



AND
FOLLOW
THEIR
FAITH!

AND FOLLOW THEIR FAITH!

In memoriam of those in the
Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement
who died for their faith

*Testimonies of faithfulness and steadfastness
during Germany's dark days*

Compiled by Hans Fleschutz
1998 Edition

Religious Liberty Publishing Association
2877 E. Florence Avenue
Huntington Park, California 90255-5751 U.S.A.

INTRODUCTION

More than twenty years have passed since the terrible Second World War ended. Much has been spoken and written about that time. In several places memorials have been erected as a reminder of those inexpressible sufferings. In that time of great apostasy when the fury of war did its destructive work and the god of war was worshiped and glorified by nominal Christians, there were still people who had the courage to acknowledge Jesus as their Lord. They knew that salvation could be found in only One—Jesus Christ. Through love for their Lord they fulfilled His will; they “loved not their lives unto death” and courageously stood firm for their precious faith.

Faith is proven in times of testing. Thus the period under the rulership of the swastika was also a hard test for God’s people. The purpose of the Reformation has always been to educate soldiers under the cross. During that trial of World War II, these soldiers of Christ proved themselves victorious—faithful unto death.

The older generation is dying out; a new one arises. Therefore it is fitting to publish this book as a memorial to the faithful witnesses of the Reformation. It expresses the thanks which the Reform Movement among the Advent people still offers today to those who held fast to their faith in spite of inexpressible sufferings and martyrdom and sealed their resistance against diabolical powers with their blood.

These witnesses represent the true nobility of the world, its royal line. The youth of today are called to perpetuate that line of champions under the cross.

It is our aim to bring together in this book of remembrance such witnesses who gave their lives in prisons and concentration camps during World War II. Yet, these are certainly not the only martyrs; in addition to them there are many, many more who suffered hardship and persecution under the rule of National Socialism. Also, little is included about those who experienced the deprivations and sufferings of imprisonment and concentration camps without losing their lives.

It can be said of some of these that they were saved from certain death by a miracle of God. A number of these survivors lived in close association with the martyrs and suffered much for Jesus' sake.

However, in this memorial book we will become acquainted only with those who lost their lives because of their sufferings or who were murdered—those who died a martyr's death. This was the end of their faith!

We pray that these examples may bear fruit among us, for God Himself looks with great pleasure on His faithful martyrs. He loved the Christians who lived in those dangerous times, because they were willing to suffer and die for His sake.

The reports and letters of these faithful witnesses come from a variety of sources: Original letters, newspaper clippings, and official and private collections of materials. To the brethren and sisters who have contributed to the collection of these documents and reports and kindly made them available to us we give our heartfelt thanks.

This "song of songs" of the courageous men and women who remained sober in a time of greatest mass hysteria, and who possessed the courage to live out their faith, is in direct contrast to the millions of Christians who failed shamefully in that time of provocation.

It is necessary for the sake of the present and future historical challenge to Christians for them to know that a small percentage of their fellow believers did a great thing. It is this hindsight that offers an opportunity for all to become wise; but this requires that we examine our own ways and direct them according to God's Word. In spite of all the shocking details, this collection is designed to encourage old and young so that they may emerge as victors in the present as well as the future conflicts.

This publication is of special importance now, for today we fight a completely different kind of battle. From that time to our own day, many a hand has become feeble, many a banner which had been kept aloft through united efforts has been conquered by the enemy and buried in the dust. And yet the pure, holy gospel still lives and is preached in all parts of the world; these martyrs saw with the eye of faith that the battle of the church is not in vain. This battle would have been in vain if the church were content to lead a complacent life after such a time of trial and persecution. Therefore we cannot betray these faithful witnesses by choosing an easier way; we are called to take up the work and continue it where these champions were forced to lay it down. This book's purpose is to point with

unmistakable clarity to the fact that the battle of the church concerns only the confession of Jesus Christ, the one Lord and King of kings, and that the church surrenders when the confession of Jesus Christ and His sacred truth is no longer its highest goal.

Thus we present this book to all churches in the hope that through the life and death testimonies of the people mentioned here the Lord Himself will speak to His church, remind them of their commission, and fill them with new confidence and strength in the present battle of faith.

THE WITNESSES OF THE REFORMATION

Gustav Psyrembel

executed on March 30, 1940, in Berlin

Robert Freier

imprisoned and murdered in 1940

Leander Zrenner

shot on August 9, 1941, at Brandenburg/Havel

Hermann

imprisoned in 1941, when 70 years old—declared dead in prison at Breslau

Willy Thumann

shot to death in 1941 in the concentration camp at Oranienburg

Salamon Sadowski

shot to death by the SS in 1942, at 35 years of age

Maria Maritschnig

died in the Auschwitz concentration camp on September 25, 1942, at the age of 58

Ranacher

sentenced to death by a military tribunal

Johann Hanselmann

killed in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen in 1942, at the age of 50

Anton Brugger

beheaded in Berlin in 1943 at the age of 32

Golanczik

tortured to death in a concentration camp in 1943 when 51 years old

Victor Pacha

shot to death at Halle/Saale on September 27, 1943, at 26 years of age

Guenther Pietz

shot to death at Halle/Saale on September 27, 1943, at 19 years of age

Blasi

murdered in the concentration camp at Mauthausen in 1943, when 50 years old

Stanislav Rohloff

tortured to death in the concentration camp at Mauthausen in 1944, when 51 years old

Tomasz Slachetka

tortured to death in the concentration camp at Mauthausen in 1944, when 44 years old

Aleksy Slachetka

died on prisoner transport to Dachau in 1944, at 21 years of age

Gottlieb Metzner

imprisoned on October 19, 1944, and later murdered, after having been in Oldenburger concentration camp for half a year in 1934

Ernst Koerner

tortured to death in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen in 1944

Dr. Alfred Zeiss

lost his life in a concentration camp

Alfred Muench

died in the concentration camp at Neuengamme in 1945

HEROES OF FAITH IN OUR TIME

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.” Matthew 10:16-18.

All through the ages, denial and persecution have been the fate of Christianity. This was the experience of the Master and Founder of Christianity, and therefore we should not wonder when the disciples and true followers of Christ make the same experience. “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?”

Thus we also of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement have made many an experience, especially during the time from 1930 to 1945, about which we want to testify and report. The purpose of this testimony is to honor Him who went before us in the battle of faith as the Herald of our salvation. It should also serve as an encouragement for us to follow in the footsteps of those who suffered imprisonment, shame and death rather than conform to the powers of darkness by taking the easier way and thereby denying Christ.

As it was in the days of the Apostle Paul, so also in our time there are faithful soldiers of the cross of whom it is written: “But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance.” Heb. 10:32-34.

THE BATTLE BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS

The above text says: “After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.” This means the soul that is born again – the soul that is revived through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit –

knows how to value the everlasting, divine truth; he is not willing to sacrifice or deny the truth for anything the world can offer. Thus the battle of faith begins as soon as man becomes acquainted with the pure truth. It leads instantly to a conflict between him and members of the immediate family, relatives, and friends who are worldly minded, as well as with nominal Christians and authorities. (Matt. 10:34-39; John 18:36, 37.) This was the experience of the "heroes of the cross," as you will see in the following pages.

Shortly after the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany, we as a church felt the pressure of persecution. As early as 1939, religious meetings were prohibited in Brieg County.



Gottlieb Metzner

About this time, Brother Gottlieb Metzner was very active as a witness for the last Reformation message. Through his activities, sincere and faithful souls came to the truth. Among them were our dear and courageous defender of the faith, Gustav Psyrembel, one of the first to die as a witness for the S. D. A. Reform Movement; and dear Sister Kiefer, whose husband raged terribly and ran with an axe into Brother Metzner's house in an attempt to kill him. Sister Kiefer was arrested on a Sabbath, put into prison, and mistreated; yet no force was able to prevent her from accepting the truth and sealing her faith in baptism. As a result of this, Brother Metzner had to suffer again; he was transported as early as 1944 to the Esterwegen concentration camp near Osnabruock. The fact that Brother Metzner had a large family to provide for as well as other factors may have contributed to his release after a half year.

During his absence, his four school-age children had been brought to school by the police, his house was searched, and the family was continually fined, putting a heavy burden upon the meager income from a small farm.

When these methods of oppression failed to discourage Brother and Sister Metzner and they remained faithful to the truth, Brother Metzner was taken in for questioning many times. All their children were taken away from the parents' home and placed elsewhere to be educated. They were away from the family home from 1939 to 1945, and their only son never returned. Such a tragedy only a mother's heart can comprehend. Only when the dictatorial system broke down in 1945 – a system which was guilty of such cruelties – did the mother recover her three daughters through the wonderful leading of God. However, their father, who had already suffered years of imprisonment and fines, never returned to his home. He had been taken away on October 19, 1944, and brought to the state secret police at Breslau. There a letter was laid before him, the content being that he would forsake his "crazy faith." He was assured that after he signed it his four children would immediately be permitted to return home. As the police officer who was present reported later, Brother Metzner answered that he had believed the truths of God's Word for many years, and now that he saw everything fulfilled and saw the complete breakdown of the socialists, he could not and would not recant his faith and deny his God. That is the last testimony we have of Brother Metzner. Lonely, deserted, misunderstood, persecuted, and separated from his family for whom he had faithfully worked, cared, and fought, this witness for Christ stood "faithful until death."

In the experiences of all these heroes of faith, the word of God is fulfilled in each individual: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2:10.

Up to this very day, Brother Metzner's wife, children and grandchildren have fought the good battle of faith for which their father gave his life. May his example serve to strengthen us as we read the words of the Apostle Paul: "... Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." Heb. 13:7.

TESTIMONY BEFORE RULERS AND COURTS

“And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.” Matthew 10:18.

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

He was arrested, and after fruitless efforts were made to change his mind, he was brought before the Military Court at Berlin. On this occasion he was told that he was to account for his actions before a military court, not before a church council. They tried to convince him that every man should be subject to and obey the government. But Brother Psyrembel testified courageously that the kingdom of God is not of this world and that therefore the followers of Christ cannot fight for worldly kingdoms. (John 18:36.) Then a lengthy letter from a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was laid before him, and this recommended the defense of the fatherland as a Christian duty. But the young man, standing alone before a high war tribunal—betrayed by the ministers of the Adventist Church who claimed he had erroneous views—declared firmly that he could not serve two masters.

Only an apostate Christendom attempts to preach such a false gospel, holding the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other. As

a result, such Christendom does not have the power of godliness but only a pretense.

