

Jakob Ellenberger

Teachers and preachers
of the Mennonite community of Friedelsheim

A biographical sketch



Presented based on his handwritten papers,
with an appendix of some of his poems.

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Foreword.



in me or my life
that one desires; what Christ has given me is
worthy of love .

Under this motto, the dear departed wrote down "Accounts from My Life" in 1866, initially for his immediate family. After his death, his loved ones wished to have this precious handwritten legacy reproduced in print. When this intention became known to some members of the congregation, they expressed that others besides themselves would likely like to read more about their former teacher and preacher and possess a copy as a memento of him. For this wider readership, however, his manuscript had to be published in a more freely revised and supplemented form, as is now offered here. Some pieces were omitted, as the deceased had offered them for inclusion in the book " **Pictures from the Pilgrim's Life,** " published in 1878, during the last year of his life. The reader will find them there under the heading " **From the Life of a Mennonite Youth** ." Instead, some of his poems have been included here as an appendix, which will surely be welcome.

May both of these things be a blessing to the readers.

In June 1879.



Jakob Ellenberger was born on October 18, 1800, in Gönnheim, near Friedelsheim, in the [then] Bavarian Palatinate. He was the fourth of five siblings.

His parents were Abraham Ellenberger and Katharina, also a née Ellenberger. He writes of them that they were pious and God-fearing. And amidst a local population that was spiritually dead at the time, their truthfulness, inextricably linked to piety, was held in very high esteem. For while the citizens of his village were somewhat distrustful of one another in what they said, Ellenberger's father enjoyed the most unconditional trust. Of what he said, it was said: "Yes, if Ellenberger said it, then it's true," whereas everyone else had to confirm their words with a sinful oath, akin to a vow, if they were to be believed. And while Christianity was generally a secondary matter for his contemporaries, and neither Christian nor unchristian matters were strictly observed, his parents lived a quiet and secluded life, keeping themselves aloof from everything worldly and worldly. Their Christianity was serious, the Bible the guiding principle of their lives, their conduct in faith, and their love not merely words but deeds. They encouraged their children to pray and read the Word of God from an early age. "And all this in such a free and unforced way that the children happily and lovingly imitated their parents."

"Under the discipline and care of such parents, I was touched by the grace of God at an early age. And yet, sin would sometimes take hold in one way, sometimes in another. But the voice of conscience and the Spirit of God always called and drove me back. – I had a great fear of thunderstorms; and this kept me constantly in prayer and in my walk before

God during the summer. Thus the Lord knows how to touch and draw us to Himself in all kinds of ways."

And otherwise, too, the boy had a gentle and sensitive nature . A lover of birds, he bit a lark that flew freely, and when evening came, it returned to him so that he would put it in its cage. When his sister unexpectedly stepped on it at dusk, killing it—oh, how he wept for her! Another time, almost against his will, he threw something at a robin sitting on a wall, hitting it so hard that it fell down dead. He was filled with feelings of the deepest jest and wept tears of remorse. The dead bird was given an honorable burial.

His school years spanned from 1807 to 1814. From 1809 onward, he attended school in Friedelsheim. There, he was able to learn the most essential subjects—reading, writing, arithmetic, and even singing—quite well. Anything he wished to learn beyond that, he had to pursue privately at home. And he certainly didn't lack diligence. One of his favorite pastimes was calligraphy. From that time, he still preserved a notebook containing a variety of very successful blackletter scripts in his own hand, for which he received a commendation from the government. His handwriting remained very clear and pleasing well into his old age. That era, as is well known, was the turbulent Napoleonic Wars, which offered a schoolboy more interesting and entertaining experiences than his parents. However, as much as the spectacle of war with the smartly dressed soldiers of the various countries on foot and on horseback, the drum rolls, the blaring of trumpets and full military music delighted him, he nevertheless got a different impression of the soldiers.

It was on New Year's Day 1814 that Russian soldiers were quartered with them. One evening he was sent to fetch brandy for the Russians who were staying with his father.

"On the way, two soldiers grabbed my arm and took me into a barn where they were binding hay, and where I was supposed to shine a light for them. I was terribly cold, and I saw that they were far from finished with their work. So I quickly devised a plan of escape, which I immediately put into action. I blew out the light and took flight. By the time the Russians, in their heavy riding boots and trousers, emerged from the dark barn and climbed over a threshing floor three or four feet high, I had gained a considerable head start. I made my way through thick and thin, and when I realized that my pursuers were getting too close, I jumped into a familiar farmyard, through the barn and into the garden, taking the shorter route home. While they searched for me with earnestness and bitterness in the house they saw me jump into, I was already sitting quietly at home behind the stove. But every footstep of a soldier frightened me, as I thought they were my pursuers."

