

# Reasons For the Emigration of Our Ancestors

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Translated by: Allen E. Konrad

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P.O. Box 157, Rowley, IA 52329

onamission1939@gmail.com

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by Senior Pastor Baumann

Germany has always been a country of emigration. At times there were only individuals, then again larger migrations, but there was always emigration. The stream has never completely dried up. Soon after the turn of the millennium, larger migrations went to distant Transylvania and the wide Baltic Sea areas and settled there in closed settlements, others went out one by one and perished somewhere in the world among foreign ethnic groups. Thus, in the course of the centuries, many thousands emigrated out into the world from all German regions (*Gauen*), and today there is no continent, yes, hardly a country, in which a more or less large number of Germans have not found a home. Exact figures are not available and can no longer be determined. According to a fairly accurate calculation, before the last war there were about 28 million living outside the boundaries of the German settlement areas who professed German ethnicity. But how large the number of those who have been absorbed into foreign people will never be determined. Certainly there are millions.

The motives for emigration were first and foremost the limited space of the German area and the suppression or restriction of personal freedom, and only secondarily the much mentioned move into the distance, the desire for adventure and the most diverse personal reasons.

We Germans, and especially the southern Germans, have always been a people without space. With regard to Württemberg, the Ulm Dominican Felix Fabri wrote as early as 1500: "Although Swabia is a good country, it cannot feed everyone because of its large number of children. Therefore, among all the German tribes one can find Swabians, especially priests and scholars, and no other nation has produced more schoolmasters in the world. Also, in all countries where

grapes grow, even outside Germany, you can find Swabian winegrowers. Swabians send soldiers all over the world and the Swabians also wander everywhere.” From time immemorial, therefore, the Swabian sons and daughters were forced to seek their bread outside their homeland, and the population has increased even more in the course of the centuries. At the turn of the last century, the Russian ambassador in Stuttgart said that there was mass emigration in Württemberg every 25 years as a result of overpopulation. But the other German regions have also provided emigrants at all times. A confined area and resulting poverty and hardship have still driven the Germans out into the world. It is the fate of our people that it has never been able to solve the question of space satisfactorily. The Russians have a sixth, the English even a third of the earth in their possession or at least in administration, the other European people have also been able to create space for themselves, only we Germans and the Italians were not granted it and that is why so many of our fellow-countrymen have left their homeland and had to create a new home for themselves somewhere in the world. Whether this is due to our character, to the hemmed in location of our country between large people groups or for various other reasons, does not change the facts.

An essential incentive to emigration has always been the suppression or restriction of personal freedom. Persecutions for political and religious reasons have occurred in the past and present, and that is why people have always been and are always on the move. In the same way, the arbitrary rule of tyrannical leaders has always set in motion individual and also larger masses. There was also emigration from Germany again and again for such reasons. And finally, the urge from the confined to the distant, the longing for the sunny south, the urge to explore and the desire to adventure have driven German people of all classes and professions on their migrations. But the movement into the distance, which is said to be in the blood of the Germans, as is often claimed, has always only brought about a single but never in our history larger masses in motion. The German loves his homeland, he clings to it with every fiber of his heart. He tears himself away only under prolonged great mental or physical distress and goes out into a foreign country. The emigrants have always suffered badly from homesickness and by far most of them would certainly never have emigrated if they had seen a possibility to stay.

It is now an interesting and very important task to investigate the reasons that once caused our ancestors to leave their homeland. Since we [the people resettled from Bessarabia in 1940] have become homeless, some people have perhaps secretly lamented that their ancestors went to Bessarabia, because they think that they would not have to bear the heavy fate of refugees today if they had stayed in Germany. Well—they certainly did not act without due consideration. It was difficult, even very difficult, for them to tear themselves away from their homeland, relatives and everything that was dear and valuable to them and to go out into an unknown world. They had their reasons and very serious ones.

In Germany, at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, living conditions were very difficult. It was particularly bad in Württemberg. The country, which was not large in itself, was then divided into many small and smaller states and free cities, all of which were in a rather neglected condition. The state coffers were empty—the judiciary and administration were in a bad way, the “nepotism” flourished everywhere. The offices were not filled with the most capable and industrious, but were literally sold to the highest bidders. Whoever could pay the most received the office and whoever had acquired such a post now tried to get quite a lot of money out of it.

