

The history of the Baptists in Neu-Danzig and Cataloi

Silke Neureuther born Graf

Foreword

I know the names of my great-great-grandparents Jakob Graf and Beatha born Klundt from my father Friedrich Graf's resettlement papers. Within the family it was still said that Jakob Graf built mills in southern Russia and came with his family from the Cherson Governorate (South Russia) to Cataloi in the Dobruja.

After long and intensive research, I found a couple named Wilhelm Jakob Graff and Beatha born Klundt in Neu-Danzig, Cherson Governorate, Berezan, southern Russia, who married on June 18, 1861, in Neu-Danzig. Their children Anna (1862-1863), Gottlieb (1864-?) and Paul (1865-1865) were born there. The death of the child Paul in May 1865 is the last entry in the church register of Neu-Danzig for this family.

The first German Baptist congregation in Dobruja was founded in Cataloi in 1869 by exiles who had to leave Neu-Danzig in the mid-1860s because of their faith. All my direct ancestors, who were born in Cataloi, were and some of them still are Baptists today. For this reason, I have spent the last few months intensively studying Baptism in Neu-Danzig and Cataloi.

The Baptist congregation in Neu-Danzig from 1860 to 1865

Neu-Danzig (Berezan, southern Russia) colonists come into contact with Mennonite brethren in Einlage (Chortitza colony, southern Russia) when they buy wagons and equipment for their farm in the wagon factory of Abram Unger (Mennonite). Through contact with the Mennonites in Einlage, some of the Neu-Danziger began to meet regularly for biblical meetings. At the beginning of 1864, two Mennonite brothers, Benjamin Bekker and Gerhard Wieler, visit the colonists in Neu-Danzig. They hold meetings and preach the word of God. On May 3, 1864, Bekker and Wieler met with other believers in a private house for a prayer meeting. Shortly afterwards, on Pentecost weekend, 5 May 1864, Gerhard Wieler baptizes eleven people by immersion in the River Ingul at 10 o'clock in the morning. *(Neureuther's note: this is probably the Pentecost date of the Julian calendar, as according to the Gregorian calendar, Pentecost 1864 is on May 15 and 16. In Russia, the Julian calendar was not changed to the Gregorian calendar until 1918. The difference between the two calendars is approx. 10 days).*



Image 1: Abram Unger: <https://chort.square7.ch/FB/4/p64978.jpg>, Hermann Schirmacher (webmaster of <https://chort.square7.ch/index.php>)



Image 2: Gerhard Wieler: Book: BISE-RICA BAPTISTĂ „BETEL”, din Tulcea, Daniel Mitrofan, Seite 21, 2002, revised 2012, image from Daniel Mitrofan

Jakob Klundt is among the baptized. Mayor Edinger and Assessor Leitner from the Neu-Danziger municipal office are present at the baptism (*Neureuther's note: Mayor Edinger is Joseph Edinger, who is a Catholic and then a Baptist. The assessor Leitner is probably Georg Leitner, who later also appears in Cataloi and is a Baptist*). Martin and Friedrich Engel are appointed elders of the Neu-Danziger Baptist congregation on the same day. (*Neureuther's note: I therefore assume that the two Engel brothers were definitely among the baptized on May 5, 1864, and that Joseph Edinger and Georg Leitner were probably among them*). This baptism marked the birth of the first German Baptist congregation in southern Russia.

Parlor meetings are now held regularly, and more and more interested people attend. This caused unrest and resentment among the Lutheran pastor and other villagers. The Baptists were repeatedly slandered by the authorities and described as unreliable and dangerous elements. On August 4, 1864, all those who were present at the meeting (men, women, and children) were therefore arrested by the local authorities and detained in a barn in the village. In the evening, all those arrested, with the exception of 5 men, were released. Jakob Klundt and Joseph Edinger are among the 5 arrested. They are sent to prison in Cherson with an escort of 10 soldiers. From this point onwards, the Neu-Danziger Baptists gather in the open field and hold their church services there.

A friend advises the 5 imprisoned men to petition the Tsar directly and protest against their imprisonment. On September 19, 1864, Joseph Edinger wrote a petition to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Peter A. Walujew. This petition is taken from the book "The Story of the Early Mennonite Brethren" by John B. Toews, pages 146 and 147.



Image 3: Count Piotr Walujew:
https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pjotr_Alexandrowitsch_Walujew

Petition of Joseph Edinger to the Minister of Internal Affairs. 19 September 1864

To: his Exalted Excellency, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Peter A. Waluevw

From: Joseph Edinger, Neu-Danzig

(Translated from the German): A humble petition on behalf of the brothers who have left [the church] in the Neu-Danzig Colony.