Of his preparatory instruction for holy baptism, he said it was brief and inadequate, but nonetheless not without blessing. He lamented that much of what he had learned was lost due to the vain and flighty nature that arose among his companions along the way. Nevertheless, he admitted to some youthful indiscretions from that time, but could confess that, despite his lack of understanding, he did not receive holy baptism without blessing. – Of his subsequent development, we know only that he was awakened to a new spiritual life during the hardship years of 1816 and 1817, and

at the same time, an almost obsessive reading arose within him, which became both a means of preservation and advancement for him. (See “ **Pictures from the Pilgrim's Life** ”)

"In consideration of my weakness, I was supposed to learn tailoring, for which I had neither much skill nor much desire."

He therefore had to undergo some heavy housework and fieldwork.

He dreaded conscription, all the more so because a year earlier he had had the opportunity to visit a barracks in Oggersheim . Everything he saw and heard there only increased his aversion to this profession. God intervened, and he was exempted. His weak eyesight was the reason the military doctors declared him unfit for service. He gratefully praises this gracious intervention from his God.

Regarding the decision about one's future profession, he writes:

*"Reading the aforementioned writings further aroused and intensified the long-awaited desire within me to become a preacher of God's word. An old, venerable preacher from our congregation served as my model and example. With my uncle, **Heinrich Ellenberger** , a preacher, I visited Mr. Weidmann, a Mennonite preacher in Monsheim , to inquire about Holland, as we had heard that young people could study there free of charge. This was indeed confirmed; however, it was also noted that I would first need to learn foreign languages thoroughly. I would have liked to do so, but no one knew how to begin, and so it remained undone."*

[**Heinrich Ellenberger** served as preacher in the parishes of Eppstein and Friesenheim until 1850, when he emigrated to America at an advanced age.]

Around this time, a Christian Englishman named Angas came to Switzerland and later also to Germany. He learned of my longing. And it is to this true Christian and noble philanthropist that I owe my acceptance among the pupils at the [Beuggen institution in](#) the Grand Duchy of Baden, where I was cared for like a father during the three years I spent there.

On May 24, 1824, I entered the congregation, having previously met my dear and esteemed benefactor in Basel. He was a member of the English Baptists and a very active and gifted man in spreading true Christianity . He traveled extensively and died of cholera while preaching the Gospel to sailors in his sphere of influence.

The three years I spent there were very important to me, and richly blessed. I owe this institution not only my training as a teacher, but also the true understanding of my perverse heart. There were difficult hours of trial for me there , hours in which I wrestled with despair. And I owe it only to the grace of my God that I did not succumb to temptation in those difficult hours.

Apart from those hours of examination, I must count my time in Beuggen among the happiest days of my life. I will never forget my dear and beloved teacher, Inspector Christian Heinrich Zeller, and his wife. They were true school parents who will remain in the blessed memory of all the pupils.

Not without having formed bonds of friendship with several pupils close to him, among whom he particularly mentions the one with **Johannes Schlosser**, who later became a teacher and housemaster at the poorhouse in Grube near Bern, he left Beuggen on May 27, 1827. The farewell address, given by Inspector Zeller, was from 2 Chronicles 20:15-17, a truly encouraging word about serving the Lord. – From his time at the institution, we include one case that he had written down at his own request in July 1878. This case not only gives us a glimpse into the good community spirit of the entire institution, but it also brings honor to pupil Ellenberger, for his unwavering convictions, and to the Inspector for his Christian tolerance. Namely:

*On the occasion of the baptism of a child of Inspector Zeller in Beuggen, the children of the institution were also invited to a simple meal. The topics of conversation were manifold. The baptism was also mentioned. Inspector Zeller approached me, lightly patted me on the shoulder, and said: "Isn't it true, dear Ellenberger, when children of Christian parents, supported by devout godparents, and by such a dear, devout pastor as **Pastor von Brunn**, receive holy baptism, is it something special?" – "Yes, certainly, Inspector," I replied, "but if the child being baptized could have made their own profession of faith, it would have been even more meaningful." To this, the inspector said: "You are quite right." And this statement was not disputed by anyone in the company.*

Beuggen and Basel are about four hours apart [by horse-drawn carriage]. The committee members of the missionary institute in Basel and those from Beuggen resided in Basel.

