

MAILING ADDRESS:

Mr. James L. Evans, Executive Director  
European Evangelistic Society  
P. O. Drawer E  
Atlanta, Georgia 30364

(Mail sent to: P.O. Box 268, Aurora, Illinois 60507  
will be forwarded in 1982)

OFFICERS for the EUROPEAN EVANGELISTIC SOCIETY

President - Dr. Robert W. Shaw  
Vice-President - Mr. Frank S. Smith  
Secretary - Mr. Robert G. Greene  
Treasurer - to be appointed  
Executive Director - Mr. James L. Evans  
President Emeritus - Dr. Dean E. Walker

BOARD of DIRECTORS

CLASS of 1985

Dr. Donna K. Dial	Dr. Allan W. Lee
Robert B. Greene	Dr. Kenneth Stewart
Frank S. Smith	Dr. Paul Clark
Robert A. Van Lew	Robert E. Barnes

CLASS of 1984

Dr. Russell F. Blowers	Earl Stuckenbruck
Dr. Harold W. Deitch	Dr. Burton B. Thurston
Dr. Henry E. Hill	Dr. Dean E. Walker
Dr. Robert W. Shaw	Dr. W. Milton Johnstone

CLASS of 1983

Dr. Thompson Burks	Dr. G. B. Gordon
William Norris	John Mills
Dr. Bruce E. Shields	

THE EUROPEAN EVANGELISTIC SOCIETY:

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INSTITUTE IN EUROPE

By: Ron Nutter

## PREFACE

Because the scope of this paper will include some foreign language terms, it is helpful if at the outset it is said that all foreign terms will be underlined and that all German words which take the umlaut (e.g. Tübingen) will be Anglicized by the addition of an "e" (i.e. Tuebingen). Also, because of the limited amount of material most of the notations will be made within the body of the text using the following abbreviations:

EE-----European Evangelist, the monthly newsletter of the European Evangelistic Society.

ES #1-----A tape recording made by Earl Stuckenbruck concerning the beginnings of the Disciples Institute and kept in the library of the Disciples Institute, Tuebingen, West Germany.

ES #2-----A tape recording made by Earl Stuckenbruck concerning the beginnings of the Disciples Institute and kept in the library of Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana.

YB-----The Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

History is not without its anomalies, and the history of the Restoration Movement is certainly no exception. Note, for example, a typical Sunday worship service of one congregation. All appears familiar as the communion bread and wine is passed among the approximately 40 celebrants present, but the familiarity begins to fade as those assembled begin to recite the Lord's Prayer:

Unser Vater in Himmel!  
Geheiligt werde Dein Name . . . .

As the members of this Christliche Gemeinde Christian community exit onto Wilhelmstrasse they find themselves at the base of Oesterberg, a majestic hill which dominates the landscape of the university town of Tuebingen. The fact that this worship experience takes place in West Germany perhaps does not strike anyone as odd. The oddity surfaces, however, when one comes to realize that this largely German congregation owes its very existence to an American religious movement which, in turn, has its intellectual roots in the empirical philosophy and rational religion of the Englishman John Locke as well as the Scottish "common sense" philosophers.

The story of this Christliche Gemeinde as well as the Institut zur Erforschung des Urchristentums (Institute for the Study of Christian Origins) which exists alongside it, is a story well worth telling. It is a story of men of faith and vision like Ludwig von Gerdtell, Earl Stuckenbruck, Theodor Mosalow, and others. It is a story which testifies both to the need of sound scholarly research into the formative history of the church and to the need of a worshipping community of believers who manifest in their congregational and spiritual lives the witness of the early church. It is a story which points to a meaningful unity of believers in the pacific and salvific grace of Jesus Christ, which in turn has much to say in this age of ecumenical concern. Perhaps most importantly, it is a story which, because of its German setting, allows those of us within the Restoration Movement more

thoughtfully to reflect on our own churchly tradition.

