

Rev. Carl Hugo Gutsche (1843-1926)

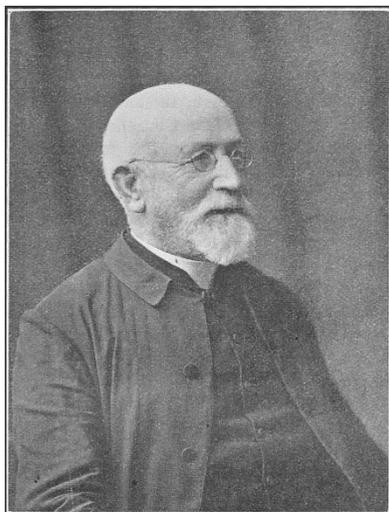
German Baptist Missionary to South Africa

Jack C. Whytock

Tucked away on the frontier of the eastern portion of Cape Colony in southern Africa is what was known in the 19th century as British Kaffraria. To this region came a missionary who was to minister in the course of his labours in Africa with four diverse cultural groups – German immigrants, English immigrants, Afrikaners, and Xhosa. His name was Carl Hugo Gutsche, not known in wide mission history circles, yet a name which must be recognized as making significant and diverse contributions in mission history in Southern Africa.

Early Life

Gutsche was born in Delitzsch, Saxony in Germany on April 20, 1843. At age seven his family moved to Halle, the famous centre of evangelicalism and pietism. His father was a civil servant and ended his career as chief auditor in Halle. During Gutsche's youth, August Tholuck was the noted evangelical theologian in the University of Halle, and Halle continued to exercise incredible missional modelling in evangelistic and wholistic mission, a fact which has been increasingly recognized by modern missiologists. Carl Gutsche studied at the Latina Gymnasium, one of Francke's schools, and received a good classical education.



At age fifteen he was confirmed as a full member of the Lutheran State Church. He apprenticed as a pharmacist/chemist from 1858-1862 at the Hirsch Apotheke, Halle. On Christmas Day, December 1864, he was baptized in the Saale River by the pastor of the Halle Baptist Church, Prussia. Gutsche had been converted and had requested to be baptized by immersion. A new impulse came upon him and he began preaching, witnessing, and distributing tracts. The Baptists in the German lands at this time were viewed as basically a strange sect and were highly suspect and faced much ridicule. From 1862 to 1865 Gutsche worked as a travelling pharmacist. During this

period he even served as a pharmacist in the Prussian Army at a military hospital in Weissenfels, where he often helped during surgeries.

Influence of Oncken

It was while doing his pharmacist work in Hamburg that he met Johannes Gerhard Oncken¹ and came under his personal pastoral mentorship. Oncken figures as one of the prime German Baptist leaders in the 19th century, and no study of German Baptist history can be conducted without studying him. Oncken's theology was very much influenced by the Haldanes, whom he personally knew. This mentorship program under Oncken exposed Gutsche to an intense period of reading and study combined with missionary meetings, prayer meetings, and preaching.



His reading concentrated upon church history, Spurgeon's sermons, and pastoral theology. Oncken's famous missions dictum was "Every Christian a missionary" or "Every Baptist a missionary". This was a concept that Gutsche would go on to try to cultivate in every Christian. He encouraged all believers to fulfil their role in witness yet never displaced the calling of the "vocational missionary".

In April 1866 Gutsche formally left his pharmacist work and became Oncken's assistant until he left as a missionary to South Africa in October 1867. Gutsche was a gifted linguist; he supplemented his income by giving lessons in French and German. He continued also to personally study more Latin and Greek and now took up Dutch and English, knowing that the latter two languages would likely be of great service in missions work. Carl Gutsche lived with Oncken and met Mary Lange, who also lived at Oncken's house. She was basically a "daughter" to Oncken as her father was dead. Mary's family were also noted for their zeal in mission work and had suffered for their Baptist convictions. Her father had been a colporteur in Heligoland and latterly an assistant to Oncken. Oncken gave his blessing to Mary Lange becoming engaged to Carl Gutsche; but upon their engagement, he requested that Gutsche seek other lodging until the day of their wedding. Mary Lange's mother, Martha Speight, was from England, so Mary grew up speaking both English and German. Mary Lange (1841-1925) was born in

¹ Oncken (1800-1884), the German evangelical Calvinist, was most influential as a church planter, educator, evangelist, literary agent, and contributor to the German Baptist Confession of Faith, 1847. Spurgeon and others referred to Oncken as the "Apostle Paul of Germany" or the "Apostle of European Baptists".

