

Klingbeil, Reinhold Gustav (1868–1928)

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Reinhold Gustav Klingbeil was an evangelist, pastor, missionary, and administrator with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United States.

Early Years and Education

Reinhold Gustav Klingbeil was born September 7, 1868,¹ in Lehnitz, north of Berlin, Germany.² He was one of four children. In 1876, when he was seven years old, his family moved to the United States, settling in Wisconsin.³ In 1887 he was baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist. After encouragement by Ludwig R. Conradi,⁴ he pursued a five-month course in pastoral/missionary training at Union College, in College View, Nebraska, in 1893.⁵

Going to Europe

That same year, Klingbeil received an invitation to go to Europe. In June 1893 he began his ministry as an evangelist/colporteur in Hamburg, Schleswig, Wuppertal, and Magdeburg, Germany. After Klingbeil came to Germany, he requested to specifically go to the areas around Magdeburg. There he began holding Bible studies and public lectures, which took place in the Grünwalds restaurant in the district of Buckau and in a hall of the restaurant “Zu den drei Kaisern” in the center of the city.⁶ All this happened while the Foreign Missions Board had recommended Klingbeil as the best candidate to commence mission work among Germans in Holland.⁷ It appears Klingbeil alternated between Holland and Germany, for his efforts in Magdeburg were reported until 1895.⁸

The Netherlands

Subsequently, in the fall of 1895, Klingbeil was asked to go to the Netherlands to commence Adventist missionary work there. Klingbeil first worked among the Germans in Rotterdam and among Sabbatarian Christians.⁹ In 1896 Klingbeil was ordained as a pastor in Hamburg.¹⁰ That same year he married Cornelia Knecht, a new convert to Adventism from Ridderkerk. They had two sons, Renold and Louie, and three daughters, Albertina, one who later became Mrs. Tilstra,¹¹ and Olga, who died during the First World War.

Klingbeil continued his work in Rotterdam, preaching and selling books to the sailors at the harbour¹² while establishing Adventist churches in Amsterdam, Zwolle, and the Hague.¹³ The Adventist church in the Netherlands grew to about 240 baptized members.¹⁴ In January 1902 the Dutch field was organized into a conference, with Klingbeil as president.¹⁵ As the year progressed, a conflict arose among the members in Holland. Some questioned the Adventist teaching on the sanctuary and the person and writings of Ellen White, with a nationalistic attitude towards some foreigners in the background.¹⁶ The conflict resulted in a schism that led to the loss of many members. This must have shaken Klingbeil, who withdrew from his official assignments for a time, almost losing the favor of the leaders in Europe. In fact, they thought he was among the dissenters.¹⁷



Reinhold Gustav Klingbeil
Photo courtesy of SHANA (the historical archive of Seventh-day Adventists in the Netherlands).

Belgium

In 1903 Klingbeil was sent to Belgium to begin pioneer mission work. The Klingbeil family settled in Antwerp. They first rented a house with a large room in the front. Klingbeil rented a large hall for meetings. After only a few meetings the man who rented the hall to Klingbeil withdrew the contract, begging him to close the meetings, "owing to the threats of the Catholics to destroy the building."¹⁸ As a result, Klingbeil resorted to using the large room in front of his house for the public evangelistic meetings. According to a report by Arthur G. Daniells, then president of the General Conference, after Klingbeil transferred the services to his house,

one of the priests in that part of the city stirred up the people to mob the place. One Sunday night hundreds of angry people gathered in front of the house to break up the meeting, but they did not succeed. They seemed to be restrained by some unseen power. This demonstration caused many people to make inquiry regarding the things Brother Klingbeil was teaching, and in the end really proved a blessing to his work.¹⁹

Klingbeil finished the meetings without interruption. He continued working as pioneer in Antwerp and further in Brussels, training Bible workers, establishing churches, and conducting meetings while administrating the "Holland Mission," i.e. Holland and Flemish Belgium.²⁰