The European Evangelistic Society, a reporting agency of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), is the legal entity in the United States which supports the Tuebingen congregation and the work of the Institute for the Study of Christian Origins (often referred to in shorthand form as the Disciples Institute). The Society is an outgrowth of the German Evangelistic Society (GES) which was incorporated under the laws of the State of Indiana in September, 1931. Among the incorporators were: P. H. Weisheimer, Charles M. Setzer, Hugh Th. Miller, Homer Dale, O. A. Trinkle, B. L. Kershner, Fred D. Kershner, W. R. Walker, Dean E. Walker and T. K. Smith (YB 1934, p. 89). The purpose of the GES was to promote the cause of New Testament Christianity in Germany and the rest of continental Europe. The moving spirit behind the Society was Dr. Ludwig von Gerdtell, who began a movement among University students in Germany after World War I to substitute a New Testament paradigm of the Christian faith for the State Church of the empire.

Von Gerdtell, relying on his own reading of scripture and other primary source materials dealing with the early church, came to the conclusion that church and state should be separate, that baptism presupposes a personal faith (thereby ruling out infant baptism), that baptism (i.e. immersion) is symbolic of Christ's death and resurrection, and that the Lord's Supper should be the central focus of each worship service (ES #1). Such views were in conflict with some of the leading theologians in Germany, including Friedrich Loofs, who was his teacher at Berlin, and Adolf von Harnack, his uncle by marriage. After telling Loofs of his intention to be re-baptised, von Gerdtell's teacher told him: "If you do that you may be right -- but you're a fool". (ES #2). Von Harnack's response was to threaten him with 17th century law forbidding adult baptism to nobility under penalty of banishment or death, to which von Gerdtell replied: "If that is the case, I will be the last of the Anabaptist martyrs". (ES #1). Von Gerdtell's sincerity may be measured by the fact that in the opposing loofs and von Harnack he passed up a prestigious and comfortable life in academic circles in order to

maintain those views he felt consistent with the witness of scripture and the early church.

Although his position was largely ignored in Germany, von Gerdtell received a warm welcome in the United States when he visited in 1930. From the summer of 1931 until the spring of 1932 he taught at the Butler University School of Religion, and there he excited the interest of several who saw in his views and his description of the free church movement in Germany much similarity with the positions and history of the Restoration Movement. From this interest the German Evangelistic Society received its life breath, with Fred D. Kershner the first President of the Society. The purpose of the Society, to use von Gerdtell's own words, was to

try by the assistance of God and his Spirit to create a new Germany on the basis of the unchanged and unchangeable gospel of the New Testament . . . . We strive after the reunion of all believers of Christ, but we see in the reunion much more than an ecclesiastical diplomatic, artificial, mechanic arrangement. The reunion of all the faithful can, in our opinion, be attained by the believers of Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit of God, but only by the renunciation of all separate opinions and all particularisms brought down by the historic past of the church, and which are still stubbornly adhered to. When the believers in Christ become one, like the Father is One with the Son, then we shall have attained this true concord, which is undoubtedly the wish of God. (YB 1934, p. 89).

Von Gerdtell returned to Germany in 1932 to continue his work among university students, but the spectre of National Socialism loomed on the horizon. Not only von Gerdtell's work, but his very life, became threatened by Hitler's tightening grip over Germany. As perceptive as he was, von Gerdtell was able to see to the heart of the National Socialist

appeal, leading him to criticize publicly the Nazis as early as the late 1920's. Von Gerdtehl engaged Hitler in public debate at a time when Hitler was little more than a Bavarian badboy in the eyes of most; and, in spite of Hitler's well documented ability to sway the masses, succeeded in publicly embarrassing the future Fuehrer (ES #1). When Hitler came to power, von Gerdtehl knew it was only a matter of time before the new Chancellor got around to settling old scores. Fortunately, von Gerdtehl had a friend in the post office who, noticing a letter indicating von Gerdtehl would be wanted for questioning, called him by telephone, allowing him to slip away from the authorities. Although trains were searched when it became apparent he had escaped, von Gerdtehl made it to Basel, Switzerland, and later to Italy by riding ordinary class on the train -- which was unprecedented for a nobleman (ES #2).

