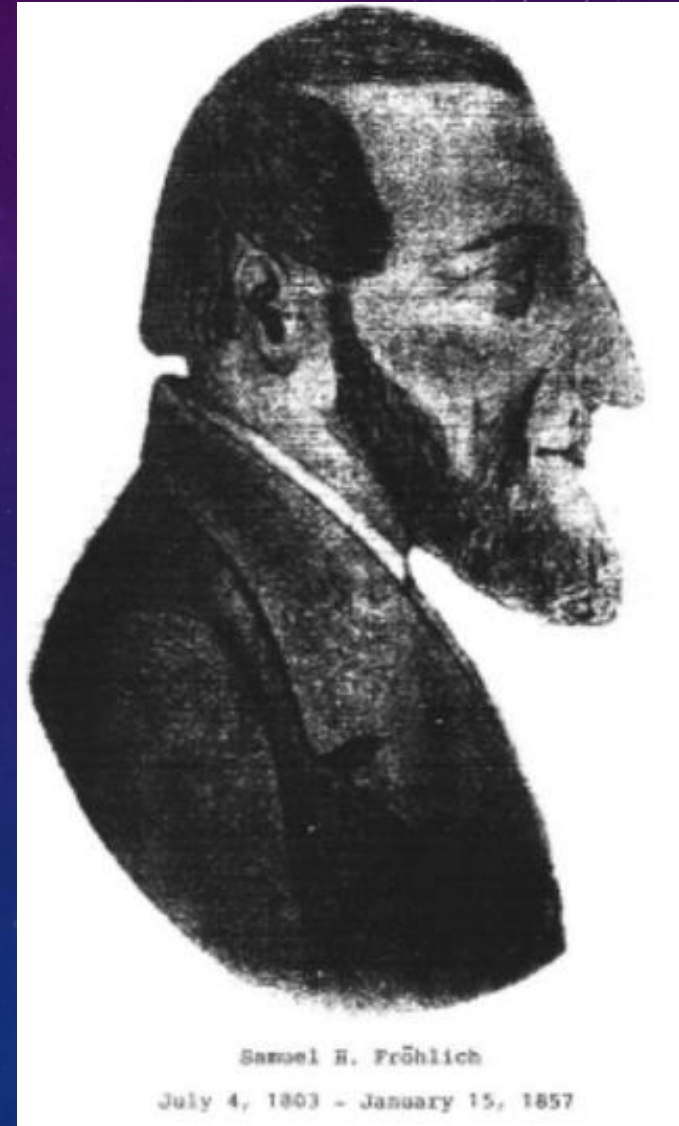


ANABAPTISM AND THE FROEHLICH TRADITION



OUTLINE -

- State of Anabaptism in Switzerland in the 1800s
- Impact of Anabaptists as Froehlich established churches in the 1830s-1850s
- Impact of Anabaptists in the establishment & growth of congregations in the United States

ANABAPTISM PERSECUTION



- Initial persecution was very severe (death for holding anabaptist beliefs)
- Menno Simons taught and led a non-violent version of anabaptism in the Netherlands, his followers eventually are called Mennonites
- Over time - this non-violence – with the advent of the Dutch Republic led to a great reduction in persecution in the Netherlands by the 1560s

ANABAPTISM IN SWITZERLAND 1800S



- Persecution in Switzerland continued much longer, with just a brief respite from 1798-1802 (Helvetic constitution)
- During this time, the leaders were often imprisoned or killed
- Maintaining doctrinal unity & community was difficult over generations of this pressure
- In some communities a focus on outward forms superseded personal repentance, in defining being a disciple of Christ

