

**ADDRESSES**

**and**

**other items of interest**

**connected with**

**THE SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY SERVICES**

**of the**

**SWISS MENNONITES**

**(Schweitzer-Mennoniten)**

**held on**

**September 5, 1949**

*"For other foundation can no man lay than that  
is laid, which is Jesus Christ."*

**1 Cor. 3:11**

*75th Anniversary Program*  
*MIGRATION OF SWISS MENNONITES TO KANSAS*  
September 5, 1949

Forenoon Session-9:45 A.M.

Hopefield Mennonite Church - Peter Voran, Chairman

- Opening ..... Chairman  
Special Music  
Address: "What Mean Ye by These Stones?" ..... Dr. E. G. Kaufman  
Hymn  
Topic: A Historical Sketch of the Swiss Mennonites ..... Wilmer Goering  
Music  
Topic: Reflections From the Past ..... Menno Kaufman

Afternoon Session 2:00 P.M.

Hopefield Mennonite Church - Walter Gering, Chairman

- Opening ..... Chairman  
Music ..... Bethany Mennonite Church  
Topic: The Impact of 75 years of American Life ..... P. P. Wedel  
Hymn  
Topic: Separation or Infiltration ..... J. W. Fretz  
Music ..... Zion Mennonite Church  
Topic: A Critical Evaluation of Ourselves ..... R. C. Kaufman  
Close

Evening Session - 7:30 P.M.

Eden Mennonite Church - Roland Goering, Chairman

- Opening ..... Chairman  
Topic: Maintaining the Faith (10 minutes) --  
a. Through the Avenue of Relief ..... Willard Schrag  
b. Through the Avenue of CPS ..... N. Paul Stucky  
c. Through the Avenue of Voluntary Service ..... Laura Mae Voran  
Music ..... Hopefield Church  
Address: Maintaining the Faith ..... Waldo Flickinger

## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE SWISS-MENNONITES

by Wilmer E. Goering

“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ,” was Menno Simons' motto for Christian living and also the basis of the faith of his followers. Often times, it carried them through privation, persecution, and trials in many and various lands, and likewise gave them the courage and fortitude to overcome these tribulations.

This morning we want to make an attempt to retrace the steps of only one of the many groups of Anabaptists or Mennonites o'er the sands of time in quest for religious freedom.

The century glass is turned back to the year 1670; the scene is the Canton of Berne, Switzerland. At first glance, this Canton probably appeared little different from any other of its time, for confusion and intolerance were the characteristics of the day. Europe was still shaking from the tremors of the Renaissance and the Reformation. The church and state, the Catholics, the Lutherans, and the Reformed, though often in disagreement among themselves, combined their efforts to thwart the movement of the extreme leftists of the Reformation, the Anabaptists.

Thus it was in Berne, where a group of Swiss Mennonites faced annihilation. Their Dutch Brethren who had fared better, for the Netherlands had been tolerant, made several attempts to intervene with the Swiss government on behalf of the Mennonites in Berne, pointing out their harmless character, their good citizenship and economic value to the country, but to no avail.

At this time there ruled over the Palatinate, a small province in southern Germany, sometimes referred to as the Rheinpfalz, the noble Count Karl Ludwig. The Thirty Years' War, recently over, had left its usual and terrible marks of destruction and devastation on his land. It was now his desire to have these lands rehabilitated. He had heard of the Mennonites and their thrift so he extended them a hearty welcome to come and make their homes in his dominion where they might enjoy religious tolerance.

To the Swiss Mennonites the attractive invitation extended them by Count Ludwig just at the time of their greatest need must have seemed like a special act of Providence. Thus in the year 1671, approximately one hundred families of the Mennonites in Berne responded to this offer and moved northward into the Palatinate to make their new home. Among this group and a smaller group which followed a year later were found such family names as Krehbiel, Zerger, Schrag and Miller.

However, not all the Mennonites of the Canton, Berne, moved to the Palatinate; some left in the year 1672, moving northward on the western side of the Rhine River and settling in Montbéliard, France. Among this later group appeared such family names as Graber, Stucky, Goering, and Kaufman.

Little is known directly of the living in these two colonies, other than that the settlements remained intact for approximately one hundred years before moving on to Russia. However, it may be of interest to note that the Palatinate settlement soon forgot their Swiss language and



**Menno Simons (1496 - 1561)**

At the age of forty Menno Simons renounced the Roman Catholic faith and for the next twenty-five years worked among the Anabaptists, particularly in the Netherlands, preaching the Gospel, organizing new congregations, reviving old ones, and writing in defense of the new faith. He was neither the founder of the Anabaptist movement, nor the object of its faith, but simply a great church leader and organizer. We derive our name from him, however, as the little flock which he shepherded was called Menists or Mennonites.

spoke a south German dialect, while the Montbeliard Colony retained their Swiss language during their entire stay in France as evidence by the fact that they carried their mother tongue with them into Russia, and even a few members that came to America some two hundred years later could speak the Swiss. The causes for these two tendencies might be various and somewhat difficult to distinguish. One reason given is that the similarity between the Swiss and the south German dialect is pronounced, while the French and Swiss languages are quite different. However, whatever the reason or reasons leading to this difference might be, it can be concluded from this fact that the Montbeliard settlement was a more closed colony than the one at the Palatinate; and likewise in all probability was more conservative than the latter, the former probably living somewhat similar to the Amish.

As previously indicated, these settlers were granted, among other privileges, religious toleration as one of the conditions of their settlement. However, the governors granting these privileges had

long since died, and as the Mennonites grew in members and became prosperous, native citizens became jealous of the prosperity of these Swiss farmers and artisans speaking a foreign tongue and practicing a prescribed religion. Thus, during the latter half of the eighteenth century these Swiss Mennonites once more found themselves hampered in the free exercise of their faith and were denied many of the rights of citizenship.

But once again they heard "the voice from out the wilderness," this time in the personage of

Catherine the Great of Russia. She had recently wrested additional territory from Turkey, bordering the Sea of Azov. Much of this became Crown Land upon which she wished to settle industrious farmers whose well kept fields might serve as models for the shiftless nomad tribes about them. This ruler had heard of the thrift of the Mennonites. Thus she offered most liberal inducements to these frugal farmers for settling on the lands of her Tartar frontier. These terms included religious toleration, military exemption, approximately 175 acres of land for each family, tax exemption for ten years, complete control over their own churches, and schools, and a liberal degree of local autonomy in self-government within the settlement. Religious propaganda among the native Russians, however, was forbidden.

Many Mennonites, as well as Germans of other faiths turned their faces toward the proffered asylum as a result of these attractive terms. Likewise the Swiss Mennonites of the Palatinate heard the generous invitation and in 1773 started their long trek eastward with Russia as their objective. The settlement at Montbeliard, France, was a little more hesitant, but they, too, cast their fortunes with the eastward movement and started toward Russia approximately seventeen years later in the year 1790.

The migration from the settlements in the Palatinate and Montbeliard to their new home in Russia was neither rapid nor continuous, but rather a slow, long journey with several stopping points.

The families of the Palatinate, leaving in 1773, moved eastward as far as Lemberg, Austria, where they stayed for approximately fifteen years. Among these settlers are found such names as Krehbiel, Miller, Zerger, and Schrag. Peter Krehbiel along with Joseph Mundelheim served this group as elders. The latter was not of Swiss-Mennonite descent, but rather of Austrian birth, and had prepared himself for the priesthood, but his conscience led him to choose Mennonitism in preference to Catholicism.

Their stay in Lemberg was comparatively short; Russia was still their objective. The reason for their staying in Austria is not definitely known but it is surmised that economic conditions and their desire to view their prospective home objectively before moving in were two factors in their remaining in Austria for this period of time.

