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Immigrant Witness in Germany¹

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Anabaptist Churches in Germany, partly comprised of immigrants from the Soviet Union, had by 2005 established more than 300 churches, and continue to plant even more new churches in Germany. According to the German Christian journal *idea-Spektrum*, worship services of immigrant Anabaptist churches are some of the best-attended services in Germany.

In the following article I will discuss missionary approaches that have played a decisive role in the Soviet Union, what kind of setbacks the so called “Resettlers” have experienced in Germany and what kind of opportunities they continue to have to fulfil their mission calling.

Lifestyle Witness—A Successful Mission Method in the Soviet Union

***Missio Dei* as a Concept for Mission as Witness**

God, and not the church, is the one who sends. *Missio Dei* was the main conviction of the Baptists in the Soviet Union. “*Missio dei* as a Trinitarian idea contains the Christological and soteriological center; without it theology cannot exist.”² Whether the church is alive, or experiences the new life which is promised to her, is evidenced by the ways in which she turns to the people around her who do not yet belong, namely in the direct interest of God. For Gensichen it is clear that sharing in the *Missio Dei*:

... need not always correspond to methods of a conventional, organized mission. Mission history has always known—beside the great missionaries, the pioneers of operational sending, the “second front” of witnesses, whose mission was not exhausted in appropriate action, but... went much beyond mission and in some cases even happened or happens as an antithesis to the established mission.³

This is what the church in the Soviet Union experienced. Without their having any extensive understanding of the theological concept of sending, God caused in these believers a need to witness to a world which was in opposition to Christianity. “Baptists distribute their mission on the shoulders of laypersons,” complained the atheist Manuylova, because “each believer has the duty to read the Bible, to memorize Bible verses and to work as a preacher or missionary.”⁴ This way they lived out (implemented) the *Missio Dei*.

This term was formed in the early 20th century under considerable influence from Karl Barth, then first expressed by George Vicedom and included into the program of the Willingen mission conference of the World Council of Churches. Accepted by the Lausanne Committee in 1974 into the mission program of the evangelicals, is it now a *terminus technicus* (standard term) in mission science. Mission is not only understood as the spread of the gospel and leads not only to the conversion of pagans, but serves the direct order of God to expand his kingdom. Mission is first of all and primarily a matter of the Holy Trinity.

In the USSR witnessing became a life style and as such an indicator for God’s work in a person’s life, evident in attitude and action. Christian mission as life style evangelism was aroused through God’s work, and through persecution *Missio Dei* became reality. People of God lived out their faith and many newcomers became believers.

It appears that evangelical churches in the Soviet Union did not have time and energy for theological treatises on the subject of missions. They had to fight for their daily survival. They only had time to live their faith and so it became their life style. They had to assume that it is God who will build up his church and not them individually. They would agree with Stott that not every preacher should be called an evangelist, but that every Christian has to be a witness: “If God does not call everyone to be an ‘evangelist’ ... But every Christian is a witness, and every Christian is called to bear witness.”⁵

In my studies about missions in the Soviet Union after the Second World War, I came to the conclusion that evangelical churches in the Soviet Union did not write down their mission motives but, like Christians of the first century, they lived missionary lives which started from their experience with God.

The union of the churches and their church magazines were inspiring for mission work, but they played only a small part in the direct missionary proclamation.⁶ The same applies to the few theological training centers. Already the effort to introduce God as the Lord of the universe and of the mission comforted the churches that faced

suffering and persecution. They knew that God will lead his work to a successful end. That these churches were still heavily involved in missionary activities is reflected in atheistic publications in the 70s and 80s of the last century.

Missionary Witness as Perceived from an Atheistic Perspective

A conflict between communist ideology and religion was unavoidable because Marxism “is not only an overthrowing economic theory, but also a philosophical system, which is the foundation of a worldview, which is pioneering for its followers all areas of the human life—politics, art, literature, religion, ethics and so on.”⁷ Berdyayev, for example, explains the background of this argument: communism is a replacement religion:

Atheism always means a transition to some kind of idolatry, to idolization. A total devastation of a soul can only lead to suicide... Just because communism is itself a religion, it persecutes all other religions and cannot be tolerant toward other religions.⁸

Below I will attempt to describe some particular areas of the missionary witness, in order to better understand the spread of the faith in a socialist state.