Thus our young Brother Psyrembel was condemned to death by the court. In a detailed letter to his wife, he pictured how it hurt him that an Adventist minister in a letter to the court had betrayed him and placed his stand in such a false light. But even this betrayal could not discourage him. In a lonely prison cell he waited for the day of the execution of his sentence. What was in the heart and mind of this soldier of the cross during those days and hours only the Lord knows.



Gustav Psyrembel

*Prison B, No. 4378
Section A1 Z 5*

Berlin NW 40, March 5, 1940

Dear Mama...!

God's peace as greetings!

Again I want to show some sign of life and send you a few lines. I would have written sooner, but I wanted to wait for my term to expire so I could tell you more about it. The decision has been made, and I hope that you... have prepared yourself for this hour... Dear Mama, I reported to you in my last letter that I stood at the beginning of the term. Today I can tell you that I now have that behind me. It was short, and all went quietly, for I did not allow myself to have

any false hope and was prepared for the worst. For me there were only two things I could do – either confess my faith or deny it. Right at the start I was told that I was not appearing before a church council which would decide religious questions but before a war tribunal. The motives for my action and conviction were regarded as wrong and were rejected. Only the offense and the deed were considered: My withdrawal from military service; the refusal to use weapons; the refusal to swear allegiance to the German flag and make the German salute. The most serious offense is the refusal to swear allegiance to the flag; this carries the death sentence. I had a lawyer to defend me, who asked for a life sentence, but this was rejected and I was given the death sentence. . . .

Dear Mama, when you receive these lines, I will no longer be in the land of the living, because my execution will take place in the next few days; and then my soul will rest in peace. Trust in the Lord in all circumstances of life. He will help you to bear the duties and burdens that will now rest upon your shoulders. Do it in love and faith in Him; endure until the end so that we shall see each other again in that better land, in the city built of gold where all pain and suffering will be ended.

Farewell! We go through suffering to glory. Once again many greetings.

Your Gustav

Another letter arrived, and it read as follows:

G. Psyrembel
Prison B, No. 4378
Section A1 Z 5

Berlin NW 40, March 12, 1940

My dear Mama . . . !

The peace of the Lord be with you!

I would like to take advantage of an opportunity to write you a few lines, because every new day that dawns may be the last one for me. . . . Therefore we will not yield in the hour of decision, for this is the right way and the truth. It is His work, and He will not let it perish. It is very regrettable when many of our fellow believers stray from the right way, leave our Leader and banner, fall away from Him, begin to doubt His divine love and guidance, and thus grieve Him. Some day they will bitterly regret it and acknowledge their

wrong, but then it will perhaps be forever too late and there will be no help or salvation. They do not realize that they betray those who hold fast to God and make their battle unspeakably heavy. When a case such as mine comes before the war tribunal, they say: "The others are all convinced that they are doing their duty and do not violate their conscience and God's commandments; why can't you do the same?" It is very, very hard in such a case to defend the truth, to explain this stand to the authorities and say that we cannot do otherwise. Another reproach came upon me because of my "unteachability" and "stubbornness." These apostatized Adventists, especially the ministers, have managed to deceive the people. Through their false representations of the truth, they declare us as the criminals and the deceived ones. It is not enough that they avoid conflict and try to sail around the difficulties, but they also attempt to justify their wrong actions through words and examples from the Scriptures that are not at all applicable. These words I have seen in the long, seven-page letter of the minister, and these statements are supposedly confirmed by the Testimonies. But all this should not shake us. Truth remains truth, and what is right will remain right; and the future will reveal on which side it can be found.

... In the faith that there is a reunion, I will now close. The Lord be with you. Receive my many cordial greetings and kisses from deeply loving Papa.

Best greetings to all those who always think of me.

On March 29, 1940, Brother Psyrembel wrote his final letter to his wife and child. It reads as follows:

Greetings with 2 Cor. 4:16-18.

I have just learned that tomorrow, the 30th, at 5:00, I am to be executed. Once again I had the opportunity to strengthen myself with the Word of God for this last journey. The New Testament was brought for me to read. (But I got less food to eat.) The portions of bread are much smaller here, and in general everything is much stricter, than at Ploetzensee; but I have borne everything gladly and patiently, for I know for Whom I do all these things and I am not the first and only one to receive this fate. The Lord says: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." These words and precious promises are what keep us going in our heavy but wonderful battle. The Lord has promised His power and protection, and He is

also prepared to grant it to His children when they are in need of it. I have experienced this in all the years of my battle up to this very hour. The Lord be thanked and praised! He has kept me healthy in body and soul and has given me His joy and love in a rich measure. He will not leave me in the last hour. We shall not be sad, but happy, and regard it a privilege to suffer and die for His sake. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." He has promised, and with faith in this power and salvation I will depart from this life in the hope, my dear ones, that we shall see each other again in His kingdom, to be forever with Him who has loved us until death and has always had good intentions toward us. There we will live in the undisturbed and inseparable happiness and peace for which we have longed so much here. We shall be as such that dream and will hardly be able to comprehend the happiness that will be the portion of us sinful, unworthy creatures, who have deserved death and punishment. What a precious privilege it is to know and believe all this. And you, dear Mama, do not permit this precious treasure ever to be taken from you; trust in the Lord in all your circumstances of life, and He will be at your side and never leave you; overcome the pain and finish the race; be comforted and of good cheer.

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

Once again; and for the last time, very heartfelt greetings from your dear Papa. Best greetings also to Mother and all our dear brothers and sisters in the faith, as well as all our relatives on both your side and mine.

Gustav Psyrembel

This last testimony of faith from this courageous soldier of the cross proves how the power of God's Spirit has overcome the world according to His word: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

In the midst of a worldly Christendom which has deliberately involved itself in war and bloodshed as well as political battles among the nations during many ages – and today, in our enlightened age as

this same apostate Christendom gives a shameful testimony before other religious confessions through their mutual slaughter – we deem it a privilege to report the upholding of the pure gospel by our faithful Brother Gustav Psyrembel, who testified for Christ and a better world. This hero of faith without boasting could also say with the apostle Paul: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

His last farewell letter shows us that the Spirit of the Lord had lifted his thoughts above all deprivations, suffering and need. His eye was directed upward, far above a world that was in conflict with God. He possessed the peaceful certainty that “whosoever takes the sword shall perish by the sword,” a fact which was fulfilled literally in history in 1945, five years after his death. The cities and places where he was led into prison for his faith – where the military court sentenced him to death and where his blood was shed – were destroyed by a devastating hail of bombs, by the symbol of force, the sword; blood and tears were their harvest. As it is written: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

How many of these fearful things this soldier of the cross was spared through his faithfulness unto death for His Lord and Redeemer! In his last spiritual thought, his eye of faith looked upon the glory of Christ’s kingdom after this season of suffering so that he could write: “We shall not be sad, but happy, and regard it a privilege to suffer and die for His sake. . . . With faith in this power and salvation, I will depart from this life in the hope, my dear ones, that we shall see each other again in His kingdom, to be forever with Him who has loved us until death and has always had good intentions toward us. There we will live in the undisturbed and inseparable happiness and peace for which we have longed so much here.”

In this spirit which caused him to rise high above all things temporary in the face of death he will also be resurrected when Christ comes again, to partake of His everlasting kingdom. Therefore, all followers of Christ, “Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

“THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP.” John 10:12

In times of oppression and testing of faith, the task of spiritual leaders and shepherds of the flock consists of going courageously before the sheep. Every shepherd should be aware of the fact that he is watched closely, especially by earthly powers, whether they be regents or authorities or governments, because his behavior has a definite influence on many people, mainly on those who have been entrusted to his care. As it is said, “Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.” Zechariah 13:7.

Christian church history shows that there are irreconcilable contrasts between heavenly and earthly powers, between light and darkness. As a result of this, it has always been evident that legal requirements of earthly powers which stand in contradiction to the teachings of Christ as taught by faithful shepherds are declared void with the words, “. . . We ought to obey God rather than men.” Acts 5:29. And it is for just this reason that the shepherds are the first ones to be persecuted, imprisoned, and executed by worldly governments. This was so in the days of the apostle Paul, when, without exception, leaders were persecuted and killed; it was likewise under the heathen Roman Caesars. And in the decisive battle between the Roman state religion and Christianity, the attack of Diocletian in A. D. 303 was directed first against all clergymen. “The destruction of the church of Nicomedia (February 23, 303) was the signal for the attack. The next day the Caesar’s edict was published. All Christian officers were dismissed from the army, and all Christian officials were released from government service. Immediately a second edict was given that all ministers were to be cast into prison and forced to sacrifice. . . . All Christian churches were to be destroyed, and all sacred books of the Christians were to be burned.” (*Church History*, S. Rohm, p. 14, §6.)

As a result of the union of church and state in the days of Constantine I, the apostatized church came under the protection of the earthly powers. Persecution ceased, because the leading clergy finally adapted themselves to the powers of darkness and became unfaithful to their shepherd’s duty in exchange for earthly privileges and rights. In later times, especially in the Middle Ages, the power of the state, under the prodding of popes and prelates, was misused

to persecute mainly Bible believers such as Huss, Luther, Calvin and others, declaring them to be heretics. Innumerable faithful Christians were condemned by the tribunals of the Inquisition and were delivered to death by the arm of the state.

Apostatized ministers accused the loyal shepherds, who went before their flocks as courageous Reformers in the faith, of wanting to shine through a self-imposed martyrdom in order to draw the people's attention to themselves, and this of course would be only spiritual pride. In this way they attempted to slander the faithful ones who risked all they possessed as well as liberty and life to set a true example for the gospel's sake. And because there is nothing new under the sun, we should not wonder when the same thing occurs in our day.

HEROES OF FAITH UNDER THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE

“To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason.” –Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 136.

The prophecy of Revelation 11:18 and *Early Writings*, p. 41 was fulfilled during the conflict of the angry nations. In World War I, the angel of the church of Laodicea denied present truth insofar that the leading men of the Seventh-day Adventists, before all the world, called upon the believers in Europe to “. . . bind themselves together in these times of stress in defense of the Fatherland, and under these circumstances we will also bear arms on Saturday (Sabbath).”

