

Part 11. "Report of the beginning of the Congregations in Dakota" by
Heinrich Adrian.

As division was the root of the breaking up of God's work in the early Christian time, so it was also in Dakota.

In 1876 several individuals from our Russian Congregation migrated to Turner County, Dakota, and looked for progress where the circumstances were of great help to them. At that time in this region an earnest searching for salvation of the soul became evident, mostly initiated and lead by preachers from the "Evangelical Community". Thru the Baptist Minister Wendt, the question of baptism was made important, so that the awakening turned toward our direction.

On May 17th 1877, Brother Cornelius Guenther as leader, and Brother David Funk as helper were elected. Four days later 4 souls were baptized and shortly thereafter 2 more. The elected Brothers now believed that they had fulfilled their obligation, and that the congregation had taken its course, so they laid down their duties, so that perhaps more qualified laborers might be found.

On November 21st two leaders were elected, namely Brother Heinrich Adrian and Isaak Loeven. The first one became the leader on April 23rd, 1878. Our little group now was in greater oneness of purpose. They worked whole-heartedly, to which the Lord gave His blessing. People were converted and became members of our congregation, so that the membership in the next three years rose to 100 souls. The work stretched for some 35 miles. The need for workers made itself more known and so on June 27th, 1881 two teachers were elected, namely Brother Daniel Unruh and Abr. Voth. Soon there was also the need of an Elder, a teacher, and a deacon. Brothers Abr. Schellenberg and Peter Wall from Kansas came to our help. On October 29th, 1881, there was a church meeting in which they had an election. The next day a large meeting gathered and Brother Abr. Schellenberg installed the following brothers: Heinrich Adrian as Elder, Isaak Loeven as Teacher, and Korn Guenther as Deacon.

So the work went along better than ever, and many were converted. However the spirit of division entered and it came to be that a number of brethren didn't love each other whole-heartedly and disagreed on some basic teachings. During this sort of unsettled time there came a Seventh Day Adventist preacher and had open meetings and won brethren to himself. Oh, it gave such deep pain.

Finally only 31 were left. It was a big rift and those left were only 31. It was a big rift and resulted in very difficult work. But God saw the pain and healed the brethren.

In November of 1885, Brother Schellenberg visited Dakota and the former elected leader Abr. Voth was confirmed. But then it gave greater battles than ever, and in 1886 it seemed as though the congregation would dissolve into nothing. All the teachers, except Elder Heinrich Adrian and 2 deacons went over to the Adventists, so that the number of those who left us came to 79 souls. This difficulty created deep humiliation and humbling and needed full dedication on the part of the Lord's faithful ones to keep the way of God's Kingdom going on. Brother Adrian had the blessing in the last summer to be able to baptize 12 souls and the total number of brothers in the congregation to date, which is in 1888, is 80 who live in three directions, and therefore living far from each other. The brothers who work are under good leadership, and we believe therefore and hope that the Lord will strengthen and ground our congregation in Dakota, so that they will be able to stand against any attack from the outside as well as from the inside. May God grant it.

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