Altona, Hamburg and served as a governess, tutor, and piano teacher prior to marriage.

Thus, Carl Gutsche and Mary Lange were married on the Heligoland Islands on September 22, 1867, about four weeks after the noted Conference and Assembly of the German Baptist Union which had met in Hamburg in August 1867. Those meetings were very significant that year as the guest speaker was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. While in Hamburg, Spurgeon also dedicated the new buildings of the Böhmenstrasse Baptist Church in Hamburg. Hamburg was the centre for the translation and distribution of Spurgeon's sermons into German. Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon were present for the announcement of the new missionaries from Hamburg that were being sent to South Africa: Carl Hugo Gutsche and Mary Lange. Carl Gutsche was in charge of the minutes for the Conference.

Missionaries in South Africa

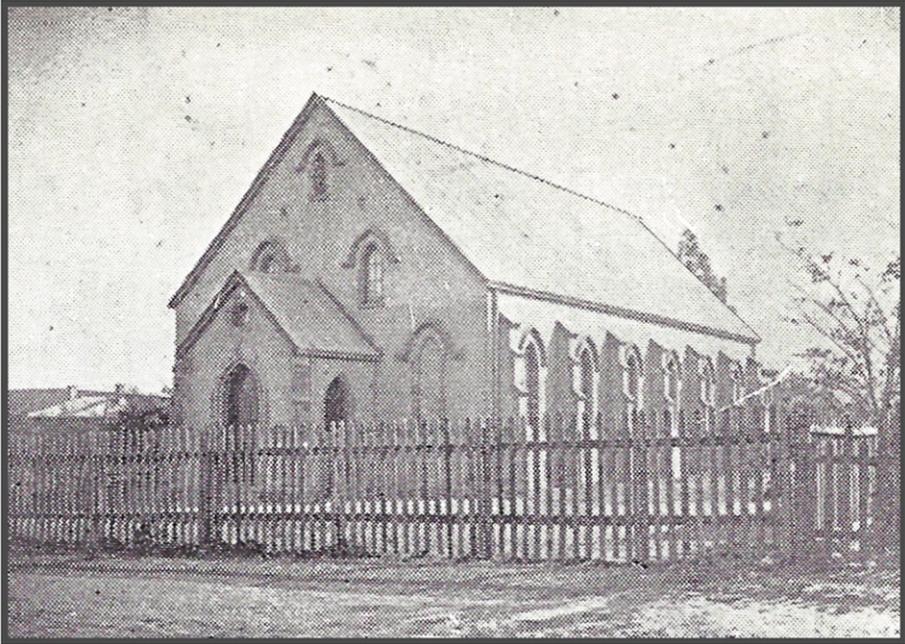
On September 30, 1867, Carl Hugo Gutsche was ordained by Oncken and set apart for missionary work in British Kaffraria, Cape Colony (now in the Eastern Cape Province), South Africa. (Gutsche had applied to the Rhenish Mission Society in 1866 but was turned down by that society.) Thus, Oncken lost one of his assistants, but likewise he considered that here was a worthy couple for the mission field in Southern Africa. Written requests had been sent over several years to Oncken to send out a missionary pastor to the German immigrants in British Kaffraria. In 1865 Oncken had written back to the German Baptist immigrants:

I must ask you to be patient. You want an extraordinary man for South Africa, one who can preach in German and English, can establish schools and deal with Government authorities, lead the flock and build up the churches.... Such men are far and between [few and far between], and as yet we cannot produce them ourselves as the baker bakes his bread, we just have to ask the Lord to supply one for us in His good time.... (Haus translator)

At last Oncken had found the extraordinary man and with a wife very dear to Oncken's own heart. Oncken's vision was that the missionary pastor was not to confine himself to the German immigrants but to spread the gospel to all peoples that he came into contact with in this new land. On October 2, 1867, the Gutschees sailed from Hamburg for South Africa.

