and to provide the questioner with a quantity of valuable notes that were better than what he could have retained in his memory. The notes were then on the desk before him when he wrote his editorials, and it was probably in part due to these notes that he had come to have a reputation for thorough expertise, a reputation that not every editor had. I always enjoyed my conversations with Dr. Spencer, despite all the difficulties of conversation. This time his advice was to take on a special significance for me.

After I had agreed to write him an article filling one page of the "Central" by Tuesday morning, he asked me about my further plans for my stay in the States. I told him that I had gladly accepted the invitation to Kansas City, because this city is on the way to California. From New York to there, as we all know, is half the way to San Francisco. To get to know sunny and golden California was one of my wishes. Already in 1913, my friends in the Californian German Conference would have expected me there, but there was not enough time. In Kansas City I had to turn back. Now they had again urged me to devote at least 8-10 days to them in order to visit San Francisco and Los Angeles. I had not only been promised the travel expenses, but also good collections, so that I thought with joy of the next weeks. For to anyone who wants to get to know America, whether the American or the foreign guest, they must see California. I have been told time and again: "*If you don't know the West, you don't know America, no matter how long you have lived in New York*." I mentioned only in passing that I was also attracted by the promised collections. In response to these explanations, I received a message from dear Dr. Spencer about my task and my duty as representative of German Methodism, such as none of my colleagues, nor any of my bishops, nor any of the general secretaries had ever given me before. "*From the desire to see California*," Dr. Spencer elaborated, "*as much as I understand it, you must not let yourself be determined in your travel plan in the present situation. I realize that you must be back in Frankfurt by the close of school, so you cannot extend the time of your stay. But you will certainly not be in the United States for the last time. To come to California, another opportunity will be found. Getting a few hundred dollars in collections, even if it should be thousands, must not seem like the main thing to you. It is also said here*: 'to his friends he gives it sleeping'. *You are the only representative of Methodism from Germany, indeed from Central Europe, to say no more, who at present has the sympathy and ear of the Church in America, at an unprecedented turning point in history. Your work in Southeastern Europe, your wartime experiences in Vienna, etc., have won you many friends even among those who still consider Germany an enemy. Your task here is to act as a bridge builder for understanding and reconciliation. Next week we have the annual meeting of the book business in Cincinnati. There are the leading men of our church, pastors and laity, to meet; it is like a general conference in miniature. The editors of all our magazines will be present, and I think I can promise you they will be glad to give you at least half an hour, perhaps a little more, to get your message out; for however they may be politically inclined, they are burning to get expert information from over there. Whether they will publish your thoughts directly, as I will, I cannot promise, of course. But you must be satisfied if something sticks and imagine that what these men write is read by perhaps more than two million people. There you can certainly do more for your German fatherland than by visiting a few German-American communities on the coast of the Pacific Ocean*."

This was indeed a noteworthy judgment, and I felt the struggle begin in my chest. Should I, as in 1913, telegraph again to the dear Californians, so shortly before my expected arrival, after all preparations for my lecture tour had been made thoroughly and with the greatest excitement? I had said that collecting should not be my main goal, but if I return home without any financial success, what will my bishop say, what will the Children's Aid Society say, what will my colleagues say, who certainly expect me to bring some help from rich America. And then I knew some of the editors. In New York, I had read through some of their articles published during the war and even doubted that their authors would want to hear me. So, I stuck to my Californian plan for the time being, especially since I already had the ticket to San Francisco in my pocket. I believe it was on the Wednesday after that conversation that I was standing in the station when the California train pulled in. With my two carry-on suitcases loaded, I boarded a Pullman sleeping car where a seat was reserved for me all the way to San Francisco. But I stopped at the door and refused to allow the porter to take the luggage to the place designated for me. For a violent storm was raging in my heart. The words of Dr. Spencer came to life again. Desire and duty fought with each other. Desire was drawn with all its might to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, to the Golden Horn and the friends there who eagerly awaited me, and duty warned: "*Will you not be unfaithful to your principle of life if you now follow your own desires? Hast thou not found it advisable for thee to choose, of two paths before thee, that which seems harder to thee, demanding self-denial and sacrifice, and not that which is most pleasing to flesh and blood? Will your master say,* 'You pious and faithful servant,' *if you let such an opportunity pass by, where you could perhaps do something really necessary and profitable for your fatherland*? Then the conductor gave the signal to leave. At the same moment I picked up my two suitcases and jumped out. Duty had triumphed over desire. At the next post office, I sent the telegrams canceling my visit to California, and with a calmer conscience I drove to Cincinnati, where, as Dr. Spencer had hoped, I was able to speak not only for half an hour but for a full hour to the heads of the press and answer their questions. The fruit of this sowing I could calmly leave to the future. How the changed plan gave me the opportunity to spend a few days in Washington and also to be introduced to the President of the United States will be told in the following chapter. Within the framework of this chapter, however, belongs an experience I had in one of the larger preachers' meetings in the East.

One of my German-American friends, who was very anxious that I should have my say at this meeting, managed to get the chairman to promise me 12-15 minutes for a speech which was to be inserted into the program. However, he felt obliged to point out to me that the mood against Germany was still very irritable, and that the assembly consisted largely of men whose hostility to Germany was known throughout the city. Among them, a Doctor C. was particularly distinguished. I must have made a sad face because he said - it was probably meant to sound comforting: "*Not true, it is not easy today to stand in the world as a German. Would you prefer to belong to another nation?*" The word gripped me like seldom anything before, and just when the inner excitement was at its strongest, I was given the floor. I simply could not help responding to the suggestion given by the question and said the following: "*It is certainly not easy today, my friends, for a Christian from Germany, even if this Christian is a Methodist, to speak to Methodist pastors in America. I was just asked whether I was not sorry in view of the whole situation that I was born a German. Then I had a strange train of thought. I imagined that it would be possible to be born again, and that the Creator in His wisdom and omnipotence would let me choose - in the present time - in which nation I would like to be born. I did not have to think long to realize the answer. I would not be attracted by the glory of France, not by the power of England, nor by the wealth of America. I would say*, 'My Creator, please let me be born again a German!' *I know that my people have collapsed, know their misery, the contempt shown them in the world, the atrocities imputed to them, the boundless poverty into which we have been thrust, which we will hardly be able to overcome through generations. But I will gladly suffer with this people, share its fate with it, serve it through my example and my work; because I know that the deep humiliation will become a blessing, the judgment on Germany, like that on the world war, will change after some time, because God has intended a task for Germany in the future, for which he wants to prepare it, purify it, equip it. It is true that we have suffered a heavy defeat. But history shows that victories on the battlefield can sometimes be the be-*

ginning of the end of a nation, but defeats can be conditions for a new and blessed future." A thunderous applause, the likes of which I had rarely experienced, began. At least 10 minutes of my time had already passed. The chairman slid me a slip of paper, "*Take thirty minutes*." The congregation, as they say, hung on my every word as I told them of the time of need and hunger in Vienna, of the relief efforts that had been set up, of the founding of the Auhof Children's Home for malnourished Viennese children, of the work of the Methodist Church in Southeastern Europe and in Germany, and of our efforts to prove ourselves in all the difficult trials as disciples of Jesus Christ - and as Methodists whose ideals were the ideals of the Master. As I was about to close, at the end of the 30 minutes, a new note came, "*Speak another 30 minutes*!" And when the hour was up, one of the listeners sang the song, "Blessed be the tie that binds," a song roughly corresponding to our "Heart and heart united together seek in God's heart rest," and when the song, sung enthusiastically and intimately, had faded away, another of the pastors stood up and said, "*I had intended to make the suggestion to sing the song when another of the brothers was already singing it. Now I have another suggestion: after Dr. Melle's remarks, we should not deal with any other subject today, but get down on our knees and pray*." The whole assembly agreed. Then earnest prayers went up to the throne of grace, petitions for the coming of the kingdom of God, for knowledge of His will, for God's blessing on me, on the preacher's seminary in Frankfurt am Main, where young men were being prepared for the preaching of the gospel, on Bishop Nuelsen, on the Methodists in Germany and Southeastern Europe, indeed on the whole German people. I believe that if Wesley had been in my place, he would have written in his diary that his heart had been "*wonderfully warmed*." I was deeply moved. As we were leaving, one of the pastors asked me to preach at his church the next Sunday. He guaranteed that I would have a large and attentive audience. I would like to do that with all my heart, I had to answer, but on Sunday I would already be on the ocean to return to my ministry in Frankfurt. "*Do you know who that was*?" my friend asked me, "*that was Doctor C., who stands at one of the largest churches in the city and who got carried away preaching against Germany during the war*." Then I was all the more sorry that I could not accept the invitation.

In New York I spent a few more hours in the circle of the brothers from the East German Conference, spoke one evening in the first German congregation in St. Mark's Place - it later became a tradition that before leaving for my ship I spoke here - and again discussed all our problems in detailed negotiations with Dr. North. He was informed of the result of my trip and my lecturing activities. He expressed his appreciation that I had succeeded in arousing much understanding for our situation and in winning friends for our work. He especially recognized that I had not selfishly thought only of myself, but had tried to serve the whole Centenary movement, and not without success. It was important to him that I remain the treasurer for Eastern Europe from Frankfurt, so that the brothers there would continue to have my advice for financial decisions. Finally, he came out with the proposal that, in addition to my service at the Seminary, he would like me to become the Treasurer of the Board for the whole Central European area. A suitable office staff, as well as the expenses for my travel and other expenses related to this activity, would be provided. Of course, I agreed. The work connected with this service, the settlements, the monthly reports, the examination of the centenary objects and their evaluation took up many an hour of time. For convenience, they had a lot of checks printed in New York and did not send checks made out in New York to the conference treasurers, as had been the custom, but authorized me to write and sign the checks for the Board. I took this concession as a sign of special confidence, not only in myself, but in the German Methodists. It was to be valued all the more highly after the World War. It enabled me to render many services to the work in our district, to Bishop Nuelsen and also to the seminary, of which neither my colleagues nor the members of the board knew or learned anything about. I also succeeded in arranging the approval for the seminary in the difficult post-war years during the inflation in such a way that we were able to get through at a time when it was almost impossible for the congregations to raise contributions for the maintenance of their preachers' school. The correspondence with the Board of Foreign Missions, however, kept the connection between here and over there, and since Dr. North liked to correspond with me about matters not directly pertaining to my service as branch treasurer, it kept me abreast of what was on the agenda across the ocean. It is only from my present vantage point that I realize what I

could not see at the time and took for granted, that there was a guidance from God for me in this service that required, indeed compelled, me to turn my gaze from the details to the whole, to observe the connection of seemingly small events with the work of the Church as a whole, and thus to clarify and mature my judgment. At the end of each year, I had to write a report about the whole diocese for the "Annual Report" and in it I could express not only my observations but also my suggestions. Thus, the bond that connected me with the leading men on the other side of the ocean became more and more intimate and gave me hope that - as Dr. Spencer had prophesied - the trip in 1921 to the USA had not yet been the last.

(1) The Centenary movement commemorated the founding in 1819 of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

(2) Western Christian Advocate 91834-1929) was a Methodist weekly in Cincinnati that published articles on literature, agriculture and the home, as well as poetry, Bible lessons, religious news items and articles on varied religious topics. The Christian Apologist (1839-?) was a German language Methodist weekly in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Chapter 27 Conversations with Well-Known American Personalities: Judge Alfred K. Nippert, William F. Warren and the President of the United States

The previous chapter requires some supplementation. Of the outstanding personalities with whom I came into contact and, in some cases, had in-depth discussions with, I will single out three: Judge Alfred. K. Nippert, (1) who in 1916 delivered the donation of the German-Americans for East Prussia, which had been devastated by the Russians, and who at that time had an interview with Wilhelm II; Dr. W. F. Warren, the former rector of Boston University, one of the most popular figures of the Methodist Church; and the President of the United States, Warren G. Harding, who after the departure of the Democrat Woodrow. Wilson had taken his place as a Republican. In the process, I will tell how I came to be one of the first Reich Germans to meet the President of the United States.

A. K. Nippert was born in Frankfurt am Main. His father, Dr. Ludwig Nippert, was one of my honored predecessors as Director at the Preacher's Seminary of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It was he who built the then so-called "Martin-Missions-Institute" (named Martin after a German-American because he had given $25,000 for the construction of the building) on the Röderberg and then presided over the institution for many years. In German

Methodism, he was one of the leading personalities of his time, and several of his literary works have gained lasting value. In particular, however, he was able to make the institution on Röderberg 88 a home for students as well as for his family, which they always remembered with joy and gratitude. Here Nippert was born, here he grew up, here he went to school, here he laid the foundation for his solid education in the "model school," led at that time by the well-known reformer of new-language education Max Walter. The school was to be above all a model for the teaching of modern languages.

When I was elected principal of the Methodist Seminary, Judge Nippert in Cincinnati, Ohio, was the first to congratulate me. At the same time, he sent me a check with the request to see whether his old teacher Max Walter, to whom he owed so much, was still alive, whether he had come into need through the war and whether I could discreetly help him a little and give him joy through the sent gift of one of his former grateful students. Max Walter was still alive, I got to know and appreciate him, and at Nippert's request I was able to do him a little service here and there. Later, Nippert and his whole family visited us in Frankfurt, and it was a great day for him as well as for his old teacher, when we gathered with an illustrious company of Frankfurt personalities, old and new friends, in the restaurant "Zum Faust" for a banquet, in which old memories of Nippert's youth and school days were refreshed and Max Walter, known as a humorous, witty speaker, let his spirit sparkle. It was during that visit of Nippert's that a little interlude took place at the ticket office of the Palmengarten, (3) which was a lot of fun for him and all of us: inflation had brought the provision that foreigners had to pay three times the entrance fee to the famous Palmengarten. I wanted to get the tickets and informed J. Nippert of this provision. "*Please*," he said, "*let me pay it myself*." He spoke in unadulterated Frankfurt dialect, such as the dialect the poet Stolze had made popular far and wide, and without further ado - there was no need for any other document - received his ticket at the price of the locals. "*But these here*" Nippert continued, pointing to his wife and two sons, "*are Americans, surely they must pay more*?" And he paid triple for these "foreigners." "*Do you see*," he then said proudly, "*that I can still legitimize myself as a Frankfurter*?"

During my visit to the United States in 1921, I naturally also visited Cincinnati, which became dearer to me the longer I stayed there. Here lived the dear Dr. A. J. Nast, editor of the "Christian Apologist", whose place was later taken by Dr. A. J. Bucher. Here Dr. J. Diekmann directed the Methodist German-American deaconess work with the model institution Bethesda; here was the center of German-speaking Methodism in America. This time I spent little time with the other friends. Judge Nippert had invited me to be his guest, had thus taken me in hand, and the conversations with him promised to give me an insight into the American psyche, into the tensions that had led to the war and into the present relationship of the United States to the German Empire, the old imperial and the new republican, such as I could hardly have had anywhere else, for Judge Nippert had had his education in Germany, but had done his life's work in the United States and was rooted there as an American citizen. Thus, his judgment combined love for the old fatherland with an understanding of the situation in the United States. I was most captivated by his descriptions of the moods that led to the East Prussian donation. The incursions of the Russians into Imperial German territory had powerfully stimulated and revived the love of German Americans, whether they were citizens of the United States or not, for their homeland, for the German Fatherland. At that time, no one thought of the possibility of war between America and Germany. Money was collected with great enthusiasm and great sacrifices were made with joy. The state government as well as the federal government did not object to this outburst of patriotism, and when Nippert was chosen to deliver the million-dollar donation, he was even received by President Wilson. His trip to Germany, the receptions that cities like Königsberg, Berlin and his hometown Frankfurt a. M. gave him, were like triumphal processions. In Germany, there was a hope that the United States, while strictly observing neutrality, would after all maintain a friendly attitude toward Germany.

Nippert was also received by Kaiser Wilhelm. Humorously, he described to me how a court official tried to instruct him in what manner he must speak to His Majesty. His Majesty was not to be addressed as "You" (formal), but address him in the third person. Then he had said, "*If I cannot speak to His Majesty in the same manner as I am accustomed as an American citizen to speak to my President, I would rather forego the audience*." Thereupon

further instructions were omitted. He then found the emperor to be a charming conversationalist, generally a very well-instructed man, perfectly proficient in the English language, with whom it had been a pleasure to converse about anything. The conversation also came to the state of America and the mood of the American people. Judge Nippert took the liberty of pointing out how sympathy for France and England was growing among the people, and how special attention would have to be paid to the attitude of the churches, which played a major role in the formation of public opinion. Then the emperor made the remark: "*But how can the churches in the United States have such an influence? After all, there are no state churches over there*." "*At that moment*," Nippert told me, "*I was startled and thought: If the emperor, whose grandmother was Queen Victoria, who speaks English almost as if it were his native German, has such views about America, what mistakes will his diplomats make*?" And he left the Kaiser with the impression that the lack of understanding of the American structure of government and the mood of the people would have a disastrous effect on the relationship between the two countries and would not succeed in keeping America out of a war, which, in his opinion, should have been the goal of German policy. Unfortunately, further developments have confirmed the correctness of this impression. Germany's underestimation of America was one of the reasons for our defeat, and it is an idle question whether America's entry into the war could have been avoided by more skillful diplomacy.

Of a very different kind was the visit I made to Boston. Boston is home to one of the largest universities founded and maintained by the Methodist Church in the United States. I was told of about 10,000 students, including 300-400 students of theology. That an invitation to Boston was therefore very welcome to me is obvious. The invitation came from the president of Boston University, Dr. Murlin, whom I had met in Des Moines, a man who had much understanding for the situation of Germany and did not hold back with his sympathies. He had formerly been pastor of the American church in Berlin for a number of years - the church stands on Nollendorfplatz - had made many an acquaintance there, had studied the German educational system, and - in a word - had grown fond of Germany. He invited me to give a talk to the students of theology. I was most pleased, however, by a visit to the old 88-year-old ex-president of the university—Dr. William Fairfield Warren. Dr. Warren had been one of the pioneers of Methodist education in Germany. My puzzled question as to whether he was still alive was well founded, for in Germany he already belonged to history. When the Methodist seminary for preachers was founded - at the beginning it was located in some rooms of the publishing house in Bremen - he was called across the ocean as the first full-time theological teacher, whose task was to introduce the students to the history and task of Methodism, but above all to the New Testament and to systematic theology. From 1861 to 1866 he worked in Bremen as a teacher. He quickly acquired a good knowledge of the German language, in which he published his "Introduction to Systematic Theology," still highly regarded today, in which he clearly emphasized the distinctiveness of Methodist doctrine alongside the older doctrinal views of Christianity. But his speech, delivered in 1866 on his departure from Germany and published in print, had become downright famous: "Methodism, no counsel or work from men." In that year Professor Warren was appointed president of the newly founded Boston University, where he served with great success for an age. He succeeded in bringing the University up to its height, in appointing well-known professors in all subjects, in attracting more and more students, and in bringing together, by voluntary gifts from members of the Church, the means essential to the extension and maintenance of such a great institution. All of this was far, far in the past for us. At the end of the 19th century, Dr. Warren had retired. He had written to me a few times in Hungary, had also congratulated me on my election as "President" of the Preacher's Seminary, had often expressed his love for Germany, and had let me know that he would be glad to meet and talk to me personally. His heart was still attached to Germany. Who can forget Germany who once lived here and loved it!

Despite his 88 years, I found dear Father Warren still spry, mentally fresh and interested in everything that was going on in the world. In order to be able to tell me a lot, he spoke English, since the German language was no longer quite familiar to him. But on his desk lay the "Christian Apologist," the Bremen "Evangelist," and to my surprise even the "Evangelist for the Danube Countries," which I had started and edited until my departure from Southeastern Europe. The conversation showed that he really read the paper. He spoke of how pleased he was

with our "Christian attitude" after the collapse of Germany, and how deeply convinced he was that the German people would overcome the time of need, even the humiliation, and rise again. The time he spent in Germany is written in the book of his memory in golden letters, and he is still convinced today, as he was when he gave his talk at the Heilbronn conference, that we Methodists have a great task to fulfill in Germany. He showed me a manuscript, intended to be printed in the most distinguished journal of the Methodist Church, the "Methodist Review." In this article he compared the constitution they were working on in Germany with the constitution of the United States. Everything pointed to how Germany, its present and future, filled his mind. Before we parted, he pulled his gold watch from his pocket and asked me to read the dedication engraved on the back cover. The Conference of Germany and Switzerland had dedicated this farewell watch to "*our brother Professor Dr. W. F. Warren in memory of the blessed services he rendered to the Work in Germany*." Mind you, it was in 1866! "*This watch*," Warren said solemnly, "*has regulated 55 years of my time. It has reminded me every day of my brothers in Germany. In my will I have stipulated that after my death it be sent to your address for safekeeping in the library or archives of the Seminary. Let it tell professors and students that time is precious, that there is no better use of time than to be in the service of Him who came from heaven to earth to seek and to save that which is lost, and who, if we are obedient to His command, is with us all the days, yea, every hour and every minute, even unto the end of the world*." Then he knelt with us - the president of the university, Dr. Murlin, was present - and prayed as fervently, as heartily, as faithfully as only one who lives in intimate communion with God can pray. He gave thanks for the spiritual blessings through the Christ - and he seemed to me like an apostle and prophet - and prayed for me, for the Seminary, for the Methodists in Germany, for all the disciples of Jesus Christ there, for the whole German people, so that Dr. Murlin and I were in tears from inner emotions. I thought of the word of James in his epistle, "*The prayer of the righteous is able to do much if it is earnest*." And when I felt his hand on my head and he blessed me like a father blesses his son, I felt as if I had received a special ordination to my ministry, connected with a blessing that will remain.

On the way to the university, I said to Dr. Murlin that this had been the most wonderful experience of my American trip. "*And what desire do you think arose in me? I would like to establish a* 'W. F. Warren Chair of Systematic Theology' *at our seminary for preachers, so as to keep alive the memory of this man of God*." Dr. Murlin was silent. He too, like me, was deeply moved. I then spoke to the students of the university. The university chapel where the talk took place was filled to capacity. Based on the relationships we had through Dr. W. F. Warren, I lingered a bit on the thought that we, they in Boston, we in Frankfurt, should use our powers to prepare a new future through the message of the Gospel, as the world needs it today more urgently than ever, in America and Germany. Dr. Murlin spoke the closing remarks, which were a great surprise. He described the scene in Dr. Warren's room, told of our prayer fellowship, of the clock that would go to Frankfurt, and of my thoughts of establishing an F. W. Warren Chair of Systematic Theology. "*I want to tell Dr. Melle that we are willing to cooperate in the fulfillment of this desire, and I promise him - before he takes leave of us again - that I want to be the first to give him $1,000 for the existence of this chair. I also declare that I am willing to help to raise the whole sum*." There was great enthusiasm among the students, clapping of hands, joy on their faces, shaking of hands and blessings as they left. Once again it had come true: "*Have your delight in the Lord, he will give you what your heart desires*." It took quite a while until the funds for the chair were gathered. It took a lot of work and a lot of prayer. But the certainty that the goal would be reached was given to me by God in that unforgettable hour, and I - like the chamberlain from Mohrenland at that time - went merrily on my way towards home. God had, looking at all the wonderful experiences, given grace to my journey.

How I came to meet President of the United States is quite an interesting story and needs to be told in some detail. It shows how God weaves together the threads to the fabric of our lives in a mysterious way, but with a sure hand, until the hour comes when His purpose finally becomes clear. As reported in an earlier chapter, I made my first trip to America in 1913. I went over in February, returned to Vienna in August, and resumed my work at the Vienna congregation after a two-week recuperative vacation spent with my wife in the beautiful mountains of

Semmering in the Austrian Alps between Vienna and Graz. During my absence, Preacher Heinz Mann had represented me in the best possible way. But now it was time to get back to the work of the congregation. It had also always been my principle to let the congregation participate in the fruits of spiritual gifts that God had given me along the way. One Sunday morning there was an American woman in my service who did not understand a word of German. She told me that she belonged to the Methodist Church, but that her husband, who was a doctor on a so-called postgraduate course at Vienna University, was a member of another church. However, he was not much interested in church work. However, she would like to be able to attend Methodist services with her children and would try to bring her husband as well. She would be grateful if I could have some conversation with him. The next Sunday she brought her husband with her, and I met Dr. J. W. Summers, a physician who was well versed in the medical field. From him I learned that the University of Vienna exerted a great attraction on American physicians. In their circles, it was a matter of good sense if they could raise the funds to take a longer course - usually up to a year - in Vienna after completing their studies in the United States. Most of them would have brought their families with them. When I asked if there was an English or American church, the answer was "no," and Dr. Summers added that they greatly missed not having a place on Sunday where they could come together and sing and pray in their own language and hear a sermon from time to time. They do try to learn some German, but it takes a long time before they are able to follow a German lecture.

Our morning services in the centrally located Trautsohngasse, near the Town Hall and the Burgring, took place from 10 to 11:15. Americans are accustomed to starting only at 11 or half past 11. I said that we would be glad to make our hall available, and since I knew how popular Sunday School was in America, for children and adults, I asked him if he would not like to take the matter in hand and start an "American Sunday School" here in our hall and invite his colleagues with their families to attend. Of the American ladies who studied music in Vienna and some of whom I had met, one or the other would certainly always be willing to play the harmonium. I would get English songbooks, but for the time being the song treasures they knew by heart would suffice. Mrs. Summers looked at me a little surprised at this suggestion. Had she not told me that her husband was not interested in church work? Now I gave him such a task in the very first conversation! But I had immediately gained the impression that Dr. Summers was not one of those men who are satisfied to hear a sermon from time to time, but who, equipped with an active nature, are only to be won over if they have something to do. Great and difficult tasks do not repel them, but excite them. After all, Jesus had also immediately connected the call: "*Follow me*" to his first disciples with the commission: "*I will make you fishers of men*!" The men's problem in the church cannot be solved if the church does not - as its Master did - put men to work. Dr. Summers was gripped by the thought of gathering his fellow Americans in a foreign land, providing them with a church home, and thereby helping them, in the midst of the hurry of life and studies, not to lose fellowship among themselves and with God. Physicians are not usually considered particularly religious, but perhaps that is a mistake. They just often do not have the time to observe religious forms regularly, but, as Augustine said, "*the heart is restless until it rests in God*," and I have found, especially among the American physicians I have met, that they seek this rest in God, and, when they have found it, appreciate in it a source of strength, as for the spiritual life, so also for their profession. Doctor Summers asked if I would be willing to assist him with my advice if he would act on my suggestion, to which I gladly replied in the affirmative, and, practical as he was disposed, and keenly interested in the anti-alcohol movement in America, which was then already working toward Prohibition, he suggested that I announce a lecture in English on the problem of alcohol control in Southeastern Europe for next Sunday morning at half past noon. He would invite his colleagues with their families, and perhaps we could organize the American Sunday School right then.

Doctor Summers kept his word. The next Sunday, almost the entire American colony was gathered, and the proposal to start a Sunday school was accepted with enthusiasm. In America, the superintendent of a Sunday school is called the superintendent. I appointed Dr. Summers to this office. He accepted it. In no time organists, secretaries, treasurers, and statisticians were elected, just as is the custom in America. As early as Monday, the student of music elected as secretary - as I recall, was from the state of Oregon in the far western United States - came and showed me a beautiful book for the minutes, consisting of the finest paper, bound in Saffiano leather,

with gold edges. Even today I keep this book with the exact entries about each meeting as a precious memory, and once in a while I read again the songs we sang, the passages we read, the topics we discussed, even an excerpt of the sermon I had preached, because they had made it a condition that on the Sundays I was in Vienna, I should give them a sermon in English. That was not an easy job for me. I usually had to preach two sermons in German on Sunday and one lecture in the youth circle. For the English service I had to write down every sermon verbatim, even every prayer, because it is difficult for me - even today - to pray in a foreign language. Often, I only got around to writing down an English lecture on Saturday at 12 o'clock at night, and it was no wonder that on Monday I had the usual migraine. But it was a nice time and a nice activity. As I write these lines, the Christmas celebration of the American Sunday School in Vienna in 1913 stands vividly before my eyes. Ninety-five or 98 people, all Americans, were there. I gave them a speech about the joy of Christmas, a few Christmas carols were sung, then suddenly, announced by a strong knocking with a mighty stick at the door, St. Nicholas appeared in a big get-up. His wide brown coat was covered with snow. On the white hair of his head sat a Russian fur cap, and his long beard reached almost to his knee. Panting, he dragged a heavy sack from which, poking the floor with his stick in front of each guest, he pulled out the most beautiful gifts and handed them out: genuine Viennese handbags for the ladies, books, fountain pens for the gentlemen, and a package of chocolate, nuts, gingerbread, and other such delicacies for each of them. In addition, there was chocolate to drink, which had been cooked in our church. It was a cheerful, happy evening, and the wife of one of the doctors said afterwards that this was the most beautiful Christmas they had ever experienced, the Christmas in Vienna, which, in addition to the Christmas message, had brought them such a vivid memory of their distant homeland. They truly felt at home. Yes, Summers had not only become a proficient Sunday school teacher, but he had also proven that he was a brilliant organizer who knew how to take advantage of opportunity. When Dr. Summers left Vienna with his family - shortly before the outbreak of the World War I - we held a farewell hour in which he thanked me on behalf of his colleagues for the blessings he had received in the Methodist church. Then he gave me his address: Walla Walla in Washington State, that is, in the very west of the United States, and we promised to keep in touch.

But what does this have to do with a reception for the President of the United States? Just be patient, the interested reader will find out in a moment. Probably before our friends reached their homeland, the world war broke out. We heard nothing from each other. And when I traveled to Des Moines for the General Conference in 1920, I hardly thought of meeting any of these physician families. That's when - during General Conference - I was invited to lunch one day by some delegates from the West. I asked one after another what city he was from. One said, "*I'm from Walla Walla*." "*From Walla Walla in Washington State*?" " *Yes, that's my home. You seem to be well known there. Have you ever been there*?" "*No. I haven't come that far west. But I have an old acquaintance there, a Doctor J. E. Summers, a physician who studied in Vienna for a time and attended our services there. Did they perhaps know him*?" "*Why, certainly. I know him very well. By the way, he is no longer practicing medicine, but has gone among the politicians. He is our Republican congressman in the United States Congress in the federal capital, Washington, District Columbia*." My surprise was great. "*In all the world*," I asked, "*how did Dr. Summers get into Congress*?" "*That's very simple*," was the reply. "*When he returned from Vienna, Dr. Summers, in addition to his work as a physician, distinguished himself especially by his interest in Sunday school work. He brought new stimulus and new enthusiasm for Sunday School to the people, and thus became generally known and liked. Then, when our delegate for Congress died, the representatives of the churches and Sunday schools met and decided to nominate Dr. Summers as a candidate for Congress. The election was a brilliant victory for him. Now he sits in Congress*." "*Can you give me his address*?" "*It's very simple:* Congressman Dr. J. W. Summers in Washington, D.C. *Congress is now in session, and if you can make possibly travel to Washington, you will be sure to meet him*." I checked my plan for the return trip. A few hours could be carved out for Washington. So, I telegraphed him in Washington that I would attend the General Conference in Des Moines, intending to arrive in Washington on Thursday morning, and would have to leave in the afternoon. I asked to be informed whether he was at home and whether I could meet him. The answer came the next morning. He telegraphed: "*Dear Brother Melle*" - this form of address gave me particular pleasure - "*we are all at home and are very glad to see you! Come as soon as possible*

and stay as long as possible." He picked me up at the train station in his car, drove me around town, showed me the public buildings; we spent a leisurely hour with the family, then I had to go on, but not without having made the promise to reserve a few days for Washington on my possible later visit to the United States. I always did that later. As a rule, I then sought out the German ambassador - sometimes a "luncheon" was held at his home with leading church personalities - preached on Sunday in some of the large Methodist churches, usually first in the well-known Foundry Church, but the most captivating for me were always the dinners at Summers. Mrs. Summers was an excellent hostess who knew how to make the evenings an experience that lingered long in the memory. Well-known senators and members of Congress were invited, I had to talk and answer questions about the conditions in Europe, especially in church life, and when the gentlemen politicians then got into a discussion, as is easily the case with them, about pending political questions, about the elections, about the president, about new bills, about the League of Nations, etc., the German guest was the one who always profited most through the insight he gained into the conditions. It was at one such dinner that Dr. Summers introduced me as "*the friend from Vienna to whom he owed his political career*." In doing so, he told the story of how I had made him superintendent of the American Sunday school in Vienna, and how the Sunday schools of his constituency had then elected him congressman.

But to the actual matter: It was during my second visit to Dr. Summers in Washington in 1921. I had allotted several days on his advice. After all, I was concerned not only to get to know Washington from the outside. And where could I have had a better guide than my friend Summers? He showed me all the sights of the city. We drove to the Potomac, visited the most important state buildings, spent more than half a day in the Capitol, he introduced me to a number of senators and congressmen, we attended a session of Congress which opened with a prayer, visited the magnificent Library of Congress which is said to contain two million volumes and many more the sights. One evening my host asked, "*Now you have seen much of Washington. Lest you be like the pilgrims who have been to Rome and have not seen the Pope, you will be received by the President at the White House tomorrow*." It should be noted that President Wilson's term had expired, his popularity and influence had completely waned. Rarely has a statesman fallen so rapidly in the esteem of his people as this man. Wilson belonged to the Democratic Party. The Republican Party skillfully exploited Wilson's unpopularity. It succeeded in getting back in the saddle in the 1920 election and in getting its candidate Harding elected. When I was in Washington, President Harding had taken office about 2 months ago, and Dr. Summers had everything well prepared so that he could introduce me. When we talked to the President's private secretary, it turned out that he had already been informed of my arrival. George Nippert had written to him and suggested whether he could not arrange for me to have an audience with the President. This, of course, was not easy in my case. I was one of the first Reich Germans after the war to be accorded this honor. As far as I remember, the peace between Germany and the USA had not yet been ratified at that time. But the influence of Dr. Summers succeeded in dispelling all misgivings. It could not, of course, be my intention to raise political issues. I found in President Harding a friendly gentleman who performed his representational duties with great kindness. Restraining himself from political judgments, he sought to increase his knowledge of the economic situation, as well as of the necessary aid. The evening before, at a dinner where a collection for the needy in Vienna, especially for the malnourished children there, was discussed, he had spoken out most warmly in favor of the relief action and jokingly added: "*Everybody has a hobby, my hobby is to do something to help*". I followed this up by expressing my joy at having such a hobbyhorse, telling some of the need in Vienna and the help for Vienna, and expressing the hope that it would soon become the true motto of all people: " I want to do something to help." I gratefully shook hands with friend Summers. If it was true that he owed me his political career, I owed him the strong hope that it would be possible - in spite of everything - to build a new future.

(1) Judge A. K. Nippert—On 23 July 1916, the *New York Times* carried lengthy article: “A Two-Hour Talk with the Kaiser: Judge A.K. Nippert Brings Message to President Wilson and the American People from Wilhelm II.” Nippert (1872-1956), Judge of the Common Pleas Court of Cincinnati, had just returned from Germany where he had participated in international meeting of war relief organizations in Berlin. On return home he met with the Kaiser at the Western Front, as well as with General Paul von Hindenburg, Chief of the General Staff of the German Army. The newspaper article conveys the message the

Kaiser had for President Woodrow Wilson and the American people, while also providing Nippert's perceptions of the Kaiser.

(2) William F. Warren— Born in Williamsburg, Massachusetts, he graduated from Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut. He later studied at Andover Theological Seminary and at Berlin and Halle. He entered the New England Conference in 1855 and was professor of systematic theology in the Methodist Episcopal Missionary Institute at Bremen, Germany (1860–1866). He was acting president of the Boston University School of Theology (1866–1873), president of Boston University (1873–1903), and dean of the Boston University School of Theology (1903–1911). Warren wrote theological books. He also published a book promoting his belief the original center of mankind once sat at North Pole: *Paradise Found: The Cradle of the Human Race at the North Pole* (1885). He placed Atlantis at North Pole, as well as Garden of Eden and Avalon. He believed all these mythical lands were folk memories of a former inhabited far northern place where man was originally created.

(3) The Palmengarten is one of three botanical gardens in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. It is a major tourist attraction.

F.H. Otto Melle – Memoirs 1875-1936

Chapter 28 From Service in the Seminary

When I began my ministry in Frankfurt am Main and took over the direction of the Preacher's Seminary, I felt that above all a correct attitude of my thinking about my new task was necessary. Whereas so far Southeastern Europe had filled me completely and the problem of German Methodism had occupied me in my church work only to the extent that I felt its mission as it applied to the Southeastern European region, now, in connection with the Seminary and its work, German Methodism, its history, its nature, its relationship to the non-German Methodist churches, its task in Germany - and in Europe - came before my eyes in a way that had not been the case until then, and hardly a day went by when I did not think about it. I was greatly helped by the fact that one of my main subjects was "The Methodist Revival Movement," on which I had to give one or more lectures every week. I took the three upper classes together for this purpose, distributed my material over a cycle of three years, and tried to give my seminarians a view of Methodism from the standpoint of German Methodism. I found that such a view not only aroused interest, but helped immensely to penetrate into the essence of Methodism in general and to enthuse the young men for their future profession as preachers of the Methodist Church. Thus, in the first year, in

connection with Wesley's life, I treated in detail the German influences on Wesley's life and work; in the second, how some Palatines who had been driven from their homeland had a personal experience of salvation in Ireland under Wesley's work, and then how Barbara Heck and Philip Embury brought Methodism to America; then, in the third, the history, the struggles, the special heritage of Methodism in Germany, Switzerland, and Southeastern Europe, with special emphasis on the close ties that bind us to the Methodists in those countries. At the end of the school year, instead of an oral exam, I had each student do an independent written paper on a topic chosen by himself from the rich material treated during the year, using the extremely rich Methodist literature of our library - in German and English - and I must say that quite excellent papers were delivered, which pleased me quite a bit. Only I still think with some horror of the task, shortly before the end of school and the board meeting, overloaded with many administrative tasks, of having to read, correct and judge 40-60 such papers crammed into 25-30 typewritten pages. Many an hour of sleep had to be sacrificed. But when I heard on my travels here and there that one of the seminarians had given a captivating lecture on Methodism during his visit to a district, I felt something like fatherly joy.