In 1787, this group of pioneers journeyed on eastward and settled in the Bruderhof Reditschoff in Russia. Here they remained for approximately four years.

It was also about this time, the year 1790 to be more specific, that the Mennonite settlement at Montbeliard, France, decided to accept Catherine the Great's invitation and started their long trek toward Russia. They moved eastward as far as Urschulin and Einsiedel, Austria, where they founded two neighboring settlements staying there approximately nine years. Family names appearing in these two colonies included Albrecht, Stucky, Graber, Flickinger, Goering, Roth, Voran, and others.

The Elder Joseph Mundelheim of Lemberg, Austria, did not leave with the earlier group for the Bruderhof Reditschoff, but rather stayed in Austria and upon the arrival of the second colony in Urschulin joined that community and served as Elder in the latter settlement until his death.

Returning again to the earlier migration of the Palatinate settlement which had been traced as Jar as the Bruderhof Reditschoff in Russia, we find this group is once again moving on. This time they journeyed to Michalin, Russia. Here new blood is found being added to these family names of Krelfbiel, Schrag, Miller, and Zerger. A certain John Krehbiel married an Anna Nickel. The Wedel genealogy can also be traced back to this place of Michalin in Russla, for here Johann Wedel, probably of Prussian descent, married Anna Schrag.

Three years later, in 1794, the group moved on to Beresina, near Dubno, where they stayed until 1801. They lived on land belonging to Prince Lubonirsky. The Prince decided to build a paper mill in this vicinity and the dam erected for the mill flooded the lands of these settlers. Therefore, Prince Lubonirsky offered them the privilege of moving onto his land near Wignansky, Russia. Thus once again the group moved on, this time to Wignansky.

The second group which had left Montpeliard, France, in 1790, moving as far as Urschulin and Einsiedel, Austria, where they founded two neighboring communities, are seen moving on, in the year 1798, to Michelsdort Poland, near Warsaw. Here they remained until 1817. Rev. Joseph Schrag and Rev. John Albrecht served this community as their ministers. Their elders included Christian Stucky, then Jacob Graber, and John Graber.

In the year 1817, the community at Wignansky, Russia, and the settlement near Michelsdort Poland, joined together and leased a tract of land from Prince Lubonirsky and founded the colony of Eduardsdorf, in the province of Volhynia, in Russia. So once again the Swiss Mennonites originating in the canton, Berne, Switzerland, having separated in 1671 when they left Berne and moved into the Palatinate, Rheinpfalz and Montbeliard, France, then migrating on to Russia, are once again united into one group in the community of Eduardsdorf. Appearing here are family names as Albrecht, Flickinger, Goering, Krehbiel, Miller, Preheim, Schrag, Stucky, Graber, Voran, Voth, Wedel, Waltner, and Zerger.

The province of Volhynia is approximately 240 miles long east and west and about 120 miles wide north and south. The northern portion was rather swampy and wooded; the southern portion was also well covered with forests, but these trees were fruit bearing, and the ground was fertile. Volhynia, although a part of Poland, has at times been under Austrian and Russian jurisdiction. It fell into the hands of Russia, and remained under Russian jurisdiction while the Swiss Mennonites lived there, due to the partition of Poland, 1773-1795, in which Catherine the Great participated. Volhynia lay approximately 400 to 450 miles to the northwest of the two large Dutch Mennonite settlements of Chortitz and Molotschna.

Here, for the first time in their history, these Mennonites were encouraged in the land of the most arbitrary ruler of Europe, to expand their settlements and to practice their religious belief according to their conscience. Catherine the Great was so anxious to obtain industrious colonists that she offered them privileges far above those of her own Russian subjects. The colonists were granted almost complete autonomy in such matters as local government, school control, and religious worship. The settlers grouped themselves into small farm villages. This custom of banding together in groups and settling in villages instead of on isolated farms was probably carried with them from Switzerland as protection against persecution. Also it offered closer community life, mutual aid and protection.

“These villages were exceedingly picturesque. They were built on both sides of a roadway, and the buildings were far enough apart so that each house was surrounded by a large fruit orchard and well kept gardens and flower hedge or tall forest trees. The village school and church buildings were located near the center. . . .The dwellings were simply constructed and all built on the same style, being larger or smaller as the means of the family would permit”

The earlier dwellings consisted of a house, barn, and granary, all under one roof. Later, however, they were separate buildings. The granaries had to be large for most of the grain was stored in them and threshed during the winter months by the old fashioned flail method. Thus the heavy work of harvest was not completed during the summertime but carried on well into the winter. The dwellings were built largely of lumber taken out of the woods, which trees the colonists themselves felled and cut into lumber.

All the land of the Eduardsdorf settlement was rented from Prince Lubornirsky for two twenty-four year periods. These Mennonites were largely farmers. However, some few learned the trade of the blacksmith, carpenter, and weaver, along with farming. They were self-sufficient, making their own furniture and implements, growing all their own food, getting wool from their sheep and raising flax for cloth. The women spun the cloth and made the clothes.

In 1860, the Czar Alexander II, wishing to bring about more equality between his nobility and his peasants, issued the Emancipation Code. Among other conditions, this “Magna Charta” of the Russian serf resulted in putting large quantities of land on the market at most reasonable prices. Thus it was decided by the members of the Eduardsdorf settlement to move approximately 160 miles eastward to the villages of Kotosufka and Neumonufka where each family purchased a tract of land and organized the colony of Kotosufka in the year 1861.

There the colonists once again started anew to build up their homes and community. They labored hard and long. Soon they turned this territory, heretofore a rather desolate forest into a prosperous community. They established a school somewhat similar to an elementary school, the principal subjects being reading, writing, and arithmetic.

The early church services in Russia were held in the members' houses. The preachers were chosen from the congregation. They had no special training and frequently were chosen because of economic success. Later, however, church buildings were erected. The church board, consisting of one elder, two ministers, the deacon and the “*Vorsaenger*” governed the activities of the church and much of the community life. The “*Vorsaenger*”, or song leader, was quite different from what we might think of today. As may have already been concluded, many members of the congregation could not read too well, also most of the church hymns were not written, but rather were handed down from generation to generation. So it was the duty of the “*Vorsaenger*” to sing a phrase or verse of the song to the congregation and then the congregation would respond by repeating the phrase.

The Kotosufka church was built approximately half way between the two villages. The congregation chose Jacob Stucky, son of Elder Christian Stucky who served them for many years

while in Michelsdorf, Poland, and in Eduardsdorf, to be their elder in the new church. The church was often referred to as the “Stucky Congregation.”

The fact that these people lived in villages enhanced greatly the social life of the colonists. They would often work together in harvesting their fields; they would have community butchering days, etc. The children often gathered, chose up sides, and played games.

Whole wheat or rye was the daily bread; white bread was served only on Sundays or holidays. Potato soup was served frequently from one big dish in the center of the table with each member of the family gathering around holding a big wooden spoon with which he served himself. The children were often served at a separate table from the adults.

These people were living a simple life and a happy life. They were not desirous of great wealth, but rather the freedom of religious worship. They were here enjoying the fruits of their labors, but not for long.

The Mennonites of Russia formed a distinct and compact group within the Empire, separated from the natives by social and political as well as religious barriers and held firmly together as a group by ties of language, religion, consciousness of a superior culture, and by special political and civil privileges. This, it can readily be noted, was an anomalous situation and could not last forever. And so it was in 1870, that the Czar decided to put an end to the highly privileged status of his Mennonite colonists.