The communist scientist Belov notices a certain pattern in missionary activity of the Christians. They would first look for some common ground with their co-workers or neighbors in order to invite them to a worship service, but then speak openly and purposefully on the train, at work and in the market about their faith. A successful method is also assisting people with material or financial problems, or those who have lost a loved one. These activities happen with the purpose to win them for their faith.⁹

Social and political isolation

Church visitors avoided social meetings common in socialist society, and rather created in their church buildings space for mutual help. They helped each other in cases of sickness, accidents and other problems. This way they experienced a pleasant feeling, which they attributed to their religious attitude.¹⁰

Another famous writer, Gal’perin, sees the isolation of Christians from the surrounding world as a genuine problem, because in that way they isolated themselves from the communist influence. “Church leaders”, writes Gal’perin, “expect a complete separation from the world. Members of the church are not allowed to watch TV, visit the cinema or attend a theatre, in order not to have their souls

polluted".¹¹ He reports about two young women who were good witnesses at their work. But their only information source was Christian literature, church sermons and Christian broadcasting programs.

Role of the family in lifestyle evangelism

From an atheistic perspective the most dangerous missionary field was the family. Manuylova shows in her atheistic research how churches grow and increase. She comes up with the conclusion that the main mission happens in the family.¹² In 1976 some Baptist churches recorded an increase of members by 70 percent. The main share of growth was through people with a Christian background. The church conducts its mission, concludes Manuylova, primarily in the family.¹³

Ugrinovich argues in his book *Psichologia i religia*, published a few years before *Perestroika*, that in the religious education of preschool children parents play the most important role.¹⁴ The author points to scientific research of psychologists about the form of the family and their importance for religious education. They come to the conclusion that the new generation of the religiously-minded population was raised and educated in families. The result of his studies can be summarized as: "in the context of the Soviet society, the religious family belongs to the most important channels to transmit religious thinking to the new generation."¹⁵

Further research also proved the assumption that religious influence on the children was even stronger when both parents displayed the same attitude in these questions. Because of these results, atheist educators came to the conclusion that the teachers' work was futile in their efforts to impress on school children an atheistic formation if they restricted their efforts only to children. To guarantee that children would buy into atheistic influence parents had also to be succumb to it.¹⁶ According to this statement, communists perceived a major threat for society in the Christian lifestyle of families.

Jaschin, a Soviet scholar, described the transmission of the tradition of faith from older people to the youth, who were particularly susceptible.¹⁷ He complains that preachers have recognized the importance of the family and use it to preserve the religious thinking as a missionary possibility. This leads, says Jaschin, to authoritarian education and strict observation of rules for daily life in families, according to the teaching that the family is the first and most important missionary cell.¹⁸

A new evaluation of the role of women and mothers led to the conclusion that they belonged to the support pillars in the formation of religious thinking and held together larger groups of believers. They were the majority in religious groups and were more religious than their husbands. Many widows compensated for their loneliness and missing social and family ties with intensified activities in the church.¹⁹

Jaschin also characterizes church activities of elderly women who were never married. To marry non-believers was forbidden for them and so they lived like nuns in the church. They belonged to the non-official group of servants and helped other members. They were involved with the preparation of the service, taught the children some needlework, and in this way were missionaries.²⁰

While describing the youth work of Mennonites, Ipatov observes a certain kind of training: "Not only that the Bible is read by old people, but it is also studied by young people in prayer meetings."²¹ Interactively, through a question and answer game, they learned the texts of the Old and New Testament; this way having their faith convictions strengthened and being trained as missionaries. "It is characteristic for the questions to advise those who have renounced their faith or went astray so that they would keep commandments of the Old and New Testament."²² In addition, according to Ipatov, to carry out meetings in the German language was also some kind of a missionary approach, at least among the German-speaking population. Many came to the church not only in order to strengthen their religious thinking, but also to cultivate their German language and to keep up with this culture. But the visitors were influenced by the Christians and found their faith.²³

Summary

The communist government knew very well that, in spite of pressures and restrictions, many Christians fulfilled their mission commandment. It did not always need to be words. A changed lifestyle was a proclamation in itself.