Accustomed to try to reduce the tasks set me to the simplest formula, I came to the conclusion: first, it is necessary to equip the students for their future profession of becoming preachers of the Gospel in the Methodist Church; second, I must try to bring in the best teachers, even in addition to the full-time teachers; third, I will have to see to it that the means are gathered which are necessary to carry out quiet educational work; and fourth - last but not least - the Seminary should be able to exert such an attraction, that not only our candidates from Germany and Switzerland rush to Frankfurt am Main to be able to sit at the feet of their teachers for a few years, but also that the young men from Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, the Baltic States, and perhaps beyond from the Nordic countries, who are called by the Lord of the Church to the preaching ministry, do not consider their education complete unless they have studied for a time in the seminary of the Methodist Church in Frankfurt am Main. The studies at Frankfort am Main must seem to the young men as valuable as those at a Methodist theological college in England or America. And would it not, if Frankfurt could be developed in this sense, contribute much to the mission of German Methodism, of which I was deeply imbued, to the best of the whole church?

That I did not consider my own church or view as the only one, disparaging and despising others, will become clear from the further presentation. Nor did I want the emphasis on the German idea to be understood in such a way that, for example, students who belonged to other nations could feel less recognized and set back. I knew very well that discussions about national differences, etc., could easily introduce something into an institute with a boarding school that would not unite but dissolve. That is why I often gave the advice to refrain from such discussions. What I wanted was to combine in our German preachers the love for their church and the joy of working in it with a deep sense of responsibility that we, precisely because we belong to German Methodism, are obligated before God and before history to live and work in such a way that we can be an example also for the congregations outside of Germany, and that we must be able, just as we have to build up and expand the work in the Fatherland, also to give the character to the congregations developing in the smaller European nations. There was a time when anyone who wanted to penetrate the essence of the Methodist movement had to master the English language; he was compelled to go to England or America to become acquainted with Methodism. This was now technically impossible, nor should it be necessary. For this, however, German Methodism must clearly recognize its mission, it must strive to come to the same level in the training of its preachers as the educational institutes of the great Methodist churches of other countries, it must have men at its head who have worked through its mission with all its problems, it must create a corresponding literature which is not inferior to the English Methodist Works, it must present in exegetical and systematic theology, also in historical and practical, as well as in the other theological disciplines, the point of view of the Methodist revival movement, the Methodist special material, both in scientific and in popular form; it must unfold in a genuinely Methodist way the existing forces to the highest activity, in order really to be able to give something, yes, to give much. "Streams of living water" must flow from our bodies according to Jesus' promise. But in order to grasp, deepen and tackle this task, it needed - German Methodism - a seminary for preachers that was up to the task.

In doing so, I was firmly convinced that I was only serving the Methodist Church, its position among the other churches, its spread and rootedness among the German people and the other European peoples. I could never stand denominational narrow-mindedness, a "sacred self-interest", as it shows itself in some communities, which even in contact with others always immediately thinks of its own advantages and seeks to gain such, and I always had to overcome an unpleasant feeling in the intercourse with such narrow-minded, egoistic Christians. As a Methodist, the thought could not even occur to me that we were the only ones who stood on the ground of Scripture, who possessed the right knowledge and therefore had to try to draw others over to ourselves and thus to the right path. We Methodists recognize all those who have been born again, who have received forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ and have become God's children and thus heirs of eternal life, as our brothers and sisters. They are to us like formations in the military with their own uniforms and equipment, but we are all in one army, all under the command of Jesus Christ, fighting for the Kingdom of God. But as in war every formation contributes the best to the victory when it uses its weapon, so in the church of Jesus Christ every church and community when it uses the charism that Christ has given it in its work for the Lord. In doing so, she not only serves her Master, she also serves others. And my ideal was to train preachers who "know the rock from which they are hewn," who cultivate and use the charism given to Methodists in evangelism and pastoral care, in the building up of living congregations, in Christian loving-kindness, in popular and in leading the congregation into the richness of biblical, divine thoughts, and which thus - perhaps also in their excellent organization - can become a stimulus and a blessing for the entire church life in the German fatherland. Even today, in the midst of another great war, it is still my firm conviction that such a position, especially in the preaching ministry of the church, must be there if it does not want to dry up and ossify, as we can see in many structures of church history.

My hope that the seminary would have an attraction beyond the borders of Germany was soon fulfilled. We began in 1920 with 20 seminarians. But the number grew from year to year, and it was not long before we had no difficulty in getting young men, but all kinds of hardship in accommodating them. The housing shortage was so great that we were not even able to free up the "teachers' house", which had been rented out during the World War, for our purposes. However, I had acquired an adjoining house, the attics of which were fitted out for dormitories, and the rest had to be accommodated in private families in Ginnheim. For the graduating number of seminarians of 23 in the school year 1920/21 rose in the following year to 41, then a year later to 76, and in 1923 there were even 83 young men. More could not be accommodated with the best will in the world. A university professor friend of mine jokingly commented during my visit, "*You have the largest number of theology students between the universities of Berlin and Tübingen*." A special problem for education was posed by foreigners who did not know enough German or any German at all when they arrived in Frankfurt. There were Hungarians, Bulgarians, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians. Later, individual Finns and Danes joined them. Of course, these young people first had to be introduced to the German language, and it was truly astonishing how quickly some of them learned not only to understand the foreign language, but also to master it. Since we could not burden the teaching staff with elementary instruction in German as well, I recruited teachers from the city, preferably high school teachers, for this service, who themselves took the greatest pleasure in introducing these gifted and extremely industrious young people first to an understanding of the language, and later to German literature. Some of these teachers told me that they felt that they were doing a special service for the spread of the German language with every hour they spent in the preachers' seminary. These gentlemen would gladly come the long way out of town to Ginnheim on Friday evenings when one of these foreigners had to preach his first trial sermon in German, to witness the progress their students had made. It has happened that the sermon of such a foreigner, who a year ago did not understand a word of German, could be counted among the best sermons, in terms of content, form, and language, that we had the opportunity to hear from our students during the school year.

Space prohibits me from going into detail about individual subjects and the experiences we had with them. I am not writing a work about the seminary, but rather recounting my memoirs. The instructions for preaching must be remembered. It was my task to teach homiletics (the art of preaching or writing sermons) to the upper three

classes and, of course, to lead the practical exercises that went with it. In addition to what we worked out and discussed in the student circle, every Friday evening there was a service in our beautiful, stylish auditorium, which one of our seminarians had to lead. Since the establishment of the seminary, a Methodist congregation had formed in Ginnheim, to which this evening belonged. Their singing choir was led by a seminarian. We sometimes had up to 150 or more listeners at these weekly services. This had a very beneficial effect. When a candidate had to preach his test sermon only in front of fellow students and professors, most of whom sat there armed with notebook and pencil, watching for what mistakes he might make, this did not usually give rise to the right joy for preaching the "Good News". And yet it is very important that our prospective preachers spoke now and then in front of people who listened critically and then did not hold back with their criticism. It was a great advantage that the preacher had a real congregation before him, a congregation that did not come to criticize form and content, but to be edified by the work of the Holy Scriptures, and that awaited each service with a certain excitement because they wanted to get to know the newly arrived seminarians. It gave the service its special character, removed the stamp of the student-like and increased the joyfulness of the preacher. The next morning - again in the auditorium - the discussion of the sermon preached the night before took place, in which all classes, including the youngest, were allowed to participate. A seminarian from the class of the preacher had to introduce the discussion, the others had the freedom to participate, a freedom of which they made extensive use. I was in charge, and I was happy to give free rein to the discussion, before briefly summarizing the outcome of the debate in the closing words and drawing attention to the homiletical rules under consideration, whether encouraging or admonishing. The seminarians always looked forward to these lessons, and they gave me a lot of pleasure, since I not only had the opportunity to memorize certain rules or to point out mistakes by practical example, but I also got to know my young people better and better. In the judgment on the sermon of one of their colleagues, they were quite impressive in their thoughts about the sermon. They revealed in the discussion - as is usually the case - a piece of their character, their theology and their attitude to some of the problems of the time.

It seemed to me that one of the goals of the lessons was to have a real and fruitful discussion about the topics presented. Not just questions to the teacher. Such questions were sometimes subtle, they caused one or the other to parade with his acumen or even to set a trap for the teacher. In the debate, where it was a matter of working out together a definition, a clarity, a depth, of getting to the heart of a problem, it was a task of grasping its essence. At the same time, such debates were a good exercise in free speech. If funny stylistic blossoms appeared, which aroused the laughter of fellow students, then the person concerned was usually cured for life. The idea of promoting free speech led me, for example, to include conference exercises in the lessons on church order, which had never been done before. It is customary at our Annual Conferences that every conference member could make a motion, which, if raised to a decision, must then also be carried out as a conference order. The motion must, of course, be justified. It can also be opposed. Here it depended on expertise and quick-wittedness, and there were preachers who achieved real skill in the art of discussion in such motions, while others, lacking the practice, simply did not come along or usually experienced a fiasco because of their clumsiness. So, I had an "Annual Conference" formed, we elected a chairman and secretary, as well as various committees, which had to bring in the result of their deliberations in the form of proposals. Of course, these were only fictitious proposals that we could deal with. But in maneuvers the soldiers also fight against a fictitious enemy in order to practice for the seriousness of battle. In the seminar such exercises were sometimes quite amusing hours, and it did not take too long to find out which of the young people would develop into a quick-witted debater on theoretical and practical questions.

It was also not easy to get the seminarians to speak the German language correctly and purely. Swiss and Swabians, Saxons and Hanoverians, Silesians and East Prussians often argued about the best pronunciation. Then I got to know Dr. F. Roedemeyer, a lecturer (later professor) who held courses on "speech education" at the Frankfurt University. After I had attended some of his very instructive lectures myself, I asked him if he could also hold these courses in the Preacher's Seminary. He gladly agreed. Later he also combined this with lectures on rhetoric and earned the gratitude of the students for his service. I also made it a point, as already mentioned, to practice

speaking without notes. In my opinion, the manuscript in the pulpit all too easily creates a kind of partition between preacher and listener. Even if one cannot do without the manuscript on special occasions, it is usually an obstacle to contact between preacher and congregation for the regular service of the Word. The Word coming from the heart has a completely different effect. This is not to say anything against the written preparation of the sermon. I required it in the seminary. As a rule, the seminarians had to hand in the written sermon to me 24 hours in advance, but then they were not allowed to take a manuscript with them to the pulpit. Only the Bulgarians, Hungarians, Finns, Danes, etc. were allowed to have the written sermon in front of them. And behold, it worked, it even worked very well! Surprisingly, I was very much strengthened in my opinion about the free sermon at one of our theological courses. Professor Dr. Schaeder gave us three lectures on "Spirit and Word in a Theocentric Theology." To my amazement, he spoke quite freely. About an hour and a half each time. The sharp theological and philosophical definitions at stake in the controversy with other modern directions in theology, for example with Karl Barth, were all treated freely with a freshness and naturalness that made a strong impression. In response to my question, Professor Schaeder explained that free speech was always used by him, even in his various lectures at the University of Breslau. He actually owed this to his wife. As a young married professor, he had once given a lecture at a theological course and read it out in the usual way. After the discussion, he had to give a conclusion, which he could not have written down, of course. His wife told him that in this short, free closing speech, the correct and entire Schaeder had been expressed in his heart-stirring immediacy. Thereupon he resolved to speak freely, and he has retained this habit until old age. I hope my students will do the same! This, of course, refers only to preaching. In the case of theological, sharply formulating lectures, in lectures for special occasions, the manuscript must be allowed, if only to avoid the impression that the speaker has neglected thorough preparation.

In the homiletical discussions I came across an error that may occur not only among Methodists but elsewhere as well. The preacher seeks out a text, sees if it is suitable for the occasion, and proceeds at once to make a draft and meditate upon it, without first laying the necessary historical, exegetical, and systematic foundation for his remarks to the congregation. Lack of time, too many sermons to preach, or even the opinion of already knowing the context and interpretation of the text from previous work, may be the causes of such behavior. Fighting errors theoretically in class and laying down rules about them may prove useful now and then, but usually the admonition is easily forgotten if not memorized through practice. So, from time to time, I had an exercise in collecting the material for the sermon in writing. According to the principle: There must be so much material that one cannot use all of it for the sermon, but only select the most important, my students were allowed to write 20 to 25 typewritten pages. The text was chosen together, then the questions relating to exegesis (critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture), to dogmatic and ethical truths, etc. were determined, also the application to the needs of the congregation were discussed and whatever else might arise. Illustrations and comparisons of one thought or another were also to be gathered. Then they were allowed to get to work. It was strictly forbidden, for example, to begin with a disposition of one's own for a sermon and then to arrange the train of thought. This was only practiced after the collections of material had been completed and compared with each other. Even today I like to think back to those hours and to the joy, the inner satisfaction and the enthusiasm that the young men felt when they had to preach the next Sunday at one of the stations assigned to them. They then had the feeling that they could draw from their full resources, and the congregation got the impression that the preacher had by no means used all his reserves with what he presented in the pulpit.

Already at the beginning of World War I, when I was still wearing the uniform of a non-commissioned officer training recruits for the war, I had expressed my thoughts about the further development of the seminary in a conversation with my bishop; that we needed to establish a somewhat closer contact with the theological faculties of the universities. "Fühlungnahme (making contact)" was a military term that was commonplace in the training of soldiers. It is possible that that conversation stuck with my bishop and six years later gave him the idea to call me to Frankfurt am Main. This idea had long since taken root in me, and after I began my service in the preacher's seminary, I waited for an opportunity to initiate the "Fühlungnahme". Not all of my colleagues in the preaching

ministry were sympathetic to my suggestion. Some of them thought that I would certainly be turned down by university professors as soon as I invited them to lecture with us; others had reservations about the thoughts I was to present. I myself was convinced that some of the professors, insofar as I knew them and was friends with them, would very much like to come to us. It would certainly be of interest to them to become acquainted with Methodism at one of its sources. The advertisement of their theological works in Methodist periodicals on this side and on the other side of the ocean, as well as the reports of their presentations in the Free Churches (1) in general, might, I thought, even offer some incentive for a commitment. But as far as the content of their lectures was concerned, I was and still am of the opinion that a Methodist student of theology must be discerning enough to examine a biblical or theological opinion that differs from his own without immediately losing the ground under his feet. Yes, I went so far in my considerations that I considered it my duty, in view of my responsibility to the church, to bring the future preachers of the gospel, who must also learn to deal with the directions of Protestant theology - even with Catholic theology - to the point that they would become all the more certain of their position, their salvation and their conviction through "contact" with representatives of the various theological schools. In 1927 or 1928 I had even invited Karl Barth to give lectures on rebirth and sanctification. Now there is hardly a greater contrast than Karl Barth's objectivity, his moving away from man and everything that man can do and does and experiences, and the Methodist, let us say biblical, view of the "faith alone", of the personal experience of salvation. I have therefore never been able to understand how Methodist and Free Church theologians could also get caught in the tow of Barthian theology. At that time, the struggle over Karl Barth was also topical. I hoped that a debate between him and Methodist theologians could help to clarify matters. Perhaps, however, such a clarification or debate was less desirable for Barth than it would have been for us. He withdrew his already given promise. With what I have said I have already anticipated something. At first, I was only interested in gaining "contact". I also knew that if my plans were in accordance with God's will, the right opportunity would arise at the right time. The "it happened" of the New Testament always gave me food for thought. In Joppa, Peter was given a hint to go to the Gentiles. As he pondered whether it was so, three men knocked at the door and brought the invitation of Cornelius the centurion to Caesarea. In my life's activities, I had tried to learn to listen for the "knock of the three men." I heard this knocking sooner than I expected.

After returning from my trip to America in 1921, I was invited by the Friendship Association of Churches in Berlin to give a lecture on my American impressions to invited guests in the hall of the YMCA, with special attention to the prevailing mood among Christians over there. Privy Councilor Professor Dr. A. Deissmann, with whom I had already corresponded on similar subjects, presided. General Superintendent Achsenfeld and other leading clergymen of the regional church and representatives of the free churches were present. The focal point of interest was the question of the possibility of reestablishing relations between the churches, and it was pointed out how the new development of church life that was being tackled also necessitated a new contact between the churches in Germany - the union of the regional churches was an important point of public debate - i.e., also between the regional churches and the free churches. The emergence of this idea meant for me the knocking of the three men. As I accompanied Professor Deissmann to the streetcar stop and we discussed further the questions raised in my lecture, I came to talk about my wish to organize theological courses in the preaching seminary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to which I would like to invite professors of theology from the universities. I wondered what he thought about that. "*That is a fine thought*," he said, "*and if they call me, I shall be heartily glad to come*." While we were still waiting for the streetcar, we had also agreed on the topic of a three-hour lecture for him. He would cover the topic, "Fellowship with Christ," according to the letters of the Apostle Paul. My teaching staff, to whom I reported the conversation with Deissmann, were enthusiastic about the proposal, the board of the preacher's seminary also agreed immediately and without any reservations, my bishop declared himself ready to also take on a three-hour lecture, and already in the week after Easter in 1922 we came together for the first theological course in the auditorium of the preacher's seminary. Bishop Nuelsen's subject was "Methodism as a Revival Movement and as a Church." On Professor Deissmann's advice, I had still turned to Professor Dr. Otto Schmitz in Münster, who spoke on "Epictetus' Idea of Freedom and Paul's Freedom." Lectures on "Jesus and the Old Testament" and

an "Introduction to the Epistle to the Philippians" were scheduled for the afternoon and evening hours, and a public lecture by Professor Deissmann in the Paulskirche on "The Gospel and the Reconciliation of the Nations" was to be the final event. A good number of clergymen from various churches, including the Landeskirche, had gathered, interested laymen were of course not excluded, and several professors from the neighboring University of Giessen had also come - I now remember Professor Dr. Hans Schmidt, the well-known Old Testament scholar, and Karl Ludwig Schmidt, the New Testament scholar, who contributed much to the enrichment of the working community of the course by their participation in the lively and substantial debate.

Deissmann had prepared a very special surprise. He was only concerned that the surprise really succeed. That is why he did not even tell me anything about it. I only noticed something when, in the last quarter of an hour before the beginning of the devotion which I had to hold - afterwards his first lecture came - he inquired again and again whether Bishop Nuelsen had not yet arrived. Only when he was told that the bishop had arrived did he seem reassured. I can still see the bishop's surprised face when Professor Deissmann, instead of beginning his lecture, presented Bishop Nuelsen with the diploma of an honorary doctor of theology on behalf of the theological faculty of the University of Berlin and justified this with a lively Latin speech. Nobody had really thought of that. The well-deserved honor of our bishop on the part of the Berlin University was a beautiful prelude to the course, which took an extremely stimulating, enthusiastic and satisfying course. I am still sorry today that inflation, which was already making itself strongly felt at that time, prevented the presentation of the lecturers with the most important contributions to the discussions from being printed. One would then see how truly fruitful theological work was done there, substantially enriched by the interweaving of national church and free church thoughts, scientific research and practical experience, conservative opinions bound by history and tradition, and on the other hand an open-mindedness attuned to the new age and its needs. It was a mutual stimulation and fertilization, an effort to find the right theological expression for the faithful unity of the church of Christ and to serve the building up of the body of Christ with the knowledge gained, so that the participants did not just go home "satisfied", but - as many assured me - with the serious will to grow much more faithfully from now on. The courses continued with a two-year, sometimes longer break. They became a tradition, so to speak. How gladly our preachers, not only the younger ones, but also the older ones, came to spend a few days again in the seminary where they had once studied, and it was captivating to listen to them reminisce in convivial conversations in the "*Bruderkreis*" (Brotherhood), in the breaks or during walks between the Ginnheim gardens or in the "*Wäldchen*" (small forest), while refreshing old memories from their own student days, discussing the difference between the "good old days" and the present, or how they eagerly discussed the theological problems stimulated by the lectures. In any case, it would go beyond the scope of my memoirs if I wanted to describe the individual courses and their effects. But I noticed with growing inner satisfaction how these meetings enjoyed great popularity, how they were eagerly awaited, how they widened the circle of vision of all participants - I do not exclude the lecturers here - how they helped free church and regional church theologians to get to know, understand, appreciate and love each other, perhaps also that they were promoted in the realization of the church's task in general in the turbulent and stormy years of that time, yes, how they contributed - a kind of alliance conference of special character - to cultivating unity in the spirit through the bond of peace in the sense of apostolic admonitions and the high priestly prayer of our Lord. It was natural that representatives of the other free church seminaries for preachers were also invited.

Six such theological courses took place during the time that I had the privilege of directing the seminary for preachers. Thus, we gradually came into contact or, as I expressed myself above, "in touch" with quite a number of the theological faculties of our universities. I cannot refrain from mentioning in this connection at least the names of the professors who served us in a friendly manner, as well as the main topics on which they spoke. Professor Dr. Julius Richter, Berlin, dealt with "Paul as a personality, as a theologian and as a missionary". In a lecture also accessible to the congregation, he surprised us with his thorough knowledge of Methodist mission history by presenting "Three Distinctive Methodist Leaders of World Mission" in Bishop Thoburn, Bishop Taylor, and President Goucher. Privy Councilor Professor Dr. Feine, Halle, who had already become more closely acquainted with our congregation there during his work in Vienna, introduced the problems involved in the subject of "Jesus and

Paul." Professor Dr. Hans Schmitz, Giessen, treated the "Problem of Suffering" and "Selected Passages from the Prophet Isaiah" with light pictures. Professor Karl Heim, Tübingen, spoke on the then widely preoccupied current topic "The Last Things" and gave us a vivid lecture on "The Culture and Religion of Japan". He had returned shortly before from a trip to the World Student Conference in Tokyo. Professor Dr. Bornhäuser, Marburg, gave us a glimpse into "All kinds of messianic expectations at the time of Jesus" as a fruit of his studies and described in an evening lecture, "How the Orient tells stories". Professor Dr. Frick, Giessen, examined "The Motives of the German Mission"; Privy Councilor Professor Dr. Schaeder, Breslau, spoke on "Word and Spirit in the Framework of a Theocentric Theology"; Professor Dr. Entz, Vienna, one of my old friends from the Viennese period, discussed "Psychoanalysis and Pastoral Care", as well as "The Position of the Christian on Occult Questions"; Professor Dr. Weber's (Bonn) topic was: "Faith and Word"; Professor Dr. Theophil Spörri, Zurich, described "The Face of the End Times"; Professor Dr. Cordier, Giessen, "Community Building in Protestantism"; Professor Dr. Koeberle, Basel, gave an introduction to the "Struggle for the Understanding of Justification in Contemporary Theology". Of Methodist theologians, Bishop Nuelsen participated above all, who, in addition to the lectures on "Methodism as a religious movement and as a church" already mentioned, gave us a biography of John Fletcher, the first Swiss theologian of the Methodist revival movement; our licentiate Theophil Spörri with his lecture on the development of Christianity "From primitive Christianity to Catholicism" and one of the outstanding theologians of Wesleyan Methodism in England - I had met him on my trips to England - Dr. W. F. Lofthouse, one of the past presidents of the Wesleyan Conference and the principal of the Birmingham Seminary, whose subject of special interest to Methodists was "Sanctification and Christian Perfection with Special Reference to the Writings of Wesley." It should be mentioned that Dr. Lofthouse was able to deliver most of his lectures in German. The theologian, reading the names of the speakers and the subjects they dealt with, will immediately notice that almost all of them were subjects with which they had thoroughly occupied themselves and were able - it is fair to say - to give an exhaustive overview.

But it was not only during the theological courses that "contact" with theologians from other circles was cultivated. I was very happy to use acquaintances I made here and there, in person or through correspondence, and to bring in visitors who I realized had something to give to my students for speeches or lectures. It would give a colorful picture if I were to list them all by name: Bishops of the Methodist Church such as Blake, Burt, Wade, Nicolson, presidents of Boston University, the pastor of the American Church in Berlin, members of the board of the Blankenburg Conference such as Kroeker, Privy Councilor Professor Dr. Müller, Erlangen, missionaries from Methodist and other missionary societies and from other circles, also well-known university professors such as Hans Schmitz, Adolf Köberle and Professor Strathmann, Erlangen, who often stopped by and delighted us with a lecture on a timely topic. This also includes the visits that Professor Dr. Hermelink made to us with his confessional seminar, usually every two years. Professor Hermelink would then arrive with about 20-25 Marburg students, all of whom stayed with us. They usually took part in a service at which one of our students preached his test sermon, and the evening ended with a full evening in which I or one of my colleagues on the teaching staff dealt with a Methodist topic, Professor Hermelink spoke about ecclesiastical problems of overall Protestantism, and then the students were given the opportunity to enrich their denominational knowledge by asking questions. I also like to think of an excursion to Marburg with our first class, where we listened to three or four lectures by Hermelink, Niebergall, Bornhäuser in the morning and in the afternoon, up at the charmingly situated Marburg Castle, in fellowship with Marburg students, we received an account of the development of the university and of the famous religious discussion on the question of the Lord's Supper.

But I cannot close this section on the education of future preachers of the Methodist Church in Germany and Switzerland and in other countries of Europe without making one more remark about spiritual education. The above remarks might perhaps give the impression to one or the other reader that too much emphasis has been placed on the side of intellectual training. In my opinion, however, there is a danger here, which is particularly noticeable in the university education of the country church clergy. How often I have discussed this question with ecclesiastical leaders who are friends of mine! The danger of overestimating scientific ability, intellectual education, is not only present in German universities. It is also evident in the Free Church seminaries, but perhaps it is

not so great here. With us Methodists it is not the desire of a young man or his happily passed examinations that are decisive for admission to the seminary and entry into the preaching ministry. We require a testimony of his divine calling, his personal experience of salvation, and want to hear the voices of the congregation which knows him and in which he has labored by inner impulse, voluntarily, in Sunday school, prayer meeting, class, and worship. It is only exceptionally that a candidate is accepted who has not served at least one year - often it is two or even three years - as an "assistant" in preaching and pastoral care under the supervision and guidance of an older preacher in a district. That is, before theological training. Theological training is not the condition for practical work, but practical work is the condition for admission to theological studies. Attempts were made to change this scheme in our country as well. I have always resisted this, and I hope that the time-tested system of our church will be maintained in the future. Yes, if all signs do not deceive, the national churches will also be compelled to examine our institution in this piece and perhaps introduce something similar. So, theological study, intellectual formation need not be underestimated. It is necessary, and I believe that in this respect we have offered our seminarians the best opportunities for our circumstances. It was and remained a constant concern of mine that not only knowledge increase, but also the heart might grow in grace. Daily spiritual stimulation was provided by the morning and evening devotions led by the house father, the common prayer meetings, and the hours - called "classes" in Methodist language - in which all the questions were discussed that approach a young person who wants to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and pursue sanctification, without which no one can see the Lord. Both in the discussions at the beginning of the school year and at its end, no scientific subjects were dealt with, but pastoral suggestions were given, always emphasizing the important thought that what matters more in a preacher and pastor is what he is than what he knows. And when, in the closing ceremony, I handed out their certificates to the young men who were now entering the preaching ministry and practical work, pointing out that we human beings may well err in our judgment, but that God, who looks at the heart, is never mistaken; and when I then gave them my hand in farewell, I always had the feeling that the Apostle Paul may well have had when he wrote to the Philippians: "*I am of this in good confidence, that he who began the good work in you will carry it out until the day of Jesus Christ.*"

(1) Free Churches— A free church is Christian denomination that is separate from government (as opposed to a state Church). It does not define government policy, and does not accept church theology or policy definitions from government. It also does not seek or receive government endorsements or funding to carry out its work. The term is especially relevant in countries with established state churches. In Scandinavia, free churchpersons would include Christians who are not communicants of majority national church, such as Lutheran Church of Sweden. In England, where Church of England was established church, other Protestant groups like Calvinists (Presbyterians, Congregationalists), Baptists, the Plymouth Brethren, Methodists and Quakers are among those counted as free churches.

Dir. Dr. F. H. Otto Melle in his study, c. 1922

Chapter 29 From Service to the Seminary and From Work in the Collecting a Maintenance Fund

The task set for me, to put the seminary on a better financial footing, I had to keep firmly in mind, of course, with all the other work. When I arrived in Frankfurt, a firm budget had to be made. The outcome of the war and the collapse of the economy, the shattered monetary system, the shortage of raw materials and of foodstuffs made themselves felt everywhere, and even if the German mark still stood relatively well compared to the dollar - in 1920 1 dollar was still 29 marks - one could already feel the coming torrent of inflation. The seminary had about 200,000 marks in debts for which interest had to be paid, and no income other than the collections of the congregations, all of which were struggling mightily to keep themselves afloat. Through the relief effort led by Bishop Nuelsen, for which the Methodists of America provided a whole shipload of food and clothing, we at the seminary received a wagon of food. This, for the time being, removed the greatest concern. On my trip to the General Conference in Des Moines in 1920, the Board of Foreign Missions in New York, after I had set forth the needs of the work in Germany, decided to send me $8,000 a year in support for the next few years, so that, it was said, I could carry out my plans for the training of future preachers and the hard-struggling congregations would be relieved of their seminary obligations. I felt obliged to emphasize this concession of the Church in America. It happened at a time - 1920 - when the American people, as I have described in an earlier chapter, were still entirely under the psychosis of war, a sophisticated propaganda was trying to make the Treaty of Versailles out to be just, and thus hatred of Germany and pity for France and Belgium were constantly rekindled. Dr. North often explained to me how they were compelled to take into account of the mood of the people, who were designating their gifts precisely to help France. But the leading men of the Church had a wider view and a Christian heart. They saw not only the need, but also their responsibility before God and history and their inner obligation to help for the sake of Christ's love. In these meetings, I did not feel at all like a beggar, like the poor asking a rich person for a little gift. Many times, a collector is viewed that way. Rather, I considered myself a member of the church of Jesus Christ, reminding his brothers in faith - as the apostle did in his collection for the needy early church - of the opportunity now given them by the head of the church to prove that their love for Christ, of which love for the brothers without distinction of nation is proof, is right. Perhaps this attitude of mine, which I expressed both in individual conversations and in public speeches, helped to establish, in spite of all political tensions, the union of hearts and to release the power of that love without which speaking with tongues of men or angels is "a sounding bell" and even the giving of noble gifts to the poor is "of no use." It will be understood, however, that my heart was made thankful when I had the pledge of the American brethren in my hand at the beginning of my ministry in Frankfurt and was able to report it to the board of the seminary. Such moments are easily forgotten. New tasks bring other questions to the fore. But I cannot forget how eyes lit up with gratitude when I gave my report. The brothers of the Board were like the women on Easter morning: "*Who will roll us the stone from the door of the tomb*?" And when they came close, they saw that the stone - by an invisible hand - had already been rolled away. For me personally, this experience was a great strengthening of my faith.

We were now able to work quietly, even plan for the future, despite the onset of inflation. But not much had been achieved for a better financial basis. I had to turn my thoughts to how we could create a maintenance fund that was recognized as necessary. In the case of city and state schools, such funds are not necessary, even though they might seem desirable. The financial contribution of the city or the state is secured, and it is necessary to set up within the budget. With us free churches, which do not receive any state subsidies, but raise all the necessary funds through voluntary gifts from their members, it is quite a different matter. To be able to get something out of the congregations in Germany at that time for such an extraordinary purpose seemed impossible to me. After all, we had all become destitute in Germany. Those who had some wealth lost it to inflation, and the others had to make every effort to get together the bare necessities of life. I could not simply "muddle along," as they used to say. So, my thoughts kept turning to my friends in America. Wouldn't some of them - German-Americans and English-speaking Americans - be interested in the Preacher's Seminary and its significance for the overall work of

the Church in Europe, and in such a way that their hearts would be willing to make special donations? In short, the thought settled in my own heart, the desire to see this task set before me fulfilled, grew stronger and stronger, until God caused faith to grow that the goal was attainable and that God in His grace would also let me reach it. This is how the path to the achievement of a goal, to the solution of a task, has usually been with me: first the desire, then the examination of the possibility and the path to be taken, until finally the certainty was given that it was my duty to proceed on the recognized path, and then the faith that the goal would be reached, or let us say, given. That it would not progress evenly on such a path, that I would have to reckon with obstacles and great disappointments from the beginning, that was certain to me anyway, based on my previous life experience. For it is surely the case that God has always placed dying before life, struggle before victory, the cross and the grave before the resurrection. And that the more clearly we recognize this law of divine action and submit to it with our plans and desires, the calmer we become in wrestling with all the difficulties we encounter.

I had the opportunity to come to the United States several times. But in promoting the seminary I encountered two obstacles: the first was my relationship, strange as it may sound, with the work of our Church in Southeastern Europe. I had become known by telling of the pioneer work in Bácska, of the beginning in Budapest, and by the time of need in Vienna with the relief work that resulted, the founding of the Auhof for malnourished Austrian children, and by my advocacy of the children's homes in Germany started by Bishop Nuelsen, as well as my thoughts on the power of the Gospel to remove or heal the wounds of war and the reconciliation of peoples. Wherever I went, whether I spoke at universities or in churches, in one of the many clubs or in the circle of German-Americans, I was always asked to speak on one of these subjects. When I arrived somewhere, I first found that a topic had already been announced from the pulpit and in the daily press, often with the note that at the end of the talk a collection should be taken for the relief of need in Germany - and Southeastern Europe. It was not easy to speak forcefully, heartwarmingly and convincingly about the seminary and its mission.

In addition, there was the second obstacle: the crisis in the collection of gifts for the children's homes forced my venerable bishop to concentrate all his strength on the "Children's Aid of the Methodists", which had been established and registered as a charitable foundation. While on the trip in 1921, he had asked me to speak for the children's homes first, so that interest in them would not wane. On my trip to the General Conference in Springfield in 1924, for example, I found a letter from him in New York in which he again urgently requested me to postpone, especially in the German-American congregations, the advertising for a maintenance fund for the preacher's seminary until a more convenient time. Although I could not completely ignore both reasons, it cost me a hot inner struggle to submit to this mood and this order, because my knowledge of American conditions, especially the already easily noticeable signs of a coming economic crisis, made me fear that this "more convenient time" - as so many times in life - would not come. Also, of course, I did not know when and how there would be an occasion for me to travel across the ocean again. I still knew - from the experiences of my first trip to America in 1913 - that one should not come with the main purpose of collecting. Nor was I in any doubt that after each trip my seminary board and colleagues waited with the greatest excitement to see whether my work in the USA had brought anything to the seminary. In addition to the regular expenses for the maintenance of the buildings, the salaries for the teachers, the remuneration for the employed staff, etc., it was also necessary to pay for the numerous seminarians from abroad, especially since the time for which the Board of Foreign Missions had promised us the annual approval was coming to an end or had already expired. All these obstacles and difficulties had to be overcome inwardly, without being allowed to show outwardly.

In 1927 (sic—should read 1929), a new crisis came: In America, the optimism that gripped minds after the World War (WWI) took its revenge. The U.S. experienced something like the post-World War 70 period in Germany. Securities fell rapidly, banks crashed, and many people lost most of their assets overnight. The work of the churches was also affected by the economic crisis. The Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Church was even forced to borrow one million to meet its obligations. Then, at their own expense, some representatives of the Board made a trip through the various areas of the Church to study the financial performance of the national

churches and to see where, for instance, such a church could become entirely self-supporting and eliminate the American support from the Board of Foreign Missions. Such a commission also came to Europe, consisting of the Corresponding Secretary (General Secretary), Dr. Edwards, the Secretary for Europe, and one of the leading laymen, Mister Mc Brier, who, I believe, financed the whole trip of the Commission for Europe. The Commission negotiated with the Bishop and the Treasurers of the Annual Conferences and asked for suggestions as to the ways in which the various Conferences could be made self-sustaining. I met with the Commission for the first time in Riga. While most of the treasurers, who had to act as experts here, pointed out the financial difficulties that stood in the way of self-sustainability, and even said that such a thing was absolutely impossible under the prevailing circumstances, I readily accepted the idea. For it has long seemed to me to be a goal to be achieved for German Methodism, I mean for the work in Germany, to become completely independent and self-sustaining. Financial support, no matter how selflessly it is given, always means a certain dependence. But I was firmly convinced that the time had come when the German congregations would also want to and would be able to assume full responsibility for the work entrusted to them. I said that this goal had been in my mind for a long time and that its attainment would be the fulfillment of a favorite wish of mine. Then I proposed to envisage self-preservation after 10 years, but to send 10% less support every year until then. So, at the end of the 10 years, all support would - automatically - cease. With such a plan, the operation could, metaphorically speaking, be painless, the conferences could slowly adjust to it and would hardly notice the transition from one state to the other, on the other hand, they would be all the more joyful when one day they could be told: "We have reached our goal!" "*One difficulty*," I continued, "*is still present, however, and that is our seminary for preachers. We have 60 to 70 seminarians and 6 teachers. If our conferences are to become self-sustaining, we would have to be able to release them from part of their services for the seminary. For this reason, I would like to raise a maintenance fund of at least $100,000, the interest on which would be earmarked for the seminary's salary fund. If you could help me to raise this fund, you would be of great help to the self-support of our German conferences, without the Board's budget having anything to do with it*." Mr. McBrier, who was met with a certain mistrust in our German circles because the opinion had been spread that he had little understanding of our situation, became so interested, so warm during my remarks, indeed so enthusiastic, that he jumped up, took my hand and said, "*You are my man! This is the first reasonable proposal that has been made to us in Europe. Almost all the expressions of opinion by the conference treasurers dealt only with the financial difficulties they were facing. Your proposal is clear, convincing, constructive. And as a sign that I am serious in my appreciation, I will solemnly promise you that you will be paid $10,000 by me for the maintenance fund of your institute as soon as you can prove you have secured $90,000. My $10,000 will be the last sum necessary to make the $100,000 full.*"

This was a joy and an incentive at the same time. And I immediately went to work after that conversation to set a plan for raising the fund. We would name some chairs after men who were connected with the Seminary and ask their friends to assist in bringing together the necessary capital. Dr. W. F. Warren, the first full-time teacher at the Seminary, whom I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter, later the widely known and popular President of Boston University, was to be honored by having the first chair bear his name: "Dr. W. F. Warren, Chair of Systematic Theology," and the sum of $1,000 promised for it by the present President of Boston University, Dr. Murlin, would form the basic fund. On my next trip to America, I immediately traveled to Boston, became acquainted with the Dean of the Theological Faculty, Dr. Knudson, again gave my lecture to professors and students about the situation in Germany, and several gentlemen immediately agreed to serve on a committee to raise funds for this chair. It was then that I first noticed how the idea of this chair also had an effect on another side: the church press published notes about it, one pointed out the importance of the school for the work of evangelization and at the same time for an understanding between the peoples. Dr. Warren's love for the seminary in Germany - Dr. Murlin called it "Warren's first love" - his sympathy for the German people and his hope that this people would have a great future in spite of its present hardship, made an impression and gave me a good introduction for my lectures. Perhaps it was also the fact that I was recommended and introduced by Dr. Warren that opened many a door for me at universities, pastors' meetings, colleges, conferences and churches. And I am not at all ashamed, looking

back on those days today - in the midst of World War II - that I made the decision at that time to work for a better understanding of both nations, in addition to and with my church activities. I found the American public not only receptive, but grateful and often even enthusiastic, when I described to them my German fatherland and my German people as they were not known in America, and then expressed my wish that the two peoples would learn to understand each other; the better they understood each other, the more they would learn to love each other; it would be impossible that anyone could again stir them up into a war against each other, but the Germans with their scientific thoroughness and the Americans with their common sense and their political talent would be able not only to stimulate each other, to learn from each other, but in common work to give the world imperishable values. I often used to conclude with the sentence, "*It seems to me that Germany needs America and America needs Germany to be made fit for their great task in the future*." And I remember how our old Bishop Hamilton in Washington, when he had heard of one of my lectures in this direction, wrote me an enthusiastic letter, and from his not too rich pension, as he expressed it, sent me $200 for the "Dr. W. F. Warren Chair of Systematic Theology," and wished me God's rich blessing for my further activity, which he would follow with great interest. I then later, when I came to Washington, experienced beautiful hours of fellowship with Bishop Hamilton, who was a great raconteur. As Warren suggested that I speak in the United States about Germany in order to arouse sympathy and understanding, so I undertook to speak in Germany about America, and I think my old friend Warren, if he could have been among my audience, would have been pleased with me. I am only sorry, looking back on those years, that I was too much limited by time. It was better in the United States. There I actually had only one task and could accept every invitation to a lecture if it could somehow be accommodated in my travel program. In Germany, I was bound to the preacher's seminary and could at most make Sundays available for sermons and lectures. But they were pleasant hours when I could describe my travel impressions in a circle of pastors from the regional church and free church preachers, or when I gave a public lecture in a large hall of our large cities, for example on the topic: "America and Us," pointing out the task of Christians and the churches in a special way. Friend Warren, who reached the age of 95 and remained faithfully associated with us to the end, always willingly assisted me in my lectures in Germany at that time. The chair did not come about all at once, but little by little the goal was reached, and once I took the ledger in my hand and opened the account with the inscription: "Dr. W. F. Warren Chair of Systematic Theology," and skimmed over the individual smaller and larger gifts that came from known and unknown donors - many also from German-speaking Methodist congregations in America - it seemed to me each time as if I saw anew the guiding hand of my heavenly Father in the life of the faithful old friend, in his relations to the Seminary, and in the wonderful way in which that hand had made me acquainted with this man of God and had blessed me personally and my service to the Seminary through him.