The Gutschees arrived at Port Elizabeth, South Africa on November 23, 1867 and from there journeyed to Grahamstown, where Rev. Gutsche preached for the English Baptists. From there they travelled further inland to the German settlers and arrived at King William's Town on December 7, 1867. This was to become the radiating centre for their mission work for the next sixty years.

Almost immediately upon arrival, Gutsche began visiting the German settlers scattered around British Kaffraria. His visits were often both pastoral and medical in nature. Many were in a state of poverty and unable to afford medical attention, so Gutsche's pharmaceutical training made for unique visits of word and deed. He also commenced a local ministry of a multicultural Baptist mission in King William's Town. Gutsche visited places where some German Baptists had started holding services, such as at Frankfurt; he also visited areas where the German immigrants lived in order to draw together those of the Baptist persuasion, such as at Hannover, Braunschweig, Breidbach, Berlin, MacLeantown, East London, Aliwal, Potsdam, Cradock, Bodium, and Fort Murray. The first person whom Gutsche baptized in South



German Baptist Church (Bethany), King William's Town

Africa was an Afrikaans man, Jacobus Daniel Odendaal. From this first baptism, there eventually developed the Afrikaanse Baptiste Kerk. Throughout the remainder of Gutsche's life, he took a strong interest in this work and was very supportive of it. During his years of ministry in South Africa, Gutsche oversaw the building of over twenty church buildings. He followed this principle: "not to consecrate a single place of worship until it had been paid for fully".

Gutsche proved to be a highly capable church administrator for the scattered German settlers. He organized them into centres/stations and visited each one every three months in the initial years until more pastors had been secured. Lay Baptist preachers filled in when he was not present. Spurgeon's sermons translated by Oncken into German were popular in British Kaffraria and were standard fair for the German lay-readers. Cottage meetings were

held in each area, reminiscent of Halle and the Pietists and Oncken's ministry in Hamburg. When Gutsche visited a "station", he not only preached but generally administered communion and baptisms and conducted a church business meeting as well. A conference was convened once a quarter to which several delegates from every station were sent. The conferences lasted a whole weekend and included the *Liebesmahl* or Love Feast. These conferences were critical for the work of evangelism, missionary edification, discipleship, and fellowship as well as for uniting the stations and consolidating and advancing the work of the German Bund. Over the years, Gutsche would also undertake itinerate preaching mission trips to Kimberley, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein area, and Durban. The purpose of these mission trips was to minister to German immigrants, to plant churches, such as in Johannesburg, and to encourage the Afrikaans work. He was very much the consolidator.

Church Leader and Missions Visionary

In 1877 the Baptist Union of South Africa was brought into existence. Gutsche was one of the founders of this Union despite some opposition from some within his German Bund of churches. Slowly he was able to arrest the opposition and advance the Union with the German churches. It appears one area of disagreement was that the English Baptists practiced open communion with Christians of different persuasions on baptism, but the German Baptists practiced closed communion based upon a unified understanding of baptism. Gutsche patiently tried to cultivate a desire amongst all the Baptists living in South Africa to unite for the purpose of working together primarily for missionary advance. Thus, Gutsche's name belongs to the list of names of those who exercised significant leadership in the early years of the development of the Baptist Union in South Africa, including his role as president and as an honorary life-president.

As a missionary, Gutsche saw his role as also instilling and inspiring missionary zeal amongst all churches in which he became involved. Upon his immediate arrival in British Kaffraria, he took steps organizationally to advance missions awareness and reminded all that he came to serve all peoples. The mission of God's kingdom was not just to the German immigrants. Mission meetings for prayer were organized in all stations. Preaching to multicultural groups was encouraged and also the development of missions schools for all children. He formed a missionary committee to raise the matter of securing a missionary for indigenous missions. A missionary couple were secured from amongst the German Baptists immigrants in 1868 – Carl and Louise Pape, who were commissioned to evangelise the Mfengu or Fingo near Berlin. Carl Pape was fluent in isiXhosa. He translated many songs into Xhosa and established the Baptist church and school for Xhosas at Tshabo. In years to come, the work continued to develop, and more missionaries were appointed under more united missionary efforts that went further into Transkei and Pondoland. Thus, the earliest mission work amongst Bap-

tists in South Africa to reach out with a missionary to the indigenous community near Berlin actually belongs to the individual efforts of the German Baptists under the leadership of Carl Hugo Gutsche. It is really from this that the next development would come, a united Baptist mission.