This led to a pleasant and lively connection between the two institutions. Under these friendly circumstances, the pupils of both institutions also visited each other, for which Sundays were permitted. This was a great blessing, for the pupils from Beuggen also became friends of the mission, who later proved themselves to be promoters of this holy work in their own sphere of influence. This is also true of our dear Mennonite pupil. Beuggen and Basel remained unforgettable memories for him. For many years, he maintained continuous contact with both through correspondence and, until his death, through reading the Beuggen Monthly Journal and the Heidenbote (Messenger of the Heathens). His holiday trips during his time in Beuggen are recounted in the aforementioned book, **Pictures from Pilgrim Life**. He was informed . After 40 years, he still speaks with the warmest gratitude of the love and friendship he enjoyed during the various visits back then. We would like to conclude this time, so dear to him, with his own words:

Thank you, heartfelt thanks to the Mennonite families near Liestal, under whose hospitable roof I so often stayed and enjoyed so much love. Thank you, heartfelt thanks to the family of the notary . Heinemann in Liestal, with her lovely little daughter Sophie , where the Beuggen and missionary pupils met for an extended period ; the pastor Hoch in Buß ; the pastor Stähelin in Wintersingen, and Mrs. Märkli there. The love and blessings I received from you will remain unforgettable . May the Lord reward you abundantly through your children.

In the spring of 1827, his preparatory period in Beuggen came to an end. At the same time, the board of the

Mennonite congregation in Friedelsheim called upon him to take on the teaching position for their children. Trusting in the Lord, he gladly accepted this call and began his teaching duties with about 20 students. But soon the government brought a bit of a scare to this school. He writes:

In the autumn of that same year, our school was closed again by the government. A corresponding rescript stated: "Since the Mennonite congregation in Friedelsheim maintains a private school, it is hereby closed, and the congregation is seriously informed that it must send its children to the local school until it has demonstrated the means to establish its own school and has employed a teacher approved by the government."

I had no choice but to request admission to the examination , which was granted. At the same time, the board of our congregation petitioned the government to allow me to continue running the Mennonite school provisionally until the examination. This request was also granted. In late 1828, I passed the examination in Kaiserslautern (at the teacher training college) and received the grade: Good aptitude for the teaching profession.

By complying with the government's directive, the school became legally recognized, and Ellenberger a fully acknowledged teacher. Consequently, even though he received no state salary, he was obligated to fulfill all duties. His school, like every other public school, was inspected annually by the royal school board; he had to attend the teachers' conferences held under the supervision of the district school inspector , submit the required papers, join

the teachers' reading society, and pay his contribution to the teachers' death fund.

Well, from his beginning at school he writes:

There were new and peculiar Experiences . Above all, the realization that teaching others is something completely different from being taught. When teaching others, I first had to begin learning myself.

For five years – from 1827 to 1832 – he was initially only active in the school . Then the congregation also elected him as their preacher. In 1832, he was ordained at a church meeting in Weierhof by the preacher Molenaar from Crefeld (the father of the preacher Joh. Molenaar in Monsheim).

Until 1831 he was single, and during that time he boarded with the parents of his pupils. And about this itinerant table he remarks:

This has its advantages, but also its disadvantages.

And after looking back on forty years of activity , he says:

So I acted with sincerity and faithfulness, but in weakness and inadequacy. Yet the Lord helped, and has helped thus far.

Regarding his marital status and domestic life, he writes the following:

On April 24, 1831, I married Lisette Blickensdörfer , a daughter of Peter Blickensdörfer of Kohlhof and Magdalena, née Schowalter , of Assenheim . Her paternal grandfather, Georg Blickensdörfer , was a landowner and preacher at Kohlhof ...

In her, I found a faithful, devout, and sincere life partner. This life brought new experiences, both joyful and sorrowful. How comforting it is to have a wife who, in true love, shares joy and sorrow, and thus becomes a true helper and companion. And this happiness has befallen me. Just as she is a faithful helper to me, so too is she a faithful, loving, and maternally caring mother. And that has been very good, for our marriage has been blessed with many children: eight sons and five daughters.

We will omit the list of children with their names and birthdays, along with brief descriptions, which is still given here in the manuscript.

At the time he wrote this, two of his children had died: his first son, at the age of 20, from typhus in Kirchheimbolanden, where he was employed as a wheelwright, and his eleventh child, a daughter of 3 years. Eleven survived him; and of these, two had already emigrated to New Zealand, and one son to America, followed by a second.

up to this point using his own handwritten notes. The following serves as a supplement to them.