He saw in his office a source of income, and sought to squeeze out of the citizens what was in his power. The entire civil servants were corruptible. The princes looked on idly. Nor could they do well against it, since they had virtually created these conditions by selling the offices. The conditions of that time are best characterized by the cruel method of raising money for the lavish life of the princes by selling young men as soldiers to foreign powers. A wild hunt for well-grown men, especially for “tall guys”, as they were the most popular, weighed on the countryside for years like a nightmare. The population could not manage with the various grievances, they simply had to put up with everything.

In 1797, Frederick became Duke of Württemberg, a gifted, clever prince, but strongly arrogant, conceited and extravagant. He had lived abroad from his youth until his accession to the throne, preferred to speak French, did not know his people and never took public opinion into account. He gradually incorporated one after the other of the small states into his duchy, became Elector and finally, in 1805, King of Württemberg. If he had always had the reins of government firmly in his hand, very soon after he had become king he dissolved the traditional parliament and hereafter ruled as an unrestricted ruler. The people now really had nothing more to say and were entirely at the mercy of the king and his ruthless officials. Public meetings were forbidden, conversations in inns were eavesdropped on, and vassals (*Untertanen*) were spied on in every way. All the people were under heavy pressure.

Frederick's reforms caused great dissatisfaction. With the aim of unifying the administration of the newly formed kingdom, he abolished old beloved laws and institutions with a stroke of the pen and imposed new laws on the country. The introduction of universal military conscription caused particular displeasure. The military had always been unpopular in Württemberg. This was due to the brutal treatment of the soldiers—especially their being sold off abroad for war purposes, where usually many had to lose their lives or returned home sick and crippled. Of the 15,800 men that the king had to provide to Emperor Napoleon for his campaign in Russia, only 150 returned.

Frederick led a large, magnificent court that devoured vast sums of money. The king's hunt also devoured a lot and not only in money. The farmers had to provide beaters, often also horses and wagons, often for longer periods of time even during the time of field work. Whether the farmers could cultivate their fields was of little concern to the king. The game also caused a lot of damage, about which the farmers had much to complain about. In addition, there were the increased needs of the enlarged state, and if no debts were to be incurred, the tax screw had to be tightened. This was also duly done with the help of a cleverly devised tax system, the poor vassals were literally plundered.

In 1796, the French broke into Württemberg and led a terrible regiment. They extorted money and fruits of the soil and plundered the country. They came back again in 1799, lived even more ruthlessly and stayed longer this time. Vast sums of money and fruits of the soil were extorted from the country and, in addition, soldiers had to be identified for their war campaigns and much forced labor had to be carried out. The high taxes and the war annoyances hit the entire population exceedingly hard.

All the same, the craftsmen were also in a very difficult situation. Since there were too many of them, they could not be fully employed, and unemployment, the scourge of the modern industrial countries, set in. To alleviate this state of emergency, emergency measures were resorted to, such as in line slaughtering, in line baking, and so forth; for example, one baker was only allowed to bake for a certain number of days, then it was the turn of others and so on one after the other. The farmers were in a better situation at first. True, 1770-1771 were bad years that had a long lasting effect, but, in the 1790s, they were already doing reasonably well again, yes, they were even already prosperous. But the merciless exploitation by the foreigners and by their own sovereign, the poor harvests of 1809, 1810, 1812-1815 and the total crop failure of 1816 completely ruined them. In 1816, the hardship rose to unbearable levels. There was an unprecedented inflation. People were forced to sell their belongings at ridiculous prices in exchange for food at staggering prices. Bread was baked from tree bark, straw and bran and grass and hay were cooked and eaten. The population was economically completely ruined and on the verge of despair. A contemporary wrote in May of 1816: "I was shocked by the terrible state of southern Germany, especially the situation of the farmers in Württemberg, Baden and Bavaria, I had not known that German princes could suck and torture their subjects in such a way that they could possess one more pleasure palace or a few more deer and wild pigs or a thousand guardsmen, by which they want to protect themselves against their vassals who have been driven to despair."

In addition to these economic hardships and political grievances, there was also a religious crisis. It is the great tragedy of that time that the sorely tried people, who were in a hard struggle for the preservation of bare life, were most shamelessly exploited and enslaved by their own princes and strangers, did not even find comfort and support in their church.

The Enlightenment Movement had already spread to Württemberg at that time and had also found its way into the church. Instead of living faith, morality was taught and preached from the pulpits. In place of the testimony of the Bible, reason and logical proof were placed. Such sermons could not appeal to the searching people. Church life therefore became more and more shallow, and to the extent that the aversion to the church grew among the population, the influence of the "Hour" (*Stunde*) increased. Religious life slowly shifted from the church to the *Stunde*.

