THE DIVIDED ROOTS OF LUTHERANISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

A Critical Overview of the Social History of the German-speaking Lutheran Missions and the Churches Originating from their Work in South Africa

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Religious Studies

By: Harald E. Winkler

Supervisor: Prof. Charles Villa-Vicencio

Department of Religious Studies
University of Cape Town

September 1989

CONTENTS

Abbreviations

ALC/ALM	-	American Lutheran Church/Mission
BMS	-	Berlin Missionary Society (German: Berliner Missionsgesellschaft - BMG)
CCLF	-	Council of Churches on Lutheran Foundation
CCSA	-	Christian Council of South Africa
CI	-	Christian Institute
CSM	-	Church of Sweden Mission
DELKSWA	-	Deutsche Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche in Südwestafrika
EKD	-	Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands
ELCSA	-	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa
ELCSWA	-	Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa
ELKSA(NT)	-	Evangelische Lutherische Kirche in Südafrika (Natal-Transvaal)
ELKSA(Kap)	-	Evangelische Lutherische Kirche in Südafrika (Kapkirche)
ELOK	-	Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church, also known as Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN)
Ev.	-	Evangelical
FELCSA	-	Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa
HMS	-	Hermannsburger Mission Society
LMS	-	London Missionary Society
Luth.	-	Lutheran
LWF	-	Lutheran World Federation (German: Lutherischer Weltbund - LWB)
NMS	-	Norwegian Mission Society
UELCSA	-	United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (German: VELKSA)
WCC	-	World Council of Churches

There are two common points of confusion resulting from this large number of acronyms. Firstly, the black churches are known as ELCSA, which is divided into regions or dioceses, e.g ELCSA-SED is the South Eastern Diocese (formerly South Eastern Region) of the black church. This is not to be confused with the two white churches use a similar-sounding acronym, ELKSA. ELKSA (NT) is the white Natal-Transvaal Church, and ELCSA (Kapkirche), the Cape Church, also known as Kapkirche. It seems better, therefore, to use the German acronyms for these churches, i.e. ELKSA (NT) and ELKSA (Kapkirche). Secondly, FELCSA and the UELCSA are often confused, especially in spoken language, since the German acronym for UELCSA (VELKSA) sounds identical to FELCSA. Here, UELCSA is used, rather than the confusing VELKSA. UELCSA unites the three white churches, whereas FELCSA was the overarching federation of all churches, until ELCSA seceded in 1975.

Acknowledgements

Financial assistance rendered by the Human Sciences Research Council towards the cost of this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed or conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not to be regarded as those of the Human Sciences Research Council. My thanks also to the Institute for African Studies for providing financial assistance which made these interviews possible. Financial assistance from the Department of Religious Studies is also gratefully acknowledged.

My thanks are due to all those people involved in the Lutheran missions and churches who agreed to be interviewed for this thesis: Dr. Wolfram Kistner, Tom Soeldner, Rev. Agulhas, Walter Johannsmeier, Prof. Simon Maimela, Horst Meyberg, Frank Müller, Prof. Gunther Wittenberg, Rev. W.B. Khumalo, Rev. A.E. Nsibande and Dr. James Cochrane. I am grateful for the time they gave, and the critical insights they offered.

I further wish to express my appreciation to the members of the Department of Religious Studies, especially to Prof. Charles Villa-Vicencio for his rigorous and detailed supervision, and to Pat Lawrence for helping me in countless little ways.

Perhaps most of all I am indebted to those who supported me through this thesis, who gave criticism, read drafts of the thesis, and helped me in numerous other ways, in particular Chris Lund, Petra Köster and Mary Ralphs.

Finally, my thanks to my family, who have always supported me in everything that I do, even when they disagree with me.

Abstract

This study defends the thesis that the present social location of the Lutheran churches can be explained by examining the history of their internal divisions and their relation to broader struggles in society. The history of the Lutheran missions and churches is considered in relation to the political and socio-economic dimensions of South African history. Church history is conceived as an internal struggle between a dominant and an alternative theology (and their respective ecclesial bases), which affects the participation of the churches in broader social struggles. The development of the churches is divided into three periods, corresponding to the growing independence of the black churches from the mission societies.

The thesis is examined by extensive reference to primary and secondary sources on the Lutheran church. Interviews with key informants from the various missions and churches provide additional information. The broader field of church historiography, as well as theoretical writings on church history are considered.

The analytical aim of the thesis is to show how the struggles internal to the Lutheran churches — including struggles around theological issues — have affected their ability to participate in the broader struggle for liberation in South Africa. In addition to this analytical aim, the thesis provides a narrative history of Lutheranism in South Africa.

The findings of the thesis are that white Lutherans have been the dominant group in the Lutheran churches throughout their history in South Africa. White Lutherans produced the dominant theology of all the Lutheran churches for most of the history of Lutheranism in South Africa. This dominance of German-Lutheran theology was established in the missionary period. The social base of the missions was the German farming community. This community broadly formed part of the ruling classes of colonial society, and its interests converged at many points with colonialism. Lutherans were not allied to the dominant colonial power, the British, but from the end of the nineteenth century to the Boers. Their theological self-understanding as Lutherans,

with their specific missiology, ecclesiology and doctrines (e.g. the Two Kingdoms Doctrine) gave them a identity distinct from others in the ruling bloc. This theology was the dominant theology of all Lutheran churches, black and white. This theological self-understanding, however, gave them only limited autonomy. They conformed to dominant values by dividing along racial lines.

This dominant ecclesiology had its effect beyond the missionary period, and resulted in the separate development of black and white Lutheran churches. Although the black churches gained more independence through the formation of synods and later regional churches, they have internalized to some degree the dominant theology taught by the missionaries. The internal divisions within Lutheranism have continued to prevent effective engagement in external struggles for justice. Yet in the course of struggles for unity and a more effective political witness, an alternative Lutheran theology and ecclesiology has emerged, mainly among young black pastors and church members, but also among some white Lutherans. It is among these people that a Lutheran tradition of resistance to apartheid in church and society can be discovered. It is here that the hope of the church is found.

INTRODUCTION

The Lutheran churches form only a small segment of the Christian churches in South Africa. They have tended to be based predominantly in the rural areas and the majority of their membership is black. They have traditionally been politically conservative, and culturally distinct from other churches. The thesis to be argued here is that the present social location of the Lutheran churches can be explained by examining the history of their internal divisions and their relation to broader struggles in society. Lutherans have tended to reproduce the divisions in society. The divisions within Lutheranism between black and white congregations reflect the broader divisions in society. Out of these separate ecclesial bases, two different theologies emerged, a dominant theology based in the white churches, and an alternative, prophetic theology emerging from some black Lutherans.[1]

White Lutherans have been the dominant group in the Lutheran churches throughout their history in South Africa. Their social base has been in the German-speaking farming community. German Lutherans can be socially located as dependent on the dominant classes of the political economy. They were not allied to the dominant colonial power, the British, but from the end of the nineteenth century to the Boers.

Their theological self-understanding as Lutherans (with their specific missiology, ecclesiology and doctrines such as the Two Kingdoms Doctrine) gave them an identity somewhat distinct from others in the ruling bloc. Generally, however, they conformed to dominant values by dividing along racial lines. German missionaries were able to impose this theology on all Lutheran churches, black and white.

Black Lutherans generally came from the oppressed classes of society. They had little

[1] The concepts of dominant and alternative theology have been used *inter alia* by Charles Villa-Vicencio, 1988, *Trapped in Apartheid*, Cape Town: David Philip. *passim*. Since the word 'alternative' has acquired a somewhat negative connotation in South Africa (suggesting a 'sitting-on-the-fence' position or third way), it is given the sense of 'alternative to the dominant position' here, and is used interchangeably with the notion of prophetic theology developed in the Kairos Document.

control over their churches, and had to accept the theology taught them by the white missionaries. Their social oppression was paralleled by their ecclesial and theological powerlessness. It is only in recent decades that they have gained access to their own churches, and that they have begun to express their own theological insights.

The white missionaries brought with them a dominant theology which they imposed on their converts. This theology was captured in a missiology which sought to convert whole tribes, and establish '*Volkskirchen*'. Theologically, this was justified by asserting a spiritual unity. However, as oppressed people began to appropriate this theology, an alternative interpretation emerged. This theology opposed the separation of congregations, and insisted that spiritual unity be incarnated in organizational forms. The conflict between these two theologies emerged most clearly over the Two Kingdoms doctrine, which was used by the dominant theology to justify political non-involvement, while the more prophetic theology saw it as a theological basis for social action.

The lack of ecclesial and theological unity within Lutheranism has prevented effective engagement in external struggles for justice. Only insofar as a prophetic theology has emerged, have Lutherans been an effective political witness. This struggle between a dominant and a prophetic theology has shaped the political witness of the churches.

Aims

The aims of this thesis are to write both a narrative and an analytical history of Lutheranism in South Africa. Through this narrative and analysis, the thesis outlined above is to be confirmed.

The analytical aim is to examine the Lutheran churches in their internal complexity, in relation to their social context, and to examine the interaction between internal struggles and external context. It shows how the struggles internal to the Lutheran churches – particularly the struggle between a dominant and a prophetic theology –

have affected their ability to participate in the broader struggle for liberation in South Africa. The particular emphasis in this history of Lutheranism in South Africa is on the relationship between church and society. The social, economic and political forces acting upon the church are examined, as well as the churches' influence upon social processes and its political witness. The analysis of the internal struggles within the Lutheran churches is understood in the context of understanding the broader, external struggle and the churches' relation to it. Through this analysis, a historical explanation of the present political position of Lutherans in South Africa is offered. This analytical aim has been primary in selecting material and organizing the thesis.

At the same time, the "permanent need for narrative history in the traditional sense"[2] is recognized in the case of the Lutheran churches. The story of Lutherans in South Africa and their relationship to society has in many cases not been written down. Much of what has been written is limited to one level of the church, for example there are many histories of individual congregations, or records of decisions of church leaders. As it would be impossible for one person to write a detailed narrative at all levels, this thesis attempts an overview of the narrative history of the Lutheran missions and churches.

The narrative and analytical aims are not altogether compatible. The need to write a narrative overview of the history of the churches has limited the time and space available for rigorous analysis. However, the methodology outlined below is designed to allow the internal workings of the church to be taken seriously, while not losing the analytical perspective.

---

2 James Cochrane, 1987, *Servants of Power*, Johannesburg: Ravan. p.7.

Methodology

If it is to explain the relation of the churches to society through history, church history must take into account the changing external influences and the social context.[3] In this it differs from most Lutheran history written to date.

Types of Church History

Traditional Lutheran church historiography has tended to reduce the history of Lutheranism in South Africa to the history of the German missionaries and settlers.[4] Lutherans writing the history of their churches have not taken into account the historiographical revolution that has been taking place in broader historical writings. Such histories have tended to describe events in theological terms, without first describing the social reality of the church in any detail. The peoples who became objects of mission simply formed a passive backdrop to the description of the activities of the German missionaries. Most of the accounts of the Lutheran missionary societies fall into this category. They are records of "the institutional church, its bureaucracies and structures, its dogmas and creeds, its liturgies and leaders".[5] For a thesis which seeks to examine the relationship between churches and society, this type of history is inadequate.

A second way of writing church history is to begin by sketching the social background against which the churches acted, before turning to their internal history. Hans Florin's report on *Lutherans in South Africa* is an example of this type. Florin spends a substantial first part of his booklet describing 'The Setting'.[6] A weakness of this parallel approach is that it does not integrate the two histories, but places them next to one another. No real insight into the influence of socio-political forces on the church

3 N.D. Southey, 1988, 'History and Church History in South Africa', UNISA: unpublished, p.7; to be published in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 68, September 1989.

4 E. Kamphausen and W. Ustorf, 1979, 'Deutsche Missionsgeschichtsschreibung' in *Verkündigung und Forschung*, Heft 2, p.35.

5 Southey, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.7.

6 Florin, 1967, *Lutherans in South Africa*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing Co. pp.7-45.

(and *vice versa*) is achieved.

No description of the wider social history of South Africa is offered in this thesis. However, references are made to historical events and processes, assuming a revisionist understanding of South African history.[7]

It is in order to integrate church and social history more fully that other writers of church history choose to deal with general historical events at the same time as describing the history of the churches. This third, integrated type is still in its early stages. A work which reflects the transition towards an integrated social historiography of the churches is John de Gruchy's *The Church Struggle in South Africa*. Written in 1979, it includes historical events impacting on the church. The depth of his analysis of the general history may be questioned,[8] and the integration with church history is incomplete.

Works published in the last two or three years have sophisticated the integrated approach to church history. Charles Villa-Vicencio in his analysis of the English-speaking churches presents a brief outline of the general history at the outset of his work, in line with the second type identified above.[9] Yet this is only an introduction. In each of the following chapters of *Trapped in Apartheid*, the historical context is briefly identified, and the churches' history located in that context. An important feature of the book is the attention paid to the theological struggles within the church between a dominant and a prophetic theology.

---

7 For such analysis see inter alia Lulu Callinicos, 1981, *Gold and Workers*, Johannesburg: Ravan; Paul Maylam, 1986, *A History of the African People of South Africa*, Cape Town: David Philip; F.A. Johnstone, 1976, *Class, Race and Gold*, London: Routledge; Thomas Karis and Gwendolyn Carter, 1972, *From Protest to Challenge*, Stanford: Hoover Institution; H.J. and R.E. Simons, 1969, *Class and Colour in South Africa*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books; Eddie Webster (ed.), 1978, *Essays in South African Labour History*, Johannesburg: Ravan; Tom Lodge, 1983, *Black Politics in South Africa*, Johannesburg: Ravan; Gail Gerhart, 1978, *Black Power in South Africa*, Berkeley: UCLA; Colin Bundy, 1979, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, London: Heinemann; Harold Wolpe, 1972, 'Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa' in *Economy and Society*, no.1; Dan O'Meara, 1983, *Volkskapitalisme*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

8 John de Gruchy, 1979, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, Cape Town: David Philip; critique in Cochrane, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.6.

9 Villa-Vicencio, 1988, *op.cit.*, pp.2-3.

The church history which is most rigorous in its sociological analysis of society is James Cochrane's *Servants of Power*. Cochrane examines a short period of the history of the Anglican and Methodist churches, integrating general political and church histories.[10] Cochrane develops a theory to explain the social location of the churches. The churches are in "functional dependency"[11] on the capitalist political economy. A weakness of his approach is that it pays too little attention to internal debates within the churches, especially the theological ones.

Fritz Hasselhorn's *Bauernmission in Südafrika* is to my knowledge the first of example of this kind of writing on the Lutheran church in South Africa.[12] Hasselhorn examines the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) in its role as land-owner. Through this study, the social location and attitudes of the Lutheran missionaries become clear. The study is only limited by its focus on one missionary society and a particular period of time.

The third type of church history described is clearly the most suited to the an attempt to examine the history of the churches as part of wider social history. Yet within this broad type, there are substantial differences, as can be seen from the examples mentioned above. While adopting an integrated approach, this thesis uses some of the elements found in the above writers, and not others, seeking to avoid its weaknesses.

---

10 James Cochrane, 1987, *Servants of Power*, Johannesburg: Ravan.

11 Cochrane, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.9 *et passim*.

12 An excellent example of the integrated writing of Lutheran church history comes from Namibia, in Lukas de Vries's *Mission and Colonialism*. Another work which is compatible with this approach is Ulrike Kistner's 'Die Politische Rolle der Unpolitischen', which examines the missionaries attitudes to socio-political events as reflected in their writings.

The Church as a Site of Struggle

A weakness to be avoided is that of seeing the church as a homogeneous entity. Some church histories of the integrated type only examine the relation between the church and the state. Churches are classified into those which support the state, and those who oppose it. While this general location of the churches along a political spectrum is important, it ignores the struggles which go on between different groupings in the church. The church itself is a site of struggle. There are different groupings within the church, with sometimes opposing theological and political aims. In this thesis, the concept of struggle is central to the methodology, in particular the interaction between struggles in different sectors of society (different sites).

The church is only one of many sites of struggle in society, and the struggles within the church relate to other struggles in complex ways. The church is a particular kind of site of struggle, namely one concerned mainly with the production of theology. As such, it is part of what Gramsci would call civil society; it depends on other sectors, yet is relatively autonomous in its internal affairs. The pattern of struggle within the church often will follow the pattern of the struggle in the political economy. Yet the struggles within the church do not merely reflect what occurs in the political economy. Theological and ecclesial struggles cannot be reduced to socio-economic phenomena.

Within the church, struggles occur between different theological interpretations. There is a dominant theology, but also an prophetic one which opposes it. Proponents of these theologies struggle against one another to achieve control over the whole church and its means of producing theology. They are engaged in a battle for ideological dominance, or hegemony. These different theologies are related to different social bases. Thus the dominant theology is most likely to be held by groupings representing (or allied to) the dominant classes in society. Conversely, a prophetic theology is likely to emerge from the poor and oppressed in the church. In this way, the struggles in the church are integrally related to the struggles outside it.

However, struggles within the church are not only about theological symbols. The church is also an institution contested by different social groupings. Struggles for power also significantly shape the church. The balance of forces in this struggle will determine where the church is socially and politically located.

The methodology adopted here, then, focuses on the church as one site of struggle in society. It examines the internal struggles within the church – both theological and ecclesial – and relates them to struggles in other sectors of society. The advantage of adopting this particular approach within the broad type of integrated church history, is that the internal struggles within the church are given priority. In particular, the struggle between dominant and prophetic theologies receives attention. This means that the activity which is central to the church, namely theological reflection, is central to the analysis.

The Role of Theological Reflection in Church History

Given the aims and methods outlined, it should be clear that this thesis does not seek to provide a historical theology of the Lutheran church, but a critical social history. The history of the churches itself incorporates an analysis of dominant and prophetic trends in Lutheran theology; the history of theology is considered. Yet the thesis writes a church history, not a theological interpretation of the churches' history.

This does not mean that there is no room for theological reflection. Rather, the social history provides the basis for theological reflection. "The Church is a human community, and as such can be understood in the same way as any other human community. ... That the results of this kind of analysis are also important for a theological understanding of the Church, that is, for a contemporary ecclesiology, is not always accepted".[13] The social analysis enables one to know precisely what one is

13 Cochrane, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.219.

reflecting on theologically. One must know what happened, before one can know how God acted in what happened.