Acting under the influence of the growing spirit of militarism of the time and specifically the unification of the German Empire in 1871, the ruler was determined to inaugurate a policy of universal military service, abolishing the exemptions enjoyed by his colonial subjects heretofore, and to thoroughly Russianize these foreigners living within his realm. Not only was exemption of military service to be abolished, but complete government control was to be exercised over all the school systems in the colonies; the Russian language instead of the German was to be used as a medium of instruction; and direct imperial control was to take place of self control in local government among the colonies.

It is needless to say that the Mennonites were greatly disturbed by these rumors of the possible lose of their peculiar privileges within the Empire. Accordingly, as early as March of 1871, delegates from the various colonies--Molotsehna, Chortitz, Volga, Volhynia, and the Hutterite settlements--were sent to St. Petersburg in behalf of their common cause.

Here they they were informed that although some consideration would be given to their scruples against war, absolute exemption would not be likely. Some sort of non-combatant service would be demanded of the Mennonites. Thus the first attempt of the group to get a favorable hearing for their cause was not very satisfactory. The delegates received no definite assurances as to the future, but nurtured a growing conviction that their privileged days were numbered.

Still hoping, however, that a personal appeal to the Czar might ward off the threatening loss of their special status, several more attempts were made between the years of 1871 and 1873 to gain a hearing, but all attempts failed and emigration seemed the only alternative. Australia,

Turkestan, South America, and North America all suggested themselves as possibilities. But to each there was some objection. With many of the Mennonites, religious convictions won, and even with all the wild rumors of the dangers among the savages along the western frontier, America became the choice of practically all who decided to emigrate.

Thus in the spring of 1873 such communities as had a considerable number of prospective emigrants chose official delegates who were to make a tour of investigation through western America for the purpose of finding a suitable place for a large settlement. The Swiss group of Volhynia was represented by Andreas Schrag. These delegates spent approximately three months touring the country from Canada to Texas, making special investigations of the Dakotas, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Kansas, and arranging for the immigration of their people the following year.

The enthusiastic reports of the committee and the information that land could be had in large quantities and on easy terms with religious freedom aroused great interest throughout the colonies. Preparations for the long journey to their new home were soon under way.

But the problems which presented themselves were not few. The land, personal possessions, and other various items had to be sold or disposed of. There were many sellers and no buyers. Much land was sold at less than half its value. In spite of these discouragements, however, the colonies continued their preparations for the move.

Another task was the securing of the necessary passports. The Russian government, needless to say, was not favorable to the possibility of losing these beneficial citizens. Thus they offered many obstacles in an attempt to discourage the departure of the Mennonites. Each demand, however, was patiently met, and the passports were finally received at a cost of \$50.00 per person.

Eventually all personal belongings were packed, business was put in order, passports were checked, tickets were purchased, and the Mennonites were ready for their long journey to America.

People probably arose a little earlier, on the morning of August 6th, 1874; activity was perhaps a little tenser; a sense of anxiety and anticipation undoubtedly filled the air; the community of Kotosufka must have seemed to be seething with excitement on this morning. The day of departure had come. Seventy-three families with their belongings gathered at the village inn from where they were to start their journey. An occasional tear likely trickled down the cheek of some old mother or gray-haired father and was briskly brushed away as the mingled thoughts and heartaches of leaving the fruits of their labors behind them and entering a new life in the little known America presented themselves.

From the inn they moved by wagon to the railroad station. After the baggage was checked, they boarded the train and soon were rolling westward. Their passports were checked and found in order. On they went, through Austria and Germany to Hamburg. Here they stayed a few days until passage could be arranged to Hull, England. From Hull they moved on to Liverpool. After a wait of three days they boarded the ship, "City of Richmond," and were on their way to

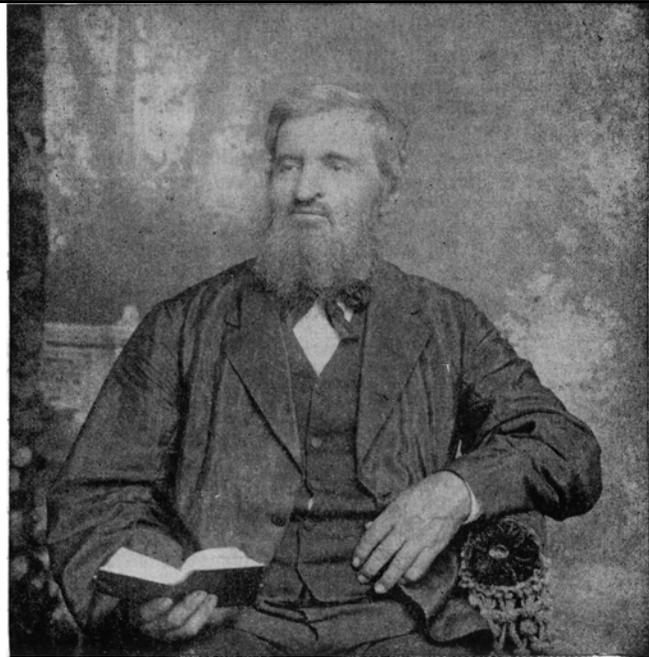
America.

On September 3, 1874, the Stucky congregation of the Kotosufka settlement in Russia landed in New York. They were now in America. But where, in America were they to settle had not been decided. David Goerz and Wm. Ewert met the group in New York, helped them change their Russian rubles into American dollars and persuaded the majority to migrate to the plains of Kansas. Some few families went to the Dakotas to join the Swiss-Mennonite settlement there; some remained in Pennsylvania to work off their indebtedness to these Mennonites who so graciously advanced the price of their voyage across the Atlantic. Sixty-four of the seventy-three families, however, decided on Kansas as their new home.

The first impression of America was not that of a land of savage Indians and wild animals as some had visualized. Cities were large; luxuries were many; people were friendly. America was civilized! However, as their train rolled westward they noticed that towns became smaller, farm houses fewer, cultivation more sparse; finally a vast wild prairie opened up before them. Here they were to settle down and start life anew. Thus approximately one month after leaving Kotosufka, Russia, they arrived in Peabody, Kansas.

The women and children of the group remained in Peabody for about a month while a number of the men set out on foot to look for suitable land where they might settle. They toured Marion, McPherson, and Harvey Counties, finally deciding on territory in Mound and Turkey townships in the southeastern part of McPherson County, as the place to make their permanent home.

The town of Moundridge had not yet been founded. However, a small land station called Christian, consisting of a post office and a blacksmith shop was located just one mile south of the present site of Moundridge.



Elder Jacob Stucky (October 25, 1834 - April 24, 1893) , pioneer, educator, elder, and shepherd of the flock. He was elected into the ministry on May 29, 1851, and ordained as elder on September 29, 1862. Twelve years later, on July 26, 1874, he led his entire congregation from Volhynia, in Polish Russia, to the prairies of Kansas. Rev. Jacob D. Goering (Feb. 22, 1830 - July 1, 1915) , who was elected into the ministry on February 6, 1863, was Elder Stucky's assistant in Volhynia, throughout the immigration movement, and in establishing the church in America.

The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad Company was very anxious to have the lands along their right-of-way settled by industrious farmers. Thus they gave the group one-quarter section of land located three and one-half miles west of Moundridge for church and school purposes. They also built an Immigrant House on this land where the new settlers might live until they could get their own homes built. This building, I understand, stood approximately where we are gathered today. The Immigrant House also served as the church.

In addition the Santa Fe Railroad had acquired a good bit of land in the area from the government, specifically every odd-numbered section, and in turn sold it to these Mennonites for an average of \$3.50 per acre. Some few bought relinquishments from homesteaders and filed on these.

Having decided on the location of their new settlement, the men returned again to take their families to the new home. However, many were grief stricken upon their return, for a sickness had taken hold of nearly all the children and a goodly number died during the stay in Peabody.