Actually, almost without my doing, the suggestion came from friends of Bishop Dr. William Burt whether I could not associate a second chair with the name "Burt". Of course, I gladly accepted the suggestion, which had already moved my heart anyway. But there I had first to have the consent of the bishop, who lived in retirement in the quiet seaside resort of Clifton Springs, NY, not far from Buffalo. After his return from Europe in 1912, he had served through three quadrennia (12 years) the Buffalo Presbytery of the Methodist Church in the USA, which, in gratitude for services rendered, made him a gift of a fine house, where he now, still active, received his guests from Europe, with whom he then talked through the old days of his European effectiveness. He had spent eighteen of his best years as superintendent of the Methodist Church in Italy. In 1904 he was elected bishop by the General Conference and entrusted with the supervision of the whole Methodist work in Europe, with residence in Zurich. Already during the first visit made to the Bácska in Hungary by a bishop - it was Bishop Vincent - I became acquainted with Dr. Burt, and from that time on we were united by an intimate friendship. In connection with the task of Methodism in general, he had grasped, as hardly any other bishop, the position and mission of German Methodism, and especially the importance of the Preacher's Seminary in Frankfurt am Main. With his broad view, directed more to the practical than to the theoretical, he saw already after 1904 how good it would be both for the seminary and for the whole European work if this place, dedicated to the training of future preachers, with its rich history and tradition, its select faculty, its library, which was after all considerable, and in which Methodistica

(books about Methodism) were numerously represented, its rootedness in the congregations, and the opportunity it offered to become acquainted with the pulsating life of a growing and fruitful church, could be developed in such a way that it would serve all Europe. His eye already saw then what we experienced in the years after the World War (WWI), when the number of seminarians rose to 83, of whom about a third were foreigners, the Swiss in this case included with the Germans. Bishop Burt had also agreed to raise the funds for some new chairs. The plan could not be carried out. The leading brethren in Germany feared that the foreign influence would become too strong. They wanted to be and remain a German school. Perhaps they also thought that with such a "university," as Bishop Burt liked to say, the leadership could be gradually taken away from them. In any case, they did not readily go along with the idea. With German thoroughness, all pros and cons were examined, then it was decided to build the new seminary building calculated for German conditions after all. At that time - Bishop Burt had the European diocese from 1904 to 1912 - this was a great disappointment for the enterprising, extremely active bishop. He had the impression that the brothers in Germany kept their eyes too much on the narrow circumstances in which they moved, instead of seeing "history" towards the future. Nothing could be done about that at first. If I were to make an objective judgment today about those proposals, I would say that for that time between 1904 and 1912 both parts were right: The bishop with his vision, the German leading brothers with their hesitation. The time was not yet fulfilled, the hour for the execution of such a plan had not yet come. But one will now also understand how Bishop Burt listened when I told him my plans for the seminary and, so to speak, fell back on his ideas expressed more than 20 years ago, albeit in a somewhat different form. Gladly he gave his consent that next to Dr. Warren his name would be mentioned for a "Dr. William Burt Chair of Practical Theology and Methodism." The thought evidently gave him great pleasure, and when he traveled with me the next day to Syracuse, NY, where I had agreed to speak to the preachers' meeting and we visited one of his old friends in the afternoon, he was so impressed with the plan that he immediately handed me a check for $1,000 for the proposed chair. I saw once again how a good and right idea grows and bears fruit. Bishop Burt's heart was much in Germany. Every time I visited him, I had to tell him how the old friends were doing, and often he told me jokingly that perhaps he had done even more than I for the understanding between the two peoples since his daughter was married to a German and his grandchildren were good German citizens.

I could tell some interesting experiences of collecting the fund. Smaller and larger gifts are registered in the books and evoke manifold memories. However, it is sufficient here to assure all the dear donors that their names will not be forgotten and that they will be kept in grateful memory. This applies especially to the gifts and collections from the German-speaking congregations, where - even though I had to speak English in order to be understood by the youth - I experienced such wonderful hours of fellowship, especially in the preachers' families. However, I must report in more detail about two greater gifts. It was around that time when I was struggling inwardly with the above-mentioned obstacles and the thermometer of my hopes had once again sunk almost to zero. Then I accepted the invitation of some friends to rest for a few days in Philadelphia. From my first trip to America in 1913, dear Philadelphia had been such a resting place for me. I was taken for a walk in the magnificent park, was content if I remained silent for a few hours, and when we sat around the fireplace in the evening in the company of our friends, everything possible was done to please and encourage the guest from the Fatherland. With fine tact they always found out when such an encouragement was necessary. Then one of the friends invited me to accompany him the next day in a private car to Atlantic City, where he had to attend a business meeting. Atlantic City is located on the Atlantic Ocean and is probably one of the greatest spas in the world. I had never been there before, so I gladly accepted the invitation. We drove for several hours in one of the finest "cars", the chauffeur did not know a word of German, my friend was a German-American who had made it big by virtue of his efficiency and enterprise. He told me a lot about his life, including his plans for the future. Suddenly he changed the subject: "*But now tell me something about your life and work in Frankfurt am Main. You seemed a little depressed to me last night when the subject of the planned chairs came up. I just want to tell you that in America you can't get discouraged. Your idea with the chairs is a great one. It will continue to work, and success will not fail to come*." Then I had to tell. My heart warmed. And before we had reached Atlantic City, he interrupted my flow of speech with

the words: "*You see, this is how I like to hear you speak. God will place His blessing on your efforts. And for encouragement, I will tell you that I have decided to give them $10,000 for the maintenance fund. You will receive in a $5,000 check while still in New York before leaving for Germany, and the other $5,000 right after New Year's Day* - it was in the fall - *because I can't make it liquid any sooner*." I was speechless, but squeezed the dear friend's hand tightly, knowing that God had given me this experience so that I would not become weak in faith. Should these lines come to the dear friend in Philadelphia, he may not only remember that trip to Atlantic City, but remember that he gave me more than a material gift for my sustenance at that time.

The second experience is related to California and must also be told in some detail. In 1927, on the occasion of the World Congress of the World League Against Alcoholism, at which I represented the German anti-alcohol movement, my long-cherished wish to see sunny California finally came true. Twice I had had to disappoint my friends there. This time it was possible for me to spend two whole weeks on the beach of the Pacific Ocean. The Californian-German Conference met in Oakland, which is actually connected with San Francisco. The long trip on the Californian Express via Chicago, Kansas City, Salt Lake City (the Mormon city) was actually a rest. One travels day and night in the same sleeping car, looking at the partly monotonous, partly varied scenery flying past the window, until one morning the inscription greets one in the dining car: "You are having breakfast in California today". Of the travel impressions, only the brief visit to Salt Lake City, the headquarters of Mormonism, should be mentioned. The first thing I did there was to drive out to Salt Lake and take a refreshing bath. The area around the lake has been developed into an amusement area where travelers from all over the world can amuse themselves with slides, etc. I was especially captivated by the lake, which is said to have almost as much salinity as the Dead Sea in Palestine, into which the Jordan River flows, but without being able to change the salinity. I had been told that the water was so heavy that one could not sink at all while bathing. That had to be tried out. And it is true. You can swim on your back, on your chest or on your side, you can stand in deep water up to your hips, you can't make any swimming movements, you can rest all your limbs: you can't sink. It was really a splendid pleasure and a delight at the same time. You just had to be careful that the waves didn't knock you over in such a way that you got a sip of water in your mouth, otherwise the pleasure would have been over for hours: the taste of salt can only be removed after a long time.

That the Mormons, with their tenacity, optimism and perseverance, have created such a flourishing city here in this barren salt region, compels the visitor to marvel. Of their temple, which is also architecturally magnificent, they, the "Latter-Day Saints," claim that the construction was inspired by the Holy Spirit. I had half an hour of rare artistic enjoyment in the daily organ concert given in the famous auditorium by one of their organists, a master of organ playing. The organ is said to be one of the largest and most beautiful in the United States, and the great hall, of oval construction, is said by the Mormons to have the best acoustics in the world. Concertgoers, mostly transients, are led to a gallery at the end of the hall, facing the organ. The hall has 9,000 seats. Children are not allowed in because they would not be able to behave quietly enough. The guide points out that complete silence is necessary. No clearing of the throat and no movement of the foot should be heard. The smallest noise is heard on the organ and disturbs the player. However, if the listeners remained completely silent, he could guarantee an extraordinary enjoyment of the art. Then the playing began. Partly like a quiet roar, and then again like the roar of the ocean or the roll of thunder, the tones poured out of the wonderful instrument into the wide space, delighted, uplifted, shook, lamented and cheered in a way that I had rarely heard before. As if spellbound, we all sat there. I don't remember what compositions were played; I only remember that we were all convinced of the fulfillment of the promise of a rare artistic pleasure. After the end of the performance, the guide gave some explanations about the famous acoustics. He dropped a pin on the floor, and despite the long distance, we could clearly hear the sound from falling on the floor in all its nuances. This unique sound effect, which can hardly be observed anywhere else, is attributed to the fact that the gallery, where we were sitting, is completely isolated from the walls of the auditorium with a distance of one meter, that there is no column in the hall, nothing at all on which the sound could break. Through the space between the wall and the gallery, the sound is given completely unhindered free

run and free development. I was just wondering why this kind of construction for concert halls is not imitated here and there.

But now to California. It was about 4 o'clock one afternoon when I arrived in Oakland. The preacher of the German Methodist congregation in whose church the Annual Conference was held bore the historic name of Gustav Wasa. (1) In the evening there was a meeting in which I was to give a German talk. Just after 5 o'clock the conferees gathered for supper in the small hall of the church. I must mention this because nowhere else in the USA did I experience such purely German hours as here. I was greeted with great cordiality, I was able to pass on the many greetings I had brought with me from the "old fatherland", and then a wonderful concert of German songs began. They were songs from the German hymnal, then the folk songs took their turn. Without needing a book or sheet music, these German-Americans, some of whom had emigrated from Bavaria or Württemberg, Hesse or Pomerania more than a century ago, sang our beautiful folk songs one after another, so that it resounded far out into the California landscape with its lovely gardens and rustling groves: "In the most beautiful meadow", "At the fountain in front of the gate", "A boy saw a little rose", "I stand in the dark of midnight", "Oh, how is it then that I can leave you where my cradle stood, my home country". I had to realize that the people here at the Pacific Ocean, as far away from New York as New York is from Bremen or Hamburg, could sing more of our folk songs by heart, all the verses, than the guest from Frankfurt am Main. What German song and German melody did to unite people, became clear to me that evening. What does all this have to do with the chairs in the Preacher's Seminary? Just be patient, dear reader, you will soon find out.

The German California Conference met for the last time. It made the decision to unite with the Southern California English Speaking Conference. This Annual Conference met the following week under the presidency of Bishop Burns near Los Angeles, the famous movie city. A representative of the Anti-Saloon League invited me to make the trip there in his car. At this conference I had to give a speech about the church work in Germany. After the conclusion of the same, Dr. Helms, pastor of the largest Methodist church in the United States, as I was told, came and invited me to preach the next Sunday morning in his church in Los Angeles. But I had already promised Pastor Zurbuchen of the First German Methodist Church to be with him. Brother Zurbuchen, however, immediately agreed to step down. "*If this great congregation makes its pulpit available to a visitor from Germany, there is no doubt in our minds what has to happen. We all consider it a tribute of a very special kind to German Methodism and will gladly give up your service in the morning if you are willing to give us a German lecture in the afternoon. You will not have so many listeners as in the great English church, but you will have a full house*." On Saturday afternoon we drove far along the Pacific Ocean, through Hollywood, talking about the service for Sunday. At Brother Zurbuchen's request, I gave him the train of thought of the sermon I would have preached at his house had not the original plan been changed by the invitation of the English congregation, and I presume that Pastor Zurbuchen, who has an excellent memory, recited the thoughts of this sermon to his congregation for their blessing. He told them about our car ride and conversation - also about the chairs in the preacher's seminary - and I noticed in the German meeting in the afternoon that the hearts were receptive and prepared for the message I brought. Yes, that perhaps the very change in the Sunday program, my ministry in the great American church, the ocean drive, and the stimulus given for Pastor Zurbuchen's message on Sunday morning had done preparatory work that could not have been done better. Sunday was one of those unforgettable days on which one feels it clearly: "He leads me on the right road", and which, in order not to forget "what good he has done", should be marked red in the calendar.

On Monday afternoon at 12 o'clock my train went back to the east. I absolutely had to take this train if I wanted to reach my ship. At half past nine there was to be a meeting of the board of the first German congregation with me in the pastor's apartment. I had no idea what was planned, but I believed, as sometimes happened, that it was a small farewell party from which the brothers would then accompany me to the train station. The distance did not matter, because everyone had his automobile in which he could still take guests. To my great sur-

prise, I was asked whether the action had been completed with the two chairs I had told them about. "*On the contrary*," I replied, "*this is only to be a beginning for the expansion of the school*." The further question was whether for a third chair I would accept from them a commitment to send me 6% interest at first for $30,000 annually, until at a later time, which could not yet be determined, they would remit the whole amount. The First German Methodist Church, in fact, owned a beautiful, exceedingly valuable property in the middle of the busiest part of the city. They had bought the place when Los Angeles was only at the beginning of its unprecedented development. It was on the very periphery at the time and didn't cost much. Los Angeles then took off in a few years in a way that seemed fabulous even by American standards: the church and its associated buildings came to the center of the city. Large business groups appeared as buyers and offered sums that were not needed for a new church in another part of the city, but were thought to have a good deal left over. With this - the impression the brothers had gained from the wonderful Sunday services - they wanted to give Methodism in Germany a special joy and a service. That this proposal seemed to me once again to be "about asking and understanding", I probably do not need to say explicitly. My readers will read and feel that between the lines. That morning brought me one of those wonderful experiences that can only be understood if you believe in divine guidance in your life. Isaiah says of the coming Messiah that his name is "Wonderful." Wonderful is his person, wonderful his life and his work, wonderful also his guidance with his own. And one will certainly be able to sympathize with me when I say that in that strange hour the scene suddenly stood before my eyes where, on the advice of my friend Dr. Spencer in Kansas City, I gave up the journey to California, jumped out of the already boarded train, returned the ticket because I had been convinced that I had to give up a favorite desire for the sake of a service which I could do for my fatherland. At that, a Bible verse shone before me that has sometimes given me light, guidance, strength: "*Take your delight in the Lord, who will give you what your heart desires*." Immediately it was also clear to me - it was suggested by the brothers - that the chair should be called the "Dr. Wilhelm Nast Chair." In German Methodism in America, no other name was as well-known and as popular as the name Wilhelm Nast. Nast, a contemporary and fellow student of David Friedrich Strauss, actually destined to be a Lutheran pastor, had lost his faith at the university and with it his inner support, so he emigrated to America, where he served as a professor in various higher schools. In a Methodist evangelistic meeting, he was so gripped by the message of the Gospel that he had a personal experience of salvation, was freed from his doubts and became certain of his acceptance with God. God called him to the preaching ministry, and he became the father of German Methodism in America, which later found its way to Germany. The German theological school in Berea also bore his name. Important theological works have him as their author. The thought of associating a chair with his name would arouse a joyful response throughout German-speaking Methodism. Immediately, at that meeting, an official record of these decisions was made and a copy given to me. In this way the collection for the maintenance fund proceeded. I have recounted it in some detail because only in this way can the inner connections be experienced, the Lord's guidance in my life, of which I am deeply convinced.

Thus - until the 75th anniversary of the seminary in 1933 - the fund came to a certain goal, even if setbacks occurred again and again. For example, around the 1930s came the severe financial crisis in America, which also destroyed the rosy plans of the first German Methodist congregation in Los Angeles and deprived them of the opportunity to pay in the entire sum. However, they faithfully sent in the 6% interest for many years and thus brought us great help. Other gifts came in - despite the financial crisis. Mister Mc Brier, who had promised the last $10,000 for the maintenance fund as soon as I had secured $90,000, followed my work with great interest. He had my papers thoroughly examined, and when he found that everything was correct, he paid the promised $10,000 to the last farthing. I suppose that as I write these lines he is no longer among the living, but my appreciation and thanks for the encouragement he gave me must not be omitted from my memoirs. In order to run an independent administration of the fund, I proposed to establish a Milde Foundation for this purpose. It was registered in the Ministry of Culture in Stuttgart under the name "Methodist Mission Aid". As chairman I proposed my old friend Richard Wobith, who was then chairman of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Württemberg. This was also

the reason why we moved the headquarters to Stuttgart, while the office remained in Frankfurt and the administration in my hands. It is impossible to say whether such care will prove successful in the future. A dear American friend, who also gave a large sum for the fund, said that it was not really wise of me to provide for the future in this way. I should use the funds I have raised to create something in the present; one seldom gets thanks - even from later generations - for such efforts. He may well be right in that. But I simply could not do otherwise. And when I thought of the financial situation, I found myself back when I took over the seminary and all the difficulties that arose from it, it gave me great inner satisfaction that my successor would have it better. And besides, should one think of getting thanks for a job? The very thought of it is not noble, not Christian, not Christ-like. Obedience to the Lord, being faithful in solving the task given to us by Him, never seeking ourselves, but Him who gave Himself completely for us, then the glorious promise given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount will be fulfilled - it is one of the greatest and most wonderful: "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*."

(1) King Gustav I of Sweden— In Sweden, Gustav Vasa (Wasa) is considered to rank among country's greatest kings, arguably even most significant ruler in Swedish history. Having ended foreign domination over Sweden, centralized and reorganized government, cut religious ties to Rome, established Swedish Church, and founded Sweden's hereditary monarchy, Gustav holds a place of great prominence in Swedish history and is central character in Swedish nationalist narratives. He is often described as founding father of modern Swedish state, if not of nation as such. Historians have nonetheless noted the often-brutal methods with which he ruled, and his legacy, though clearly of great and lasting importance, is not necessarily viewed in exclusively positive terms.

Chapter 30 Of Life and Activity in the Seminary

All in all, life and work in the seminary became more and more pleasant to me every day. The fellowship with colleagues, the intercourse with seminarians, and the representation of the seminary at the annual conferences at home and abroad filled my mind and time to such an extent that the worries and difficulties, of which, as already mentioned, there was no lack, seemed to me only as tasks that increased the charm of existence. It is also wonderful to give young men, who are called by God to preach the Gospel of Christ, guidance in their training and to introduce them to the work that awaits them. Therefore, in my memoirs, the references to some more external things must not be missing. Our festive assemblies for the opening of the new school year were always uplifting. They took place in the spacious church at Merianplatz and formed - it is fair to say - every year an event in the Methodist church life of Frankfurt. The districts of Frankfurt and the surrounding area skipped their services on this Sunday afternoon, and Methodists from Frankfurt 1 and 2, from Offenbach and Bergen, from Wiesbaden and Friedrichsdorf, Brombach, even as far as Dillenburg and Marburg and beyond made a pilgrimage to Merianplatz to take part in the festivities. Often there was not only no place to sit, but no place to stand. The opening was usually accompanied by a meeting of the board of directors, so that the entire board was present, or at least a larger committee. The director gave a pioneering address referring to the tasks of the preaching ministry, the seminarians' choir introduced itself for the first time in its new composition, the choirs of the congregations and the deaconesses sang some of their most beautiful songs, and then the newly admitted spoke in short speeches of 5 minutes about their conversion and their calling to the preaching ministry. These testimonies were always eagerly awaited. Sometimes there was a stylistic flourish or two - most of them were speaking for the first time before such an audience - but the seriousness with which these young men told of their decision for Christ, the certainty of their calling to the Gospel ministry, the hopeful expectation with which they now began their training period, and not least the way in which they knew how to express their thoughts and feelings, made an impression every year. I used to make a few brief notes about character, aptitude, etc., while each one was speaking, and later, when I had become better acquainted with the young men, I found that the first impressions were usually correct.

The Christmas celebrations, which began with a party in our auditorium about a week before the feast, constituted a major break in the life and activities of the seminary. It was a tradition that the seminarians themselves made the preparations, decorated the tree under the direction of the housemother, and also set up a program for the social gathering after the official celebration. It was part of the leadership's task to make sure that every seminarian, indeed every member of the large seminary family, found a package of useful things under the Christmas tree. When this family consisted of 100 or more people, this was not only a lot of work for the director, the house father and the house mother, but it was also connected with the worry of raising the funds. For in the ordinary budget no provision was made for such extraordinary expenses. It was up to the director to provide advice and help if he wanted to please the large family. I have to add a small experience which, without me being aware of the consequences for future Christmas presents, helped to solve the question of the means and their procurement for Christmas: It was a matter of a pair of torn trousers. During the garden vacations at the end of October or beginning of November - so I was told - one of my students had had to climb a fruit tree and had torn his trousers in the process. It turned out that the poor boy - he was from the Baltic States - had only one pair of pants at all. So, he had to lie down in bed, while his roommate carried the torn piece to the tailor and had it mended there. Immediately it was clear to me: For Christmas, the young man must get a new pair of pants or at least the fabric for them. I was about to send a circular to our preachers and congregations with the request to help me to give a little Christmas joy to the many seminarians. I dictated for the circular the story about the torn pants. And behold, it struck a chord more than anything else could have done! It should not be forgotten that this was an episode from

the time of the greatest need during the inflation. But necessity and love are the mother of invention. No sooner had my request been sent out through the mail than the answers arrived. Pants, new and used, cloth stores sent fabrics, linings, buttons, the communities gave money. My joy was great, the participation of the communities in such a seminarian's fate was touching. It showed how close the ties of the seminary were with the membership of the church. My thought at first was to use the gifts received to give each of the seminarians fabric for a new pair of pants. It was, as so often in my life, "about asking and understanding." The trousers became a whole new suit, and on Christmas Day each of the seminarians found under the Christmas tree a package that received fabric, lining, buttons with all the other accessories for a new suit! My esteemed readers will be able to understand the excitement with which the packages were opened that evening and the joy that shone from their eyes. And what was then planned for a Christmas party as a special edition could be continued as long as I was in Frankfurt. Not every year a new suit for all - that would have been too much of a good thing for 83 seminarians, for example - but every year one of the classes received its suit, and I had agreed with the head of the house that each seminarian would be granted this privilege once during his study time. It seemed wonderful to me that the incoming funds were always sufficient. Only once or twice - after trips to America - I had to add something from the gifts I had brought with me. Otherwise, it went according to the old saying: "*The flour bowl was not exhausted and the oil jar did not become empty according to the word of the Lord*." The get-together after dinner was always awaited with particular excitement. If the official celebration took place in the assembly hall with a speech or short Christmas sermon, followed by the giving of presents, we usually stayed in the dining hall for the after-party, in order to be able to express more the family character. The program was entirely in the hands of the seminarians, and it was the first class, that is, the high school graduates, who traditionally did not let themselves be deprived of their right to provide the entertainment for the evening. Usually, they knew how to spread such a veil of mystery over what was to come that neither the other classes nor the teaching staff had any idea of it. Already in the fall, the material was collected, the roles were distributed, and the suggestions were discussed in strictly confidential meetings. Of course, this year's first class did not want to be behind that of last year. Now and then it happened that the "senior", who was responsible by virtue of his office, also quietly took the director into his confidence. And this was often a good thing, because student and youthful exuberance, if given the reins, can easily overstep the mark.

According to an old custom that had already formed during my own student days, a Christmas newspaper was usually written and read aloud. Poetic outpourings, editorials with a joking undertone about seminar events, characterizations of individual classes, in which the hand of a draftsman was often outstanding and accurate, anecdotes, reflections on life and activities in the institution alternated in colorful succession. The authors of the individual contributions were not named, but for us in the teaching staff it was an intriguing guessing game to find out the writer from the content and style. The main content was always incidents from the life of the seminary, stylistic blossoms from lectures or answers in class. It is understandable, however, that the teaching staff was not left entirely unscathed. For the Christmas newspaper was, so to speak, the outlet from which criticism accumulated in the course of the year - I want to say "mild" - flowed out for the amusement of the teachers and the pleasure of the students. Only once, I remember, was I forced to "confiscate" the newspaper by decision of the teaching staff, because in one article, in the opinion of the "censorship authorities," the limit of what was permissible had been exceeded. In general, it was a matter of harmless jokes, such as one should not hold against students. Thus, for example, in a year in which a representative of the thought of the group movement had spoken a lot about the "fat" or "swollen I", a well-done picture of our "Rolf" - the institution dog - appeared in the Christmas newspaper under the headline: "Rolf with the swollen I". It really seemed that this Airedale, whom I was particularly fond of, suffered from an exaggerated self-confidence. I had saved this dog's life when he was young and had run away from his owners, and had taken him to the institution. Since that time his attachment to me and his loyalty to me had been unshakable. He had a seminarian who looked after him. Almost every one of the many residents of the house made friends with him, brought him a treat now and then, once - the most delightful thing for him - went for a little walk with him. But as soon as the director was there - even if I had spent half a year over the ocean - no

one else existed for him but me, and being allowed to be near me was the height of happiness for him. Now this was in the year in which the Central Conference with the election of the bishop was to take place, and the article concluded with the sentence: "*What will become of poor Rolf now, if the director is elected bishop*?" But we all laughed heartily at Rolf, and I thought that perhaps the moral application would not hurt even in this not everyday form.

Our seminary trips also deserve mention. Some of the preachers who once took them with pleasure would miss something if I passed them over in my reminiscences. Usually soon after the beginning of the semester, around the beginning or middle of September, the seminary family went on a smaller or larger excursion to the surroundings of Frankfurt am Main, which were rich in natural beauty and historical memories. During the first years of inflation, which were difficult, we limited ourselves to a hike through the Taunus, (1) visiting Bad Homburg with its old castle, (2) where Kaiser Wilhelm II had his headquarters during the World War, and the Roman fort at Saalburg (3) under the expert guidance of Dr. Lüring. Lüring climbed the Feldberg, the highest mountain in the Taunus; the later day trips took us a little further, to the Wetterau, (4) to the birthplace and place of work of Ulrich von Hutten (5) in the Eberburg, and even to Koblenz with a trip on the Rhine. The purpose was a day of complete relaxation in the enjoyment and deepening of fellowship and at the same time an instruction on some historical or ecclesiastical topic. Our church historian, Dr. Theo Mann, whom the seminarians called a walking encyclopedia because of his diverse knowledge, was in his element. He was able to answer questions, draw comparisons between the past and the present, and paint pictures of world and church history with a few but sharp strokes, so that one felt as if one were living them all over again. There were plenty of points of reference everywhere.

The visit to the Wetterau, to Ronneburg and Herrnhag is still vivid in my mind. Zinzendorf had founded a refuge in the old weather-beaten Ronneburg in the Wetterau through the kindness of the princes of Büdingen for Protestant exiles. In Marienborn and Herrnhag his "brothers" lived. From Herrnhag the first emissaries were sent to the heathen world in that revival movement. John Wesley had felt "his heart wonderfully warmed" on May 24, 1738, while Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans was being read, and had come to a living experience of the beatific faith. His guides to the certainty of salvation had been members of the Brüdergemeine, especially Peter Böhler, who came from Frankfurt am Main. Fourteen days after the experience described, John Wesley began his journey to Germany in order, as he put it, "to get to know the land where Christians dwell." After a night in Frankfurt, he traveled to the Wetterau region to meet Count Zinzendorf. In his diary he gives a detailed account of the sermons he heard from Zinzendorf, the meetings of the brothers he attended, the conversations he had. From Wetterau he then traveled through Thuringia and Halle, saw the orphanage founded by August Hermann Francke, and spent two weeks in Herrnhut, where he thoroughly studied the teachings and institutions of the brethren. The impact of this trip, the deep impressions he received of the spiritual life among the Brethren, the clarity he was given about the basic truths of the way of salvation, and the suggestions about the constitution and leadership of living Christian communities soon had an effect not only on his preaching of the Gospel, which had such a powerful impact, but also on his organization, which - no one could have guessed at the time - was to lead to the formation of one of the largest and most fruitful churches in Protestantism. All this passed before our eyes as we climbed up to the Ronneburg, climbed around in the old castle, now partly dilapidated, walked to Marienborn and Herrnhag, stood in the hall where the sending out of the missionaries of the Brethren Society had taken place, and in the small cemetery, remembering that the funeral was a joyful event for the members of the Brethren Society - one did not go in black mourning clothes, but in white clothes of joy - sang the song: "One Christian's death knows of no misery" and at the end they sang the song of heaven which so beautifully expresses the living hope at the grave: "In heaven it is beautiful".

But the most valuable thing was the insight into a captivating chapter of church history and Methodism, and the deepening of the conviction to which I had to attach importance according to my whole attitude: that the Methodist revival movement has its roots in the German Reformation and in German Pietism, that it represents one of the greatest gifts of the German Reformation to the Anglo-Saxon world, and that from this arises both the

position of German Methodism within the framework of the Church as a whole and its special mission. Such a day spent in intimate fellowship, between teachers and seminarians, with its historical perspectives and practical suggestions for the present, outweighed many hours of instruction, and I gladly allowed an essay on this excursion to count as an examination paper. The seminarians who were there at that time will probably not have forgotten the excursion and the exam paper.

However, walks and excursions to the Taunus were to play a further role in my life. Soon after my fiftieth birthday, as a result of overwork, many night trips, etc., heart disturbances made themselves felt. On the advice of my doctor, I was forced to take a cure in Bad Nauheim and the following year in Sankt Moritz in the Engadine. Mountain climbing was forbidden. I was not even allowed to go to the Johannesberg in Bad Nauheim. On the other hand, I was strictly ordered to go for a walk every day for one to one and a half hours. When I had continued this for a while - after the end of the cure - I was seized by the old longing to climb the mountains, I would have liked to climb at least the Feldberg again. When I told my doctor about this wish, he said: "*Just try it once, but go uphill very slowly, then you will find out whether your heart is strong enough to go on mountain tours again*". And I went. The old rule of mountaineers, go very slowly in the beginning, don't think you have to take the mountain in a hurry, proved to be true. My two daughters, Irmgard and Edith, who usually accompanied me, thrilled by the magic of the Taunus mountains, were sometimes a bit disappointed when at Hohemark or Bad Homburg, where the path to the Feldberg didn't seem steep at all, younger people rushed past us as if at a run, but I didn't let them bother me and calmly said, "*we'll soon catch up with them again*." In fact, it rarely happened that we did not catch up with these men long before reaching the summit. They had expended too much energy at the beginning and were forced to take a longer break to catch their breath and regain their strength, while I, to the surprise and delight of my doctor, soon managed to reach the Feldberghaus without any rest, from where we had a magnificent panoramic view of Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, the Rhine and Maine plains, and westward to the Vosges Mountains.

F. H. Otto Melle with his daughters Irmgard (left) and Edith

When I saw that these hikes were doing me the same service as my cures in Bad Nauheim or St. Moritz in Switzerland, I added them to my work and weekly program, the execution of which seemed to me almost a duty. We had arranged the teaching schedule in such a way that each of the lecturers had a free day every week, i.e., a day without teaching obligations. It was nice to have a whole day to oneself, where one could devote oneself undisturbed to scientific work. I soon found out, however, that it was best for me, and perhaps saved medical and spa costs, and also always refreshed my spirit, if I spent as much as possible of this free day in fresh air in the Taunus forests. Whenever possible, my daughters joined me, and soon they loved the Taunus as much as I did. But my dog Rolf was always the happiest. He understood the word "Taunus" so well that when I opened the window in the morning and asked him - his hut was directly under the window: "*Rolf, shall we go to the Taunus*?", he gave such an unrestrained howl of joy that not only all the residents of the seminary, but the whole surrounding area found out what was going on. One of my colleagues once felt compelled to ask me not to tell Rolf half an hour beforehand that we were going to the Taunus. He and probably other people would be disturbed in their meditation.

We then usually took the tram to Hohemark and climbed from there, sometimes over the Sandplacken, sometimes over the Fuchstanz, sometimes on marked, sometimes on unmarked paths, up to the Feldberg (highest point in Taunus Range). Nice weather was not a requirement. It was often at its most beautiful in storms and driving snow, in the great cold, when the snow crunched under your hiking boots. Sometimes I knocked on the door of Professor Rade in Hohemark, who was happy to come along and then on the way when we passed the so-called "White Wall" or looked at the stone walls on the Altkönig, which are said to have been built 3,000 years ago, all sorts of historical, theological and ecclesiastical ideas were discussed with me. Those were stimulating hours

that didn't just bring physical pleasure. The preachers W. Firl from Friedrichsdorf and Alexander Goebel from the church at Merianplatz in Frankfurt am Main also often accompanied me. Then it was mostly Methodist questions that were at the forefront of interest and conversation. I was happy to let them tell me what they had preached about last Sunday, and when we then came to the sermon for the coming Sunday, there was a happy exegetical and homiletic discussion, until an idea crystallized that I would use as a good basis for thoughtful explanations for the benefit of the congregation.

But I like to think back to the trips with the first class, i.e., with the “high school graduates”. I felt the need to devote a whole day to these brothers, who were about to leave the seminary to enter practical work, without any particular program, without any compulsion. They were already familiar with my Taunus hikes. So actually, from among them came the request to be allowed to accompany me once. I was happy to do that. On these occasions we also visited historical places such as the Saalburg and the Altkönig, the old Königstein fortress or the Empress's palace in Kronberg, but the increase in historical knowledge, the views of the natural beauties that are so abundantly scattered here, were not the main thing. It was about the community that connected, about an expression of the feeling of togetherness, about an exchange of ideas that is not quite possible in the classroom. Of course, Rolf was also there, and one after the other had to lead him on a leash, because his hunting instinct was always awakened in the Taunus, and when he came across the tracks of a deer or stag, he was almost impossible to stop. But as we walked, with Rolf in bridle, and let our eyes wander over the charming landscape, our hearts grew warm, and now one, now the other of the seminarians was at my side with a comment, a suggestion, a question, which allowed a glimpse into the heart, into the struggle for truth and clarity, sometimes into personal hardships. When we then had our midday meal together on the Feldberg or Sandplacken and made our leisurely pilgrimage back to the valley and our dear Frankfurt, I often had the feeling that the old Taunus with its mountains steeped in legends, its historical memories and its rustling foliage and fir forests have given some much of value to us. But I never had the feeling that I had missed something because of the hikes in the Taunus. I noticed how good such a day felt the same evening when I worked with my accountant until 11 or even later and dictated to my secretary. It was very different than if I had been sitting at a desk all day. I was able to easily draft many a sermon or lecture on such evenings, and one or the other article that arose from the conversations of the day could be put down on paper until tiredness overcame one and a refreshing sleep for the tasks of the coming day strengthened. It also happened that a colleague from the faculty would join me on a hike, and I will confess that I was heartily pleased when recently, just as I was writing this chapter, one of my colleagues said, one of the best memories of my time as director is the trip with me to the Taunus!