If no analysis precedes the reflection, one may be reflecting on superficial appearances or even illusions. It is to confuse the church as it is with the church as it ought to be. "The 'church of faith' and the 'church of history' have never been identical. The former relates to the latter as an ideal intended to draw it forward to what in its better moments it knows it ought to have become. To take refuge, however, in the notion of this ideal church while evading the historical reality of the existing church is a dangerous and irresponsible exercise in religious subterfuge".[14] The first step is to analyze the church as it is; theological reflection is the second step.[15] If church history is not to be theological legitimation of the churches' past, or "historical theology",[16] it is necessary that critical historical tools are used to understand the church as a human reality. The path towards a better theological reflection on the church leads through a critical historical analysis of what the church has been.

The purpose of the social history is to analyze which aspects of the churches' history are praiseworthy – judged by theological criteria – and which are not. "To praise ancestors without discrimination just because they are dead is in itself a form of idolatry, but to praise them for particular characteristics which we recognize in them and greatly value is a piety long acknowledged".[17] The bulk of this thesis is concerned with the task of uncovering the social characteristics of the Lutheran churches. On the basis of that analysis, it is suggested (in the Conclusion) where the Lutheran churches fall short of the theological vision of what the church is meant to be, that is the body of Christ. However, such theological judgements, and the actions that would result from them, need ultimately to be made by the Lutheran churches themselves.

---

14 Villa-Vicencio, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.1.

15 On theology as the second step, see for example Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, 1987, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, New York: Orbis. p.22ff.; and also Clodovis Boff, 1987, *Theology and Praxis*, New York: Orbis.

16 Southey, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.14.

17 Monica Wilson, 1983, 'Missionaries: Conquerors or Servants of God?' in *South African Outlook* 113, January. p.15.

Limits

This thesis is limited in that it deals only with two of the German-speaking Lutheran missionary societies, the Hermannsburger Mission Society (HMS) and the Berlin Mission Society (BMS), and the churches descended from them. These two societies were the largest and most influential in the growth of German Lutheranism in South Africa. It does not deal with the Rhenish Mission Society, the Moravians or the Free Church.[18] Nor does it cover the developments of the HMS and BMS outside of South Africa, in other Southern African countries.[19] Also not considered are the Norwegian, Church of Sweden and American mission societies (NMS, CSM and ALM) which contributed to the growth of Lutheranism in South Africa.

A second limitation of this thesis that it is not a church 'history from below', in the sense that revisionist historians tend to use the term.[20] That kind of social history involves detailed study, usually of smaller groups of people over a more limited period of

---

18 The RMS began its work in 1829 around Cape Town and in Namaqualand among the Khoi and 'Coloured' workers. In 1842, they moved further north into Namibia, where they had the most success (Richter, 1940:33). In 1931 the RMS decided to hand its mission stations in the Western Cape (except Wupperthal) over to the NG Sendingkerk (Heyns, 1980:25.). For excellent studies of the RMS, see Lothar Engel, 1972, 'Die Stellung der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft zu den politischen und gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen Südwestafrikas und ihr Beitrag zur dortigen kirchlichen Entwicklung', University of Hamburg: PhD Thesis; and Engel, 1976, *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus im deutschen Protestantismus in Namibia*, Frankfurt: Lang; and Lukas de Vries, 1978, *Mission and Colonialism in Namibia*, Johannesburg: Ravan.
The history of the Moravian Church is closely interlinked with that of the Lutheran missions and churches, and is omitted here only to keep the scope of the thesis within reasonable limits. The Moravians trace their history to 1457, before Luther's time (B. Krüger, 1957, *The Beginnings of the Moravian Church*, Genadendal: Mission Press. p.3). The Moravian churches draw particularly on the traditions of the Herrnhuter Brüdergemeinde and its founder Graf von Zinzendorf. They are the oldest German-speaking mission; Georg Schmidt having started working among the Khoi in the Western Cape in 1737 (U. Kistner, 1979:7). Mission stations such as Genadendal and Wuppertal had influence far beyond the Moravian mission, setting an example for the later Lutheran missions. The Moravians worked in the Cape Province only (Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.1).
Finally, the Free Lutheran Church ('Lutherische Freikirche') is a theologically more conservative break-away from the main-stream of German-speaking Lutheranism.

19 Evangelical Lutheran Churches in other Southern African states which have links with the South African churches are Namibia, Malawi, Botswana, and Zimbabwe.

20 For an account of the development of revisionist historiography in South Africa, and the role of 'history from below', see Colin Bundy, 1986, *Re-making the Past*, Cape Town: Dept. of Extra-Mural Studies, UCT. For an analysis of the relationship of church history to revisionist historiography see Southey, 1988, *op.cit.*.

time, but rich in detail.[21] This thesis, by contrast, seeks to present an overview of the history, an overview which intends to make visible the broad outlines of relationships between the Lutheran churches and the rest of society through history. It is an exercise in the 'macro' approach to history, showing the general influences of society on the churches and vice versa, rather than documenting them in detailed case studies. It is by considering the overall changes which the Lutheran missions and churches have undergone through history in their relationship to society, that the current social location of the Lutheran churches is explicable. The limit that this approach imposes is that the concern with broad historical trends will inevitably have led to inaccuracies in detail.

In attempting an overview of Lutheran history, the source material has been limited. Most of the material available consists of the writings of missionaries, *Festschriften* of various congregations, archival material and writings of students from Germany. The information is widely dispersed, and has a very narrow focus. Written material on the history of black Lutherans is particularly scarce. Such material that does exist has been collected from a number of libraries and archives. Overviews of the history as they have been written for Namibia (De Vries 1978, and Engel 1972 and 1976), and for Zimbabwe (Soederstrom 1984), do not exist for the South African church. The one notable exception is Hans Florin's booklet *Lutherans in South Africa* (1967). The primary material has been interpreted by means of content analysis, while information gleaned from secondary sources has been more directly incorporated.

To fill some of these gaps, interviews were conducted with people who have been directly involved in shaping the history of the Lutheran churches. Interviews were conducted in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Pietermaritzburg and Umpumulo, as acknowledged above. Fieldwork further included finding primary material in the archives of some of the churches. In this way, it was attempted partially to redress the

[21] Examples of Lutheran church history from below in this sense are Peter Delius' study on Botshabelo in *The Land Belongs to Us*, Johannesburg: Ravan; Fritz Hasselhorn's study of the HMS and land ownership *Bauernmission in Südafrika*, Erlangen: Verlag der ev.-luth. Mission; and to some extent A.E. Nsibande's thesis, 'Historical Development of ELCSA-SER', UNISA: M.Th. Thesis.

voids in the existing historiography.

Periodization

Having examined the thesis to be defended, the analytical and narrative aims, the methods by which these aims are to be achieved, and the limits placed on the thesis, it only remains to explain the periodization of the history which has been used in this thesis.

Periodizing history is always an ambiguous and somewhat arbitrary undertaking. Periods can be selected according to many different criteria. Historical developments do not occur at one moment, and often cross over the borders created by the historian.

While recognizing these limitations, this overview of the history of the Lutheran missions and churches is divided into three periods. The first period (1834-1889) falls within colonial society. It is dominated by the missionary societies, which operate in relative isolation from one another, and establish separate white and black congregations. The second period (1889-1963) spans various phases of the industrialization of South Africa. In the church, there is greater cooperation between missions, the consolidation of congregations into synods, and the establishment of regional churches. The third period (after 1963) is in modern South Africa. It sees the formation of an independent black church, ELCSA, as well as a Lutheran federation, FELCSA.[22]

22 1834 is the year of the arrival of the Berlin Mission Society; 1889 the founding of the Free Evangelical Lutheran Conference of South East Africa; and by 1963, most regional churches had been formed.

CHAPTER ONE
THE MISSIONARY PERIOD (1834-1889)

The early history of Lutheranism in South Africa is the history of the missionary societies, the Berlin Mission Society (BMS, date of arrival in South Africa - 1834), and the Hermannsburger Mission Society (HMS - 1854). It is the history of the interaction between the German missionaries and the African people whom they sought to convert. The missionaries brought with them their particular theology, the Lutheran confessions and their vision of what the church in South Africa should be. During the early period, the control of missionaries over the affairs of the church was virtually complete. Yet the African people resisted aspects of the missionaries' work from the beginning. They appropriated the theology taught to them by the missionaries, and fought for some control over their own churches. It is the struggle between the missionaries and 'their' converts that shaped the Lutheran missions.

The Missionary Societies

Theologically, the Berlin and Hermannsburg Mission Societies were fruits of the Pietist and Evangelical awakenings in nineteenth-century Germany.[1] Politically, they came from a situation where German nationalism was asserting itself. The conservatism of the German missions "must be understood in the close relations with the conservative and autocratic '*Kaiserreich*'. The Lutheran teaching of unconditional obedience to state authority left its unmistakable mark on German Protestantism. ... Therefore, German Protestants saw the salvation of the people in the alliance of '*Kaiser, Kultur und Kirche*'".[2]

---

1 Aunice E. Nsibande, 1981, 'Historical Development of the Evangelical Lutheran Church - South Eastern Region', M.Th.Thesis, UNISA. p.16.

2 Werner van der Merwe, 1987, 'Die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap, 1904-1962' in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*, Deel II. p.97, my translation; Die konserwatiewe instelling van die Duitse sendinge "moet in die noue verbintenis met die konserwatiewe en outokratiese keiserryk gesien word. Die Lutherse leerstelling van die onvoorwaardelike gehoorsaam aan die staatsgesag het sy onmiskenbare stempel op die Duitse Protestantisme afgedruk. ... Daarom het die Duitse Protestantisme die redding van die volk in the verbintenis van '*Kaiser, Kultur und Kirche*' gesien".

The roots of the BMS[3] lay in the religious revival in Germany which followed the Napoleonic wars. These revivals began in the eighteenth century with the Herrnhuter and Halle movements, a key figure being Graf N.L. von Zinzendorf.[4] Around Berlin, various groupings were alienated by the rationalist preaching of the time, and were attracted to a simpler proclamation of the gospel -- one around Baron von Koltwitz, some around Schleiermacher, the congregation of Pastor Jänicke and others.[5] One of these groups, that of Pastor Jänicke, established a mission school some 25 years before the founding of the BMS.[6] It was in this school that most BMS missionaries were trained when the Berlin Mission Society was established on the 29th February 1824.[7] It initially called itself the 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen'.[8] The society drew its members from urban, upper class, educated Prussian circles in Berlin. In their mission work, education was a crucial tool. "The 'aristocratic young men' who formed the first committee of the B.M.S. were motivated by a combination of piety and patriotism and one of their ideals was that the Prussian state should play a part in Christianizing the world".[9] The missionaries themselves tended to be poorer people for whom mission work was an opportunity for social advancement.[10] In Jänicke's school, the Prussian values of orderliness and industry, hierarchy and authority, which were to influence their style of work so strongly, were inculcated in BMS candidates. "The mood and relationships of the seminary in Berlin and in the field in South Africa reflected the hierarchical and authoritarian milieu of Prussia; and to a pietistic rigour which did not easily accomodate indigenous custom and which also implied a firm distinction between those who were saved and those who were not, the Berlin missionaries in the nineteenth century added an extra cultural load of

---

3 For a history of the BMS, see Julius Richter, 1924, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, Berlin: Buchhandlung der BMG.

4 Werner van der Merwe, 1983, 'Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendingenootskap, 1860-1900' in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*, Deel I, Pretoria: Staatsdrukker. p.1.

5 See Richter, 1924, *op.cit.*, p.1-2.

6 In 1800; see Van der Merwe, 1983, *op.cit.*, p.1.

7 L. Zöllner and J.A. Heese, 1984, *The Berlin Missionaries in South Africa*, Pretoria: HSRC. p.14.

8 Richter, 1924, *op.cit.*, p.9; "Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden".

9 Delius, 1983, *op.cit.*, p.118.

10 *ibid.*

orderliness and industry as an index of Christianity".[11] This was the style and background of the first five BMS missionaries who were sent out to South Africa in 1834.

The HMS emerged from a revival led by Louis Harms in Hermannsburg, a rural village in Lower Saxony.[12] The awakening in that area was not related directly to the larger revivals led by the '*Brüdergemeinde*' or the Pietists,[13] but like those awakenings was also a reassertion of pietism and orthodoxy against the rationalism prevalent in post-Enlightenment Germany.[14] Inspired by the revival, twelve young men from this peasant community asked Harms to train them as missionaries. Harms tried in vain to get them accepted in the mission schools, and eventually gave in to their petitions to facilitate training himself.[15] With the perseverance which was to be characteristic of HMS missionaries, Harms organized the purchase of a mission house for the training of missionaries, despite not having the money to buy it. The students were expected to work to maintain the '*Missionshaus*';[16] thus the link between spiritual and manual work was established early on in the HMS. In the mission field too, HMS missionaries would also have to work to support themselves.[17]

The HMS was founded in 1849 by Ludwig Harms.[18] Despite not being accepted by the Hannoverian '*Landeskirche*' for a long time, the HMS always understood itself as connected to the Lutheran church in Germany. This link was to shape its mission work, as was the ardent Lutheranism propagated by the '*Hermannsburger*'.[19] An important influence was the tradition of organizing in national churches or '*Landeskirchen*', which was incorporated in the ecclesiology of the HMS. It was the

11 *ibid.*

12 For more detailed descriptions of the origins of the HMS, see Georg Haccius, 1910, *Hannoversche Missionsgeschichte*, Hermannsburg: Verlag der Missionshandlung. For a study of Harms' life see A. Pagel, 1958, *Ludwig Harms*, Gießen: Brunnen Verlag.

13 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p.2.

14 B.H. Lange, 1988, 'One Root, Two Stems', University of Natal (PMB), Church History III Project. p.15.

15 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p.24.

16 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p.25.

17 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.6.

18 A.M.H. Leuschke, 1985, 'The Hermannsburg Mission Society in Natal and Zululand', University of Natal (PMB): BA Honours Project. p.1.

19 J.H. du Plessis, 1965, *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa*, Cape Town: Struik. p.373.

theological basis for the separate development of congregations. The HMS's black congregations were also organized along ethnic lines.

When the first missionaries had been trained, a ship (the '*Kandaze*') was built, and the eight missionaries and eight settlers were sent to work among the Galla in East Africa. They were refused entry in East Africa, however, and returned to Durban in 1854.[20] They were welcomed by a BMS missionary, Posselt, and eventually decided to stay and work in Natal instead.

Missiology of the German Lutheran Missions

The missiology of the German Lutheran missions, "for which the names of Bruno Gutman, Gustav Warneck and Siegfried Knak are representative",[21] aimed at the creation of autonomous national churches ('*selbständige Volkskirchen*'[22]). In order to establish such churches, the mission should respect the culture and language of the people among whom it worked – except where this culture was opposed to the gospel.[23]

Since the gospel was brought by the white missionaries, it was they who defined what was contrary to the gospel. In doing so, they often imposed their cultural assumptions – what they brought was not only Lutheran, but German-Lutheran. An example of the imposition of European patterns was the way in which the principle of organizing in '*Landeskirchen*' was implemented in South Africa. It meant that the use of mother language in the church was encouraged, that missionary education did not aim at making Europeans of Africans, in short, that a church was built "which grew out of the people's culture".[24] The Christian gospel was to be preached in such a way as not to alienate black people from their tribal relations.[25] This form of organizing the churches

20 Leuschke, 1985, *op.cit.*, p.1-2.

21 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.113.

22 Van der Merwe, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.159.

23 See for example Gustav Warneck, 1897-1903, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, Gotha: n.p.

24 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.8 – The page reference refers to the author's interview on the date indicated. All further interviews are referenced in this way. German: "eine Kirche, die aus dem Boden des Volkes erwachsen ist".

25 Stephan Rothe, 1986, *Kirchen in Südafrika*, Hamburg: Entwicklungspolitische Korrespondenz. p.69.

had far-reaching consequences for the development of the black churches (see Chapter 4).

The Ideal of 'Volkskirchen'

In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon focus on converting individuals, the German missionaries sought to convert whole tribes.26 Amongst each tribe, the equivalent of a German '*Volkskirche*' or '*Landeskirche*' was to be established. The concept of the '*Landeskirche*' had particular historical connotations. "The post-Reformation age in Germany really began with the victory of the absolute territorial princes who rule the territories (*Länder*) in which the churches (*Landeskirchen*) were integrated".27 Thus the German '*Landeskirchen*' were tied to local rulers. The same pattern was to be followed in the mission field.

This strategy also reflected the rural emphasis of the German missions. German missionaries were convinced that "the true '*Volkskirche*' could only blossom fully in the rural areas".28

The implementation of this strategy depended on the tribe and missionary society concerned. The HMS mission amongst the Zulus could only attract individuals who were willing to leave their people and culture for Christianity. There was little chance of converting chiefs. Amongst the Batswana, on the other hand, if the chief could be converted, many other conversions followed easily.29

This was the theological root of the internal apartheid which divided Lutheranism in South Africa so deeply. The missiology which determined that black and white congregations would develop separately was based on the ecclesiological understanding

---

26 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.113; also Van der Merwe, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.154.

27 Ulrich Duchrow (ed), 1977, *Lutheran Churches - Salt or Mirror of Society?*, Geneva: LWF. p.10.

28 Van der Merwe, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.154, my translation; "altyd daarvan oortuig dat die 'ware volkskerk' slegs in die landelike gebiede tot sy volle reg kon kom".

29 Horst Meyberg, 12/01/1989, p.2.

of '*Volkskirchen*', implemented in the South African context as churches bound to particular ethnic groups. "Individual mission agencies concentrated on certain African tribes and larger language groups, thus setting the pattern for differentiation along ethnic lines".[30] This ecclesiology was based on the emphasis of spiritual unity over organizational unity. The concept of the spiritual unity was used throughout history by the dominant Lutheran theologians to support the separate development of congregations. A dualistic interpretation of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine provided the theological basis for such a separation of spiritual and temporal realms.[31] In opposition to this, others argued that the spiritual unity must manifest itself in the outward forms of the church.[32]

Though it may not have been a case of conscious collaboration, this missionary approach in effect served the divide-and-rule policies of colonialism well.[33] The German missiologist Gustav Warneck certainly saw colonialism as something positive, because it served the spread of the gospel.[34]

> Mission must fit into this situation, this expansion of Western Christian elements, through which salvation and judgment is brought to the nations.[35]

The dominant Lutheran ecclesiology, which led to the separate development of black and white congregations, fitted in with these goals.

---

30 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.83.

31 The Two Kingdoms Doctrine is discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

32 See for example FELCSA, 1975, 'Appeal to Lutheran Christians in Southern Africa', adopted by conference of FELCSA 11-13 February 1975. p.1; the FELCSA 'Appeal' is examined in more detail in Chapter Six.