The largest missionary power was perceived to lie in healthy Christian families. The family had to be influenced, to be changed and to be retrained, in order to stop the missionary message. The communist government certified that the Christians had an active missionary commitment. In the atheists' view, mission was not understood in the first place as proclamation *expressis verbis* (expressed in words), but as living a changed life. Christianity affected the daily life of members in Christian churches and in this way presented a danger for socialism. Stoner's statement about the mission of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists can also be applied to the work of Anabaptists in the USSR:

...more impressive was the witness of hundreds of ordinary men and women who were so filled with the life of Christ that their relatives, neighbors, and friends were convinced of sin and attracted to the overflowing life which they saw in these believers.²⁴

With some similar-sounding statements the atheist scholar Ipatov characterizes missionary efforts of the Germans in the Soviet Union. According to his statements, Mennonites from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan tried to organize effective work with children and young people.²⁵

Facing a New Reality

The most extensive changes in the population of Europe in recent history resulted from migration processes, refugee movements and expulsions of large groups of people toward the end and after the Second World War. Furthermore, changes came as a result of a new distribution of political powers at the conference in Yalta and Potsdam (1945). In his dissertation, John N. Klassen states that since 1950 Germany has received approximately 5 million immigrants, of which 1.8 million are Soviet German Resettlers.²⁶ Approximately 300,000 of these immigrants have an Anabaptist²⁷ background, which means they are either Mennonites, Baptists or members of Mennonite Brethren churches. In addition, there are members of Pentecostal churches and the Seventh-Day Adventist churches.

How do these immigrants continue to live their mission of witnessing through lifestyle as the approach and attitude of the Anabaptists who came from the Soviet Union to Germany?

The first generation of immigrants to Germany continued to see their mission also as witnessing, which meant to live a life that would demonstrate their attitude without too many words.²⁸ But in the new environment in Germany this language was misunderstood. What in the Soviet Union was a good basis for conversation led in Germany to demarcation. For example, the explanation that consumption of alcohol was not permitted for Christians and a sin against God led only to amusement with colleagues and neighbors. To drink much in public and to get drunk was not very popular in Germany anyway. The immigrants came to Germany with a divided church identity.

A Divided Church Identity

Walter Sawatsky made two interesting observations in 1981 about descendants of Anabaptists who lived in the Soviet Union. First, he mentions the loss of a Mennonite faith identity: "All that has remained is the name Mennonite, their characteristic Low German dialect and traditional cooking," and secondly, the loss of leaders: "Between 1923 and 1929 approximately 20,000 immigrated to Canada and South America, an immigration that included a disproportionately large number of their most able leaders."²⁹

A group without experienced leaders soon encounters a crisis, which proved to be true also for the Mennonites in the Soviet Union. This had the consequence that,

“...the Mennonite remnant now had several important features. A high percentage of the families consisted of mothers with children whose fathers had disappeared while they were small. The children, due to the upheavals of the war and the subsequent ten years in the camps, had received almost no education, and an educated Mennonite became a rarity... Mennonites had refused to issue an official declaration of loyalty and therefore became an illegal denomination after the war.”³⁰

We need to remember that, after the Russian Orthodox Church was acknowledged by Stalin in 1943, the Baptists also tried to receive an official approval to carry out worship services. They did receive this permission under the condition that the Russian movement of the Evangelical Christians and the Baptists (EChB) would unite and together form one association. After the official recognition of this alliance, they received the acknowledgement from the state and were able to meet openly and perform church services.

But it was hard to live as a German in the Soviet Union after World War II. The population believed that all Germans had a fascist attitude. They did not have permission to meet in their own church buildings. Nevertheless, even Germans awakened to a new Christian life. They often found their spiritual home in churches of the already acknowledged Association of the EChB. With that, their own distinct identity was lost. Heinrich Löwen speaks about “relationships which fell into oblivion” and Johannes Reimer dares to call it “Mennobaptism.”

The divided church identity continues to be clearly observed in the controversy about the titles immigrant churches give their churches in Germany. Of the twenty-seven churches that are part of the BTG (Union of Anabaptist Churches), sixteen use different church names.³¹

Colony (Closed Community) Thinking

One great obstacle for integration and mission is the perception the immigrants have of themselves. They believe themselves to be a minority in the state, the faithful ones who, misunderstood and persecuted, move closer together in a closed community. The order of 1929 with the prohibition of every form of religious and educational work in the Soviet Union and the following persecution caused a development in which every evangelical church became a minority.

Thiessen describes this type of thinking in a new environment as very similar to the old desire of the Anabaptists of the seventeenth century, to have “a peaceful togetherness, far away from the world..., [this] carries away the hearts of the Germans, which came from the Soviet Union to Germany.”³² The immigrants want to stay among themselves and so design some areas of life according to their own principles. This creates tensions with the surrounding society. Thiessen continues his description stating that emerging problems were always “solved” through emigration.³³ Talking, praying and trust in God are replaced by escape!³⁴ On their escape route the immigrants reached Germany and met here churches where they did not find a spiritual home.

