

## **The Influence of German Pentecostal Churches in Foreign Countries on the Development of Pentecostalism in Germany (HT)**

A Lecture by Gottfried Sommer at the University of Leuven, Belgium in September 2003

I remember a remark of the former Bavarian Bishop Hanselmann, I think written may in Idea more than 15 years ago where he stated, that the Pentecostal Movement in Germany is a child of the influence of Pentecostal American walking preachers.

Nobody can put in doubt that the Pentecostal Movement in the World has began as an international movement. But in no way it is correct to say that Pentecostalism is only a fruit out of American revivalism and was spread only through massive North American Mission Work in Europe.

I think that my academics studies had helped to proof this statement also for the situation in Germany. In the paper I will present in the following to want to show the importance of the various groups of ethnic Germans and single German emigrants to the development of Pentecostalism in Germany.

### I. Single German emigrants with influence on the development in Germany

#### 1. Ludwig Graf

The 5th evangelist

In heaven signs and wonders occur  
But chaotic is everything on earth  
A loud cry is send to outer space  
From the rocks to the beach of the sea  
When will the savior come? He is near:  
He's called Brother Graf – America.

With this poem a roman catholic pamphlet caricaturized the evangelistic activities of Ludwig (Luis) Graf (1861-1935) in the 20<sup>th</sup> of the last century. He was borne in Neufreistatt in Baden and worked as a precision mechanic. He emigrated 1880 to America. After being converted in a Baptist Church, he comes to wealth because of

trading with bicycles and weapons. After joining a Mennonite church, he found his way to the Pentecostal movement. Working together with the well-known female evangelist Maria Woodworth-Etter, he led a relief organization for German children after World War I. in connection with the Mühlheimer Movement.

Through this contact, he comes 1922 back to Germany, working as an Evangelist in the Mark Brandenburg, in Silesia, Saxony and Hamburg. Invited form a preacher with the name Heinrich Wehler, he evangelized in Königsberg in Eastern Prussia in Königsberg. It is claimed, that in a time between three and four month up to 4000 people converted to Christ. True is that the later Elim church in Königsberg, which has its roots in this revival was the largest German Pentecostal church until our times. From this area, many refugees fled after World War II to Western Germany, normal members but also church leaders and filled and influenced the growing Pentecostal churches there.

The service of Luis Graf was often controversial, but he was an remarkable example of an emigrant with German roots who brought Pentecostalism with a strong emphasis of signs and wonders to his former home country.

## 2. Marie Primmer

At the end of the 19.century a lady with the name Marie Pfrimmer emigrated to the United States where she must have been a witness of the beginning of the Pentecostal movement in Los Angeles. She realized that her experience was something which she must give the people of her former home village. But she didn't wanted to go back to Germany, because she was more than 50 Years old an the travel across the Atlantic takes about two weeks on sea. But 1925 she had a vision, she saw Jesus riding on a wide horse, saying to her very friendly: "My child, go to Germany, I will be with you!" So she went to her very little home village in the Hohenloher Land in Württemberg where she stayed about two years, singing Pentecostal songs and giving testimonies about here experience with Jesus. So a little Pentecostal association was founded. Being a woman, she didn't wanted to lead this church. After her return to the United States, she informed a Pentecostal organization there (the name of this organization is unknown) to send a pastor to the village called Weckhof to lead the little church. Nearly all of the inhabitants of the little village became members of this church which was also very effective in evangelizing the surrounding area. Marie Primmer was not a Missionary who was sent by

a Pentecostal Mission organization but an individual with a personal vision and a longing, to give her experienced to her old home village .

### 3. Herman Lauster

Herman Lauster was the founder of the Pentecostal Church of God (Cleveland) in Germany. Coming from pietistic background in Germany, he found after emigration his spiritual fulfillment in the Church of God Movement in the USA. From there he went back to Germany 1936 with an individual call from God to evangelize his home country.

## II. The influence of Revivals in Eastern Europe

### 1. The geographical aspect

#### a) Pentecostalism among Baltic Germans

The Pentecostal message reached Latvia early. As we gather from the British Pentecostal periodical *Confidence*, E. Patrick developed a mission work mainly amongst Baltic Germans at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Eleanor Patrick was an English women who had been fascinated by revivalist preachers Torrey and Inwood. . According to her own testimony, she received the sign of tongues during meeting with A.A. Boddy in Hamburg in December, 1908.<sup>(18)</sup> She had worked at a mission in Frankfurt, visited Russia in 1909 spending time in Revel (now Tallinn, Estonia), Riga and Dwinsk (now Daugavpils, Latvia) and Witevsk (Belarus). She reported back to the pioneer of British Pentecostalism, Alexander A. Boddy. E. Patrick claimed that 200 people were converted within two months of her ministry.<sup>(19)</sup> In 1911, Patrick wrote to A.A. Boddy that she recruited a German deaconess to take on some of the work in Riga, but G. Rabe is mentioned as leader of the work.

