Joseph Weißenberg, Faith Healer and Founder of the Evangelical Johannine Church (1932)

Abstract

One of the more well-known of the dozens of the prophets and faith healers [*Wunderheiler*] to attract followings in early twentieth-century Germany, Joseph Weißenberg (1855-1941) fascinated the public and alarmed authorities throughout the Weimar Republic. Long convinced of his own spiritual powers, Weißenberg had turned his back on the Catholic faith of his childhood and begun a spiritual journey that led, in 1907, to his founding of the *Vereinigung ernster Forscher von Diesseits nach Jenseits, wahrer Anhänger der christlichen Kirchen* [Association of Earnest Researchers of this Life and the Next, True Followers of the Christian Churches]. His association propagated "healing methods" that included necromancy, the laying on of hands, home remedies, and prayers, which Weißenberg initially practiced in his private apartment in Berlin. He regularly applied quark, a type of fresh cheese, to ailing bodies as part of his healing ritual, and he gained renown as the "Weißkäseheiler." Despite several publicized court cases in which he stood trial for fraud—one of which resulted in a conviction, later overturned— his following grew rapidly in the interwar period. By 1926, Weißenberg had attracted between 100,000 and 120,000 people to his association, spread among twenty different branches. Weißenberg inspired such personal and cult-like devotion from his flock that he inspired them to build an entirely new community, the so-called "City of Peace" [*Friedensstadt*], south of Berlin, where around 400 of his followers eventually settled. These clips from a 1932 documentary film about Weißenberg feature him with his wife, a parade through the "City of Peace," and the unveiling of a statue in his honor. Weißenberg and his church initially supported the National Socialists, and in this clip a swastika flag is seen flying in the background during the statue's unveiling. The Nazi regime later banned Weißenberg's church, the "Evangelical Johannine Church," in 1935, and it exiled him to Silesia, where he died in 1941.

Source

Source: *Joseph Weißenberg, Gründer der Evangelisch-Johannischen Kirche* (archive title), 1932. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv Filmwerk ID: 25811 https://digitaler-lesesaal.bundesarchiv.de/video/25811/680192

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