A Confusing Church Scene in Germany

The church scene in Germany in the free evangelical circles is difficult to portray. The population knows well both large national churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran church. Associations such as the Association of Christian Churches (ACK) and the Association of Evangelical Free Churches (VEF) are not very familiar to the general public. Terms like Baptists, Mennonites or Pentecostals are only familiar to insiders and smack of sectarianism.

The abbreviations like FEG (*Freie Evangelische Gemeinde*), BEFG (*Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden*), and AMG (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden*) sound unfamiliar and need an explanation. When strangers visit worship services of free churches they sometimes leave with the impression that the term “free” in this case means an individually fixed piety or spirituality style, and this is unacceptable to them.

For example, many of those who had emigrated from the Soviet Union and did not belong to a church at the end of the eighties and early nineties found their spiritual home in the New Apostolic church. Most of them did not have any religious background, except that they knew their parents had been Mennonites or Evangelical Christians. The dress code and the service order in the New Apostolic church often was considered as one of the persuasive elements to join this church. After two or three visits to the worship service and realizing certain benefits experienced by the members of this church, many immigrants developed the desire to become a member of the church. Theology did not play a role. The outward appearance was formative and decisive.

Visits to FEG churches confused many who had been church members in the Soviet Union. They learned that FEG churches, which were constituted in 1854 in Barmen and in 1874 took the name they have today, had developed in the opposite direction to Baptist churches of those days, which emphasized the necessity of

baptism.³⁵ For FEG churches water baptism played an important role insofar as they baptized only persons who believed in God, but they also approved of infant baptism in that they accepted people into membership who had been baptized in childhood.

Visits to German Baptist churches helped many believers to join these churches. According to some statistics, there are 7,000 adults of the immigrants who joined.³⁶ However, soon confusion emerged concerning their theology and they also had to discover that worship order and spiritual formation were quite different in the Soviet Union and in Germany. Some theological discussions estranged the believers and so most immigrant churches distanced themselves from the German Baptists and founded their own churches.

In summary one can say that sometimes it was certain differences in theology, but much more often the great differences in Christian lifestyle irritated the immigrants and they decided to plant new churches—more than 300 churches in the last 30 years.

Immigrants Witness to their Faith

Faith witness becomes evident when immigrant believers live out their faith in everyday life. It is expected from every member to let his/her Christianity become visible through a changed lifestyle.

1. They bear witness to their faith, as they proclaim the Word of God in and attend worship services.
2. They bear witness to their faith, as they are prepared to bear “suffering.”
3. They bear witness to their faith, as they conduct missionary work. Social engagement in Germany and beyond its borders is a well-known way of doing mission. The mission relief organization AQUILA, founded in 1990, can be considered a good example. In the year 2005 they delivered humanitarian aid in about fifty trucks, containing 1,000 tons of goods. In addition they supported more than twenty summer camps.
4. They bear witness to their faith, as they confess their faith in school, at work and with neighbors. Both the verbal proclamation and the social engagement belong for them to the field of church work, the work for the kingdom.

Active Cooperation with Existing Training Centers and Organizations

Bible school training was used by members of the immigrant community to receive theological training and to advance in the discipleship process. Bible schools, on the other hand, benefited from both the newly-won contacts and from the financial involvement of participants, such as the Bible school in Brake, the city of Lemgo. In

response to my inquiry I was told that one third of all Bible school students at Brake in Lemgo had a background as immigrants.

Members of Anabaptist churches have studied at Mission House/Bible school at Wiedenest (Bergneustadt), in the Bible school at Beatenberg (Switzerland), in the Educational and Training Center at Bienenberg (Switzerland), at the Independent Theological University at Basel (Switzerland), at the Free Theological Academy at Giessen (Germany), at the Evangelical Theological Faculty at Leuven (Belgium), and at the recently-founded Society for Education and Research at Bergneustadt (Germany).

It is interesting to note that leading administrative and teaching positions in some trainings centers are occupied by former immigrants. At the *Bibel Seminar Bonn*, the seminary founded by the BTG in 1993, many board members and school administrators are immigrants of the first or second generation.

In addition immigrants founded their own mission organizations.³⁷ Furthermore, they founded publishing houses in a number of cities.³⁸ Every large church has its own book shop in their church building. Often training at a Bible school expands the horizons of immigrants for mission. Many of them are ready to work in existing organizations and contribute to sharing the gospel in Germany and Europe through newly-founded mission organizations and publishing houses—through word and action.