As your Exalted Excellency already knows, a spiritual awakening occurred in the colony of Neu-Danzig near Nikolaev several years ago. As a result, some thirty-one persons of both genders left the Lutheran, Reformed and Catholic confessions.

We petitioners represent a number of persons who have been indicted before all humankind as the scum of the earth and as simply idiots. Because we cling to biblical truth we are viewed and condemned as a danger to the state, as insubordinate to the authorities and as rebels. We, on the contrary, pray for our authorities and all humankind, pray for the Tsar and wish to be subordinate to him.

Our model for the founding of a new apostolic church, which consists only of such persons as are truly born again, is based upon the church founded by the apostles themselves. It rests solely on Scripture and not, as some claim, on a one-sided interpretation. Therefore, no one can prove that we hold erroneous views on any one issue. To date, no one has convinced us from the Word of

God [that we are wrong]. The authorities, however, have immediately taken various measures, even illegal ones, to convert us from our errors without bothering to investigate. Even Probst Hueber, without consulting the truth of God's Word, sought to constrain us with human laws and consistorial statutes. He did not realize that the finger of God was clearly evident in this revival. He grasped at every measure in order to revert us from a godly life into an orthodox form and into a spiritual death.

Our salvation is in Jesus Christ, our only Savior, and not in human might, wisdom or observances. Therefore, we are not afraid of persecution or arbitrary treatment. If the matter were investigated by competent authorities, another viewpoint might emerge, which would provide a better perspective on our exodus [from the Lutheran Church].

Currently, we are being oppressed in every imaginable way and subjected to every humiliation. Five of our brethren were arrested on their farms and sent to Kherson under guard. Here they were informed that if they did not deny their faith, they and their followers would be exiled abroad. Others, bound, were arraigned before the Supervisor of the Hebrew Colony in Dobro-Jedeke. Inspector Tscherniaysky has threatened to eradicate our faith and to take all measures necessary to destroy us. In view of the fact that we have suffered great losses from (the actions of] the local authorities and are not certain that the law allows such punishments and humiliations, we take the liberty of making the following appeal to your Exalted Excellency in the name of my co-religionists.

Would it be possible to remove the arbitrary treatment accorded us and allow justice to come our way? Do not allow this important matter to be investigated by a man who is liberal, partisan, and who has prejudged [the issue]. We request that your Exalted Excellency look into the matter and protect us from the pressures of an entire, enraged village.

Please, your Exalted Excellency, do not leave this petition unanswered but allow righteousness to come our way soon. Your Exalted Excellency, I provide my signature and commit our cause to our Lord and Savior.

*Your most obedient colonist of the Neu-Danzig Colony,
Joseph Edinger
Yekaterinoslav
19 September 1864 Kherson Government and District
Master Farmer of the Gubernia Colony of Dobroya*



Image 4: Tsar Alexander II of Russia:
[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_II._\(Russland\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_II._(Russland))

When the petition reached Tsar Alexander II, he ordered their immediate release. This release order reaches the prisoners on the border to Siberia. The five men return to Neu-Danzig, but continue to be harassed and slandered. The governor advises them to leave Neu-Danzig. However, as they must expect the same fate in other southern Russian provinces, they decide to go into exile in the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish Pasha in Tulcea takes in the exiles and assigns them Cataloi in Dobruja as their new place of residence, where other ethnic Germans had already settled since 1857. Among the exiles were Martin and Friedrich Engel, Joseph Edinger, Josef Linowski (another spelling: Lenofsky), Martin Heringer, Georg Leitner and Jakob Klundt.

Alexander Brune (an Evangelical Lutheran clergyman sent by the Evangelical Lutheran General Consistory in St. Petersburg to the province of Ekaterinoslav to investigate the state of the churches in the foreign colonies of southern Russia and to gather information about a "new mystical sect" that had arisen in the Mennonite settlement of Chortitza) reported on September 21, 864 about the Neu-Danziger Baptists as follows: *"In the meantime (Neureuther's note: Brune reports on the situation in the summer of 1864), 20 families with a total of 66 people have joined the Baptists. This caused an enormous uproar among the Lutherans. They turned to the state authorities, who banned the Baptist meetings".*

At the same time, the authorities refused to issue passports to the Baptists so that they cannot complain about harassment from other churches to the local authorities and the government in St. Petersburg . In September 1864, the Mennonite brother J. Kowalsky baptizes more people in Alt-Danzig (Berezan, southern Russia), is expelled from the country by the Russian government and also goes into exile to Cataloi in Dobruja.