By 1935 von Gerdtehl was back at Butler University School of Religion as a Professor of Church History and Dogmatics. Charles Reign Scoville was President of the EES at the time, but the restrictions on movements in Germany and the increasingly audible drums of war meant there was little effective work in which the Society could participate.

In 1942 the Society was listed in the Christian Church Year Book as the European Evangelistic Society (EES) for the first time and R. H. Miller replaced the deceased Charles Reign Scoville as President. By 1944, Miller confessed he had no idea what direction to lead the society, in light of the historical situation, and resigned. Abram E. Cory immediately nominated and the Society's Board of Directors approved as President Dean E. Walker, who had served as Recording Secretary since the Society's beginnings. It was under Walker's leadership that the EES eventually came to make a measurable contribution on the European continent.

In 1946 the EES chose Earl Stuckenbruck as its representative on the continent. Stuckenbruck was born in Lake City, Iowa, October 30, 1916. He father, C. O. Stuckenbruck, was a minister of the Christian Church while his mother served as Vice President of the International Convention one year. He entered the

University of Kansas on a Summerfield scholarship in 1935 and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1938. After receiving his degree in 1939 with a major in philosophy and psychology, he entered the Butler University School of Religion. Stuckenbruck was ordained to the ministry in 1941 and completed his Bachelor of Divinity degree at the School of Religion in 1946 with a concentration in Missions. After being chosen as the representative for the EES, Stuckenbruck and his wife Ottilie sailed to Birmingham, England, so he might do further study at Overdale College under the direction of William Robinson, who was formerly associated with the Butler University School of Religion and was a member of the EES Board of Directors. Being in England also afforded Stuckenbruck an opportunity to have a closer view of events as they unfolded on the continent.

It was originally believed that Prague would be a nice, centrally located city from which to work, but the Cold War soon made it apparent that the EES would be denied access to evangelistic work in Eastern Europe. Interest then centered on Basel, and it was to that city that Stuckenbruck paid a visit in April, 1949. It soon became apparent that Basel did not afford the best opportunity. The theological faculty at the university there was reacting against the threat to the Volkskirche embodied in the writings and remarks of Karl Barth, most particularly his pamphlet Teaching of Baptism in the Church, and, consequently, was very suspicious of all free church groups (ES #2).

Interest then began to focus on West Germany. Several university towns were surveyed and rejected: Marburg was rejected because of its existential tradition as represented in Martin Heidegger and Jurgen Moltman<sup>1</sup>; Hamburg was rejected because there was a Baptist seminary already in operation; Heidelberg was rejected because Stuckenbruck wanted to avoid an association in German eyes with the U. S. Military; other sites rejected included Giesen, Goettingen and Erlangen.

<sup>1</sup> An irony here is that Moltmann later came to receive an appointment to teach at the University of Tuebingen.

Finally, Stuckenbruck visited Tuebingen, which had a well established theological tradition as represented by Karl Heim, Adolph Schlatter and Adolf Koberle.

After being warmly received by Koberle and discussing with him the possibilities of the EES in the city, the decision was made to center the Society's work in Tuebingen. That is not to say there were not reservations, however. "My one reservation", Stuckenbruck recalls, "was that Tuebingen had been so passive through the Nazi era. In fact, the Tuebingen men by and large had supported" the Reich Church and the Nazi ideas about Jews. (ES #1).

