

Laubhan, Conrad (1838–1923) and Katherine Sophia (Meier) (1842–1929)

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Conrad Laubhan was the earliest pioneer Adventist missionary in Russia, with the significant support of his wife, Katherine Sophia.

Early Years and Marriage

Conrad Laubhan was born to a German family in Tscherbakowka, on the Volga river in Russia, on April 22, 1838.¹

Katherine Sophia Meier was also born in Tscherbakowka, Russia, on February 4, 1842.²

On January 3, 1861, Laubhan married Katherine Sophia Meier. They had ten children, all but one of whom died in infancy.³ The surviving child was later to become Mrs. Richards.⁴ In 1878 the Laubhans immigrated to America, and settled in Enterprise, Kansas. They later moved to Lehigh, Kansas, where they became Seventh-day Adventists, through the ministry of Ludwig Richard Conradi.⁵

Pioneer Mission in Russia

In 1883, German colonists in the Crimea began corresponding with mission leaders in America about Adventist teachings. In 1886, just when a church was organized there by L. R. Conradi, Laubhan and Katherine Sophia went to Russia to begin pioneer mission work.⁶ The Laubhans settled in Saratov, on the Volga, their former home, where 400,000 Germans lived on both sides of the river. Conrad Laubhan was ordained to the ministry in July 1887 in Basel, Switzerland.⁷ By 1888, there were more than 100 Adventists in the south of Saratov. Laubhan was instrumental in organizing about five churches from the spring of 1888 onwards.⁸ He also made a consolidatory mission, building upon the Russian Sabbath keepers he found. He was quite successful. Conradi's report in 1889 stated, "Partially through missionary work, and partially through his labor, the number has steadily increased until there are now about 300 Sabbath-keepers in Russia."⁹

In 1889 Jakob Klein, who had been working as a “student missionary” in Germany, was ordained and sent to Russia to join Laubahn in further pioneering work. Both were instrumental in the establishment of Adventism and its structures in Russia, even though the pioneer work was difficult. Laubahn suffered various hardships, including imprisonments, such that most of “his most effective work was done under cover of the darkness.”¹⁰

Later Years, Contribution

The Laubhans worked in Russia for twelve years until Conrad Laubhans’ health failed, after which they returned to the United States. They lived in Oklahoma for five years. Conrad Laubhan passed away in College View, Nebraska, USA, on April 4, 1923.¹¹ After the death of her husband, Katherine Laubhan stayed for some time with her sister, Katie Blehm, in the southeast of Okeene. She died July 12, 1929, of a stroke of paralysis. She was 87 years old.¹²

Writing years later, Heinrich J. Löbsack recognized the efforts of Laubahn in Russia and its reverberations in Eastern Europe. To Löbsack, it was from the earliest endeavors of Laubhan that the Adventist message spread in Russia. Local ministers and colporteurs were trained and churches, conferences, and union conferences were established all through Russia and Central and Northern Asia.¹³

Memory Statement

“In common with many other non-conformists,” Conrad Laubhan “preached a faith that was under the ban of the government, and he paid dearly for persisting in preaching his message in the face of officers of the law whose studied purpose it was to silence his voice of truth. Many a time was he compelled to flee in the dead of night lest he be apprehended and cast into prison. Much of his most effective work was done under cover of the darkness.” “He was known here as a quiet, consistent Christian. He passed away in full faith, trusting in the great Father of life who will in that day call all His sleeping ones.”¹⁴

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. "Obituaries," *The Central Union Outlook*, July 3, 1923, 7.
2. "Obituaries," *Southwestern Union Record*, July 1929, 7.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. "Obituaries," *The Central Union Outlook*, 7.
6. See L. R. Conradi, "The Work in Russia," *ARH*, September 17, 1889, 582.
7. L. R. Conradi, "Beginnings of Our Work in Europe," *ARH*, September 18, 1924, 15.
8. Conradi, "The Work in Russia," 582.
9. Ibid.
10. "Obituaries," *The Central Union Outlook*, 7.
11. J. N. Anderson, "Elder Conrad Laubhan," *ARH*, June 7, 1923, 22.
12. "Obituaries," *Southwestern Union Record*, July 1929, 7.
13. H. J. Löbsack, "The Gospel of the Second Advent in Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia," *ARH*, April 18, 1929, 8.
14. Anderson, "Elder Conrad Laubhan," 22.

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