A celebratory event were the meetings of the Board of Directors, which usually took place in connection with the end of the school year. Six annual conferences formed the backbone of the seminar. Each of them, including the Swiss conference, sent two preachers and two lay people to the board, so that the board consisted of 24 people. If you add to this the teaching staff consisting of six lecturers, the bishop, who was often present as honorary president, and other visitors, you will understand that the meetings of the board of directors acted like a small central conference. In any case, they were a bond of communion, wrapped around all the conferences, since we had no branch of the Methodist work in Central Europe. Attempts were made to limit the number of board members, but I vigorously and successfully resisted these attempts, believing that such a large representation would best assure the intimate connection of the seminary with the conferences and with the congregations. In the conferences, it was considered a special honor to be elected to the board of directors of the seminary, and in the negotiations, without any special plan, mostly matters related to the common work came up for discussion. The relationship between management and board of directors could best be understood in a comparison with a parliamentary government. The headmaster formed the government, so to speak, with a few small committees at his side, the board was the parliament, which received the report on the past year and examined, amended, supplemented and approved the budget for the new school year. There is no need to deny that from time-to-time small difficulties in competence arose. For it is quite possible that the government had to make a decision in the course

of the year for which it could not first convene parliament, and on the other hand there will always be personalities in parliament, as in a seminary board, who were critics and opposition at times. But that is just one of the many suggestions that serve the best. I also don't want to give the impression that what I'm saying is an allusion to specific events. My remarks are only intended to remind you that the handling of such a board of directors also poses a special task for the management. I don't remember a single case where we had any serious disharmony in the 16 years that I was in Frankfurt. On the contrary: I always looked forward to the board meetings like a child looks forward to Christmas and through the discussions during the negotiations I not only got to know the representatives of the conferences better, but also came to appreciate them more and more in their understanding of the task of the school, their expertise, often reaching into details, their love for the Lord and His work, and their strong sense of responsibility to the conference and to the Church. And since, of course, not only the budget and the financial side of the administration were discussed, but also the certificates of the seminarians, the subjects of the lessons and other questions were touched upon, also the written examination papers, the test sermons held with the comments of the teachers that were available for inspection , the board members also took part in the oral examination in some subjects; such a board meeting constituted a kind of training course of very special value for all participants. The oral exams mostly took place on the second day of the meeting. For the gentlemen on the board, these examinations were a fascinating part of their work. They wanted, as one of them once told me, not only to see what the seminarians could answer, but also to see the way the teachers presented their material and asked their questions. There were times when they got stuck on some question and a lively discussion ensued, not between teachers and students, but between teachers and board members. Examinations in logic, psychology, Greek or Latin or in church order offered all sorts of opportunities.

I myself once almost failed, or, to put it more bluntly, my seminarians almost failed. This is how it happened, and I don't think I'm committing any indiscretion if I tell the story now and let you look behind the scenes: an oral examination in canon law, or as we Methodists call it, church order, was requested. Even the bishop was there and was very interested to know whether the young preachers to whom he was to entrust a congregation at the next conference also knew the ordinances of the church. Now the church ordinance with its many paragraphs, in which the exact wording is often important and even the use of a synonymous word can change the meaning, is not an easy subject to examine. Anyone who has ever studied law will admit that. I personally consider the Methodist Church Order to be a masterpiece on which the church, indeed the whole church, has been working uninterruptedly for two centuries, that is, in which the wisdom, the experience and the vision of the generations are laid down. A lot of history, knowledge of the Bible, solutions to crises, knowledge of the human heart and striving for Christian perfection is woven into the individual sections, which at times seem dry. In teaching it has always been my goal, through knowledge of the individual orders, to show the spiritual bond that binds the parts together, making them an organic whole governed by a unified life principle and thus making the whole order a means of grace that gives aid in winning souls to Christ and in building up the church. Because, according to Peter, the church of Jesus Christ is a spiritual house, built of living stones, in which it is important that every stone has its right place and every service - the spiritual sacrifices - is properly aligned according to God's will. For me, Church order was not a dry subject, and I noticed with satisfaction how interested and warm the seminarians usually went along.

In order not to do badly, I had broken down the individual sections covered into questions over the course of the year, in preparation for the prospective oral exam, to which the students should, I had advised, write the answers in red ink. If they went through these questions and answers several times, paying particular attention to the more difficult passages, they would be prepared in any case. Questions could then be asked about Creed and General Rules, about General, Central, Annual or Quarterly Conferences, about terms and privileges of membership, about the ministry, about the judicial process, or about the various branches of the administration of the Church, so that they would become quick-witted and could answer satisfactorily to the board of directors and the bishop. Couldn't I be sure of my cause? A few days before the board meeting, that is, before the exam, a deputation from the classes relevant to the church order came to see me. It was said that they were looking forward to

the examination in church order with some apprehension, especially since the bishop would also be present. The questions I had dictated to them were so many, and the material so rich and varied, that they feared a blunder here and there. Incidentally, it was also impossible to go through the whole large area in 30 minutes - so much time was available for one subject. They had therefore agreed to ask me if I could select a few sections from the rich material for which they would then prepare themselves in a very special way. They had brought with them the entire set of questions I had dictated, and they begged me to give them some pointers as to which sections I thought were particularly important. "*Well*," I thought, "*I can give a little help like that*." I took the red pencil and marked the departments that I would value. The important ones were therefore marked in red, on one copy that the seminarians kept and on the other that I put in my portfolio for information, which I wanted to take with me for the exam. The hour of the exam came. I can still see the tension on their faces. With so much work to do, I hadn't had time to look at the portfolio. As I open it, I see the sections marked in red and - trick of memory - I can't remember whether I wanted to go through the parts marked in red or leave them out! That was bad luck! As is usually the case in such cases, I reached for the wrong departments and immediately noticed what was going on from the startled faces as soon as I asked the first questions. Of course, I now had to deal with the section I had started, after which I could switch to the section marked in red. But it worked. It actually went very well. And when, at the end of the difficult chapter on the so-called "judicial procedure" against a minister, a district leader or a bishop, none of the young men failed to answer, as if they had memorized the entire ecclesiastical order, the bishop said: "*The examination has provided the proof that the students are firmly in the saddle in the church ordinances*." But afterwards we laughed heartily in close circles about my mistake.

The 75th anniversary, which we celebrated in 1933, was a highlight of seminary life. On this occasion we published a commemorative publication which, in addition to numerous illustrations, dealt with the history of the preacher seminary as well as teaching and learning in the present. I myself wrote an article on "Calling and Training for the Ministry in the Methodist Church." Conferences and communities participated in large numbers. Representatives of Methodist universities arrived from Germany and Switzerland, from the countries of Southeast Europe, even from England and America, and brought us their greetings and blessings. For the Sunday festival I had rented the hall in Frankfurt am Main, one of the most beautiful concert and lecture halls in the German fatherland. In the mornings and afternoons, this hall, which can hold almost 2,000 people, was filled to the last seat. In the morning service, Bishop Dr. Nuelsen in his thoughtful way about the commission that Jesus gave to his disciples on the Mount of Olives before his ascension: "You shall be my witnesses". In the celebratory meeting in the afternoon, I gave an overview of the development of the seminary over the past 75 years. Then the well-wishers spoke: on behalf of the board, on behalf of the conferences, on behalf of Boston University in the USA, on behalf of the Methodist seminaries in England. For the latter, Dr. W. Lofthouse, ex-President of the Wesleyan Conference and director of the Birmingham Seminary; Pastor of the American Church in Berlin, USA, for the University of Boston; for the entire Methodist Church in the United States of America Bishop Dr. Wade from Stockholm. The representatives of the free church preacher seminars in Germany, director Dr. E. Neuschäfer from the Baptist seminary in Hamburg, Director J. Schempp from the seminary of the Evangelical Community in Reutlingen, and Bishop Marx from the Moravian Church all had their say. The message conveyed by the director of the Swedish seminary to the Methodist Church in Gothenburg also made a strong impression, and the reports that the Methodist press, it is fair to say, brought all over the world, showed that the seminary had succeeded and to focus attention on its importance for the life and work of the Church in Europe.

The conclusion of the festival was again a theological course, which brought together numerous clergymen from state and free churches together with the seminarians in the preachers' seminary. I must refrain from going into the content of the lectures. Suffice it to say that Dr. W. Lofthouse of England, a specialist in the field of Methodist revivalism, undertook to give some lectures on "The Doctrine of Christian Perfection," with special reference to the writings of John Wesley. Sharp investigations have examined the origin and presentation of this doctrine characteristic of Methodism, as well as the objections to it and the fact that its proclamation has now receded somewhat, while at the beginning it had just formed part of the impetus of Methodism. Here it was emphasized

that it was never a question of a sinless perfection - as many opponents mistakenly assumed and therefore fought against - but a "Christian perfection" which, according to the Sermon on the Mount, consists in the complete love of God and neighbor. In my memory, the discussion that followed the speaker's presentation was one of the most stimulating, profound, and fruitful we had on any occasion at seminary. I couldn't remember the details. But I have not forgotten how Professor Dr. Rade, after speaking at length about the idea of Christian perfection in German Protestant theology, called out to us: "*Methodists, keep your special good*!" And if I was asked what the result of this jubilee celebration was for me personally, it would be I answer without hesitation, "*It was a deepening of my conviction of the special task God has set for us as Methodists and the special good he has entrusted to us*."

(1) Taunus—mountain range in Hesse, Germany, located north of Frankfurt. It is a relatively low range, with smooth, rounded mountains covered with forest. The Taunus is bounded by the valleys of the Rhine, Main, and Lahn rivers.
(2) Bad Homburg— It is known best for its mineral springs and spa (hence the prefix *Bad*, meaning "bath"). In 1888, Homburg became known throughout the German Empire because Kaiser Wilhelm II made its castle his imperial summer residence. The emperor's mother also lived there for several years. Edward VII of the United Kingdom was often a guest; it was he who introduced the Homburg hat and turned-up trousers. Edward took fasting cures at Homburg 32 times.
(3) Roman Fort at Saalburg—located on the main ridge of the Taunus, northwest of Bad Homburg, Hesse, Germany. It is a cohort fort, part of the Limes Germanicus, the Roman linear border fortification of the German provinces. The Saalburg, located just off the main road roughly halfway between Bad Homburg and Wehrheim is the most completely reconstructed Roman fort in Germany.
(4) Wetterau—has a long history and is one of oldest cultural landscapes in Germany. It was always a very fertile region and was populous from as early as Neolithic Age. Artifacts from successive civilizations that populated the area also exist. Prominent discoveries are tombs from the Bronze Age, Stufe Wolfsheim or from the Celts, Glauberg. Many historical findings are exhibited in the Wetterau-Museum in Friedberg. It was of high strategic relevance for the Roman Empire during its advance into the free Germania. After the end of the Germanic and Gallic wars (58 to 51 BC) a number of Roman forts and roads were built in the Wetterau. A series of fortifications, part of the limes, surrounded the fertile Wetterau region.
(5) Ulrich von Hutten (1488 – 1523)—German knight, scholar, poet and satirist, who later became a follower of Martin Luther and a Protestant reformer. By 1519, he was an outspoken critic of the Roman Catholic Church. Hutten was a bridge between the Renaissance humanists and the Lutheran Reformation.

Frankfurt am Main, May 1, 1934

During the Conference in Leeds, England, July 1930 (Irmgard, daughter)

Study trip to Marburg, June 1931

PUBLIC WORSHIP: DIFFICULTIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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THE YOUTH MOVEMENT IN GERMANY.

Interview with DR. OTTO MELLE.

By a Special Correspondent.

Dr. Otto Melle, with his daughter and his interviewer (Mr. George Rogers, of the Wesleyan Temperance Department), photographed opposite the Houses of Parliament.

A MOMENTARY hush—then a volume of sustained applause which grew in force until it reached the crescendo note—greeted two speeches made by a distinguished German visitor to the recent Leeds Wesleyan Conference at two of the public meetings held in Leeds Town Hall.

That visitor was Rev. Dr. Otto Melle, Principal of the Methodist Theological Seminary at Frankfurt-on-Main, who is actively associated with the German Youth Movement; an international Temperance leader and representative; and one of the most eloquent and impressive English speakers this country has ever welcomed from other lands. In addition, Dr. Melle possesses a genial and charming personality, is familiar with many aspects of various religious and social problems, and is especially concerned with the creation of a spirit of fellowship and mutual goodwill between the people of his own country and those of Anglo-Saxon lineage.

Moreover, as befits the Principal of a Methodist institution to which students from eleven different nations of Europe come to receive their training for the ministry of their Church, he is specially well versed in Methodist history and development in South-Eastern Europe, and his knowledge of the religious situation in his own country is also extensive and of great interest. Dr. Melle's visit to this country was inspired by his friendship with Rev. Henry Carter. In Germany, the United States of America, and elsewhere, these two international leaders in social reform have met together at various Conferences, and have spoken in support of the same causes. As it was my privilege to act as courier and guide to Dr. Melle and his charming daughter, Irmegard, during their visit to the Leeds Conference, I took advantage of the situation to obtain for the readers of THE METHODIST TIMES the following interview on subjects of interest to Methodist people.

A Religious Revival.

"About one hundred years ago," said Dr. Melle, "a young German named Gottlieb Mueller was converted in one of the Wesleyan churches in London, and, later, went back to his own country to tell his people how he had found Christ in a foreign land. His message started a religious revival, which resulted in a request that the Wesleyan Missionary Society should appoint Mueller to preach in Germany. This request was acceded to. Later, Dr. Lyth was sent over to Germany to superintend the work of the church which had grown up as a result of Mueller's ministry. His successor was Rev. Mr. Barrett.

"Eventually, a theological seminary was founded in Cannstatt, where Dr. Tasker was a professor for several years. The Methodist Episcopal Church of America began its work in Germany in 1849 under the leadership of Dr. L. S. Jacoby. These two branches—the English and the American—united in 1805, and their union proved to be a great blessing to Methodism. The power and influence of the Church extended until to-day we have fifty thousand adult persons in full membership—quite as many children in our Sunday-schools— about three hundred ordained preachers—a thousand deaconesses — four hospitals — and a theological institution at Frankfurt where there are at present six professors on the tutorial staff, and fifty students from all parts of Central and South-Eastern Europe.

"In fact, it may be fairly said that the Methodists in this area send their future preachers for education and training to Frankfurt-on-Main. At the present time students are attending the Seminary from Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Yugo-Slavia, Bulgaria, Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. During past years we have also received students from Russia and Finland."

Crowded Churches.

"Contrary to what I believe to have been the case in England, we had a religious revival in the years immediately following the War," continued Dr. Melle. "For several years until 1925 we had a net increase in Church membership in Germany of a thousand annually. The churches were crowded. Our only problem was that we had not sufficient accommodation in our churches and halls to seat the people who desired to attend. Owing to the inflation of our currency, which meant that every fund was swept away, it was impossible to erect new buildings to receive would-be worshippers. Now we are faced with a reaction against that revival, and there has been during the past two years a lessened increase in new members. But Methodism in Germany is growing steadily and gaining influence amongst the people, and especially amongst members of the younger generation.

"For instance, in our Church we have a strong Epworth League (Jugendbund). Special secretaries with academic training are working amongst the young people, and festivals and conventions of youth are outstanding features of Church work in Germany. Our Christian young people realise their great responsibilities and opportunities. Evangelical meetings are often held with a definite appeal to young persons, and here the gospel is preached in a way to meet the needs, doubts and aspirations of youth. These meetings have been a great help to the Church as a whole.

Summer Schools.

"We have also established summer schools on lines similar to those held in England. Lectures are given by competent persons on religious, moral and social subjects, such as Temperance, Peace and War, the Future Task of the Christian Church, and especially upon the development of Individual Character and Conduct. Special attention is given to the subject of Community Intercourse and Social Relationships.

"The great national Churches also have their youth organisations. The Christian Endeavour movement in Germany is very strong. The Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association, are also doing good work there. One outstanding feature of the work amongst young people in the religious life of Germany is that all youth organisations for this purpose have some relationship one to the other, and their representatives come together at certain periods to discuss questions and methods which affect youth. But the time is past, I am sorry to say, when we could rightly speak of the Youth Movement in Germany as a unit. We have now come to a period in which all the German Churches, and all the great national political parties, are seeking to capture youth for their own ends, and to direct the strength of the Youth Movement into their own particular channels."

Responsibility for the Future.

"There was a time immediately after the War," continued Dr. Melle, reflectively, "when the youth of Germany felt that the older generation had led them astray. 'The responsibility for the future rests upon us. In a few years we shall be grown up, and it is our duty to make things better than they have ever been in the past!' they argued. So, of course, the authority of the older people was a little weakened. This phase, however, was not permanent.

"A remarkable feature of this uprising of youth was a return to a more simple life and manner of living. Young people determined to spend more time with Nature, to read folk-lore stories, to sing old German songs, to see, and discuss old German plays. 'We desire to live a clean life—a life of sacrifice!' was their declaration. The movement was highly idealistic. But there is one danger of which I must speak. It is that this idealism may be directed into wrong channels if the youth of Germany cannot be kept under the influence of the Church of Jesus Christ. This danger is especially apparent in relation to the groupings of youth with political activity.

"In Germany, in the Social Democrat party, which is the strongest political party in the Reichstag, and with eight or nine million votes in the last election, there is, I am sorry to say, a strong antipathy against the Church, and perhaps sometimes against religion. In my judgment this is one of the results of the former connection between State and Church. The task of the Church will be to win these people back to Christ, and give them a better idea of Christian life and service. Here is a great opportunity for the Free Churches in Germany, and I sincerely trust that

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Cover of the Methodist Times, August 7, 1930, interview with Dr. F. H. Otto Melle.

(Pictured to left of daughter Irmgard and interviewer George Rogers)

Chapter 31 A High Mountain Tour in the Bernese Oberland: 4,166 Meters Above Sea Level (1922)

Except for names and dates, which had to be looked up, I am writing my reminiscences from memory. This gives a uniform line in the assessment. I have therefore carefully avoided - with the exception of a few small quotations - referring to published writings or journal articles. However, the following chapter dates from the year 1922, when I wrote the article for his paper at the request of H. Georgi, the then editor of the “Leitstern” (Guiding Star), a monthly magazine for young people. The editor of “The Christian Apologist” in Cincinnati, Ohio asked me to reprint the article, to which of course I had no objection. When I returned to the United States a few years later, I found that my description of the high mountain tour in the Swiss Alps had not been forgotten, indeed that even the youth who no longer read German easily had read it; and in more than one place, when we sat comfortably together with a bowl of ice cream after a day's work on Sunday evening, I was asked to repeat the journey on the Jungfrau Railway to the Jungfraujoch and then the ascent to the highest peak of the Jungfrau (1) massif in the Bernese Oberland. This came to mind as I looked back over my early years in seminary after the World War (WWI). I wanted to read that article again, but I couldn't find it among my papers because I never considered what I wrote for magazines so important that I would have carefully collected and kept them all. Then friend Georgi came to my aid. With his own hand he copied the essay from the 1922 volume “Leitstern” for me to include here. Thank you very much for your hard work. As I read through it, I found that I could not give such a description from memory today, but that what I wrote at the time reflects the mood of that time and my attitude towards it in such a way that I should actually include it in my memoirs. Anyone who doesn't love the mountains and isn't interested in such tours and adventures will skip this chapter without any special warning and won't lose much by doing so. However, perhaps some readers would like to be led up 13,668 feet above sea level – at least in their imagination.

"*Right after the end of the semester in our seminary, I traveled through Austria and Hungary to Yugoslavia in the beautiful month of May to attend the mission conference there and the dedication of the new church in Verbász. From there I went via Agram, Trieste, Venice and Milan to Switzerland. I had 4 days free before the Swiss conference, where I had to give a presentation. The exertions of the past few weeks had been very great, the nerves betrayed something of the tension and longed for rest. So, I decided to spend these days in complete silence, and on the evening before Pentecost I drove from Zurich to Interlaken on Lake Thun via Bern, which is so splendidly situated and which Goethe called one of the most beautiful cities in the world. There will be few towns that enjoy such a situation as Interlaken. The mountains of the Bernese Oberland frame it on all sides. A lovely lake, fed by the ever-fresh springs of the Aare, reflects the friendly villas and hotels on its shore, and in the distance the mighty giants of the Alps salute, among which the Jungfrau looms as queen. No wonder that people from all parts of the world meet here, especially many Americans and English, who usually know where it's nice. It was the first day in a long time that I hadn't seen anyone I knew, no postman had found me, no one had asked me to give a lecture. I sat for a long time in the morning on the balcony of my hotel, let my eyes wander over the glorious world of God and read the story of Pentecost from Acts 2, how the disciples in Jerusalem waited from the day of the ascension for the fulfillment of the promise, until on the morning of Pentecost a mighty one roar filled the house, and the Holy Spirit sat upon them in the form of tongues of fire. Ah, that the fire of first love should burn again in our Christian communities! But you can't celebrate Pentecost alone. Although I had longed for complete silence, I felt the need for fellowship and after breakfast I made my way to the service. Both the German sermon, which I heard in the Reformed Church, and the English one in the Church of England served to deepen the ideas about Pentecost.*

In the afternoon it rained heavily. There was no sign of the maiden (the Jungfrau). *Only a few Englishmen ventured out into the street and walked up and down with their umbrellas, bemoaning the misfortune of being here on the loveliest spot on earth without being able to see or enjoy anything. I soon got bored myself, and despite the rain and clouds in the evening, I decided to take the cable car up to Wengen via Lauterbrunnen, where dozens of roaring mountain streams rush into the depths, right into the high mountains. The journey was not very promising.*

*There was only one other passenger on the train besides me, and the hotels upstairs were almost empty. Only people like the writer, who were no longer concerned with seeing much but with being quiet for a moment, seemed to be here. I want to say that Wengen is one of the most well-known climatic health resorts in the high mountains, much visited in summer and in winter. From here you have a magnificent view down the valley to Lauterbrunnen, opposite to Mürren to the mighty rock and snow masses of the Finsteraarhorn group and – provided the weather is favorable, of course – to the Jungfrau. But today we didn't seem to get such looks. A dense, dark-grey veil of fog covered the mountains so that you could hardly see 20 steps in front of you and spread a melancholy mood that could be read on all faces and also tried to overwhelm me. But no sooner had I finished my simple supper and was about to go to bed than a surprising turn of events took place. As if by a magic word, the fog suddenly parted, the clouds disappeared within a few minutes, the night sky shone clear and blue above us, and within reach, as if to remind us of herself, the Virgin stood there in the dazzling white of her entire body majestic calm and grandeur. It was a sight that powerfully seized even the mountain dwellers accustomed to such scenes. How delighted everyone rushed out of the rooms, one breathed a sigh of relief, and the shepherd boys upstairs yodeled into the stillness of the night, while the melodic ringing of the cowbells lent the evening atmosphere a special charm. "*This makes*," said the hotel porter, '*a great day tomorrow. I would advise you to take the first train up to the Jungfraujoch station' 'Fine,' I replied, '*if the weather stays like this, I'll take your advice. Wake me up at the right time.'

Wengen is not exactly high. But the mountain railway runs from here via Wengenalp to Kleine Scheidegg, 6,772 feet high. One would have to be a painter to describe the kaleidoscope of scenes that roll before the eye on such a dewy and sunlit spring morning as the cogwheel railway slowly winds its way up the steep mountain cliffs. Near Wengen there are still magnificent spruce forests, green meadows everywhere, in between sown the idyllic alpine huts, surrounded by grazing cattle, and on the other side the massive mountain masses of the Jungfrau, above them the glaciers, from which from time to time an avalanche thunders down into the valley. With a sharp telescope you can see chamois grazing on the steep rocky cliffs, where a few little grasses still venture out. A Dutchman is sitting next to me, the Baedeker in his hand, which he is studying eagerly. I point out to him that it is now better to turn our eyes to the wonders out there in nature. He follows my advice, pockets the red Baedeker and then breaks out in astonishment over and over again: 'How wonderful! We don't have anything like that in our Holland!'

The Kleine Scheidegg is the terminus of the cog railway. It is the goal of most visitors who are content with having been 6.000 feet high. In fact, the view of the valley from here is incomparable. I remember how I felt when I came here on my first trip to Switzerland during the World War and visited the Eiger Glacier. That night, surrounded by the majestic silence of the high mountains, I was even able to forget the war for a few hours. And yet I returned home unsatisfied. There is something strange about these mountains. You think you're satisfied when you've seen them from afar, you just want to climb 3.000 to 6,000 feet, and once you're here, it hits you with uncanny force, it's as if the word "Excelsior" was written everywhere and someone waved at you to climb up as quickly as possible. You would like to see what it is like up there. When you see so much beauty at 6,000 feet, how must it be at the summit! Didn't the good Lord make the peaks so high to show the people up there something special? He speaks to us in the rustling of the harvest fields, in the rustling of the grove leaves in the evening breeze, in the rumbling of thunder, in the roaring of the ocean, in the solitude and stillness of the desert - what voices will he have saved for the highest mountains? It came over me like a longing to see the pictures that my God's hand had painted up there and to hear the voices that he lets sound there for receptive ears. So, I decided not to turn back at 6,000 feet this time, but to climb higher. Excelsior!

The world-famous "Jungfraubahn", the highest railway in Europe and undoubtedly the most interesting of all mountain railways in the world, starts at the Kleine Scheidegg station. It is to be admired how human enterprise could plan such a work and how human courage and perseverance could bring it to completion. The Jungfrau Railway is a a5.8-mile-long electric rack railway that travels in an hour and a half through a tunnel inside the Eiger,

Mönch and Jungfrau, the three largest giants of the Bernese Oberland, up to an altitude of 11.332 feet. From 1896 to 1912 this gigantic work was brought about. The total cost was 12 million francs. A power plant in Lauterbrunnen, fed by the waters of the Jungfrau glacier, provides the necessary electricity. One touches the stations Eigergletscher, Eigerwand, Eismeer, and the terminal station Jungfraujoch (11,342 feet). At each station there are views of the mountains. Jungfraujoch is the highest train station in Europe. It lies in the glaciated saddle between Mönch and Jungfrau and, surrounded by these thirteen thousanders combines the views of the previous stations into a panorama of overwhelming magnificence.

*Of course, there is a rest station up there, also postcards and stamps, and I saw how the 5 or 6 passengers - the day before the railway had been opened for this year - immediately wrote their postcards so that they could get the altitude stamp. I stood outside on the terrace and looked at the white glaciers, the Rottal saddle and the highest peak of the Jungfrau waving down beyond the glacier. A feeling of satisfaction filled me to be able to be at such a height after all. But why not go even higher? Two Swiss people next to me, equipped with rucksacks, hiking boots and ice axes, are talking to the guide about the ascent to the summit. The summit has not yet been climbed this year, but the guide assures us that it is now safe to venture. The two Swiss do not come to terms with the guide and decide to just take a short walk on the plateau and return on the next train. "*It's a pity*," I say, "*that I don't have any mountaineering equipment, I'd almost like to dare the ascent*." The guide says, "*You can have goggles for your eyes up here, regulation shoes, ice ax and alpenstock*." I reply: "*But I have never been in the high mountains, would you still dare to take me*?" The guide, Hans Schlunegger, looked at me with a searching eye, something like just like in the good old days, when Germany was not yet "liberated" from militarism, the general looked at the recruits during the muster, and then the verdict came: "*I would dare to do it with you*." Now it was time for the equipment. After a long search, a pair of sturdy leather hiking boots appeared, studded with big nails and so heavy that I almost got a fright. But they fit. Snow goggles were said to be essential. Without one, I was assured, the eyes would go blind after a short time, since they could not stand the reflection of the sun's rays on the white snow. Gaiters were wrapped around the legs and a mighty mountain stick was held in the hand. The guide armed himself with an ice ax and rope, and so we were ready to climb. The company caused quite a stir up on the Jungfraujoch. The telescope was adjusted to watch us as we climbed, and the next day it was even in the Swiss newspapers that on Whit Monday the summit of the Jungfrau had been climbed for the first time that year.*

*The ascent initially went over the glacier. It was a day that is rare in the Bernese Oberland. The rain and fog of the previous week had given way to a clarity and purity in the air that cannot be described. Not a cloud anywhere. The sky above us shone pure and blue, as did the sun in its summer splendor. Fresh snow had fallen during the night, covering the glacier up to half a meter high. No hut anywhere, no smoke anywhere, no impurity anywhere. I felt as if I had never seen such snow in such immaculate holiness and purity in my life. Again and again, the words of the prophet moved through my soul: "*Even if your sins were red as blood, they should turn white as snow." *However, walking in the fresh snow was not easy. With every step you sank well above your knees. The guide, to whom I was tied by a strong rope, gave me the wise advice: "*Follow in my footsteps*!" I tried as best I could. But I didn't always manage to do that, and as soon as I slipped just a little bit, my foot sank so deep into the soft mass that it was difficult to pull it out again. It was very tiring, and I kept hearing, "*You're not exactly following in my footsteps*." Is it really that hard to follow in someone else's footsteps? It is probably the same for us when it comes to following Jesus.*

*The further we got, the more difficult the climb became. It goes with the high mountains in nature as with the various heights in life. From afar they don't appear that big and the ascent isn't that difficult. But when you get close, you first see what kind of obstacles have to be overcome and that the highest point can only be reached after extreme effort with patience and perseverance. Here, too, one difficulty arose after another. Once we came to a wide crevasse which my guide assured us had to be overcome. I was curious how that could possibly happen. He led me along the cleft for a while, until we came to a place where the snow had built a bridge over it. "*Here," *he said, "*we have to go over here. Watch how I do it and follow my example*!" He examined the ceiling with his ice*

*ax, then put his foot on a tried spot, gave himself a swing and was over on the other side, which – by the way – was about 3 feet higher than where I was standing. I looked at the man as if I couldn't understand how he could put such a burden on me. But he didn't get involved in any debate, but said in the tone of a Prussian sergeant, which the Swiss can also manage: "*Just go quickly and don't hesitate*!" Accustomed to obeying, as always, I put my foot on the indicated place and tried to do the jump. But whether it was because the blanket of snow had been shattered by now, or for some other reason, just as the other foot left its place, I felt the ground give way beneath me and, more quickly than one can think, sank into the depths. The guide had secured a firm position at the top when I felt the rope at the top being tightened and he was holding me. There I hung between heaven and earth. There was no way to brace your foot a little on the left or right of the mirror-smooth ice wall or to help yourself out with your hands. It only works if the leader is strong enough to pull me out with his strength. He lifted me up so high that I could grasp the ice cover with my hands. But no matter where I grabbed it, it broke and fell down. He had to pull me up slowly, using all his strength. I must confess that as I hung there and saw the icy depths below me, I did not quite feel comfortable and wondered if I had done the right thing to do the tour. Anyway, I thanked God from the bottom of my heart for giving my guide the strength to pull me out.*

*The hardest thing always comes last. There was still the climbing up the Totthal saddle, which had to be done on all fours. Looking around once, I discovered a yawning depth of more than 3200 feet below. There was no rocky outcrop with a fixed position anywhere. The ice was smooth and slippery. Where the foot touched earth and rock, the latter began to roll. You got dizzy. Later I read in the newspaper that a few weeks later 4 Swiss people had crashed there and there was little chance of finding them at all. I no longer dared to look around, lay flat on the slope and, like Eulenspiegel, thought about what it would be like if I had to come down here again. Then I suggested to the guide that we turn back, especially since we wouldn't be able to see much more from the summit, which was already quite close. The feeling of exhaustion was so strong that I could have fallen asleep immediately. My guide let me rest for a few minutes, then started encouraging me. He did not like to turn back before the goal was reached. I had only to flex my strength again, and he assured me that I would thank him heartily for persuading me to endure to the end. After a few minutes we were up - up on the summit of the Jungfrau! 13,668 feet above sea level! What pen would be able to describe what unfolds before the astonished eye! To the north the large low mountain range up to the Black Forest in the German fatherland. In the south, at our feet, the largest glaciers in Europe, surrounded by countless rock and ice peaks and then in the far distance on the Italian border, Monte Rosa with its satellites, behind which the sun-drenched plains of Italy are hidden. There in the southwest, that's right, that's the massif of Mont Blanc, rising out of the mountains of France. Between these kings of the Alps the other dominant names, some threatening, others gently gliding down to the green meadows of the forests. I sit spellbound and cannot take my eyes off this splendor. The guide warns me to leave so that we can get back to the Jungfraujoch before dark. Here you are really removed from the world and closer to heaven. Solemn silence all around. No one to be seen far and wide. In the regions of eternal snow there is no living being at all. Not a stalk, not a little grass grows anymore, not even animals dare to climb up to this height. Even the eagle, the king of the skies, never soars to these heights. Only isolated jackdaws sometimes stray up here, as the guide said. Completely cut off from the plant, animal and human world. No human voice can be heard. Even the yodeling of the herdsmen and the ringing of the cowbells are silent. The noise from the doings and bustle of the people does not penetrate up here. One thinks only to see God's hands weaving in an invisible way and to hear the voice of God quietly but very clearly. God becomes great and man becomes so small. "*What is man that you think of him and the son of man that you take care of him*!" I take my New Testament out of my pocket and while the sun slowly approaches Mont Blanc to say goodbye to the day and to Switzerland and with its departing rays bathes the ferns of the Alps in a sea of glow and purple and the white fields greet me white and pure, I read the words in the 104th Psalm: "*Lord, how great and many are your works! You have wisely arranged them all and the earth is full of your goods*!" A feeling of infinite gratitude flows through the soul at the thought that the God, who through his almighty word created all that, who holds the worlds in his hands, is my Father, who loves and guides me, who cares for me, who gave his only begotten Son for me, and who promised to be with me always, to the end of the world.*

*That hour of prayer will remain unforgettable to me. Peter must have felt the same when he made the request on Mount Tabor: "*It's good here, let's build huts*!" Like Peter, I had to go back down into the valley. But I believe that the ascent to the highest peak of the Bernese Oberland although it brought trouble and effort, also brought gain for the spiritual life and stimulation for the work in the Lord's vineyard."*

"Eiger and Mönch seen from the Jungfrau"

"On the summit of the Jungfrau".

The lecture I was supposed to give at the Swiss conference came to nothing. It happened like this: That evening I took the cogwheel train from the Jungfraujoch down to Lauterbrunnen. All day long I had been exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, which, reflected from the snow that had fallen overnight, penetrated all my clothes, but particularly hit my face and hands. Arriving at the hotel, I felt a faint tingling sensation on my face, which I perceived as a need to wash. The warm water was extremely beneficial. But when I looked in the mirror a few minutes later, I almost didn't recognize myself. Rags of skin hung down from my forehead, nose, chin, and cheeks, and when I ripped off one piece, another rag would immediately appear in the same place or another, awaiting the same procedure. This went on not just for a few days but for a few weeks until the old skin all over the body was renewed. But it was impossible for me to appear in the pulpit like this. However, I attended the conference.

What I said at the end of the article, that I hoped that the high mountain tour would have brought me not only physical exertion and enjoyment of nature, but also profit for my work, also came true. The experience brought me - gradually - a whole lot of illustrations for the sermon. The “Excelsior” to which the mountains remind us, the view into the distance as one has it on the summit of the Jungfrau, the blessing of the silence in the mountain solitude, the glory of God in his works, the thought that the almighty God, who created all this, became my father in Christ, the example of the leader and his advice, to always follow in his footsteps in the deep snow, the roping to him and the skill and strength with which he got the tethered one pulled out the crevasse, these were all fitting images of the narrow path that leads up and of obedience to him of whom we sing: "*Follow me, speak Christ our hero, after me, all Christians*". The scene that impressed me the most was when I felt dizzy at the last and steepest point and suggested “*climb no further, no higher, but turn around*”. I can still hear the words of my weather-tanned, storm-tested, safe Swiss mountain guide: “*What, turn back*? *Almost all of them say that when we get to this point. But they made the big mistake of looking down. Looking down makes you dizzy. So don't look down*

anymore, look up to the summit, it's not far anymore. And look at me. I'm going ahead I hold you tight by the rope. And I can assure you that I have brought up and down everyone who confided in me". Then he gently pulled me after him, hewed one step after the other into the icy massif with his ice pick, I followed in the prepared footsteps and - soon I was up! Tiredness seemed like a temptation that wanted to deprive me of the most beautiful, the rarest pleasure.

I used this illustration for the first time at one of the Blankenburg conferences. For four days we spoke about the Sermon on the Mount according to Matthew 5: about the character of Jesus' disciples, about their better righteousness, about their task to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. On the last day it was Jesus' turn to admonish: "*Therefore you should be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect*". I had to introduce the topic that day. Suddenly, our hike from the Beatitudes to better justice and the task of being the light of the world seemed to me like a mountain hike, on which it always goes higher, up to the summit. It still brings me joy today to think of the excitement with which the thousands in the great conference hall listened to the narrative, how they sensed the dangers that await us in following Jesus, how easily it is possible for us to tire or get dizzy before the goal is reached, but that it went through the ranks like an uplifting refreshment and faces lit up in blissful faith when the application came: "*No mountain guide will be able to take everyone up*." But what that Swiss guide said: " *I brought everyone up and down*", this applies to Jesus, the "*beginner and finisher of our faith." "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him*." We just want to remember the admonition: Don't look down! That makes you dizzy. Look up to the goal and to the leader! "*Let us look up to Jesus*". When after the conference I received, in addition to the oral testimonies, a whole number of letters thanking me for this illustration, which gave the listeners a lot that will stay with them forever, then I knew for the first time what I had before had only suspected that the high mountain tour in the Swiss Alps was not only physical exercise and relaxation for me or a wonderful enjoyment of God's beautiful mountain world, but that it also belonged to God's guidance that led me prepared and equipped for the assigned service in his kingdom.

(1) Jungfraujoch is a glacial saddle connecting two major 13,000ers of the Bernese Alps: the Jungfrau and the Mönch. It lies at an elevation of 11,362 feet and is directly overlooked by the rocky prominence of the Sphinx.

Chapter 32 Blankenburg Conferences

The name “Blankenburg” occupies a significant place in my memories. It refers to Bad Blankenburg in the Thuringian Forest, which has become the gathering place for many thousands of God's children from the various regional church and free church circles through the alliance conferences held there every year, on which Peter and the other two apostles who saw the glory of Jesus would have liked to "build huts". The first time I attended a Blankenburg conference was in 1900. Shortly before, I had finished my studies in the preacher's seminary of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Frankfurt am Main, then I had done some internship at the University of Halle, and finally, at the end of July, I received the congregation in Dresden as my field of work. But as soon as I was able to organize my time, it was clear to me that in the last week of August I would take part in the Blankenburg Conference, whose reports had always interested me, and whose goal of not only grasping the unity of the Body of Christ in faith, but also realizing it at least for a few days in common contemplation of the Word of God and prayer, seemed to me like a call of God into the discord of Christians. I was powerfully drawn to this place and to the community of believers. In that conference, as far as I remember, Lieutenant Colonel von Knobelsdorff (1) presided. Even on the platform as speaker and evangelist, he sounded like an officer. Short and to the point were his sentences, and the personal testimony gave his words a special force. What thoughts he dealt with on that opening evening I no longer know. I only have an impression of his powerful personality. He said that they intended to print his report on the speeches given at the conference. For this they needed brothers who could take shorthand notes and then prepare the recorded speeches for printing. He called for this service as he used to do before his soldiers, "*Volunteers forward*!" The call reached me, and I was one of the first to volunteer for this work. It did take some work - and my dear mother, whom I visited after the conference days, was not at all pleased that I sat at the table writing all the time instead of talking to her - but it was much more joy than trouble. For the transcription from the shorthand, the working through for printing, the abbreviation of some parts of the speeches and the clarification of the actual meaning of many sentences made the words heard come alive a second time and laid the seed for many a fruitful suggestion which could later mature.