Four fields of service were envisioned as work on the continent began. First, the Society saw a need for preachers native to their own country studying at a school to be set up by the society in order that they might minister to the spiritual needs of their countrymen as well as spread the Disciple message of the relevancy of New Testament Christianity. Second, the Society wanted a centrally located school so that those from throughout Europe might have easy access to it. Third, a significant service of the school would be to contribute meaningfully to the ecumenical mind of the day with the witness to unity of the New Testament. Fourth, one service the Society saw as immediately important was that of evangelism to the great mass of the unchurched on the European continent (YB 1948, p. 97-98). It soon became apparent that such a four-fold program based on the existence of a sort of Bible school was a bit optimistic on the part of the Society and evidenced a lack of understanding of the European situation.

A lack of adequate housing, a harsh winter and the birth of their first child forced the Stuckenbrucks to return to the United States in December of 1950. Although forced to leave, he was able to make several contacts in Tuebingen, begin a Bible study group in his room on Gartenstrasse, and buy a section of land in the south part of the city with an option to buy another plot. It was on this land that the Society envisioned building its school. When Stuckenbruck returned to Tuebingen in 1952 the Society was firmly behind the concept of a school. In its annual report

to the International Convention the EES wrote: "We are persuaded that an academic approach is the most strategic, one which provides access to the theologians with the facts and precepts of the New Testament which are of divine origin and universal validity, and one which invites students of various churches and countries to investigate these matters for eventual evangelistic service." (YB 1952, p. 37). Again, such a plan was probably too optimistic, especially when one considers the fact that the total contributions from the period of July 1, 1951, to June 30, 1952, was only \$6,648.53 -- hardly enough to consider a building program to establish a school.

Through most of the 1950's Stuckenbruck worked out of a basement apartment on Gartenstrasse, a street which overlooks the Neckar River near the heart of the Altstadt, or old city. He again built up a Bible study class, which later came to meet regularly as a congregation. As the German church was recovering, he participated in conversations taking place with regard to the role of Christianity in post-war Germany. More and more, he was convinced that his work should proceed with an academic approach so that the gospel could be related to the full cultural background of the people. Stuckenbruck began to participate in small research seminars, mostly in connection with the Institut Jadaicum directed by Otto Michel. One of his projects was to help translate the works of Josephus from Greek into German language -- a project which was later published. "When one works with others on in-depth projects," Stuckenbruck contends, "there ceases to be language or cultural barriers. Theologians become simple Christian scholars seeking answers to questions with other Christian scholars." 2

One form of ministry which the EES became involved in -- quite by chance -- was ministry to Slavic peoples in Germany through the work of Theodor Mosalkow. Mosalkow was born near Moscow May 29, 1892, and studied medicine at the University of Moscow. Although raised in a religious family, Mosalkow came under the influence of atheist professors at the University of Moscow but through a profound religious experience his faith was restored (EE, August, 1962, p.2). He

attended a Baptist Seminary in Hamburg, Germany in 1912, and was conscripted into the German Army during World War I, which gave him German citizenship after the war. From 1922 to 1927, he taught at the Slavic Bible College in Berlin, at which time the inflationary German economy forced the college to close its doors (EE, March, 1979). Mosalkow worked with the German Tent Mission as an evangelist during the 1930's and took over a Baptist church in Munich during the early 1940's after the Nazis closed down the Tent Mission. Resuming tent evangelism after the war, Mosalkow eventually came to live at Reutlingen, about ten miles from Tuebingen, in 1952. Mrs. Paul Bajko of Bel Air, Md., a friend of Stuckenbruck and a niece of Mosalkow, put the two in touch with each other in the spring of 1954, at which time Mosalkow began to evangelize both to Germans and to those Slavic peoples streaming out of Communist dominated Eastern Europe. (EE, August, 1962). This ministry to Slavic peoples, which was unique among American-sponsored missionary endeavors, came to a close with the death of Theodor Mosalkow in January of 1979.