Voluntary Service

Serving in the church is understood to be voluntary work done by all church members and is preferred against paid employment of a few people. According to the principle that each church structure reflects a theology and defines the faith of the members, most members decide to get involved in voluntary service in the church. All church members are encouraged, according to the following Scripture passages:

“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord”
(Rom. 12:11).

“You know that the household of Stephanus were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints”
(I Cor. 16:15-16).

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive the inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving”
(Col 3:23-24).

Through voluntary involvement all members are challenged to support all areas of church life. For this reason each member gets a chance to serve and through this enjoys a discovery and self-actualization process as personal talents and gifts are revealed. For example, out of the twenty-seven BTG churches only five have hired pastors.³⁹

Planting New Churches

Some church planting projects in Germany conducted by BTG associated churches can be listed as follows: Dresden, Nuremberg, Hammeln, and Leipzig.

BTG associated churches also have some church planting projects in other countries: Ukraine, Brazil, Indonesia, Turkey, and Kyrgyzstan. In addition they partner with churches in Moldova, Tschelyabinsk, Tulun, and Belarus, among others.

Conclusion

It is true that immigrant churches experience biological growth. It means the children and family members visit worship services, become Christians, get baptized, and work in the local church. In addition, immigrant churches are a reservoir for thousands of new conversions and baptisms, which would be difficult to conceive in another context. I have been able to present only a brief glimpse of the situation of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Mission as witness—first and second generation immigrants witnessing God's message in Germany—does have its challenges and opportunities, and certainly opens a wide scope for the church!

My prediction for the future is that there will continue to be tensions between immigrants of the first and of the second generation and the line between them will become hardened. The consolidation of positions will lead to the foundation of many new churches. In some cases this will lead to a break with the tradition. Some will rise from this break and start churches with a German personality. Traditional immigrant values will be not very important for them. As new churches they will be shaped by contemporary means of reaching out to people (for example, using concepts of Bill Hybels, etc.). It will not be a homogeneous group.

In addition there will be some churches which foster cultural integration and good member care. These churches will attract people with different backgrounds and bring them into the communion with God and his people. They will hopefully reach out to the hearts of the western population.

A conscious and informed engagement with this complicated subject, mission as witness, and a consensus in many matters will help German immigrants—Baptists, Mennonites, and Evangelical Christians—to be a witness for Christ. A witness where they can live the *Missio Dei* in a European context!

Notes

- ¹ This chapter is reprinted, with permission, from *Mission Focus* vol. 14 (Elkhart: Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 2006).
- ² Herwig Wagner, "Das Lutherische Bekenntnis als Dimension des Missionspapiers des Lutherischen Weltbundes: Gottes Mission als gemeinsame Aufgabe" in Volker Stolle, Ed., *Kirchenmission nach lutherischem Verstandnis. Vorträge zum 100jährigen Jubiläum der Lutherischen Kirchenmission* (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 1993), 161.
- ³ Hans-Werner Gensichen, "Ein einziges Zeugnis? Mission zwischen Herausforderung und Hoffnung," *Ökumenische Rundschau* 33 (1984): 483.
- ⁴ D.E. Manuylova, *Social'nye funktsii religii* (Moskva: Znanie, 1975), 46.
- ⁵ John R.W. Stott, *Our Guilty Silence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 58. The term "evangelist" occurs in the New Testament only three times, but the responsibility to evangelize is for the whole church. See Stott, 55.
- ⁶ Reimer writes about the missing freedom for mission, which emerged due to the stiff structures of the All Union Council in the seventies. See Johannes Reimer, "Mission in Post-Perestroika Russia," *Missionalia* 24.1 (1996), 111.
- ⁷ Alexander Kichkovsky, *Die sowjetische Religionspolitik und die Russische Orthodoxe Kirche* (München: Institut zur Erforschung der UdSSR, 1957), 5.
- ⁸ N. Berdyayev, *Russkaya Religioznaya Psichologiya I Kommunisticheski Ateizm* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1931), 40.
- ⁹ A. V. Belov, *Sekty, Sektantstvo, Sektanty* (Moskva: Nauka, 1978), 83.
- ¹⁰ D. E. Manuylova, *Cerkov' i Veruyushij* (Moskva: Polititscheskaya Literature, 1981), 58.
- ¹¹ B.I. Gal'perin, *Religiosnyj Ekstremizm: Kto est' Kto?* (Kiev: Polititscheskaya Literature, 1989), 62.
- ¹² Manuylova, *Cerkov' i Veruyushij*, 70.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 69.
- ¹⁴ D.M. Ugrinovich, *Psichologia i Religia* (Moskva: Politizdat, 1986), 223.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.
- ¹⁷ P.P. Jaschin, *Ideologia i Praktika Evangel'skych Khristian-Baptistov* (Char'kov: Prapor, 1984), 74.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 76-77. The discovery of the missionary "function" of the family leads Jaschin to call, from his socialist views, for a struggle against the family or a fight for changes in the family tradition of the many religious groups (Jaschin, 75).
- ¹⁹ Ugrinovich, 242.