The group once again picked up their belongings and traveled by train to Halstead, Kansas. Here they found shelter in a building erected by the railroad just south of the Warkentin Mill. They stayed in Halstead but a matter of a few days. Once they had decided upon who was to get what land, which they did by drawing lots, they packed their belongings onto wagons and started northward to the Immigrant House which the Santa Fe had erected for them on the southwest quarter of section 19 of Mound Township. The Immigrant House was a rather crude structure approximately 14 feet wide and 120 feet long.

As individual homes were completed, families left the Immigrant House and moved onto their own farms to settle down to their new life in this land of opportunity.

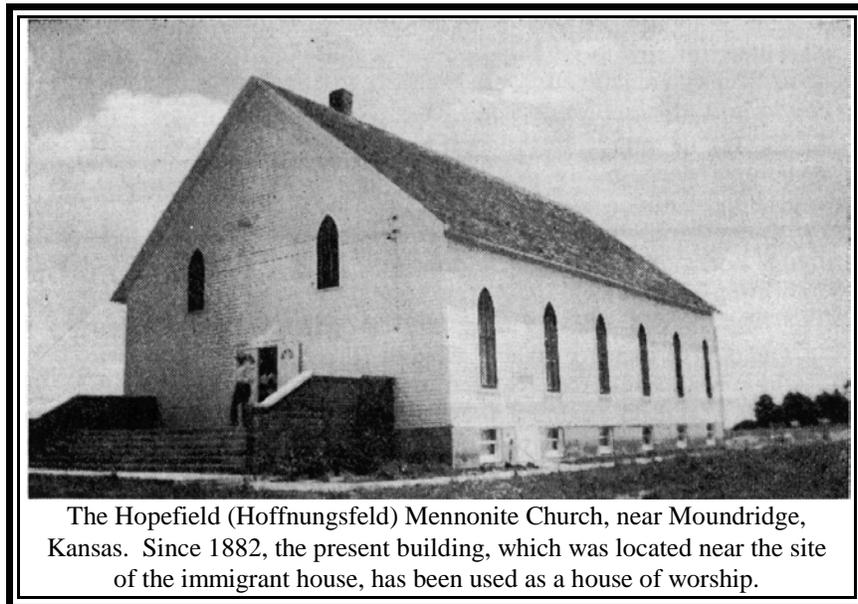
Thus this group of Mennonites under the leadership of Rev. Jacob Stucky courageously forsook all to take up life anew where they might live as their conscience willed.

As is the characteristic of most pioneering adventures, the hardships were many. One common difficulty was that they could not speak English, and, of course, their neighbors could not understand the German. Thus commerce was not easy, though occasionally rather humorous. One incident related was something like this:

“In the old country they had to deal mostly with Jews and they usually asked two to three times the price they would sell for. So our folks thought the merchants here would do business the same way and usually offered one-half the amount that was asked. At one time a man went to the hardware store to buy a whetstone. After a long time the dealer caught on to what was wanted. He handed out a whetstone for inspection. After it had been examined and found good, half price was offered. The dealer misunderstood what was meant, thinking the customer wanted a stone one-half that size. So he struck it against the counter, breaking the stone in two. The customer paid the original price, took his broken stone, and went off in order to escape further trouble.”

Likewise, it was difficult to make their oxen understand. The beasts knew no German, Russian, Swiss, Polish, or Yiddish, and made no attempt to master any of these languages. However, since the oxen were seemingly rather stubborn by nature, the farmers soon learned some English quite fluently.

The rigors of this early period would no doubt test the courage of the stoutest people today. Life did not blossom forth full grown in a day, but rather was carved out of the untamed prairie with hard labor, sweat and tears, over a period of months and years, without the aid of power driven machinery, technical skills, and the many luxuries so often taken for granted today. Their success in farming can perhaps be attributed to the fact that they plowed under the morning dew and did not stop plowing until the evening sun had set.



## REFLECTIONS FROM THE PAST

by Menno Kaufman:

As I look over this group, I find that all or nearly all of our high school students and our grade school students are missing. I think it is rather unfortunate that they cannot be here for this celebration to experience these things which they need so much.

In my reflections from the past, I shall begin with the near past and end my remarks with the more distant past.

On March 28, 1949 the Hopefield Church called a special meeting to discuss the celebrating of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Swiss Mennonites' immigration. It is fitting that they should take the initiative, and discuss the seventy-fifth anniversary of the immigration of our forefathers with members of other churches whose ancestors are of the same origin, most of them having immigrated to this county on the ship, *The City of Richmond*, in 1874. At this meeting it was resolved that the church board and minister constitute a committee to contact the various churches in regard to the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration. Details of the program should be worked out by representatives of the different churches.

We all appreciate the cooperation of individuals and churches to make this celebration a success.

Some experiences we distinctly remember because they are unique and very unusual. Several years ago I was impressed with the sight of a middle-aged man who appeared at this location for the first time. He was deeply moved by this sight because the Swiss Mennonites, who came to Kansas in 1874, resided here in the Immigrant House which was also their school and their church; and he was further moved at the sight of the church building here which was the first church building constructed by the original Swiss Mennonite congregation. He was moved by this sight because it marked, in a sense, the beginning of the history of these Mennonites in America. The surprising thing to me was, that he was thus moved, even though he was not one of this group. May we pray today for that same absorbing reverence, as we come together in this same located, in due respect to our forefathers.

As a platter of record I shall begin my reflections from the past from this location. I understand that this tent covers the major portion of the site of the Immigrant House. The north end of the Immigrant House extended beyond the boundaries of this tent by approximately forty feet. This tent is seventy feet wide and 120 feet long. The Immigrant House was twenty feet wide and 120 feet long. It was built by the Santa Fe Railroad Company and given to Elder Jacob Stucky for the congregation and for religious purposes. The congregation, upon the recommendation of its leaders, adopted the name Hoffnungsfeld at an early church meeting. Then later on January 20, 1880, it was chartered as the Hoffnungsfeld Society of the Mennonite Church. The church joined the Kansas Conference in 1877, and the fourth Kansas Conference was held in this Immigrant House in 1880. A building, an edifice, forty feet by sixty feet, was erected in 1882 as a church building. To the east of us we see that same church building with its original dimensions. It was later reinforced and redecorated; the location of the front entrance has been changed. Within the past two years the building was moved about forty feet to the south and placed on a full sized

basement. More recently the benches have been replaced with new ones.

Later, the following churches in central Kansas, were organized, wholly or in part, from members and descendants of the original Hopefield (Hoffnungsfeld) congregation. These in chronological order are: (1) First Mennonite Church of Pretty Prairie (1884); (2) Hoffnungsfeld-Eden Church, now the Eden Mennonite Church near Moundridge (1895); (3) Bethany Mennonite Church near Kingman (1907); (4) Zion Mennonite Church, Kingman (1929); (5) First Mennonite Church of Burns (1944); and (6) First Mennonite Church of McPherson (1945). In addition, nearly two-thirds of the present membership of the Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge, Kansas, originated from members and descendants of this Swiss Mennonite congregation. Descendants from this Mennonite congregation are also found in many other churches.

We might also say, in due respect to many of our Swiss Mennonite friends in Pretty Prairie and South Dakota, some of which are here today, that there are three other Swiss Mennonite groups who came to America from Volhynia, then a part of Polish Russia, during that same year of 1874. These are the Sahores, Horodisch and Waldheim congregations. The Sahores congregation came in two groups. Ten families came in the first group which left Russia on April 10, 1874. The second group followed soon thereafter. In July, 1874, the Horodisch and Waldheim congregations came here from Russia. All three groups which I have mentioned settled in South Dakota. Later some individuals and families from these groups moved to Pretty Prairie; a few also came to this vicinity.