In doing this, the unfaithful shepherds exchanged spiritual armor for weapons of the flesh and sought to hold the Bible in one hand and the bare sword for the shedding of blood in the other, thus partaking in the self-destruction of apostate Christendom. The result of this treason against the gospel of peace and the flock entrusted to them by Christ was revealed in their own words; 98 per cent of the Adventist denomination was affected by this apostasy. And this denial of the present truth was sanctioned by the highest leadership in 1920 with the following words: “We believe that you are complete-

ly in error concerning your position on this question. . . . What would you have said concerning Moses a few days after he received the law upon Sinai if he had told you to go and kill the King of Bashan and all the men, women and children? Would you have accused him of being a murderer? But God had commanded him to transgress the sixth commandment." (*Protocol of Friedensau*, p. 59.)

The first sentence of the above quotation claims that those who refused to participate in the First World War were in error because they refused to take part in the slaughter of the people, the destruction of towns and villages, and all the unrighteousness connected with these things. They were accused of fanaticism and were called the apostasy movements. (*Protocol*, pp. 61, 62.) However, nothing can be found written in the *Protocol of Friedensau* about what trials many a faithful fighter for truth endured with deep suffering during these four years under the persecution of warring authorities and finally because of the betrayal of unfaithful shepherds who courted the favor and sympathy of worldly state powers. To the contrary, in 1918, it was declared publicly in a newspaper, "These unprofitable elements set themselves up as preachers, and, with small results, made propaganda for their foolish ideas. They call themselves falsely preachers and Adventists; they are not; they are deceivers. When such elements shall receive their merited punishment, we will regard it, in fact, as a favor done toward us. . . ."

In this book we wish to remember our heroes of the third angel's message with thankfulness, for through their unshakable loyalty in the midst of cowardice and treason, surrounded by many difficulties from inside and out, the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement was founded. The experiences they made in times of war and persecution led to their giving a clear testimony before the authorities in World War II, as a witness against these authorities and the nations.

REPORT OF THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST REFORM MOVEMENT BEFORE AND AFTER WORLD WAR II

In the years 1919-1926/27, the central office of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement in Germany was moved to Isernhagen, near Hannover. The work progressed everywhere, in Germany as well as abroad. But when the totalitarian regime of the National Socialists came to power in 1933, a difficult time again began for the believers. The required coordination in the service of earthly and national interests presented to us many decisive conscientious problems. The leading men of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement in Germany as well as in other countries were convinced, mostly because of personal experiences and battles of faith during World War I, that on the basis of the Bible and Testimonies we cannot at any time participate in political struggles or national or international quarrels. Therefore it was not long before principally the leading men in Germany were called to testify before party bosses and organs of the state government. Because of the unmerciful election propaganda and the pressure to take part in and become members of the party, etc., all under the symbol of the sunwheel, hardly anyone was spared from showing his colors.

For many Adventists, the time had come – they would now have a foretaste of the future struggles of which time one testimony says: "It is in the time of conflict that the true colors should be flung to the breeze. It is then that the standard-bearers need to be firm and let their true position be known. It is then that the skill of every true soldier for the right is tested. Shirkers can never wear the laurels of victory. Those who are true and loyal will not conceal the fact, but will put heart and might into the work, and venture their all in the struggle, let the battle turn as it will." – *Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 272.

Our elder brother in Christ, Otto Welp, who in the First World War had suffered four years of persecution for his faith, was one of the first leaders to give a clear testimony that we could not take part in politics, nor in direct or indirect military service, because the teachings of Christ forbid this and the believers were to be instructed along this line. Everywhere, especially the leading brethren of the Reform Movement gave the same testimony in word and in

writing. Consequently, as early as April 29, 1936, the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement was outlawed. We reproduce the letter to Elder Welp, which read as follows:

*The Political Police Commander
of the Countries
Prussian Secret State Police
B.-Nr. II 1 B 1 - S. 213/36*

Berlin SW 11, April 29, 1936

*To Mr. Otto Welp
Bad Godesberg
Rheinallee 56 II*

In accordance with Section 1 of the People's Ordinance of the Reich's President for the protection of the people and the state of February 28, 1933 (Reich's Law Publication I, p. 83), the sect "Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement" is herewith dissolved and prohibited in the whole of the German Reich. Their property is confiscated.

Actions contrary to this ordinance will be punished in accordance with Section 4 of the People's Ordinance of February 28, 1933.

Reasons: The "Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement" pursues goals under the cover of religious activities that are contrary to the world vision of National Socialism. The members of this sect refuse to perform military service and give the German salute. They openly declare that they know no Fatherland but are internationally oriented and regard all men as their brethren.

Because the stand of this sect is liable to create confusion among the population, its dissolution was necessary for the protection of people and state.

Representative: (Signed) Heydrich

*

The president of our East German Union, Brother Johann Hanselmann, who lived at that time in Saxony, near Dresden, was arrested in September of 1936. Based on the decision of September 29, 1939, the Attorney General ruled that the trial against him was to be at the cost of the state. Nevertheless he was further held in custody in the police prison at Dresden.



Johann Hanselmann

The Secret State Police had decreed the following on January 27, 1937:

“In connection with the drives against the leaders and ministers, as well as colporteurs, of the Reformed Church of the Seventh-day Adventists, the current leader for East Germany, Johannes Hanselmann, born 5/1/1892 in Frankenberg (Wuerttemberg), last living at Langebrueck (Dresden County), Adolf Hitler Street 9, has also been taken into custody for investigation under 16 Js 2796/36.”

On March 23, 1937, the Attorney General and Chief of the prosecution for the special court of Saxony at Freiburg issued a warrant for the arrest of Hanselmann, Johann Georg, Minister. He was accused as follows:

“He drove through the following territories with his car—Saxony, Brandenburg, Pomerania, Silesia, and East Prussia—visited the followers of this sect, held Bible studies, celebrated the Lord’s

Supper according to the rite of the prohibited sect, and accepted monies that had been gathered.

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

These were the “crimes” of which Brother Hanselmann was accused. For this reason he was put in prison at Dresden until October 2, 1937. As a faithful shepherd, he served the flock entrusted to him in the midst of all dangers and obstacles, gave them “the bread of life,” and strengthened them in the faith, impressing upon them that “through many trials we must enter into the kingdom of God.”

Shortly after this, he was again arrested. At Halle/Saale the second trial against him was begun. The accusation read as follows:

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

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

The reasons given in this document of accusation as quoted above show clearly that the leading brethren of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement were not willing to deny the doctrine of peace as found in the gospel, which is valid for all nations; they would not deny it even when they were persecuted, imprisoned, and executed for their stand. The good shepherd goes before his sheep as a good example, for what would become of the sheep if they were left without protection in the midst of ravenous wolves? Alas, it was just in this regard that the leading clergy of the nominal Christians and the responsible men of the great Advent Movement failed, as is unmistakably shown in the above writ of accusation.

Later, in the main session of the special court at Halle/Saale, several brothers and sisters of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement were brought forward as co-defendants and also as witnesses against Brother Hanselmann. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Also the court costs were given him to pay.

When the two-year term ended, his pocket watch and some personal belongings were sent to his wife. In a letter, Brother Hanselmann wrote very briefly: *"Now the worst is yet to come. I am being transported to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen."*

About the middle of May 1942, his wife received the report that her husband had fallen sick of dysentery and died in the concentration camp. That was the last official notice.

A prisoner who was in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen later reported that Brother Hanselmann had refused to go to work on Sabbath morning, and therefore he was pulled up by his hands, which were tied behind his back, and this caused him to choke to death.

So this faithful gospel servant's life ended as he fought for the present truth. He did not forsake the souls that were in his care but served them, surrounded by many dangers and much suffering, and was faithful until death. We should be thankful to God that He has given us such conscientious men as shepherds of His flock for an example.

*

To continue this report, further testimonies of Twentieth Century martyrs who had to seal their faith with death follow.

“THEY LOVED NOT THEIR LIVES UNTO DEATH”

Brother Golanczik, 51 years old

Brother Golanczik was employed by a coal dealer and delivered coal to customers. One Friday in November 1943, he was driving his coal truck, and shortly before sunset he was supposed to deliver yet another load; but he refused to transgress the Sabbath commandment and be unfaithful to his God. This was reported to the secret police, and he was called to answer for his deed. He declared that he could not violate his conscience and transgress the fourth commandment. As a result, he was taken to a detention camp, where he had to endure much pain and torture. Again and again he was summoned to work on the Sabbath, which he refused to do. Finally, after he was tortured many times in the concentration camp, he was thrown into water which was at freezing temperatures and then pulled out again. This was repeated over and over again until death finally freed him from such suffering.

*



Stanislaw Rohloff

Brother Stanislaw Rohloff, 50 years old

Brother Rohloff was president of the work in Poland. He was a tailor by trade and was known as a just man. He was loved by all his fellow believers because of his sincere devotion and his self-sacrificing labor for the flock which was entrusted to him. In 1944,

he was arrested by the secret police and delivered to Mauthausen concentration camp, where he was tortured to death.

*

Brother Bogdan Rohloff, 21 years old

Shortly after the father was arrested, the Gestapo also took the son to the same camp where his father was. Young Brother Rohloff was also a tailor by trade and worked in a ready-to-wear tailor shop. The Gestapo demanded that he also work on Sabbath, which he refused to do. He determined to remain faithful to his confession of faith and declared: "I will not yield one inch." Then he was beaten half to death and thrown out in the courtyard, where he lay semi-conscious. As he lay there so helpless, not far from death, his father happened to pass by, recognized him, and encouraged him to endure. They poured cold water over him to revive him, and again and again he was questioned and examined by the Gestapo, whether or not he would be willing to work on the Sabbath. He consistently refused. Thereupon he was transported to the Dachau concentration camp, where he had to endure many trials. However, he was liberated by the Americans when they rapidly took over. Sick and diseased, he returned home.

*

Brother Tomasz Slachetka, 51 years old

In 1944, our dear brother and father Slachetka was arrested at the age of 51. He worked for a construction firm and was forced to work on Sabbath, even though he made up his lost hours on Sunday. His employer told him that the Gestapo would come and see for themselves whether he would work on the Sabbath. Consequently, when Brother Slachetka did not go to work on Sabbath, he was picked up the following Monday by the Gestapo. He was taken into a camp, where he was tortured terribly because he steadfastly refused to work on Sabbath. A basket lined with barbed wire was placed over him and he had to crouch naked under this basket. The other prisoners were forced to jump over this basket, which only few could do. Often he had to spend entire nights under the basket, and during the day he was forced to work. After repeatedly refusing to work on the Sabbath,



Thomasz Slachetka

on one particular Sabbath, they hung two sandbags on him – one in the front and one in the back – and then they chased him with a whip until he collapsed. When this brother continued to remain faithful to God and his confession of faith, he was taken to the Grossrosen concentration camp. In this camp, the most horrible and cruel tortures were inflicted upon him. But Brother Slachetka remained firm, and also in this camp he refused to work on the Sabbath. His son, Aleksy Slachetka, was brought to this same camp for the same reasons. The elder Brother Slachetka was then undressed, bound, and cast into the courtyard. His son had to watch while the father was cruelly tortured as a Kapo (policeman) jumped on his chest until it collapsed. Brother Slachetka was mercifully delivered in death from the torture of such indescribable pain.