Gutsche's work as an educationalist combines both the missional aspects as well as the education of German immigrant children. It is believed that he helped to establish thirty-eight schools in his lifetime. Many of these were German-speaking day schools. A mission school was formed at Tshabo.

Actually, the Tshabo mission was his particular focus. It was through Gutsche that the first indigenous evangelist was brought into the work. This was John Adams (Gilana) [1861-1893] and his wife, Annie. Adams served four years before dying from tuberculosis. Hugo Gutsche authored the four-page leaflet published by the South African Baptist Missionary Society, "The Tshabo Mission and its first Native Evangelist". Gutsche was the human instrument used in bringing Adams into the service of the Baptist Union of South Africa as their first black missionary.

Missionary Statesman

As already intimated, Gutsche was to be one of the key players in helping to move from individual development in missions work to a larger united effort. He helped to establish the South African Baptist Missionary Society in 1892. This occurred in part to commemorate the founding in 1792 (exactly one hundred years earlier) of the Baptist Missionary Society in England connected with William Carey. This new society was formed at the 1892 General Assembly of the Baptist Union, which was held that year at Gutsche's church, Bethany, in King William's Town. Gutsche was appointed the secretary of the society – a post he would hold for many years. It was only logical that he be appointed the secretary as he was no doubt the most well-read on the state of missionary work in Southern Africa of anyone in the Baptist Union. The society was established to help to coordinate and plan more mission stations for the Baptists in Southern Africa.



Missionaries and mission leaders in South Africa joined together in the late 19th century for the United Missionary Conferences (UMC). Gutsche was one of the attendees of these conferences. When he first arrived in South Af-

rica, he had made a point of studying the situation of all Protestant mission works in Southern Africa. He was a very capable statistician and noted that there were over four hundred missionaries serving in South Africa in the late 1860s. In fact, he was one of the key authorities on such information. Thus, he was asked by the United Missionary Conference to collate and publish a comprehensive work “relative to all Mission work in South Africa, south of the Zambesi – to be collected once in five years”. It seems that Gutsche had compiled the report using the year 1884. It was not published until 1889 and was reduced in size from the full compilation which Gutsche had prepared. However, it is an invaluable work and worthy of consultation by missions historians. It was printed by the Lovedale Mission Press. Andrew Murray, Jr. would compile the next published survey for the UMC in 1906.

Carl Hugo Gutsche and Mary Lange had seven children: Hugo (b. July 18, 1869); Jonas (b. April 3, 1871 and died April 7, 1871); Philipp (b. May 5, 1872); Juanita (b. May 4, 1874); Clemens (b. January 13, 1876); Hulda (b. June 13, 1878); and Jesse (b. June 11, 1881). The eldest two were sent back to Germany to receive their higher levels of education and then returned to South Africa and exercised noteworthy contributions in the fields of the pastorate, education, and medicine. The others all received their education in South Africa. The Gutschehs had five furloughs back to Germany during their sixty years in South Africa (1874, 1880, 1886, 1897, and 1911) averaging about six months each in Germany. In 1886 Gutsche was invited to become a theological tutor at the Oncken Theological College in Hamburg, Germany but declined because he believed his life’s calling was in South Africa.

Gutsche perhaps went through his most trying years of ministry between 1895-1897. His health had diminished at this time, and there were internal factions mounting in his congregation (Bethany). The bright spot during those years was hosting Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Jr. at the Bund Konferenz at Bethany. However, soon afterwards a split occurred with the result that there were now two German Baptist congregations in King William’s Town. Gutsche pastored the “new” church, called Emmanuel. Before his death, this congregation attained the status as the largest congregation in the Baptist Union of South Africa; thus Gutsche was once again pastoring the largest congregation in the Union.

The German Bund ceased its separate existence as an association in the Baptist Union in 1955 and joined with the local English association. Thus the Bund lasted about 90 years and during that time exercised a considerable contribution mainly through the leadership of Gutsche. Ethnic and linguistic-based churches usually undergo shifts over the generations, and a study of the German Bund proves no exception as an immigrant church.