Fir For those readers who did not know him personally, it should be noted that he was a man of medium height and well-proportioned. His head was adorned with a full head of black hair, which, with advancing age, became a crown of honor (Proverbs 16:31 and 20:29). His features were mild and benevolent, yet not without seriousness; and had the light in his eyes not been so weak, the expression on his face would have gained even more vibrancy. He was unassuming in his own person, far removed from anything forced or

insincere. His appearance was simple and straightforward, engaging and confidence-inspiring, and his demeanor calm, confident, and dignified. Otherwise, he was a healthy, vigorous, and active man, even well into his old age.

With faith in Christ, the crucified one, in whom alone comfort, salvation, life, peace, and strength for us lie, he entered his field of work. First, he went to school. And just as his beloved teacher in Beuggen had done , so too did our Ellenberger: He led the lambs entrusted to him to the great Shepherd and heavenly friend of children, Jesus. He made it his earnest concern to properly acquaint and nourish the young hearts with the pure milk of God's Word. Nevertheless, the other subjects of instruction were of no concern to him. His pupils distinguished themselves favorably in general knowledge compared to those of the local school , so that an educated man who did not belong to our parish sent his boys to his school for a time. With God's help, it visibly flourished. And his work was a joyful and rewarding one.

He was particularly fond of singing and cultivated it diligently. The older students in his school , and those who graduated, formed a mixed choir, which gained new members every year. And since no one left, not even after marriage, and many had a little singer at home, the membership grew steadily, and the choir became ever more accomplished. None of the major festivals were celebrated without this choir singing one of their rehearsed songs after the sermon, and often even at the beginning of the service. Later, at his instigation, a separate association for male choirs was established , whose performances in church also contributed

to the beauty of the services. The effort involved in rehearsing the songs , as well as the numerous pieces of music written for the choir , was truly remarkable . Men's choirs were never too much for him; he sought his reward in the beautiful and noble purpose and goal of singing . [He cultivated such choral singing especially as a means of enlivening and strengthening the sense of community.] The men's choir has, as proof of its In 1846, they presented him with a silver box as a token of their appreciation, which greatly pleased him, and for which he expressed his gratitude to the singers in a lighthearted poem at the next rehearsal. As proof of how modestly he regarded his efforts and achievements, we present here the second verse of his thank-you poem:

*Surprised by the size of the gift
Compared to what I have accomplished:
I felt deeply ashamed.
Well, thank you! And I mean my heartfelt thanks.
So come all from the singing club,
Yes, come and take a pinch .*

(With these words, he handed each person the opened can.)

In later years, when he began to suffer from respiratory problems , he could no longer properly pursue singing, and although it did not completely cease, it did diminish as a consequence.

In the 1840s and 50s, he also organized delightful Christmas celebrations at the school, which remain unforgettable for his students at the time . He reported on one such school Christmas celebration in the Mennonite Papers, 1856, No. 1 ,

to which we would like to draw the readers' particular attention. It is unique in its kind and testifies to how he sought to make Christmas, the Gospel, and school all at once a pleasant and meaningful experience for his students .

As a preacher, he acted in the same spirit. He preached Christ, who was made by God for us to be wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The writer of this report still vividly remembers how individual souls from the state church came to the quiet Mennonite church in Friedelsheim to hear from him what their troubled souls thirsted for, because they could find no solace for it elsewhere nearby. A lively current of spiritual life also entered the congregation, the movement of which spread to other congregations in our area. The Christian periodicals he sought to distribute served this purpose particularly well . A good number of copies of the "Monthly Paper," edited by Inspector Zeller in Beuggen, as well as several copies of the "Basel Collections," found appreciative recipients and attentive readers in his congregation, as well as among some families living elsewhere who were friends of the congregation. To this end, he himself also distributed the "Basel People's Messenger" and the youth papers of [Dr. \[Christian Gottlob\] Barth](#) in Calw, which he gladly lent to his parishioners. In general, he made his library, or rather the Colks writings contained therein , available to his parishioners free of charge and was pleased when they made use of it. A particularly important concern of his was the missionary cause, which had already been initiated in the congregation by the aforementioned English Baptist preacher Angas in connection with the esteemed Mr. Tauchnitz .