*

Brother Aleksy Slachetka, 21 years old

This young brother worked for the same construction company as his father. The same Monday that his father was arrested, the son was also picked up by the Gestapo, because he too had refused to work on the Sabbath. He had to suffer the same tortures that were inflicted upon his father. One Sabbath, as he again refused to work, he was put in a dark cellar, which was filled to the height of his knees with corroding excrement mixed with chemicals. Four days and nights he had to remain there without bread or water. When he

was taken out of this cellar, he was forced to walk back to his barracks and then received a piece of bread. On the way, he met a fellow prisoner who had to go to the cellar for seven days. Brother Slachetka gave his fellow sufferer his piece of bread; however, he received a small piece of bread from the other prisoners in the camp, so his mercy was rewarded. Back in the camp, he discovered that the flesh fell off his bones, and he was no longer able to work. Then he was taken to the Grossrosen concentration camp, where he had to remain until November in his sick condition. However, because this camp had no gas chambers, he was transported with other sick people to Dachau; the journey lasted 14 days. They were transported in a closed cattle car. But young Brother Slachetka did not reach Dachau. On the way, he and many other inmates, overcome by the terrible tortures and hunger, died.

*

Sister Bronislawa Slachetka, 23 years old

Brother and Sister Slachetka's daughter worked in a state nursery. On February 10, 1944, she was arrested by the Gestapo because she refused to work on the Sabbath. She was imprisoned in the same camp where her father and brother were at first. From there she was transported to the concentration camp at Ravensbrueck. Again in this camp she fought for the Sabbath and remained firm and faithful to her God and to the faith committed to her. She was taken into a punishment cell block and was told that if she could stand all the punishment given her there she would get the Sabbath free. The Lord gave her grace, and she did get Sabbath free. But she was not released from the camp. Instead, she was taken with other prisoners in a cattle car past Berlin into Russia and another camp. Only few reached the destination. Many were taken starved or frozen from the car. But Sister Slachetka was supported by God's grace, and the Lord gave her strength. Because the front came closer and closer, the prisoners had to march 30 kilometers every day until the liberation came on May 8, 1945. The Lord gave this sister grace so that she could survive all this and tell others that the Lord has done great things for her.

*

Sister Maria Slachetka

One of the greatest martyrs was the mother of the Slachetka family. She was forced to give up her husband and breadwinner, son, and daughter. Often she was taken from her home by the Gestapo, interrogated, and exhorted that she should encourage her husband and children to work on the Sabbath, for then she would get them back. But she would rather see them face death than encourage them to fall away from their faith. Therefore she answered, "They are old enough; let them decide for themselves." Until her life's end, she remained a faithful Reformer for her God. Her heartfelt wish on her deathbed was that her remaining children would be as faithful to God as were her husband and her son.

*

Brother Victor Pacha, 26 years old

Victor Pacha received his draft call to military service in 1941. Because it was his conviction that he should be faithful to God's commandments and the testimony of Jesus Christ, he refused to enter military service. He was taken to prison at Breslau. From here he was transported to Halle/Saale, and there he met a good friend and brother in the faith, Guenther Pietz. Shortly before that, in Breslau, a minister from the large Adventist Church (Gomolla) was sent to him, and this man asked him, "Brother, what are you doing here? We are in Egypt and not yet in Canaan, and we must bend under the staff." But Brother Pacha rejected this counsel and remained firm.

*

Brother Guenther Pietz

In 1941, Guenther Pietz, whom we just mentioned previously, was taken to Camp Auschwitz because of his refusal to work on the Sabbath. He was 16 or 17 years old when he was arrested. In the camp, he had to work hard and fought for the Sabbath. After six weeks he was released for a short time. His parents, brothers and sisters did not recognize him; they all cried when they saw the thin young man. For about one year he was able to rejoice in freedom, but then he was drafted for the labor service, where he remained for three weeks. During this time, he visited believers, strengthened



Guenther Pietz

himself, and rejoiced with them in the truth. Then he received a draft call for the military service and was taken to Halle, where he met Brother Pacha, his good friend and fellow believer. Both took up the battle and refused to do military service. At the command of Himmler, both Brother Victor Pacha and Brother Guenther Pietz were shot to death on one day because of their faithful endurance. Both were good friends in life and in death, and both remained firm in their confession of faith.

Here are two letters from Guenther Pietz to his parents:

*W. U. G. Berlin-Tegel
Seidelstrasse 39, Abtg. 10
Aktz. 1 164/43 R. K. G.*

Tegel, August 15, 1943

Dear Parents!

The peace of the Lord be with you!

I can now report to you that up to this hour I am healthy in body and soul. That which you sent me I received with much joy on the 4th of this month. Your letter, which likewise made me very happy, I received a day later. And now, dear Parents, I must tell you. I know that this will be sad news for you; it is that I appeared before the court on August 6. You can imagine what was spoken there. In any case, I have spoken the words which the Lord has put in my mouth. The judgment that was pronounced over me was the death sentence. And now, dear Father and Mother, I ask that you not shed one tear for

my sake; for the hope, love and happiness which I had before I left home I still have now. And when sadness creeps up on me, I pray, as the publican did, "Lord, be merciful unto me, a sinner." Who will stand before God? Only he who has a pure heart. Therefore, dear parents, please forgive me for all the things that were not right which I did in my youth. Because of the death sentence, I do not allow myself to dwell on discouraging thoughts, for I know the Lord is with me; I have never had such peace and rest in my heart as just in these last days. My prayer is still that the Lord will change the hearts of the government. I forgot to write in my last letter about visiting. First, you must have permission from the war tribunal. Second, it doesn't make sense to travel such a great distance in order to speak with me for just a few minutes. It is my wish that we will be inseparable on the earth made new. This is all I have to report right now; I expect a reply from you. Do not worry, dear Parents. Before the execution, I will still have another court session. And in case I am not able to write any more, then these should be my last greetings to you, dear Father and Mother, and also at the same time to my sister. Do not forget to give my best greetings to all the dear ones in the Lord.

The Lord be with you all. Amen.

Guenther!

Dear Parents!

Halle, September 27, 1943

The peace of God be with you as a greeting!

I thank you for your letter and the postcard, which I have received from Posen. It made me very happy. Until this moment I am well physically and spiritually. Right now I am at Halle, where the execution is to take place. I know that this will be a very sad tidings for you. Do not weep for me; I will be well taken care of. When our Saviour comes to redeem us, we shall rejoice. And it is my wish, dear parents, to see you there. Nothing should separate us from the love of God. May the Lord forgive us all the sins we have committed in our lives. Him only can we exalt and praise. Send my little sister heartfelt greetings in the Lord. (Note: This sister was at the time in an educational institution, because the parents did not send her to school on the Sabbath.) In this last letter I wish you, dear Parents, God's richest blessings and everything good. Remain faithful to the Lord, for He will one day bring us into the blessed rest and joy and glory.

My very best greetings! Give them also to all relatives and acquaintances. They also should not lose their faith in our Lord. Especially hearty greetings and kisses I am sending to Alexe. Even though our last days of companionship were short, yet they were a source of great joy for me. Also heartfelt greetings and kisses for Bogdan. Yes, I love all brothers and sisters very much. This is all I have to write. And right now I send my cordial greetings and kisses to you, my dear Father and my dear Mother, and also to my sister. Greetings to you once more.

Your son Guenther

*

Brother Salamon Sadowski

This brother was about 35 years old when he came from Rumania. There he had spent four years in prison because he had refused to do military duty and did not want to transgress the fourth and sixth commandments. He was thankful to God that he could enjoy freedom, for after he was released from prison he would have been arrested again, because he should have reported for military service. He was so thankful to his God for liberty that he worked as a colporteur and Bible worker for his Saviour, to bring others to the faith for which he had stood firm and fought. However, because of his Jewish parentage, a new trial was in store for him. The SS searched for every Jew. The believers of the Reform Movement had made plans to send him to Palestine, but these could not be carried out. He found work as a laborer in the fields of a brother in the faith from the big church. But the SS found him, led him and the brother for whom he worked out to the farmyard, and shot both to death. It was in 1942 that this dear brother laid down his life for his Saviour. The farmer and brother who employed him and thus risked his life will be rewarded abundantly on the day when Jesus returns and brings the reward for every faithful soul.

*

Today the Reform Movement's right of existence may be questioned, but the history of the Reformation is written with the blood of faithful witnesses for the faith. Therefore it is of God. What is the mark of identification of the remnant? They keep the commandments

of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. They are the ones who, in spite of persecution and struggle, live out their faith. The Spirit of prophecy writes of the remnant: "God has a church on earth who are lifting up the down-trodden law, and presenting to the world the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. . . .

"There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach, and making up the hedge, building up the old waste places; . . .

"Let all be careful not to make an outcry against the only people who are fulfilling the description given of the remnant people who keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus, who are exalting the standard of righteousness in these last days." —*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 50, 57, 58.

This testimony was written in 1893. However, what happened to the church in 1914, when the test came? Who were the ones that stood firm in the breach, making up the hedge, and building up the waste places? What happened during the last World War, and who were the ones that kept the commandments of God and the faith in Jesus? In Hebrews 10:38, it is written: "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Betrayed by their own brethren and all alone, these faithful followers of Christ had to live out their faith. The truth was not held by the mass who yielded, but by these few who stood loyal to the truth.

During the reign of Hitler, when the faithful witnesses for their faith from the ranks of the Reform Movement fought a good battle for God, the Seventh-day Adventists conformed to the tyrannical Hitler regime; they broke the Sabbath and fought under the banner of the swastika.

How many faithful believers in the Reform Movement fought for truth under such deep suffering and pain during this period! Children were taken away from their parents and taken to educational institutions because the parents did not permit them to attend school on the Sabbath. How many tears were shed by mothers when they knew that their sons were buried alive in the concentration camps under this tyranny of Hitler and finally received the news of their death! These mothers knew that their sons had not died in the way they were told they did but that they had been tortured to death. All these sufferings could be borne only through the strength of God's power.