At the beginning of 1865, three former exiles, including Joseph Edinger and Josef Linowski (presumably also Jakob Klundt), return to Neu-Danzig to join their families and sell their property. Their passports are immediately taken from them. They are also captured by the authorities in Cherson and sent into exile in Siberia. They fall ill and are hospitalized in Nikolayew. In February 1865, 8 more Neu-Danzig Baptists are imprisoned. In March 1865, Martin and Friedrich Engel from Cataloi send a petition to Tulcea. This is forwarded to the Evangelical Alliance and published in the magazine "Evangelisches Christentum". In the petition, they demand the immediate release of the prisoners from Neu-Danzig, the right to stay in Russia, the right to sell their property and to leave the country with their families. All the prisoners are released. In the fall of 1865, 10 families (22 men and 22 women, including the families of Karl and Joseph Edinger) apply to be released from Russian citizenship in order to go into exile in Dobruja. After a long and arduous journey, the exiles arrive in Tulcea on May 10, 1866, many of them impoverished, and then move on to Cataloi.

The following names, which are represented in the church records in Alt-Danzig and Neu-Danzig up to the summer of 1865, subsequently appear with their families in Cataloi: the brothers Martin and Friedrich Engel, Jakob Klundt, the brothers Joseph and Karl Edinger, Martin Heringer and his parents Martin and Elisabetha born Weisser, Martin Herboldt, Josef Linowski, Georg Leitner, Jakob Graf, Eberhard Ockert.

The Baptist congregation in Cataloi from 1865 to 1940

The Cataloi Baptist congregation around Martin and Friedrich Engel grows steadily. For this reason, the elders (one of whom was Friedrich Engel) wanted to establish a church constitution and found an independent Baptist congregation. They decide to write a letter to the English Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon. However, Friedrich Flocken, a Methodist missionary in the Dobruja, advises them to address this letter directly to Johann Gerhard Oncken in Hamburg.

When the letter reached Oncken, he sent August Liebig to Dobruja in October 1865, who was a Baptist preacher and missionary in Bucharest at the time. On November 1 and November 4, 1865, August Liebig baptizes 11 people each time in the Danube and travels on to southern Bessarabia. In April 1866, he returned to Dobruja on his way to Ukraine, baptized another 14 people and visited the Dobruja again in the summer of 1866. On another visit in December 1866, the Cataloi elders asked him to stay on as a preacher. The Cataloi Baptist congregation now had 49 members and 70 visitors. There was hardly anyone in the village who did not belong to the Baptists. In January 1867, August Liebig finally comes to Cataloi full-time.

The Baptists were also persecuted and slandered in the Dobruja. The Lutheran pastor of Cataloi repeatedly approached the Turkish Pasha in Tulcea and wanted to have the Baptist meetings banned. The Pasha replied to the pastor that religious freedom prevailed in Turkey and at the same time asked the pastor why he was harassing others because of their faith. August Liebig reports on his visit to the Pasha in Tulcea as follows: *"February 20, 1868: an eventful day. I was in Tulcea with the Pasha, who told me that I had been sued by the pastor of the Lutheran congregation and advised me to become a Turkish subject. "It would be good," he said, "for me to stay here, because then perhaps all the villages (namely the German ones) could become what we are. Later I learned that the Pasha had presented the pastor's accusation, which consisted of terrible slander, to the court, which ruled in our favor without any of us being present. In the evening I led a Bible study in Catalui and performed a wedding ceremony."* (taken from the Missionsblatt 1868, No. 9, page 162).

In 1869, Johann Gerhard Oncken was on a missionary journey through various countries in south-eastern Europe. He reports on his individual stays in detailed travel letters. In November 1869, his journey took him from Odessa via Tulcea to Cataloi.

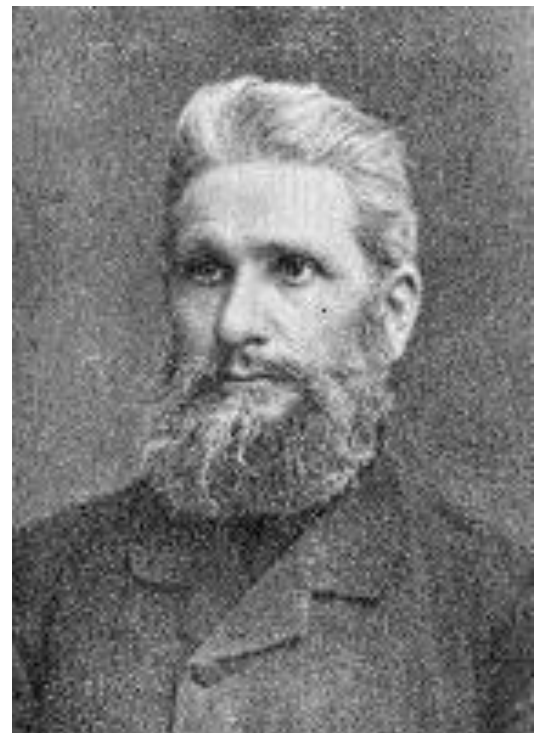


Image 5: August Liebig: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Liebig