Summary Conclusion

Carl Hugo Gutsche must be regarded as one of the key fathers of the Baptist Church in South Africa. This remarkable servant was a consolidator, an

evangelist, and a church planter for the German Baptists in British Kaffraria and even beyond that district (Bund Deutscher Baptisten-Gemeinden in Sud-Afrika or the Association of German Baptist Churches in South Africa). He was one of the fathers of the Afrikaanse Baptiste Kerk. Likewise, he was one of the founders of the Baptist Union of South Africa in 1877 as well as the South African Baptist Missionary Society in 1892. As the inspiration and visionary for Baptist Xhosa missions work, his foundational efforts led to the establishment of the Bantu Baptist Church, which was birthed in the Union in 1927, the year following his death. This noted educationist and missionary statesman is deserving of mention amongst his contemporaries and personal friends, James Stewart and Andrew Murray, Jr.

Ten Lessons for Today

- 1) “Every believer is a missionary” is true and must be cultivated; yet the balance must be maintained alongside the calling of a vocational missions worker.
- 2) Diaspora cultural and linguistic churches have unique features and tensions. These surface clearly in the second and third generations; this remains true today and has to be addressed.
- 3) Rarely are congregational splits entirely over theology; there is a warning here to weigh things carefully.
- 4) It is important to know Baptist heritage in terms of key leaders and their doctrinal convictions.
- 5) Believers should cultivate a large heart for the family of God and strive for a catholic spirit; they should also strive to be knowledgeable beyond their own denominational confines.
- 6) Likewise, Christians should cultivate a missional vision for their immediate context.
- 7) Christians must strive and pray to pass the torch of the faith to the next generation within their own families.
- 8) Leadership demands organization and form appropriate to the ministry context in which one is placed; it also demands financial realism.
- 9) All Christians need mentorship and Christian friendship.
- 10) Christians must remain gospel-centred in ministry and strive not to become tangential.

Please note: a shorter version of this article appears online in the Dictionary of African Christian Biography (DACB - <http://www.dacb.org/index.html>).

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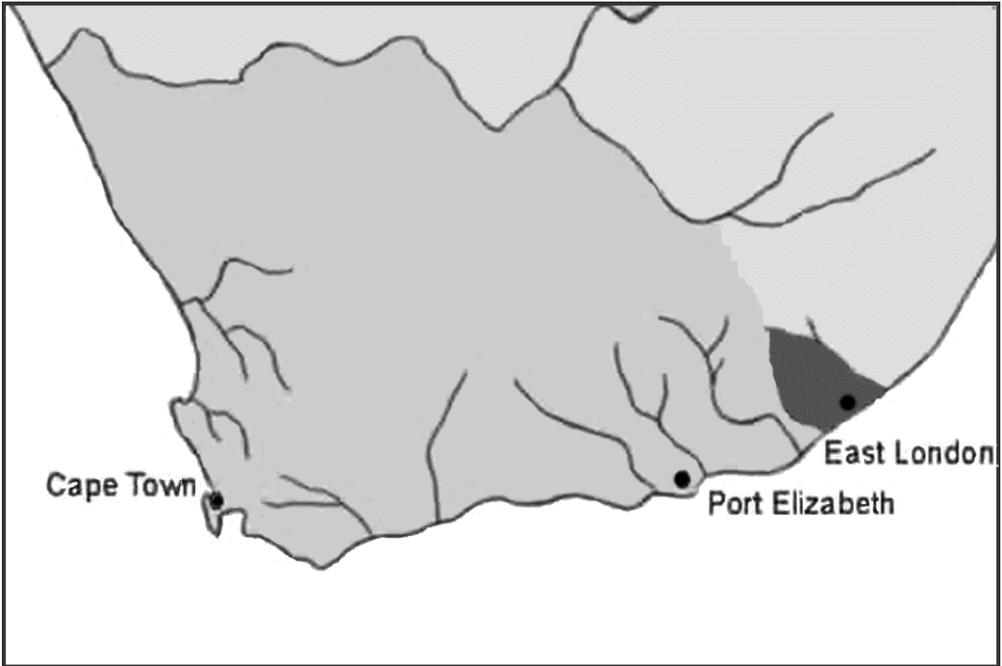
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*Map of the Cape Colony and British Kaffraria
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