In the book *Education*, the deeds of faith of many heroes of the gospel in Biblical times are enumerated. Then it says further: "Such examples are not found in the Bible only. They abound in every record of human progress. The Vaudois and the Huguenots, Wycliffe and Huss, Jerome and Luther, Tyndale and Knox, Zinzendorf and Wesley, with multitudes of others, have witnessed to the power of God's word against human power and policy in support of evil. These are the world's true nobility. This is its royal line." —*Education*, pp. 254, 255.

When the Romanists in Luther's day despised the work of Reformation and looked down on him because he had only a small group around him, he answered these objections like this: "I do not say that I am a prophet; but this I say, that they should fear just because I am alone, while on the side of the oppressor there are large numbers, castes, wealth and derisive letters. Yes, I am alone; but I stand highly, because the Word of God is on my side; and with all the boasted numbers, this, the greatest of all powers, is not with them."

Today one may speak just as mockingly about the Reform Movement, but one thing is certain: The truth is on their side, and that is the greatest power. They are the ones who lived a life of faith in times of test and trial.

When the General Conference committee sessions took place in 1920 at Friedensau, the Reform Movement brethren declared in closing: "Here are brethren who were in prison three years for the Lord. Some died in prison and gave a good testimony for Jesus Christ. Should not our message further educate such soldiers of the cross? But when is this possible? The message should be preached in all clearness, that a separate people, a united people, battles under the banner of the Lord and will carry off the victory." —*Protocol*, p. 56.

The Reform Movement has as its goal the education of such soldiers of the cross, and the fruits were the faithful witnesses during the rule of Hitler.

"The deeper the night for God's people, the more brilliant the stars." —*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 81. The stars that shine during the day have no value, for they cannot be seen. But those stars that shine in the darkness are the ones that show us the way.

God requires nothing more than faithfulness. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." 1 Cor. 4:2. We are not recognized by God because we are many in number, but only

when we live out our faith. "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear." Rom. 11:20.

The stand of a church in times of peace is not conclusive, but only when it faces a crisis. Then we can see who and how many are the faithful ones we have journeyed with on the pilgrimage. The "remnant" were always the few who proved themselves faithful. In Israel's wilderness journey, in the Babylonian exile, in the days of Jesus and the apostles, it was always only a small company through whom the Lord did great things.

*

Brother Willy Thaumann, Danzig, born in 1906

This brother was brought to the truth through the canvassing work. He owned a hardware store. He had a pure and sincere character, and in living out the truth he knew no compromises. He suffered much from the ever-increasing National Socialism, which turned the truth into a lie. He saw it as his duty to confess his stand very publicly, and in spite of a well-meaning warning from a friendly policeman, he kept his business closed on Sabbath. On the door of his store he had the Sabbath commandment attached and proclaimed the truth in this way.

Brother Thaumann's faithfulness to the fourth and sixth commandments led him, through the agency of the Gestapo, to the concentration camp at Oranienburg, where he was murdered in 1941 because of his irrevocable confession of God and His sacred truth.

*

Brother Zeiss

This brother was locked in a prison, where he was often beaten black and blue because of his refusal to work on the Sabbath day. Because he could not be moved to yield his position—for he did not want to become unfaithful to his Lord and Saviour—he was transported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

There he laid down his life for his faith.

*

Here is a letter from our dear Sister Muench; it is a great testimony:

My dear Brethren and Sisters in the Lord! Mannheim, Oct. 9, 1964

Peace be unto you!

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

In our village there was a woman interested in the Truth who visited us quite often and whose husband was with the SA (Socialist Workers' Party). Her husband became so angry about her visits that he brought the matter to the attention of the party. It was not long before my husband was arrested and taken away, while my children, who were then ten and five years old, cried so hard at the separation that my heart almost broke. For nearly two weeks we could hardly eat because of this terrible event. The Gestapo demanded that I furnish all the addresses of our fellow believers, but since I refused to give them this information, they left with the remark, "We shall keep your husband until you will give us the other addresses." This was in November 1936. On April 19, 1937, a trial was held before a special court at Mannheim. We were then sentenced (there were 15 of us), and the longest prison term, seven months, was received by our church leader and my husband, while the shortest term was four weeks. The interested lady, of whom I previously spoke, also received four weeks. My husband had already been in custody for five months, and this was counted, so that he had to spend two more months at Bruchsal. I received ten weeks. We were supposed to spend this time simultaneously, and no one was concerned about the children. The Nazis threatened that if I would not send my children to school on Sabbath the children would also be taken away from me. Since my ten-year-old daughter was sick, I was permitted to spend my sentence after my husband returned. When he was released in July, I went to prison in August. We received solitary confinement, and a new struggle began in prison in regard to the Sabbath and also the

food that was served. Because he did not work on nine Sabbaths during the two months, my husband received 26 days of confinement. He received only bread and water and was led into an even darker cell with only a wooden bench to sleep on.

They made it somewhat easier for the sisters. Since I did not work on the Sabbath, I received two days of confinement, was led into the darker cell, and had to take off many things, such as my apron, shoes, hairpins, etc. — things with which one could perhaps commit suicide. This was on Sabbath and Sunday. Now, my dear brethren and sisters, how do you think I felt? Wonderful! Man becomes accustomed to anything; and as I was not permitted to sing loudly, I sang quietly, “I have a peace within my heart, which makes me very happy,” and another song, “Cut loose from all the earthly things, and filled with things eternal, I find here the blessed peace that satisfies the soul’s desire.” The experiences I made there, although hard and severe, were wonderful. It was difficult to resist these mighty powers, yet I would not have missed these experiences for anything. When I was first taken in, the lady who was supervisor scolded me terribly when she discovered that I belonged to the Adventists. She said that on Sabbath there was work to do and I had to obey or I would never return home. I was very downcast as I stood there deathly pale, while the tears rolled down my cheeks. But when she finished with the words, “There are two more of your people here, and they are my best people in the whole house,” the sun appeared again and laughed into my heart. I stood solidly in my conviction, saying quietly to myself, To these believers I belong also. She will not see me give up the Sabbath.

Since I was faithful in standing up for the Sabbath, the supervisor said after several weeks, “You are a real Communist!”

I answered her, “Miss Boehler, since when do Communists believe in God?”

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

The battle began again when my husband received his draft papers at the beginning of the War in 1939. He ignored them, although he received six orders to appear. In March 1940, he was again arrested. The reason given was that he did not respond to the Hitler salute. After spending two months in prison pending trial, he was taken to the concentration camp at Dachau. He bore everything heroically;

at times he wrote to me, and I could gather from various phrases how he was; for instance, he would write, "We hope that the severity of the winter will soon be past." I knew the meaning of these words. From Dachau he was transferred to the concentration camp at Neuengamme, near Hamburg. From there he wrote letters full of joyfulness in the Lord, and he always hoped to meet again with his loved ones. In every letter his chief concern was his children. I received the last word he wrote at the end of February 1945, shortly before the Americans marched into Mannheim. Our hope and his to have him among us again ended after we waited and waited for news about him, which never came. I never received an official statement. In 1948, I heard from a man, who supposedly was with him to the last, that he died of starvation. Eternity will reveal it. May the Lord give me strength to endure unto the end and then experience the blessed promise of 1 Thess. 4:16-18.

Yes, dear brethren and sisters in the Lord, I would call upon you all to step into the fiery trials as into the water of the Jordan, and the Lord will still perform the same miracles as He did for the children of Israel then. "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: For He maketh sore, and bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." Job 5:17-19.

I greet you all cordially as your fellow pilgrim to Zion.

Sister A. Muench, Mannheim



Alfred Muench

When one time during a canvassing campaign I sold the book "Auf Gottes Wegen" ("In the Ways of God") to an old woman of Hassloch and told her that I was an Adventist, she asked me if I knew a certain Brother Muench. I said that I knew his wife and children very well. She then asked where he was, and I told her that he had perished for his faith in a concentration camp. When she heard this, tears welled up in her eyes, for 30 years before Brother Muench had given this woman Bible studies. As I went on down the street, I thought of Brother Muench, who had gone from house to house down the same street many years before. I thanked God that He had given this dear brother strength to endure to the end, and I prayed that I too might have this strength to remain faithful, so that one day I can meet him on the streets of gold.

Our dear Sister Muench fell asleep in the Lord in November 1965. In her last letter she wrote: "I lay everything in the hands of the great Physician; however He leads, it is good. I thank Him alone, for He has led me wonderfully, has cared for me, and kept me up to this day; and I am sure that He will do it until the end of my life. May God bless you is the wish of your ever grateful and loving Sister Muench."

*

From the *Munich Evening News* of April 21, 1955, we take the following report:

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

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

Yesterday, 16 years later, Zrenner's son stood before the Examination Committee for Conscientious Objectors at the Selective Service Local Munich 1. He also refused, like his father, to take a weapon in

his hands for the war. He will never have to do it, for the Committee recognized him as a Conscientious Objector. "The human life is untouchable, therefore I cannot conscientiously kill innocent people," Werner Zrenner declared before the members of the Examination Committee. "I probably will have to bear the consequences just as my father did 16 years ago."

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

"BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH!"

Further Martyrs from Austria

The golden thread of loyal, sincere believers reaches to our own days, when three brothers and one sister from the church of Klagenfurt were killed for their faith during Hitler's reign. They laid down their lives joyfully and in full consciousness of their love for their Saviour and His pure and true teachings.

Sister Maritschnig

This sister was the widow of a tailor, and Brother Ranacher managed the tailor shop after her husband's death. In the home of Sister Maritschnig, Brother Ranacher became acquainted with the truth of the Reformation, which he accepted with all his heart. The authorities, at the instigation of Brother Ranacher's relatives, accused Sister Maritschnig of having led Brother Ranacher to this faith and brought her to court. At the trial, Sister Maritschnig was so roughly addressed and accused that she fainted. Then she was carried from the courtroom. The believers looked for her in the hospital, believing that she had been taken there, but this was wrong. Soon the report came that she had been transported to Munich

and not long thereafter, after cruel tortures, had been gassed in Auschwitz. The following documents, although they do not indicate the true cause of her death, show that our sister in the faith was murdered in the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Concentration Camp Auschwitz

A

Commando, Section II

Az.: 14 f/10/1942

Auschwitz, October 9, 1942

In reference to: Maria Maritschnig

Relatives: None

Enclosures: 1 death certificate

To Mr. Mathias Winkler, Klausen b. Feldkirchen, Klagenfurt County

Your sister, Maria Maritschnig, born March 26, 1884, died on September 25, 1942, in the above named hospital as the result of acute stomach and intestinal flu. The remains were cremated in the state crematory. In case you wish to receive the urn with ashes of the deceased, you should remit a certificate from the cemetery authorities in your county. This certificate should indicate that a place for burial is available there. As soon as the certificate has been received, the urn will be sent free of charge to the cemetery authorities. These authorities will be notified at the time of sending. The certificate of death is herewith enclosed.

