CHAPTER THREE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PENTECOSTAL
AND CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS IN
THE GERMANIC COUNTRIES

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Introduction

This brief historical overview of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement in the German speaking world will focus mainly on Germany, but will also make reference to both Switzerland and Austria. Pentecostalism in Germany began in 1907 amongst evangelical believers who were greatly influenced by the Holiness Movement\(^1\) and the Fellowship Movement – the Gemeinschaftsbewegung.\(^2\) Jonathan Paul (1853–1931) emerged as the recognized leader of German Pentecostals in the early years, assisted by Emil Meyer (1869–1950) of Hamburg and Emil Humburg (1874–1969) of Mülheim. Within two years an irreparable split occurred between the fledgling Pentecostal Movement and the Gemeinschaftsbewegung whose leaders initially favoured the Pentecostal outpouring but then altered their convictions, convinced that the new Movement was influenced by a false spirit, and conducted a determined campaign of opposition which led to the Berlin Declaration of 1909 in which Paul and the Pentecostals were denounced by evangelical churchmen.\(^3\)

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1 The Holiness Movement plus the Welsh Revival of 1904 created a heightened expectation of a similar move in Germany. This was realized in 1905 in Mülheim-on-Ruhr when 3,000 souls were converted during evangelistic meetings conducted by Jonathan Paul and Jakob Vetter.

2 The development of the Fellowship Movement from Pietism created a unique expression of evangelical Christianity specific to Germany. In reality the members of the Gemeinschaften are normally committed members of the Lutheran Church who attend service in their local State Church on Sunday morning but then have a Sunday evening service and midweek meetings in their Gemeinschaft Hall, where they emphasize personal holiness, Bible study and evangelism.

3 Clearly the Pentecostals bore some responsibility but Gemeinschaft leader Fabianke also laid blame at the feet of the Gemeinschaftsbewegung of which, in his
The years between 1909–1914 were characterized by a struggle to maintain a legitimate presence against virulent opposition, and by Pentecostal conferences, attended by thousands, in which doctrines and practices were shaped and formed, charismata experienced and the Pentecostal influence extended. The organization of the Mülheim Verband in 1911⁴ offered Pentecostals an organism within which interested parties could fellowship and further their interest in Pentecostal matters whilst maintaining their own denominational affiliation. For various reasons a number of leading Pentecostals, including Emil Meyer, Benjamin Schilling and Heinrich Vietheer, were excluded from this and became involved with independent Pentecostal churches, the latter with the Elim Movement.

The rise of National Socialism in the 1930’s witnessed a period of proscription for Pentecostals, but in the post-war period various groups saw significant increase in membership and new organizations were founded. The major Pentecostal denominations in Germany, notably the ACD (later BFP) and the Gemeinde Gottes (Church of God, Cleveland Tennessee) have largely developed since World War II. More recently the charismatic renewal in the historic denominations paralleled by new independent and charismatic churches, such as JMS Altensteig, BGG Stuttgart and Gemeinde auf dem Weg, Berlin has altered the scene for the classical Pentecostals in Germany. The Pentecostal scene in Switzerland and Austria in the early years until World War I was impacted by the German leaders but subsequently an independent development can be traced in each land.

**A Contentious Beginning**

During the month of July 1907 meetings were conducted in the town of Kassel by the evangelist Heinrich Dallmeyer, to which he had also invited two Norwegian sisters,⁵ where people received the

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⁴ The Hauptbrüdertag began meeting in 1911 and featured leading Pentecostals from within Germany and Holland who represented Pentecostal Fellowships, irrespective of denominational affiliation. It did not see itself as a new denomination but an organism to promote fellowship and growth, c.f. note 26.

⁵ In Barratt’s meetings in Norway Emil Meyer had met two young women, a 25 year old teacher, Dagmar Gregersen, and a young milliner, Agnes Thelle, who felt they had