Image 6: Johann Gerhard Oncken:
https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:PPN663953375_Bildnis_von_Johann_Gerhard_Oncken.jpg

In Cataloi, he founded the first German Baptist congregation in Dobruja. Oncken preaches, officially appoints elders, deacons and August Liebig as preacher and leads a love feast celebration. In his travel letter of November 22, 1869, Oncken reports in detail on his visit to Cataloi. This travel letter is published in the *Missionsblatt, Organ der Baptisten in Deutschland*, 1870, on page 3 as follows:

"Cataloi, November 22, 1869

My dearly beloved brother Schauffler!

Thursday, November 17, I said goodbye to the brothers in Odessa.

I can only thank the Lord that my stay there extended far beyond my plans. The opportunities to testify of the Lord increased and the meetings were more numerous than at the beginning. On the last evening I was allowed to testify of the Savior's love for sinners in the Lutheran confirmation building before an audience of about 200. The brethren, who in their hearts have long since ceased to belong to the existing churches, have become more and more convinced that their present unregulated position is untenable and that sooner or later they will have to form an independent congregation following the example of the first apostolic congregations. I can hope that my dealings with the brethren have not been without influence, although I have never tried to force my

convictions on anyone.

When I left, the dear brothers accompanied me to the ship and stayed on the shore of the Black Sea as long as we could still greet each other. May the Lord repay my dear brothers and sisters for all the hospitality and love they have shown me in every conceivable way. But in this great harbor city with its 150,000 inhabitants, may He build a church of true disciples who do not live for themselves, but for Him who bought them with His blood.

I cannot describe the feeling of gratitude and adoration that surged in my heart when our steamer reached the open sea and I knew myself beyond the reach of any and all molestation from the Russian authorities. However, to the honor of the Russian government, I must assume that perhaps it was not their intention to put obstacles in my way. May the Lord bless the Emperor and the Empress, of whom I have heard many good and Christian things. May He bless the 22 million emancipated serfs and the 75 million who live on this part of the globe. May He bless and multiply our young churches in particular and let them be bright shining stars, through whose light many lost ones will be led to Him who has come to gather from all peoples and languages a people that no one can count.

The journey across the Black Sea and on the Danube went well and on Friday morning we reached the port of Tulcea, where Brother Liebig was waiting for me on the shore. Brother Flocken, a missionary of the American Methodist Mission, also welcomed me on board, and in a few minutes, I was ashore and on my way to the Turkish customs office. My belongings were simply placed on the ground in the presence of two customs officials - the friendliest and most courteous I have met on all my travels. The senior official, a handsome man with a beautiful turban, nodded his "enough" when my suitcase was barely open.

We then drove to Brother Flocken, where we were soon served a good cup of tea by his wife. After a short stay, we took a brother's carriage (Neureuther's note: it was probably a horse-drawn vehicle) to Cataloi, where we arrived after a quick one-and-a-half-hour drive and were warmly welcomed by the dear Sister Liebig, born Ratzeburg. What a pleasure to be surrounded once again by the greatest cleanliness and to be freed from all nocturnal guests. My quarters are in the new congregation house, a simple building with a meeting hall, schoolroom, bedroom and kitchen, built with the congregation's own funds.

The congregation has 111 members, two stations in Atmadja (= Atmagea) with 28 members and in Tachneroff (= Ciucurova) with four members. Friday afternoon we traveled to Atmadja for the inauguration of the new chapel, a similar building to the one in Cataloi, only slightly smaller.

I led the service and had a large and very attentive audience, whom I pointed to the living temple building according to Ephesians 2:19-22. On the way there and back we met Bulgarians, Wallachians, Tatars and Circassians on horseback in their national costumes. I led the service and had a large and very attentive audience, whom I pointed to the living temple building according to Ephesians 2:19-22. On the way there and back we met Bulgarians, Wallachians, Tatars and Circassians on horseback in their national costumes. The villages of these peoples are extremely miserable, the huts are built of mud with reeds and straw and make a most disgusting impression. What temporal benefits can be seen everywhere in the wake of Protestantism compared to these and other non-Protestant denominations!