33 Some debate exists on the conscious or unconscious role of the missionaries. Those arguing for conscious collaboration tend to emphasize the convergence of colonial and missionary interests, and the cultural associations of the gospel they preached; while those favouring the 'unconscious' approach stress the relative autonomy of the missionaries, and their aims in spreading the gospel. The debate within church history begins with Nosipho Majeke, 1952, *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*, Johannesburg: Society of Young Africa, and Wilson, 1983, *op.cit.*, but see also W.Kistner in Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.4; Cochrane, 1987, *op.cit.*, pp.12-15; Villa-Vicencio, 1988, *op.cit.*, pp.43-46; and Greg Cuthbertson, 1987, 'The English-speaking Churches and Colonialism' in Villa-Vicencio (ed.), 1987, *Theology and Violence*, Johannesburg: Skotaville. pp. 15-30. The debate about the socio-economic role of the missionaries has also been raised in social histories of South Africa, see for example Maylam, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.70-71 and Delius, 1983, *op.cit.*, pp.108-110.

34 Kamphausen and Ustorf, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.9.

35 Cited in Kamphausen and Ustorf, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.11, my translation; "In diese Situation muß die Mission sich finden, in dieses Drängen christlich-westlicher Elemente, durch die Heil und Gericht über die Völker gebracht werden."

Another distinctive feature of German missiology was the emphasis on practical skills rather than academic education.[36] In aiming to develop autonomous tribal churches, the missionaries used building, shoe making, tailoring or carpentry as a basis for missionary activity.[37] The two aims of the missionary were "to impart to them [the African people] the Gospel instruction, and to train them in the habits of industry".[38] Here the economic interests of missionaries and colonialists converged in the formation of a labour force. The missionaries work-conversion programme corresponded closely to Grey's frontier policy.[39]

In their pastoral care for German settlers, on the other hand, the preservation of German identity, language and culture became almost as important as the spreading of the gospel. In this regard, the German missionaries distanced themselves from British imperial ideology, and sought rather to spread their particular brand of European culture. The white churches were the site where the missionaries could reproduce the dominant theology they had learnt in Germany most readily.

The missionary strategy of the HMS, while falling within the influence of Warneck's missiology, was given particular shape by the founder of the mission, Ludwig Harms.[40] It therefore deserves separate mention. Harms sent out small colonies of German missionaries and settlers. Mission stations and 'colonies' ("Siedlungsdörfer") were established simultaneously.[41] These colonies would immediately establish German congregations (which were considered to be part of the church in Germany) in the mission field. Thus a Lutheran church was instantly planted in the foreign soil.

The next step was to build a local Lutheran church. The German congregations would provide practical support for the missionary. It was accepted that services for black

36 See Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.113.
37 See Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.112-115.
38 Du Plessis, 1965, *op.cit.*, p.374.
39 Leuschke, 1985, *op.cit.*, p.46.
40 Julius Richter, 1940, *Deutsche evangelische Missionsfelder*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann. p.60-61.
41 Richter, 1940, *op.cit.*, p.60.

and white congregations would be held separately.[42] The German congregation would help the missionary effort by living an exemplary Christian life which those around them were expected to copy. Through this concrete example of Christian living, the dominant ecclesiological model was transmitted to the black congregations.

In the dominant theology spread by the German Lutheran missionaries, the gospel was linked to a rigorous German work ethic. Well-kept farms were to be established not far from one another, staffed by missionary families, and emphasizing self-reliance. This missionaries consciously sought to inculcated this work ethic in the black population, encouraging the development of an established African peasantry ["*bodenständige Bauern*"[43]] as the base of future black churches. Missionary expansion was to proceed regionally, with a network of farms gradually spreading over the entire country. In spreading the gospel, tribal cultures were to be preserved, though European/Christian skills were to be passed on.[44]

The weakness of German missiology in both HMS and BMS was that the concept of '*Volkstum*' was adopted uncritically. The notion of the 'chosen people', abstracted from its original Old Testament context, was used to give legitimacy to the expansion of Christianity by white Christians. Other nations could join the realm of Christendom, but only by accepting the gospel as taught by the missionaries. Applied to the church, the concept was translated into the ecclesiology of '*Volkskirchen*'. The missionaries failed to recognize the links of this kind of theology to destructive political ideologies. The missionary ecclesiology tended to become an apartheid ideology itself, an ideology which separated black and white Lutherans.[45]

42 Lange, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.31-32.
43 Richter, 1940, *op.cit.*, p.64.
44 Lange, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.22-23.
45 Kamphausen and Ustorf, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.18.

Conservative Anti-Colonialism

Not everything taught by the German missiologists was conservative, or in line with colonial policy. In the missiology of Ludwig Harms there was a clear anti-colonial strand. Harms felt that "the missionaries were to call the Boers to repent and turn from their evil ways by confronting their racist ideology with the biblical message, as Harms understood it.

> He criticized the fact that Africans were considered to be inferior: "One of our brothers was talking to a farmer recently and heard from him the view that the good Lord had made the Kaffirs black because they were meant to be slaves, and the farmer quoted Genesis 9:25 to support this. During the rest of the conversation he added, 'If you were to shake hands with a Kaffir or let him eat with you, or treat him like a white man, you would lose all respect from the whites.' Our brother then answered: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.' " In response to the misuse of the Old Testament to justify subjugating Africans, Ludwig Harms emphasized the witness of the Epistle to the Galatians (3:28) to one community in Christ transcending all national barriers.[46]

Harms also encouraged the communities to live in a life-style of 'Christian communism'. The Communist Manifesto had been published only a year before the founding of the HMS. Harms saw in Marx's thought values which were Christian. "Taken out of its wider context, the social way of life envisaged by Marx appealed to the Christian principles of equality and humility".[47] Thus within the dominant HMS theology, there were at the beginning elements which challenged the norms of colonial society. The missionaries and settlers at Hermannsburg initially built one big house and lived in community of property, seeking to have equality within their community. The community soon found this impractical, and being removed from Harms' direct influence, soon changed their way of life to conform to the white settler society around them. Harms also opposed the idea of individual settlers owning land; this instruction was reversed, however, when his brother Theodor became Director of the Mission.[48]

These teachings could have served to guide the HMS in a different direction. However,

---

46 Fritz Hasselhorn, 1987, *Mission, Land Ownership and Settlers' Ideology*, Johannesburg: SACC. p.30; this booklet is a short version of a fuller, referenced work by the same author, 1988, *Bauernmission in Südafrika*, Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission.

47 Leuschke, 1985, *op.cit.*, p.16.

48 Leuschke, 1985, *op.cit.*, p.25.

they were soon forgotten, and considered to be inapplicable. The dominant theology adapted itself to the needs of white settler society, and suppressed the 'dangerous memories' of its own tradition.[49]

Separate Development of Congregations

Out of the work of the German missionaries, two sets of congregations developed, the white settler and black mission congregation. This development was based on the missiology and ecclesiology of '*Volkskirchen*', rooted theologically in a dualistic interpretation of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine. As Ottermann admits in a sympathetic account of the Lutheran church, "our history shows a sort of separate development, if I may be allowed to use this term, right from the beginning".[50] The dominant ecclesiology saw the separate development of congregations as a positive trend.

A reason often given for this division was the question of languages. Theologically, it was argued that there was spiritual unity between the separate congregations, and that this was more important than outward forms of unity. It reflected an understanding of Africans as heathens, so that even when they converted, they were still considered 'heathen-Christians' ('*Heidenchristen*'). The feeling amongst Africans, however, was that these were excuses, and that this problem could have been overcome.[51] It was in opposition to a spiritualization of unity in the dominant ecclesiology that an alternative vision of the church was to grow. The history of other churches in South Africa suggests that more unity, at least at the level of church leadership, if not in congregations and among ordinary members, would have been possible if the will had been there.

In the BMS, black and white congregations were linked by the missionaries who served

---

49 On the concept of dangerous memories in the Christian tradition see Johan-Baptist Metz, 1980, *Faith in History and Society*, London: Burns and Oates, p.88ff.

50 R. Ottermann, 1973, 'Lutheran Church in Southern Africa', Kenilworth: unpublished paper. p.6.

51 Aunice E. Nsibande, 1981, 'Historical Development of the Evangelical Lutheran Church - South Eastern Region', UNISA: M.Th. Thesis. p.16.

both communities. In the HMS, not even this link lasted very long, as some missionaries were employed as pastors for the German congregations at an early stage. In the examination of the work of the HMS and BMS respectively, the separate development of German and black congregation becomes apparent.

The Hermannsburger Mission Society

The HMS missionaries who arrived in South Africa in 1854 had originally intended to work among the Galla in East Africa.[52] Failing to gain entry there, they returned to Durban and were welcomed by German missionaries and settlers, and invited to work in South Africa instead. Soon they were able to settle at a place they named Hermannsburg (after their home town in Germany), 15 miles North-East of Greytown.[53] In the following years, they established a number of settler and mission congregations – separately – in the area, i.e. in Natal and the adjoining South Eastern Transvaal.

HMS Missionaries

The HMS has often been characterized as a '*Bauernmission*' (a farmers' or peasants' mission). This can be understood in three senses.[54] Firstly, it can be taken to refer to the background of the missionaries, 70% of whom came from farming backgrounds.[55] Many of them had been landless, poor peasants in Germany, and mission work provided a channel of upward mobility, a chance to own land. The poor background of most HMS missionaries meant that the mission was an avenue of upward social mobility.

August Hardeland captured this aspect graphically:

---

52 Lange, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.1.

53 Wilhelm Bodenstein, 1937, *25 Jahre der Hermannsburger in Südafrika*, Hermannsburg: Missionshandlung. p.18.

54 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.18.

55 *ibid.*

> Dear brethren, what 'inalienable rights' could this person have had in Germany, which he (*sic*) did not have twofold here? Would have remained an apprentice forever, or perhaps a small tailor in a village. Would in both cases have struggled for his daily bread, would have had to bow, and endure so many things, especially from unbelieving, rough people ... But now he is a missionary; now he has very different 'inalienable personal rights', cannot be a 'mechanical tool', but must have unfettered freedom for his will and desires -- why else should he have become a missionary?[56]

The missionaries were clearly loath to give up this newly-won social position, and thus reacted strongly against anything that threatened their status. They shared a fear of black labour with the other white settlers. On the mission stations, they firmly established their dominance as missionaries over 'their' converts.

The HMS was a '*Bauernmission*', secondly, because the income of the missionaries was so low that they had to supplement their salaries, which they often did through farming. Proclamation of the gospel and manual labour were linked. In addition, on the encouragement of Harms, the early HMS missionaries developed a 'communistic' life-style. They had no individual salaries, but paid expenses out of a central fund.[57] They lived in a communal house and were encouraged to share all things. However, as early as 1869, under Superintendent Hardeland, this life-style was abandoned as being impractical.

Thirdly, teaching the African population farming methods was a mission strategy, which has been described above. The HMS operated mostly in rural, agricultural areas.

What were these '*Bauernmissionare*' like? As in the case of the other German missionaries, an ethic of industry, orderliness, discipline and propriety was fostered. What was distinctive, however, was that HMS missionaries had a strong feeling of self-

---

56 Ulrike Kistner, 1979, 'Die Politische Rolle der Unpolitischen', Wits: BA Honours Dissertation. p.27, my translation; "Liebe Brüder, was hätte dieser Mensch doch für 'unveräusserliche Rechte' in Deutschland gehabt, die er hier nicht doppelt hätte? Hätte vielleicht immerdar Gesell bleiben müssen, oder wäre vielleicht ein kleiner Flickschneider auf einem Dörfchen geworden. Hätte in beiden Fällen es sich blutsauer ums tägliche Brot werden lassen, hätte sich bücken, sich so vieles geduldig gefallen lassen müssen, dazu von ungläubigen, rohen Leuten ... Aber nun ist er Missionar; nun hat er natürlich ganz andere 'unveräusserliche persönliche Rechte', darf nun kein 'mechanisch Werkzeug' sein, sonder muß unbeschränkte Freiheit für seinen Willen und seine Lüste haben, - warum hätte er sonst Missionar werden sollen?"

57 Lange, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.9.

reliance and independence. They did not expect to return to Germany like many BMS missionaries.[58] The Home Board in Germany did not find it easy to enforce regulations in South Africa. It had little potential to counter-act the influences of settler ideology on the HMS.[59] This independence showed itself clearly in 1860, when the Home Board decided that a superintendent was needed to coordinate the expanding work in South Africa. HMS missionaries in the Transvaal refused to accept the authority of the first superintendent, Hardeland. All but one of the Tswana missionaries were fired by Hardeland.[60]

From the work of the HMS missionaries, two sets of congregations emerged, one white and one black.

> Out of the work which started in Hermannsburg there thus developed two branches, i.e. the mission work amongst the Zulus and Tswanas and the church work among the Germans".[61]

These two branches grew further apart as time went on – in 1911, a separate German synod was formed, in 1963 the black church became independent, and in 1975, the black churches (incl. the HMB mission synods) formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) without the participation of the white churches. The root of this separation lay in the missiology of the HMS, and in its strong ties to the church in Germany and to German settlers in South Africa.[62] Their ecclesiology determined that congregations should develop as '*Volkskirchen*'. Their dualistic understanding of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine allowed them to value spiritual unity over temporal (organizational or structural) unity.

58 Wolfram Kistner, 08/01/1989, p.4.
59 Wolfram Kistner, 1988, 'Missed Chances', Johannesburg: unpublished paper. p.15.
60 Lange, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.29-30.
61 Lange, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.2.
62 Lange, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.33-34.

German Congregations

The HMS work among German settlers bore fruit quickly. The HMS always had close links to the German settler community, in particular to German farmers, since it had brought settlers along with its missionaries. The nucleus of the white congregation was transplanted directly from Germany to South Africa. The synod formed in 1911 already had eleven congregations, and this number increased quickly.[63] It was called the '*Hermannsburger Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Synode Südafrikas*', reflecting in its name its German and specifically HMS identity. The church was the institution (together with the school, which was also run by the HMS) through which the German community was held together. The community was united both through the faith which was propagated, and through the preservation of German culture. The HMS German congregations, unlike those of the BMS, started employing missionaries as pastors serving the white congregations only, at an early stage.[64] Many of these missionaries were still trained in Hermannsburg in Germany.

The German congregations saw themselves as part of the Lutheran Church in Germany. The first article of their constitution stated that "the Lutheran community which we send to East Africa, is a member of the Lutheran Church of Hannover".[65] The Cape Church, too, understood itself in this early period as another diocese of the Hannoverian church in the Cape.[66] The dominant ecclesiology of the HMS German congregations was simply transposed from Germany to South Africa, with little adaptation to the new context. Only later did it begin to understand itself as a church rooted in South Africa. This understanding was in accordance with Harms' missiology which saw settler congregations as little pieces of the German Lutheran church sent out

63 Wilhelm Bodenstein, 1937, *25 Jahre der Hermannsburger deutsch evangelische-lutherischen Synode*, Hermannsburg: Missionshandlung. p.2; see also Georg Scriba, 1983, 'Einheit Lutherischer Missionen und Kirchen in Südafrika', Rustenburg: unpublished diagram. p.1; and Wolfgang Albers, 1970, 'Evangelische-Lutherische Kirchen im Südlichen Afrika', Universität Hamburg: Magisterschrift. p.12.

64 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.1/2.

65 Lange, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.3.

66 Johannes Hasselhorn, 1975, '175 Jahre Kirche am Kap der guten Hoffnung', Cape Town: St. Martini Gemeinde, unpublished paper. p.5.

to Africa.[67] A consequence of this understanding was that the German congregations developed separately from the black ones, since they were really part of the church in Germany. The ties with Germany were deemed stronger than those with black fellow Lutherans in the same country.

Black Congregations

The HMS' work amongst the black population was done among the Zulus of Natal and the Tswanas in the Western Transvaal. HMS missionaries met considerable resistance from the Zulus, but eventually their persistence and the missionary strategy suggested by their founder Louis Harms, paid off.[68] In 1858 the Zulu king Mpande allowed HMS missionaries to establish a mission station, Enlalazi. The king's need of the technical and medical knowledge of the missionaries was enough to overcome his suspicions. However, when HMS mission stations often served as sanctuaries for refugees fleeing from the Zulu king, this led to tensions between the king and the missionaries.[69] HMS work in Zululand proceeded relatively slowly, since only individual converts were gained. However, by 1867, eleven more HMS stations had been established in Zululand.[70]

After 1857, the HMS mission extended to the Western Transvaal. President Pretorius of the Transvaal Republic had expelled LMS missionaries for their 'liberal' race practices, and invited HMS missionaries "because 'it was believed that they taught natives to work and to respect the white man' ".[71] This says much both of the missionaries' good relations with the Afrikaner state, and of their mode of work. The HMS fitted into the Boers' plans for extending their control over the Tswana in the Western Transvaal.[72] The HMS's work amongst the Batswana resulted in large numbers of conversion more rapidly, since the aim of converting whole tribes could be facilitated through the

67 Du Plessis, 1965, *op.cit.*, p.374.
68 Richter, 1940, *op.cit.*, p.60-61.
69 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.9.
70 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.8.
71 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.96.
72 Richter, 1922, *Geschichte der evangelischen Mission in Afrika*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann. p.415.

conversion of the chief.

The advent of mining and later manufacturing industry had a profound effect on the HMS. HMS missionaries coming from a rural background saw cities as places of evil.[73] They discouraged converts to go to the cities and work on the mines, and refused to teach English in their schools, even if there was demand for it from the students.[74] Their missiology of '*Volkskirchen*' also required that converts learn their faith in their mother tongue. Africans began to suspect that this was part of a strategy of barring them from higher education.

> The Hermannsburg mission was slow in allowing black people to progress. They always kept the power and authority in their hands. Even when other missionary societies had succeeded to establish local mission synods, the HMS were the last to do that.[75]

Africans experienced the dominance of the HMS missionaries as preventing their own progress.

Relations with the State

The Hermannsburg mission generally cultivated a close relationship with the government of the day. The move of the HMS into the Transvaal was based on an invitation by the Boer government, as noted above. Some ambiguity arose, however, because the HMS missionaries sought to preserve a distinct identity — based on their German culture and Lutheran (rather than Reformed or Anglican) theological identity. Initially, the HMS missionaries were suspicious of the Boers. Yet as British colonial power became dominant, as Germany became more nationalist, as industrialization (industry was perceived to be in British hands) increased, the HMS's sympathies swung more towards the Boers.[76] This is an instance where the German missionaries took a different political position to the English missionaries, who clearly supported the British.[77]

---

73 Wolfram Kistner, 08/01/1989, p.3.
74 W. Kistner, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.17.
75 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.4.
76 See U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, pp.24-26.
77 Cf. Cuthbertson, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.24.