During the decade of the 1950's, ideas about what the EES should be doing in Tuebingen evolved from the concept of a Bible College, to the concept of a student center, and finally to the concept of a research oriented institute. In order for such an institute to become a reality, Stuckenbruck realized some sort of building would be necessary. It was during this time that the manager of a Fiat firm in Tuebingen began approaching Stuckenbruck about buying the 100-yard by 35-yard plot of land owned by the EES in the south part of the city. Stuckenbruck kept insisting he was not interested in money for the land, but some sort of structure in which to house the nascent Institute as well as the continuing life of the congregation that met each Sunday. In the autumn of 1961 this manager came to Stuckenbruck with a proposal

<sup>2</sup> Ron Nutter, "Report from Europe: the establishment of Disciples Institute, "Johnson City Press-Chronicle, August 5, 1976, p.1.

that the EES turn its plot of land over to him in exchange for a house on Wilhelmstrasse, about one-half mile from the center of the University in Tuebingen. On Feb. 16, 1962, the house became the property of the EES, and Stuckenbruck's work began to take a turn which would define the future of the European Evangelistic Society's work in Europe. (EE, April, 1962, p. 1-2).

As Stuckenbruck's work was spent more and more building up the strength of a specialized library bearing upon the origin of the church from late Judaism to early Christianity and with cultivating contacts within the theological faculty of the university, James Crouch, who arrived in Tuebingen in October of 1961, took over ministerial duties with the Christliche Gemeinde.

Stuckenbruck did as much as he could in building up the reputation of the Disciple's Institute, but he was coming to the realization that further growth of the Institute would call for others with sorts of academic credentials that would allow them entrance to the full theological resources of the university. Thus, in 1968, Stuckenbruck returned to the United States and Burton Thurston, on leave from the American University in Beirut, Lebanon, became the interim director of the Institute. S. Scott Bartchy, a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard University arrived in the autumn of 1968 and eventually became full time director of the Institute. Fred Norris (Ph.D., Yale University) joined the staff in September of 1972, and together with Bartchy established the Institut zur Erforschung des Urchristentums as one of the leading specialized centers for research on the origins of the early church.

In addition to the impressive library and the prodigious amount of scholarly work emanating from the Institute, the EES sponsored Institute Fellowships from 1969 to 1974 and sponsored lectures and colloquia which have attracted a list of participants that is impressive by any standards. Among the participants have been: Gerhard Rosenkrantz, Helmut Koester, Douglas Webster, Gabriel Vahanian, Dieter Georgi, Herbert Richardson, Dale Moody, Walter Thiele, James M. Robinson, Leslie Newbiggin, Langdon Gilkey,

Jerome Quinn, Daniel Day Williams, G. D. Kilpatrick, Robin Scroggs, Ernest Kaesemann and Hans Keung. In addition, both Bartchy and Norris have been invited by the theological faculty at the University to lecture, making them the first non-Lutheran, non-Reformed persons committed to New Testament Christianity allowed on the faculty on the German university scene (ES #2).

At present, there are three scholars connected with the Institute: Bartchy, who is centering his research on the city of Corinth; Norris, who is concentrating on the city of Antioch; and Dr. Richard Oster, although not a salaried member of the staff at the present time, is doing research on the city of Ephesus in addition to his teaching duties at Rich University in Houston.

But all of the scholarly work did not go on in a vacuum. For the scholars of the Institute, all of the research, lectures, publications and colloquiums were of no real value unless it manifested itself in the corporate worship and spiritual lives of Christians. In this sense, the Christliche Gemeinde, now ministered to by a native German named Werner Hausen, is an integral part of the total mission of the European Evangelistic Society. This congregation, in its own way, has also made giant strides in breaking down some of the barriers that stand in the way of the reunion of all believing Christians. In the autumn of 1978, for example, there was an exchange of ministers between the free church Christliche Gemeinde and the state church Martinskirche a couple of blocks away for a Sunday worship service, with both ministers administering the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. (ES #2).