Therefore, the congregation also received a tin box inscribed : "Collections of Christian gifts for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Mennonite Congregation Friedelsheim and Erpolsheim 1824." His predecessor, preacher Johannes Risser, cultivated the then still new missionary cause in the Friedelsheim congregation. He then sought to bring the Evangelical Messenger to families to promote a missionary spirit. And once a month, following the Sunday service, he gave reports from the mission territory. And this continued without interruption until his death. His example extended beyond the local congregation, so that through his efforts the missionary cause spread ever more widely among the Mennonite communities of the Palatinate. And since that time, he has regularly sent contributions, sometimes small, sometimes large, for the mission to Basel every year. That he also extended his support to our Anabaptist Missionary Society in Amsterdam after its founding is quite natural. For as much as his memory and love remained with the institutions in Switzerland , he nevertheless wholeheartedly adhered to our confession . He was devoted to the community and considered it a sacred duty to support and promote it in his own way, wherever and however he could. In general, wherever it was a matter of cultivating and promoting the well-being of himself and the entire community , he was always present. How delighted he was by the publication of the Mennonite Papers! He valiantly sought to disseminate this journal from our community within his sphere of influence , regularly submitting an article for it. He also endeavored to establish a Mennonite foundation for the benefit of his community in commemoration of the 300th anniversary of Menno Simon's

death . A start was made. How far it has progressed after 18 years, the writer of this report cannot say.

He quickly established a fraternal relationship with his fellow ministers, the preachers **Risser** in Sembach and **Molenaar** in Monsheim , after they had established their spheres of activity nearby. The relationship between him and Molenaar, in particular, was very close and confidential. **Chr. Schmutz** in Rappenau was also drawn into the circle of brothers, and the fraternal relationship was maintained and nurtured through mutual visits and correspondence. The **preachers Roosen** and **Neufeldt** visited him as students from Heidelberg and encountered him frequently later in life. **Preacher de Veer** from Neuwied and **Tiesen** from Ibersheim also visited his home, and he was always spiritually refreshed by the visits of brothers and fellow ministers from the community. He also developed friendly relations with several devout pastors in the regional church, especially with **Pastor Schiller , whom he** assisted in the publication of the first volumes of the " Sickinger Bote." And when, in 1848, the devout priests of the Palatinate began to hold missionary festivals, he was a welcome guest at the first of these festivals, as it was known that he had long been familiar with this holy work and faithfully supported it. And on several occasions, he was invited to the meetings of those men who were initiating and fostering a new Christian life in the Palatinate's united church.

in the compilation of the books for liturgical use: the catechism, the formulary, and the hymnal, which were edited by Pastor Molenaar . Hymns 209 and 215 are his own. The prayer in the formulary, "For a New Mother on Her First Visit

to the Church," is also his; it was later included in the "Guide" published by our Baden brethren. He also contributed a melody book to the hymnal, in which the chorales are arranged for four voices.

responsible not only for his own parish but also for Erpolsheim and Kohlhof . In Erpolsheim , an hour away, he held services in the afternoon , after preaching in Friedelsheim in the morning. Kohlhof was a three-hour journey, and he only held services there once a month. He always walked back and forth until asthma and declining physical strength made this impossible, and he was then picked up. In the early 1950s, he also served the parish of Eppstein as a substitute for four years. And for about 20 years, since the local preacher, Johann Herschler, retired, he has been serving the parish of Branchweilerhof near Neustadt an der Haardt [now Neustadt an der Haardt]. [Wine Route] he administered the preaching office. He preached regularly once a month in this parish, which was also three hours away. While people used to drive him part of the way , he was recently able to take the train. But even then, he still had a half-hour walk to the station where he boarded and alighted. His ministry, including serving the branch parishes, was indeed strenuous and exhausting. For when the week's schoolwork was finished on Saturday, he had to go to preaching and on his preaching tour. And when he came home tired on Sunday evening , schoolwork was already waiting for him again on Monday morning . He found time for rest only during the few weeks of vacation; otherwise, he was active day after day . Had God not blessed him with good health , it would have been impossible for him to bear the burden of work for so long.

But his spiritual and religious office already brought many hardships and various afflictions; over time, the worries of a large family were added, weighing heavily upon him. He possessed some things, but only a very modest private fortune, received an annual salary of a few hundred guilders ; and also enjoyed annual support from his Dutch fellow believers; and yet, the worries of his physical needs weighed heavily on him, as is easily understood, considering his family.

Several times he seriously considered emigrating to America to at least find an easier economic footing. However, he did not leave the community and remained where he was, resigning himself, albeit with a heavy heart, to his situation, which compelled him to extreme frugality , so that he often had to eat his bread literally in the sweat of his brow . Thus, as long as his sons were still too weak, he could often be seen sawing wood in his yard for half a day in the summer, purely out of consideration for thrift. And while other colleagues usually went for a walk after school to get some fresh air , he went to his workbench and crafted this or that piece of necessary household furniture to save a considerable amount of money. He made the armchair in his study himself, on which he sat while writing. And anyone who is not an expert would hardly believe it, so light and pleasing is its form.