Early in the morning on November 18, we started our return journey to Cataloi, accompanied by four wagons with brothers and sisters who wanted to take part in a church meeting on Saturday and the church services on Sunday. Lovely spiritual songs were sung on the way, which sounded very sweet in the beautiful woods through which our road led.

The deliberations on the formation of the congregation, the election of Brother Liebig as an elder and the election of six deacons, four for Cataloi and two for Atmadja, were all peaceful and harmonious. The congregation voted unanimously to accept our confession of faith and instructed me to arrange for their acceptance into our covenant. The Sabbath was a blessed day for us all. The ordination was carried out after the necessary instructions about these ministries and addresses to both the brothers to be ordained and the congregation. In the evening I preached and the conclusion of this glorious day was the great visible sermon of our dear Savior at a richly filled covenant table. Yes, truly, those who dwell in HIS house praise HIM, to whom we owe everything, forever.

Monday, November 22, love feast from 2 o'clock in the afternoon and now, after eleven o'clock in the evening, it is still going on. From seven to half past eight in the evening I gave a talk about our mission, which was followed by a collection. It almost pained me that Brother Liebig recommended this collection, as the brothers and sisters are anything but wealthy.

The two dear Liebig siblings demonstrate a self-sacrificing love that borders on the unbelievable. Both are not only pastors of the congregation, but also doctors of it, and Dr. Lutze's book is hardly ever consulted as it is here. May the Lord raise up many more such workers for our assigned field of work.

Today I married another couple after I had interpreted John 17 to about forty brothers and sisters in the morning, where I myself was blessed exuberantly.

On Wednesday I intend to travel by Turkish steamboat via Galaz (= Galatz) to Bucharest, if the Lord wills, where I fear our sour work awaits us. But the Lord has helped me with everything on the whole journey so far and can also help me there with requests and understanding.

Warm greetings to all brothers and sisters, whom I ask to thank God that they were born in Germany and not in the unfortunate countries through which I have traveled. It is heart-breaking to see the ignorance and the depression of the people in these countries, it surpasses all description. But how great is our responsibility!"

Oncken's report on his stay in Cataloi, where he spent six days from Friday, November 18 to Wednesday, November 24, 1869, ends here. His further journey then took him to Bucharest and Kronstadt.

The newly appointed preacher August Liebig reports on the past year 1869 of the Cataloi Baptist congregation on pages 68 and 69 of the 1870 Missionsblatt: "We suffered many a bitter wound, which, however, the dear Lord is beginning to heal at the end of the year through the hope of the return of some, as well as through the lovely appearance of other seeking souls here in this place. Nor did we remain without blessings during the course of the year; we were allowed to go to the baptismal font five times to immerse six blessed souls in the death of the Lord; our meetings were also well attended on average and now and again we were delighted by visits from foreign brothers and messengers.

However, we enjoyed the best hours of this year in the presence of our beloved brother Oncken. These were days of joy and delight for the whole group, but especially for the writer of this report and his partner, who now had the rare good fortune to host him in their poor hut. The dear brother's stay was all too short and there was much work for him; the holding of several meetings, the dedication of a new house of prayer in Atmagea, 5-6 hours from here, the founding of the church here, ordination of the elder and deacons, preceded by a church meeting on Saturday evening and followed by a love feast on Monday, which will remain unforgettable for us due to the reports made there about the beginning and progress of our missionary work, and finally the consummation of a wedding ceremony.

All of this was carried out with great joy and strength under a rich blessing from above in the house of God through the dear brother Oncken, to which must be added the many private conversations with brothers and the extremely blessed edification of the morning, to which the brothers and sisters gathered. Indeed, what God's grace can do in HIS messenger and how HE hears the sighs of His children became clear to us for admiration when, after all the hardships we have gone through, which we learn to understand much better down here than one can in civilized countries, we were allowed to see our dear brother working so tirelessly, so freshly, so lively and spreading blessings. May the great God continue to keep him in this strength and soon prepare for us the return of the blessings we have enjoyed.

It seems as if the dear Lord wants to encourage us as a new congregation by opening a door for us across the Danube into Moldova, not far from the Russian border, where the writer of this report intends to go in the first days of the new year to see the story that has become known to us from there."

Before Oncken's visit in November 1869, Cataloi already had a new chapel with a meeting room, classroom and rooms for the preacher's family. Cataloi had 111 members and two additional preaching stations, Atmagea and Ciucurova. Cataloi was the center of the German Baptists in the Dobruja. August Liebig returned to Odessa in 1872. His brother Ludwig Liebig was appointed pastor in Cataloi. However, August Liebig remained an elder of the congregation and regularly visited the Cataloi Baptists until he finally emigrated to America.