The Leader of Section II

Signed, SS-Under Officer of Storm Battalion

Death Certificate

(Registrar's Office, Auschwitz No. 32669/1942)

Maria Maritschnig, maiden name Winkler, believing in God, residing at Feldkirchen, Bahnhofstrasse No. 37, died on September 25, 1942, at 4:00 p.m., at Auschwitz, Kasernenstrasse. The deceased was born March 26, 1884, at Elbling, Feldkirchen County, Kaernten. Father: Mathias Winkler. Mother: Apolonia Winkler, maiden name Putzi, last residing at Villach. The deceased was the widow of Edmund Maritschnig.

Auschwitz, October 8, 1942

The Registrar

Signed in representation: Signature

Brother Ranacher

This brother was called into the military service, but in loyal obedience to God he refused to put on the military uniform. His words were that he could not serve two masters and pledge allegiance to both. He further stated that he had pledged allegiance to His Saviour and this promise he could not break. He died as a martyr for his faith.

*

Brother Blasi

Brother Blasi also gave his life for his conviction and his Lord. He left five orphaned children behind, for his wife had already died.

*

Still other believers spent years in prisons and concentration camps. They were treated cruelly; they had to endure hunger, thirst, cold and beatings, because they could not transgress the holy Sabbath day for their consciences' sake.

*

Brother Anton Brugger, born April 9, 1911, in Kaprun (Salzburg)

Anton Brugger's fiancée, Esther, writes the following account: Baptized in the Woerthersee (near Klagenfurt, Austria) in 1922, Anton was ever since that time a very lively and active member of the Reformed Church. In spite of his youth, he revealed a great zeal for the truth and had at the same time a humble spirit. He never spoke in a derogatory way about others; an angry or critical word never fell from his lips. His speech was pure and without dialect. He was tall, always happy, companionable, and ready to help.

At the outbreak of the war in 1939, he succeeded in fleeing to Italy, where I met him when he came one Sabbath to the large Adventist Church meeting at Triest. He brought me the truth of Reformation, which I was permitted to give also to others. After many trials and with God's help, the first Reform groups were established at Triest and at the same time at Milano. After two days, Brother Brugger returned to Milano and Genoa, where he tried (Italy having not yet entered the war) to get a ship to the United States. However, this



Anton Brugger

was not to be his fate. During a short stop at Milano, where Brother Mueller had also come to instruct us in the message of Reformation, he was arrested by the police and, after being held in custody for one month, was returned to Austria (then under German rule). At this occasion, he wrote to me about the journey to Brenner – escorted by police. In the pages of his Sabbath School Lesson were the following sentences, which he sent to me, along with all his books by Sister White, before he crossed the Italian border; he did this so the German authorities would not get possession of them. They would have destroyed them. Up until today, they still remain in my possession as a heritage.

In Austria he was employed for some months as a baker. During this time, we were in the process of obtaining the documents with ancestry, etc., for our anticipated wedding. However, just when we had these papers ready, he was called to bear arms. After he had refused to bear them, he was called before the military court at Salzburg and was condemned to two years of prison in a concentration camp.

At that time I was in Italy and proclaimed there the glorious Reformation message. One time I was permitted to visit Brother Brugger in the Dieburg Camp (Germany). This visit was a very painful and short visit for both of us. At the end of the two years, he was again drafted for the service. After giving a clear testimony for the present truth, he was taken before the war tribunal at Berlin and finally was condemned to death as a conscientious objector. (See the attorney's letter to Anton Brugger's mother.)

Here are the sentences Anton Brugger wrote in his Sabbath School Lesson:

Sunday, June 16, 1940, while traveling on the train

My dear Esther!

When you receive these books, I will already be in Germany. While I write these lines, I am in the company of two policemen on the train from Milano between Verona and Bolzano, on my way to Brenner. Unfortunately they did not let me go. I believe that if Italy had not become engaged in the war I would have had a better chance. Well, the Lord's will be done; I take it all from His hand as it comes. I have received your dear letter but not the money. Please write to Brother Settembrini; in case he might have left it somewhere for me, he should pick it up again, because I have not received it. If I would have left you immediately on Tuesday, everything would have been different. But I wanted to wait until Brother Mueller came back, and so fate overtook me and the poor believers there. Sabbath evening I visited two sisters, and as I came into the house, there were four officers there who searched the house and took me into custody too. The porter's wife had informed the police, because she believed that political meetings were being held. Unfortunately, these sisters had many books from the Jehovah's Witnesses in their home, which they used to sell, and this was not good. Well, after four weeks they are returning me to Germany, because I have no papers and because they have found out that I was already deported once before.

In all the storms and trials that now come over us, the Lord is with us as long as we remain faithful to the precious truth, fight for it, and defend it. The nations have become angry and soon the wrath of God will come. This war will also end one day, and then a short time of peace will come, in order that God's people can prepare themselves for the battle with the beast, which will become great through this war! Only a few years, and then the battle will come to an end and the Saviour will come to reward those who have fought the good fight. Therefore, let us battle courageously and endure to the end. Victory is ours!

My dear Esther, in spite of everything, we must not become weak. When I am returned to Germany now, the Lord in His mercy can guide everything so that all will be well in the end. Now we must have patience and remember that many believers all over the earth, but especially in Europe, are now having great difficulties. Now is the

time when everyone is tested, whether he will be loyal in all circumstances to the truth. Pray for me, my darling, that the Lord may be gracious unto me in the coming trials. As soon as it is possible, I will write you again. Have courage and be comforted, my darling; do your duty quietly, and most of all do your best to bring the truth of Reformation to others and to defend it. Then the Lord will bless you and He will make all things well with me also. I will carry you always in my heart, and the thought of you and your love will give me much comfort and strength.

In case we really would not see each other again upon this earth, then we still have the wonderful hope of meeting at the Lord's throne, where we do not need to separate any more. The Lord bless you, my darling, and may the Lord give you strength for all things. With many thousand loving greetings and kisses.

Your Anton

Write to Brother Mueller and greet him cordially for me. I greet all dear believers! They should pray for me. Greet especially the ones in Milano. The Lord willing, we shall see each other perhaps at Klagenfurt. Maybe the Lord intends for me to give a testimony here and there for the truth, and that is why I am going back. Have confidence and trust, my darling.

The following are the last letters from Brother Anton Brugger:

Letter No. 1

My Darling!

Berlin-Tegel, December 17, 1942

I have received with joy all your welcome letters. It is always a special blessing when I receive some ones from you. I believe the same will be true for you. I hope that you will soon be able to go to your dear parents. Or are you perhaps already there? As for me, I am sorry that I cannot tell you anything encouraging. As you probably already know from Mother, I was called suddenly into the army and then came into difficulties because of my special conviction. A trial was started against me, and the main session will take place on January 18, 1943.

In case you are already here and want to visit me, please do not come before the new year. Then Ida Blieberger will also have time to come with you; she knows her way better around Berlin and can be very helpful. How I would like to give you better news, and my heart

presses me to tell you heartfelt words; but you know without many words that you have a special place in my heart. The future we simply have to lay in the hands of God, and take it the way it comes. I wish your dear parents and brothers a richly blessed new year. The same also for you and all loved ones. Write me when you are at home, and do not be sad, my darling. Greeting and kissing you with deep love,

Your Anton

Letter No. 2

My dearest Treasure!

When you receive these lines, I most likely will no longer be among the living. How everything turned out this way, you probably will have already learned from Mother. Yes, there was no other way open to me if I wanted to remain faithful to my convictions. If, because of this, our hope of being united here on earth is not fulfilled, we still have the much more glorious certainty of meeting at the Lord's coming, never to be separated again. Therefore, my dear, do not be sad about this hard trial, but look joyfully and with confidence into the everlasting glory. Even if all this is so bitter, yet we must accept it all patiently from the hand of the Lord, for the way He guides and leads will finally serve for our best. If we want to be with our Saviour in His glory, we must also be willing to suffer here with Him. The way to paradise goes over Calvary. But the world cannot understand that true victory consists of submission. How astonished and frightened the poor people will be when the Saviour appears in majesty in the heavens at the judgment. There a complete change of all values will take place. There they will acknowledge, but too late, what the actual meaning of this battle of life was; and they will bitterly regret having neglected to do the right thing. But even when the world is in such a terrible confusion and darkness, we should not lose the goal from sight but should follow the Lord wherever He may lead us. It is our duty to reveal the sin-forgiving Saviour to the world and to invite the people to be reconciled with God. Even if the people in this world do not understand or even if they misjudge the motives for our actions and deeds, this should not discourage us from doing good. I know in whom and what I have believed, and I am certain that the Lord will not make my hope ashamed. What inexpressible joy it will be for us when we all shall see each other there by the Lord, where there will be no more separation and suffering. Through all the terrible noise of warfare and pain and misery of this

world, we are to train our sights on the coming glory of God's kingdom, where everlasting peace will reign. This will give us strength to endure all the trials. I also want to thank the Lord from the bottom of my heart for His great goodness, grace and mercy, as He has sustained me until now in His love. I am certain that He also will give me the needed strength for the last difficult way.

It would have been my special joy and relief to be able to speak to you once more and to see you. But because you are hindered from coming here in time, unfortunately this cannot be done. If I had complied with all the requirements that were placed before me, it would have been possible for us to meet again, and maybe even to be married. But that would have been a bitter happiness, which the Lord would not have given us. Without the true blessing of the Lord and His peace, it would have been worthless; therefore, we would rather wait until the Lord brings us together forever.

The last months in the concentration camp, until the end of October 1942, I worked in a large woodworking plant in the sawing department at Mainz on the Rhine. The officers of the Justice Department wanted to force me to work on the Sabbath, but the foreman was so satisfied with me and my work that I did not have to work on Saturdays. In exchange, I helped to unload boxcars every Sunday. In this way I did my duty, until suddenly without any notice they came to get me for the military. The leading men in the camp may have had good intentions in this. But with the apparent liberty they have done me a disservice. If they would have left me there in my position, I could have done a useful work for society; however, my death cannot profit anyone. I could not pledge allegiance to the flag, because in doing so I would have promised not only to fight with arms but also to fight on the Sabbath day. Because I could not give this promise, I was condemned to death.