The great hall had not yet been built. People met in the hall that was later called "the old hall," but which did not seem old at the time. It held about 800 listeners and was always filled to capacity. On the walls, the slogans about the unity of the community stood out. Even today I can see the slogan in bright colors that has been unforgettably imprinted on my heart since those days: "*Unum corpus sumus in Christo*" (We are one body in Christ). It was indeed so, as I had been told. It was not asked whether one belonged to the national church or to a free church, whether one was a member of a national church or free church community, but one felt, so to speak, whether the characteristic of coming out of death to life, the love for the brethren, was present, which forms the bond of perfection. My heart warmed during this conference and I was won over to the great and beautiful and biblical thought of the Evangelical Alliance, as far as this had not happened before. For already in Frankfurt am Main the Alliance prayer meetings in the French church at Goethe Platz, especially the uplifting gatherings of the general week of prayer, had made a deep impression on me.

Of the speakers at that first Blankenburg conference, some, whose speeches I steno graphed, are particularly memorable. Pastor Jellinghaus stood in the fullness of his power. I assume that he was working on his book "*Das völlige Heil*" ("Complete Salvation") at that time, because his remarks on sanctification - I still vividly remember a lecture on Romans 6 - were so rich and concise in thought, although he spoke quite freely, as if reading from a dogmatic. It was not easy for the stenographers to follow along and then figure out the correct meaning in context, so we didn't exactly fight over copying it. It was quite another thing when von Knobelsdorff spoke, or even the Congregationalist preacher F. B. Meyer from London, who was usually translated by Preacher Mascher. It was easy to do that. The pictures this popular preacher used were captivating, the diction so simple that one could

sometimes reproduce the whole illustration from memory after a noted keyword. I also remember Pastor Paul, who was in Blankenburg at the time, as well as Professor Dr. Lepsius. All in all, these were days that increased my knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, in which new light was shed on some biblical passages, that made me more and more enthusiastic about the service of the Gospel, and that made my love for all those who have come over the same dear faith grow, and at the same time awakened the desire and will to become an instrument that the exalted Christ could use to promote unity and oneness in the Spirit among the faithful.

During my work in Southeastern Europe - in the Bácska, in Budapest and Vienna - with its many tasks and the World War that intervened, it was not possible for me to attend the Blankenburg Conference. However, I kept an eye on it, regularly read the Alliance Bulletin and thought I would find a small substitute in the Alliance Conferences that I myself convened in the Bácska and the one that had already been founded before my time in Vienna. Then, in Frankfurt am Main in the spring of 1921, I was visited by the dear pastor Wittekindt, who at that time belonged to the board of the Blankenburg Conference. We had an hour of cordial fellowship and stimulating exchange of ideas together. Pastor Wittekindt was one of those men who have had a living experience of salvation in Christ, who are filled with the urge to save souls for Christ, and for whom the church of Jesus Christ, "the one, general, Christian church," as we confess it in the 3rd Article, has become a reality. So, we understood each other immediately, and at the end he asked me if I could not make it possible to attend the Blankenburg Conference in the last week of August. The topic was Colossians chapter 2, and he would like me to take over one of the lectures - I think it was meant for Wednesday - in the morning of that day. I had just returned from a trip to America, six of our annual conferences were expecting lectures from me in the summer, and the work program was also very heavy in other respects. But I immediately felt that this was a call from God that I had to obey, and I happily agreed, hoping to postpone the opening of the semester until after the Blankenburg conference.

In August I received a visit from America. Dr. Fowles, the treasurer of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was making a trip through Europe. I had been appointed by the Board as "Branch Treasurer" for Central Europe. As such, I had to make or review the submissions of all Central European Conferences, and annually write a detailed report on the financial situation. All sorts of things depended on my judgment, and it was my duty to accompany Dr. Fowles. We visited various cities, Nuremberg on the Sunday before the Blankenburg Conference, and when we had attended the service in St. Paul's Chapel that evening, he asked me to accompany him to Paris as well. He would, of course, pay for the travel expenses. This brought me another night of sleepless hours in the struggle for an inner decision. To travel to Paris in a comfortable express, to participate there in the discussions about the questions of the French work - as a German - and to be introduced on this occasion to the problems of the universal church in America, that was a tempting offer. A great deal of genuine confidence in me, in my ecclesiastical judgment and financial management, was expressed in the invitation. On the other hand, Blankenburg called. I knew that I would not be too much needed there. After all, on the Blankenburg platform there always sit quite a number of Reichsgottesarbeiter (Kingdom of God workers) who, although not on the program, have their quivers full of arrows, ready, very willing, to step in and help out on the floor if a gap should appear in the list of speakers. I was also convinced that such a brother would perhaps be able to do the service better than I, who, in the hustle and bustle of the various tasks and journeys of the last weeks - this should be admitted here - had not done a thorough preparation. The verse, which was intended for me, was - for Blankenburg - not quite easy to handle. It read: "*See to it that no one deprives you through philosophy and loose seduction according to the doctrines of men and the statutes of the world and not according to Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*" I discussed my duty with the heavenly Father in prayer. And when I noticed that flesh and blood were inclined to choose the pleasant task - in this case Paris - and to shrink back from a difficult one - that was Blankenburg with a speech on Colossians 2:7 and 8 - then the old principle, which had already helped me in such decisions, retained the victory: in case of inner wavering, to choose rather the more difficult than the easier, to do rather what requires self-denial than what is pleasant. In the morning my decision was made that I could not go to Paris, but would go to Blankenburg.

On Monday afternoon I drove to Saalfeld, stayed there overnight, and used Tuesday morning in my closet to prepare for Wednesday. For the Greek Testament I had taken Zahn's commentary on the New Testament, the volume with the Epistle to the Colossians. I find that the thorough investigations made here into the original meaning of biblical terms are among the most valuable we have in our exegetical literature. In Blankenburg I took a room in a hotel, out on the road to Schwarzburg in the lovely Schwarzatal. When I went on pilgrimage the next morning to the new, large and beautiful conference hall, I heard from afar - it resounded over the whole town - the song that the people of Blankenburg love to sing: "*Oh, my Lord Jesus, if I didn't have you*," and when I then stood in front of the large assembly of at least 2,500 people - there were still hundreds standing in the aisles between the rows of seats - and saw the excited, expectant, praying faces, all doubts had faded as to whether this was the place God had appointed for me for this day. Whether I kept to the thoughts I had prepared the day before, I can no longer say. I only know that God gave me grace to speak with great joy. At the end of the morning meeting, I was asked to speak again the next morning on the following verse 10: "*And you are complete in him, who is the head of all principalities and authorities*." And when this meeting was over, the chairman of the conference, Freiherr von Thümmler, came to me, thanked me for my service, and surprised me by telling me that the board had just unanimously decided to ask me to become a member of the board. So, I joined the board right at the first service I did in Blankenburg, and there - as Privy Councilor Professor K. Müller from Erlangen used to say - I "got stuck". When I look back on my life now, I would not want to miss the Blankenburg experiences in particular. They gave me a lot, and I know today that they were part of God's wonderful guidance, without which my life would have been much poorer.

Very warm and intimate was the fellowship that united us on the board. According to tradition and the statutes, the board elected itself. But it was one of the principles that were strictly observed that in the composition the basic lines of the Evangelical Alliance were observed, i.e., that as far as possible all community areas, regional church and free church, were represented. But it was not the case that the various circles delegated someone with the obligation to "represent their interests", as is a common saying in community undertakings. That would have been against the spirit of the alliance. We elected men from the community circles who were alliance-minded, of whom we were convinced that the idea of the unity of the church of Jesus Christ was close to their hearts, and who, according to the gifts given to them by God, were able to serve the community as a whole. Decisions - even in the case of a new election - were not made according to the majority principle, but always unanimously, something that is not supposed to happen very often. I was once asked whether such a thing was possible, and I was happy to answer that it had proved possible and beneficial in Blankenburg. If a member of the board felt compelled to say, "*I could not happily agree to that*," the point was settled or deferred for a later discussion. This procedure proved so convenient for maintaining harmony, unity through the bond of peace, that no one desired a change. Usually, in the fall or winter, a meeting of the Board, sometimes occupying two days, was held. The place of the meeting changed. We were in Berlin, Kassel, Göttingen, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt am Main. There the business was done. The director, formerly Brother Dreibholz, later K. Seinsche, gave his report on the financial situation, the auditors of the books reported, the new budget was discussed. The main item on the agenda, however, was always the next conference, especially the topic and the choice of speakers. Looking over the list of topics that have been discussed in the more than 20 years that I have been a member of the Board, I see that we have considered a great wealth of biblical thought. Since I was asked to chair the board, it was very often I who suggested the theme, usually at the conference for the next year. Then, before the decisive meeting, Brother J. Kroeker and I would usually get together somewhere for a day to go over the subject, to formulate it, to fix the main ideas for the four days of the conference, and also to suggest already which speakers might best be considered for one or another subject. Brother Kroeker, who has a gift for formulating aptly and beautifully, rendered good service in this regard, and our proposals were usually accepted without substantial changes. The discussion of the program in the plenary session of the board was always immensely fruitful. Often, depending on the theological attitude and talent, the main ideas for the individual statements were already expressed with various suggestions, and the result was usually an expectant and hopeful mood in view of the coming conference. It goes without saying that

there were also opportunities for an exchange of ideas on all kinds of ecclesiastical, theological and other contemporary issues. As for myself, these hours were always quite wonderful to me, I felt them to be a spiritual enrichment of a special kind, not only in knowledge, but above all in brotherly love, and the constant emphasis on the essential in contrast to the more unessential in doctrine and constitution helped each time to direct the gaze from the periphery to the center. I felt as a great blessing of such community not only the fraternal love for each other, but one of its fruits: Mutual respect and recognition, even in those things where we differ theologically or ecclesiastically.

The conference usually opened on Monday evening. Then four full days were available to deal with the subject. Punctually at 9 o'clock in the morning, on Monday, the board met for a preparatory session. Always these board meetings were opened with a prayer meeting in view of Jesus' promise: "*Where two become one for which they ask, that shall be given to them*." In this promise of Jesus, the original text uses the same word for "becoming one" that we have in our musical terminology in the expression "symphony." Thus, it actually means: "Where the hearts" - like the instruments in a symphony - "sound together". We have often experienced such a harmony of hearts in common prayer and have received the certainty that God, through His Spirit, will open the windows of heaven in the days to come and let blessings flow down in abundance upon the waiting multitude of listeners.

Since I was often very busy in my manifold activities in Frankfurt until the last day and then became aware in Blankenburg that it is not advantageous for the leadership of such a conference to be exhausted, and that also for workers in the kingdom of God an old saying applies: "Mens sana in corpore sana" (A healthy mind in a healthy body), I found it advisable to rest at least one or two days on the journey to Blankenburg in a quiet place of the Thuringian Forest. After discovering Oberhof, I usually sought out this little town about 2,600 feet above sea level, surrounded by rustling spruce forests, to let my body rest a bit and give my mind time to immerse itself in the biblical thoughts that were to be discussed in Blankenburg during the next few days. On walks - all by myself - in the beautiful forests, up to the Schmücke (2), or excursions to the Kikelhahn near Ilmenau (3), or often another day in Schwarzburg, the pearl of the Thuringian country, many a speech for the conference came into being, which was only later put down on paper. When I then drove on Monday morning, bright and early, on a carriage drawn by a light-footed Thuringian horse through the magnificent Schwarza valley to Blankenburg, on a road that is certainly one of the most beautiful roads in the German fatherland and whose quiet beauty could not be disturbed by any automobile, the forest and the mountains, the whole magnificent nature with the gently rushing river seemed to me like an overture to the coming conference days.

The conferences have often been described. From small beginnings, when Fräulein von Weling (4) invited 18 well-known disciples of Christ from various churches and community circles to her home for a few days of immersion in the Scriptures and fellowship of prayer in the 1880s, they grew from year to year until they reached their normal size in 1906 with the inauguration of the large conference hall, which seats 2,200, but sometimes must hold nearly 3,000. Not all attendees were able to stay for the entire week. Many came for only one day. This was especially true of the Thuringian community circles, who arrived in numerous omnibuses in the morning, participated in the day's events, and returned home after the evening meeting, which was usually devoted to evangelism or missions. They usually came when "their" Pastor Modersohn was on the program. The number of conference guests often exceeded 3,000, even came close to 4,000. Even the prayer meetings that began the day usually drew 1,500 to 1,800 visitors. From 10-12 a.m. and in the afternoon from 4-6 p.m. lectures were then given on the subject, the purpose of which was always to introduce the Scriptures and to throw light on biblical items. The old custom of publishing the conference speeches in a separate volume had been dropped. On the other hand, at my suggestion, we soon began to publish excerpts of the speeches of the opening evening and of the first day in the "Evangelisches Allianzblatt" (Evangelical Alliance Journal) before the end of the conference, and to have the complete speeches, reviewed by the speakers, printed in later issues of the year. This was for the listeners a review of hours of rich blessing and at the same time an advertisement for the next conference. The collected volumes of the Alliance Journal, however, formed a kind of commentary on many basic teachings of the Scriptures. In this

way, the editor, Preacher G. F. Nagel, succeeded in making the paper, published by the Evangelical Alliance House, a mouthpiece of the Blankenburg Conference for almost the entire year, thus giving it its unique character. Serving such gatherings always seemed to me a privilege and an important service entrusted to me by the Lord and head of the congregation. I felt at home on the Blankenburg platform. One could not know all of the thousands by name, but the familiar faces were imprinted on the memory, one felt carried by faithful intercession, and the conviction that here in Blankenburg was a place where the unity of the Body of Christ found such a visible expression, promoted the receptivity of the hearts for the seed of the Gospel. The testimonies about the blessings received, as they were given in the "praise and thanksgiving meeting" on Saturday morning, showed the deep effects that the Word, which according to God's promise never returns empty, produced.

But it is not the ministry I myself had to do - abundant as it was in presentation of the Word, in pastoral care, in answering questions, in the board meetings that took place between meetings each day - that I think of most when I look back. Rather, it is what I received that I feel obligated to thank. I have already mentioned the fellowship of the Spirit and of prayer, the friendship with the brothers of the Board, the sharing of the experiences of the spiritual life, the suggestions for the work in the Lord's vineyard that resulted. But there was another thing that captivated me anew at each conference. That was the glimpse into the many gifts that the exalted Christ bestowed upon His servants. Was it not something wonderful to see how these gifts were made serviceable for the church in Blankenburg, "that the body of Christ might be built up"? There were the brothers who had the charism of evangelistic speech. Yes, he sent some as evangelists! They always knew how to present the old Good News in a new form, in simple language, with apt illustrations. And who wants to count the souls who came to a personal decision for Christ during the conference days? It was always refreshing for me to observe how the evangelistic presentation of the known truths of salvation, the description of the way of salvation and the conditions of salvation always captivated even the already believing Christians. Then, perhaps, one of the brothers who had been entrusted with the charism of knowledge, of insight into the great connections of the divine plan of salvation of our God, spoke afterwards. New light fell on many an otherwise dark passage of the Bible, so that blindness fell from the eyes like scales, and something of the "unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ" was seen before the listeners. Now a university professor spoke in carefully prepared, terse sentences, which betrayed long research in the Scriptures, an in-depth preoccupation with the problems of theology, and then came the simple testimony of a man who, like the man born blind, said: "*Is he a sinner, I do not know. I am not familiar with the theological problems surrounding the person of Jesus Christ. But one thing I do know: I was blind and now I see*". The one was given to speak of wisdom, the other of knowledge; the truth received its special face through the personal life experience of the one who had recognized it, investigated it, tested it. Not that we were always of one mind. In the debates in the board of directors, criticism was sometimes voiced. Not every sentence that was spoken was accepted as a revelation of wisdom, and for me it turned out more and more that these were the essential teachings of the Holy Scriptures, about which the Holy Spirit succeeded in achieving agreement among the believers in Christ. But it was precisely to bring about such agreement that Blankenburg had aa a task.

The committee - and the conference - were enriched when Professor Dr. Karl Müller of the University of Erlangen accepted election as a member, and subsequently regularly attended the conference and served with his solid biblical reflections. Jokingly he told several times how one of his university colleagues had told him that, with him, at least a reasonable person was now on the Blankenburg committee. The opinions among the representatives of the theological science about Blankenburg may have been something like this, that it was soon seen as too strongly like the Plymouth Brethren or Baptist influenced, and to my surprise I experienced after my election as chairman that they feared the Methodist influence too. These opinions, however, were not based on facts in the general guidelines of the conference or in the principles of the Evangelical Alliance, but probably on the more or less strong emergence of individual charismatically gifted personalities who belonged to one or the other church. Lt. Gen. von Viebahn (5), who worked for many years in Blankenburg, was a Darbist (Plymouth Brethren), although he was sharply criticized by the brethren of his own fellowship precisely because of his broad heart toward other

believers and because of his involvement in Blankenburg; Mascher, who, although he did not stand out as an orator, nevertheless played a role on the board through his often demonstrated sincere Alliance-mindedness and his practical talents, was a Baptist; and the present chairman was director of the Methodist seminary for preachers, later bishop of the Methodist Church. In this such opinions might find an explanation. It must also be admitted that on the Blankenburg platform remarks were made from time to time which, although of no significance in view of the whole of the preaching, were seized upon by opponents to find a reason for their assertion of un-scientificness, unsober-mindedness, and even sometimes of rapture. They completely forgot that the flowing stream of thoughts at the Blankenburg Conferences, the intimate fellowship of the spirit, which resulted in "incitement to love and good works" and also found expression in the biblical "exhorting one another," very quickly corrected any aberrations and thus cleansed the course of the Blankenburg stream again. The very thought that derailments on the platform would preclude from future service here had a salutary effect. For the rest, I did not consider it tragic if a simple brother in the heat of the moment attacked a direction of theology or philosophy or even the representative of a theological system, although the professors of theology are said to do this sometimes to their colleagues. Nevertheless, I saw a task for me in the attitude of some believers - state church and free church - to theology, especially to theological science. As understandable as it was that the strongly neglected cooperation of the laity in the former state and national churches, especially in their involvement in the proclamation of the Word, must provoke a reaction that easily went too far, I nevertheless felt urged to do something here to rehabilitate or, shall we say, to eliminate the danger. Publicly speaking out against such wrong view probably would not have done much good. It often does more harm. Only in one case, I remember, I felt urged, as a correction, so to speak, to be on the side of theological science. I tried to solve the task that presented itself to me in a different way. Through my work in the preacher's seminary, especially through the theological courses introduced there, I had become acquainted with some representatives of theological science at our universities. Privy Councilor Professor Karl Müller of the University of Erlangen was, as already mentioned, one of the constant speakers at the conference. Wouldn't it be a nice thing and a service to both sides if a representative of faithful theology spoke in Blankenburg now and then? My suggestion immediately met with the approval of the other board members, and Professor Dr. Köberle, whose writings, especially his work on "Justification and Sanctification" were also highly regarded in community circles, gladly accepted my invitation. Some brothers thought that such a university professor would probably deal with all kinds of problems and speak "over our heads". But there was a pleasant disappointment. Professor Köberle struck the conference tone very well, his profound remarks on Romans 12:1 and 2 offered a wealth of biblical thoughts, and his lecture in the Assembly for Kingdom Workers, in which he took a stand on the questions of the day that move us all from the standpoint of Jesus' disciple rooted in the New Testament, was a liberating act for many in those years of upheaval. He succeeded in building a bridge from community life to theological science, and everyone was grateful that Professor Dr. Karl Heim from Tübingen could be scheduled for the commemorative lecture at the Jubilee Conference in 1936. I am convinced that if the war had not come, we would have experienced many more joys on the path we had taken! The bridge had been built. We could have gone over and over. The brothers from the universities could have imparted many a gift to Blankenburg, and - so I would dare to hope - for the teachers of our future pastors and preachers a lively knowledge of communal Christianity, as it shows itself in Blankenburg without denominational character, could have a fruitful effect on their pedagogical and scientific activity.

After the conference, there was usually another Bible course, in which especially Kingdom workers took part. I was able to lead this course only once, because usually immediately after the Blankenburg Conference our semester opening took place in Frankfurt am Main, at which I had to be at home. But I still think back fondly to the one course in which I treated the Epistle to the Colossians. The listeners were for the most part brothers and sisters - the deaconesses were always represented in large numbers - who had to serve their circle with Bible studies, etc. With notebooks open, they sat there, eager to learn something, and they diligently took notes so that they could take valuable thoughts home with them. How they followed what was said was shown by the questions or remarks

at the end of each lesson. It is easy to speak to such listeners. There is a "reciprocal effect of faith", as Paul expresses it, and I myself probably had the greatest profit from being allowed to treat one of the core letters of the apostle Paul in a coherent way in one course. If one preaches continuously on biblical books in a congregation, one has to struggle with the difficulty that the audience is composed differently from Sunday to Sunday, or that after a week since the last sermon they do not easily find the bond of coherence again. Even the lectures to students often suffer from the fact that the listeners are occupied with too many subjects and already in the next hour have to concentrate on something completely different. Here it was different. I had given as a topic: "The glory of Jesus Christ" according to the letter to the Colossians and could have the impression that my listeners really went along, yes, that in that week the thoughts of this letter rich in content occupied them fully.

The external organization was also important. During the last week of August each year, the town of Blankenburg was entirely devoted to the conference. There was hardly a house that did not have conference guests in its quarters. All the hotels were overcrowded. Those who registered too late had to make do with a room in one of the neighboring villages. The main burden, however, had to be borne by the Alliance House itself. Even if a few hundred visitors ate in the hotels and restaurants of the city, the table in the Alliance House had to be set for 2,000 or a little more people. We had the old conference hall available for this and the spacious open hall at the top of the hill, where the stews were eaten in several sections. This, of course, made all kinds of work. But our brother Dreibholz, who had been in charge of the Lutheran Alliance Houses for 25 years, and then his successor K. Seinsche had so familiarized themselves with the necessary measures that everything always went like clockwork - the menu for each day was fixed, the necessary quantity of potatoes, beans, rice, meat and sausage had been purchased beforehand, willing female hands from Blankenburg worked in the kitchen from morning until late at night, and volunteers from the visitors to the conference, adorned with the numbers for their tables, considered it a privilege to be allowed to serve the food. Usually, a song verse was sung at the beginning of the meal, and it was a pleasure for us at the table reserved at the window for the members of the Board - we, as we still had meetings, could not come until a little later - to see the "waiters and waitresses" singing along vigorously as they ladled out the food or distributed the Thuringian sausages.

Thus, the year 1936 approached, in which the 50th Blankenburg Conference was to take place. It was clear to all of us that it was our duty to celebrate this anniversary conference in a special way. When one thought of the small beginning, of the steady growth, of the importance that the work had gained for the church life of our fatherland, of the decisions for Christ that had been made here, of all the blessings that had gone out from here, was there not much cause for thanksgiving? Also, to bow down over many failures? And to examine our position and task? Most certainly. Thursday was designated as the actual jubilee day, and repeated references to it were made in the Alliance Bulletin. As a Jubilee theme I had suggested: "We saw his glory!" For Thursday in the form: "From the history of the Blankenburg Conference". Professor Karl Heim had agreed to give a ceremonial lecture. Several hundred singers from the associations of the Christian Singer's Band agreed to sing in a choir that was to perform a jubilee song written and composed by August Rücker, the editor of the "Sängergruß" (Singer Salute). And the Lord gave his blessing to the preparations. Even the weather was wonderful, and I can still hear how our old friend, Pastor Wächter from Frankfurt am Main, a faithful alliance man and Blankenburger, in the closing meeting, among other blessings God had bestowed, also thanked us warmly for the jubilee weather! We expected that the attendance would be good. We could not know that it would exceed all our expectations. Already in the opening meeting on Monday evening the hall was overcrowded. However, we had a loudspeaker system installed in the old hall, which was switched on that evening and then on Tuesday and Wednesday. So - in the big conference hall and in the old hall - about 3,000 people could follow the chants, prayers and speeches. A few hundred standing outside could also listen in. But for the anniversary day, Thursday, all these arrangements proved insufficient. New crowds kept pouring in, the railroad trains were overcrowded, and the marketplace was full of buses. They all wanted to celebrate the anniversary. What to do? There is a large new town hall in Blankenburg that can comfortably hold 5,000 people. That would be just right for our anniversary meetings in the afternoon and evening!

Quickly call the mayor! He is willing to have the large hall cleared and prepared for the festive meetings if we provide him with helpers. There was no shortage of such helpers. We could have provided a thousand or even a thousand if that many had been needed, and at 4 p.m. the hall was ready, festively decorated, ready to receive the festive assembly. It was not long before the hall was filled to capacity. How they streamed in from all sides, from the Greifenstein, from the streets of the city, from the lovely Schwarza valley - even the inhabitants of Blankenburg wanted to be present on this day! These were uplifting gatherings that we had. Certainly, it can be said that the jubilee day was not only a high point in the jubilee conference, but in the history of the Blankenburg Conference in general. Professor Heim gave his lecture on "The Communion of Saints." A representative of the Alliance in London brought greetings from across the Channel. Prince Bernadotte sent blessings on behalf of the Alliance of Sweden. I had the privilege to speak on the history of the conference, from which "rivers of living water" have flowed out into the world, into the circles of living Christians of all denominations. Director Kroeker of the missionary organization "Light in the East" gave a gripping closing speech, reminding us of the great task of the present. Then we sang - I don't know for how many times in Blankenburg: "*Heart and heart united together seek rest in God's heart, let your flames of love blaze toward the Savior. He the head, we his members, he the light and we the shine, he the master, we the brothers, he is ours, we are his*!" I felt as if I had never heard this song sung more intimately, more powerfully, more enthusiastically. It was like the sound of a great water as the 5,000 - or more - sang as if with one voice the praise of their Master and the blessing of the community. We did not have a banner attached. In Blankenburg no importance is attached to outward appearances at all. But I am convinced of this: When we said goodbye to each other and the many, many went home again, to north and south, east and west, the theme of the Blankenburg Jubilee Conference shone in their hearts as if written in flames: "We saw his glory!" And when I read the reports of alliance conferences in the following years and found that some of them put the same theme on their conference program and dealt with it, I knew that the blessing of the Blankenburg Jubilee Conference was still continuing. Let us hope that it will continue to work until we are gathered before the throne of God at the great Alliance Conference, where we will see Him, whose glory we can only behold here as in a mirror, "face to face."

(1) Curt von Knobelsdorff (1839 to 1904) was a Prussian officer with the rank of lieutenant colonel and a pioneer of the Blue Cross. He came from the first noble family von Knobelsdorff. In 1880 that he met Dr. Frederick W. Baedeker (1823–1906) - a cousin of the well-known publisher of travel guides – which led him to renounce alcohol and tobacco for 19 months. In 1883 he relapsed into excessive drinking and by 1887 experienced a total collapse and reported on July 9, 1887 in the military hospital in Breslau. He joined the Blue Cross Association, an anti-alcohol movement and retired from military service and by 1888 was finally consecrated and sent to Berlin to serve at the Blue Cross. In the first quarter of the year, three groups were founded, but they were nonetheless hostile. Abstinence was widely seen as an exaggeration. In the years that followed, Curt von Knobelsdorff became the most important ambassador of the Blue Cross, who undertook “agitation trips” throughout almost the entire German Empire, Switzerland and North America. He worked closely with the Evangelical Alliance. For example, he was in charge of the Blankenburg alliance conference and was a regular speaker at the Tersteegensruh conferences in Mülheim an der Ruhr.
(2) The Schmücke is a ridge of hills in Thuringia, Germany.
(3) Kickelhahn is a mountain in the northern edge of the Central Thuringian Forest in the municipal area of Ilmenau, Germany. Its summit has an altitude of 2,825 ft.
(4) Anna Thekla von Weling 1837 to 1900 was a German writer, translator and the founder of the Blankenburg Alliance Conference. Her pseudonym was Hans Tharau.
(5) Friedrich Karl Hermann Georg von Viebahn (1840—1915) was a Prussian lieutenant general and evangelist .

Chapter 33 From Annual, Central and General Conferences

The Methodist Church has shown its originality in its system of organization, despite all its adherence to existing ecclesiastical orders, by creating new designations for some of its institutions. Foremost among these are the "conferences." The board meetings of a district, at which the district superintendent presides, are called quarterly conferences. There the supervisory preacher reports on the work of the previous months, the budget of the congregation is examined, lay preachers must undergo a character examination, treasurers and other officers of the congregation are elected, appointed or confirmed. No member can be admitted or dismissed, no ward restarted or abandoned, no official act of the preachers such as baptisms, marriages, or funerals performed without the quarterly conference receiving a report or comment thereon.

The groups or congregations are again grouped into districts, and the districts into "Annual Conferences." These Annual Conferences are actually the first. It is from them that the name comes. The first Methodist ministers - when there were only four or five of them - met once a year to discuss with each other their work, the spread of the movement, the state of membership, the methods of ministry, the dangers threatening the communities, and other questions that arose. They always began with a celebration of Holy Communion and prayer. Since there were discussions about the entrusted work, they called these informal gatherings "conferences." The name caught on, became popular, and perhaps it can be said that today it signifies a kind of mark of belonging to the Methodist revival movement.

The "Annual Conference," however, has gradually outgrown the narrow framework of a casual meeting. Today it forms a central point of church organization, so that church life cannot be imagined without it. At first it became the structure into which the preachers were admitted. Every candidate for the preaching ministry had to be tested here about his theological and ecclesiastical knowledge. Before the Annual Conference, he must answer certain generally accepted questions, take his vows, and no bishop can ordain a man for the ministry of the Word and the leadership of a congregation who has not been recommended for that purpose by such a conference. At the Annual Conference, if at all possible, a bishop shall preside. The district superintendents make their reports, as do the other branches of the conferences, and resolutions are adopted concerning the work of the new conference year, which then have binding force upon all preachers and congregations. At the end of the conference, the bishop reads the list of preachers with the addition of the fields of work. For each preacher of the Methodist Church receives his field of work assigned by the bishop and always for one year, that is, until the next "Annual Conference". Of course, preachers may stay longer than one year. The time limit, as it existed in the beginning of Methodism - in Germany it was initially three, later five years - has long since fallen away, but the essential thing has remained that the field of work is always given for one year.

This distinguishes our "Annual Conferences" essentially from similar events at which biblical or theological lectures and debates form the main part. The Methodists transfer such topics to their district meetings and to meetings for the deepening of the spiritual life. Such meetings are entirely voluntary and have no official character. Nor do they have the right to make binding decisions. The Annual Conferences are different. Every preacher, as far as he is a member of the conference, has the duty to be present at his conference. He may not be absent without good reason, which he must give when excused. His character as a preacher of the Gospel and of the Methodist Church is tested, and it is his duty to cast a vote - for or against - on questions at hand to be decided. For a number of years laymen, that is, elected representatives of the districts, have also been members of the Annual Con-

ferences. On the one hand, this has been a great enrichment, especially of the discussions on administrative matters, where the expertise of the lay workers, who are well versed in these areas, is of great service; on the other hand, it has brought the danger that financial and other administrative problems, and perhaps also personal issues, may become too predominant. But this danger has been less noticeable in the work in Germany.

When I returned to Germany from Southeastern Europe in 1920, I became a member of the North German Conference from which I had emerged. I had been admitted to this conference in 1900, and on its recommendation Bishop Dr. H. Vincent had ordained me a deacon and an elder in one day at the conference in Chemnitz in the summer of 1901. And it was a great joy for me to enter here into the closer fellowship of old friends from my youth. The first conference I attended - now as a seminary director - took place in 1920, shortly after my return from the General Conference in the USA, in Zwickau in Saxony, and I still think fondly of that large gathering in the crowded hall of the Schwanenschlößchen am Schwanenteich, where I gave a talk on the impressions of my journey through America. Perhaps the custom was born then, which persisted until my election as bishop, that at almost every Annual Conference I was asked by the Program Committee to give a talk in a public meeting, or "rally," as it was usually called.

In 1926, the two Annual Conferences in Germany that had existed until then, the North German and the South German, were divided into five Annual Conferences: The Central German, which included Saxony, Thuringia, and Silesia; the Northeast German, which extended from Berlin through Pomerania to Königsberg and Tilsit; the Northwest German, centered on Hamburg, and included Bremen, East Frisia, Oldenburg down to Kassel; the South German, which included the work in Bavaria and Württemberg; and the Southwest German, with Frankfurt a. M., Baden, and the Rhineland. My bishop, having already spoken with the district superintendent, asked me to which conference I would like to be transferred. Now I felt, with all the friendship and love that was shown to me, that there were probably brothers in every conference who did not exactly want me as a member of their conference. And this was not for lack of love for me, I would like to say that looking back on those times, there was probably never a lack of that. But for reasons - if we want to call it by the right name, we have to say - of church politics. There are brothers in every conference who occupy a leading position, who stand first in elections to special tasks, such as deputies to the Central Conference or even to the General Conference - especially the latter was rightly considered a privilege and a great honor. So, these brothers felt - I don't know if it came to their clear consciousness - that my affiliation could perhaps oust them from their positions. What should I wish for? Should I check ecclesiastically in which conference I would have, as they used to say, the greater chances? The thought really came. Such a conference for me would have been the Central German Conference, where I had been known from my youth. But I immediately recognized the thought as a temptation. It is not worthy of a preacher of the gospel to violate his character as a Christian and likewise as a Methodist, not to mention the high ideals of the preaching ministry, to be guided in any decision by these considerations, which are so closely related to the "honor of man-seeking." Any wish I might have expressed, however, would probably have made the impression, if not on all, at least on some brothers, that it was based on the considerations described. So, I said to my bishop: "*I have no special wish, I must belong to some annual conference. You are my bishop and you are overlooking the whole thing. In my opinion, the teachers at the seminary should be distributed in such a way that one of us belongs to each of the five annual conferences in Germany and to the conference in Switzerland. I will gladly become a member of that conference for which they designate me*." When the list of preachers and their fields of work were read out, I saw that I had become a member of the Northwest German Conference. This was the conference with which I had never had any relations, either as a member of the congregation, or as an assistant, or as a preacher, and in which, therefore, I was quite a stranger. But I soon felt comfortable and at home among the brethren in the Northwest, talked and thought along with them in their meetings, and otherwise endeavored to disturb their circles as little as possible, and found that this decision also belonged to the leading of God in my life. But I was pleased when, after

the Central Conference in 1936, one of the Northwest German brothers said that they considered it an honor that from their conference, one of the smallest in Germany, the first German bishop had been elected.

Actually, as director of the Preacher's Seminary, I was at home in all the German conferences - the Swiss included. I was expected to attend all these conference sessions, very often I was asked to read my annual report with its suggestions, as I submitted it to the seminary board, in the public session, and where there was not enough time to do so, I was given the opportunity to give an address about the seminary. I was usually called upon to participate in the committee's deliberations about the seminary, and in many sensitive matters concerning church discipline I was considered an expert whom they were happy to consult. My independent work in earlier years, the leadership of the work in Austria and Hungary, up to its organization as a "Missionary Conference", but above all the teaching I had to give in the seminary about the history of Methodism and its orders, my acquaintance with many leading men of the Methodist Church in England and America, as well as my cooperation in important commissions of the General Conference were of benefit to me. If there were important decisions to be made, the bishop usually invited me to discuss them. In this way, without any effort or intention, I grew to understand the various matters of the Conference, including their personalities, and the relations with the brothers, the exchange of ideas between and besides the official meetings, also the role of mediator that I was allowed to play here and there in some differences, as they arise everywhere, helped to strengthen mutual trust and love for one another and - what I now see even more - to clarify my judgment about the Church, its tasks and problems, successes and dangers. For a sure, clarified, sober and well-founded judgment is not obtained by theoretical study alone, but by contact, I would like to say by growing into living life, which, although it follows its laws, can never be pressed into a template. In Methodism it has always seemed to me particularly great that it has not only made its orders, which are much admired, according to a rigid principle and thus put the congregations into a ready-made format, but that its whole church order has arisen out of the practical needs, that is, out of the flooding life of the revival movement. But I had set myself the task of recognizing these life movements, and the Annual Conferences thus became a school for me in which I learned much for my future work.

It was similar with the central conferences. The 1920 General Conference had further developed the pre-existing system of Central Conferences. I had the privilege of serving on the relevant committee at the General Conference in Des Moines, Iowa. Already at that time, the powers, rights and duties for the Central Conferences were laid down, which were later repeatedly examined, improved, amended or supplemented. The question at issue was how to give greater autonomy to the conferences outside America, a question that was extremely important for the development of Methodism. Church leaders in the United States, I must testify, were always generous in their understanding, appreciation, recognition, and confidence in congregations and conferences in other countries and parts of the world, however young they might be. One consideration played a role in this which I found - forgive the political allusion - in English colonial policy. Opponents of greater autonomy in the non-American conferences sought to spread the opinion that these smaller Methodist churches, which were still very dependent on the financial support of the Church in America, for example, as in the field of external mission, were not yet capable of governing themselves. They needed guidance from the home church that supported them. That is why they sent bishops from America, that is why they made many actions dependent on the approval of the General Conference. It is the same problem that occupied the external mission of all countries. Since we in Germany are also among those who live outside the USA, such provisions also affected us. But as a result of our history and beneficial development, our whole German way of combining scientific thoroughness with depth of mind, we had already developed much more independently than other small churches anyway, and we were also able, through the recognition that some representatives of Methodism in Germany had managed to gain in the church as a whole, to give a special tone to the striving for greatness and for independence, and to carry out the new provisions about this with greater understanding and a harmony that had not been the case everywhere. The first central conferences we held, some of which included not only Switzerland but also Austria-Hungary, Yugoslavia or Bulgaria, were, so to speak, preliminary exercises in independence. Under the presidency of Bishop Dr. Nuelsen, who, though an American citizen, had done most of his studies in Germany and had a perfect command of the German language, these

Central Conferences, at which each of the associated Annual Conferences and Missionary Conferences was represented by elected delegates, became planting places of spiritual life and training courses in the administration of Church affairs.