During these years, the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) employed colporteurs to sell the Holy Scriptures and other Christian books and to preach the Gospel. Joseph Edinger, Martin Heringer, Martin Herbold and Jakob Klundt (all exiles from Neu-Danzig who had settled in Cataloi) worked as colporteurs for the BFBS. Their "working area" extends from the Dobruja to Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Albania and Bessarabia. Jakob Klundt is later transferred from the BFBS to Lom in Bulgaria and opens a bookshop. He later became pastor of the Lom Baptist Church and died in Kazanlak, Bulgaria, in 1921.

On September 24, 1884, Martin Issler from Atmagea is ordained as a pastor in Cataloi. In 1899, Martin Issler goes to Russia as a preacher. During his time in Cataloi, a new house of prayer is built. The congregation is then looked after by Brother Pawloff, who comes from Russia. In 1910, the Baptist congregation in Cataloi is divided into 3 congregations: Mangalia with wards is served by Pastor August Lücke, Tariverde and Cogealia by Pastor Johannes Fleischer and Cataloi with wards by Pastor Martin Issler (back from Russia).



Image 7: Ludwig Liebig
Image from retired dean Hans Issler

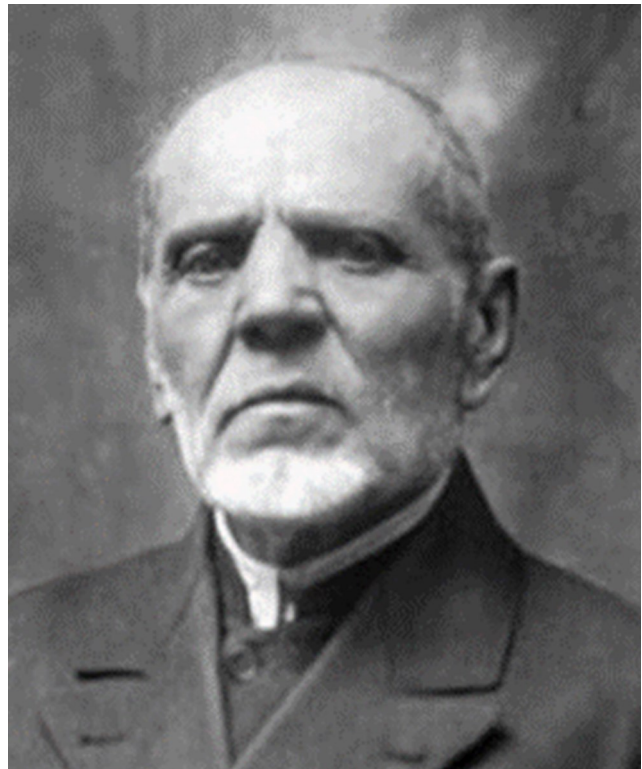


Image 8: Martin Issler
Image from retired dean Hans Issler

Between 1882 and 1909, many members of the congregation emigrated to America and Canada due to failed harvests, unemployment and various changes of government in the Dobruja. The emigrants include the following surnames: Adam, Arndt, Blumhagen, Dermann, Ehrmann, Fandrich, Hauff, Issak, Kant, Kessler, Kolschewski, Maier, Martin, Rauschenberger, Rauser, Stach and Suckert.

At the beginning of 1885, Pastor Ludwig Liebig reported on the emigration of parishioners in the Wahrheitszeuge No. 5 on pages 52 and 53 as follows: *"The repeated changes of government in this country (Dobruja) in recent years have also tried to exert their influence on our congregations, in that many who believed themselves to be in possession of land (from the Turks) were deprived of it; some other unpleasantness also arose, including in particular the feeling that the German was now out of place here and held in low esteem by the government. This gave some people reason to look around and seek an earthly home elsewhere. The emigration fever to America crept in and as a result seven families emigrated there (North Dakota, USA) as early as 1882. However, this was not enough, but now one thing led to another, so that in the last year 1884 three families followed them and many others were infected to go this way as well, so that we sometimes feared that the congregation would soon cease to exist here under such circumstances. But despite all these movements, which sometimes get in the way of the kingdom of God, the dear Lord has not ceased to build his kingdom.*

He put it into the hearts of the congregation to choose a brother (Martin Issler) from their midst to help pull the net of the gospel. The dear Lord blessed the proclamation of His Word with united power for the salvation of poor sinners, so that we were able to introduce 49 (people) into the congregation through holy baptism last year. The congregation was particularly blessed by the confessions made at these receptions, as well as the eleven baptism celebrations and the visit of dear brother August Liebig from Odessa, who also ordained the aforementioned brother, Martin Issler, which was followed by a love feast.