Greet heartily from me all loved ones as well as your family. Please take care of my poor mother and comfort her. Tell all dear ones, especially Albert, that my thoughts are ever with them and always will be.

Farewell, my Darling. be of good cheer and happy, with kisses in deep love,

Your Anton

Letter No. 3

Dear Mother!

Even though all the sadness that has come to us is so very grievous, I ask you not to despair because of it. As much as I would have liked to spare you this bitter agony, I could not have acted differently. Even the gentlemen in the court meant well, after a fashion, in their dealings with me. They continued to try to persuade me to change my attitude and gave me opportunity to the last to yield my course of action. As good as their intentions might be concerning me, I cannot yield for anything in the world. Since I vowed my faithfulness to the Lord Jesus at my baptism and promised Him to keep His commandments under all circumstances, there remains no other way but to let all this bitterness come over me.

On the 5th of January I was sentenced to be punished by death, and now I am informed that on the 20th the sentence was verified and thus became legitimate. So every day I am expecting them to come and take me to make this painful walk. The Lord, who by His grace and mercy has till now helped me to suffer everything with patience, will also stand by me to the end in this last trial and give me strength. Even though we are not allowed to be with one another in this world, we have the precious hope of seeing each other again in the Lord's presence, where there will never be any parting. Therefore, dear mother, do not be sad, but trust in the Lord in all things. He will be your helper and comfort you in all suffering, so do not despair! For poor Esther it will also be especially hard. How much I would have loved to see her once more, but since it was impossible for her to come up to now, unfortunately, I must comfort myself in the thought of seeing her again in the Lord's presence.

Then, when everything has been finished with me, you will of course receive word. So I send once more to all loved ones cordial greetings, especially of course to dear Esther and the loved ones at Salzburg. May a loving God bless them especially for their goodness.

I shall write you then once more. The Lord bless and help you.

Sending greetings and kisses to you,

Your Son Anton

Letter No. 4

Dear Mother!

It is very hard to find the right words for the things that I wish to tell you now. Even though you are very sad about my fate, I would like to ask you above all not to despair about it and become discour-

aged. How gladly would I have saved all of us this sadness, if it only could have been possible. But, with the best will on my side, I could not have acted differently if I wished to remain faithful to my conviction of faith.

To describe all the feelings that move my heart when I think of you, dear Esther, and the other loved ones and when I think that I will never again see anyone on this earth who was beloved and dear to me, cannot be expressed in words. How glad I was to beautify your later years, but it is sad that everything turned another way. Even if I wanted to, I could not take the oath to the flag, because I would have obligated myself to serve with weapon in hand and commit actions which my Christian conviction of faith forbids me to do. I could not swear to a worldly power unconditional fidelity, for this I did already to my Saviour at my baptism. Then I made a covenant with the Lord, promising Him to keep faithfully His commandments and follow Him under all conditions and difficulties in life. So there remained only two alternatives: either to remain faithful in all trials – even unto death – or else to become unfaithful by choosing the easier side. I chose death since I desire to attain to eternal life, for which Jesus Christ has called me by His sacrificial death. In all the anguish and misery of this world, my heart longs for the true peace of the kingdom of God where neither hatred nor envy, sickness nor death will be found. The firm assurance that my Saviour forgives my sins and will raise me again to eternal life at His soon coming, if I am not among the living any longer, gives me strength and joyfulness to carry it all with patience.

On January 5, the main session when I was condemned to death was held; and yesterday, January 22, I was informed that the death sentence was verified, making it valid. And even though the court meant well in trying to talk me into abandoning my attitude, it is, as was already said, an impossibility for me. For me there is no halfway position; I am either fully true to my conviction, or not at all.

Dear Mother, if I must die now and it is therefore not granted to us to be together on this earth, we have the precious hope of being together with the Lord for eternity on the earth made new, where we shall never be separated. Therefore, be comforted and carry the unavoidable thing bravely in the hope of a blessed reunion. If I had yielded to all the persuasions, then you would have had to count on losing me. So I beg of you once more, do not despair in your grief but look with confidence to the Saviour; He will give you comfort and strength to endure in all trials until He will redeem us.

That I cannot see my dear Esther any more is especially bitter to me. When she comes to see you, give her both of these letters which are written for her also. Oh, the poor soul! For her this trial will be particularly heavy—especially since she constantly hoped that we could still marry in spite of all the difficulties.

The loved ones at Salzburg shall, till the last moment, be especially close to my heart. May the loving God bless them abundantly and reward them for all the good they have done for me. Orce more I greet them very cordially, especially the children, Martha, and the others. Heartfelt greetings also to all loved ones at Lend, and to Uncle Franz, his family, and to Uncle Ferdl and his wife. All sufferings of this world are truly as nothing in comparison to the eternal glory which a benevolent Father in heaven is preparing for His children. The Lord, by His grace, has sustained me up to now, and He will give me strength for the last heavy-hearted walk. To Him be praise and honor throughout eternity!

The Lord bless and keep you. With deep love, Your son Anton

Letter No. 5

Written on February 3, 1943, at the
Prison of Brandenburg-Goert

My beloved, dear Mother!

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

God, who has redeemed me and stood with us up to now, shall also give me power and strength for the last grievous walk. I pray you, do not despair. Trust in the Lord; He will help and comfort and not forsake you. Do all in your strength to serve Him, so that we may see each other again.

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

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

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

I greet also all dear ones everywhere. The Lord bless you and keep you! With the deep love of a son, I greet and kiss you in the hope of seeing you and all dear ones again in the Lord's presence.

Your Anton

Letter No. 6

Brandenburg-Goert, February 3, 1943

My deeply beloved Esther, cherished Treasure!

Unfortunately it has not been granted us to see each other again. Alas, how I desired to see your loving face once more and to speak a few words with you. Your lovely picture I have always kept with me.

In the back of my Bible is your picture and the one of dear Mother. There I have always seen you in spirit before me. Now take the Bible as a remembrance from me. I hope you have also received my last letter. When you go to my Mother, she will give you these letters.

We would have never thought that we had seen each other for the last time at Niederroden. Still I always had a certain feeling that a great, severe test would yet come, but I would not tell you of it so as not to frighten you. Now the very thing which I feared so long, and which I expected to come to pass, has actually become a reality. Oh, how gladly I would have lived on to work and to do good unto others. How beautiful I had imagined working together with you in doing good. There could have been no more perfect happiness for me than this.

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

Greet all dear ones from me. My heart was always with them. Especially give my best regards to your dear parents and your dear brother. Then also, greet Photographer Tollinger, his wife and brother; and he should also heartily greet Mr. Simon. My dear Mother should also write to Dr. Heberdeg Franz in Vienna XIII, Brudermannsgasse 4. He was very good to me when I was out of work. I want him

to be greeted and sincerely thanked for all his goodness. Also, will you write to good Mr. Franz Graf of the Frauen Clinic in Zurich and greet him and the good Pastor Bernatelli; the latter should give my greetings to my vegetarian friend and Mrs. Ragatz, the professor.

I would have gladly been buried in the earth, but all those here are burned at the crematory. I have already asked Mother to request to entomb the urn with my ashes in Salzburg; there it is best. Now I hope I have not lived in vain.

Now, my beloved, good Darling, may the Lord bless you and yours, and all dear ones and protect and help you graciously so that we may see each other again forever beside HIM in His wonderful kingdom of peace.

Yours, loving you deeply unto the end, Anton.

Farewell, my Darling, auf WIEDERSEHEN!

C o p y

*The Supreme Imperial War Attorney
STPL (RKA) II 469/42*

*Berlin-Charlottenburg 5
Witzlebenstrasse 4-10
2/5/1943*

*To Mrs. Elise Brugger, Widow
at Zell on the Lake, Einoed 335*

Your son Anton Brugger has been condemned to death by the sentence of the Imperial War Department of Justice of 1/5/1943, Senate Session 2, for deterioration of the defensive forces (refusing to bear arms). The president of the Imperial War Department of Justice verified the sentence on 1/20/1943.

The sentence was carried out on 2/3/1943.

Included herewith, the last letters of your son are sent to you.

Unfortunately your petitions for a parole of 1/22 and 1/27/1943 could not be granted in consideration of the urgency of the war, because your son did not yield his refusal in spite of many efforts. You are requested to inform the co-signer, Mrs. Blieberger, of this matter.

*Issued by
Boell
Court Martial Investigator*

*By order of:
(Signed) Stegmann*

POSITION OF AN AUSTRIAN NEWSPAPER CONCERNING THE PERSECUTION OF OUR BELIEVERS

From the "Voelkischen Beobachter" ("People's Observer"):

Kaernten District

Klagenfurt, August 20

*Ten Years to Reflect in the Penitentiary.
Adventists in the Service of the Opponents.
Personal Report of the People's Observer*

Accused before a special court at Klagenfurt were 48-year-old Blasi, 48-year-old Maria Krall, both from St. Donat; 37-year-old Matthias Weratschik and his 28-year-old wife Maria of Tiemenitz. Under the influence of the Adventist folly, the four had created an atmosphere of refusing to bear arms, quoting sayings from the Bible, and tried to lead drafted countrymen into resistance. The representative of the prosecution branded hard the actions of these pro-Jews, who want to spread their ideas at a time when Germany is engaged in a hard struggle against its enemies. They want to leave the defense of the Fatherland to the Lord God. In order for us to ward off worse calamities, such stray elements must at least for the duration of the war be rendered harmless. The four were declared guilty by the special court. Joseph Blasi received a penitentiary sentence of 10 years; the three others were convicted only of the crime under Paragraph 3 of the Ordinance for the Protection of the Defenses of the German People—opposing the law in an anti-military connection—namely, Maria Krall received 5 years, and Matthias and Maria Weratschik each received two years in the penitentiary.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP?

In the Fall of 1963, I, with some others, surveyed the Dachau Concentration Camp. At the entrance to the camp's crematory, a large blackboard was fastened to the wall, and it bore the inscription, "He who does not remember the past is condemned to experience it again." These are admonishing and earnest words in a place where so much injustice and bestiality were committed; a place where tears and blood flowed; a place where one shivers and becomes silent when reading about it or stepping upon its floors.

In this book of memory, we often speak of concentration camps in which these martyrs gave their lives and were tortured to death. Therefore, here are a few words about the concentration camp.

"If the miracle happens and you come through alive, then write it down and make known to all what they have done with us."