The HMS mission did not maintain strong links with other Lutherans. They developed their unique identity, also in their relations to the government. "One striking thing about the [Hermannsburg] mission is the fact that for a long time it had great difficulty in simply co-operating with other Lutheran missionary societies. In the early sixties it made a point of distancing itself from the protests of the Christian Council against forced relocations, assuring the government of its unwavering support for its policy of 'independent cultural development for the Bantus, corresponding with their racial identity', i.e. apartheid."[78] This reluctance to cooperate with other Lutherans transmitted itself to the Hermannsburg church, as did its conservative 'apolitical' position.

The missionaries saw no contradiction between their particular identity and loyalty to the state. The following quote, although written in the context of the Third Reich, refers to the South African situation: "Such a self-confident breed keeps what it has. It is the carrier and preserver of the German church, the German way and the German language. But it is also a strong pillar for the state structure of this country".[79] The HMS missionaries taught that to be an obedient citizen was an important Christian virtue.

Land ownership

A key determinant of the HMS missionaries' social location was their position as land owners.[80] The patterns of land ownership by the HMS varied from place to place. In Natal, the HMS generally did not buy land (except for Hermannsburg itself), but was given glebes, which were gifts of land to the church by the British colonial government.

---

78 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.6.

79 Bodenstein, 1937, *op.cit.*, p.49, my translation; "Ein solch selbstbewußtes Geschlecht hält, was es hat. Es ist der Träger und Bewahrer der deutschen Kirche, deutscher Art und deutscher Sprache. Es ist aber auch ein kräftiger Pfeiler für das Staatsgebäude dieses Landes".

80 For the insights of this section I am entirely indebted to the excellent work of Fritz Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*.

The land became the property of the mission society.[81] Missionaries even rejected African initiatives to buy land jointly, feeling that conversions among the Zulu would only be possible if the missionaries had greater control over the land. Later, there was further competition for the mission's land from the white settlers, who were interested in using it commercially. Since the German settlers played a key role in the mission, this was difficult to oppose. The settlers got some control over land through Administrative Councils after 1928.[82] Settlers used the land for production, and often required African families settled on the land to move. This commercialization of the land was met with protest and resistance by Africans, but mostly to no avail (see the case study in Chapter Two).[83]

In the Western Transvaal, by contrast, the pattern was that the HMS bought land for the African people as trustees.[84] Getting the missionaries to act as trustees was the only way Africans could have access to land in the Transvaal Boer Republic. The Volksraad, realizing this, limited missionary work further. "The mission was not allowed to alter the distribution of land in any way, it had to prove its loyalty to the white government, and it had to gear its schools to the idea of keeping the African as a servant".[85] The 1887 '*Plakkerwet*' turned mission land into locations.[86] Being trustee placed the missionary in a powerful position.

It was often through their access to land that the missionaries could establish their position of dominance over the African people on the mission stations. There were four patterns of land ownership for the missions: They bought farms, they received land from the governments as glebes or mission reserves, they received land from the tribal chiefs (HMS in Zululand), and they acted as trustees of land for the African population.[87] In all cases, the missionaries occupied positions of power since they

81 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.1.
82 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.23.
83 See Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, pp.24-29
84 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.15.
85 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.16.
86 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.16/7.
87 W. Kistner, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.15-16.

controlled access to the land.

The Berlin Mission Society

The first five missionaries of the '*Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der evangelischen Missionen unter den Heiden*' arrived in South Africa in 1834 – D.A. Kraut, A.F. Lange, R.Th. Gregorowski, J. Schmidt and A. Gebel.[88] The BMS started its work among the Koranna, a Khoi tribe, in the Western Cape. When the Koranna moved to the Vaal River, the missionaries followed, and thus came to the Transvaal at an early stage. From 1860, BMS missionaries worked in the North Eastern Transvaal among the Basotho, Bavenda, Amandebele, 'Coloureds' and Oorlams.[89] The first mission station, Bethanie near Philippolis, was however established in the Orange Free State.[90] Soon, activities expanded to Natal and the Transkei as well. In 1858, the missionaries A. Merensky and H. Grützner were sent North of the Vaal, eventually working mainly amongst the Pedi. After severe conflicts with the Pedi paramount Sekhukhune, Merensky established Botshabelo mission station, which became a model for the work of the BMS.[91] This mission station is the focus of one of the case studies in Chapter Two.

The work of the BMS was geographically more dispersed than that of other Lutheran mission societies.[92] However, when diamonds were discovered and cities grew, the BMS moved into the cities, and consequently gained its largest successes in the Transvaal.[93] By the turn of the century, most of the BMS mission stations were to be found in the Transvaal (36), and smaller numbers in the other provinces (Cape - 7; OFS - 6; Natal - 6).[94]

---

88 Gerhard Brennecke, 1954, *Brüder im Schatten*, Berlin: Ev. Verlagsanstalt. p.347.
89 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.96.
90 Zöllner and Heese, 1984, *op.cit.*, p.15-16.
91 Zöllner and Heese, 1984, *op.cit.*, p.19.
92 Brennecke, 1954, *op.cit.*, pp.345-355, provides a time-chart of the developments in BMS history which makes these movements clearer, alongside selected events from wider South African history.
93 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.24-25.
94 Zöllner and Heese, 1984, *op.cit.*, p.19.

BMS Missionaries

BMS missionaries were drawn from teachers' or pastors' families. They came from an urban background, and often from a more educated and wealthier background than the HMS missionaries. They were sent out on their own or as a missionary couple, sometimes in twos, perhaps with a nursing sister or teacher to help them.[95] Their theological background was that of a "united" *'Landeskirche'*, which meant that they might come either from Reformed or Lutheran congregations. German settler congregations did not grow as rapidly as with the HMS. The salaries were paid from overseas, with little contributions from local congregations. BMS missionaries were responsible for both the black and the white congregation up to the 1950s.[96] BMS missionaries were also particularly active in the translation of black languages, particularly Sepedi and Setswana.

The style of the early BMS missionaries was characterized by a strong paternalism and Prussian obedience.[97] The transfer of values from urban Berlin society to the mission field was apparent in their schools, which were central to the BMS's work. Merensky's school at Botshabelo was the largest in the Transvaal in the late 19th century. The missionaries ruled the mission station with an iron discipline. The ultimate form of social control was the threat of expulsion.[98] Discipline was applied in teaching their converts productive work, as well as requiring European dress and customs (including singing German Lutheran hymns), and the acceptance of Lutheran doctrine. In matters of doctrine, the BMS missionaries did not require acceptance of all the Lutheran writings, coming from a less strictly Lutheran background. They did, however, hold to Luther's Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession. The method of work of the BMS will become clearer in the case study of Botshabelo.

---

95 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.1-2.
96 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.2.
97 Zöllner and Heese, 1984, *op.cit.*, p.18.
98 Cf. Cuthbertson, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.20.

German Congregations

The BMS was slower in forming German congregations than the HMS. German congregations were formed through the work of missionaries, who brought the German settlers together for services.[99] The BMS missionaries did not arrive in South Africa together with the core of a congregation, as the HMS did. Before the move into the cities, there were relatively few German settlers in the rural areas where the BMS worked. In these areas, missionaries only provided occasional services, with baptisms, marriages and funerals to those German settlers.[100] Most BMS congregations were formed in the cities. These congregations were not linked to the church in Germany. The BMS thus did not have as strong a community as its social base, as the HMS did in the German farming community. The German congregations soon came together in various structures. In 1873, German BMS congregations formed the '*Verband Deutscher Luth. Gemeinden*'.[101] The '*Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Kapsynode*' was formed in the Cape in 1885, and in 1925, the '*Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Synode Transvaal*' was formed out of BMS congregations.[102]

Black Congregations

Out of the mission work of the BMS among the various tribes, five "semi-autonomous" black synods were established in 1912.[103] These synods were still headed by white superintendents. They were responsible from then on for their own financial support. By 1940, there were 81 black clergy in the BMS.[104] By 1962, the BMS employed 85 black and 35 white missionaries. The financial difficulties of the BMS forced it to give greater independence to its black congregations and synods at an earlier stage than the HMS. Their first two black pastors, Timotheus Sello and Martin Sewushane, were

99 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.1.
100 *ibid.*
101 Scriba, 1983, *op.cit.*, p.1.
102 *ibid.*, and Albers, 1970, op.cit., p.12.
103 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.97, see also Scriba, 1983, op.cit., p.1.
104 Richter, 1940, *op.cit.*, p.53.

ordained in 1885.[105] By 1940, there were 81 black clergy in the BMS.[106] By 1962, the BMS employed 85 black and 35 white missionaries. However, many of the black BMS pastors had to teach part-time to earn a living.[107] Despite this trend, the BMS also promoted the concept of a '*Volkskirche*'. As Werner van der Merwe puts it, "the emphasis throughout fell on the degree to which Lutheranism was integrated into the culture of Blacks ('Bodenständigkeit')".[108]

Many of the initial converts of the missionaries were refugees. In Natal, many Zulus were fleeing from Dingaan, but if they could cross the Tugela River and come to the mission station they were safe. Thus many who came to the mission stations did not come to be Christians, but to seek asylum.[109] Subsequently, "they were allowed to remain there and build their houses, and then attend services. In most cases they were given some clothes, and some food to start with".[110]

Cooperation with other Lutherans

The BMS was involved in cooperative ventures with other Lutheran missions. One reason for this were the financial difficulties experienced by the mission. In Natal, the BMS received support by being part of the Co-operating Lutheran Missions (CLM) together the Norwegian mission led by Schreuder and the missionaries of the Church of Sweden.[111] The HMS was more reluctant to get involved in joint ventures. The history of the CLM is described in more detail below.

---

105 Brennecke, 1954, *op.cit.*, p.352; the RMS only did so in 1949.

106 Richter, 1940, *op.cit.*, p.53.

107 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.5; they were ministers "im Nebenamt" (part-time).

108 Van der Merwe, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.154, my translation; "Nogtans het die klem deurgaans op die mate waarin Lutheranisme vir die Swartes kultuurbesit geword het ('*Bodenständigkeit*') geval".

109 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.1.

110 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.1-2.

111 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.94-95.

Comparing the HMS and the BMS

HMS and BMS missionaries generally had different social backgrounds. BMS missionaries were drawn from teachers' or pastors' families, while the HMS missionaries often had a rural peasant background. A graphic illustration of the different social background of HMS and BMS missionaries is provided by these two examples of typical life stories:

> Albert Neizel of the BMS was the son of a teacher - schooling - teachers' training - two years as private tutor - decision to become a missionary - entry into mission house in Berlin - sent to BMS station Emangweni.[112]

> Johannes Reibeling of the HMS by contrast trained to be a tailor in Grebenau after his confirmation - tended to be depressed - returned to home town - trained as missionary - sent to HMS station Ehlanzeni.[113]

This difference of social background meant that the conditions for critical thought to develop among HMS missionaries were less favourable. BMS missionaries, even if conservative, were conscious of the connection between mission and colonialism.[114] Hence the HMS tended to be more conservative than the BMS. Rooted in these different backgrounds were somewhat different theological approaches. A strict Lutheran confessionalism emerged from the rural Hermannsburg context, while the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Berlin had spawned a united (Reformed and Lutheran) church.

Coming from different backgrounds, BMS and HMS missionaries also chose to work in different areas. The Berlin Mission moved into the cities as they were established, while the HMS missionaries saw the cities as centres of sin and evil, and tended to confine their work to rural areas. This meant that slightly different styles of work developed. Both mission societies used agriculture, practical training and formal schooling, but the BMS emphasized education more, while the HMS's strategy relied on agriculture. The African people felt resentful that the HMS schools did not teach English, but only catechism and the African language.[115] In comparison with BMS mission schools, the HMS schools seemed to keep people back from developing.

---

112 See U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.24.
113 See U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.27.
114 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.37.
115 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.2-3.

There were some differences in the geographical areas in which the two missions worked. The HMS missionaries arrived in Natal, which remained a strong area for their society (including parts of the South Eastern Transvaal).[116] They also worked successfully in the Western Transvaal amongst the Tswanas, and in adjoining Botswana (then Bechuanaland). The BMS's field of work was more dispersed. It had clear centres in the Western Cape and in the Eastern, Northern and North-Western Transvaal.[117] In addition, however, many congregations on farms and in cities were established all over the country, including the Eastern Cape. The most overlap between the two missions occurred in Natal.

A crucial difference between the Hermannsburg and Berlin missions was that the Hermannsburger missionaries brought German settler families, as well as artisans with them.[118] A result of this was that wherever Hermannsburger mission stations were founded, there was also -- virtually instantly -- a sizeable German congregation. The Berlin mission was slower in developing German congregations. "Another factor was no doubt the close relationship between the [HMS] missionaries and the German farming communities in South Africa, from whose ranks the missionaries were recruited".[119] The HMS had a clear social base in these farming communities, whereas the BMS's constituency was more varied. The HMS therefore also had a pool from which new missionaries and pastors could be drawn. From this social base, a strong dominant theology developed, which saw black and white congregations developing separately, but under white control. This was to show itself in the HMS's reluctance in granting their black congregations autonomy.

The BMS trained black church workers much earlier. The German community also provided a financial base for the HMS. The HMS congregations were taught to make

116 Richter, 1940, *op.cit.*, p.60ff.
117 Richter, 1940, *op.cit.*, p.47f.
118 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.20.
119 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.6.

sacrifices in order to support their own pastors.[120] However, HMS missionaries did receive part of their money from the mission society in Germany, too; the point is that they were not solely dependent on money from overseas, as were their colleagues in the BMS.

These differences were expressed in theological, confessional terms.[121] The Berlin mission came out of a '*unierte Landeskirche*', i.e. where Reformed and Lutheran traditions had been joined by the decree of Friedrich Wilhelm II in 1817.[122] Individual congregations in the united church could still follow Lutheran teachings, or Reformed ones. Individual BMS missionaries, too, were either Lutheran or Reformed.[123] The HMS, on the other hand, laid great stress on the acceptance of the full Lutheran Confession: The Three Creeds of the Ancient Church, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power of the Pope, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms and the Formula of Concord.[124]

In their ecclesiological thinking, the HMS saw acceptance of these confessions as a crucial defining factor of the church. The BMS was an independently organized society, not a mission of the church, and did not stress these confessions. For purist Lutherans like the Hermannsburger, this was not acceptable. The differences went so far that members of the other missionary society were not allowed to attend holy communion, nor could they be confirmed in the rival mission congregation. When missionary Hohls attended a conference for Protestant missionaries in 1876, he took part in all the proceedings except communion.[125] These confessional differences within the dominant theology of the Lutheran missions had a divisive effect in their mission work. The divisions caused between black congregations which identified themselves as '*Berlin*' or '*Hermannsburg*' later became an obstacle on the road to forming one Lutheran church.

---

120 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.2, my translation; "Sie sind zu Opferwilligkeit erzogen worden".
121 Horst Meyberg, 12/01/1989, p.1.
122 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.4.
123 Horst Meyberg, 12/01/1989, p.1.
124 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.72.
125 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 3 (1), p.116.

A consequence of these differences was that the HMS did not cooperate much even with other Lutheran missions, much less other denominations. The HMS was slow to join in the Cooperating Lutheran Missions in Natal. The CLM was formed in 1912, the HMS only joined in some of the common work in 1938.[126]

Despite these differences, there were clearly many things that were similar in both missions. Their missiology, as described above, was basically similar and seen as distinct from the approach of English mission societies. The strong connection between Lutheranism and German culture was common to both societies. Both groups began their work in a time of great social unrest, and often their first converts were refugees.

Cooperation in Natal

The Cooperating Lutheran Missions in Natal (CLM), formed in 1912,[127] was the most advanced form of cooperation amongst Lutherans for many years. It was in joint structures that the vision of Lutheran unity began to develop, based on the experience of practical cooperation. The need for cooperation arose from the extensive overlap of work, and the proximity of many Lutheran mission societies in one area. First in Natal was Schreuder of the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS); the BMS had started its Zulu Mission in 1847, the HMS came to Natal in 1854, the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) in 1876.[128] Apart from these four major societies, the American Lutheran Mission (ALM) and the Hannoverian Free Church Mission (HFCM) also operated in Natal. The need for cooperation was clear to everyone because of the close proximity of so many Lutheran missions.

Another reason for the formation of a joint body was the financial aspect.[129] Theological education and the production of literature were expensive undertakings,

126 Hermann Schlyter, 1953, *The History of the Co-operating Lutheran Missions in Natal*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing House. p.58.
127 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.95.
128 Schlyter, 1953, *op.cit.*, p.4-6.
129 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.94-95.

and costs could be cut by producing for all the missions together.

The CLM was preceded by another cooperative venture, the Free Evangelical Lutheran Conference of South Africa which was first held in 1889.[130] Practical tasks such as joint production of hymn books, devotional manuals, school books and a religious paper were discussed. Joint theological education also was on the agenda from the early stages. An annual conference was planned, not as formal unity, but "a free union of Lutheran missions in order to exchange experiences and discuss questions and problems of immediate interest".[131]

It was the need for theological education to provide pastors and evangelists for growing congregations, that led to the formation of the CLM in Natal in 1912.[132] At first, only the BMS, NMS and CSM participated.[133] The ALM joined in 1927, the HMS in 1938.[134] At this stage, the CLM was a body for the cooperation of missionaries. The black mission congregations were not directly represented.

The work of the CLM was successful in producing literature — a common hymnbook, translations of Luther's writings, the catechisms, and a common agenda and liturgy. Work towards a common church constitution for all mission churches was begun. This work was helpful in developing a common Lutheran theology in South Africa. However, since the CLM represented only missionaries, it still developed a dominant theology. It was only in 1948 that blacks were included in the CLM, and then they met separately in an Advisory Synod of the missions of the CLM.[135] In the Advisory synod, each mission was represented by two missionaries and two African representatives.

The CLM did important ground-work for joint theological education.[136] Theological

130 Schlyter, 1953, *op.cit.*, p.8.
131 Schlyter, 1953, *op.cit.*, p.9.
132 Schlyter, 1953, *op.cit.*, p.22/3.
133 The ALM joined in 1927, the HMS in 1938; see Schlyter, 1953, *op.cit.*, p.43 and p.59 respectively.
134 Schlyter, 1953, *op.cit.*, pp. 43 and 59.
135 Schlyter, 1953, *op.cit.*, p.71.
136 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.95.

training centres had been established by the HMS at Ehlanzeni (1877), the NMS at Umpumulo (1893), the BMS at Emmaus (1905) and the CSM at Oscarsberg (1908).[137] These institutions served variously to train teachers, evangelists and pastors. Already in 1912, the missions involved in the CLM agreed to a joint teachers training college and theological seminary at Umpumulo.[138]

The CLM attempted to achieve unity, at least between the different mission synods. The envisaged united church, however, was still ethnically defined – the aim was the formation of one Zulu Lutheran church in Natal. This goal of a united Lutheran church in Natal was only reached in 1963 with the formation of the ELCSA South Eastern Region.