The Kotosufka congregation, which in America became the Hoffnungsfeld congregation, and therefore includes our ancestors, was the last and largest of the Russian Swiss Mennonite groups to leave Volhynia. They left Russia on August 6, 1874, and arrived in New York on the *City of Richmond* on September 3, 1874. Most of them arrived at this location to make their new home in about the middle of October of the same year. It was for these that the Santa Fe Railroad Company constructed the Immigrant House on this sight.

Reflections From the Past is such a broad theme that my remarks could become rambling and shallow. However, I shall try to limit my reflections from the distant past to such as relate to a few vital issues.

There are afloat some peculiar notions and misunderstandings concerning the reasons for the immigration of our forefathers. Perhaps some of us are not aware of these. Several years ago I had the opportunity to hear a young speaker of Mennonite origin at a civic club in a Mennonite settlement who presented a very strange viewpoint concerning the migration of the Mennonites. He spoke of the Mennonites as being a sneaking, irresponsible people, who evade their social responsibility to their government through migrations, etc. He referred, in this connection, to a group of Low-German Mennonites who came from South Germany, and incidentally, they comprised about one-fourth of his audience. Then he proceeded with his notions about how to deal with these people. Before he concluded his speech, I was convinced that had he talked before a group of Swiss Mennonites, his accusations would have been similar. I was especially interested in these comments because he spoke before a civic club in a community composed largely of Mennonites; and, second, because the speaker himself was of Mennonite origin; his grandfather was a good Mennonite.

The question I wish to present to you in this connection is this: Do the reflections from our past bear witness to this testimony? Occasionally we find similar criticisms, not only from those of Mennonite origin, but also from some who are still Mennonites. Recently I heard one of our Swiss Mennonites, a man who is well educated, remark that the Swiss Mennonite migrations have been primarily motivated by economic reasons. And I again ask, do reflections from the past bear witness to this testimony?

Let us briefly review a few of the major Swiss Mennonite migrations to determine the accuracy of these accusations. Let us turn back the pages of history to the beginning of Mennonite history, over four hundred years ago to find the real causes of these migrations. The beginning, or the cradle of Mennonite history, and the causes of their migrations date back to a great decision that was formally made at Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525. What was this decision? How did it affect the migrations? Here is the story in brief:

Certain evangelical Christians in Switzerland objected to infant baptism which was practiced by the State Church and they also objected to the control of the State Church in general. They wanted religious freedom. Their views were vigorously opposed by Zwingli who was an outstanding leader of the State Church. Zwingli brought court action against these Christians on the seventeenth day of January, 1525. And what did the court do? The court, of course, decided in favor of the State Church. It ruled that all unbaptized children must be brought to baptism within eight days, and that the leaders of this false movement must leave the city. So these Christians were confronted with a major problem. Should they give up a major part of their religion, or should they take the consequences? Now let us note how they solved this problem. Seven days later, on January 25, they held a meeting to seek God's will for them through prayer. A decisive conclusion was reached at this meeting. During the meeting each member of the group submitted to adult baptism. It was also agreed that the children would not be committed to infant baptism as had been requested by the court. It is said that this event in Zurich, Switzerland, this separation from the State church by these people, may truly be called the birthday of the Mennonite Church even though the name Mennonite came later and was generally accepted by 1550, about twenty-five years later.

Now what bearing does this important event have on the migration and motives for migration. Simply this: these decisions which were based on their religious beliefs and their faith in God, brought the wrath of the State church of Switzerland upon them and resulted in persecution and the subsequent first migration of the Mennonites. Remember, economic motives played no part. I shall quote briefly from one of our histories entitled: *Kurze Geschichte der aus Wolhyniem, Russland, nach Kansas ausgewanderten Schweizer-Mennoniten*, to indicate the punishment endured because of their religious convictions. Listen to this: (Quotes in the German)  
Summarizing in English: They were whipped, imprisoned in filthy prisons, and some were put to death. So, read this part of our history which also includes Canton Berne from which many of our forefathers originated. Read this part of history to those who contend that the Swiss Mennonites migrated primarily for economic reasons rather than to maintain their faith in God and give their religious convictions first place. For economic reasons these would have denied their religious convictions and remained on their lands in Switzerland.

Now someone may say that may have been true in the sixteenth century, but it was not true when

our forefathers migrated from Russia to America in 1874 because they were in poverty at this time seeking economic gains. Now let us again consider the facts to uncover this fallacy. Here is the question: What was the *comparative* economic standing of our forefathers when they left Russia? Did they leave for economic reasons? Let us examine the economic history of our forefathers in Russia to find the answer. After entering Russia, and for nearly three-quarters of a century, nearly seventy-five years (that's a long time), our forefathers rented their land from landlords who owned large estates. They did not own their land for nearly three-quarters of a century, partly because this land was not available for purchase. Then as we have already pointed out, a decree changed the picture, and in 1860, thirteen years before they emigrated a decree was issued by the Czar limiting the size of these estates. This gave our forefathers the opportunity to buy land. So they bought the provinces of Kotosufka and Neumonufka and the intervening land. This land was wholly or in part covered with forest. To clear these forests was a colossal job, a tremendous task. Nevertheless, our forefathers persisted and succeeded, and subsequently farmed this fertile land.

We this day have with us here a few of the living witnesses to this statement. I interviewed some of these early pioneers who are still with us concerning the fertility of the soil which they had bought, and they also say that the land was *good*, with considerable emphasis on the word good. So, let us note that when they left Russia in 1874 they had finally won a fairly high degree of economic security - they owned good land and should have stayed in Russia if their subsequent migrations had been based on economic motives. But after a degree of economic security, in 1871 a cloud came upon these Mennonites. There were rumors that the Russian government would interfere with their religious liberties and would require of them such service as was against their religious convictions. These rumors were investigated and found to be true. Now then, again they had a great decision to make. Should they leave their land or should they give up a part of their convictions. We all know the answer. It was not only the poorer class of the community of our forefathers that left, but the entire Swiss Mennonite congregation of Kotosufka excepting two men - Andrew Voran and a Mr. Sutter - remained. From the other provinces whose membership emigrated to South Dakota only seven families remained. So it was not the poorer class only that left. It is, therefore, quite evident as we review these reflections from the past, that our forefathers migrated because they put God and His Kingdom in first place and their religious convictions in first place. And this should be your answer to those who contend that the Swiss Mennonite migrations were motivated by economic reasons.

Discussing our forefathers guiding motives raises in our minds this challenging question: What are our guiding motives? In the last few days I asked some of our early pioneers who are still with us this question: How, from their viewpoint, do our guiding motives compare with those of our forefathers. And one of them especially pointed out that many of us have an absorbing interest in one or both of the two motives, namely, the motive of money and the motive of pleasure. He felt that as these motives become increasingly intense they tend to disintegrate our prayer life, that contact we have with God. I wonder how often we think of these motives - money and pleasure - as they grow more absorbing and intense as also disintegrating our prayer life. I wonder how often we think of it in that way? This now aged pioneer recalled how in his youth everyone attended prayer meeting and Bible study. Now, many of us rarely attend on account of our absorbing interest in business or pleasure. I believe this trend is not only true of our Mennonite congregation

but also of many other Christian groups.

The shocking parallel development is evidenced in the world wide political trend. As we or many of us lose much meaningful prayer life, the world divides itself between fascism and communism into two opposing camps, each threatening to annihilate the other.

Recently I read an article, "It is Later Than You Think." Perhaps it is later than we think also in this respect. But another world conflagration is not the correct answer.