And even if we are facing a much larger emigration of members this year, we still have the certain promise that the Lord will not abandon his people. The well-attended week of prayer in the new year and the desire of many poor sinners for their salvation give us hope that our request will be heard that the gaps will be filled again this year for His glory and for the blessing of His people. If emigration serves to convert those who remain, there is not much to be said against it, except that many earthly means are lost to the kingdom of God. But the truth of his precious word remains a glorious comfort to the church at all times."

In the surrounding villages, love feasts take place at regular intervals, which are also known as "agape" and are aptly described in Wikipedia: *"To promote community and fellowship among the otherwise largely autonomous Baptist congregations, there were love feasts in a particular region, individual congregations invited the surrounding sister churches to such celebrations. Public*



Image 9: Prayer house before 1922: taken from the book: „Die Deutschen in der Dobrudscha“, Paul Träger, Stuttgart 1922, Heimat- und Auslandsverlags-AG



Image10: Baptist congregation Cataloi 1928/1929: image from Friedrich Graf

holidays were particularly popular. Each congregation had its own fixed date for the love feast and hosted the other congregations on this day. In addition to the sermon, prayer fellowship and common meals, personal testimonies from everyday life played an important role at these events." (Source: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agape>)

My grandmother Anna Graf, widowed Nitschke, born Kaißner, took part in such a love feast at the end of the 1920s, converted and was subsequently baptized. The baptism took place in winter in a shallow part of the river in Cataloi. It was so cold that the water first had to be cleared of ice so that the baptism could take place at all.



Image 11: Prayer house 1930er Jahre – image from Karin Wood-Lamont born Rauschenberger

From 1929 to 1934, the congregation was led by Pastor Hans Folk, who had just completed his studies at the preacher's seminary in Hamburg. He lived with his much-loved wife Anny in the preacher's house, which had been built at the back of the chapel courtyard.

All Baptist congregations in the Dobruja hold regular evangelization, often lasting a week. Michael Theil, Johannes Fleischer and Georg Teutsch come to the churches for this purpose and interpret God's word. The local preachers also visit other Baptist churches in Dobruja and conduct evangelization. In addition, the Baptist brothers Jakob Lutz and Johannes Sasse are on the road as missionaries in Bessarabia and the Dobruja.

The Sunday school and children's groups probably sang from the children's songbook "Singvögelein", which was first published in 1867 by Philipp Bickel for the German-language Sunday school work in the USA and adapted to the conditions in Germany in 1874.

In the 1930s, the "Täufer-Bote" was read by Baptists in the Dobruja. In addition, the "Christenfibel" by Johannes Fleischer is used for Bible study at home and during evangelizations.