The CLM provided an opportunity for joint Lutheran deliberations. "The multi-national climate of the CLM time and again offered opportunities to raise the question of the Lutheran witness. The CLM minutes of recent years reflect an increasing concern for the church's witness in the situation of South Africa".[139] However, the CLM never took strong political positions publicly, nor engaged in social action. The absence of black Lutherans for the first 36 years of the CLM's existence may account for this.

Conclusion

In the missionary period, many patterns for later developments were established in the Lutheran missions. Among the most important was the clear dominance which the white missionaries established over 'their' black converts. This dominance was partly based on their control over theology. The missionaries were seen as the bringers of the gospel, the African people as objects of mission. The African people experienced this theology as one that was imposed without regard to their situation or traditions. It was a theology which was not adapted to its context, but was transposed without much

137 Schlyter, 1953, *op.cit.*, p.12.
138 Schlyter, 1953, *op.cit.*, p.19.
139 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.68.

change to the South African situation.

Social factors were the other source of the missionaries' dominance. They had greater access to land, they mostly enjoyed good relations with British and Boer governments, and were incorporated in the ruling classes of colonial society.

The African people did not accept the role of the missionaries without resistance. However, in this period, the power of the missionaries was too great for them to be effectively challenged in the structures of the missions themselves. Resistance largely took the form of protest and withdrawal. It was only in later periods that black Lutherans were able to assert their rights within the mainline Lutheran churches.

The dominant theology of the missionaries included a conception of the church which led to the separate development of black and white congregations. This separation became the key issue of conflict between black and white Lutherans. It was also an obstacle to an effective political witness of Lutherans.

The relation between the missionaries and their socio-political context is examined in Chapter Three. Before turning to such an analysis of the missionary period, however, case studies of two mission stations are presented. These case studies provide a more detailed illustration to complement the general description of the Lutheran missions above.

CHAPTER TWO
CASE STUDIES OF BOTSHABELO AND HERMANNSBURG

The historical method employed in Chapter One, employed to provide a socio-theological context for a consideration of Lutheran missiology and ecclesial development, can readily be criticized for making generalizations about differentiated and complex realities. It can also be accused of drawing mainly on sources which view the history from the perspective of the missionaries rather than that of the African people, simply because most of the written sources come from the missionaries or settler churches. The case studies that follow seek to redress partially these weaknesses. Two mission stations which have operated over a limited period of time are considered here, with a view to showing the different ways in which missionaries and African people interpreted this history. These case studies will also show in more detail the differences between Hermannsburger Mission Society (HMS) and Berlin Mission Society (BMS) approaches to missions.[1]

Botshabelo

In 1858, Sekwati, the paramount chief of the Pedi polity, asked for missionaries from the BMS. Alexander Merensky and Heinrich Grützner were sent.[2] The sending of a pair of missionaries, without lay people to back them up, was typical of the BMS. In the

---

1 The case study of Botshabelo draws largely on the work of Peter Delius (1983, *The Land Belongs to Us*, Johannesburg: Ravan). Delius has done detailed research in the archives of the BMS in East Berlin, particularly concerning the work of Alexander Merensky and Heinrich Grützner. He incorporates this history into the wider history of the Pedi polity in an exemplary fashion. Analysis of the relations at Botshabelo can also be found in Werner van der Merwe's excellent works (Van der Merwe, 1976, 1983 and 1987). Two more traditional sources are used to contrast the perspectives of Delius and Van der Merwe with that of the missionaries – Wangemann, who visited South Africa as director of the BMS, and Brennecke, who provides a relatively liberal interpretation of Lutheran history (Theodor Wangemann, 1877, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft und ihre Arbeiten in Südafrika*, Berlin: Ev. Missionshaus; and Gerhard Brennecke, 1954, *Brüder im Schatten*, Berlin: Ev. Verlagsanstalt). The study of Hermannsburg follows a similar pattern, comparing the perspectives of Fritz Hasselhorn (1987, *Mission, Land Ownership and Settlers' Ideology*, Johannesburg: SACC), with those of the mission directors Georg Haccius (1910, *Hannoversche Missionsgeschichte*, Hermannsburg: Verlag der Missionshandlung) and Winfried Wickert (1949, *Und die Vögel des Himmels wohnen unter seinen Zweigen*, Hermannsburg: Missionshandlung).

2 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.117.

1860s, they established three mission stations amongst the Pedi. One of the stations established in the South-Eastern Transvaal, on the banks of the Olifants River, was Botshabelo.[3] Botshabelo became the model which other BMS missionaries were encouraged to follow. Botshabelo became part of Lutheran and BMS mythology, its history presented in terms of the faith of the converts and the hardships suffered by the missionaries.[4]

The key to Merensky and Grützner's penetration of the Pedi polity was that some Pedis had been exposed to Christianity while working as migrant labourers or '*inboekselings*'. These Pedis were important in evangelization. "Pedi participation in migrant labour helps to account for the development of Christianity within the Pedi domain".[5] Another reason for the success of missionary activity was the internal disruption of the *difaqane*. Refugees and marginalized people often got help from the missionaries, and in return had to accept the faith and customs of the missionaries.

Under the reign of Sekwati, Merensky and Grützner were able to establish mission stations and win converts. In particular, they were able to convert many Pedi at the capital, Thaba Mosego, including clients of the paramount chief and royal wives.[6] A further source of alienation between the Pedi rulers and the missionaries were the close links which the missionaries had with the Boer state. Merensky, while defining himself primarily as a missionary, said that "nonetheless, I will always be willing to support my government [the ZAR] in its attempts to maintain law and order".[7] In 1863, Merensky and Grützner were officially appointed as ZAR representatives to the Pedis. It was no wonder, then, that Sekhukhune, when he gained power in 1864, saw the missionaries as 'people of the Boers'.[8] "He told the missionary Alexander Merensky: 'I am no longer king in the country; you have taken my people away from me ...; you are spies of the

3 Werner van der Merwe, 1983, 'Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal', in *Argiefjaarboek*, Pretoria: Staatsdrukker. p.40.
4 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.108.
5 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.112.
6 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.113.
7 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.119.
8 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.120.

Boers.' By 1866 he had expelled the missionaries and proscribed Christianity".[9] However, the missionaries were skilled people and could offer medical services which were valuable to the Pedi. For this reason they were allowed to establish their third station, Ga Ratau, closer to the capital, as late as 1864.

That same year saw the campaign of Sekhukhune to halt the spread of Christianity. Christians were publicly reviled, and eventually expelled in November 1864.[10] Merensky and 300 converts fled, and established Botshabelo in February 1865. Three years later the stations had 900 inhabitants.[11] The continued exodus from the Pedi polity made this growth possible.

The Model Mission Station

Botshabelo, under the leadership of Merensky, became the show-piece of the BMS. A church and houses were built, a store, workshops, a 'native village', a mill, repair works, a wagon building workshop and even a fort.[12] Its emphasis on practical work rivalled that of the HMS station at Hermannsburg. In addition, the BMS developed education for its black members. The largest school in the Transvaal was built up on the mission station.[13] Black pastors, too, were trained at an early stage.

The rules of the station also reveal much about the relations that existed between the missionary and the African people. Merensky governed the station with an iron hand: "Merensky showed himself to be a brilliant organizer, who naturally had to establish and maintain orderliness with the strictness of a patriarch".[14] Merensky perpetuated the hierarchical and authoritarian attitudes of Prussia, seeing "orderliness and industry

---

9 Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, 1982, *A History of South Africa*, Cape Town: David Philip. p.440.

10 Brennecke, 1954, *op.cit.*, p.255f.

11 Brennecke, 1954, *op.cit.*, p.256.

12 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.160.

13 *ibid.*

14 Brennecke, 1954, *op.cit.*, p. 256, my translation; "Merensky erwies sich als genialer Organisator, der freilich auch mit patriarchalischer Strenge durchgreifen muß, um eine rechte Ordnung durchzusetzen und aufrechtzuerhalten".

as an index of Christianity".[15] Werner van der Merwe describes the situation as follows:

> The converts daily life was discplined by strong rules and regulations. All traditional tribal customs which conflicted with the gospel, were strictly forbidden. The Blacks were alienated from their tribal relations and Merensky became their new chief in practice.[16]

Only those Pedi customs compatible with the gospel were allowed to be practiced, and this, in the opinion of the missionaries, excluded initiation, bridewealth, polygamy, herbalism and ancestor worship.[17] German customs were subjected to no such scrutiny. Africans were expected to wear European clothes, and had to work to earn the money to buy those clothes. In addition, a tithe of the corn and maize harvests was to be paid to the missionary, and unpaid labour was required to build the church and schools, and to maintain roads and bridges.[18] Brennecke sums up the result of all of this work by saying: "Botshabelo became a centre of Christian culture".[19] The tensions that arose between Merensky and Johannes Dinkwanyane were clear evidence that the Pedi perceived things differently.

The example of Botshabelo illustrates the social impact of missionary work. The process which encouraged Africans to become independent peasants producing for a market, are clear. The missionaries provided access to the use of land for the Pedi, but at the same time required work, a tithe and the wearing of European clothes. This pressure, plus the beginnings of state taxation, forced the Pedi into a money economy. The initial response would have been to step up their agricultural production, often using the agricultural techniques taught by the missionaries. When that source of income failed, the next step — after the discovery of gold and diamonds — would have been to work in the cities. The missionaries were able to supply and direct labour for the mining industry, owing to their control of sections of the African population.[20] Here

---

15 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.118.

16 Werner van der Merwe, 1987, 'Die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap en Kerkstigting in Transvaal', in *Argiefjaarboek*, Pretoria: Staatsdrukker. p.7, my translation; "Die inwoners se daaglikse lewenswandel is deur streng reëls en regulasies voorgeskryf. Alle tradisionele stamgebruike wat met die evangelie ingedruis het, is ten strengste verbied. Die Swartes is van hulle stamverband vervreem en Merensky het in die praktyk hulle nuwe opperhoof geword."

17 Brennecke, 1954, *op.cit.*, p.256.

18 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.165.

19 Brennecke, 1954, *op.cit.*, p.257; "Botshabelo wird christliches Kulturzentrum".

20 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.167.

the BMS differed from the HMS in that it did not discourage black people from going into the city. A mission station like Botshabelo was an important factor in the peasantization (and later proletarianization) of African communities.

Botshabelo also illustrates how firmly control was in the hands of the white missionaries. Missionaries introduced their theology to the mission stations. They also controlled access to land, which was the crucial economic resource, they were able to extract a surplus both in kind and in the form of labour from the African people, they enforced a strict moral code, and obviously were in control of the religious symbols around which the community was built.

Johannes Dinkwanyane and Resistance

One of the few forms of resistance available in such a situation was withdrawal, i.e. to leave the mission station. This happened in the case of Botshabelo in 1873, when Johannes Dinkwanyane, himself a Pedi chief and brother of Sekhukhune, left with 335 followers. The reasons were that the Pedis wanted their own land. They resented the unpaid labour required of them. Consequently, they tried to escape the institutional frame-work accompanying Christianity under Merensky.[21] Despite "their rejection of the missionary as landlord and of the authority and the demands of the ZAR, the continuing commitment of this group to Christianity never seems to have been in doubt".[22] In the face of the missionaries' strict control over the church and theology, the only option left was to leave the station and to develop an alternative theology elsewhere. Dinkwanyane established his own community at Mafolofolo, which survived attacks by the ZAR army in July 1876.[23] Requests by the community for a missionary to serve them were turned down.

---

21 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.171.
22 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.174.
23 Delius, 1983, *op.cit*, p.167ff.

Hermannsburg

The mission station Hermannsburg (near Greytown in Natal) was the first to be established after the HMS missionaries had arrived in South Africa in 1854. Initially it was known as Neu-Hermannsburg to distinguish it from the place of origin of the HMS in Germany, but soon it became known simply as Hermannsburg. The links with Germany, however, remained as strong as before, since not only two single missionaries were sent as with the BMS, but eight settlers in addition to the eight missionaries (all bachelors).[24] Thus the German congregation was transplanted directly from Germany to South Africa.

Failing to receive land for a mission station from the Governor of Natal, the HMS missionaries bought the farm Perseverance from a German business man, Carl Behrens.[25] They proceeded to build a house for their group of sixteen, as well as beginning to plough fields and build a smithy.[26] Hermannsburg became a flourishing village with good grazing for its live-stock and orchards of fruit and wattle trees.[27]

Having established a secure base of operations, the work of the missionaries among the German settlers and the black people began. The German congregation which established itself saw itself as "a branch of the Lutheran mother church" in Germany, and followed the Lüneburger church agenda.[28] The black or mission congregation was established separately, though initially they used the same church building. The dominant ecclesiology of separate development of congregations according to ethnic criteria was implemented from the start. The German service was held first, thereafter the service for the black congregation. While the former centered around the sermon,

24 A.M.H. Leuschke, 1985, 'One Root Two Stems', University of Natal (PMB): Church History III project. pp.61-64.
25 Wickert, 1949, *op.cit.*, p.27.
26 Wickert, 1949, *op.cit.*, p.28.
27 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 3 (1), p.127.
28 Wickert, 1949, *op.cit.*, p.333; "Zweig der lutherischen Mutterkirche".

the second was considered to be catechetical in nature.[29] The theological teaching in both churches emphasized the importance of Lutheran confessional writings. Luther's Small Catechism was used for instruction. For preaching in the black congregation, a black teacher, Jakobus Hadebe, helped out.[30] In 1865, the German congregation had 89 members, the black one 36; by 1884 the black congregation had grown to 313 members.[31]

A German school was started in Hermannsburg in 1863. This school was to become an important cultural centre for the German HMS community, and still exists today. It was seen as an instrument for maintaining German culture and resisting acculturation through the contact with English, Boer and black peoples. When English children were accepted in the school in 1869, the missionary Hohls expressed fears that this would threaten the "simplicity of our mission and the rigour of our church teaching".[32] In 1870, compulsory education for the black Christians living on the mission station was introduced. According to Haccius, it was difficult for black parents to become used to this system.[33]

Conflict arose between the HMS missionaries and the black people on the station over customs such as '*lobola*' and the brewing of beer. The missionaries regarded these practices as serious sins, "and when the people did not want to obey at first, several had to be expelled from the station".[34] In response to such events a set of rules governing the mission station was drawn up in 1901. Thus, control over station life, both economically and religiously, was firmly in the hands of the missionaries.

29 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 3 (1), p.127.
30 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 3 (2), p.36.
31 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol.3 (1), p.125.
32 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 3 (1), p.129; "Bedrohung der Einfalt unserer Mission und der Strenge der Kirchenlehre".
33 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 3 (1), p.128; "schwere Gewöhnung".
34 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 3 (2), p.37, my translation; "und die Leute wollten sich zuerst nicht fügen, so daß etliche vom Platz gewiesen werden mußten".

Conflict over Land

Most members of the black congregation lived on the 6,400 acres owned by the mission. Initially, most of them lived as tenants on land for which they had to pay the mission, even if they were part of the congregation. When payments became irregular, the missionaries took "strict measures" to enforce payment.[35] Other black Christians were employed as servants in the keeping of livestock.

The close relationship between the HMS and the German farming community made itself felt in conflict over the commercialization of the mission's farm land in Hermannsburg. German farmers had suggested that the mission should plant as much wattle as possible.[36] Land which previously had been leased to black tenants, either for agriculture or growing wattle themselves, was taken over by the mission when the leases expired. This move met with resistance from the black congregation.

> On the 15th January 1929 Elisa Mapumulo and Johannes Mazibuko presented the following three demands of the community to the Director and the Administrative Council:
>
> '1. We protest against having to leave our old homes, which we have built up ourselves. ... 2. We protest against having the wattle plantations taken from us who live here. ... 3. We protest against not being allowed to plant and farm on the plots we have leased as we want to.'[37]

The mission refused to yield to any of the demands, and only promised to be considerate in enforcing the changes. Black farmers on the mission station were no longer allowed to plant wattle. The missionary Heinrich Hohls, who favoured blacks keeping their wattle, lost his position as farm manager. Hohls said that "the old amakolwa complain that they came to our mission to obtain the Gospel; but now, they say, they can go again; they are being squeezed out".[38] Only European tenants and the mission were allowed to cultivate the most lucrative crop, wattle. Rent for black tenants was increased, levies for grazing were raised and pressure was exerted for them to work on the mission's wattle plantations. Significantly, the mission farm was run by

35 Haccius, 1910, *op.cit.*, vol. 3 (1), p.127; "strenge Maßregeln".
36 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.23.
37 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.24.
38 *ibid.*

the son of a German farmer.[39] By 1935, the shift to wattle cultivation had taken place. 1,500 acres of wattle were farmed by the mission, 390 by European tenants.

The 1936 'Native Trust and Land Act' put further pressure on mission land. "Mission land was longer exempted by special provisions as it had been in 1913."[40] Africans living on white land were now considered to be illegal squatters. The Hermannsburg administrators reacted to this situation by joining a commercial cooperative farming wattle in 1938. Only 15 tenant families were allowed to stay, the others were forced to work for the mission, their land and cattle was limited, and they had to perform unpaid labour.[41] Protest by the black community on the mission again had no effect. "It was decided against changing the new regulations ... which meant that many members of the congregation were faced with the alternative of giving up their work in the town and working for the mission, or of leaving Hermannsburg".[42]

This decision illustrated the HMS missionaries' prejudices against the cities. Most HMS missionaries came from a rural background themselves, and they believed that rural life was better for their congregations. The congregation even appealed to Senator Edgar Brookes, who represented them in Parliament, but this was rejected by the HMS as interference. The protests were regarded as the work of outside agitators instead of a struggle by the congregations against social decline leading to the status of farm labourers which the mission wanted to enforce.

Many families eventually left Hermannsburg rather than accept the new system. Their places were often taken by black non-Christians who were looking for work.[43] Thus the mission had reached a point where it was putting its needs for labour over the needs of its black congregation. The end for the black congregation -- by then counting over 1,000 members -- in Hermannsburg came when it was forcibly removed by the state

39 *ibid.*
40 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.26.
41 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.27.
42 *ibid.*
43 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.28.

under Apartheid legislation.[44]

Conclusion

These short case studies have illustrated with concrete examples some of the similarities and differences between the styles of the HMS and BMS mission outlined above. Yet the case studies also reveal much about the socio-political role of the missions. They show clearly that there are two histories to be told about the Lutheran missions in South Africa. On the one hand, there is the history of the white German missionaries and settlers, the churches which they established, and the dominant theology they introduced. On the other hand, there is the history of resistance to the missionaries, and attempts by African Christians to shape their own future as congregations, with their own theology. This entailed a rejection of the cultural packaging in which Christianity had been presented to them, and a refusal to accept that Christianity entailed political acquiescence or economic subservience for the black peoples of South Africa. The following chapter offers an analysis of the socio-political role of the missions.