The essential power of these Central Conferences - as long as they could not elect their own bishops - was that their decisions had the force of law for various fields of work. They were not merely recommendations - although such can also be given - but became paragraphs of the church orders. Much of what until then had had to be submitted to the General Conference for consideration and decision was now in the hands of the Central Conference. There was ample opportunity to give suggestions, to make proposals, to exercise the gift of discussion of pros and cons. For me, these Central Conferences were always highlights of church work, I introduced many a proposal which was then discussed and accepted. I also worked on the rules of procedure for the Central Conference on the basis of those for the General Conference and was then elected chairman of a business committee which had to prepare the following Central Conference, a job which was not always easy, but always very beautiful and - if the program succeeded - very fruitful.

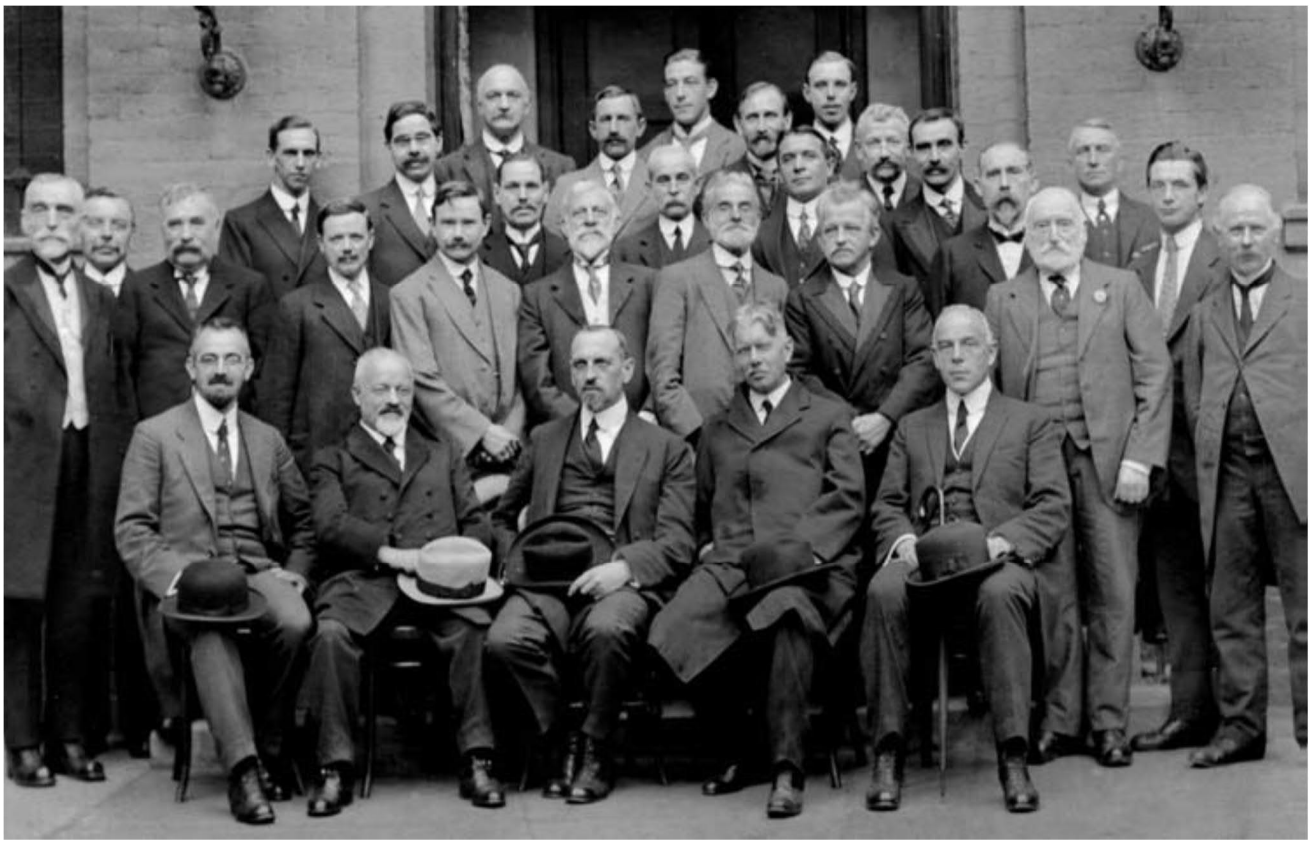
It is not necessary to go into individual proceedings. It seems important to me, however, that I was almost always asked to give a lecture at both the annual and the central conferences. I accepted this as something natural, since my activity was usually connected with some subject that captivated the minds. If on one occasion it was a topic that arose from my travels in America, or the anti-alcohol movement, in which, as we shall see later, I was strongly involved, the conferences wanted to hear something about this work or the tasks of Methodism, its position in overall Protestantism, its relationship to the Reformation or to Pietism, or about its free-church principles. The topics were usually suggested to me, and I gladly responded to them, until a colleague once complained to me that, in his opinion, these lectures, which were announced on the often very finely decorated conference programs, put me too much in the foreground, so that others were pushed back. Then I realized that he was of the opinion - perhaps others were, too - as if I myself were proposing myself for these lectures or pushing myself into the programs. That, of course, was not the case. With my many demands, I would have liked, as the other teachers at the seminary could do, to use my summer vacations - the Annual Conferences were regularly held during these vacations - to rest or to do some scientific or writing work. Also, I had seen the reason for my coming somewhat in purely material causes. I came to the conferences in the interest of the preacher's seminary, so there was no need to reimburse me for travel expenses. But when, in spite of similar misgivings, there was no change and I was still called upon, I realized that perhaps I had a gift, recognized by my brethren, for speaking before a larger audience on current questions of Methodism or of Christianity in general, and for expressing what the others had long felt. This was especially the case with lectures on "The Future of Germany," "German Free Churches and their Mission," "Methodism and the New Era." The first of the above lectures was given during the inflationary period, the last after the tremendous upheaval in the German Revolution. It was usually the case that when I had spoken on such a topic somewhere, the invitations soon increased in which I was asked to repeat the lecture. I then had to accept this as a commission from my Lord, with the binding obligation for me not to "bury the entrusted pound in the sweat cloth", but to grow with it until He comes again. The lectures generally did not cause me too much trouble, since my method of preparation was not to read through thick books on similar problems and laboriously get to know the opinions of this or that "authority" before I dared to have an opinion of my own. Instead, I usually went about expressing the thoughts that had come to me while thinking, or even in conversation with friends, quite naturally. And I always noticed how this spoke most to the heart. I often had to think of Goethe's words in the introduction to Faust - I sometimes quoted them to my students in homiletics: "*Just sit down! glue yourselves together, brew a ragout of other feasts, and blow the puny flames out of your ash heap. Admiration of children and of monkeys, if your palate is craving for it, but you will never create heart to heart, if it is not from your heart*."

The emergence of at least one such address shall be described, because this seems to belong here: The final meeting of the Central German Conference, which met in Plauen in the Vogtland, was to take place in one of the

largest halls of the city, which held over 2,000 people. The meeting was intended as a song service. Mixed, women's, even trombone choirs were to sing and play. At the end, the bishop would read the list of preachers and their fields of work for the new conference year. It was very much desired, however, that in the middle of the program - so they wrote to me - a short address of evangelistic content be given, which I might take over. I agreed. And since it was a speech on such a special occasion, I thought it advisable to work out the speech - I think it was about "The New Song" - and write it down. On the afternoon of the Sunday in question, a friend drove me in his car to Liebengrün to visit my mother (about 29 miles). We arrived back in Plauen only in the evening, shortly before the beginning of the song service. The choirs were already singing. They did an excellent job that evening. Immediately before my address, the mixed choir sang the well-known, good, simple gospel song, set to music by Sankey: "*Ninety-nine of the sheep were already lying in heaven's pasture there, but one of them had wandered far away, far away from the shepherd, far away in the mountains wild and gray, far away from the shepherd's blessed meadow*." The choir sang the song according to the well-known melody, but so beautifully, with elaboration of the individual verses and such clear pronunciation, that the mighty assembly was visibly moved. I myself was strangely moved by the simple song. I thought of how, in the struggle for the old and new ways of singing, which had also gripped the Christian Singers' Association, the commission appointed for the new publication of their church hymnal had seriously discussed whether it should include this song with its melody, which originated in the revival movement. At my request, however, it was included in the hymnal. Didn't the impression of this song have to be exploited now? So, I decided to leave aside the speech I had written down, which would have led to another thought, and to continue with the magnificent song that had just sung. I thanked the singers for the choice of this song and added that they had upset me with their singing - as they had done on a previous occasion. I could not give my prepared speech. But I wanted to tell something about this song. And I now related an experience of Archbishop Söderblom of Sweden, who, as is well known, was not only a great churchman and pulpit orator, but also, gifted with a wonderful voice, a good singer. I myself had been edified by his singing of Swedish hymns at the meeting in Geneva preparing for the World Church Conference in Stockholm. Söderblom was one of the first Europeans to come to America shortly after the armistice in the World War of 1918. The Protestant churches of New York held a banquet in his honor, at which the famous church leader was to deliver a speech on the situation in Europe that could be heard on the radio throughout the United States. The excitement was extraordinary. Millions of Americans sat by the radio. That's when Söderblom said the following (I don't have the scripture where I read the story at hand and am quoting from memory): "*It is a great pleasure for me to see America again, of which I have many youthful memories. And do you know which was one of the most beautiful? As a student, I attended an evangelistic meeting or student conference at which Evangelist Moody spoke. When he finished speaking, he asked Sankey, the singer accompanying him, to sing his song of the 99 sheep again. Sankey sang the song with deep feeling. Moody, who had heard it perhaps a hundred times, stood beside the harmonium on the platform, and as the singer sang the verse*: 'Where do the drops of red blood come from that you see down the road? It flowed from the shepherd, to the sheep, it became so hot and anxious. O shepherd, how colorful is your hand, you have turned so much pain to it'.... *then tears streamed down the face of the evangelist, so that the whole assembly was moved;* and when the last verse came: 'And over the mountains it sounded high, and from the deep it cried, O rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, for that which I have lost is found! And the angels sing a song of praise: Praise be to the Lord who has done this!' *Moody's features were transfigured, and the joy of finding the lost sheep was reflected in his face*." Söderblom paused. "*I was particularly looking forward to hearing this song again now that I was seeing America again. To my astonishment I learn that it is seldom sung now, indeed that many evangelical Christians no longer know it at all. So, I thought that now I could do nothing better than, instead of making a speech, to sing the old beautiful song into the radio*." And he sang the song of the 99 sheep in his sonorous baritone voice as heartfelt and moving as he remembered hearing it from Sankey. The result, it is reported, was that in the next few days he received many, many letters from all parts of the United States thanking him for this song, that from now on it was sung again in the churches. My address concluded by saying that the good shepherd was also present today - in the great assembly - looking for a lost sheep.

I was happy about the impression of the song and the message of the searching love of the good shepherd that it had brought, but I was not sure whether my advocacy of the song and its melody would not bring me criticism from the friends of the new singing movement, against which, by the way, I did not want to say anything. One should do the one and not leave the other. I was only against the fact that the old evangelistic songs, to which many of God's children - like Söderblom - tied the most beautiful experiences of their lives, would be pushed aside. Now at that time the Christian Singers' Association was just about to celebrate its 50th anniversary. The celebration, which was to extend over several days, was planned for Berlin. Thousands of members of the federation were expected in the capital of the Reich. The finale was to be a singers' festival in the Sportpalast (Sport Palace) (1), which was known to hold 12,000-15,000 people. This hall, the largest in Berlin at that time, had been secured by the Christian Singers' Association, whose chairman was Mr. H. Stehl, the state treasurer, and whose treasurer was Fabrikant van der Kerkhoff. The representative of the Berlin Association, in whose hands the preparations lay, was Mr. A. Brose. I had not yet been involved in the singers' cause. I knew the limits of my talent and knew that I was neither suitable for solo singing nor for singing in a choir. My surprise was all the greater when I received an invitation to give a speech of evangelistic content at the celebration of the anniversary of the Singers' Association in the Sportpalast, and it was indicated to me that they would be pleased to hear from me on this occasion the same thoughts as I had expressed at the conference singing service in Plauen. Of course, I gladly accepted. Only this much should be noted that the event in the Sport Palace went off splendidly. The large room was not only occupied, but overcrowded. An enormous orchestra, composed of the trombone choirs of the Federation, played, a choir of about 3,000 singers sang their uplifting songs, and I spoke, in accordance with the wishes, about the song of the 99 sheep. This song brought me into the Singers' Association, made me a speaker in the Sport Palace, and I don't know at how many festivals all around the country, I had to serve as a speaker. The response I received from the country was wonderful. Many singers and non-singers thanked me for this message.

I never considered the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in which I participated, or, let us say, had the honor to participate in, as the main reason for my trips to America. Rather, they always form only an inducement for me to work in particular in the church over there for the seminary and to awaken general understanding, interest and love for Methodism in Germany, or in general for European Methodism. My brothers in the Annual Conferences, I may well assume, also made their choice from this point of view. I participated, as already mentioned, already in the General Conference of 1920, at that time not as an elected representative of an Annual Conference, but at the special invitation of the Church in America to report on Southeastern Europe. As a delegate, I was then sent from my conference in Germany to the General Conference in Springfield, Mass. in 1924, to the General Conference in Kansas City in 1928, and to the General Conference in Columbus, Ohio, in 1936. At the Great Uniting Conference in 1939, which was actually a General Conference of the Great United Church, I was no longer a delegate but a member of the College of Bishops.



At the Ecumenical Conference in London, England, September 1921.

The election of deputies to the General Conference was always a major event in the Annual Conferences. As with all such elections, there was then a weighing, a searching and questioning for the right personality. The larger conferences, such as the South German and the Central German, were able to elect 2 preachers and 2 laymen. The smaller ones, like the Northeast German, the Northwest German and the Southwest German, were only entitled to one preacher and one lay delegate. It is to be understood that there were always many candidates for such a ministry. One had relatives over there somewhere in Tennessee or California whom he would have liked to see again. Another would have liked to collect for a chapel building or something else in the German-speaking communities in the USA. The election was strictly secret, conducted with ballots. However, there was always some agitation beforehand by some men. For the brethren who would have liked to be elected, their friends set themselves in motion. There were conferences that followed the principle: We elect a different one each time, so that as many as possible get their turn. Whoever was over once was eliminated. They then elected only according to the position a conference member held in his conference, and looked at the election from the point of view of the recognition they thereby gave to one of their preachers or church representatives. The opinion then was that seldom did any of us have a sufficient command of the English language and the necessary expertise to be able to actively intervene in the General Conference. So, it did not matter so much who the representative was. Perhaps this tactic was one of the reasons for the assumption that the European conferences had not yet grown to full independence and responsibility, nor did they have the appropriate leaders. As much as I begrudged other brothers the opportunity to experience a General Conference, because for me it really could not be a matter of coming to America once, I was convinced that I could do a service for German Methodism over there like probably no other of my brothers. Yes, the journeys were a special burden for me, since each time I was also expected to make a financial contribution to my fund. But I was always pleased when, without any agitation on my part, the Northwest German Conference placed its trust in me and sent me as its representative to the General Conference. Since every time I intervened in the debate or made a motion or had to give a speech, when it was said: "F. H. Otto Melle, Northwest German Conference", my conference also made some appearance.

To go into the details of these general conferences would be going too far. It should only be mentioned that it gave me great pleasure to work actively and positively with them. In a body of about 1,000 delegates, including the most talented leaders of the Church from all over the world, it is not so important whether a delegate appears in a debate in the plenum. The main work is done in the large commissions and their subcommittees: episcopacy, state of the church, education, press affairs, external mission, home mission or temperance matters, etc. The most important thing is to be known and trusted. But I did manage to get a word in edgewise once in a while. In 1924, when the tension between America and Germany was still very strong, I thought it appropriate to do something to overcome this tension and to draw attention to the responsibility of the Church in the USA for Christians in Germany. I discussed the matter with a number of friends among the Americans, gaining especially the help of our F. W. Mueller, who, as far as staff knowledge and knowledge of the mood in leading circles was concerned, was probably surpassed by no one, and then introduced a motion in which the General Conference sent a message of warm greetings to the Methodists in Germany with an assurance of inward attachment and intercession. My friends had paved the way in such a way that no opposition arose, there was no political debate, and the motion was passed unanimously. That was something for those times, considering that such resolutions were not only circulated by the ecclesiastical press, but also by the daily press, thus influencing public opinion. The adoption of the resolution revealed the state of the barometer in terms of awakening from the war psychosis.

At the 1928 General Conference, I introduced a motion that had more general church significance. That year was 225 years since the birth of John Wesley, the father of the Methodist movement. I proposed that the General Conference appoint a special committee, including 5 bishops, to make a call to all Methodist churches in the world to use this day for grateful remembrance, repentance for our failures, and reflection on our tasks today. The request aroused interest and approval. The fact that it came from Germany made a special impression. However, my friend Dr. Marsh, the president of Boston University, played a little trick on me. He liked the proposal, but he was against appointing an extra committee for it. Instead, he wanted the "State of the Church" commission, of which he was the chairman, to deal with the matter. Sometimes there is a little competition between the different commissions to get important motions, especially those that go beyond a narrow scope, into their hands. Thus, immediately after I had read out my motion, he came forward and asked that my motion be referred to his commission. I was not prepared for this, nor did I feel so well versed in the rules of procedure of the General Conference and the English language that I could have answered immediately with counter-arguments. But it was only a formality. Dr. Marsh's commission handled the motion as well and as effectively - it was adopted unanimously - as a special committee could not have done better.

Another scene from this General Conference is vivid in my memory: a committee on the peace question brought in a report. In the meantime, the Americans had become fed up with the war and its consequences. Pacifist ideas were gaining ground, even in the churches. Young people in particular took a radical anti-war stance. The debate was one of the liveliest I had attended at a General Conference. The viewpoint of the American "Legion" on the one hand, and of the Quakers on the other, had their say. Reasons for peace and reasons for the inevitability of war marched up and were advocated by adroit speakers. That's when it grabbed me inside. Wasn't this an opportunity for me, indeed a duty, to say something? But would I even get a chance to speak? When a speaker had finished his 5-minute speech, sometimes a dozen, sometimes many more, would take the floor. And would I, without prior reflection, be able to express my thoughts intelligibly and clearly in English before this illustrious assembly? Bishop Smith presided. As he had been in Germany a year before and knew me well personally, I might hope to be seen by him when I came forward. So, I came forward, rising from my seat, and behold, the bishop recognized me at once and gave me the floor, "*F. H. Otto Melle, Northwest Germany Conference*." A strong tension took possession of the meeting. A German wants to speak on the question of peace! What will he say? And it was as if the expectant faces helped me to find the right words. I said they would certainly understand that as a German I had listened with the greatest interest to the discussion on war and peace. Especially the disarmament proposals I considered to be very useful suggestions for the governments. But my hope that the disarmament conferences would lead to the goal was very low. And that came from the facts that we as Germans had

before our eyes. The only country that had disarmed was Germany. It had been promised that the other nations would follow. But what is the situation today? (I gave some figures) The disarmed Germany stands in the middle between nations that are armed to the teeth and increase their army budget every year. If this is the meaning of disarmament and the League of Nations, then all faith in a policy of peace and understanding among nations will soon be completely destroyed. For the talk of peace and disarmament is worth nothing if it is not followed by action. The church, however, had the task of sharpening consciences. I was not only listened to attentively, but gave abundant applause, as is the custom in America, and my suggestions got into the press.

Thus the General Conferences, each of them in its own way, were for me a great opportunity to deepen my knowledge of the Methodist Church in America with its foreign mission fields, to make new friends, to throw some thoughts for reflection into the debate and to penetrate the widely ramified administrative system, at the same time also to become clear to me how the relations between Methodism over the ocean and Methodism in Germany would have to be formed in order to become fruitful for the Kingdom of God. Also, at almost every General Conference I was one of the speakers on the program at the great annual celebrations of the Temperance Society and the Women's Society for Mission. In all of this I felt that I was also doing a service for the Fatherland. On the latter thought, a small experience: A peculiarity of American social life is the numerous clubs. It is good manners to be a member of one. The annual dues, however, are rather high, for some clubs have their own houses, sometimes in beautiful country surroundings, hotels, valuable libraries, etc. In some clubs the number of members is limited. Often only 2 members may belong to the same profession, i.e., 2 merchants, 2 advocates, 2 doctors, 2 officers, 2 clergymen, 2 railroad officials, etc. Such a club then usually meets in its own rooms once a week for a "lunch", followed by a lecture of 30-45 minutes if a speaker can be found. Now it was curious that these clubs often came to me, and once I had spoken in one, invitations came from the others, so that at the General Conference in Columbus, Ohio, for example, I had only a few days off. There was usually a car outside the conference hall at 12 o'clock that picked me up, and then took me to the next session at 2 o'clock. They always wanted to hear from me about the situation in Germany.

So, one day I was in such a club again. Since I was a little late, the chairman, an apparition reminiscent of Hercules, asked me to give my talk immediately and not to eat with him until afterwards. The atmosphere seemed quite favorable, so that I could venture a little into the political field. Note that this was in 1936, when the American people were eager to hear from Adolf Hitler. I described Hitler's career, his struggle for power, and lingered with some amusement on the scene of the World War I corporal being introduced for the first time to the Field Marshal General. That such a high officer as Hindenburg should be advised by a corporal was something; but that he should make this corporal Chancellor of the Reich, that will not have been easy for him at any rate! Then I was interrupted by a veritable storm of applause, which I had to let run riot before I could continue. But all this was somewhat puzzling to me. Later, when I was sitting at lunch with the chairman and some other gentlemen, I had no peace of mind to inquire about the reason for the applause at a point that seemed insignificant to me. Then he laughed and said: "*With the description of that scene between the Field Marshal General and the corporal, you have given my club comrades a great deal of pleasure. You see, I am an officer, i.e., a colonel, commanding a regiment. I have to endure a lot of teasing about the stiffness, sometimes about the conceit of the officers. When they described how Hindenburg looked down on the corporal, my men naturally thought it was meant for me. At any rate, they took it that way. Hence the applause*." I talked with the Colonel for quite a long time in an animated manner, answered many of his questions, and when he shook hands with me at parting and said, "*Hopefully our soldiers and yours will never have to fight each other again*," I felt as if my speeches in these clubs were also part of the bridges that must be built between America and Germany. No one thought then that war would come again after only a few years!

(1) Berlin Sportpalast, built 1910, demolished 1973, was a multi-purpose indoor arena located in the Schöneberg section of Berlin. Depending on the type of event and seating configuration, the Sportpalast could hold up to 14,000 people and was for a time biggest meeting hall in Berlin. The Sportpalast is most known for speeches and rallies that took place during Nazi Germany, particularly Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels's 1943 "Total War" speech.

F.H. Otto Melle – Memoirs 1875-1936

Chapter 34 How I Became Teetotaler and Alcohol Opponent: Work in Anti-Alcohol Movement and Petition to Reichstag

Two experiences were decisive for my position on the alcohol question. The first was the example of my father. Although I was still a child when he came to a personal experience of salvation through my mother and his acquaintance with the small Methodist church, which was despised and fought against at the time, I was old enough to become aware of the great change that had taken place in him. This change was noticeable not only in the table prayers - previously there had been no prayer, it was usually only done in church - and in the family devotions held in the morning and evening, but in the whole way of life. So, the tobacco pipe was put in the stove. Father, who had been a heavy smoker, tested the power of the new life and of his love for Christ, that he gave up something that had grown close to his heart and had become, as he said, his idol. It cost him a hard struggle, also brought him much ridicule, and the invitations to try a good pipe or a cigar again may have been no small temptation for him. But he was victorious. He saw in the freedom from smoking a piece of the freedom that Christ had brought him, and sometimes it is as if I can still hear him explaining to colleagues and acquaintances, in contrast to the bondage of others, Jesus' saying, "Whom the Son makes free, he is quite free." Never did I hear him say that smoking was a sin, or that he made non-smoking a sign of following Jesus. He was far too sober for that. But for himself he considered it an exercise in godliness, indeed a means of grace for the growth of the spiritual life, that he persisted in the freedom "to which Christ had set him free." And it is a testimony to Father's powerful personality and his living, influential example that, despite all the incentives, I also became a non-smoker, or rather remained a non-smoker.

It was similar for father with the consumption of alcoholic beverages. In his workshop as a wainwright, where our journeymen and apprentices were employed, it was customary to take a sip from a liquor bottle now and then. Especially in winter, when several carters fetched the wood from the forest and worked all day in the cold, the schnapps played a major role. It was a deeply rooted folk belief that schnapps gave warmth and strength. The

regular use of beer does not seem to have been so common in the countryside at that time. But my memory may be wrong. But brandy was one of the recognized foodstuffs considered necessary for life. After his conversion, my father threw the liquor bottle into the fire just like the tobacco pipe. With some friends he founded a "Blue Cross Association" in which every member took a vow of complete abstinence from intoxicating drinks, in writing - communion and medical prescription excepted. And when, as a boy of about 12 or 13, I asked if I could become a member, they allowed it without further ado. Only they did not allow me - a sign of much psychological understanding - to sign the vow of abstinence for life, which I wanted to do in my enthusiasm for the cause. From that time on, Father devoted much of his time to working on poor slaves of alcohol, and he succeeded in showing some of them "the way to freedom," as he liked to put it. It was precisely in this work, which was not easy, that one could observe how it was not so much the reasons that could be put forward against drinking, but rather the example of a personality rooted in Christ that made the strongest impression. To me, this example of the father and his position on the use of alcohol is all the greater now, since the preacher of the district at that time was not a teetotaler and did not even miss small jibes against the "Blue Crossers". In any case, such derogatory remarks had the opposite effect on me of what they intended and probably helped to let a different ideal of the preacher and pastor grow in my heart. Much was also contributed by the behavior of my mother to make me follow in the footsteps of my father. She herself was not a member of the Blue Cross Society. She didn't need it either. I don't remember her ever taking a sip of brandy. But with her wise advice she encouraged every good impulse in us children, she refrained from any remark that could have weakened the father's example and welcomed it with obvious joy when I, as her eldest child, showed the same character traits as father. Thus, I grew into the way of life of a teetotaler without any special struggles, and even today - I am writing these lines in my 69th year - I am grateful beyond the grave to my good parents for their teachings, their example and their prayers, which showed me the way, preserved me and helped me to fight a "good fight of faith" even in alcohol-related work.

The second experience, which strongly influenced my life, was about a dozen years later. It was in the Bácska, which has many important memories for me. One day a drunkard came to me who was a pitiful slave of drunkenness. When the devil came over him, there was no stop and no barrier for him. He even turned his wife's shoes into money so that he could indulge his passion. Then, when he had slept off his drunkenness, came remorse and the desire to start a new life, as is usually the case with drunkards. When I showed him the way of salvation and prayed with him, he said that he had long since realized that there was only one way for him to get free, and that was total abstinence. He asked if I had also signed the vow of abstinence. Now the vow of abstinence that I had signed in Liebengrün had long since expired. I didn't even think it was necessary to sign such a vow, since I lived as good as abstinent anyway. However, I had no conscience about drinking a little glass of wine now and then, perhaps on a festive occasion, which was plentiful and good in the Bácska. The drinker's question struck me. I suspected, which later turned out to be true, that he knew that I had not refused such a glass of wine. Brandy and beer had long been overcome. But how could I advise a poor slave of drunkenness to abstinence, if I myself did not have the courage and strength to renounce intoxicating drinks? With him it was usually so that he began with wine, then continued with beer and finally brought his intoxication to the climax with schnapps. As a clergyman, as a pastor, as an educator, shouldn't I lead not only by teaching, but by example? The value of example and the duty to refrain from such indulgence for the sake of others, no matter how harmless it may seem due to the naturalized custom, was suddenly written on the wall in front of my soul as if with shining letters. The question what my father would say, I could answer only in one sense. At the same time, I felt that this poor drunkard had been sent in my path by God to remind me of the high responsibility that rested upon me as a pastor, and that if I failed here, it would reveal a dangerous weakness of character and rob me of some of the strength that Jesus meant when he said to the disciples who could not cure one possessed by the devil, "This kind goeth not out but by praying and fasting." I replied that although I did not have a card with a signed vow of abstinence, his question reminded me of a duty. I would get such cards, and - like him - sign them. This happened a few days later. With the man there were always setbacks, but to me he helped by his question to complete determination. I think it was a blessing, not only for me.

But there was another consideration connected with this decision for me. I spoke in meetings of the Blue Cross, where saving drunkards was the main goal of the work. A goal that is really beautiful and great. And how often I read and witnessed how people whom others despaired of, and who despaired of themselves, became immune, saved, happy, and blessed by the signing of the vow of abstinence and a thorough conversion to Jesus, the Deliverer from guilt and the power of sin. But I soon realized that for my work in the anti-alcohol movement, the salvation of drunkards, however necessary and however delicious, was not enough as a goal. Slowly the thought took root, which deepened more and more with the goal, that it must be a task of the church and especially of its teachers and pastors - as the Bible also does - to carry out a preserving activity. What is greater, to lift up a fallen man or to remove obstacles so that he does not fall? What is a greater goal, to save the drunkard who is bound to alcohol so that he becomes free, or to help him so that he is preserved from becoming a drunkard? Accustomed to reduce such problems to a simple formula, and then to consider all related questions, including the possibility of work, from the clear, simple and obvious truth, I had found the starting point for my activity in the anti-alcohol field, without having any idea that this activity would play an even greater role later in my life.

After my appointment as director of the Preacher's Seminary in Frankfurt am Main and after my trip to America in 1920, I became acquainted with Professor Dr. Gonser, the director of the German Association against Alcoholism. The introduction of Prohibition in the United States caused a great stir in Germany. I had become acquainted over there with leading men of the anti-alcohol movement, had also otherwise made my observations during the long trip to Des Moines in the state of Iowa, and was thus considered a source of information in this field. The Methodist Church has taken a decidedly anti-alcohol position from the beginning of its existence, and when we went to work in Germany on post-war reconstruction, I suggested to my bishop that we appoint a "Committee on Abstinence and Popular Welfare" which would be, as it were, an authority on alcohol throughout our church, that is, in all conferences in Germany, and would be responsible for this work. Bishop Nuelsen immediately acted on my suggestion and appointed me chairman of this committee, on which each of the Annual Conferences was represented by a preacher. The task of this committee was to point out to our congregations the necessity of working against alcoholism, to remind them of the instructions of the Church Order in the "Advice" and especially in the "General Rules", and also to seek contact with the other anti-alcohol organizations in our fatherland. When I had briefly explained these thoughts to Professor Gonser - it was at the Potsdam train station in Berlin, some time before the departure of my train - he was so interested that he asked me whether I would be prepared to give a lecture on "The Position of the Methodist Church on the Alcohol Question" at the board meeting of the German Association against Alcoholism, which would take place in Weimar in a few weeks under the chairmanship of Dr. Wegmann, a member of the Higher Administrative Court. I gladly accepted. In my lecture I did not need to say much more than what is written in the Methodist Church Order. I only read aloud the passage from Wesley's sermon on money (text Luke 16:9: "Make friends with unrighteous Mammon"), in which he is very clear about the alcohol question. The sermon, as we know, has three parts: 1. acquire as much as you can; 2. save as much as you can; 3. give as much as you can. In the first part it is stated that we are entitled to earn as much as we can, but this should not be done to the detriment of our health, much less to the detriment of our soul, and especially not to the detriment of our neighbor, as happens, for example, in the production of intoxicating beverages that cause so much harm in the world. This sermon has given Methodism an anti-alcohol stamp. The sentences are as if carved in stone, the argumentation has a conscientious effect. They are among the most convincing things that have been written against spirits - for that was what it was mainly about at that time. The board of the German association then discussed the ideas suggested, and the surprising result for me was that I was elected as a member of the board. As such, I was sent the publications of the Association, the rich anti-alcohol library of the Association, which had its central office in Berlin-Dahlem, was at my disposal, and the meetings of the Board and the Board of Directors were excellent training courses, introducing both the history of the anti-alcohol movement and the current problems of the present. Doctors, lawyers, heads of insurance companies, clergymen, officers, representatives of the police, etc. met there; the debates were at a considerable level, so that one always returned home enriched and thus kept abreast of the latest developments, even if one did not have

the time to delve into the special fields of alcohol problems. Already at the first board meeting, as far as I remember, it was where the question of the right of community determination came up for discussion, which captivated me immensely, so that I resolved to study it more thoroughly. It became known that the government was preparing, perhaps had already completed, a new law on pubs, in which the so-called right of municipal determination would probably find a place. This was the possibility of giving a municipality or municipal district the right to decide, by a vote of its voting members, whether to grant new licenses to serve alcoholic beverages, and indeed how many such licensed premises were considered necessary by the population in the municipality or municipal district. This aim was based on the idea that it would be easier for the influential alcohol market, which naturally strives for expansion and increased sales in order to increase its income, to influence the granting of further concessions than if the decision on this were in the hands of the population itself. This would, of course, be an opportunity for the anti- alcohol organizations to help ensure that the proposal would actually be adopted by the Reichstag and become law. I also saw immediately that we would have a means in our hands to look at the alcohol question from a higher perspective than is usually the case in small temperance societies, to throw ourselves into the public discussion, so to speak. Couldn't we achieve this goal by collecting signatures to be addressed to the Reichstag?

Something else moved me: The anti-alcohol movement in Germany was divided into two camps. One could call them the "moderates" and the totally "abstinent". Professor Gonser, although teetotal himself, was regarded as the representative of the "moderates. The leader of the totally abstinent was Professor Dr. Strecker, the head of the Good Templars. the Protestant Blue Cross associations and the Catholic Cross Alliance were in this camp, as was the Association of Abstinent Pastors. According to my lifestyle and personal convictions, I actually belonged to the total abstainers, was also recognized by them, and gave the keynote speech at many a Good Templar celebration. I had known and been friends with Professor Strecker for a long time. Officially, however, I belonged to the "German Association," as it was abbreviated, and now I experienced - on the one hand and on the other - how people often used up their precious strength by going into the field against each other instead of fighting together against the common enemy. This problem gave me no peace. If only there were a way to unite these "enemy brothers"! This will be impossible if one side is to accept the principles of the other, i.e., if one wants to win the "temperate" to the standpoint of the totally abstinent or, conversely, to win them to the principle of temperance. But if we could harness them to one wagon, if we could win them both to work for a common goal, to work for once to push the discussion about which direction was actually right with its principles, if not completely forgotten, at least into the background! That would certainly be something great, a goal dreamed of by many and yet always considered impossible. Then it flashed in me in that hour: Wouldn't the right of community determination be such a goal? But how to start the matter? It was once again one of those seeds that need time before they germinate, grow and bear fruit.

Now we Methodists at that time had a magazine called "The Christian Abstainer," which advocated total abstinence from intoxicating drinks. Ernst Gebhardt, who was known as a singer, father and a Blue Cross man, had founded the magazine, which had the fame of having been the first magazine in the German language to advocate the principle of total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. It was the property of Ernst Gebhardt's son, the preacher Samuel Gebhardt in Wiesbaden. He came to me one day in Frankfurt am Main - it was around the height of inflation - and confessed that he could no longer keep the magazine. He was determined to discontinue it, but believed that if I could take it over for the "Committee for Abstinence and Public Welfare" and keep the editorship in my own hands, the journal could be kept going. It would be a pity to let this magazine, which has existed for 39 years and would soon enter its fortieth year, simply die. I had observed the "Christian Abstainer" and thought I had discovered why it was shrinking more and more. It made its living by printing good articles that it found in the anti-alcohol literature. There was no longer enough strength for original articles that dealt with something special. He did not have the staff to do so. There was also no attractive idea. Strangely enough, the right of the congregation to determine the course of events came to my mind again. Wouldn't it be possible to make the "Christian Abstainer" an organ that would stand up for this right, the GBR (right of municipal

determination) (1), as we called it for short, and thus first win over the leading personalities of the anti-alcohol organizations, then, in addition to us Methodists, the free churches, and finally the other churches and other circles of the people? No, the thought was so bold that I did not dare to think it through or even to express it. Was I allowed at all, that was the question, in view of the abundance of tasks that were set for me, and which I have briefly indicated in the preceding chapters, to take on a new work, which after all would take up a lot of time and energy? And would such work be reconcilable with my ministry as preacher of the Methodist Church and director of the Seminary? I was able to answer the latter question quickly in view of the historical development of Methodism and its position on alcohol. And for the other, the offer of S. Gebhardt seemed to me like a call to a work opportunity on a special scale. I thought of a word of my unforgettable teacher: "*If something is to be done, one must never turn to someone who has nothing to do. Because such people have no time. Someone who has a lot to do can usually take on something new."* So, I took action, took over the "Christian Abstainer" and decided to make the very first number, which was to appear on January 1, 1923, an advertisement for the right of municipal determination and to get my thoughts across about a collection of signatures that would go to the Reichstag.

That same evening, I wrote the editorial with the headline: "*A petition to the Reichstag" and the request to sign the petition.* Then it said: *"Who should sign? All Germans over 20 years of age who are entitled to vote, who love their people, who do not want our children to starve while many millions of pounds of food are used for alcohol; all who want the permission to serve alcoholic beverages in a municipal district to be made dependent on the vote of the men and women of the district who are entitled to vote."* Then, the first paragraph said, "*Why now? In the next few weeks, the Reichstag will receive a draft of a new 'liquor law,' the discussion of which will most likely provoke a great debate on the alcohol question. As we know from earlier information, the government has provided for the 'right of municipal determination' in this draft. But already the fight of the liquor interests and the liquor money, which, as we know, also has great influence on the daily press, is beginning to bring this part of the law down. They will say that the German people do not want such a right at all and that a restriction of alcohol consumption is not necessary. Then it is necessary to support the government and to remind the Reichstag how many German men and women expect the people's representatives to do their duty fully in a question touching so deeply the whole life of the people*."