Patrick moved to Libau (now Liepaja) where the Town Council allowed her to use a hall with 700 seats free of charge. She also noted that a German evangelist, Eugen Edel, had preached in Riga and Libau.<sup>(20)</sup> The report continues: "H. Rabe

(brother of Riga Rabe) is doing a wonderful work. He was converted and received his baptism in our Frankfurt work, and works in the power of the Spirit." <sup>(21)</sup> Later Patrick moved further to Dwinsk, and Witebsk then settling in Saratov, Russia.

It can be taken for granted that the service of Eleanor Patrick and her work in the Baltic States must have had remarkable influence on the development of the work of Heinrich Vietheer, to later founder of the Pentecostal Elim Church movement. He worked with E. Patrick in Frankfurt, but also traveled to the Baltic States, preached there and was Eye-witness of the revival in this whole area. It is interesting that he mentioned a visit in a remote region in Estonia, where many years before the Pentecostal outpouring in Los Angeles a very enthusiastic Revival had taken place. When Heinrich Vietheer was preaching there, the Church visitors were coming very close to the altar. When they heard any remarkable truth from the preacher, they clapped in their hands and began to hop and to jump full of joy. So they were called the "Jumpers".

(Dittert, Wege und Wunder Gottes 10-11)

A very remarkable person out from the Baltic States is also William Fetler, a German Baptist evangelist from Latvia, later known in America as Basil Mallough. Although he never left the Baptist movement, he was very sympathetic to renewal movements like Pentecostalism. He believed that a 'preacher of the word of God may be only a person who has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of preaching.' In February 1907 he cited in the Baptist magazine Avots an editorial titled "Pentecost with Signs Following" from the Azusa St. magazine Apostolic Faith. It is interesting that the son of William Fetler, Don Mallough became latter an Assembly of God minister.

The wellknown Dr. Oswald J. Smith writes of the revivals taking in the Baltic region: "To describe the scenes that have been enacted by the Holy Ghost in the Salvation Temple at Riga would be simply impossible. For what God has wrought is nothing less than miraculous. Each night the great Auditorium was literally thronged, and, during the closing days, crowded beyond capacity, gallery, platform and all, with people standing everywhere. Night after night souls came forward for salvation, and the altar was filled over and over again. Great numbers for the first time accepted Christ. Then the power of God fell on the audience. Men and women knelt everywhere, an oh, such prayers! Such tears! In Russian, German, Lettish and English, they poured out their hearts to God. Oh,

what a melting time! How they wept before the Lord! What a joy it was to be in such an atmosphere of revival and to see the Holy Spirit Himself at work.” (Drewitz 6)

#### b) Poland

Not only in the Baltic States and in Russia, but also to Poland revival spread in this time. In Poland it gripped the entire Lutheran church and German (Volksdeutsche) community. In the village of Rajszewo, near Warsaw for example, a Revival Convention was conducted. An estimated crowd of over 2000 people gathered to hear God’s word. William Fetler preached on Biblical Baptism by immersion, which led to a mass baptism of 364 Persons in the Wisula river.

Following this baptism, the believers separated from the Lutheran church, organized local congregations and formed the Pentecostal Fellowship. These new assemblies of believers were immediately severely molested and persecuted, but they realized that the Lord confirmed his word with signs and miraculous healings with and without laying on of hands. (Drewitz 7)

The Pentecostal Church organization in Poland, which originated from this revival, called “Association of the church of Christians of the Evangelistic Faith” mainly consisted out of ethnic Russians. But the German Branch after all consisted out of 1500 members out of the 26500 overall members of the Pentecostal movement of Poland. (Dietze, Schwimmgade, nicht Knöchelgade S. 30).

It is remarkable that Arthur Bergholz, Pastor of the German Pentecostal Church in Lodz, has been some years president of the whole Pentecostal Movement in Poland (Jeske, Erweckung oder Revolution, S. 54)

#### c) Slavonia (pre-World War II Yugoslavia)

- Beschka Area: Mühlheimer Convention → Stundisten → Baptism through Assemblies of God → Two Pentecostal Movements
- Hundreds of Members, dozens of leaders → Flight to Austria and Germany → emigration to Canada and USA
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## 2. The importance of the German East European Pentecostals for the Movement in Germany

### a) Church founding

After the great Exodus of German Inhabitants from the former German provinces and after the flights of the German minorities out of the traditional areas of German settlements in Eastern Europe the former Church leaders went also to Western Germany. Here they not only supported existing Pentecostal Churches (Elim-Churches etc.) but also founded new ones (f.ex. Arthur Bergholz near Bremen, Gerhard Krüger in many cities in Northern Germany)

### b) Teaching

A constant danger for religious groups that emphasized the supernatural was the tendency towards extremisms. Overemphasis of spiritual themes and strict behavioral codes began to plague early Pentecostal ministers in Eastern Europe. Consequently, some of the problems early workers faced in the villages were created by heretical teachers. Oscar Jeske, a Polish national but ethnic German and one of the first students of the Bible Institute in Danzig, tells of a serious heresy that threatened his church in Lodz. A Pole named Muraschlo became influenced by the mystical aspects of Pentecost, shaved his head and traveled from village to village explaining the "mysteries" of the Book of Revelation, and advocating polygamy and other unorthodox doctrines. Jeske and other leaders were able to refute the teachings of Muraschlo from the Scriptures, after their training at the Bible school. He said: "If the Bible school had not come into existence fanatics like Muraschko could have turned whole districts into chaos with their so called spirituality.