The work of both the Institute and the Christliche Gemeinde have much to say to Americans who have been associated with the Restoration Movement. Although the EES is a reporting unit of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) it did not participate in Unified Promotion and its Board of Directors have been dominated by those who have aligned themselves with the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ

(i.e., Independents) and the North American Christian Convention. The EES approached the UCMS on an informal basis in the mid-1940's for funding and support, but were told their proposal would be rejected (ES #2). Although its survival was dependent on voluntary gifts from churches and individuals, Stuckenbruck maintains there was a conscious choice to cultivate a good working relationship both with the Disciples and with the Independents. This commitment has been maintained throughout Dean Walker's presidency of the Society, as well as his successor, Robert W. Shaw.

Adopting the position of "sweet reasonableness" has caused some problems. According to Stuckenbruck, "we have had to take a great deal of criticism from certain of the Independent people -- who have just as much right to their approach as anyone else does, and we have had to take a great deal of criticism from (Disciples) because we did not go into Unified Promotion . . . . Probably we could have gained a whole lot more money if we had gone one way or the other, but we felt it more important to gather together into our concerns what the total heritage of this movement is." (ES #2). Fred P. Thompson, in a two-part essay on missions printed in the February and August, 1960, editions of the Society's organ, European Evangelist, has probably best articulated the EES position by chiding both "Ultracongregationalists" and "closed shop" missionary agencies". He ended by writing that the true test in missions

"is not whether they are organized or independent. It is not whether they have Boards of Directors or no boards.

It is not whether they are large or small. It is not whether they have the support of this journal or that. It is rather whether or not they are faithful to the New Testament. All who preach Christ in obedience to His revealed will, whose lives are worthy and whose labors honest, are deserving of support. Let us then support them, independent or organized, and thank God for their good works! (EE, August, 1960, p.3).

Stuckenbruck sounds a related note when he says: "Maybe the European Society, in striving to clarify issues and also to encourage participation of people in what they believe, can be of help in the sorely tried fellowship in our country". (ES #2).

At the beginning of this paper, reference was made to the German congregation in Tuebingen being an anomaly in the history of the Restoration Movement. But there is a real sense in which it really should not be. In studying what it is that is distinctive about this congregation one comes to an understanding that it operates under a paradigm of a New Testament church which appeals to a consensus fidelium that may be appropriated by all believing Christians. The matter is put succinctly by Fred Norris in a way that should challenge us all to study what are truly the distinguishing characteristics of the Restoration Movement. He writes:

What is the identity of the Christliche Gemeinde, the Christian Church in Tuebingen? It immediately appears ludicrous to a German to begin by saying that this congregation is one portion of a movement which has relied heavily on the philosophical positions of the Englishman, John Locke, and the Scottish "common sense" philosophers, and thus adapted quickly to the American, democratic, frontier life through the leadership of Alexander Campbell and others. Why should a German become a nineteenth-century American in order to become a Christian? The tale turns into tragic comedy if we describe our distinctive features in terms of instrumental music and organization. Yet, if one looks to encyclopedias for a definition of our heritage, such issues often strike outsiders as our distinctive characteristics. To be blunt, these features have almost nothing to do with our Tuebingen congregation.

The characteristics of the Tuebingen congregation that seem most apparent to outsiders are those of a family with strong personal relationships . . . . We want to talk about being part of the family of God, brothers and sisters in Christ with various gifts for ministry, all of which are necessary for the full functioning of the body of Christ. Because our racial, national, educational, occupational, and personal backgrounds are so varied, little else exists that would explain why we come together. Therefore, we must in this setting recover a broader and deeper heritage. And thus we have discovered, as others can discover that the reformation of the nineteenth-century appealed to the consensus fidelium for its distinctive characteristics. It sought the apostolic, catholic, and sensible. <sup>4</sup>

Written 8/1976  
Printed 7/1982

<sup>4</sup> Frederick W. Norris, "Apostolic, Catholic and Sensible" The Consensus Fidelium, "Essays on New Testament Christianity," ed. C. Robert Metzger (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1978), p. 15-16.