"This was the holy testament of the comrades who died in the arms of their co-sufferers, or were carried off with the truckload of invalids to be gassed. This was the heritage of the brethren, of the friends tried by fate, of the innumerable humans whose ashes blew away through the chimneys and covered the fields of a foreign soil."

The last petition was, "Make known what they have done with us!" Without this knowledge, all the lessons which this sad incident can give us would be lost and we would expose ourselves to renewed danger. The text, "The truth will make you free," (John 8:32) will make us say an honest "Mea culpa" before God and man and urge us to pay the penalty and make restoration.

Also, we shall not forget where the abandonment of Christianity leads, and what man is capable of doing when he loses his faith in God and claims that he is not responsible to a higher authority. Then he really turns into a beast, into Satan himself. Faith cannot elevate the dignity of man high enough, and even that faith says to the Creator, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet." Psalm 8:4-6.

But unbelief can lower a man so that he is like an animal, mere merchandise, or a number; it can treat him mercilessly, even kill him and throw him away. At times the pen seemed to resist even intimating, much less describing in detail, all the cruelties and inhuman treatment. Yet, for truth's sake and as a warning, all this must not be suppressed and forgotten.

"Dachau's historical mission" is the thought to which Dr. Sales Hess devotes the last chapter of his book, *Dachau, A World without God*. In this chapter it says:

"The concentration camps were a world without God—even more, a world opposed to God. Any kind of religious activity on the part of the occupants was forbidden; every religious article was prohibited; even every muttered prayer was forbidden. Not even the dying one

was afforded this comfort. All things religious were laughed and scoffed at.

"Toward the inmates, the SS (Schutzstaffel) people felt no restrictions of any of God's commandments, not even the natural code of ethics which God placed in every human heart, even the hearts of the heathen.

"There was no truthfulness.

"There was no justice. The inmate was without any rights, as the leader of the camp declared publicly to us in the very first days.

"He had no right to property and personal freedom. He had no right to food. How many thousands actually starved at a time when no one in Germany needed to go hungry.

"He had no right to shelter. Six to eight inmates had to sleep in two beds in the invalid barracks. The floor space in the barracks was filled with bedsteads, with only the narrowest of aisles. In such close confinement thousands were ill housed day and night. In other camps, such as at Kaufering, there were no bedsteads but only wood shavings or shredded straw on a floor full of holes.

"The inmate had no right to clothing. When food, clothing, and shelter were granted, this was a good deed on the part of the camp leaders, as we were assured; but no one had a right to these things.

"No one had a right to joy, play, or conversation. Not even the most innocent joys were allowed, such as possessing snapshots of relatives.

"No one had a right to just treatment. Punishment in the camp was always administered without a hearing, even if the report on the individual was given by block personnel who were themselves inmates. 'An opportunity to complain does not exist,' the camp leader explained to us.

"No inmate had a right to health. Anyone who was appointed had to serve as a guinea pig (for malaria, phlegmatic, and aerial weapons testing). At Dachau there were only two testing sections; at Buchenwald, there were ten of them, as Dr. Kogon said.

"No inmate had a right to life. The concentration camp meant the death decree with an uncertain date and an uncertain manner of death. Such a death decree was pronounced by the Imperial Supreme Safety Council on account of the most insignificant, small offenses. An example of Himmler's conception of this was his employees' attempts to find out what things lead to death, such as the test of how low a

temperature a man can stand before he dies. Himmler himself was present at such tests.

"There was no pity nor mercy for the sick and feeble. Persons starving to death, on whose foreheads the token of death was burning, were kicked out to the quarters one day before their death, even though they could not stand up alone any more. The quarters was a place of horror.

"Instead of sympathy, bestial cruelty reigned. One can think of the punishment: Beatings, hanging on trees, underground stand-up dungeons, sadistic manners of death, collective punishments, etc.

"These are some of the principles of a world without God. They show with stark vividness to what extent humanity will go when it no longer believes in the God of creation."

WHAT WAS A MAN WORTH?

A computation by the SS showing the expected utilization of the inmates in the concentration camps:

Average daily exchange wage	*RM	6.00
Deduct for food	RM	0.60
Deduct for clothing amortization	RM	0.10
Average lifespan, 9 months (270 days)		
270 × RM 5.30 (6.00 - 0.70)	=	RM 1,431.00

Income from actual use of the body:

1. Gold from teeth		
2. Clothing		
3. Valuables		
4. Money		
Deduct cremation cost, RM 2.00		
Average net gain	RM	200.00
Total gain after 9 months	RM	1,631.00
(With additional income from bones and ashes)		

*One German RM (*Rentenmark*) equals about One American Dollar in wages earned by the German laborer; however, the purchasing power of the RM is only about one-fourth that of the American Dollar.

CONCLUSION

Of the witnesses reported in this book it may be said that they sealed their faithfulness to the gospel and the commandments of God with their blood. They went through many trials. They had to battle against doubt and depression. But they learned to overcome.

Had others spoken of their exemplary actions, they would have taken no honor for themselves. They knew too well from their own experiences that human strength fails when asked to stand in the last hard struggle. They could overcome only because they had previously been overcome by JESUS CHRIST and had received in HIM the only comfort possible in life and death.

Overcomers who were overcome – this seems to indicate that a world in animosity to God got rid of them, disposed of them, and overcame them. Yet, this is not the case. True, these men and women were persecuted, reviled, and delivered to death, as many other disciples of Christ were before. But overcome them the enemies did not. In the last final decision, the world remained powerless against them. Even during their last succumbing moments they were overcomers as dying and murdered ones. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Rev. 12:11. They proved themselves overcomers even though they were overcome, because the grace of God, given to us in Christ Jesus, gained the victory over all faint-heartedness and all trials and made them strong, even in suffering and death.

They regarded it as an evidence of God's love that they were given comfort from the word of God even in the valley of death, and this comfort would raise them up and make them fearless. They could say with Job, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth," and they were conscious that God was with them in the evening, in the morning, and certainly on every new day. This is faith. It is never

solidly owned, for faith must be constantly renewed in us, so that it may meet all trials and emergencies victoriously. Such faith is an act of daring—not the daring of an adventurer, but the daring of a humble man who has placed himself fully under the guidance of God and His Word. God Himself said this is so, and therefore my heart dares to do everything joyfully and undismayed and is not afraid of anything.

Such faith, if need be, will walk into the darkness, for it knows that the Lord JESUS acknowledges His own and does not leave them.

Such faith is ready for decisive action. No recipes can be given for individual conduct. Also, no decisions we have to make can be made ahead of time. Anyone reading with interest the life sketches in this book must have realized by now that these men stood ready to listen to and obey the command of JESUS CHRIST. They stood by the words, "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." In their place they did the thing that had to be done and were led only by the obedience of faith, and nothing else. They could have had it easier; it would have been possible for them to save their lives if they had not asked for the command of the Lord but had regarded other human beings and themselves. But by doing this they would have denied their faith and made merchandise of their lives.

"Even life itself should not be purchased with the price of falsehood. By a word or a nod the martyrs might have denied the truth and saved their lives. By consenting to cast a single grain of incense upon the idol altar they might have been saved from the rack, the scaffold, or the cross. But they refused to be false in word or deed, though life was the boon they would receive by so doing. Imprisonment, torture, and death, with a clear conscience, were welcomed by them, rather than deliverance on condition of deception, falsehood, and apostasy. By fidelity and faith in CHRIST they earned spotless robes and jeweled crowns. Their lives were ennobled and elevated in the sight of God because they stood firmly for the truth under the most aggravated circumstances." —*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 336.

Now they stand before us as those who admonish and are examples. We praise them before the churches of God for their patience and faith in all the persecutions and trials which they suffered. (2 Thess. 1:4.)

"Lest they should forget the history of the past, He commanded Moses to frame these events into song, that parents might teach

them to their children. They were to gather up memorials and to lay them up in sight. Special pains were taken to preserve them, that when the children should inquire concerning these things, the whole story might be repeated. Thus the providential dealings and the marked goodness and mercy of God in His care and deliverance of His people were kept in mind. We are exhorted to 'call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.' Heb. 10:32. For His people in this generation the Lord has wrought as a wonder-working God. The past history of the cause of God needs to be often brought before the people, young and old. We need often to recount God's goodness and to praise Him for His wonderful works." —*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, pp. 364, 365.

When today men arise and claim that it is no longer needful to go to prison for our faith; when Advent believers sit down on the judgment seat, condemning these martyrs as suicides and cowards, then they show clearly what spirit they are of. But we have been called to prove in word and action that "My kingdom is not of this world;" we are called to stand in the breach and carry high in front the banner of the last church. "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Let us continue the work where these standard bearers had to lay it down. They were the salt of the earth and the light of the world; and to them we owe our thankfulness that the LORD has not yet made an end to this sinful world.

We must still walk the way before us and prove our faith. The conditions of life today are somewhat different than the conditions under which these men labored and died. The demand for unconditional and faithful discipleship in the sufferings of JESUS is the same today, and will remain so. Today we also must prove ourselves as men of whom it may be said that the grace of God has not been spent on them in vain. The question for us is also whether we have permitted ourselves to be overcome by CHRIST JESUS and have yielded to Him joyfully, so that He can fashion our life according to His will.

"It is as true now as when Christ was upon the earth, that every inroad made by the gospel upon the enemy's dominion is met by fierce opposition from his vast armies. The conflict that is right upon us will be the most terrible ever witnessed. But though Satan is represented as being as strong as the strong man armed, his overthrow will be complete, and everyone who unites with him in choosing

apostasy rather than loyalty will perish with him." –*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 407.

It is for this reason, above all others, that this book has been written and published – that it may serve as a strength to all those who strive earnestly to be Christians in the church, that it may call them into the militant church under the Word and the cross, and also that it may place before our eyes those witnesses who, for Christ's sake, brought the supreme sacrifice as conquered overcomers.

Consider the outcome of their life, and follow their faith!

They bore the cross of Christ's good will.

They died indeed, but live on still !

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Witnesses of the Reformation	4
Heroes of Faith in Our Time	6
The Battle between Light and Darkness	6
Testimony before Rulers and Courts	9
“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:12	15
Heroes of Faith under the Third Angel’s Message	16
Report of the Experiences of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement before and after World War II	18
“They loved not their lives unto death”	23
“Be thou faithful until death!”	38
Position of an Austrian Newspaper Concerning the Persecution of Our Believers	52
What Was It Like in the Concentration Camp?	52
What Was a Man Worth?	55
Conclusion	56