What is the answer? There is only one right answer. That is the Jesus religion. Only the Jesus religion, which includes much meaningful prayer and puts economic and pleasure motives in second place, can bring the people of the world together under one common goal.

Let us take a better hold on life and on the Christian faith in order that God may use the Swiss Mennonite people and other Christian people in a greater measure to build His Kingdom. May each accept the challenge that comes to him from these reflections of the past according to the dictates of his own conscience.

## **THE IMPACT OF SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS OF LIFE IN AMERICA**

by Rev. P. P. Wedel

It is seventy-five years this month that the so-called Swiss Mennonites of the Kotosufka Church came to this country. The good ship, "City of Richmond" of the Inman Line, on which they came sailed into the New York harbor on September 3, 1874. In Mound and Turkey Creek Townships, McPherson County, Kansas, and in Garden and Alta Townships, Harvey County, Kansas, they established their homes, so that now they and we their descendants have been in contact with life in America for seventy-five years.

It is self-evident that having been exposed to American life for this period of time has made its impact upon us, and this paper is to show what it has done to us. Although we did not appear on the scene until ten years after the arrival of our pioneer fathers it was our privilege often to "sit in" when a group of them were gathered in the homes of our parents, grandparents, and others and to listen in on the conversations, which dealt with the early experiences through which we received impressions of the character and the attributes of these sturdy pioneers. From these impressions, from personal experiences among our Volhynia Swiss Mennonite group, and from observations of them we shall try to show what seventy-five years of life in America has done. In the first place, we are all aware of the fact that it has brought us prosperity. China and silverware on our tables deep freeze units, refrigerators, gas or electric ranges, electric appliances of all kinds, telephones and radios in our homes, rugs and carpets on our floors, beautiful draperies on our windows, automobiles and trucks in our garages, when they are not on the roads, tractors, combines and other machinery in our fields, all of these speak a loud language of the prosperity that has come to us. Little did the pioneers of 1874 dream that they, and even more their descendants, would ever have all the conveniences, luxuries, pleasures, privileges and opportunities that we enjoy today. No one will gainsay that in the standard of living, physically speaking, much progress hasn't been made. America has given us temporal or material prosperity.

It has done something with us and for us also intellectually. By saying this we do not want to undervalue the intellectual abilities of our fathers. For though they had but little education in the sense of formal schooling, they did have much native ability, common sense, and sound judgment. In the school of hard knocks they learned much. In the province of Volhynia, in Poland, they cleared the forest and wrought from the cleared land their living. In central Kansas they, under new conditions, plowed the prairies and developed them into a Garden of the Lord; for He added His blessing to their labors. God forbid that we should undervalue their mental capacities and their ability to make their way in the world.

On the other hand it is true that in seventy-five years our educational standards have been raised to a high degree, and that the forefathers also helped to achieve it. They were tillers of the soil and upon arrival at once sought to establish their homes. But they also opened schools where the children were instructed in the Word of God and in the German language, which was the language of the church as well as the home. On this very spot, where we meet today, a school was arranged for the children in a section of the "Immigrant House". This building was originally erected by the Santa Fe Railroad to shelter our people upon their arrival.

Some fifteen to twenty families spent their first winter in America in the Immigrant House. The children attended also the district schools and soon most of the parents desired for their children a graduation from the eighth grade. With this they seemed to be satisfied for some time. But at the turn of the century, when high schools were being established in the surrounding towns, the desire for more education arose and parents began to send their children to the high schools. Today there are very, very few of our young people who do not have a high school diploma, and many are the proud owners of a college degree, while an increasing number have acquired a doctorate.

Because of this, and no doubt also for other reasons, we are no longer a people who make their living only by tilling the soil; but many have gone into business and into the professions. Thus we find our people engaged in many kinds of business enterprises, such as, groceries, general merchandise, hardware, home appliances, oil and gas, grain, insurance, banking, and others. In the professions the largest number of our people have gone into the field of teaching. We find them in the schools, all the way from the grade and high schools up to college professors and college presidents, and even in university work. We find them not only in teaching, but also in other professions - doctors of medicine, dentists, lawyers, nurses, preachers, missionaries, and others. All this, because in this country, we have enjoyed educational advantages and opportunities that our pioneer fathers did not have.

Spiritually too, seventy-five years in this land of freedom, has done something with and for us and we trust also through us. This should be the natural result of prosperity and of education. These factors should lead to spiritual progress; and in some respects, we have advanced spiritually. Our beneficences have increased greatly. Our Volhynia Swiss Mennonite Churches are known for their liberal contributions to missions, relief, schools, hospitals homes for the aged, conference activities, and other benevolent causes. We say this not boastfully - for we are conscious that we fall far short of what we ought to give for the cause of Christ - but do acknowledge with humility and gratitude the fact that much is being done.

As we think of spiritual progress we remember that there has been an increase in the number of congregations. It was one congregation of 73 families that came from the village of Kotosufka in Volhynia. The whole congregation left and with a few exceptions all of them settled here in Kansas, where the congregation was incorporated under the name of the Hoffnungsfeld Mennonite Church. This one congregation has grown into eight congregations aided by an influx of a number of families of the Volhynia Swiss Mennonite group that in the same year, 1874, settled in the Freeman, South Dakota community, and by the addition of a few families who are not of this Swiss Mennonite background. In other words, the following eight Mennonite congregations in central Kansas are made up largely of this Swiss Mennonite group: Hoffnungsfeld, Eden, and First Mennonite of Christian in Moundridge, First Mennonite of Pretty Prairie, Bethany and Zion in Kingman County, First Mennonite of Burns, and First Mennonite of McPherson.

Also, there has been progress in the type of church buildings. For eight years the Hoffnungsfeld Church worshiped in the "Immigrant House" which was just a shed type of building. The first building of the First Mennonite Church of Christian was of the same type. Today these churches have attractive buildings, that are conducive to a more extensive and intensive work program.

For in this respect also the congregations have grown. Sunday Schools, Christian Endeavor Societies, Mission Societies and other organizations and auxiliaries of the church were established and are carrying out a larger program than that of the pioneer years. Thus, at least outwardly there has been progress during these seventy-five years.

But we might well raise the question whether we have made spiritual growth in the inner life of the church and of the individual, and whether we measure up to the faith of our fathers. As we raise this question we are conscious of the fact that as we look back we are prone to magnify the virtues of our fathers and to think of them as perfect saints. However, all of them were human as we are and had their temptations, faults and shortcomings, and there were a few individual cases of persons who went far astray. But, after having said this, we are happy to say that on the whole they were men and women who stood for principle and who believed in Jesus Christ the Savior. So we ask, do we their descendants live up to the moral and spiritual qualities and standards they set for us?

Their high standard of honesty is the first one we call to our attention. In the community and in the business world our fathers made for themselves a reputation of honesty, integrity, and fairness. They were known as people who kept their word, who paid their debts, and who were above fraud and deception. Many incidents are told of how the American people had confidence in them and trusted them, especially in money matters. The pioneer fathers of this community soon found it possible to borrow money from people who learned to know something about them and even from strangers. In some instances those who loaned the money did not even require a promissory note. The same can be said of the Pretty Prairie community which was established in 1884. One of the pioneer fathers of that settlement often related how they enjoyed the confidence and trust of the public and especially of the business men of Hutchinson. He told that when they desired to borrow money there, they needed only to report that they were from the German Mennonite Settlement at Pretty Prairie, and they could get the money without giving any security and without being questioned as to their financial rating.

Is it not true that in the materialism of our age and of our country we have lost this reputation of honesty and integrity? We too have become materialistic. People do not have the confidence and trust in us that our pioneer fathers enjoyed.