In the time of the reconstruction of the German Pentecostal Movement after World War II, the influence of the German Pentecostal Leaders out of the east in establishing solid opportunities for teaching and training was immense, and goes further than the effort of these German Pentecostals who have been from the Mühlheimer Movement or have been under the influence of the Swedish Pentecostal Movement with its tendency of short term Bible courses.

We must also realize that the first Pentecostal bible school, where German was tuition language, was the Danzig Institute of the Bible, founded by G. Herbert Schmidt, an ethnic German born in Annapol, Wolynia. 1919 Schmidt received appointment as an Assemblies of God missionary to Poland, where he engaged in relief work and evangelism. Returning to the U.S. in 1925, he asked the Assemblies of God for permission to start a Bible institute, but they declined due to heavy financial pressures for other mission projects. Together with Paul B. Peterson, a former missionary to Russia he organized the Russian and Eastern European Mission (REEM). It worked in close collaboration with the AG until 1940.

1929 Schmidt returned to Poland and on March 2, 1930, the Danzig Instytut Biblijny opened in the Free City of Danzig, the first Pentecostal Bible institute in Eastern Europe (Gee, 770). Schmidt served in the early years as dean, Gustav Kinderman, also an ethnic German from Poland, as interpreter and part-time teacher (Salzer 10).

Later Leaders of many Pentecostal churches from various Eastern European countries got their education at Danzig, some very remarkable of them were Germans, who served to a large extent the reconstructed Pentecostal churches in Western Germany after World War II.

The realization of the importance of long term biblical training helped was a strong encouragement to establish a Bible School in Western Germany after the World War, were also the man like Gustav Kinderman and Arthur Bergholz played an important role.

#### c) Mediators between American and German Pentecostals

Because of the relationship of ethnic German leaders like Kinderman and Bergholz with emigrants in the United States and in Canada and because of working together with the Russian und Eastern European Mission with man like Gustav Herbert Schmidt, it was clear, that these man where the ideal mediators between American and German Pentecostals. And in deed, it was Gustav Kinderman who worked after World War II as field secretary of the Assemblies of God in coordination relief actions for the Pentecostal Churches in Germany. It is said that due to his engagement the Pentecostal World Conferences in Zurich was initiated. Through this conference, the isolation, which had taken part in many circles of the Pentecostal Movements began to get more and more reduced.

d) Members

III. German Pentecostal Churches in North America

1. German Pentecostals in Canada

Theo Canadian Encyclopedia identifies German Canadians as Canada's third-largest ethnic group, after Anglophones and Francophones. Some Germans immigrated to Canada from the German Reich and are known als Reichsdeutsche, many other ethnic Germans came from other European countries and are known as Volksdeutsche. The Canada Census of 1971 listed some 1.317.000 people of German origin.

Several church denominations in Canada have been started by German Canadians: Lutherans, Mennonites, Evangelical United Brethren, North American Baptists, Maravians Huterrite and others. Until World War II many of them conducted their services primarily in the German language. (Drewitz: 2)

1919, when the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada was officially granted its charter by the federal parliament, the German farmers mainly in the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, prayed also for the same outpouring of the Spirit on their own lives and churches, and they received it. This led to the establishing of separate German Pentecostal local assemblies.

The first German Pentecostal Assembly was established in December 1919 in Wiesenthal near Leduc in the province Alberta under the leadership of Reverend Georg Schneider. In the late 1920's and early 1930's again, German people from Eastern Europe immigrated to Canada, many of them had experienced Pentecostal rivals in their home countries.(Drewitz 8)

By 1934 there were 10 German local assemblies in the province of Alberta. (Drewitz 9). But also other provinces experienced the founding of German Pentecostal churches so Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Britisch Columbia.

At July 8, 1940 the first conference of the German Pentecostal churches in Canada was held in Leduc, Alberta to form a national branch conference. There were nine ministering

men and one woman present, six from Alberta, three from Manitoba and one from Saskatchewan. Thereupon the General executive of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada was contacted, and at a general conference in Hamilton, a resolution to receive the German Branch into the Pentecostal Assemblies was passed. (Drewitz 14).

## 2. German Pentecostals in the USA

### a) Ridgewood Pentecostal Church

- Joseph Wannemacher -> Hans Waldvogel -> Revival tents after World War II in many German cities

### b) German branch of the Assemblies of God

-> Loenser, Kolenda -> Bible Institute in Stuttgart, later in Erzhausen