Administrator

In 1909 Klingbeil returned to the Netherlands for a short while. The next year, under Klingbeil, the "Holland Mission" was reorganized by separating Belgium from it. Klingbeil returned to Belgium in 1911. This time he settled in Brussels with his family.²¹ They remained in Brussels during the First World War, "passing through those terrible years when the work was carried forward under great difficulties and privations, much of the time being without sufficient food to sustain the family."²² Writing about the war, Klingbeil recounted, "the year 1917 was the worst year of the whole war. Shortage of necessary food cost the life of our beloved daughter Olga." She had been sick for several months, and then died.²³

In 1919 Klingbeil and his family returned to the Netherlands. The next year the Dutch territory of the Adventist church was reorganized into the East Holland Mission and West Holland Mission.²⁴ Klingbeil directed the affairs of the West Holland Mission until 1923, and served as president of the Belgian conference from 1923 to 1926. Thereafter, he returned to the United States with his family, and pastored a congregation in Holland, Michigan.²⁵

Death, Contribution

On the evening of April 27, 1928, while returning home, Klingbeil had a heart failure and died in just a few minutes.²⁶ Reinhold Gustav Klingbeil had served the Seventh-day Adventist church as evangelist, pastor, missionary, and administrator from 1893 to 1928. His 35 years of ministry saw him playing a key role in the establishment of Adventism in parts of Europe, especially in the Netherlands and Belgium. As a pioneer mission worker in these two countries, he was instrumental in founding several congregations amidst conflict and difficulties. As administrator and pastor, he trained and mentored Dutch and Belgian workers who later took over the affairs of the Adventist church in their regions. His tenacity and doggedness were prized during the founding years of Adventism in Europe.

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NOTES

1. J. F. Piper, "Elder R. G. Klingbeil," "Obituaries," *ARH*, June 28, 1928, 22.?
2. See "Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk: Reinhold Klingbeil," compiled by Hendricus G. van Rijn, accessed March 1, 2020, <http://shana.adventist.nl/biografieen-3/reinhold-kleinbeil/>?
3. Piper, "Elder R. G. Klingbeil," "Obituaries," 22.?
4. "Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk: Reinhold Klingbeil," compiled by Hendricus G. van Rijn, accessed March 1, 2020, <http://shana.adventist.nl/biografieen-3/reinhold-kleinbeil/>?
5. *Ibid.*?
6. Adventgemeinde Magdeburg, "Chronik der Adventgemeinde Magdeburg," n.d., accessed March 1, 2020, <http://www.sta-magdeburg.de/chronik/>?
7. "Proceedings of the Board of Foreign Missions," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Battle Creek, Michigan: General Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists, 1893), 70.?
8. See Adventgemeinde Magdeburg, "Chronik der Adventgemeinde Magdeburg,"; cf. "Klingbeil, Reinhold Gustav," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 873.?
9. Ludwig R. Conradi, "From the North Sea to the Black Sea," *ARH*, May 1, 1894, 282.?
10. "Klingbeil, Reinhold Gustav," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 873.?
11. Piper, "Elder R. G. Klingbeil," "Obituaries," 22.?
12. "Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk: Reinhold Klingbeil."?
13. Ludwig R. Conradi, "The German Conference," *ARH*, June 25, 1901, 413.?
14. "Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk: Reinhold Klingbeil."?
15. Ludwig R. Conradi, "The German Union Conference," *ARH*, March 11, 1902, 148.?
16. Ludwig R. Conradi, "The German Union Conference," *ARH*, December 2, 1902, 15; "Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk: Reinhold Klingbeil."?
17. "Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk: Reinhold Klingbeil."?
18. Arthur G. Daniells, "My Visit to the European Field: Belgium and England," *ARH*, October 19, 1905, 6.?
19. *Ibid.*?
20. Ludwig R. Conradi, "German Union Conference Council," *ARH*, April 25, 1907, 12?
21. Piper, "Elder R. G. Klingbeil," "Obituaries," 22.?
22. *Ibid.*?
23. "A Letter from Belgium," *ARH*, February 13, 1919, 32.?
24. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1921), 99.?
25. Piper, "Elder R. G. Klingbeil," 22.?
26. *Ibid.*?