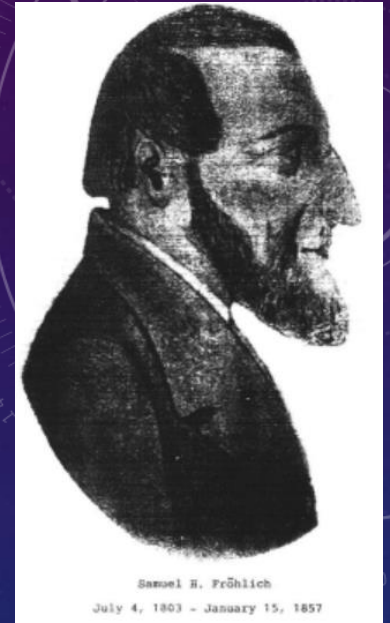
MENNONITE CONGREGATION OF GIEBEL



- “Christian Gerber sought to instill new life into the congregation because he saw how lukewarm conditions were in the old Mennonite churches. The old outward form remained, but there was little inner and spiritual life. There was a lack of Elders and teachers. Since the persecutions, members lived widely scattered on solitary mountain heights, so that meetings could be held only monthly, later every 3 weeks, alternately in homes and barns. In places there was no preaching of about repentance and regeneration” *Ruegger - Apostolic Christian Church History*

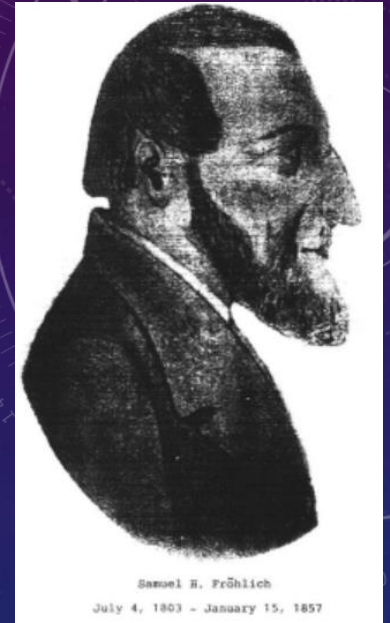
FROEHLICH WAS SHAPED BY MULTIPLE FAITH TRADITIONS

- He grew up with his father a Sexton of the Reformed Swiss State Church – was designated to be the minister in the family – went through 6 years of training to be a minister in the state church – was ordained
- While in religious training he interacted with Pietists, including Theophil Passavant, eventually having a Pietistic repentance experience
- Froehlich preached to whoever would hear, many Anabaptists listened and responded, bringing their past experience with them to the Froehlich congregations



FROEHLICH DID NOT SET OUT TO CREATE A DENOMINATION

- “It never entered my mind that I should found a sect here on earth, rather it was and is my purpose to gather children to God. If I could not place my confidence in the Lord my God, that He has called me to His Gospel, I would indeed repent to have begun something on which the Lord could not place His blessing, or with which He could not be pleased. Now, however, I placed myself wholly into His hands, that He might lead me according to His good pleasure.” S H Froehlich in 1836 – 4 years after his baptism



EXAMPLE OF ANABAPTIST TENET ADOPTED BY FROEHLICH

- Froehlich was sharing his doctrinal positions with a Mennonite group when Christian Gerber, a seventy-year-old minister in the Mennonite church, challenged Froehlich on his lack of a position on military service
- Froehlich, who had grown up in the state church that sanctioned and demanded military service, nevertheless, saw the truth of the scriptures that Jesus calls his followers to not use violence, even in the face of evil

◀ *Matthew 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

PARTIAL LIST OF ANABAPTIST TENETS SHARED BY FROEHLICH

- Believer Baptism – adult baptism based on a testimony of faith
- Church membership is voluntary - a fellowship of true believers committed to holy living and discipleship
- The church membership is separate from the world in outlook and choices
- Non-resistance or the Way of Peace
- Internal discipline
- Closed communion
- Holy kiss

ORIGINS OF MEMBERS OF EUROPEAN FROEHLICH CHURCHES

- Particularly in Leutwil, where he had preached in the State Church for over a year, many members of Froehlich's later congregation came from the State Church
- In Langnau, the congregation was reported to have been initially formed of half former Mennonites and half former members of the State Church
- Many members were also of Pietist background, and many of the hymns in the Zion's Harp (assembled in Froehlich's lifetime) were from Pietist authors

ORIGINS OF THE AMERICAN CONGREGATIONS

- The New York churches were initially made up entirely of Amish-Mennonite converts. Benedict Weyeneth stayed only a short time and on that first visit, ordained Joseph Virkler a minister.
- Later evangelism in the United States (by Weyeneth, Peter Virkler, Joseph Bella, and others) often occurred among Anabaptist communities.
- There were also significant numbers of Froelich followers who immigrated to the United States as well.