Pietism was old in Württemberg and had proven itself well. It had influential representatives in the prelate Bengel, Hiller, Oettinger and others, and during their lifetimes many pastors belonged to the *Stunde* and its followers were recruited from all ranks [in society]. With the advent of rationalism, however, many clergymen and educated people fell prey to the Enlightenment, and, as a result, the *Stunde* came more and more into the hands of the laity, especially farmers. In contrast to the rationalist direction of the church, a warm Christianity was cultivated here. It therefore gained more and more importance among the people and felt itself to be the guardian of the true doctrine of the Church. There is no doubt that the *Stunde* had a salutary effect in those years. It has taken on with great faithfulness the religious awakening which had seized wide circles of the Swabian people and which, devoid of understanding, the church and the secular authorities were against, but it cannot be concealed that through them there have also been harmful consequences in church life in Württemberg, which have been well recognized by the serious ones among them. but could not be prevented. The often strongly critical attitude

towards the church has encouraged Separatism, which not only in Württemberg, but also in Bessarabia, caused a lot of trouble for the state, the church and ultimately the *Stunde* itself.

A detailed account of the history and doctrine of Separatism would be far beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, only the most essential things will be briefly mentioned here.

Efforts to separate themselves from the church became apparent as early as 1760, but it was not until Johann Georg Rapp that they became a Separatist Movement. Rapp did not want to profess any of the religions of the time and stated that his religion was: "The one who loves Jesus, that one he also loves." He no longer wanted to go to church because most people only use the name of Jesus in their mouths, but no longer live by it. His followers, who called themselves the "Body Corps of the Savior" (*Leibkorps des Heilandes*), demanded celibacy, did not let their children be baptized by the clergy, because it would be of no use to them. They celebrated love feasts in their assemblies after the model of the first Christians. Since they also refused to take the oath, they soon came into conflict with the authorities. As a result, Rapp went to America in 1803. In 1804, about 700 of his followers followed. They established a closed settlement near Pittsburg in which they introduced community of goods and celibacy. Rapp was the administrator of the community until his death in 1847. He led a strict control and made the church members work hard.

With the departure of Rapp and his followers, the Separatist Movement was by no means extinguished. On the contrary, it has only gotten new impetus through various measures taken by the church and the state.

The loathing toward the church and the attempts to separate increased considerably with the publication of a new hymnal in 1791. Since many favorite songs were not at all included in the new hymnal, and others had been rewritten, the introduction met with fierce resistance. There were downright grotesque publications (*Erscheinungen*). In the church, the hymn numbers according to the new hymnal were put up [on the hymn board], and while the congregation sang according to them, the opponents sang the songs under the same numbers in the old hymnal, which of course led to an impossible confusion. In some places, the clashes reached such a ferocity that the police had to intervene.

The School Reform also caused great annoyance. From as far back as one could remember, much religion was learned in the Swabian schools, and now other subjects were introduced and religious instruction was reduced, which caused much dissatisfaction and an increasing number did not let their children go to school anymore.

However, the introduction of the new Agenda in 1809 met with the most violent resistance, which was particularly directed against the new Baptismal Ordinance, because it lacked the old Lutheran formula about the casting out of the evil spirit and the renunciation of the devil. Many did not let their children be baptized according to this new order.

The consequence of these unpopular innovations was a strong resentment of a large part of the members of the congregation, who took these things very seriously. In view of the fact that they were deprived of rights and enslaved in political life, they suffered unspeakably from the fact

that everything traditional and cherished was now taken away from them in the church. Not all of them became Separatists, but they did get new followers.

The ideas of the French Revolution also found their way into Württemberg. The call for freedom, equality and fraternity met with much understanding among the downtrodden people and was received with enthusiasm in certain circles, and since the Separatists were the only ones who dared to go their own way, they found much sympathy in these circles and some adhered to them for political motives.

The king stood idly by for a long time, but when the church could no longer be mastered, he took vigorous action. The unbaptized children had to be presented to the clergy for baptism. The pupils, whose parents prevented them from attending school, were forced to attend. The meetings of the restless Separatists were banned and a number of their leaders were imprisoned. On the whole, these measures have been of very little use. The Separatists remained steadfast, the Movement could not be eradicated. Although they were never strong in numbers—their peak was 800 members—they caused much trouble for the state, the church, and also the *Stunde*.