And rural work had always remained familiar to him from his youth. In the revolutionary year of 1848, he and Pastor Risser from Sembach had met in Monsheim at Pastor Molenaar's house to discuss a particular matter . After serious deliberations , they took a walk together one afternoon for

recreation. They passed a field where, not far from the path, two workers were busy digging. The spirit of rebellion raged in the hearts and minds of these two men, and as our pastors were passing by, one stood up and said to the other, but loudly enough for passersby to hear : "Those are three of the black-robed ones whose jackets we'll soon be shaking out!" Our Ellenberger remained for a while. He paused for a moment, then bravely approached the men and said that it was unfair to consider them lazy ; besides their clerical work, they were quite skilled with a spade. He took off his coat, picked up one of the men's shovels, and demonstrated by digging back and forth several times that he had the strength and skill to perform their work as well as they did, which made the men quite uneasy. Then he spoke a few more words to them; they lowered their gaze in shame and let the three men go in peace. – Certainly , it is to his credit that he knew how to adapt himself to such circumstances for the sake of God and the congregation , circumstances that are rarely found among preachers employed solely for their ministry. Yes, he was a worker in the spiritual field, and when it came to the natural one as well, for he bound many a sheaf out in his field, and rejoiced there too, "*as one rejoices at the harvest*".

such circumstances he grew old and gray, without his spirit changing. Evidence of this can be seen in the large number of poems he left behind. Despite the burden of his office and many hardships and worries, he nevertheless retained a creative energy, expressing religious thoughts or short stories, both serious and lighthearted, in verse , as he pleased . And it was precisely this free intellectual activity that helped him overcome many difficult times and brought

much refreshment and relief to his often troubled heart. Whether he was giving or receiving visitors , he was always the calm, friendly, and communicative man that everyone had known from the beginning.

We do not deny that he might sometimes have acted differently in his actions. However, our relationship with him does not permit us to pass a dismissive judgment . Besides the love and high esteem we feel for him , we also have too great a respect for the burden he bore to presume to judge him. Nevertheless, perhaps he was still unconsciously governed by a trait closer to the natural than to the spiritual. And it may often have been this trait that prevented him from immediately possessing the spiritual flexibility to yield without harm and with generosity , and sometimes gave him cause to be somewhat one-sided. Even so, peace resided in his being, and universal and brotherly love dwelt in his heart; he readily forgot what troubled him and harbored no resentment towards anyone. We can testify that we heard from his own mouth in our inner circle how, praying before God, he accused himself of his sins, as well as his weaknesses and shortcomings in office; and we know for certain that he always carried his congregation on his heart in a priestly manner.

He worked faithfully, made many sacrifices and denied himself many things, saving diligently and consistently throughout his entire term of office, so that he might be honored before God and man as a faithful steward , and be a true father and provider to his family. But: "Many brothers make a meager fortune!" Is this true when Tavern 's wealth is considerable, how much more so when it is only small? So it

was with our Ellenberger, who had to provide for eleven children with a meager fortune. It is therefore understandable that, with regard to his children's future and their professional training, he had little more than the bare necessities at his disposal. Only one of his sons, the youngest, chose to follow in his father's footsteps. He writes: "*But as gratifying as it was for me when Daniel Adolf expressed his inclination towards study, a heavy burden of worry fell upon my heart, because such a career is very expensive, and I am so limited in my means.*"

And when he had received help from his fellow believers in this matter, he appointed Ebenezer with the words: "*The old God still lives! Lord, I am too little for all the mercy and faithfulness that You have shown me! You hear prayer, therefore all flesh comes to You!*"

But it wasn't only in this instance that he experienced God's powerful helping hand; he confesses in his own words that in general, in his domestic life as well as in his official and professional life, he "experienced *the fatherly, gracious, indeed powerful help of the Lord in many a need and affliction, and this assures me that the Lord will not forsake or abandon me, indeed that he is calling out to me, as it were: 'Do not be afraid! I am with you; I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with my eye.'*" (Psalm 32:8)

As proof of this, he recounts two further cases:

Two of his sons were already in the military, and a third was to follow them, but was urgently needed at home to manage the small farm. The father wanted to secure him permanent

leave and, in all modesty , requested the cooperation of the local council, which they readily granted. However, the promise was sincere, but keeping it would be difficult; they wanted to provide him with a necessary... The certificates , signed by the individual fathers of the families, were refused. However, he did not accept being dismissed so rudely; he insisted that they attest to the one truth: that two of his sons were already in the military. No one could give him any hope of success, since the The certificate had been issued so shortly before the induction that it could no longer be reviewed by a higher authority beforehand. He did not lose heart: "But I turned to the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and asked Him to guide hearts like streams of water, and make them inclined toward me."