The second thing we want to mention is that of nonconformity to the world. They separated themselves from the world. We may think that they separated themselves too much, or that it was easy for them to do so because of the language barrier. All this may be true; but the fact remains that they did not conform to things the world practiced. They also led the more simple life. We may argue that necessity demanded it, since they did not have the financial means, and that they did not live much more simply than other people who came to see these regions as pioneers. This too may be true in part; but again the fact remains that they did live the simple life. In their dress, in the building of their homes and the furnishing of the same, in their food, in the matter of luxuries they lived within their means.

Nor were they beguiled to follow the trend of an ever increasing pleasure and amusement-mad America. As Christians they felt that they could not take part in everything that the world did and even that some churches were advocating. They took literally the words of Paul in II Cor. 6:

14-17, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. . . . Come ye out from among them and be separate." It is a far cry from their nonconformity to what we practice today.

At the beginning of the Second World War a friend visited us to discuss some of the problems that were confronting the Mennonite Church as a result of the war. Among other things he related an experience that he had just a few days previous to his visit. He was making an auto drive with an acquaintance who was not a Mennonite, and in their conversation this acquaintance turned to him and said, "What is the matter with you Mennonites? You are no different than we. We smoke, so do you; we drink, so do you; we dance, so do you; we go to the movies, so do you; we play cards, so do you; there is nothing we do, that you do not do, except when it comes to war; then you refuse to render military service." That to some extent this was a voice of prejudice and misunderstanding, we admit; but that in this voice there is enough truth to make us uncomfortable we humbly confess. We fall far short of our forefathers in obedience to the admonition of Romans 12:2, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

As we do not measure up to our pioneer fathers in honesty and in nonconformity, so also in other qualities or characteristics. We merely make mention of some of them, such as, diligence, industry, frugality, sociability, mutual helpfulness, fidelity in family relations, absence of divorce, and obedience to civil law.

Above all we want to point to the fact that our forefathers had faith in God. They believed in God and in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ the Savior. Because of their faith they came to this country, where they could live in accordance with the dictates of their conscience founded on the Word of God. They sacrificed for it. Especially did they think of their children and of coming generations, whom they desired to save from the militarism and dictatorship of Europe. For them too they were willing to sacrifice. They gave up home, fatherland and friends, and turned their steps towards a new and unknown world. It cost them much in money, in comfort, in heartache, and in the fear of an uncertain future.

Here in this country they practice the doctrine of their church. They refused to swear the oath, they practiced the teaching of non-resistance and non-violence, they avoided lawsuits and secret, oathbound societies, and they practiced or at least endeavored to practice a biblical church discipline.

To them the whole Bible was the Word of God. It was their most important piece of literature, and they believed it from cover to cover. To live up to its precepts was their aim and their desire. It was the book not only for the church, but also for the home. There it was studied; there and in social gatherings it was discussed. Yes, they sometimes argued about its doctrines, but at least they had enough interest in it to argue about it.

The church was near and dear to them. Services were attended regularly, even though for some it meant a walk of four or more miles. They had great respect for the house of worship and even the children caught something of this respect. Prayer and family worship were quite generally practiced, and the children were taught to pray and to love the Lord Jesus Christ. In difficulties

and trials, when the going was hard, they put their trust in the Lord, and submitted to His will, believing that He would undertake for them.

We have drifted away from some of these spiritual traits of our fathers. Seventy-five years of life in America finds us morally and spiritually poorer, at least in some respects, than they were.

This seventy-fifth anniversary celebration of the coming of our fathers to America is a loud challenge to us to prove ourselves worthy of them. Let us thank God for the heritage they have left us. Let us appreciate the great advantages, privileges, and opportunities and blessings we enjoy, and this because they were willing to sacrifice for us. Let us repent and confess that we have lost some of their moral and spiritual values and do all we can to regain them. Let us do all we can to bequeath to our children and children's children the good heritage they have left us, so that coming generations can rise to call us blest, as we today rise to call our forefathers blest.

**A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF OURSELVES**  
(The Swiss Mennonites)  
by Dr. R. C. Kauffman

I have no objection whatever to a critical evaluation of ourselves. Some such inventory of our strengths and weaknesses from time to time is certainly desirable. However, I must admit that I ran into some trouble in trying to think my way through this topic. My difficulty has been principally two-fold.

In the first place, a critical evaluation of ourselves means that we as a Schweitzer group compare ourselves with some other group. More particularly, it means that we compare ourselves with some other group which in all other respects is most nearly like us. Obviously it would not be very meaningful to compare ourselves with the Hottentots of central Africa. To get at that which is uniquely Schweitzer it would not do even to compare ourselves with the average American. The comparison must be with another Mennonite group living within the same general area and under the same, general circumstances. This quite obviously limits our comparison to one between ourselves and our good friends and neighbors, the low Germans. And I, for one, see no reason for being hesitant in making this comparison, if it is done fairly and objectively. The indications are that the day is past when the Schweitzers on the Bethel College campus, living in the White House, and the Low Germans, living in Western Home, would get out on the porch roofs of their respective houses and shout across the street at each other, calling each other all the derogatory names they could think of. This, however, is not the difficulty.

The difficulty is, rather, that the topic, "A Critical Evaluation of Ourselves," seems to imply that there is some essential difference between the groups being compared, and I do not believe that any such essential difference, other than that of language, actually exists. As a matter of fact, I am inclined to say that the difference between Mennonites as a whole and the outside world is often grossly exaggerated. I have now spent some summers among the Mormons in Arizona. The Mormons are not even a strictly Protestant group. Yet I find their young people confronted by much the same problems and demonstrating much the same strengths and weakness as our own. The most significant aspect of my experience in India I regard as the first-hand knowledge gained of the essential sameness of humanity - a sameness that cuts across color, creed and nationality. The outstanding conclusion to which any comparison of groups can lead us, I am convinced, is that the differences between groups are not nearly so great or important as the differences among individuals within any one group. "Under the ocean all islands are one; under colors of face, humanity is one; under the creeds, God is one." The difficulty with the topic at hand is, then, that it would readily lead us to attribute characteristics to ourselves as a group that have no basis in fact. It is an all too common human failing to notice some relatively superficial difference - such as that of language, skin color, or national origin - and thereupon immediately proceed to postulate other differences as well.

The second difficulty that I have with the topic is that of making the evaluations that it calls for. Even if certain characteristics of the Schweitzers could be established as unique, what of it? Are they of any real significance? Are they necessarily good or bad? We are in an age today when it is wrong to call attention to differences unless one has a good reason for doing so. The emphasis

needs to be placed on that which unites us. Our natural tendency, at any rate, is to regard as good those things uniquely characteristic of ourselves and as not so good, those things that characterize the other group. I suppose we have all at one time or another marveled at the exceedingly good fortune of having been born in the best nation in the world, the best state in the nation, the best community in the state, and the best family in the whole Schweitzer community!

The difficulty at this point is not that of having no standards of right and wrong, of good and bad, to go by. It is, rather, that of making a proper application of these standards to complex cultural factors. Take, for example, one of the most obvious of our Mennonite traits - that, namely, of a strong in-group feeling - the denominational loyalty and separateness that characterizes us. Even in speaking of this one is confronted by a choice of words that depicts the problem at hand. Is this trait to be referred to as solidarity or as clannishness? Is our separation from the world good or bad? Dr. Fretz has just spoken of cultural infiltration and the dangers associated with it. These dangers are real and not to be minimized. But then, on the other hand, what is our primary concern - group survival or the extension of God's kingdom? Are we first of all concerned with the preservation of Mennonitism or with the service that can be rendered to the outside world? Going out into the world and associating on a common basis with other people will almost inevitably bring about a degree of assimilation and a loss of Mennonite distinctiveness. Cultural assimilation is seldom a one-way process.