Much unrest was also caused by Chiliasm or the belief in the Thousand Year Kingdom. The idea was extremely obvious at such a time. The signs of the times bore a striking resemblance to the biblical prophecies of the End Times. It is no wonder that faith in the imminent return of Christ arose. In England, France, indeed in the whole of Christendom, strong hope was alive, and in Württemberg it reached its climax. The Doctrine of the Last Things writings of the Old and New Testaments, especially the Revelation to John, were eagerly studied. All writings that somehow dealt with such questions were immediately devoured. The writings of Bengel and the popular publications of Jung Stilling were joyfully received. Since some of Bengel's prophecies had come true, his calculation, according to which the Lord was to come in 1836, was also willingly believed. Large circles of the population and especially the Separatists believed that they were in the middle of the end times. They saw some of the tribulations of recent times already fulfilled, the others approaching. Napoleon was considered the Antichrist and Germany as the country of the enemy of the people of God, from which the elect had to move out and shelter themselves in a safe land from the horrors of the End Times. The mountain location was seen in the Holy Land, in the Caucasus on Mount Ararat, and finally also in Russia, in the land of the pious Emperor Alexander I, who was close to these areas and appeared to them as the God-sent protector of the pious in the Last Days.

The Movement also spread to Catholic circles. In Bavaria, well-known clergymen such as Boos, Goßner and Janaz Lindl, pastor in Batndlkirch, who is important to us, joined in. Lindl was a powerful preacher. People came in multitudes from far and wide, not only from Bavaria, but also from Württemberg, as far as from Stuttgart and Ulm, to hear him. Up to 15,000 people gathered Sunday after Sunday for his worship service. He preached the imminent return of Christ and the dawn of the Thousand Year Kingdom. He kept in close contact with the people of Württemberg. He had particularly loyal followers in Gingen on the Brenz, in the merchant Christian Friedrich Werner, the founder of our Werner School, and his *Stunde*. There was soon a considerable Movement in Bavaria, but it was suppressed by the Catholic Church. Goßner and Lindl had to give way and found refuge in Petersburg [Russia] with Emperor Alexander.

The decades of bitter servitude, the difficult economic conditions and the religious conditions have worked together and made our ancestors so unhappy with their homeland that they finally saw their only hope in emigration. If you think about all the things that have passed over them, you understand only too well that when it was finally possible, they gave up their homeland, relatives and everything that was dear and valuable to them and moved abroad. The final incentive for emigration came from outside.

Prussia had received West Prussia and the Netze Region during the First Partition of Poland in 1772. The land was severely neglected and therefore Frederick the Great decided to settle a larger number of Germans as “free farmers”. His appeal was successful, all the more so because it promised houses, land and support with money and cattle. The settlers came from the various German regions, but especially from Baden and Württemberg, in such masses that the Prussian authorities had great difficulty in accommodating them. The emigration began in Württemberg in 1780. Around 1,200 families with about 5,000 souls emigrated over the course of five years. The following verses from an emigrant song of those years indicate poverty, but also political grievances as motives:

*“Allhier ist es nimmer gut,  
Dort in Polen ist es besser.  
Fasset einen guten Mut!  
Dort gibt es auch volle Fässer  
Bei dem Bier und Brantenwein  
Kann man auch vergnüget sein.*

“All around here it is no longer good,  
It is better there in Poland.  
Take good courage!  
There are also full barrels there  
With the beer and brandy  
You can also be content.

*Was hilft Euch der edle Wein? Ihr dürft doch gar wenig trinken!  
Wollt Ihr etwas lustig sein, müßt Ihr an die Schulden denken.  
Diese plagen Euch alltag, das man nicht mehr leben mag.*

What does the fine wine help you? You need to drink very little!  
If you want to be a little merry, you have to think about the debts.  
These plague you every day, that you do not want to live anymore.

*Sitzte hier einer in der Ehr, daß er tut ein Amt verwalten,  
So kommt solcher gleich daher, tut den Armen übel halten.  
Spricht der Arme nur ein Wort,  
Heißt es gleich: ‘Ins Zuchthaus fort’”.*

If someone sat here in the honor that he does manage an office,  
So such a person comes along at once, does evil to the poor.

If the poor man speaks only one word,  
It is immediately said: 'Off to the convict prison.'”

A second wave of emigration to the east began in 1798. King Frederick William III of Prussia wanted to settle in the territories that had fallen to him after the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> partitioning of Poland in the years 1793 and 1795 (the province of Posen [Poznań] and the northern part of central Poland near Warsaw). Since he also promised land and support with money and cattle, he found enough settlers. 1,800 families from southern Germany alone—1,000 of them from Württemberg alone—may have migrated eastwards. Besides political and economic reasons, religious reasons played a strong, if not decisive, role in these migrations.