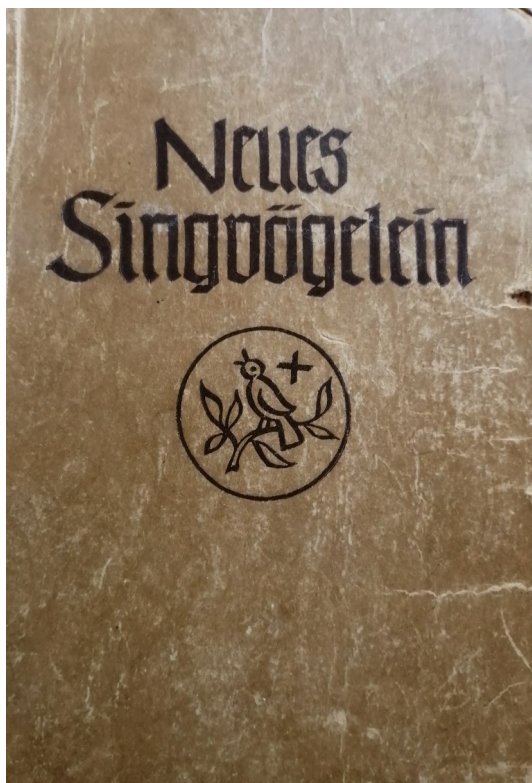


Image 12: Singvögelein – image from Silke Neureuther

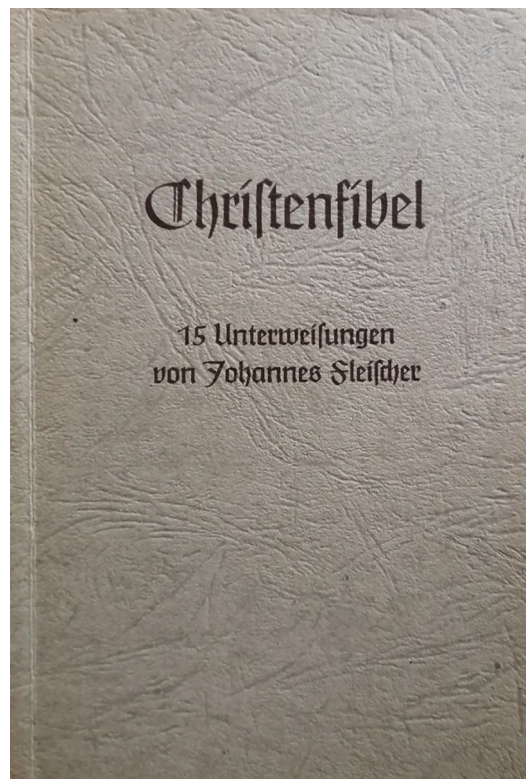


Image 13: Christenfibel – image from retired Pastor Roland Fleischer

For the children there is the children's newspaper "Der Morgenstern". In 1934, Anny Folk (wife of the preacher Hans Folk) reports from the "Morning Star Group" in Cataloi as follows: *"Cataloi, Romania. In addition to an impressive Sunday school, there is also a "Morgenstern Riddle Group" in our congregation. About 2 ½ years ago, our 10–12-year-old girls met regularly one Sunday a month (every second Sunday in winter). The "Morgenstern" was read, the riddles were guessed, a nice story was read out, sometimes a little song was learned; biblical tasks were not missing either. Once a week, these girls could also be found doing handicrafts together. And this gave rise to our newly organized "Cataloi Riddle Group". Boys were also recruited; willing helpers were found and now we wanted to bring joy to our congregation. A small spring festival, which took place in our chapel on the evening of Sunday, March 25th of this year, was to serve this purpose. With much diligence and perseverance, this small group prepared songs, poems and talks and presented "spring" as a gift from our good Father in heaven. This was followed by a serious discussion between our adult girls: "Sanctification". The song "O Lamb of God", which was sung with fervor by these faithful girls, left a deep impression. Our dear preacher complemented the individual presentations with fine words, and we want to remember the admonition to become efficient in order to be able to recognize the meaning of the riddles we encounter in life, guided by the Holy Spirit, and to solve them in a God-willed way."* (taken from: *Täufer-Bote* No. 4, from the year 1934)

Jakob Rauschenberger, a member of the Baptist Church of Cataloi, studied at the Baptist preacher's seminary in Hamburg at the end of the 1920s. There he met his wife Elsbeth Holzmann (1914-2016). After completing his studies, he was appointed pastor in Kronstadt (Transylvania) on August 17, 1930. In May 1934, he was transferred to Cataloi and ordained pastor by Pastor Carl Füllbrandt on February 3, 1935. During Jakob Rauschenberger's time as a preacher, the Baptist congregation in Cataloi became somewhat more liberal and open. The "pastor's wife" Elsbeth Rauschenberger brings fresh impetus to some church groups (e.g. Sunday school, youth group, guitar/mandolin orchestra). In the fall of 1940, Elsbeth Rauschenberger prepares all the necessary certificates from the Baptist church register that the Baptists of Cataloi need for the "Heim ins Reich" resettlement campaign. The "Heim ins Reich" campaign marked the end of the history of the German Baptist congregation in Cataloi.

Today there is a Romanian Baptist congregation in Cataloi, which built a new chapel a few years ago and is led by Pastor Adrian Popa.

Note: Please also read the detailed report on Jakob Klundt's (1839-1921) life



Image 14: Carl Füllbrandt
image from the Archive of the Baptist
Congregation Vienna Mollardgasse



Image 15: Baptist chapel 2021 – image from Pastor Adrian Popa



Image 16: Family Rauschenberger in Cataloi
image from Karin Wood-Lamont geb. Rauschenberger



Image 17: Family Rauschenberger in Massenbach Germany after World War II
image from Friedrich Graf

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10. Baptist congregation Cataloi 1928/1929 – image from Friedrich Graf
11. Prayer house 1930er Jahre – image from Karin Wood-Lamont born Rauschenberger
12. Singvögelein – image from Silke Neureuther
13. Christenfibel – image from retired Pastor Roland Fleischer
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15. Baptist chapel 2021 – image from Pastor Adrian Popa
16. Family Rauschenberger in Cataloi – image from Karin Wood-Lamont geb. Rauschenberger
17. Family Rauschenberger in Massenbach Germany after World War II – image from Friedrich Graf

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