- ²⁰ Jaschin, 82.
- ²¹ A.N. Ipatov, *Mennonity* (Moskva: Mysl, 1978), 169.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 169.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 172.
- ²⁴ John K Stoner, “Anabaptists Alive” in John K. Stoner, Jim Egli and G. Edwin Bontrager, *Life to Share* (Scottsdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1991), 27.
- ²⁵ Ipatov, 172.
- ²⁶ John N. Klassen, “Gemeindeaufbau und –Wachstum bei den Russlanddeutschen Evangelikalen Christen in Deutschland Inmitten der Spannung von Einwanderung und Integration,” (Unpublished Dissertation, University of South Africa, 2002), 29; 49.
- ²⁷ I use the term Anabaptist in this article as a summary description of denominations such as Mennonites, Baptists and Mennonite Brethren churches; these all practice faith baptism.
- ²⁸ Hereafter when speaking about “immigrants” I mean resettlers who came to Germany from the former Soviet Union.
- ²⁹ Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Kitchener: Herald Press, 1981), 280.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 280.
- ³¹ For example, Mennonite Brethren church, Christian Mennonite Brethren Church, Evangelical Christians, Baptists (from the Address List of the BTG, 2005).
- ³² Jacob Thiessen, “Die Entstehung Mennonitischer Kolonien: Eine Untersuchung” (Unpublished Thesis, University of South Africa, 2005), 17.
- ³³ Thiessen, 17. The widely spread immigration of Prussian Mennonites to south Russia started with the Manifesto by Tsarina Catharina II of 1762 and 1763, where she invited west European peoples to colonize the areas around the Black Sea. In the Manifesto she promised the settlers many liberties.
- ³⁴ Thiessen, 18.
- ³⁵ In the year 1854 the “Free evangelical of Elberfeld and Barmen” was constituted (Erich Geldbach, *Freikirchen—Erbe, Gestalt, Wirkung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 2005), 225. In the year 1874 the 22 churches established in Wuppertal the “Association of free evangelical churches and communion societies,” which in 1928 took the present name (*ibid.*, 227).
- ³⁶ John N. Klassen, 97.
- ³⁷ Among these are: *Friedensstimme* e.V. (Voice of Freedom), Logos-International e.V., *Gefährdetenhilfe Bad Eilsen* e.V. (Prison Ministries), *Friedensbote* e.V. (Messenger of Peace), *Christliche Freizeiten International* e.V. (Camping Ministry), Mission

Aid Committee Aquila e.V., *Glaube und Werke* e.V. (Faith and Works), *Internationales Centrum für Weltmission* e.V. (International Center for World Mission), *Herz für Behinderte* e.V. (Heart for Disabled).

³⁸ Among these are Paderborn, Lage, Gütersloh, Bielefeld, Frankenthal, and Steinhagen.

³⁹ BTG statistics of 2005.

Recommended Reading

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Bürkle, Horst. "Mission im Weiteren Sinne." *Ökumenische Rundschau* 19 (1971): 406-417.

Gensichen, Hans-Werner. *Missionstheologie*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1985.

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Reimer, Johannes. "Mission in post-perestroika Russia." *Missionalia*. Nr. 24.1 (1996): 18-39.

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Study Questions

1. Discuss the minimal involvement in missions among many churches in light of the author's statement: "evangelical churches in the Soviet Union . . . lived missionary lives which started from their experience with God."
2. Reflect on the implications for children's ministries from the following statement: "atheist educators came to the conclusion that the teachers' work was futile in their efforts to impress on school children an atheistic formation if they restricted their efforts only to children."
3. "Serving in the church is understood to be voluntary work done by all church members and is preferred against paid employment of a few people." This statement is made about the church in an immigrant population. How might it impact cross-cultural missions? Does it speak to practices of paying for the services of local leaders?