44 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.4.

CHAPTER THREE
THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ROLE OF THE MISSIONS

The first two chapters presented a narrative history of the missionary period of Lutheranism in South Africa, and two case studies to illustrate some of the historical trends. This chapter reflects analytically on this history, examining the relationship between missionaries and their socio-political context. The German missionaries were integrated into colonial society; the social basis of the dominant theology was clearly among the German settlers. Yet their cultural and theological identity gave the missionaries a certain degree of autonomy. Their work was also not left unchallenged by the black people. These factors introduced some fluidity into the relationship between the Lutheran missions and colonialism.

The Context

In order to understand the social location and political role of the missionaries, one needs to examine the colonial context in which they operated. The colonial period was a time of great social dislocation. The many border wars created turmoil which directly affected the work of the missionaries. The early converts were mostly people fleeing from tribal rulers, who went to the mission stations to seek refuge.[1] In the early period, the missionaries only made slow progress. In times of disruption the missionaries fared better. In Natal, for example, it was only after the destruction of the power of the Zulu kingdom through the Zulu War 1879 and the annexation of Natal 1897, that mass conversions took place.[2] "It seems that these missionary successes were related to the economic, social and political disintegration of traditional tribal society".[3] Colonialism created conditions favourable to missionary work; the missionaries in turn had an

1 Ulrike Kistner, 1979, 'Die Politische Rolle der Unpolitischen', University of the Witwatersrand: BA Honours Dissertation. p.8.

2 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.15.

3 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.18, my translation; "Es ist anzunehmen, daß diese Missionserfolge mit der zunehmenden ökonomischen, sozialen und politischen Disintegration des traditionellen Stammeslebens zusammenhängen".

interest in the extension of colonial rule.

Yet wars were not the only, or even the most important social processes of the colonial period. Economic relations were being transformed in a fundamental way.

> The last seven decades of the nineteenth century represented an era of transition and trauma for most African societies in Southern Africa. This era begins at the tail-end of the difaqane and concludes with all these societies under some form of colonial domination. A number of important processes can be identified in these decades: The consolidation and reconstruction of African states after the difaqane; their penetration by white missionaries, traders, concessonaries and land-grabbers; colonial conquest and subjugation, and African resistance thereto; as well as the process of peasantisation, proletarianisation and incipient class stratification, all of which were stimulated by the mineral revolution.[4]

It was their relation to colonialism, with all its social, political and economic implications, that shaped the Lutheran missionaries' social position.

Mission and Colonialism

In the *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* of 1885, a contributor suggested that "we must desire from the entire heart ... that a peaceful and friendly relationship may exist between mission and colonization".[5] Broadly speaking, the material and ideological interests of German Lutheran missionaries converged with those of the colonialism.[6] Cuthbertson's comment about English missionaries can be applied to the Lutheran missions too: "As custodians of the 'religion of the status quo', missionaries served the prevailing ideology of imperial expansionism".[7] Yet the relationship was not an unambiguous one, but rather one filled with contradictions. Nonetheless, at crucial points the interests of colonialism were served by the

4 Paul Maylam, 1986, *A History of the African People of South Africa*, Cape Town: David Philip. p.132/133.

5 Cited in Karl H. Hertz (ed), 1976, *Two Kingdoms and One World*, Minneapolis: Augsburg. p.96.

6 Much has been written about the relationship between mission and colonialism in other contexts. *Inter alia*, in the Namibian context, Lukas de Vries, 1978, *Mission and Colonialism*, Johannesburg: Ravan; on churches other than the Lutherans in South Africa, Nosipho Majeke, 1952, *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*, Johannesburg: Society of Young Africa; Greg Cuthbertson, 1987, 'The English-speaking Churches and Colonialism' in Villa-Vicencio (ed.), 1987, *Theology and Violence*, Johannesburg: Skotaville; Monica Wilson's article, 1983,'Missionaries: Conquerors or Servants of God?' in *South African Outlook* 113; Chapter Two in Villa-Vicencio, 1988, *Trapped in Apartheid*, Cape Town: David Philip, pp.42-64; Chapter Two in James Cochrane, 1987, *Servants of Power*, Johannesburg: Ravan, pp.12-54.

7 Cuthbertson, 1987, 'The English-speaking Churches and Colonialism' in C. Villa-Vicencio (ed) *Theology and Violence*, Johannesburg: Skotaville. p.16.

missionaries, and the missionaries benefitted from colonialism. Some of the ways in which this happened are listed below.

At the outset it should be noted that despite the broad support for colonial subjugation of the African people, there is evidence of criticism of colonialism in the history of the German Lutheran missions. Ludwig Harms' denunciation of colonialism as 'fraud and robbery' is perhaps the most famous.[8] Yet these small signs of a "conservative anti-colonialism"[9] were outweighed by the many instances of collaboration with colonialism.

Relations with the Boers and the British

To give content to the thesis that the Lutheran missionaries were close to the ruling classes in colonial society, one needs to examine their relationship with the Boers and the British.

Until 1780, the Dutch Reformed Church was the only officially recognized church in the Cape. It was Lutherans who were first to receive the freedom of public worship, indicating that their standing with the authorities was privileged.[10]

Initially, the German missions acted in the interests of the British colonial governments as means of control of Africans and as socializing agencies.[11] The colonists wanted to civilize the Africans, the missionaries sought to Christianize them. Their interests converged in the expansion of 'Christian civilization'. The ideology of 'Christian civilization' was able to incorporate both the interests of the settlers, and a dominant theology as preached by the missionaries.

---

8 Wolfram Kistner, 1988, 'Missed Chances', Johannesburg: unpublished. p.13.

9 Fritz Hasselhorn, 1987, *Mission, Land Ownership and Settlers' Ideology*, Johannesburg: SACC. p.29.

10 M. Wilson and L. Thompson (ed.s), 1982, *A History of South Africa to 1870*, Cape Town: David Philip. p.229.

11 C. Tsheloane Keto, 1976, 'Race Relations, Land and the Changing Missionary Role in South Africa' in *The International Journal for African Historical Studies*, vol.X, no.4, p.627. Although Keto is writing about the American Zulu Mission, his insights can be applied to the Lutheran missions as well.

The relations with the Boers were not without tensions, however. Georg Schmidt, a Moravian missionary in the Cape from 1737, was expelled after seven years of work. The reasons for his expulsion were confessional differences with the Dutch Reformed Church and conflicts over church law.[12] Moravian mission work was only taken up again in 1792. While German-speaking missionaries had a privileged position, they were not directly part of the ruling class culture.

The missionaries tended to defer to British authority in order to gain some protection for their work. The convergence of interests has been illustrated above. The overlap of interests ended, however, once colonial power was firmly established and local white settlers gained more power (around 1890).[13] The settlers no longer required the missionaries to control Africans, and wanted direct access to African land, labour and taxes. Mission reserves were thus no longer encouraged, but incorporated into locations and homelands. After the South African War, and influenced by German nationalism which competed with British colonialism, the missionaries decided to side with the Boers for tactical reasons.[14]

The relationship with the Boers had developed from the time of the arrival of the missionaries. The missionaries and settlers of the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) "were soon on cordial terms with some of the surrounding Boers".[15] There was some criticism of the Boers, but this did not prevent a relationship from developing. Hardeland, superintendent of the HMS from 1860, felt that "although the Boers treated the Blacks harshly at times, their master-servant relationship was more beneficial for everyone in the long run [than British 'humanitarianism']".[16] The missionaries' friendly relations to the Boers was aided by the similar language and culture which they shared. It was only the Calvinism of the Boers which was not acceptable to the strongly

12 Albers, 1970, 'Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche im Südlichen Afrika', Universität Hamburg. p.16.
13 Keto, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.627.
14 U.Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, pp.35 and 180.
15 A.M.H. Leuschke, 1985, 'The Hermannsburg Mission Society in Natal and Zululand', University of Natal (PMB): BA Honours Project. p.10
16 Leuschke, 1985, *op.cit.*, p.58.

confessionalist Lutherans.[17]

The relationship of the Berlin Mission Society (BMS) with the Boers was also a close one. It resulted in an accomodation to the racial policies developed in South Africa. "The Berlin missionaries in the Transvaal identified themselves to such a large extent with the Afrikaner in South Africa however, that they were reluctant to condemn the racial policy. For that matter, it is apparent ... that the Berlin missionaries with their strong emphasis on ethnicity, mother tongue, individuality and national identity indirectly promoted the racial policy of the South African government. ... This explains why the Lutheran Church kept a low profile ..., giving no audible Lutheran testimony."[18]

The relationship with the Boers deepened in later periods. One practical consequence of the closeness of Lutherans and Boers was that the RMS decided in 1931 to hand its mission stations over to the NG Sendingkerk when the Rhenish missionaries retired.[19]

During the period of the Third Reich, some German missionaries were affected by the intense nationalism prevailing in Germany. "Mission work became the victim of National Socialism".[20] Bodenstein (1937) and Richter (1940) reflect some of these sentiments. This influence brought German missionaries closer to the Boers, who often also supported the Nazis. Richter's comments reflect how Nazi ideology affected thinking among some in the mission societies. "We can really only approve of the fight of the white race to retain its purity, so we share this position with the church of the Boers. But the means which they use are often so arbitrary ... that we well understand the outrage of the coloured peoples".[21]

---

17 Lange, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.26-27.

18 Werner van der Merwe, 1987, 'Die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap en Kerkstigting' in *Argiefjaarboek*, Pretoria: Staatsdrukker. p.159.

19 Henrice Heyns, 1980, 'Wupperthal 150 jaar', Wupperthal: Evangeliese Broederkerk. p.25. The only station that was not handed over was Wupperthal, which eventually became Moravian in 1965.

20 Van der Merwe, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.104, my translation; "Sendingwerk het die slagoffer van die Nasionaal-Sosialisme geword."

21 Richter, 1940, *Deutsche evangelische Missionsfelder*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann. p.48, my translation; "An sich können wir den Kampf der weißen Rasse um Reinhaltung ihrer Rasse ... nur für recht halten, teilen also darin die Stellungnahme der Burenkirche. Doch sind die Mittel, die dazu angewandt werden, oft so

Yet despite their closeness to the authorities, and particularly the Boers, the Lutheran missionaries were not as closely associated with British colonialism, nor with the Boer Republics as many others. Their Lutheran theology, and their German culture marked them as somewhat separate from the mainstream of white settlers. The African people saw the mission farmers as different from the ordinary Boers. "The missionary was involved in their ordinary lives, sometimes even to know their joys and sorrows. Whereas an ordinary Boer who was running a farm was only interested in work".[22] African chiefs preferred to have a German missionary as intermediary to the government. The German Lutheran missionaries occupied a position close to, but not completely identified with colonial authority.

The Convergence of Interests

The autonomy of Lutheran missionaries from colonial society was limited.[23] In many ways, their interests converged with those of the rest of the settler community. As has already been indicated, Lutheran missionaries benefitted from the disruptions in colonial society. "In considering the different mission societies, one should remember that generally speaking, the mission societies established themselves only in places where clan and tribal ties among the indigenous population had been dissolved, or were in the process of dissolution, as a result of wars between the different tribes, the appropriation of land by the settlers, the subjugation and employment of blacks by whites, and annexation and legislation".[24] With the development of a capitalist industrial society, the traditional religion and customs of Africans were thrown into disarray. Christianity provided a new religion which allowed ties beyond one's tribe or

---

willkürlich, so wenig überlegen ... daß wir die Empörung der Farbigen nur zu gut verstehen".

22 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.3.

23 This convergence of missionary and colonial interests is by no means unique to the Lutheran missions. It has been traced for other churches in many works, *inter alia* Nosipho Majeke, 1952, *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*, Johannesburg: Society of Young Africa; James Cochrane, 1987, *Servants of Power*, Johannesburg: Ravan; Cuthbertson, 1987, 'The English-Speaking Churches and Colonialism' in Villa-Vicencio (ed) *Theology and Violence*, Johannesburg: Skotaville; and Charles Villa-Vicencio, 1987, *Trapped in Apartheid*, Cape Town: David Philip.

24 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.21.

clan by focusing on the individual.[25] The interests of the missionary and the colonist converged economically in the endeavour of creating an industrious population.[26]

The connection between social dislocation and mission work is not only made by modern sociologists. In 1861, a commentator (presumably a missionary) writing in the *Hermannsburger Missionsberichte* felt that "it was 'certain that in a country where God's judgment has broken the people politically the seed of evangelism is most conveniently sowed, that is when missionaries enjoy the legal protection of the colonial government'".[27] While the interpretation of the events is different, the same connection is made between mission and colonialism.

Missionaries acted as advance posts for colonial expansion, in what de Kiewiet has called an "unintentional collusion" of mission and colonialism.[28] They softened up a territory before it was taken over by military and economic might. Missionaries were deployed in areas where there was conflict, especially in the Cape Colony.[29] "Nothing tended so effectively to the pacification of unruly and warlike tribes as the introduction of a missionary into their territory".[30]

The break-down of traditional tribal rule which was encouraged by the missionaries was an important condition for the growth of new, capitalist economic relations.[31] Werner van der Merwe, looking at the BMS in the Transvaal, comes to the conclusion that "indirectly, the Berlin missionaries assisted the South African Republic in establishing its authority over recalcitrant Bantu tribes. Because the Berlin missionaries enjoyed the confidence of most of the Bantu chiefs they were used as informants and intermediaries between the government and the respective Bantu chiefs".[32] Once

25 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.19.

26 E. Kamphausen and W. Ustorf, 1979, 'Deutsche Missionsgeschichtsschreibung' in *Verkündigung und Forschung*, Heft 2. p.16, my translation; "In dem Interesse, eine arbeitsame Bevölkerung heranzubilden ... trifft der Missionar mit dem Kolonialpolitiker zusammen".

27 Cited in Peter Delius, 1983, *The Land Belongs to Us*, Johannesburg: Ravan. p.118/119.

28 C.W. de Kiewiet, 1937, *The Imperial Factor in South Africa*, Cambridge: University Press. p.190.

29 U.Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.179-180.

30 J.H. du Plessis, 1965, *A History of Christian Missions*, Cape Town: Struik. p.218.

31 Cuthbertson, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.19-20.

32 Werner van der Merwe, 1983, 'Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal' in

Africans had been brought under the control of the central state, there were many ways of pulling them into the growing capitalist economy.

African culture was clearly broken down on the mission stations. "On the mission farm, there were many things which you were not allowed to do, which were African customs".[33] Africans were forced to wear European dress, to give up polygamy, initiation ceremonies and worship of ancestors. The missionaries decided what was 'heathen and unChristian'. "Everything that was happening among these congregations on the farms was dictated by the missionaries. ... Anything that had to do with black society was looked upon as heathenism and was not allowed".[34] The missionaries participated very directly in transforming African culture into a form more acceptable to colonial society.

The missionaries adapted ideologically to colonial society.[35] The HMS is a case in point. Their founder, Ludwig Harms, was critical of many aspects of colonialism. Yet in this instance, the teaching of Harms was soon dropped by the missionaries in the field. "By the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century the Hermannsburg missionaries in South Africa ... had deviated considerably from the conservative anti-colonialist outlook of the founder of the mission society and ... they had found theological and other arguments to justify their position. These arguments did not differ essentially from those prevailing among white settlers in South Africa".[36] Thus prophetic trends in the dominant theology which the missionaries had brought with them from Germany were suppressed, as the missionaries adapted to the South African colonial society.

The missionaries adopted the general colonial attitude to African resistance. Resistance was condemned as furthering racial hatred. The missionaries provided theological

---

Argiefjaarboek, Pretoria: Staatsdrukker. p.166.

33 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.5.

34 *ibid.*

35 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, *passim*; see also W. Kistner, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.17-18.

36 W. Kistner, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.18.

arguments showing resistance to be unChristian.

Yet how can one assert that the missionaries were close to colonialism, when they saw themselves as foreigners, who were not to become involved in South African politics? Kistner captures this seeming contradiction well. "The people who were involved in this mission outreach in many cases were concerned to proclaim the pure Gospel without becoming involved in political and economic issues and controversies. Exactly as a result of this outlook they often, on the whole unwittingly, became instruments of the forces of oppression, under whom the people to they wanted to bring the Gospel had to suffer".[37] The missionaries' conservative effect was the political result of their apolitical position. It was precisely because they remained passive, and refused to take an active, critical role, that they had a conservative political effect. It is clear that "eventually, because of their ahistorical understanding of their faith on the one hand and social relations on the other, they failed to understand social developments in their significance for both black and white South Africans. They did not intervene consciously in these processes. Through their alliance with colonial rulers in Europe and South Africa, and their alliance with white settlers who were seeking power, they supported the proletarianization of the black peoples".[38]

Economic Impact

Missionaries were involved in the basic economic conflict of colonial society, the fight over fertile land.[39] It has already been shown how the missionaries (esp. the HMS) occupied a powerful position as land-owners; converts settled on 'their' land and were bound in many ways to them.[40] Maylam summarizes the economic impact of mission stations: "Mission stations ... provided access to land. Missionaries transmitted new skills and technologies. And they instilled an individualist ethic that broke some of the

37 Wolfram Kistner 'Introduction' to Fritz Hasselhorn, 1987, 'Mission, Land Ownership and Settlers' Ideology', Johannesburg: SACC. p.4.
38 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.39.
39 Wilson and Thompson, 1982, *op.cit.*, p.266.
40 Wilson and Thompson, 1982, *op.cit.*, p.265ff.

bonds of chiefly society".[41]

The missionaries perceived a link between the proclamation and a strict work ethic. They saw the need to teach not only the Christian faith, but industrious, loyal citizenship too. A certain Pastor Paul captured this link well:

> The inhabitants of our colonies cannot remain in their natural condition. They are by nature mostly untamed and warlike, whereas the colonial administration wants people in its territory who are orderly, well-bred, and peaceful. The natives are by nature lazy and work no harder than they must, whereas the German planter wants willing and hard-working laborers. ... If the native population is ever to satisfy these desires, they must be raised out of the childlike state in which they presently find themselves to a higher level. ... In short, the natives must be educated. Here is where the mission steps forward and announces: 'That is my task'.[42]

The missionaries saw the education of the black peoples as their task, in tandem with their proclamation of the gospel. Conversion to Christianity and incorporation into the colonial economy were expected to go hand in hand.