At the same time, Russia also tried to attract German immigrants. In addition to the Polish territories, it had also received a large increase in territory in the south. In 1774 and 1792, it took the Black Sea area from the Turks. A lot of people were needed to settle this almost uninhabited steppe. In 1803, the Emperor Alexander I issued a Manifesto, which, thanks to his generous offers, found a joyful response, in all German territories, among those willing to emigrate, and Russia became the most preferred immigration country in those territories. Thousands of families from Württemberg also moved to Russia during these years, and it was not until 1807 that King Frederick, who needed his vassals as soldiers, banned the emigration and stopped the flow.

A new wave of emigration to Russia, in the course of which our ancestors came to Bessarabia, began in 1814. Russia had taken Bessarabia from the Turks in 1812 and decided to settle this country after the victory over Napoleon. For this purpose, it wanted to have a number of capable people who would be role models for the other settlers. Since he had already had good experiences with Germans, Tsar Alexander I decided to win Germans again. On 29 November, 1813, he issued a Manifesto for voluntary emigration to Russia, which had the following wording:

1. The Russian Government takes the colonists from the Duchy of Warsaw under its special protection, and grants them all the rights and comforts enjoyed by the natives.
2. The colonists are required to occupy themselves preferably with the improvement of field, garden, vineyard and silk cultivation
3. They are free of all duties and property taxes for 10 years, except for a small payment to the Bessarabian leaseholders.
4. Each poor family will be paid 270 *Rubles Banko* by the crown for 10 years, and to the others as much as will be necessary for their first establishment.
5. Each family is allotted 60 *Deßiatin* [162 acres / 65.4 hectares] of land for their personal and hereditary property.
6. Moreover, all those who have no provisions will receive 5 kopeck per day food money for each soul from the day of their arrival in Russia until the first grain harvest.



7. The immigrants, as well as their descendants, are free once for all from the conscription, as well as from military quartering, except in the case of passage of troops.
8. The colonists are free to build churches according to their religion, to keep clergymen and to practice their religious customs in their own way.
9. After the expiration of 10 years, another 10 years are determined in which the Crown subsidies granted to the colonists are to be paid back.

The appeal was addressed to the Germans in the Duchy of Warsaw, who had already settled there at the time of the Prussian colonization under Frederick the Great and Frederick William III, mainly as tenants and agricultural workers on Polish estates. They were living in great poverty and joyfully followed the emperor's call. The first arrived in Bessarabia in 1814, which were gradually followed by other migrations. They founded the following municipalities: Alt-Elft, Arcis, Beresina, Borodino, Brienne, Dennewitz, Friedenstal, Katzbach, Klöstitz, Krasna, Kulm, Leipzig, Neu-Arcis, Neu-Elft, Paris, Plötzk, Posttal, Tarutino and Wittenberg.

Even among the emigrants who moved to Russia from 1803 to 1807 from Württemberg, religious reasons played an important role in addition to political and economic reasons. In the emigration movement that began in 1816, however, religious reasons were decisive. In the difficult years after 1807, Chiliasm had gained a lot of ground, but especially in firmness of conviction, and the famine of 1816 increased the will to emigrate to the boiling point. To the extent that the living conditions deteriorated, the certainty of the imminent end of the world and the will to gather at the mountain location increased. The destination was the Holy Land, the Caucasus and Russia, and when King Frederick lifted the ban on emigration in 1815, smaller and larger groups, called *Harmonies*, formed all over the country and moved eastwards toward the Lord. From one such *Harmony*, in which epidemics had broken out in Ismail in Bessarabia on the way to the Caucasus, and which had therefore been detained there for a long time by the Russian authorities, a group of about 100 families branched off and founded the community of Teplitz.

Among Lindl's followers, too, the decision to emigrate matured in these years as a result of the hardship and the harsh oppression on the part of the state and church authorities, and they repeatedly turned for help to Lindl, who was then in Petersburg and had access to the Emperor. At his request, the Tsar gave him a larger estate in Bessarabia. As a result, Lindl's followers also took to the road. The first migration arrived in Bessarabia in 1821. In 1822, the municipality of Sarata was founded. Among them was the merchant Christian Friedrich Werner, the founder of the Werner School, which is so important in our history, and his business partner Beygel, who was Senior Mayor (*Oberschulz*) in Sarata for many years and achieved great things.

The Chiliasts went forward and paved the way. They were followed by others for various motives—but mainly for religious reasons—and, for years, small and large groups from Württemberg and other southern German areas moved to Bessarabia. The municipalities of Gnadental and Lichtental were founded by them, others settled in the villages founded by

emigrants from Poland. In 1842, the Russian government stopped immigration, putting an end to emigration to Russia.

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