

## **Definition of Key German Terms for understanding the History and Development Pentecostalism in Germany**

**Paul Clark February 2010**

*Gemeinschaftsbewegung* - direct translation into English, meaning fellowship movement. The *Gemeinschaftsbewegung* grew out of a renewal awakening among Lutheran Pietisms during the later part of the nineteenth century. Over time fellowship congregations were organized, sometimes within a local Protestant church and more often outside of the local Protestant church. The *Gemeinschaftsbewegung* of the past and even today places greater emphasis on personal holiness and evangelism than the Protestant Church as a whole. In the late eighteenth hundreds, *The Deutscher Evangelischer Verband für Gemeinschaftspflege und Evangelisation* was organized as an umbrella organization for the various fellowship congregation groups within the Protestant State Church. The origins of Pentecostalism in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century came out of the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung*. Today, as in the past, most *Gemeinschaftsbewegung* adherents remain members of the Protestant Church, attending their only fellowship group services.

*Mülheimer Verband* - Mülheim refers to a city in the industrial Ruhr Valley of Germany, and *Verband* is the German word for association. The Mülheim Association organized as the first Pentecostal fellowship of churches in Germany during 1913. This group of Lutheran leaders and their fellowship groups were forced out of the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung* due to their Pentecostal experience and Pentecostal teaching.

*Volkskirche* - literally translated means church of the people. In Germany, this term refers to the established and socially acceptable state Protestant or Catholic Church which have been an integral part of German culture and society for centuries.

*Freikirchen* - Free Churches refers to Pentecostals and other Evangelical groups and denominations in Germany who are not affiliated with the State Protestant Church. They are

considered free for primarily two reasons. First, only a committed Christian can voluntarily joins a Free Church. In the Protestant or Catholic tradition, one generally becomes a member at birth, as decided by the parents. Secondly, Free Churches are financed through the free will offerings of their members, as opposed to Protestant and Catholic churches which are financed by a tax that is withheld along with other taxes directly from the salary of their members. Germans as a whole tend to view Free Churches as cults on the fringes and margins of society.

*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Christengemeinden in Deutschland* (ACD), which literally translates as “Working Fellowship of Christian Churches in Germany.” The ACD was organized after World War II, as various Pentecostal fellowships and their leaders came together to establish a united national fellowship. The ACD became the partner fellowship for Assemblies of God missionaries from the United States who helped to establish its’ Bible School in 1951.

*Bund Freikirchlicher Pfingstgemeinden* (BFP), which is translated as the „Federation of Free Pentecostal Churches.“ The ACD changed its name to the BFP in 1982 due to receiving the higher legal status of a „cooperation of public jurisdiction,“ which entitled the BFP the same legal status to operate without restrictions in the public sphere as the state churches and political parties do.

*Berliner Erklärung* (Berlin Declaration) was signed in 1909 by 56 influential leaders primarily out of the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung*. This written document officially rejected the infant Pentecostal movement in Germany among the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung* and other Free Churches. The signers of the Berlin Declaration went on record to assert that Pentecostalism is a movement from „below“, implying that it is satanic in nature. The Berlin Declaration officially sanctioned hostile anti-Pentecostal sentiment among Evangelicals and Protestants in Germany that lasted through most of the twentieth century.

*Kasseler Erklärung* (Kassel Declaration). In 1996 Representatives of the German Evangelical Alliance and leaders of the BFP, Germany's largest Pentecostal denomination, met in the city of Kassel. The Kassel Declaration signed by both parties established guidelines and an understanding for Pentecostals and Charismatics to be officially integrated into this association of Evangelical Christians throughout Germany. Unofficially the agreement helped negate the negative effects of the Berlin Declaration, which had unjustly disenfranchised Pentecostals as legitimate Evangelical believers in Germany for almost ninety years.