A very direct and conscious economic intervention by the missionaries was the introduction of European agricultural methods into the African peasant economy. The missionaries prided themselves on this achievement. "By employing unfamiliar German intensive agricultural methods, e.g. irrigation and the use of fertilizer, the station (Hermannsburg) introduced a mini-agricultural revolution into the district. These were the farming methods the missionaries intended to teach the Zulus to help them become self-sufficient".[43]

But this was not how the Africans saw the matter.

> They could have been taught proper agriculture. But nothing was done at all. It was just subsistence farming. They didn't produce for markets. And those who were left at home were very poor, mainly women and children. They were even worse off than those working for white farmers. In fact, the neighbouring farmers were always criticizing the missionaries, saying that they are spoiling the people by allowing them to stay on land where they are doing no work. And this was true, they were not teaching them anything.[44]

41 Maylam, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.105.

42 Pastor Paul cited in Karl Hertz, 1976, *Two Kingdoms and One World*, Minneapolis: Augsburg. p.99.

43 Leuschke, 1985, *op.cit.*, p.10.

44 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.5.

There are thus clearly conflicting perceptions as to the benefits of the agricultural methods taught by Lutheran missions. However, the skills taught certainly were essential to the process of peasantization.

Missionaries were also useful to the African people when land was to be bought, to develop trade, or to provide medical and educational expertise.[45] Yet on the mission stations, the economic relations prevailing in society were reproduced, with the missionary as land-owner and the black converts as labourers. African people were asked to provide 'auxiliary services' – to provide the labour to build schools, clinics and churches.[46] It was felt that in return they should receive social services from the missions.

German Lutheran missions thus had an important economic impact, even if they saw this as secondary to their main task of spreading the gospel. Perhaps the most crucial factor was the development of a new class of African people on the mission stations and farms. "There emerged a class of independent African producers who operated outside the domain of the 'traditional' communal economy, producing for a growing market as well as for subsistence. This economic individualism was particularly fostered by Christian missionaries, and many African peasant communities were to be found in and around mission stations".[47] The HMS policy of fostering '*bodenständige Bauern*' certainly fitted into this pattern. The missionaries did not create the African peasantry on their own, but they certainly hastened the integration of Africans into the colonial economy.[48]

The creation of a class of Amakholwa – an educated class – on the mission stations had great economic impact.[49] It meant that African people were prepared for a nascent industrial economy.

---

45 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.29.
46 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.3.
47 Maylam, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.70.
48 Maylam, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.105.
49 U.Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.179-180.

Education

One of the key political effects of the missions was through education. Education was a key channel of social advancement for black people, particularly in the rural areas. The mission schools were potentially means of empowering people. Not only did missionaries provide education, but the mission churches provided some employment for church workers. Yet in the context of colonialism, the role of mission education was ambiguous.

In both BMS and HMS mission schools, the emphasis was on teaching the African languages and religious instruction. Only mathematics and sciences would be taught in English. The German missions placed less emphasis on 'book learning' than the Anglo-Saxon ones.[50] "Education would begin with God's Word"[51], i.e. learning catechism and Bible verses by heart, singing from the hymn books and reading the set readings for the day.[52] The HMS schools were designed in line with the philosophy of '*Volkstum*'. They taught African in their mother tongue, refused to teach English, and emphasized teaching people to read the Bible and memorize the catechism. While such aims were also part of BMS schools, they did teach English and skills which would enable African people to participate in the emerging mining and industrial economy.

In the colonial period, mission education was allowed to proceed relatively independently. However, even at this stage the government was watching developments closely. The white settlers felt threatened by the development of an educated class of Africans, the '*Amakholwa*', on the mission stations.[53] The colonial school policy in the Cape, for example, required practical training , which the German missions conformed to. The missionaries generally followed the instructions given by the authorities about

50 Van der Merwe, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.154.
51 Cited in U.Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.30, my translation; "Der Unterricht beginnt mit Gottes Wort".
52 U.Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.30.
53 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.15.

mission stations and schools.[54]

The political effect of mission education was ambiguous. They trained people for entry into an emerging Western industrial economy. On the one hand, this presented Africans with some opportunities for development, but on the other, it defined such development in terms foreign to the people.

Black Resistance

The African people were often seen as mere 'objects of mission' by the missionaries. Much of the historiography of the mission societies presents them as a passive backdrop to the struggles of the white missionaries. Yet the efforts of the missionaries, and their alliance with colonialism did not go unchallenged by black people. Not only did they challenge the social role which the missionaries played, but also the imposition of a dominant theology.

The most direct form of resistance was to burn down mission stations. In 1878, 12 HMS stations were burnt down.[55] Two BMS stations, Bethel and Itemba, were destroyed in the 'Eighth Kafir War' in 1850.[56] This was resistance by the African peoples as a whole, not the Christian converts in particular.

General acts of resistance affected the mission stations. The Mapumulo district was affected by wider resistance in 1906, when three chiefs refused to pay the poll tax.[57] The resistance escalated when the colonial authorities declared martial law, and executed seventeen of the resisters.[58] The resistance spread to the Umvoti resistance, and led to the Bambatha rebellion. It seems that these events must have influenced the Lutheran congregations as well, since the missionaries appeared relieved when the

54 U.Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.179-180.
55 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.31.
56 Du Plessis, 1965, *op.cit.*, p.217.
57 Shula Marks,1970, *Reluctant Rebellion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press. pp. 198-199 and 225ff.
58 Maylam, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.141.

rebellion was over. The HMS Mission Director welcomed the crushing of the uprising as a "salutary shock" which was "in the best interests of the natives".[59]

Converts living on the mission stations were engaged in resistance against particular rules and teachings of the missionaries. One reason for Zulu resistance to the missions was that the accumulation of goods in Zulu society depended on polygamy. The missionaries were very strict in enforcing monogamy, which undermined the system of production.[60] Many people living on the mission farms refused to become Christians because of this teaching.

Another contentious issue was land, and the mission farms. Refugees who had settled on the mission stations refused to pay rentals. "They claimed that they did not need to pay the rental, because the mission does not own these places. There was a belief that the missions were given land by the government in order to help the congregations".[61] The HMS particularly encountered such resistance. "They had a lot of farms. Sometimes the mission was forced to go to the government, and the government would send police to burn the houses, because of the refusal to pay the rental. One of these places where this happened is just near Müden".[62] The missionaries also would take people to court, or personally tear down houses of those who refused to pay rent. Black resistance and white reaction were both strong.

The final form of protest for converts was to leave the mission station, as illustrated by the case of Johannes Dinkwanyane and his followers above. The community did not reject Christianity, but rather sought to develop an alternative to the dominant understanding and practice of the church. The 'Ethiopian' movement, as the African Independent Churches (AICs) were known at this time, also had its examples among Lutherans. Richter claims that "there was hardly a mission station which was not at

59 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.33.
60 Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.8.
61 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.2.
62 *ibid.*

some time disturbed or even confused by such Ethiopian stirrings".[63] Many rival groups could exist on one mission station. For example, next to the 4,500-strong HMS congregation on the station Saron, there were also 50 mainline Anglicans, 75 Anglican 'Ethiopians', 50 Ethiopian Zionists, 20 baPedi Ethiopians, 15 Ethiopian Baptists, and 350 Wesleyan Ethiopians.[64]

Ethiopianism was not only a protest against the alienation of colonialism, but also against white domination of the church.[65] Glenda Kruss in her seminal work on the African Independent Churches, argues that AICs in general need to be understood as forms of religious-cultural resistance.[66] The 'Ethiopian' type of AICs were movements led by the African elite and wealthier sections of the peasantry.[67] They emerged around the turn of the century, when the capitalist economy being imposed by British colonialism was replacing traditional forms of production. The African elite responded to the conflicts thrown up by the clash of different modes of production, such as the alienation of land, hut and poll taxes, etc. Through the Ethiopian churches, it expressed the desire for an alternative theology to the dominant one, and for African control over their own churches. "The advent of white settler rule in Natal coincided with a growing spirit of independence among the Kholwa and a desire among African ministers to control their own congregations".[68] This spirit led to the secession of African Lutherans to form independent churches.[69]

Bapedi Lutheran Church

The best-documented case of an African Independent Church breaking away from the

63 Richter, 1940, *op.cit.*, p.63, my translation; "Es ist kaum eine Missionsstation nicht je und dann von solchen äthiopischen Umtrieben beunruhigt oder gar verwirrt worden".

64 Julius Richter, 1922, *Geschichte der evangelischen Mission in Afrika*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann. p.421.

65 Maylam, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.71.

66 Glenda Kruss, 1985, 'Religion, Class and Culture -- Indigenous Churches in South Africa', University of Cape Town: MA Thesis. *passim*.

67 Kruss, 1985, *op.cit.*, p.8; The Zionist type is seen to be based more strongly amongst peasants, in response to their proletarianization, while the Zionist-Apostolics are movements in the black working class in the post-World War II era.

68 Keto, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.627.

69 U. Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.31.

Lutheran missions is that of Martin Sewushane, Johannes Winter and the Bapedi Lutheran Church. "A Berlin missionary, the Rev. J.A. Winter, formed in 1890 together with Pastor Sebushane the Lutheran Bapedi Church in protest against the slow pace of ecclesiological development within the Berlin Mission".[70] Approximately a thousand black Lutherans left the BMS mission congregation in Sekhukhuneland and formed their own congregation.[71] The church was seen by the Pedi chief Holokoe as a potential Pedi National church.[72] The church fits into Kruss's characterization of the Ethiopian type, being led by well-educated ministers.

The loss of Sewushane was felt sorely by the BMS, since he had been among the first black ministers ordained, only five years previously. Together with the former missionary Winter — who lived among the African people "like an African" together with his family[73] — Sewushane ministered to the break-away church. Alternative practices were introduced in the church. The church ordained its own ministers and evangelists, though they were dismissed by the BMS missionaries as being "immature and unsuitable".[74] Yet the break-away church proved to be attractive to substantial numbers of Lutherans on the mission stations. It drew Pedi Lutherans not only from BMS congregations, but also from HMS congregations. In 1907/8, a third of the BMS congregation at Neu-Halle left to join the Lutheran Bapedi Church, and in 1908 a group of 1,000 Christians formerly belonging to the HMS congregation at Mokolokoe near Bethanie did the same.[75] "The Lutheran Bapedi Church still exists today under African leadership and represents the most prominent among a number of smaller, mostly insignificant Lutheran sectarian separations in Transvaal and Natal".[76]

---

70 Hans Florin, 1967, *Lutherans in South Africa*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing Co.. p.52-53.
71 Richter, 1922, *op.cit.*, p.376.
72 Richter, 1922, *op.cit.*, p.426.
73 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.5.
74 Richter, 1922, *op.cit.*, p.377; "unreife und ungeeignete Helfer".
75 Richter, 1922, *op.cit.*, p.426.
76 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.52-53.

Lutheranism and German Culture

One reason for the conservatism of the Lutheran missionaries was their close relation with white, in particular German settler society. Dominant Lutheran theology was culturally bound to German culture. When the first HMS missionaries departed, Harms said to them that "you must never forget that you are Lutherans, Germans and missionaries".[77] Lutheranism and German culture were inseparably linked for Harms. Africans were seen as heathens, without any true religion or culture. Both had to be brought to them by the missionaries.[78] It was the strong link of Lutheran theology to the culture of the dominant group – white German missionaries – that made it into a dominant theology.[79]

The connection between Lutheranism and German culture was made not only by Harms, but by most Lutheran missionaries. It is not coincidence that the settler congregations were always named 'German Lutheran', on occasion even hyphenated 'German-Lutheran'. Ulrike Kistner has shown how 'German' and 'Lutheran' became virtually synonymous in the writings of Lutheran missionaries.[80] 'German' was associated with a whole range of virtues such as discipline, industry, cleanliness, morality. The unspoken corollary was that African culture and customs were likely to be sinful and even unChristian. A theology that saw their culture in such negative terms had to be experienced by the African people as a dominant and dominating one.

The church, together with its schools, was the primary instrument for preserving German culture. Not only the white church was to fulfill this function, but even in the black churches German customs were introduced. "The almost innate joy of singing of the negroes was fostered in choirs; especially the profound German hymns are

77 Leuschke, 1985, *op.cit.*, p.13.

78 W. Kistner, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.13.

79 This link is comparable to the link between Victorian culture and the gospel proclaimed by English-speaking missionaries. See Chapter Two of Cochrane, 1987, *op.cit.*, and compare with Villa-Vicencio, 1988, op.cit., pp.46–48.

80 U.Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, *passim.*

introduced".[81] Brass bands were also introduced.

Clearly this strong identification of Lutheranism with a foreign culture posed major problems for black converts. But what was its social function?

It served to reflect and maintain the link of dominant Lutheran theology to the German settler community. The Lutheran missionaries were "caught in the class of whites".[82] The most powerful groupings in the Lutheran missions were the missionaries and the settlers, both white. It was they who produced the dominant theology for all Lutheran churches. This German community was broadly part of white settler society, although it strove to retain a separate cultural identity. Its material interests were largely identical with that of other white settlers. As shown above, the German community found itself moving closer to the Boers. Its German Lutheran identity allowed it to keep some distance from other cultures. Being German allowed the missionaries to feel that they were ultimately only sojourners, and thus not to get involved politically.

Conclusion

The Lutheran missionaries, rather than bringing good news to the African peoples, were part of the ruling classes of colonial society.[83] The German missionaries were not direct agents of British imperialism, or of the Boer governments, but their interests largely coincided with those of the ruling groups. The autonomy which they might have had because of their different cultural and theological identity, was limited by the similarity of their material interests. Even the theology, which might have given them some autonomy, was at times adapted to the needs of colonialism. Their point of reference was white colonial society, in particular the German farming community. In the course of the missionary period, this grouping began to identify more strongly with the Boers

81 Richter, 1940, *op.cit.*, p.57, my translation; "Die dem Neger fast angeborne Lust zum Singen wird in Gesangvereinen gepflegt, besonders die gehaltvollen deutschen Choräle werden eingebürgert". This quote reflects Richter's context, the Third Reich, but also illustrates the point.

82 Gerhard Brennecke, 1954, *Brüder im Schatten*, Berlin: Ev. Verlagsanstalt. p.330; "festgehalten in der Klasse der Weißen".

83 Cf. Cuthbertson, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.27.

than with British imperialism.[84] This was to mould the social location of Lutheranism in South Africa, and hence their political position.

Kistner argues that the missionaries missed a vital chance, in that they had some distance from colonial society, but did not act differently to white settlers. The mission farms attracted people from various backgrounds, taught them skills and allowed them to work and worship together. "The social composition of people living on mission farms had the potential of paving the way for a new South Africa. On the whole, however, this potential was not realised. White missionaries tended to side with the colonial authorities".[85] In this context, a prophetic theology and a prophetic ecclesiological practice might have emerged. Yet too little room was given for Africans to express their needs and aspirations, and independent churches broke away from the mission churches. In the missionary period, this was the only way of giving expression to the need for religious and political freedom of the African people.

Perhaps the single greatest weakness in this regard was the lack of unity, not only between the different missions, but between black and white congregations. "The lack of unity among ... Lutheran missions in Natal was the source of weakness of Christian missions in solving socio-political problems in the colony of Natal. The Lutheran missionary societies, whether unjustly or not, have been considered by the indigenous people as supporting civil powers".[86] Black Lutherans felt that the missionaries had failed to speak out against inhuman treatment meted out to black people by the government. Even when congregations were forcibly removed, the missionaries did little to prevent this. "The German missionaries have been depicted as content to work within the framework of the then existing system or social order without ever questioning it".[87]

It was this legacy which was to shape the history of the churches which grew from the

84 U.Kistner, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.35.
85 W.Kistner, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.23.
86 Aunice E. Nsibande, 1981, 'Historical Development of ELCSA-SER', UNISA: M.Th. Thesis. p.26.
87 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.27.

German mission societies. The lack of unity continued to haunt the Lutheran churches, and prevented them from engaging their political context more critically. The development of the Lutheran churches and their political witness is the subject of the next three chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR
FROM SYNODS TO REGIONAL CHURCHES (1889 - 1963)

The missionary period had produced two sets of congregations, black and white. The dominant theology spread by the white missionaries had determined that churches should develop as '*Volkskirchen*'. The efforts of the missionaries had been met with some resistance, but this had not been able to prevent the separate development of congregations. These congregations were then brought together in synods. Each mission society formed its own synods, and separate synods were created in each of the language or tribal groupings according to which the missions defined their work. Thus in this period, the dominant theology still asserted its ecclesiological vision. Yet the basis for a prophetic ecclesiology, and the formation of one Lutheran church, was beginning to be laid. It was to be found in the formation of synods and regional churches.

From Synods ...

The creation of synods occured under the auspices of the white missionaries, and still reflected their theology. In the case of the Berlin Mission Society (BMS), black mission churches had their own synods earlier than the whites. A uniform constitution for synods ('*Synodalordnung*') was created as early as 1912 by the Berlin Mission, but it was imposed from above. Control of these synods was in white hands. The chairpersons of these synods were the superintendents of the mission.[1] "The synod was black, but the determining figure was the [white] superintendent".[2] The Hermannsburg Mission Soceity (HMS) formed mission synods later than the BMS. The Zulu synod, for example, was only formed in 1957.

Why did the formation of synods occur? The intention of the missionaries had always

1 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.4.

2 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.6, my translation; "Die Synode war schwarz, und der [weiße] Missionssuperintendent war der bestimmende Mann".

been to develop indigenous churches, following the pattern of German '*Landeskirchen*'. But beyond that, it was based on the feeling that congregations were becoming increasingly independent, and that they should not become isolated from one another. Practical and theological questions could be dealt with jointly, e.g. a common church agenda, liturgy, hymn books, administration, and additional payments for the missionaries.[3] The initiative for forming black synods came more from the missionaries than from the congregations themselves.[4]

The theological debate around the formation of regional churches centered on the question of unity. The dominant theological position that the unity was primarily spiritual, and that structural unity was not important, asserted itself. "The decision to develop along ethnic lines raised a steep barrier against closer organic Lutheran unity of a country-wide level. The secular influences of the official policy and of the traditional tribal outlook should at that time have been counterbalanced by a concept of the unity of the Lutheran church".[5] The assertion of an alternative theological vision was, however, not developed enough to resist these influences and the dominant theology. The ecclesiology of ethnically defined churches reproduced itself in this period.

Autonomous churches were then formed on the basis of existing synods. The ecclesiological model used was clearly that of the dominant theology, often drawing directly on constitutions from German '*Landeskirchen*'. The dependence of the synods was heightened by the fact that they had no independent church leadership. They were still subject to the white superintendent, who was accountable to the mission society's Home Board.