On the day of decision, the motto was : "See, I have looked upon you even in this matter." With this word in his heart and the testimony in his pocket, he went joyfully ... Speyer . And behold, even though the President and another government councilor were about to reject the matter, **Councilor Kurz** , who knew him, stepped forward and said: "*Mr. President! Mr. Ellenberger already has two sons in the military, and several younger sons face the same fate; one could certainly enlist him without any reprimands !* " "*So!* " said the President. "*Therefore: leave of absence!* " and the matter was settled.

Equally surprising was the help received by another son. He had emigrated to New Zealand but was then called up for training in his homeland . The father wanted to provide him with a replacement so that he wouldn't be considered and treated as a deserter. Time was short, and two men

knowledgeable about the matter, through whose hands the case had to pass, explained to him that any such attempt would be in vain. Our father Ellenberger's experience was like that of the psalmist: "Out of his distress he called upon the Lord;" and as if by an answer from above, the words of comfort were given to him: "You hear the desire of the afflicted, O Lord; their hearts are assured, and your ear is attentive to them" (Psalm 10:17). He persisted, recruited a man, had the document officially recorded with him before the royal notary, and telegraphed the relevant military command in Munich that a replacement had been provided for his son. He writes: *"And the Lord heard my plea and answered it. ... A few weeks later, one of the men who had given up all hope for him summoned me officially and informed me of my son's passing, with the somewhat subdued remark: 'They have achieved their purpose after all.'"*

Thus, he also experienced in relation to his children that God holds all people in his hands. Solomon said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but let me receive my meager portion of food." This latter thing was also granted to his children, most of whom married during his lifetime; Father Ellenberger was privileged to witness this before the Lord called him home.

Because of his weak eyesight, he had to wear glasses for reading even in his forties. With increasing age, however, his eyesight deteriorated further, so that even the glasses were of little use to him. He therefore applied to the government for his pension. Here we must now add the following: As a state-certified teacher, Ellenberger was asked in the 1850s to join the new pension scheme. He did so. The annual

contribution, however, was not insignificant. The local council had decided to pay the contributions for the two schoolteachers from the municipal treasury, but not for the Mennonite teacher. In contrast, the then- regional commissioner , Mr. Kurtz, insisted on Ellenberger's equal right to a pension. And so, his pension was guaranteed; but the contribution, which would have become too burdensome for him in the long run, was waived.

During the public school examinations, Mr. Kurtz, in his capacity as district commissioner of Neustadt, also visited Ellenberger's school, where he met him; and because he was very pleased with Ellenberger's academic performance, he also held him in high esteem. He also developed a personal affection for him later, even after becoming a government councilor , a position to which he was appointed, as we saw from the above account.

That this high-ranking official showed him personal favor and maintained it at all times, he always considered a gracious act of God. And that he was also granted the benefit of a pension , he thanked the noble Councilor Kurtz most sincerely, even more so than God. – So he applied for a pension . This first application was denied, however, because, contrary to the cantonal physician's opinion, a military doctor had declared his eyesight still fit for work. His eyesight, however, continued to deteriorate, so that finally, two years later – in 1869 – the government also had to grant him a pension from his teaching position; and thus, corresponding to his years of service, he received an annual pension of 400 guilders, which later, after the chambers had approved the increase in schoolteachers' pensions, amounted to somewhat more. This, of course, entailed the resignation of his teaching post. Unfortunately, this marked the end of the Mennonite school, and their children now had

to attend the village's mixed school. He continued his ministry until his death.

Ellenberger was now able to gradually pay off his debts with his pension, debts he had been forced to incur over time. He didn't complain about having to give away this well-earned money again; on the contrary, it was a truly relieving and comforting feeling for him that he could use it to settle all his liabilities, as evidenced by his own letters. Despite his darkening eyesight, the merciful God had indeed granted him light in this respect in his twilight years. And he was deeply grateful for it.