This was followed by remarks on how bitterly necessary it was to restrict the consumption of alcohol in Germany, how many millions of pounds of barley are used annually for beer and how many potatoes are used for brandy instead of food for our women and children, and so on. This was followed by "A Word to the Free Churches and Community Circles" and instructions on collecting signatures. Each number of the "Christian Abstainer" had 20 lines blank on the last page for signatures. It was requested that 20 names be collected, the sheet then detached, and sent to the Committee for Abstinence and Popular Welfare, which had its office in Frankfurt am Main. Friend C.A. Flügge of the Baptists added an appeal to the youth, and the paper flew out to begin its advertising work. Today, when I look back on those days and pick up that issue of "Christian Abstainer," I am surprised at the boldness of my proposal. But I was not aware of that at the time. The misery of our people, the waste of food for intoxicating beverages at a time when many were, so to speak, starving and we had to ask for food abroad, the inactivity of the government, which stood idly by while the annual expenditure on alcoholic beverages rose into many billions of gold marks, the disunity of the Reichstag, where the number of parties representing any "interests" was constantly increasing, while a unification of forces for the real vital interests of the people proved impossible, the indifference of the masses, especially of the Christians, who for the most part looked on silently and inactively in an incapable and unproductive fatalism: All this had gripped me, it excited me anew when I thought of my new task, and the thoughts flowed into the pen as if of their own accord. The serious appeal to the sense of responsibility and duty did not need to be strongly emphasized. It was written between the lines, but at the end it was expressed once again in very brief words.

In order to see whether the suggestion would catch fire, I invited people to a public meeting in the large hall of the educational Volksbildungsheim in Frankfurt am Main. The newspapers carried a notice about it, it was

sufficiently publicized on the poster pillars, my students volunteered to distribute flyers, and the preachers of the congregations were ready to draw attention to the "rally". As a speaker I had won Professor Dr. Hans Schmidt from the University in Giessen, already recognized at that time as an authority in the field of anti-alcoholism. I was the second speaker on the program. Since that time, we have fought many a battle against alcoholism shoulder to shoulder. However, the attempt to go public with the alcohol issue was a risk. Even from the ranks of my own church, whose position on alcohol has been established in principle and historically, there were strong reservations. A friend said: "*Talking against alcohol and its abuse in Frankfurt am Main will not be successful. There is no understanding for it. The people of Frankfurt love their 'Äppelwoi'* (apple wine) *too much to let anyone interfere with their deeply ingrained habit. I'm afraid you're going to have a big fiasco at the meeting in the Volksbildungsheim*." It is even possible that some of the people who were not exactly alcohol-abstinent came to watch the "fiasco." But these people experienced a great disappointment. Whether it was the announced subject, or the name of the speakers, or the intention to make a petition to the Reichstag, which attracted the people, I am not able to decide. The fact is that one of my "aides-de-camp" brought me the news half an hour before the meeting began that the hall was already overcrowded, and large crowds of people were still standing outside the doors seeking admission, but the police were not letting anyone in. I may say that the assembly of nearly 2,000 people - all churches, all parties, all classes of the population were represented - interrupted the speakers again and again with applause, and when I pointed out at the end that there were lists on tables in front of the exits for the names to be entered, all of which would be sent to the Reichstag, there was a storm of enthusiasm, and I knew that the first battle had been won. About 2,000 signatures were collected that evening, and - what was probably even more valuable - many took the "Christian Abstainer" home with them with the firm intention of collecting at least 20 more signatures among their acquaintances. Thus, it happened that the movement for the right of municipal determination first gained a foothold in Frankfurt am Main, the newspapers took a stand on it, the authorities took notice, and the old imperial coronation city on the Main marched in the lead among the other cities of our fatherland in terms of the number of signatures. According to the report in the "Christian Abstainer," the meeting lasted three and a half hours, as the lectures were followed by a public debate. "Professors, pastors, students, workers, merchants, doctors, German nationalists, social democrats, Good Templars, Blue Crossers, representatives of the national church and the free churches, the central association and the German association against alcoholism spoke. And the strange thing was: nobody was against it. All participants were united in the feeling of responsibility that rests on us, toward the welfare of the people, and in the conviction that the time has come when we may demand more effective measures from the government." So much for the report at the time.

But would the echo from the realm be so similar? There I should experience a new surprise. Only for one week it was a little bit quiet. Then came the answer. The letter carriers from Frankfurt-Ginnheim asked in amazement what was actually going on. They almost couldn't cope with the letters that were coming in every day. Dozens, hundreds, even thousands of letters came, all with the same content: whole packets of signatures for the petition to the Reichstag. I set up a classroom as a kind of office, and my students volunteered to sort and count the signatures and bundle them into packets of 10,000 each. When they were done, they reported with beaming faces: 466,000 signatures! They were packed into boxes, I drove to Berlin, dropped them off at the Reichstag's messenger's office, paid my visit to the president of the Reichstag, who promised that as soon as the liquor law came up for negotiation, I would have the signatures placed on the House table. I hoped that I had thrown a stone into the water that would cause further waves, even without me.

But after I had put my hand to the plow, I could not get away. It is troublesome when someone wants to make a movement, but nothing moves. Something else when you are carried by a movement. Not that it would then be possible without work and effort, sweat is always put before success. But it is different when you are carried along on the back of a stream than when you have to fight with all your strength against the waves and do not move forward. The movement for the GBR became a mighty current in the people's life, by which one was carried along and carried. The igniting spark had fallen and had set off the fire, which now sought its own nourishment and spread further and further.

At first, I noticed this in my correspondence. The newspapers had carried a notice of the delivery of the petition to the Reichstag. The "Christian Abstinent" had passed from hand to hand. There came now the congratulations and the inquiries from all sides. I received letters from Protestant pastors and Catholic priests, from German nationalist deputies and from Social Democrats, from anti-alcohol associations and from women's organizations: At last, the right path had been taken. They had been waiting for such a day for a long time. They asked me to send them the "Christian Abstainer" regularly. Also, other literature about the GBR. The only thing they had to criticize about my action was that I had limited it to such a narrow circle. They asked me not to stop now, but to continue the work. Everyone wanted to participate. The whole nation must be called upon to fight alcoholism.

At first, I was left with the "Christian Abstinent" as a means of struggle, which now found wide distribution without being sought out. How it became more and more known and reached the people is just one example: I was invited to speak at a mass meeting of the youth in Darmstadt. The desired topic, I believe, was: "Youth and Alcohol". Since I was prevented on the day in question, I asked my friend, Professor Hans Schmidt, then in Giessen, to represent me. It turned out to be a stormy meeting. In his lecture, Professor Schmidt had made a remark about how French wine supplies, i.e., alcohol, had played a role in the spring offensive of 1918, when, according to the judgment of a British journalist, we were only a few kilometers away from victory. There was a protest against this. But a man who had taken part in the offensive and kept a detailed diary came forward and agreed to make it available to Professor Hans Schmidt. From his own experience, he was able to confirm and supplement everything that had been said in the lecture. When Professor Schmidt told me this, I said, "*That would be a subject for the* "Christian Abstainer. "*Wouldn't they be willing to write an article on the subject:* "Why did we lose the war"? The article appeared in the next number, of which I was able to have a larger print run produced. General Ludendorff and the most famous army leaders of the World War each received a copy. Some of them - including Ludendorff - corresponded about it with the author, Ludendorff in a thoroughly appreciative manner: "*I welcome it in German populist thinking that you put your finger in a serious wound and will help what I can."* But the discussion of the serious problem did not matter here. All the members of the Reichstag and the various state parliaments in the Länder also received a copy of the aforementioned number. Magazines and newspapers took up the question. Since the "Christian Abstinent" does not have enough space for an in-depth debate, Hans Schmidt, who, by the way, was a captain in the reserves and had led a battalion in the World War, published several writings in which he gave all-round reasons for his point of view. He was allowed to see the war files deposited in the Reich Archives. The press of the alcohol industry, it can be imagined, intervened, and soon a hot feud was underway, which had taken its starting point in that article in the "Christian Abstainer" and did much to bring the alcohol question to the attention of the general public.

It was significant for the position that the "Christian Abstinent" gained among the anti-alcohol journals that, at the suggestion of Professor Hans Schmidt, it also became the organ of the Association of Abstinent Pastors, whose far-sighted and purposeful chairman was Superintendent Rolffs in Osnabrück. Dr. Rolffs, an expert in the alcohol question, gifted both organizationally and as a writer, himself supplied many an article rich in content, and the other leading men of the Federation gladly made themselves available for cooperation, so that it was not difficult for me to carry out the principle that the "Christian Abstinent" must always bring original articles that would also have to provide thoughts and suggestions to the leading opponents of alcohol. Sometimes such essays were sent to me unsolicited, as they grew out of special studies; in most cases I provided the topics, and it was a matter of course that men like Professors Hans Schmidt, H. Strathmann, Niebergall, Karl Heim, Dr. Rolffs, Reverend Römer, etc., wrote articles on the subject. offered excellent, scientifically founded, and original work. The "Christian Abstinent" was not an advertising journal for the salvation of drunkards - in my opinion, there was no lack of such writings - but in the process of its natural growth, in the fulfillment of a task set for it in the circumstances of the time and the needs of those opposed to alcohol, it had become a leading journal of the associations opposed to alcohol, and the fight for the GBR gave each number a special character. It should be noted in passing that not only theologians and church leaders, but also economists and doctors had their say. An article by Professor Dr. Gaupp in Munich on the subject of "*Why I, as a German and a doctor, am fighting alcohol,"*

which I published at the beginning of a week of publicity for the GBR, had an almost resounding impact. In any case, the paper provided us with invaluable services for the movement at that time.

Above all, however, it was close to my heart, I felt it was an essential task, to interest the churches, and indeed the national churches as well as the free churches, in the fight against alcohol, to awaken their conscience in this piece and to mobilize the religious and moral forces existing in it for the fight, as I expressed myself from time to time. This was already necessary among us Methodists - in spite of our history and church order. One had, under the pressure of public opinion in Germany, especially under the tremendous influence of ingrained popular morals, not emphasized the rules for personal abstinence and the fight against the popular damage caused by alcohol as generally and not as strongly as would have been desirable. It was similar with the Evangelical Fellowship, while with the Baptists it was really only individual personalities, albeit very decisive ones, such as C.A. Flügge, who, correctly recognizing the danger of alcohol, placed themselves in the ranks of their comrades-in-arms in self-denial and ready to fight. So, there was already a lot to do. The founding of a Free Church Committee for Abstinence and Popular Welfare served to remind the Free Churches of their duties. The situation was even worse in the Protestant national churches. Here, people were too accustomed to looking at the fight against alcohol from the standpoint of saving drunkards, which was left to the few Blue Cross societies. The idea that there was an obligation to help all the people, an obligation to stand up for the preservation of the youth, for alcohol-free education, an obligation that also included the example of the clergy and teachers, seemed to have found little acceptance. Therefore, it was necessary to draw attention to this point again and again. The arguments put forward by Rolffs, Schmidt, Niebergall, Strathmann and others did not fail to have an effect. Like an awakening it went through the Protestant churches. When I look through the old issues of the "Christian Abstainer", read the headlines of the articles, look at the resolutions that were written in that time, it awakens very pleasant memories in me. At the international anti-alcohol congresses in Copenhagen, in Geneva, in Dorpat, the position of the churches on alcoholism played a major role. Likewise at the general meetings of the German Association. That I myself was very often asked to speak on the subject of the "*Church and The Fight Against Alcoholism*" gave me pleasure. Of the various congresses at which essentials were offered on this question, two stand out in my memory: One was the congress in Dorpat, where in the University Church Pastor Dr. Stubbe had to speak about the Protestant Church, Professor Dr. Ude, a very energetic and widely known opponent of alcohol, about the Catholic Church, and I about the Methodist Church. The second was the meeting of the German Association in Kiel, for which Rev. Dr. Stubbe had secured the auditorium of the University. It was an impressive and uplifting general meeting, when Pastor Engelke, Professor Hofmann, Director Melle and Rabbi Baeck described from the Protestant-Regional Church, the Catholic church, the Free Church and Jewish standpoints the obligation to serve the people against the enemy of the people, alcohol, and at the same time advocated the demand of the GBR.

This demand became all the more urgent because the long-promised liquor law had still not been brought before the Reichstag. Already at the board meeting of the German Association mentioned at the beginning - it took place in 1922, according to my recollection - we had the impression that the Reichstag would deal with it in the foreseeable future. I had accelerated my petition with the 466,000 signatures in February 1923, because the treatment of the draft and thus a large alcohol debate would certainly be obtained in a few weeks. Years had passed, but nothing happened. In the anti-alcohol organizations the tension and the demand to approach the Reichstag again increased. But the opponents were not idle either. We were under the impression that they were succeeding again and again in delaying the presentation of the law or in watering down its provisions. Was it not time for the opponents of alcohol to undertake a new campaign? How it came about will be told in the following chapter.

(1) GBR law that mean municipal right of determination in matters such as banning or limiting alcohol in a community.

Chapter 35 Advertising Week for Reich Municipal Determination Right Committee: 2,565,000 Signatures; Congress of World League Against Alcoholism

The presentation of the pub law to the Reichstag was a long time coming. I had submitted my first collection of signatures in February 1923. In the meantime, the new year 1925 had approached and still nothing happened. The opponents of the law were working mightily behind the scenes, and the anti-alcohol organizations, energized for joint action, were pressing into action. What pleased me most was the fact that the voices for community determination rights (GBR or Gemeinschafts Bestimmungs Rechte) (1) and the will for joint action were making themselves felt in both wings of the anti-alcohol movement. It was obvious that the ground for joint action was here. The German Association against Alcoholism under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Gonser unanimously and vigorously advocated the GBR, and the teetotalers united in the "Central Association", whose chairman was Prof. Dr. Strecker, naturally did the same. The conviction that the expected liquor law was a rare and great opportunity for the opponents of alcohol to influence the broad masses of the people, an opportunity that should not be missed, was general. So, I dared to invite the leaders of all anti-alcohol organizations to a meeting about the situation and the possibility of joint action on January 20, 1925, in Frankfurt a. M. And almost all of them were there: Prof. Dr. Gonser, Prof. Dr. Strecker, Miss von Blücher, the chairwoman of the Women's Association for an Alcohol-Free Culture, Superintendent Rolffs, the chairman of the Association of Abstinent Pastors, Prof. Dr. Hans Schmidt, to name only these names that were generally known in the movement. But there were many more. According to my notes, about 40 people came, among them the Grand Templars Blume and Dr. Kraut, representatives of the Blue Cross (2), the Catholic Cross Alliance, various women's organizations. A representative of the authorities also attended, who subsequently became a warm supporter of the GBR and promoted our work where he could. I can still see how Miss von Blücher, who had inherited something of the nature of her great relative, the "Marshal Forward," jokingly said. "This is almost like 1813: 'The king called and everyone, everyone came.' At last, it will go forward!" At the suggestion of Prof. Gonser, a Reich Committee for the GBR was founded

and I was elected its chairman. Furthermore, a closer working committee was formed, whose task it was to examine the possibilities of carrying the movement into the people and to initiate a petition to the Reichstag with the collection of signatures on a broad basis. All resolutions were passed in the greatest harmony, and there was no sign at all of the antagonisms in the two wings of the organizations.

Then February 18 approached. A motion to "immediately submit the draft of the pub law to the Reichstag" was defeated by 200 votes to 168. Prof. Dr. Strathmann, a member of our working committee, had tabled a contingent motion that, if the committee's motion was rejected, "*the government be requested to submit as soon as possible a law for the protection of young people against the dangers of alcoholism and for the improvement of the liquor licensing system, rejecting the draining of Germany*." This motion was adopted by 309 votes to 59. Apparently, it was the "rejection of the draining of Germany" that the liquor interests painted on the wall as the looming specter that made this motion acceptable to the gentlemen delegates. The debate on the two motions had shown how many deputies had little or no understanding of the dangers of alcohol. Dr. Strathmann felt compelled to point out how wrong it was to ridicule the matter instead of treating it with complete seriousness. After all, the adoption of Strathmann's motion made it possible to include the GBR in the new draft of a law "*for the improvement of the liquor licensing system*," and it was the German Association, especially its chairman, Dr. Wegmann, who, with the help of other lawyers, prepared an appropriate wording for such a paragraph of the law.

The Reichstag debate had shown that the time for action had come for the alcohol opponents. In several meetings of the working committee, one of which was held in the Ministry of Welfare in Berlin, it was decided to vigorously continue the work for the GBR. Following the Reichstag debate, the "Christian Abstinent" had written: "*It is necessary to enlighten the people about the harm of alcoholism in a way that has not been done before; it is necessary to sharpen the conscience of the members of the Reichstag; it is necessary now to demand with all our might that the new draft of the liquor law include the right of the municipality to decide in a form that corresponds to the will of the majority of the German people*." Since it could not be assumed that the new draft would be completed soon, time was gained for thorough preparation. The election of the Reich President also intervened, which made it necessary to postpone the collection of signatures for the GBR, which had already been decided, for a while, but first to organize a week of publicity throughout the Reich.

The preparations also included contacting the members of the Reichstag. There were abstainers and alcohol opponents in some, though not in all, parties. I tried to become acquainted with them and to win their cooperation. I found a lot of understanding among these men and women and had many a stimulating conversation with them, and also found a lot of willingness to cooperate. "*There is only one difficulty*," said a centrist delegate, "*and that is that they will not succeed in getting the concept of the right of municipal determination into the public consciousness in such a way that it will become so popular that people will understand what it is all about, and so it will become a catchword. But that is absolutely necessary to bring a mass movement into being*." That was some time before the planned advertising week. When I met the gentleman again after the same - it was in the restoration of the Reichstag - he met me almost excitedly: "*In all the world, what have they done that the GBR has suddenly moved so into the foreground of interest? You can't pick up a newspaper from the most distant town without finding an article, either for or against the GBR. The whole press is full of them. And think about what I experienced earlier: I was having lunch here. A deputy of the German People's Party sits down at my table and has a glass of beer brought to him. Then an acquaintance comes, takes a seat next to him and asks without any introduction,* 'What do you actually think about the GBR?' *It's appalling. You can't even drink your glass of beer in peace anymore. Everywhere you go you encounter the specter of the GBR*." That was enough for me to know that our efforts to throw the idea into the people's minds were not in vain after all. This week of advertising for the right of community determination meant a mighty step forward in the common work against alcohol in Germany. We had set ourselves the goal of bringing about 1,000 mass meetings during this week, with as many resolutions for the GBR going to the Reichstag. This number was far exceeded. A request had gone out to church leaders - Protestant, Catholic, and Free Church - to preach in churches against the danger

of alcohol and to draw attention to the GBR's demand on Sunday, May 10, when Publicity Week began. In how many churches this happened cannot be proved. But it happened in many churches, and we consider it a significant event that once - perhaps it was the first time - in our fatherland, in Catholic as well as in Protestant pulpits, preaching against a demonic enemy of our people's life took place. It showed how, despite all denominational differences and antagonisms, the struggle against such obvious harm to the people possesses a unifying power which it is a simple and serious duty to utilize.

There was no shortage of telling individual images of how the GBR had already become a buzzword - to use the expression of that centrist deputy. It had indeed gained a rare traction. I could see this again and again during my lectures during the advertising week - both before and after. Mostly, the interested clubs joined together to organize a mass meeting. Only in some places I could serve as a speaker, so to speak, but I had to spend many nights on the railroad. I saw my service as a duty to my beloved German people. It was astonishing what unifying power the idea proved to have. In Frankfurt am Main, I had spoken together with a Catholic priest in a meeting; now invitations came from many places in the area, requesting us both for similar events. Women's associations, German nationalist ones, asked me to inform them about the GBR, and a few times I was able to speak to Social Democratic workers. With the Guttemplers (3) and some Blue Cross associations I was at home anyway. In Homburg we had a meeting of 2,000 people or more, at the union hall, where a Catholic priest, a Protestant theology professor, and the director of the Methodist seminary were the speakers. The meeting lasted for more than three hours, and there was no sign of the tension diminishing until the end. In Königsberg, where I was over a Sunday and Monday, they had scheduled nine meetings for me to speak at over the two days, including several large outdoor rallies.

In Wiesbaden I got a special impression of how the GBR topic worked. When I arrived there, I found that they had indicated on the Litfass pillars (4) a quite harmless topic on which I was to speak. It was something like the question, "*What is the best way to combat popular damage?"* When I asked why they had phrased the topic so colorlessly, I was told, "*We didn't dare call it GBR. The brewery workers are said to be so incited that great disturbances would have to be feared. But we will have a full house even so*." That was true. The hall - it was, I think, the auditorium of a high school - was crowded. On the first benches sat the representatives of the brewing capital, more in the back the rows were filled with brewery workers, who had been made "courageous" by free beer and probably something stronger and had the task to disturb the meeting by interjections - which were however little witty. The harmless and colorless topic had served neither to distract nor to calm. Even the doctor who spoke before me kept interrupting, "*We want to hear from the GBR*." And when I began to speak, I had to deal directly, without all ado, with the GBR. It was a hot battle. But it gave me no small satisfaction to see how little by little the opposition, which had soon shot its meager ammunition, became quieter and quieter, and some even seemed to listen with interest.

In that meeting, as in many others, it became apparent that we were dealing with a serious opponent who was mobilizing his troops and was not willing to stand by without a fight as the movement for the GBR grew and provided for the enlightenment of the people. In Zwickau in Saxony, they had rented the large hall of the city, the "Neue Welt". A few days before, the cancellation was made: the hall was not to be used for a lecture against alcohol. The echo of the advertising week in the press was telling. Only two examples are mentioned. The "Süddeutsche Zeitung" brought the following cry of pain from its Berlin correspondent:

"*A divisive fungus has taken root at the tables of all Reichstag factions in the Reichstag restaurant. Banter and sometimes quite concerned words fly back and forth over the issues of the pub law. In any case, petitions with 466,000 signatures are on the House table today, demanding a municipal right to determine whether alcohol may be tapped or not. But those are probably concerns for a later session. Before the vacations, the Reichstag is unlikely to address them*."

Another essay said, "*This motion (meaning the Strathmann-Westarp motion of Feb. 18) has led to a movement against alcohol not yet experienced in Germany. The word* Gemeindebestimmungsrecht *has become a catchword*."

Thus, the ground was prepared for the action of a generous collection of signatures - that the alcohol capital would pull out all the stops to fight the GBR was certain for us. On the other hand, the conscience of thousands and thousands of people was awakened, the alcohol opponents in all strata of the population stood ready to fight and waited for the signal to attack. The pros and cons about the timing of a general collection of signatures were thoroughly considered in the working committee, the text for the paragraph on the GBR, as it was to be proposed by us, had been completed, the members of the Reichstag who belonged to the committee advised not to wait too long; so, the start of the collection of signatures was set for March 14, 1926. I had to write the call for this. The office for the collection of signatures was Berlin-Dahlem, Werderstraße 16, with Prof. Gonser as managing director and Dr. Kraut as secretary. Some sentences from the end of the appeal are reproduced. It said, in answer to the question: "*What do we expect from the collection of signatures?*":

"*It is to remind the Reichstag and the government of their duty, and to tell the deputies who are fighting for the welfare of the people that the widest circles of the people stand behind them.*

It should strengthen the belief that there is still initiative, courage, strength for self-denial and determined action among the German people.

It should show to foreign countries that the will to rise and to fight for our ideals is unbroken in the German people.

It should give all those who sign it the joyful awareness that in a decisive hour they have done something as a member of the whole for the good of the whole people. It should set the ball rolling and help us to get soon what we urgently need in Germany: The right of municipal determination."

We did not even have the means to send the appeal free of charge. Don't forget that these were the years after inflation, after the stabilization of the Mark, with all kinds of economic crises. I had the "Appeal" printed in our Methodist publishing house in Bremen, where it could be obtained (100 copies for RM 15). But orders came in from all sides, the machines had to run day and night to meet the demands, and it wasn't long before the director of the printing house could report to me: "*The million copies of the Appeal for the Collection of Signatures have already been exceeded*." "*Perhaps that*," I used to tell him jokingly, "*was the first million-copy run that the publishing house had experienced*." So, the beginning was made, and we eagerly awaited the result.

First of all, a terrible barrage began against the GBR on the part of the opponents - which shall only be hinted at. Among other things, a paper was published with the title "*One Hundred German Chambers of Commerce against the GBR",* in which all the reasons that could be found against the GBR were listed. Only very modestly, the damage to the fermentation industry appears at the end as the last concern. For the sake of curiosity, I want to emphasize a foreign-policy reason, the flimsiness and nullity of which is put into perspective especially by the subsequent events of the people's survey and which seems downright embarrassing, as Strathmann said: The GBR would endanger the Dawes (5) payments!

But let us leave these attacks aside. The time set for collecting signatures, March 14, 1926, arrived, and the work began. It began in all areas of the Reich, in cities and in the countryside, and the incoming signatures piled up at the office in Berlin-Dahlem. Dr. Kraut and his staff had their hands full counting and sorting. Each 10,000 signatures were neatly tied together in a nice envelope - just as I had done with the first 466,000 - and labeled with an appropriate inscription indicating content and purpose. After a few weeks, Dr. Kraut was able to report to me that the second million had almost been reached, and when we decided to end the campaign, it had become 2,565,000! On May 21, 1926, these signatures were delivered to the Reichstag by the Reich Committee for the

GBR. The "Christian Abstinent" wrote: "*This day will not be overlooked in the history of the anti-alcohol movement in Germany*." Two automobiles were needed to transport the mass of signature packets from the office to the Reichstag. According to police regulations, one had to be unloaded at the Bismarck monument, the other on the Spree side of the Reichstag. Forty young Berlin teetotalers from the Guttemplern had taken time off for the morning; they unloaded the trucks, packed themselves with 50,000-60,000 signatures, and marched past the Bismarck Monument to Portal V to deposit the volumes in the petition office, where they were piled up into a veritable mountain. This was an easy and enjoyable part of the work and gave great pleasure to the Berlin boys and girls. They will probably all remember this day fondly. The photographic images that some photographers took of their work and their march past the Bismarck monument will certainly form fond memories for them as well. I published one of these photographs in the "Christian Abstinent" (No. 4, 1928).

Then a delegation of the Reich Committee was received by the President of the Reichstag. I cannot deny myself to mention the names of the members of this delegation, because these names belong in my memoirs. Besides myself, who had the privilege of being the chairman and therefore the spokesman, there were the following personalities: Dr. Kraut, Secretary of the Reich Committee (Good Templar), Dr. Weymann (German Association Against Alcoholism), President (ret.) Prof. Dr. Strecker (Reich Headquarters Against Alcohol), Miss Gustel von Blücher (Federation of German Women's Associations) (6), H. Blume (Grand Templar of the Good Templar Order), Dir. Wincken (Caritas Association), Dir. Coleth (Cross Alliance), Rev. Seyfert (Inner Mission: Association Against Alcoholism), Preacher Rockschieß (Union of German Baptist Churches), Superintendent B. Keip (Episcopal Methodist Church), Mrs. Gerken-Leitgebel (Women's Associations against Alcoholism), Mrs. Gertrud Matschenz-Streichan (Abstinence Teachers), Director of Studies Paarman (Good Templar). This was a deputation that was backed by all kinds of people, and I assume that everyone still remembers that day fondly.

The president of the Reichstag received us in his study. Jokingly, he said that such an impressive number of representatives of large associations should not have been received by him alone, but by the Reichstag. Of the many, I presented him with a volume containing 10,000 signatures from Breslau, his constituency, and briefly described how the collection had come about. The President said that, as far as he could remember, this represented the largest collection of signatures that had come to the Reichstag in this form. In any case, it would not fail to have its effect, and he would be glad to see that it was brought to the attention of the Reichstag. An opportunity for this would arise when the draft of a new pub law, already prepared by the government, came up for negotiation. The "mountain of signatures" should then appear on the table of the House. He himself professed to be an opponent of alcohol and a supporter of the GBR.

The collection of signatures had a powerful effect. It was far more than a demonstration. The very fact that in the decisive resolution of the Budget Committee of the Reichstag, the motion to include the GBR in the Licensing Act was rejected by only 1 vote majority - a single vote - showed how close we were to achieving our goal. That we did not reach the goal, i.e. the GBR, did not discourage me. On the contrary, I was grateful for the result and inwardly satisfied with it. Because in the whole action, the paragraph of the law was not the main thing for me. I knew, as was also shown in the case of the prohibition of alcohol in the USA, that legal paragraphs, however necessary they may be and however desirable they may be, are not of penetrating force in questions of morals and public morals, unless a majority of the people stand behind them in their attitude and conviction. To create this attitude and conviction by example, testimony, enlightenment and education must be the main goal of the anti-alcohol movement. My main concern was to awaken the German people from their sleep for once by a signal, to put the alcohol question up for public discussion, to make the people interested in alcohol realize that their doings are watched by millions of the best of the people, that there is a "so far and no further" for the expansion of their capital, and to accomplish a task in the education of the people such as has not yet been tackled in such a comprehensive way. This goal was fully achieved. Yes, I may well say that our wildest expectations in this respect were far exceeded. Could we have done anything else to draw the attention of the entire German people to the danger of alcohol in such a resounding way? At the same time, it was a strengthening of the anti-alcohol cause, of

the belief in the power that lies in it, in the power of joint work. The idea that the fight against the danger of alcohol was not about whether a glass of beer would harm me personally, or only about saving notorious drinkers, of whom we had 300,000 in Germany at that time, but that it was about the preservation of the youth, about the training of the people, about strengthening them for the resurgence, was of great educational value and gave a new impetus to the whole anti-alcohol work.

Thus, the collection of signatures for a GBR in Germany became the most significant anti-alcohol event of the postwar period. And not only in Germany. Something that we had perhaps thought about from time to time, but only in passing, came to pass: The ripples of the movement crossed our borders. Bishop Cannon said in a circle of delegates at the Congress of Dorpat that during the past year no news from Germany had aroused greater interest in America than that thousands of signatures had demanded from the Reichstag the right of municipal determination. At that time, this referred only to the first collection of 466,000 votes. In the U.S., this expression of the German people's will was regarded as a strong awakening of German self-consciousness, of the willingness to practice self-denial and to make sacrifices, in order to pave the way for a new ascent for our people through strict self-discipline and a willingness to make sacrifices, out of love for one's neighbor. And if in the USA in those years not only the hatred from the war time but also the prejudices against Germany and the Germans disappeared more and more and in their place sympathy and the will for understanding paved the way, then the collection of signatures for the GBR to the Reichstag had a merit in this, which I can testify from my own experience. This became apparent the very next year at the congress of the World League Against Alcoholism in Winona Lake, Indiana, of which I will tell you something.

Dr. Cherrington, Wayne B. Wheeler and other leading men of the anti-alcohol movement in the USA organized a World Congress against Alcoholism in 1927. The alcohol question was to be treated as a world problem. In addition to fundamental statements on the problem from the medical, economic, health, moral, political, and legal points of view, for which the best-known authorities in this field were called upon, as many representatives of individual nations as possible were to be given the opportunity to speak about the state of the anti-alcohol movement in their countries. The excellent organizer, Cherrington, succeeded in making this congress a show of the anti-alcohol movement. As far as I remember, 45-50 nations were represented. The congress lasted over a week. It took place in a large auditorium owned by the Presbyterians - intended for summer conferences - which had 8,000-10,000 seats. If at one time only 3,000-4,000 people were there, it was considered a small meeting. At the main lectures, the large auditorium was filled to capacity. It testified to the spirit of the American movement that not only the morning, but also the evening meeting was always introduced with a biblical meditation, with the singing of church songs, with a kind of choral service and with prayer.

There were also some representatives from Germany. I particularly remember Mr. Gösch, the leader of the clergy. I had been asked to represent the anti-alcohol organizations of our fatherland, and at Dr. Cherrington's request I was to give a talk on the movement in Germany. The collection of signatures for the GBR was of immense interest. People were anxious to hear something more detailed about it. I don't know if we can still put ourselves in the mood of those days; let me just say that I felt something of what Paul calls "fear and trembling" in his letter to the Corinthians when I thought of my task at the Congress. However, immediately on the evening after my arrival in Winona Lake, I had a small and immensely uplifting and strengthening experience which, however minor it may seem, must not be passed over: A concert was taking place in the massive hall. Tired from the long journey, gripped by longing for my loved ones and for my homeland, by the situation of my German people, by the question whether this time I could do them a service in front of so many people, I used the warm summer evening, all alone, to walk along the lake of the bathing resort and to indulge my thoughts. Towards the end of the concert, however, I was drawn to the auditorium. I just wanted to have a look inside, to get an impression. Just then a new number of the program came. The musical instruments stopped. A singer stepped onto the podium. It was Mrs. Schuhmann-Heintz. The accompaniment of the grand piano began softly, and to my surprise, the old Christmas carol rang out - in German - sung by a wonderfully carrying voice with genuine

German feeling and thus conjuring up the German homeland before the eye: "*Silent night, holy night, all is asleep, lonely wakes only the happy, highly holy couple, gentle boy in curly hair; sleep in heavenly peace*!" The crowd listened breathlessly. Did they understand the text? I do not know. In any case, they felt something of the German spirit, of the magic of the German Christmas celebration. For me, however, the song, the German Christmas song at Winona Lake, chased away all depressing mood and restored my old optimism, which I really needed for the next few days.

The next morning, when we two or three Germans looked at the great auditorium where the Congress was to meet, we found it decorated with the flags of the nations represented. A mighty star-spangled banner flew on the podium, next to it the Union Jack, and then, hanging down from the gallery and moved by every breeze, came the most diverse national flags, so that one could have made a study of what a variety of combinations the seven colors of the rainbow permitted. But we were not in the mood for that. We were looking for a German flag, the flag of the German Empire. Since Germans were present at the congress as participants, Germany had to be represented in the forest of flags. Several times we made the rounds, together and individually, searching with sharp glances. That the flag of the German Reich, against which America had fought in the world war a few years ago, would not be placed in the most prominent and conspicuous place, we would have had to accept. Perhaps, we told ourselves, it would be somewhere hidden among other flags. But our search was in vain. I went to the chairman of the committee in question and called his attention to the deficiency. He explained that they had also thought of Germany, but no German flag could be found. We would like to see for ourselves if we could find one. Now we started the search. But in the seaside resort there were not even pieces of canvas in our colors that could have been sewn together. What to do? We could not simply accept this as a misfortune. As it had come to our attention, some journalist could have discovered the matter and brought it to the public with the usual sensational trimmings. But what would people in Germany say about us if it became known over there? Either a German flag was needed, or we could not participate in the congress! The congress would have taken this in stride, but it would have been a loss for us, and perhaps also for our fatherland. Deciding quickly, I telegraphed to the German ambassador in Washington, whom I had visited on the trip to Winona Lake and had drawn his attention to the Congress. My talk on Germany was scheduled, I believe, for the fourth or fifth day. By then a package from Washington, D.C., with a flag might well be there, provided the Embassy was in a position to immediately fulfill our request. I set the situation apart in the telegram and urged, if at all possible, that a flag be sent immediately.

It was on an afternoon when I had to give my lecture. Shortly before, the package arrived, which, without being able to look at it closely, I sent to the chairman of the business committee, Dr. Cherrington, while I was gathering for the task ahead. We found the auditorium densely packed. There may have been about 10,000 there. Apparently, the subject of "Germany" exerted an attraction. My place was on the platform. I sat between Dr. Cherrington and Wayne E. Wheeler on one side and Dr. Russel, founder of the Anti-Saloon League, and Dr. Hereod of Lausanne, who presided at this meeting, on the other. When I asked whether the German flag had arrived, Dr. Cherrington pointed out to me that it was placed directly behind me, that is, on the stage. It was covered by the other flags, but at least it peeked out enough to make out its origin.

Then it was my turn to speak. I was introduced by the chairman, as is customary, with a few sentences and stepped up to the lectern. A storm of applause broke out from the thousands, the like of which I had never experienced before. Was this hand clapping meant for me, was it meant for the topic, could it be meant for my fatherland? I could not make it clear, nor did I have time to think about it, but began my speech, which was calculated to last an hour and was listened to with great excitement and often interrupted by applause. I pointed to Germany's situation, to our external and internal hardship, but also to our determination to rise again. We see the fight against the dangers of alcohol as a means to this end. Our fight for the right of municipal determination was an example of how the German people felt about this. Then I told the story of our two collections of signatures addressed to the Reichstag and concluded with a reference to Livingstone, who, when he saw the devastating effect of slavery in Africa, wrote in his diary: "*God bless everyone, whether Christian, Mohammedan or*

heathen, who helps to free Africa from the curse of slavery." I want to say, God bless anyone, of whatever denomination, party, or nation, who helps that mankind be freed from the curse of alcoholism. The word had struck strangely, you could tell.

It was only when I returned from the lectern to my seat that I realized what had caused the storm of applause: In order to give me and the whole assembly a surprise, they had, when I went to the lectern, pulled the German flag out of its hiding place by a clever mechanism, so that it was directly behind the speaker, covering almost the whole space above the podium, who thus held his speech in front of the flag of his fatherland, a privilege and an honor that was actually only granted to me, if one disregards the fact that the Americans - but also the other speakers - spoke in front of the star-spangled banner. The scene made a deep impression. I was assured that it was the first time after the World War that the German flag and thus Germany had been honored in such a way at a congress in the USA. We Germans at the congress, however, saw that the anti-alcohol work we had joined together for in our homeland could have not only a moral, health, economic and educational, but also a foreign policy significance. That immediately after that hour I received an invitation to speak at a meeting in Montreal, Canada, and that it was then stated there that I was the first Reich German to speak publicly there after the World War, may only be mentioned in passing, as well as that in Winona Lake the connection was made which led me to a lecture tour in England.

In this connection I must mention a scene in the closing session of the Congress: One of the most outstanding representatives from England was Henry Carter, the general secretary of the Methodist anti-alcohol work in Great Britain and secretary of the Church Union Against Alcoholism. In some meetings we had exchanged our thoughts also about the political situation. We both agreed that an understanding between Germany and England would be necessary for general détente and beneficial to both countries in order to secure a lasting peace. Henry Carter was a member, perhaps even chairman, of the committee which had to prepare some resolutions for the meeting. It is customary for such resolutions to be introduced by one mover and then "seconded" by a second. Just before the meeting at which the resolutions were to be introduced, Carter came to me, showed me the resolution relating to joint sharing in the fight against alcoholism, and asked me if I would be willing to support it. He had thought it would make a good impression, not only here at Congress and in the U.S., but beyond that in other countries, if it could thus be publicly documented that Englishmen and Germans regard the work against alcoholism as a work of peace, in which they work hand in hand with each other for the good of mankind. I was seized by the idea and immediately agreed to support his action. When Carter read out his proposals, he added, "These are the words. But it is not the words that matter in our movement, but the spirit from which they are born. The spirit that animates us should be the spirit of the one who came to bring "peace on earth." *We all know and still suffer from the fact that war has inflicted painful wounds. Can our work serve to heal these wounds?* "*I,*" - he exclaimed - "*from England ask Dr. Melle of Germany to support my request and join hands with me*." A mighty movement passed through the ranks. I stood up, grasped the hand of my friend Carter, and said that I grasped this hand extended to me not only in my own name, but in the name of many of my countrymen, and that I not only endorsed the wording of the resolution, but was deeply convinced that if we work in this spirit not only in England and Germany, but throughout the world, the great cause we represent would become a powerful factor in healing wounds, repairing damage, indeed helping to lead peoples into a new future, a time of peace that would make reconstruction of the world possible. The founder of the Anti-Saloon League, Dr. Russel, now sprang between the two of us with a small star-spangled banner, laid his hand on our clasped hands, the assembly sprang to their feet and, besides applauding by clapping their hands, waved handkerchiefs and small flags, and Mr. Rodeheaver, the leader of the singing, intoned with his silver trombone the song, "Blessed be the tie that binds," to which the assembly enthusiastically joined.