Yet, when Jesus talked of a grain of seed falling into the ground and dying and when he said, "he that seeketh to save his life shall lose it," was he not saying something as true for the group as for the individual? Are we not in danger of losing our life as Mennonites by making self-preservation our primary concern? You see, here we have a characteristic of the Mennonite community as clear as any that can be found, and yet, what are we to make of it? How are we to evaluate it? From our own point of view this separateness can be justified, both practically and Scripturally. From an outsiders point of view, it is sheer clannishness and a light, if it be a light at all, hid under a bushel.

I have now managed to use a good share of my time in being critical of my critical evaluation. In the remaining moments I must turn to what the program committee must have had in mind in assigning this topic, hoping, however, that you will keep in mind the qualifications that I have set forth.

To get directly at the point, I think what differences there are between the Schweitzers and the Low Germans can be traced largely to the fact that when the Schweitzers came to America they were both economically and educationally an inferior people.

Economically, our Schweitzers were among the second poorest of all immigrant groups. They arrived here with little other than their health, strength and a determination to succeed. Few had the financial resources of some of the Warkentins, Goerzs, Regiers, and Claassens.

Educationally and culturally also, they were inferior. While the Low Germans came from well established cultural settlements in Russia and Germany, our Schweitzers did much wandering and finally came by way of Volhynia, a section of Poland hardly known for its cultural refinement. We were an uncouth and simple people. One hears of numerous instances indicative

of the ignorance and superstition of our forbears even sometime after their arrival in this country. One of our grandfathers, seeing a telephone in the home of his host and hearing it ring, remarked seriously, "Du kumsht geviss net in der himmel mit dem ding and der vandt." Some were against photography and one of our grandfathers explained how, if one were in proper relation to the occult world, one could stop a person's heart by piercing his picture with a needle in the region of the heart. Even the innocent bicycle was suspected by some. They reasoned that only the forces of the evil one could keep this two-wheeled contraption upright. While availing themselves of the services of doctors and sometimes lawyers, they would have excommunicated anyone proposing to enter training.

It is therefore not surprising that when it came to advanced education and to the founding of an institution such as Bethel College, it was the Low Germans who took the initiative. Last week I looked through the first two Bethel College catalogues (1893 and 1894). Not a single one of our Schweitzers appears among either the faculty or the Board. There are some non-Low Germans - i.e., Birish and Pennsylvania Dutch (Haury, Lehman, Sprunger, Welty, Krehbiel) - but none of our own people. In talking with Dr. P. J. Wedel, our college historian, he made the statement, "With regard to the history of Bethel College, if the Low Germans had not dragged us along we would not be where we are." This "dragging us along" should not be interpreted as a purely benevolent gesture on the part of the Low Germans, for by this time the people in this Hoffnungsfeld community represented some economic power and then, as now, Bethel College always needed money! Nevertheless, the original impetus and leadership in higher education came from the Low Germans. But the point I set out to make is that, originally, our people were economically and culturally inferior, and what differences are discernable between the two groups today are traceable largely to this fact. They are traceable to this fact either directly or by way of that common psychological mechanism known as "compensation."

In a relative sort of way, there are perhaps four characteristic distinctions that can be made. First, I think it is true that the Low Germans are still ahead of us in cultural refinement. Schweitzers are still a bit more loud, uncouth and unpolished. I have noticed this on the Bethel campus. While there is ample room for improvement in all cases, it has been my impression that the Low Germans, by and large, keep their rooms more neatly than we do. They are also not quite as boisterous and loud-mouthed. You can't always tell what a Low German is thinking or how he feels. You can always tell what a Schweitzer thinks or feels, for he will tell you. This reticence on the part of the Low Germans is sometimes irritating to us Schweitzers as our bluntness must be to the Low Germans. It makes us feel a little uncomfortable. We don't quite know where we're at and we are inclined to look upon it as indecision and "riding the fence." We believe in being forthright, in telling the other person just what we think and then, perhaps, even listening to what he says he thinks. To the Low German, however, this reserve is a part of good breeding, and also of good diplomacy. A one-time Bethel professor, now retired, told me, "In early years the Low German students would address professors and outsiders impersonally, saying, 'What does so and so think about it?' or 'What does the professor believe to be the case?'" With us, of course, "Vas denksht du?" is sufficient.

A second observation is that the Schweitzers, possibly because they did not come with as much of a culture or tradition as the Low Germans, do not seem to be as firmly bound by it. They have, I believe, proven somewhat more flexible and adaptive to the American way of life. Again, I say,

I do not know how to evaluate these observations. I am simply making them here. While the point just observed may mean that the Schweitzer has more adaptability, ingenuity and originality and that he is more sophisticated - that is, more at home in the outside world - it may also be that he is more susceptible to the assimilation and has, consequently, a lower survival value as a Mennonite.

In the third place, our Schweitzer people still have something of a generalized inferiority feeling and have, I believe, a disproportionate number of individuals among them affected by inferiority feelings. In view of the psychology of the inferiority feeling, it is not unreasonable to suppose that this condition may be responsible for other eccentricities among our people which we can not take time to enumerate here. There is one, however, which deserves special mention. This is the dynamic and energetic quality of our people, a quality that appears almost compensatory in nature. Schweitzers are strongly motivated, highly active and intensely persevering. Once a Schweitzer sets out to accomplish something, the likelihood is that he will get it accomplished. In the academic world, for example, I have observed that it is seldom that one of our people starts out for his **Ph.D** without eventually getting it, even if his I. Q. isn't much above 80!

Finally, we are "the newly rich" and the newly cultured, and we show the symptoms of it. We are no longer poor or uneducated. We have money, advanced degrees, and leisure. But it all came about so fast that we don't quite know what to make of it. Dr. Kliewer, former president of Bethel and himself a Low German, once said something to the effect that when the Low Germans came to America they were ahead financially and educationally, but the Swiss group by management and sheer determination, almost in his own generation, caught up and in some respects surpassed them. Yes in some respects we have caught up and even surpassed the Low Germans. Our farms are just as big, if not bigger; our houses are just as fine; if not finer; and our cars are just as new, if not newer. For an interesting comparison, drive past the Alexanderwohl and the Eden churches some Sunday morning and notice the difference in the cars lined up at the two places.

But these are all surface matters, not to be confused with genuine **deep-down** cultural development and refinement. These are things that money can buy. Real cultural refinement can't be bought - and it does not come about in seventy-five years. It is the art of truly gracious living and this comes about only with time - generations and generations of time.

A well-developed society will have a degree of material prosperity and security. But along with this there will also be a composure and serenity which we still lack. We have money, but many of us can think of no better way to use it than to turn it back into more land for more money. We have, or could have, leisure, but our highest idea of a good time is to get into our fine cars and burn up the road - seeing two or three baseball games in an afternoon. We do little in the creative arts. We have produced no outstanding painter, writer, or composer. If we were as spiritually minded and as deeply concerned about things of the spirit as we purport to be, we should have **engendered** some creative genius. The point is, I think, our development has been predominantly material. We have adopted the American standards of success, which are confined largely to that which can be seen and measured and which do not reach far below the surface.

Well, this has turned out to be a *critical* evaluation after all. Permit me to remind you again, in

closing, that any differences between groups, however valid, are represented in far greater degree within any one group. Also, not to end upon a depreciative note, may I say that if we can get our sense of direction straight and in the next seventy-five years demonstrate the same dynamic and stick-to-it-iveness in the realm of spiritual and cultural values that we have in the past seventy-five years shown in the area of material values, then the Schweitzers will really be one of the best communities in the nation!