In 1875, on April 1st, his wife passed away. This was a hard blow for him. While he had grown old until then, without suffering much from the ailments of old age, the separation from his faithful companion bent him so deeply that he began to age noticeably. He lived as a widower for almost four more years, during which time his eldest and youngest daughters stayed with him. Quiet and withdrawn, he now confined himself to his clerical duties and the upbringing of his grandchild, to whom he was particularly devoted. He also continued his ministry to the wider community, although his eyesight was steadily failing, to the point that he could no longer read the text .

Thus came the year 1878. He had turned his back on the world. The infirmities of old age overcame him like a fully armed man, so that one could not deny that he would soon be shedding his earthly shell. And we believe he could face his end with confidence ; otherwise, he could not have concluded his own account of his life with the following words :

My domestic life, and my life and work in preaching and teaching, as I still conduct them today, are open to everyone's eyes, and I can therefore conclude my written work here. However, I cannot do otherwise than with the confession : Despite all my weakness and shortcomings in life and office, the Lord has done great things for me and my family. Yes, I am too small for all the mercy and faithfulness the Lord has shown me ! My motto was, is, and will remain as long as I live: "I and my household will serve the Lord!" May this also be and remain the motto of all my children. It is good to be with Him; He helps and blesses where no one else can. "Blessed is the one whose help is the God of Jacob!" (Psalm 146:5).

*With You, Jesus, I will remain ,
always in Your service ; nothing shall
drive me from You ; I will
walk Your ways .
You are the life of my life ,
the impulse and strength of my soul,
as the vine
gives its branches strength and life-giving sap.*

Regarding the days of his illness and his end, the following:

"On November 10th, Father still held a church service at the Kohlhof farm . But even on the return journey, the effects of old age began to set in. He had to get out of the car every few moments and also had the misfortune of falling. He arrived home ill. For several weeks, he lay on the sofa during the day. At first, he still got up; but gradually he preferred to lie down and, since he could no longer do it himself, had to be dressed and undressed. Then he even demanded to be

put to bed during the day and remained there permanently from then on. He didn't actually suffer from any particular illness, but rather from the infirmities of old age , which manifested itself especially in his urinary organs, as their functions had completely ceased. And to prevent a worse outcome, his urine finally had to be drained artificially."

In the beginning, Veter spoke only when absolutely necessary and slept almost constantly. Once, after waking up, he quite unexpectedly said , "Peace! Joy!" and fell back asleep. Father had always enjoyed reading aloud and praying with him. The visit of his fellow pastor, J. van der Smissen Mr. Sembach was clearly welcome at his bedside. Unfortunately, he couldn't really speak to him, as he was so weak. He read him the hymn: "My all that I love, - My all that I practice - Be my Lord Jesus Christ " and said a short prayer over him.

I once asked him if he had peace in Christ. He answered, "Yes, in the Lord I have righteousness." I said, "That is our only comfort and refuge in dying." He replied, "Yes, that alone."

At first he felt no pain, until he lay down. The last few weeks were painful, so much so that even the doctor said after his death that his passing was to be welcomed, for he had been in terrible pain lately. But he never complained. Slowly his strength was consumed until the very last drop . Hours before his death, he could no longer be roused, and so he fell peacefully asleep.

February 8, 1879, 7 p.m.

The funeral took place on February 11th with a large turnout . At the graveside, the schoolchildren sang the song: " Let me

go, let me go, that I may see Jesus ." In the church, the preachers J. van der Smissen from Sembach and Chr. Hege from Branchweilerhof spoke ; the latter on Philemon 1:23, and the former on 2 Peter 3:15.

So rest now, dear teacher and pastor. Rest from your work; He, the Lord, has granted you rest. Rest in the holy place of peace among your own; rest among the members of your congregation, whom you have blessed for their burial and resurrection. Rest until the great day of our Lord Jesus Christ. One day you shall rise with them.

*What will we be like? What will it be like
when we move into Salem?*

"Now, one no longer seeks anything in stewards except that they be found faithful." Faithfulness was also the main characteristic of the departed. He recognized that Christ is his Lord, and he his servant. Therefore, the applause of the people was not a measure of his official work. According to the gifts and strength bestowed upon him, he preached the word of God without twisting or distorting it; he looked upwards and did not seek human honors. He did not consider himself to know anything in his congregation except Jesus Christ the Crucified. Thus, for 51 and a half years, he worked tirelessly and unceasingly in one and the same congregation; bearing the burden and intensity of his demanding dual office each day, and expending his strength in its service to the glory of his Lord.

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their lives and imitate their faith. (Hebrews 13:7)