This scene was certainly the highlight of the Congress. Magazines and newspapers reported it extensively, the editor of the Encyclopedia on the Alcohol Question (in English) edited by Dr. Cherrington came and said, "*This hour must be immortalized in our lexicon*," and both of us, Carter and I, would now have had to stay in the United

States for a long time in order to be able to respond to the invitations to lectures in which we should have carried out the thoughts only hinted at in Winona Lake. But I had to be back in Frankfurt for the opening of my seminary. The trip to the World Congress in Winona Lake had only been a vacation trip. I made only one detour to California, then I went home again, with the deep impression that - as it says once in the Holy Scriptures - the Lord had also "given grace to this journey" and that the alcohol-opposing work under divine guidance was a definite part of my life's task. Admittedly, we could not prevent the war, a new one, even much bloodier than the first world war. The powers that pushed for war, that forced it on us Germans, were too strong. The "Prince of Darkness" succeeded in plunging the world into an unprecedented sea of tears and blood. But just in view of this disaster and misery which this war brought upon us and the whole world, I may say: I am not ashamed that I stood up at that time for the prevention of such a disaster.

(1) GBR or Gemeinschafts Bestimmungs Rechte

(2) Blue Cross in Germany strives to alleviate the harm caused by alcohol and other addictive substances to prevent addiction. The Blue Cross runs its own counseling centers and homes.

(3) Guttemplers (IOGT Germany) the “Good Templar” live free from alcohol and other drugs and promote peace and global solidarity. The Guttemplers, founded in 1889, is the largest religiously independent addiction self-help association in Germany.

(4) Litfass pillars: They are common throughout Germany including its capital Berlin, where the first 100 columns were installed in 1855. Advertising columns were invented by the German printer Ernst Litfaß in 1854. Therefore, they are known as Litfaßsäulen (Litfass columns).

(5) Dawes Plan: In late 1923, with the European powers stalemated over German reparations, the Reparation Commission formed a committee to review the situation. Headed by Charles G. Dawes (Chicago banker, former Director of the Bureau of the Budget, and future Vice President), the committee presented its proposal in April 1924. Under the Dawes Plan, Germany’s annual reparation payments would be reduced, increasing over time as its economy improved; the full amount to be paid, however, was left undetermined. Economic policy making in Berlin would be reorganized under foreign supervision and a new currency, the Reichsmark, adopted.

(6) Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (Federation of German Women's Associations) (BDF) was founded on 28/29 March 1894 as umbrella organization of the women's civil rights feminist movement and existed until the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. Its creation was inspired by the founding of the World's Congress of Representative Women meeting on the occasion of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

F.H. Otto Melle – Memoirs 1875-1936

Chapter 36 Fight Against War Guilt Lie: With American Students in Berlin - A North American Committee. "For Peace Through Justice." - Conversations With Vice President Curtis in USA and Senator Borah - At Ecumenical Methodist Conference in Atlanta, GA, USA

In 1930/31, Germany went through a terrible crisis. The reparations payments under the Dawes Plan sucked the last drops of blood out of German economic life, and unemployment became more and more rampant. Bombs crashed, industrial enterprises collapsed, and Germany once again faced the abyss. President Hoover's intervention in the U.S. did result in a moratorium on reparations payments so that the German people would have time to catch their breath, but this seemed more like the last meal given to a condemned man before execution than any real help for the future. A heavy pressure was on the whole nation. The League of Nations seemed to be a union to preserve the spoils of the victors and to keep the vanquished down. The government was powerless, helpless and inactive. The Reichstag had become a comedy.

In such times, even the non-political person asked himself: What should we do? Can I also help? I refused to enter politics as a preacher of the Gospel. The efforts of the "Christian People's Service" to put me forward as a candidate for the Reichstag election all failed. I knew that through politics I would be deprived of my actual profession of being a preacher of God's people - the examples of Stöcker and Naumann warned - and besides, I had no confidence in the party economy in the Reichstag. For my sphere of activity, therefore, only the churches remained, and I thought, on the basis of the experiences I had made with the collection of signatures and the echo that this work had found in the USA, of the large Free Churches of America. Could I, with my little strength, perhaps do something to awaken their conscience, to awaken their sense of responsibility to the German people? Does the Treaty of Versailles have only a political and economic side? Aren't moral and also religious questions of a serious nature connected with the paragraphs about the war guilt of the Germans for us Christians?

Actually, this question came to my mind in all its force during a Reichstag session. Since I had become acquainted with some members of the Reichstag, including the president of the Reichstag, during the collection of signatures, I sometimes took part in a Reichstag session when I was in Berlin. It was very instructive to listen to the speeches of some of the deputies and thus to gain an insight into the work and the spirit of the people's representatives. At one point, a highly political topic was on the agenda. What it was, I can no longer remember. I only remember that when I got to the Reichstag building, I was told that all the tickets for the session had been issued and that no one else could be admitted. I asked a policeman to take my card to the president, whereupon I was immediately escorted to the presidential box, from which I could hear and overlook everything. I forgot the subject matter at issue, so also the speakers who spoke on the matter, for and against. The one scene, however, which pushed everything else out of memory, has been indelibly impressed upon my mind: Some national speaker stepped up to the lectern to begin his remarks. Then the leader of the Communist Party jumped on a seat, the Communists, who numbered about 100 deputies, rose as one man, and at a sign they intoned the Internationale. The president interrupted the session, the deputies left the hall, but the singers were not disturbed, they finished their song with all the strength of which the voices were capable. This is what happened in the German Reichstag! My heart cramped. Tears came to my eyes over the German misery and over the lack of understanding of the victorious states, which, consciously and intentionally, or unconsciously and lazily, let a nation perish and did not have the courage to recognize the mistakes made and - as a prophet put it - to plow a new one. Were the people of the other nations really asleep? Were Christians also walking around with blinders on? Didn't one have to do something there - as a German, as a Christian, as a Methodist - to remind the churches and the Christians of their duties?

I do not want to say that in that hour I immediately thought through these questions clearly in all their sharpness. It was more - as it was often the case in my life - at first only a feeling, an inner feeling of being moved, a still "dark urge", which did not leave me any peace, until gradually, during thorough reflection and discussion with friends, above all during discussion in prayer with the Father in heaven, to whom my life and service belonged, more and more light was given to me. For such a task, as it slowly became apparent to me and forced itself into the light, cannot be solved by a quick decision or a great resolution. How can one tackle it at all, if one sees no way to the solution before oneself, no lever, which one can use, no plan, on whose execution one could work. I have learned in my life that it is first necessary to be quiet, to let the seed germinate and grow, to let the thoughts clarify and to wait calmly until God, who shows clouds, air and winds, also the millions of celestial bodies their path, and who also has the life of the individual in his hand and guides it, opens the door and shows the way to go. It was always important with me that the idea grew, that it came to full clarity, and that even when I examined the motives, I gained the conviction that it was not a matter of some egoistic striving to bring one's own will to bear, but of God's guidance, which made it my sacred duty to do something that perhaps others would not understand.

There is something else I must mention on this point. It is wonderful when one has true friends or at least a friend with whom one can discuss such innermost experiences in a fruitful exchange of ideas. But such friendship is rare. It also happens that suggestions are accepted and then passed on as one's own ideas, or that the other person, despite all insight and love, cannot muster the right understanding for the mission of his friend. Simply because every man, of this I became more and more convinced, is an original, and there are hours for everyone - as was the case with Jesus, for example - when he must "tread the winepress alone". The man who has a woman at his side who understands him, with whom he can discuss everything, who is a real friend to him, who does not agree with everything right away, who also warns him when she sees danger approaching, but who is able to help him to clarity and truth by understanding his ideas and plans and by skillful questioning, is to be considered lucky. I must say that I was fortunate enough to have such a person. My wife helped me a lot at that time, especially by advising me to wait calmly and patiently, not to be hasty, until the opportunity presents itself to do something in the direction I saw before me. Sometimes one has to wait a long time for such an opportunity, but the waiting

time often has creative powers in it. And the opportunity to act, as the old saying goes, usually comes in a different way than one thinks. It may come in a very inconspicuous way.

It was the same in this case. The threads that God uses to weave together a new piece of our life are very fine. Only when the new piece is finished, with its links intertwined and tangled on the back, do we recognize the hand of the Master in the image of the weaving on the front. There were some Methodists among the American students at Berlin University. The pastor of the American church in Metzstraße was also a pastor of the Methodist church. The American congregation in Berlin, however, was interdenominational. It sought to unite the Americans staying in Berlin, including those passing through, for worship on Sundays, to strengthen their memories of home through social gatherings, and to offer them a foothold in the foreign metropolis. Now and then the pastor invited me to a social gathering over a glass of tea in the church's cozy library room or to a lecture. Finally, he asked me to give a sermon or lecture in English to his congregation on a Sunday morning about the tasks of Free Churchism (1) in Germany, about which I had published a little book. This would be of great interest to the Americans and would give them an insight into the ecclesiastical conditions in Germany. I, of course, gladly agreed to do so. In my sermon, after describing the history and situation of the Free Churches in Germany, which had only recently been granted the rights of public corporations, I said in passing that the Free Churches, because of their relations with the great Free Churches of America, might be called upon to do something there for a better understanding of the plight of the German people and thus for the reconstruction of the world - I used a catchword much used in America.

In the evening we, the pastor of the American church, a number of students, some of whom were preachers of the Methodist church in the USA, were together at the home of a professor of philosophy, an American, who had made studies here on Kant, Fichte and Hegel and was going back to America in a few days. His wife had managed a really cozy evening, and there was a cheerful mood. My sermon of the morning formed the subject of conversation. The remark quoted above, in which my concern for the German people had also come through, was the cause of all kinds of questions. The striving to get to the bottom of the matter made itself felt. And finally, one of the students made the suggestion: "*Dear Dr. Melle, we would like to profit as much as possible from being with you today. Are you willing to discuss political issues with us? Once they take the standpoint of a 100-percent national German and one of us takes the standpoint of a 100-percent American, we could see which reasons are most resounding.*" "*Deal,*" I said, and the discussion began. Naturally, I brought up everything that was said in Germany against the Americans: their selfish intervention in European affairs in the World War, the foolish belief that Germany alone was to blame for the war, the deception through Wilson's 14 points, and what were the more serious accusations. The other side was not embarrassed with their counter-arguments expressing the American point of view. The sparks were flying, and it was not long before we had talked ourselves into such a heat that the flames of passion were already beginning to flare up. We got farther and farther apart, and a quiet feeling of dissatisfaction seized us, as it is wont to do in fruitless discussions where one talks past the other because there is no common ground. The professor of philosophy - I am writing during the Second World War and have therefore decided not to mention any names - said more than in jest: "*Pax vobiscum! We won't get any further in this way. If we continue in this way, there will be no understanding, but we will slip into a new war.*" And another said, "*Let's leave aside for a few hours the arguments of the politicians who made war and are unable to establish peace, and talk to each other as Christians, as disciples of Jesus Christ, who, whether they are Germans or Americans, feel a responsibility to cooperate in solving the grave problems with which our peoples wrestle.*" That was the cue for a fruitful turn in the discussion. It was strange how quickly common ground was now found, even the ground from which we could calmly discuss the question of war guilt and a possible revision of the Treaty of Versailles. I realized how my inner struggles since that scandalous Reichstag session and the struggle for clarity about my task were - perhaps - a preparation for this hour. For I saw how my presentation of the German situation, my concern for the beloved German people, my horror at the failure of Christians and the churches in one of the greatest crises in world history, and the view of the unique opportunity to do something meaningful for the peoples, in this

case for Germany and America, how these remarks were listened to with the greatest attention and visibly made an impression.

Certainly - these were my basic thoughts - the Treaty of Versailles is a political matter. But it is a political matter that interferes with the economic, cultural, national and international life of the peoples. Not only of the Germans. The reparations payments had thrown economic life out of balance. How good it would have been to listen to the advice of great national economists like Cassel and Keynes. But let us leave this side to the experts. Let us rather ask ourselves as Christians whether there is not also a moral side to the matter. We in Germany have asked ourselves again and again: *Will not at last the conscience of mankind awaken and rise up against the fact that the war guilt paragraph still remains, although it has long since been proved to be a falsehood? Must it not seem like a failure of Christianity if nothing is done in an hour that lets the last SOS cry of a subjugated people, condemned to slavery, rendered lawless and powerless, be heard*? In short, I got off my chest all the concerns and questions, desires and hopes, worries and beliefs that had weighed me down in recent times. In conclusion, recalling the growing movement for peace in the United States and weaving in some impressions from my travels in America, I expressed the wish that the ecclesiastical circles of America would recognize the hour and call for a peace of justice instead of a peace of violence.

As we parted - it was in the elevator that took us from the upper floor to the exit - one of the participants in the meeting said, *"I've got it: peace through justice, that's a catchphrase we must not forget - peace through justice!"* When I came back to America a few months later, I found that those students, with the professor of philosophy at the head, had formed an ecclesiastical committee with the telling title, "Peace Through Justice." They had drafted a resolution urging the U.S. government to take steps that would eliminate the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles, especially paragraph 231 - the war guilt paragraph. The resolution had already been discussed by 10 annual conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, attended by more than 2,000 pastors, and passed, I was told, "almost unanimously." In articles and lectures the members of the committee advocated the idea, and this justified the hope that the generous suggestion would also be adopted by other churches. Deeply impressed upon my mind - in connection with this movement - was an hour at Boston University when, at the invitation of the Dean of the Theological Faculty, I spoke on the subject of "The German People and World Peace," and the students present, when I referred to the activities of the said Committee, agreed with me so kindly and enthusiastically that I looked forward with great hopes to the Ecumenical Conference of the Methodist Church. It was my wish and expectation that this conference, at which all the Methodist Churches of the world, those of North and South America, of Europe, of Australia, of Africa, of China, India, Japan, the Philippines, and I do not know from where else, would be represented, should bring us a step forward. At the same time, of course, it was dear to my heart that the church I professed to belong to, the Methodist Church, should march at the head of such a movement.

The Ecumenical Conference, which first met in London in 1881 and has been repeated every 10 years since, forms a major event in church life. It is the only conference that unites all Methodists of the world. Deputies come from all five continents. The conference does not have legislative and administrative authority like the Wesleyan Conference in England or the General Conference of Methodist Episcopal Churches in America. It has more of a Methodist alliance character. Reports are given on the situation of the churches in the various countries, and papers are given on pending questions concerning common doctrines, tasks, or even difficulties. Solid, thorough papers are offered, which are then printed in a thick proceedings report and form a veritable treasure trove for the historian who wants to delve into the history of the Methodist movement. Traditionally, the conference is held alternately once in England, usually in London, and the other time in the United States. Its program is published in all countries and languages where Methodists are represented. Reports on the conference likewise. In the country where it takes place, the daily press takes much notice of the representative meeting, so that one can speak without exaggeration of a worldwide effect. Its importance is already evident from the fact that in England the King is

in the habit of sending a telegram of greeting, but in the USA the President of the United States has already appeared several times in person for an address. This time the conference was to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, in the territory of the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church, which was preparing to make the 500 official delegates from all over the world and the 2,000-3,000 visitors experience Southern hospitality and to give the conference as good a popular response as possible. Would not this conference be an opportunity to bring the problem of the Treaty of Versailles before the Christians and have it dealt with for once, so to speak, before the world public from the Christian point of view? Would we Methodists in Germany be in a position, indeed perhaps in an obligation, to give a suggestion in this respect, for we too were to be represented by some delegates, and the coming ecumenical church congress was also attracting attention in Germany - and not only in church circles.

Out of these considerations, several of the Annual Conferences meeting in the summer of 1931 had drafted resolutions on the German situation to be sent to the Ecumenical Conference. I am reproducing some of the thoughts of the resolution of the Northwest German Conference which I drafted and submitted and from which the mood at that time can best be seen: "*Preachers and congregational representatives of the Northwest German Conference with its meeting in Bremerhaven from July 22-26, 1931, are deeply shocked by the events of the last weeks, in which the impoverishment of our German people and the collapse of the German national economy have become apparent in a way that no one would have thought possible. Almost more profound than the economic distress, which seems to be pushing toward an unprecedented catastrophe, is the fact that § 231 of the Treaty of Versailles still brands Germany as the sole culprit in the World War, although the opened archives of the governments and the objective investigations of international researchers prove the contrary. From this paragraph of guilt, one derives the demand of reparations for three generations, and we see with pain how these reparation payments not only destroy our economic life, but are used in other countries for an outrageous increase of armaments. To advocate world peace without eliminating this paragraph would be tantamount to attempting to build peace on injustice, an attempt that cannot succeed as long as there is a moral world order*. 'Justice and peace shall kiss thee' - *according to the word of the Psalmist. We stand at a turning point in history; is Germany, and with it Europe, to be driven toward the chaos for which Bolshevism waits ready to leap? We feel deeply the responsibility that rests upon us as Christians and Methodists, and we are ready to be pillars of support for our own people by sacrifice to the utmost, by steadfastness and faithfulness in small things, by bowing under God's hand, and by helping, self-denying love. But now we also feel that the hour has come when we should turn to our brothers and sisters in worldwide Methodism, especially in the United States and Great Britain, to ask them to stand up for us before God and man*."

Who was to represent Germany at this church council? It was up to the bishops to appoint the delegates. Germany was entitled to two representatives. Since I had been to the United States in 1927, 1928, and 1930, and would probably have occasion to travel to America again later, the bishop believed it would be advisable to appoint some other brethren. His choice fell on a representative of the Methodist press in Germany, Pastor Horst Holzschuher, and on the director of the Methodist tent mission, Pastor Martin Funk. I gladly granted my colleagues the privilege of participating in such a conference, even though I would have liked to be there because of our submission on § 231 in the Treaty of Versailles. But the matter was decided, the appointed delegates were recognized by the conference leaders, and what I would have had to say was essentially set down in the resolution of the Northwest German Conference. It could hardly be assumed that it would be possible to speak on the matter at the conference, and in the committees Bishop Nuelsen and the two German representatives would already be able to give further information.

But now something happened that probably also belongs under the heading of "leadership". I received from the committee for "Peace through justice", when the list of delegates was published and my name was not on it, an urgent request to make another visit to America and support their action; and, what was most strange, I was also approached in Germany with the request to travel to Atlanta. The resolution of the Northwest German Con-

ference - several other conferences had also drafted similar resolutions - had become known. Well-known members of the Reichtstag sought me out to remind me, as they said, of my duty, and even from the Foreign Office, which must have received detailed reports about my lectures in America and about the significance of the Ecumenical Conference, it was suggested to me that they would be happy if I could be present at the conference along with the other two delegates. Good advice was expensive. I could not and did not want to travel without being a delegate, so I sat down and wrote a detailed letter to my venerable bishop, explaining the facts of the case and proposing to him that I be appointed as a delegate at a later date, and that I pay for the travel expenses myself. He accepted my proposal, and the four of us then experienced in Atlanta the change of moods and the struggle for our view, many a sad but also serious hour of fellowship in the work for a great cause. I relate this at some length because it was probably the only time I myself had to advocate it and make an effort to become a delegate, but in this case - as the further course of events will also show - it was an obligation for me to help a little.

In the USA, 1930

In America, I received a particularly warm and cordial welcome. I have already mentioned the visit to Boston University. I could have remembered that only now, when I reread the notes in my diary, I found that the poor wretches of students were so impressed that they decided to use their own means to have my lecture printed and distributed. Far-sighted men, however, who knew the American psyche, advised against it. Let us not now challenge the opposition to backlash; let us first wait for the Ecumenical Conference. I believe that these men were right; but I am still grateful to those students for the encouragement they gave me with their resolutions.

I spent some impressive, more than stimulating days in Washington D.C.; it was natural for me to visit the German ambassador. But the most interesting thing for me was the visit to the Vice-President of the United States,

Mr. Curtis, arranged by my friend Dr. Woolerez, the editor of the Methodist Press Headquarters in the Federal Capital, who had me describe the situation in Germany in detail, and a long conversation with Senator Borah, the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the U.S. Senate. Borah was a vigorous figure with a broad forehead, a keen eye, accustomed to get to the bottom of things. For all the energy that his features betrayed, he had a heart full of sympathy for his fellow men. For many years he played a decisive role in American politics; seldom did a day go by without some statement of his making the rounds of the American daily press, and, as Americans in public life attach great importance to, on the front page. Borah received me in the meeting room of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. A few days before, the French Prime Minister Laral had arrived with his daughter, who knew how to advertise himself and his daughter in a skillful manner. This had obviously annoyed Borah, and he said a few sentences to a newspaper reporter about how he thought the French war debt would be paid. Now, however, one of the goals of Laral's trip had been to work toward the cancellation of the war debt by the United States. Borah had spoiled the concept for him, because suddenly the audience was more interested in Borah's view of the French payments than in Laral's trip. I myself had enjoyed this game, which the senator was visibly pleased about. Then he asked question after question about Germany, about the men of the government, about the attitude in the anti-alcohol movement-he was a supporter of Prohibition-and about many a thing else. With regard to my thoughts about the Treaty of Versailles and the infamous Paragraph 231, he said that we Germans just had to have a little patience, and things could not be broken over the knee, but one could still tell that he followed developments in Germany with sympathy and was generally quite well informed. It was enough for me to know - as it was during the conversation with Vice President Mr. Curtis, which lasted almost an hour - that the American politicians and the American government were concerned with the problem of Paragraph 231 and that - if I, as a German, also advocated the elimination of the war guilt lie during my lectures in the USA at the Ecumenical Conference - I did not have to expect any resistance on the part of the government. What this meant for me at that time, those will be able to understand, who once were in a similar situation. For even in Germany there was no lack of voices of an overanxious nature urging caution. My own venerable bishop in New York thought that he had to point out to me that I might lose sympathy, which German Methodism urgently needed in the present crisis, by pointing out the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles, which I also emphasized strongly in public meetings.

It was an experience for us Germans to get to know the North American South, in which Atlanta in the state of Georgia plays an outstanding role. Georgia was the state where John Wesley carried out his missionary activity, trying to "convert the Indians" only to make the important discovery that he himself was not yet converted. It was there that Whitefield had founded the historic orphanage - on an excursion to the ocean coast we were to have an opportunity to see the sites of Wesley's work at that time. Atlanta itself, a city of about a million people, was all set for the great church council. The Southern Church - it had separated from the Northern 100 years ago over the slavery question - exercised almost magnificent hospitality, such as we had not experienced before. Some were accommodated in private quarters; I had my room in one of the best hotels in the city, which was entirely at the disposal of the conference. In front of the hotel and the convention hall were about 50 automobiles or even more, bearing the inscription, "Courtesy Car," and available at any time for drives or excursions by the delegates, who were adorned with the badge of the conference. The public events featured lectures by famous speakers. In one of these a speech by President Hoover was read, and in another the Vice-President, Mr. Curtis, who, by the way, I understand belongs to the Methodist Church, appeared in person for an address. Impression was made by the dramatic performance in a Negro congregation, in which, approximately as in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, the way to heaven was shown with its dangers, enemies, temptations, until at last the pilgrim reaches his destination in heaven and is received with songs of praise by a choir of angels - there were here 300 Negroes dressed in white. The play had been written by a young colored woman who herself participated, so there was an opportunity to learn something of the Negro problem in the South. In the conference itself one could see and hear the leading men of Methodism; more than 40 bishops were present. The Japanese bishop gave a very noted address on "The Differences between East and West." The speeches dealt more with practical questions of work than with theologi-

cal problems, and it appeared that the evangelist Gipsy Smith and the head of the Westend City Mission in London, Dr. E. C. Walters, were the most popular speakers, because, I said to myself, they expressed most strongly the original, popular, evangelistic type of Methodism. I mention Walters because we will meet him again later in his advocacy of our proposals.

The resolutions from Germany were submitted and, as is the custom, given for consideration to the Business Committee, which consisted of about 20 leaders of the Conference. Who all belonged to it from England and America and the other countries of the world, I am not able to say. It was reassuring to us that Bishop Nuelsen, representing European Methodism, was a member of this committee. But we soon realized that our proposals posed a difficult problem for the brethren. First, it struck me that none of us had been asked to attend a meeting of the committee to present and justify our position. Then it leaked out that the report on our proposals would not be presented until the last official meeting, in order to avoid a debate on the world war and its outcome. The gentlemen were very anxious to avoid a division of the conference over such a highly political question, I heard. But - I was repeatedly assured - we, like our brothers in Germany, would be able to be satisfied with the solution found. That was all we could learn. The "solution found," i.e., the wording of the resolution before the plenum, was kept strictly confidential. I discussed the situation with my American and English friends; they almost all advised me to keep quiet, saying that much had already been gained by the fact that through our submitted resolutions from three German conferences the idea of German need and concern had been thrown in. Probably the wording of our wishes would be printed in the report of the negotiations, which would give them further circulation, and what other such reassuring and comforting words there were. Today, after world history has taken a completely different turn and the situation of those years has long since perhaps only historical value, it will not be easy to put oneself in the mood in which we found ourselves as German delegates. Nevertheless, and this seems to me to be something great today, we were able to enjoy many tokens of love that were shown to us, and we were also able, in view of God's rule in history and its promises to look forward calmly, without any nervousness, although with inner tension, to the official session of the Plenum, in which we would receive the answer to our questions and requests.

The last day of hearings arrived. I think it was an Englishman who, on behalf of the Business Committee, read out the resolutions to be adopted. Much and many things were there to be said and considered. I have sometimes admired the American brethren, how they know how to take into account the different views, circumstances and needs, to emphasize the essentials of the Methodist revival movement, to make things that lie on the periphery appear to be of secondary importance, and thus, even in the case of often quite delicate questions, to find a form that does not tear the unity bond and leaves it to the future to transform any existing discords back into full harmony. This time, however, I was not interested in all that; today I do not even remember in the least the subjects that the Business Committee touched upon. I was waiting for only one thing: the statement on the German submissions.

At last, the expected resolution came. It was as I had suspected; the mention of the Treaty of Versailles had been carefully avoided. So, a statement by all the Methodists of the world was thought impossible or inappropriate. To me this was a sign that even among the members of the Business Committee the war psychosis had not yet been overcome. But it was felt that a friendly and fraternal word should be said to the German need. Thus, sympathy was expressed to the German people, especially to the brothers and sisters of the Methodist Church, and they were assured of continued intercession, with the wish that God would send strength and help in the severe distress which had affected them. Two of the leading men of the conference, bishops and brilliant speakers, sought in choice and eloquent words to justify the resolution, pointing out that the same had been arrived at after long and thorough deliberation, and contained, in their opinion, all that the brethren from Germany could desire. It was clearly noticeable that they urgently wished that, as in the resolution presented by them, so also in the debate, the words war guilt and Treaty of Versailles should be avoided.

But this did not succeed. Dr. E. C. Walters from London, mentioned earlier, an Englishman with a broad view and his heart in the right place, dared to say before the conference that he was not satisfied that a clearer and sharper form had not been found with regard to the question of war guilt. Surely it was time to speak openly and honestly about this before such a Methodist body. Although we Germans had been advised not to intervene ourselves in the debate on the question we had raised, I felt so strongly urged to speak now on behalf of the German delegation that I could not hold back. One can also imagine what tension lay over the powerful assembly when the chairman gave me - "Dr. Melle from Germany" - the floor. Seldom in my life have I felt the responsibility resting upon me more strongly, indeed I would say more vehemently, and more impetuously than in those moments when I ascended the platform to state the position of the Christians and the Methodists in Germany. A wrong word could produce the opposite of what I intended, indeed a wrong accent could, instead of sympathy, produce antipathy. Almost all those present, with the possible exception of us three Germans, belonged to countries which had been at war with Germany and which had to take into account the opinion of their countrymen and their governments. What I said could be picked up by the press and broadcast to the world. Against this was my inner conviction that it was a duty imposed on me by God to speak a word of clarification and conscience-awakening now in an hour of historical significance for Methodism. I was encouraged by the welcome I received, and it seemed to me that it was not only my friends who expressed their applause, but the majority of those present, because they felt it as a release from the tension that - at last - a German was to be seen and heard. I was not allowed to speak against the resolution; that would only have provoked the opposition of the Business Committee. I could not speak in favor of the resolution either, because it went beyond the essentials that we wanted. Then I was seized with a desire, and I asked God in a prayerful look upward, that he would grant me grace to be able to speak in such a way, matter-of-factly, calmly but convincingly, that not only this great assembly, including the Business Committee, but the churches behind it all over the world would be convinced of the truth, justice and also Christianity of the German wishes.

So, I spoke of the importance of the hour, which would be a landmark in the history of Methodism. It was an unprecedented opportunity for the Ecumenical Conference, an opportunity that perhaps only comes once in hundreds of years, to take a stand on a question that moves the whole world, and I had a deep wish that this Conference would prove worthy of the task set for it by God and history. Then I addressed the submissions of the German conference: "*I stand before them as a German and am not ashamed of it. I speak as a Christian, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, who knows that at the cross of Christ is to be found the reason for our salvation, for our fellowship with one another, but also the answer to the most difficult questions, and I speak as a Methodist who knows - from the history and present of the Methodist revival movement - what the Lord and what the world may expect of us in one of the most serious crises we face*." Then I explained that the deepest impression on me had been made by the discussions on the peace question. We Christians and Methodists in Germany are fully prepared to work for the reconciliation of nations, for "peace on earth". But there are two great obstacles for the German people on the way to peace which must be removed, and we Germans ask for nothing but help in removing them. One obstacle was disarmament (it should be noted that the disarmament question played a major role in public discussion at that time). While Germany had been forced to disarm, the other nations had not kept their solemn promise to do the same. We are waiting for these commitments to be finally fulfilled, because today the disarmed Germany stands in the midst of nations that are armed to the teeth and that use the reparations squeezed out of impoverished Germany to increase their armaments. The second obstacle was the question of war guilt: there was still paragraph 231 in the Treaty of Versailles, in which Germany was held to be the sole culprit in the war, although the opposite had long since been proved by published documents from the archives of the governments and by the work of unprejudiced researchers. Then I went on to say that we Germans were ready to take upon ourselves the part of the blame that was due to us. We bowed under God's mighty hand, which was heavy upon us. But I asked the question whether there were really still people who believed that Germany alone was guilty, but that the other nations with their governments were innocent. If one wanted to impose such a belief on us, it would be a futile endeavor for all time to come. At this point, the agreement that had already existed for many a sentence broke through so powerfully that I had to pause for several minutes. I felt that the assembly was on my side. So, I could go on and say that perhaps the expected religious revival, of which there had been much talk at the conference, would have come long ago if at least the Christians had recognized their common guilt and repented together, instead of rising above the poor publican like the Pharisee in the parable.

For us Germans it was an experience to see and feel what kind of movement went through the assembly. It seemed as if only now the real cue for the conference had been given. The editor of the "Western Advocate," Dr. Spencer, handed me a piece of paper asking me to write down what I had said; he wanted to write an editorial on it. The resolution of the Business Committee was adopted as it was, but no one spoke to me of the resolution. The general topic was: the war guilt paragraph. Church periodicals described that hour as the high point of the Ecumenical Conference; it occupied a wide space in the reports, and an Atlanta daily carried a detailed report of several columns on the day's proceedings under the headline, "*Ecumenical Conference Begins Action to Remove Accusation of Germany's Sole Guilt in War*." In the "Message of the Congress" to the Methodists of the world, however, the following sentence was included - I suppose under the impression of the meeting described: "*We welcome the fact that many nationals are beginning to realize that the treaty by which the world war was brought to an end contains grave injustices*."

In any case, that hour had a great impact far and wide. I received a number of telegrams from America with words of thanks and congratulations, and telegraphic invitations to speak at preachers' meetings, conferences, in clubs and churches on the subject of "Germany and Peace," so that I was able to make the most of the four weeks that remained until my return home. I was also very pleased that immediately after that hour I was asked to give another talk on Germany the next Sunday in the large church in Atlanta where the Ecumenical Conference had taken place. That was another beautiful evening. Then, of the three Germans who had participated in the Ecumenical Conference, each of us "went his way cheerfully," with the feeling that we had been allowed to do a modest service for Church and Fatherland after all.

(1) Free Churchism: The free churches in Germany include about a dozen affiliated but independent churches and congregations that emerged from Protestant renewal movements, primarily in the nineteenth century. Some free churches practice baptism, and others accept a simple public declaration of faith. Prominent among the former are Baptists and Methodists, who set up religious communities in Germany in 1834 and 1849, respectively. Methodism was brought to Germany by immigrants returning from the United States. Since 1854 a third group, the Free Evangelical Congregations, has practiced baptism of believers, without making it a precondition for membership in the congregation. Although the various free churches follow different practices, they differ from the two main religions in Germany in that they are independent of the state. The free churches, seeing themselves as "free churches in a free country," seek no special treatment from the state and are funded almost exclusively by members' voluntary contributions.

Denominationally, there were Catholics, Lutherans and Reformed, depending on the area they came from. They had their

Epilogue

The life experiences described in the 36 chapters are actually quite enough for the lifetime of one human being. But F. H. Otto Melle was entrusted with yet another great and difficult task from his church: at the age of 61, he was, on September 20, 1936, elected almost unanimously by the Central Conference to be the first German bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Germany.

In the unanimous opinion of the delegates, he was probably the one and only person able to take on the responsibility for about 44,000 church members with relatives and friends as well as 290 preaching families with over 900 preaching places, and other employees, including over 900 deaconesses in three mother houses.

Today, almost 70 years later, we know that the subsequent years until 1945 were the worst period for our people with unspeakable crimes and suffering. We know much more about the criminal regime of the National Socialists and their intentions. Many of our ancestors were not as aware and became "victims" of this criminal culture themselves. From today's perspective of an internationally open information society and a strengthened democracy, it is almost impossible for us to comprehend this threat of daily increasing oppression.

In this situation, the first German bishop stood as witnessed by his life story, which tells of the constant struggle against secular and confessional authorities, and the hardship and depression experienced by the German population. The certainty of being guided by God and the mission to proclaim the Gospel guided him even in this time. Just as he describes the footprints of God in his life, he certainly also prayed constantly for further guidance and help in making decisions.

Unfortunately, he no longer had the strength—and probably was too near the center of the Reich - to report about life in these last years in this terrible time. As a substitute, you can see on the following double page some pictures from this time of this time without further description of his life.

Above everything in the life of F. H. Otto Melle stood always his motto: S.D.G. - Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God alone!).

Klaus Schneider, Autumn 2005

Timeline

1875 August 16	Born in Liebengrün, Thuringia, Germany
1880-1888	Attendance at elementary school in Liebengrün—Started age 4 yrs. 9 mos.
1889	Sunday school director in Eliasbrunn, age 14
1890	Preacher
1891	Permit for admonishers and local preachers
1893-1895	Assistant
1895-1897	Military service in Dresden—Establishing church in Dresden, age 20
1897-1900	Student at the Preachers' Seminar in Frankfurt am Main (a. M.), age 22
1900	Admission to the conference, municipality of Dresden (6 months), age 25
1900	Beginning of missionary work in the Bácska (Hungary)
1901 June 13	Ordination as a deacon and elder, age 25
1905 about	Missionary work in the Bácska (Hungary)
1905-1911	Founding of a municipality in Budapest, age 30
1907	Marriage to Hanna Eckardt
1907	Congregation in Austria-Hungary separate district/F. H. Otto Melle, District Head
1908	Birth of son Otfried
1910	Birth of daughter Irmgard
1911	First Mission Conference of Austria-Hungary
1911	Brith of daughter Edith
1912	Founder and editor of "Evangelist for the Danube Countries"
1913	Awarded a Doctor Divinitatis by German Wallace College, Berea, Ohio
1914	Drafted for military service as an instructor for 7 months
1920 about	Superintendent and parish pastor based in Vienna
1920-1936	Director and lecturer at the seminary in Frankfurt a. M.
1922-1926	Chairman of the Committee for "Abstinence and People's Welfare"
1923	Input of 460,000 votes to the German Reichstag
1923 about	Editor of the "The Christian Abstinent"
1926	Re-entry with 2,656,000 signatures for introduction of the municipality's right to determine German Reichstag
1926 about	Chairman of the "Association of Evangelical Free Churches"
1922-1947	Member of the board of the Evangelical Alliance House in Blankenburg, Thuringia

1931-1947	Chairman of the Blankenburg Alliance Conference		
1936-1946	Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Germany, age 61		
1947 March 26	Death in Berlin, Germany		

Original Acknowledgements

Without the energetic assistance of various people, it would not have been possible to publish this extensive transcript of my grandfather in book form. It was about 950 handwritten pages in DIN A4 format, closely written in German pages in German script, which is hardly legible for today's generation.

- Mrs. Dorothea Sackman: transcription and used 60 cassettes with the help of a dictation machine.
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- Estate of my mother Irmgard Schneider, née Melle: further pictures and documents.
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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those involved that it has been possible to present a small chapter of church history to interested posterity.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my dear wife Rosmarie for her willingness to make up for my recent frequent "absences" for this project and everything. *Klaus Schneider. Autumn 2005*

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my dear departed brother, Tim Melle, for originally sending me the German version of this book. I also want to thank Roland Schneider Schön, my cousin, great-grandson of the bishop, and his father, Klaus, grandson of the bishop, for helping me connect with some of my family still living in Germany.

Here is a picture of my dad, Otto John Melle, and his sister and brother with the bishop outside the apartment of my grandparents in Park Ridge, Illinois in the 1930s.

Bishop FH Otto Melle - Chuck - Anne - Otto J. Melle