This situation changed with the formation of regional churches in the early 1960s. For example, when the Transvaal synod became a church in 1961, it had to write a new

3 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.2.
4 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.5.
5 Hans Florin, 1967, *Lutherans in South Africa*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing Co. p.93.

constitution, and elected its church leadership. The church leadership was accountable to the synod. Instead of the chairperson of the synod having authority, the office of president ('*Präses*') was instituted (in the white churches). The black churches chose an episcopal system of church government. The mission churches had become autonomous regional churches.[6]

... to Regional Churches

A number of factors contributed to the development of regional churches. The wave of decolonization sweeping Africa put the issue of autonomous African churches on the agenda.[7] The All African Lutheran Conference held in Tanzania in 1955 called for such moves. The missionary agencies also realized that their mission synods would become independent churches, and thus they initiated discussions over church independence.[8] More black church workers were trained to enable black administration and ministry to the church. By 1962, the year before many regional churches were formed, the BMS had 85 black ministers as opposed to 35 white missionaries.[9] Thus a slow transition from mission society to independent church had taken place. This transition brought about the ecclesial conditions for a more effective political witness.

The theological force behind these changes was the vision of one Lutheran church for South Africa. The dominant theology preached by the white missionaries had led to separate churches, but an alternative, prophetic ecclesiology was developing in the black congregations, and among some missionaries too.

Two vital conferences formalized the process of the formation of regional churches. A 'Preparatory Assembly' in November 1957 in Durban was called by the CLM.[10] It laid the ground work for a 'Constituent Assembly for the Formation of Regional Churches

6 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.5.

7 Wolfgang Albers, 1970, 'Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche im Südlichen Afrika', Universität Hamburg: Magisterschrift. p.21.

8 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.97.
L.Zöllner and J.A. Heese, 1984, *The Berlin Missionaries in South Africa*, Pretoria: HSRC. p.19.9

10 Aunice E. Nsibande, 1981, 'Historical Development of the ELCSA-SER', UNISA: M.Th. Thesis. p.35.

and a FELCSA' in October 1958 in Christianenburg. Black pastors were well represented at these conferences.[11] The Berlin, Hermannsburg, Norwegian, American and Swedish missionary societies all participated in this process. It was here that conflicting theological understandings of the unity of the church clashed.

The HMS asserted the old dominant position most strongly. The HMS was not in favour of united regional churches, but preferred the formation of regional federations of synods.[12] This would allow the different churches to retain their autonomous theological interpretations.

The black pastors present made it clear, however, that they were intent on a full merger.[13] What had long been an alternative ecclesiology only in theory was now to be incarnated in organizational structures. At the level of black regional churches, the prophetic theology was now stronger than the old 'separate development' position. Yet the final goal of the prophetic theology — one Lutheran church in South Africa — was still far from being achieved.

At the Constituent Assembly, it was agreed to form a regional church in Natal, and to work towards the rapid establishment of similar churches in the other provinces.[14] The most extensive ground-work had been done in Natal, where the Cooperating Lutheran Missions had been working towards a united Zulu Lutheran Church for a long time. The base of the regional church was to be expanded beyond the Zulu people to include the Xhosa and Swazi-speaking peoples as well. Thus the ethnic definition of church regions was being broken down, and replaced by a regional one. In Natal, a Union Committee was formed to tie up the practical questions of the merger. Subcommittees on theology, organization, and finance were formed.[15] By 1960, they had completed the ground-work, and the ELCSA (Zulu-Xhosa-Swazi Region) was launched.[16]

11 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.6.
12 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.26.
13 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.37.
14 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.27.
15 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.38.
16 Georg Scriba, 1983, 'Einheit lutherischer Missionen und Kirchen in Südafrika', Rustenburg: unpublished.

Other regional churches followed the example of the Natal region. All the regional churches were formed between 1960 and 1963. The Transvaal regional church was formed in 1963, initially without the participation of the HMS. The resistance of the HMS to the unfication processes in many areas pointed to the strength of the dominant theology in that mission society. The HMS soon changed its mind however, and ELCSA (Tvl. Region) was launched.[17] ELCSA (Cape-Orange Region) was also formed in 1963.[18]

Black reaction to the formation of regional churches was varied. The younger generation and many clergy tended to support the merger. This was expressed for example in a letter by the theological students at Oscarsberg to the Constituent Assembly.[19] Among some of the older generation, however, there was some reluctance to break with the mission churches. Clearly not all black Lutherans had a prophetic theology; many had internalized the dominant theology and made it their own.

White reaction to the drive for independence for black Lutherans was to emphasize, even more strongly than before, the importance of German culture in the white churches. As an alternative vision for the Lutheran churches asserted itself more strongly, the need to consolidate the previously dominant theology at least in the white churches increased. Many white Lutherans were resentful of what they saw as outside pressure to give black churches independence quickly. They saw this as interference in their internal affairs. There was also much mistrust of ministers sent out from Germany who were seen to be 'liberal'. Some white missionaries, however, saw the need for regional churches and supported them strongly.

The differing reactions can be explained by the fact that the formation of regional churches was a reaffirmation of the principle of organizing Lutheran churches along language or tribal lines. This principle had its roots in the dominant ecclesiology of the

---

p.1.

17 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.28.

18 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.94.

19 See Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.100.

missionaries, who sought to establish '*Volkskirchen*'. "In the discussion about a black united Lutheran church in South Africa the ethnic principle received consideration. ... This principle had its roots especially in the German mission tradition that the word of God can be proclaimed in a relevant way only in the encounter with the language, the thinking, the concepts and the culture of a specific people".[20] At this point, the dominant Lutheran theology, as held by most missionaries, conformed to the policy of separate development.

It was precisely to escape from this kind of thinking that black Lutherans wanted to form their own churches. In doing so, they had to develop a different understanding of the church, an alternative ecclesiology to the dominant one. Resistance to the dominant ecclesiology had in the past been expressed through withdrawal, and the formation of African Independent Churches. Now, this alternative ecclesiology asserted itself within the established Lutheran churches. The most concrete manifestation of this was the struggle to overcome the ethnic divisions in the churches, and those between black and white Lutherans.

ELCSA-SER as an Example of the Regional Churches

In July 1960, a General Church Assembly was called to establish the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa South Eastern Region (ELCSA-SER).[21] It was held at KwaMondi. Many practical issues – such as structures, the need for church workers, and finances – occupied the new church at the beginning. The new church not only led the way with many practical arrangements, but also showed a bold new approach to political issues. Despite the preoccupation with internal affairs, the ELCSA-SER demonstrated that greater unity was a condition favouring a more effective political witness of Lutherans. A statement issued by ELCSA-SER in 1963 was one of the first by Lutherans on an issue such as race relations (see Chapter Six).[22]

---

20 Kistner, 1977, 'The Context of the Umpumulo Memorandum', Geneva: LWF. p.174.
21 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.40.
22 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.67.

The following structures were set up. A Church Assembly with supreme judicial and legislative power met annually. Two thirds of the delegates were laity (if one includes evangelists as laity).[23] A Church Council composed of the superintendent and one lay person of each circuit, took on the function of the Assembly between meetings, meeting quarterly.[24] The bishop was head of the church for life, and had far-reaching powers.25 The regional church was divided into circuits, which were made up of parishes which had between 3 and 18 congregations.[26]

Commissions were established in the church to look at education, religious education, youth work, stewardship, the diaconate, literature, women's work and men's work.[27] The church structure was hierarchical; each level was represented at the next higher level; thus democracy functioned in a centralized way.[28] The constitution also recognized certain associations, namely the Women's Prayer League, the Association of Young People, the Children's Association , the Lutheran Teachers' Christian Fellowship and the Men's Association.[29]

One way of asserting the new direction of the church was to establish its headquarters at Umpumulo.[30] The church accepted the traditional Lutheran creeds, basing its doctrine on the Augsburg Confession and the Book of Concord. These confessions were accepted as true interpretations of the Word of God.[31] In its constitution, ELCSA-SER noted that God's action had not been exhausted in church history thus far, but that God continues to act among the people of South Africa today.[32] This was an important

23 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.37.
24 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.56.
25 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.39.
26 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.44-45. It was of great symbolic significance for black Lutherans that the circuits had local names, e.g. Umfolozi Circuit, rather than the old German names (Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.56.).
27 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.62.
28 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.46.
29 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.108.
30 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.44.
31 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.33; note that the HMS acknowledged a far more extensive list of specifically Lutheran creeds.
32 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.36.

theological basis from which the new church tackled the obstacles facing it. It affirmed that God could act through the church in new ways.

The first task of the new regional church was to overcome the divisions it had inherited.[33] Not only did it need to integrate congregations formed by five different missionary societies (which came from four different countries in Europe and America), but it also had to overcome the tribal divisions which had been encouraged by the political and ecclesiastical dispensations of the missionary period. The process of forging a new ecclesial identity was begun. One way of doing this was the decision of the new church to change its name from 'Zulu-Xhosa-Swazi Region' to 'South Eastern Region'.[34] In this change of name, the previously dominant definition of the churches in ethnic or language terms was symbolically replaced by an alternative, regional definition.

The divisions left by the traditions of different missions were obvious to everyone because the HMS mission synod did not join initially. It only joined in 1963.[35] At the formation of ELCSA-SER in 1960, the HMS Zulu Synod received sympathy "because it became clear that all the indigenous people were committed to the idea of one church in spite of the fact that some missionaries were totally against it".[36] Despite these good intentions, the dominant ecclesiological perceptions often persisted. Ordinary church members often still saw themselves as being '*Berlin*' or '*Hermannsburg*', rather than simply Lutheran or ELCSA. The new church inherited the confessional debates between 'pure Lutherans' (HMS) and those from a United Church background (BMS). The question of Africanizing the liturgy receded into the background. Many black Lutherans had fully appropriated the liturgies they had been taught.[37]

Other problems facing the new churches were the continued dependence on whites for

33 See Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.33ff.
34 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.6; also Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.28.
35 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.28.
36 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.44.
37 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.89ff.

access to land.[38] Apartheid legislation made it impossible for black Lutherans to own the land which many of their churches stood on. There was also a great need for more black church workers to put the leadership of the church into the hands of the people. "In actual practice, the missionaries were very reluctant to increase the number of indigenous ordained persons", because this threatened their own jobs and position in the church.[39]

The missionaries continued to work in the church, but were paid by the missionary societies. This was a generous gesture by the societies, though it also perpetuated the dependence of the church on the missionary society.[40] The regional churches could not afford to finance the theological institutions which had been built up, yet they needed more church workers.[41]

A problem also arose that some black pastors now expected to live like the missionaries they were replacing. They reproduced the attitudes they had learnt from the missionaries. By contrast, the evangelists tended to live with the people they were working with, and really carry the message of God.[42]

Choice of an Episcopal Structure

In the formation of a regional church in Natal, a key question was that of leadership. The Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) insisted on having a bishop as leader of the new church, others were in favour of a president.[43] Even at KwaMondi, no unity had been reached on this question.[44] The problem became acute because the CSM made the acceptance of the episcopate a condition of its participation Furthermore, its Bishop Fosseus had been the chairperson of the Unity Committee, and was the most likely

38 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.55.
39 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.52.
40 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.48.
41 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.64.
42 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.67.
43 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.7.
44 Heinrich Schlag, 1966, 'Lutherische Zusammenarbeit und Einigungsversuche im Südlichen Afrika', Universität Hamburg: Magisterschrift. p.36.

candidate to head the new church.[45] Eventually, the other missions relented, although a five-year interim period was granted before the first bishop would be elected.

Why was this decision made? A common view in white missionary circles was that bishops were more acceptable because of their similarity to chiefs. "The Africans find this office to be in keeping with their social system, i.e. the tribal and family order. They want to have a bishop, who will be an equivalent to the head of the tribe to them".[46] The role of bishop is clearly one of authority, not only a pastoral role,[47] although some argued that a Lutheran bishop should have a more pastoral role.[48] Other factors were the powerful position of that bishop Fosseus had won in Natal, and the respect he had won among black Lutherans. Being head of the unity committee, he was a likely candidate to be head of the new church. Through him, the CSM exerted more influence than its numbers would have warranted.

This decision had far-reaching effects in other regional churches, and later in ELCSA. Other regional churches later followed suit, even though they had a different missionary tradition, with a presidency being the norm.[49] ELCSA eventually also adopted this structure, a fact which is now regretted by many people in ELCSA, since it creates a position which is not changeable.[50] As Leonardo Boff aptly remarks, "the hierarchical function is essential to the church — but it does not subsist in and for itself".[51] The danger in the regional churches, and later in ELCSA, is that the hierarchy does not serve the church, but exists for itself. The church is in the first instance a community of believers; only secondarily to differences arise within this unity to fulfill the functions of the community. Jesus did not select the disciples as administrators of a future institution, but formed a community with them. There is a need in ELCSA to "conceptualize the church more from foundation up than from the steeple down".[52]

45 Nsibande, 1981, *op.cit.*, p.41-42.
46 Herman Schlyter, 1953, *The History of the CLM in Natal*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing House. p.84.
47 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.8.
48 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.7.
49 Simon Maimela, 12/01/1989, p.2.
50 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.8.
51 Leonardo Boff, 1986, *Ecclesiogenesis*, London: Collins. p.24.
52 Boff, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.25.

German Congregations

At the same time as black regional churches were being formed, white churches also formalized their structures. In 1961, the 'Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche in Südafrika' (Transvaal) and ELKSA (Kapkirche) were formed, and two years later the Hermannsburger Kirche.[53] These churches came together with the German Lutheran Church in Namibia (DELKSWA) to form the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southeran Africa (UELCSA, the German abbreviation is 'VELKSA') in 1964. In 1981, the Transvaal and Natal churches united, and are now known as ELKSA (NT). The HMS white church constituted itself as ELKSA (Hermannsburg) in 1963.[54]

Church-Mission Relations

With the independence of the former mission churches, the relationship between the new churches and the missionary societies needed to be redefined. A realignment of theological traditions took place. White missionaries no longer had the control to be able to assert the dominant theology in the black churches. These churches provided a possible base for the development of a prophetic Lutheran theology. A clash of authorities between the church, the home board and the field board loomed.[55] The missions expressed concern that Christian outreach would not be continued sufficiently by the churches, while the churches wanted their newly-won independence to be expressed in organizational authority as well. The mission societies have redefined their role to be one of service to the churches which they helped develop,[56] yet the tension has remained.

53 Scriba, 1983, *op.cit.*, p.1.
54 *ibid.*
55 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.123.
56 Horst Meyberg, 12/01/1989, p.3.

The CCLF and the Board of Trustees

With the growth of a theology emphasizing the unity of all Lutherans, initiatives for broader Lutheran unity also took form. In 1953, the director of the Berlin Mission, Dr. Brennecke, visited SA and encouraged greater cooperation between the Lutheran churches. Through his efforts and those of other church leaders, a loose confederation was formed – the "Council of Churches on Lutheran Foundation" (CCLF).[57] In 1967, 12 Lutheran churches, 8 mission agencies and two Moravian churches were affiliated to the CCLF.[58] Furthermore, a Board of Trustees for Lutheran Extension Work in South Africa was formed by the Lutheran World Federation in order to facilitate increased cooperation.

Conclusion

The period during which Lutheran congregations formed themselves into synods was still shaped by the dominant theology. Synods were formed along ethnic lines, to implement the ideal of '*Volkskirchen*'. Yet in an embryonic form, the synods provided the social basis for the emergence of a prophetic theology and vision of the church. It was in the following period, with the formation of ELCSA and FELCSA, that this theology developed more fully.

57 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.4.
58 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.66-67.

CHAPTER FIVE
LUTHERAN CHURCHES AND FEDERATIONS (FROM 1963)

In this period, the prophetic vision of the Lutheran churches began to be asserted more strongly. Black Lutherans pressed for the formation of a united Lutheran church. As a result of greater unity, Lutherans were better able to address the issues which divided South African society at large.

Formation and History of FELCSA

The alternative ecclesiological vision asserted itself in the formation of a Federation which – for a few years – united all Lutheran churches in Southern Africa. The loose unity which had been established in the Council of Churches on Lutheran Foundation (CCLF) were deepened in this period through the formation of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (FELCSA). The first plans were suggested by Bishop Fosseus of the Church of Sweden Mission, and Dr. von Krause of the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS).[1] The aim was to create a federation uniting Lutherans from all mission societies and all races. The CCLF had united churches on a doctrinal basis – all the churches affirmed Holy Scripture, the three ecumenical creeds and the confessional writings of the Lutheran Reformation (esp. the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord) as the foundation of their faith.[2] This doctrinal unity, however, had not taken organizational form. In terms of the previously dominant theology, spiritual unity was sufficient. The CCLF had provided only loose links between the different churches. There were strong calls from the international church (the World Council of Churches [WCC] and the Lutheran World Federation [LWF]) for visible Lutheran unity as a witness in the South African context.

In the context of a renewed theological emphasis on organizational as well as spiritual

1 Heinrich Schlag, 1966, 'Lutherische Zusammenarbeit und Einigungsversuche', Universität Hamburg: Magisterschrift. p.72.

2 Hans Florin, 1967, *Lutherans in South Africa*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing Co. p.106.

unity, the initiatives towards unity bore fruit in 1966 with the formation of FELCSA. FELCSA formally united all Lutheran churches in South Africa and Namibia.[3] On the 24th and 25th February 1966 the last meeting of the CCLF was held, and the Federation of Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa was launched.[4] It included the black regional churches (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa [ELCSA] Tswana Region, Transvaal Region, Cape-Orange Region, South Eastern Region), the German churches (ELKSA Transvaal, and Kapkirche), three Namibian churches (DELKSWA, ELOK, and the Rhenish Mission Church), the ELC of Rhodesia, and the Moravian Church (W. Cape).[5]

FELCSA still constituted a compromise, however, between the dominant and prophetic theology in the Lutheran churches. It united Lutherans, but did not have much power over the churches, and therefore could not force them to adopt political positions. The old dominant position was once again expressed most strongly by the HMS and the ELKSA (Hermannsburg), the latter saying that it had to wait until its 1967 synod before it could agree to join.

FELCSA's structure was modelled on that of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Every two years there was to be a general assembly with two representatives from each member church; in between these sittings, an executive would attend to the business of FELCSA.[6] The executive structure had limited authority, owing mainly to the reservations expressed by the German Lutheran churches.[7] Decisions of the federation were not binding on the member churches. The dominant Lutheran theology of separate development still demanded autonomy for the different language groups. The black churches participating in FELCSA were unhappy with this loose federal structure, and pressed for FELCSA to work towards the formation of one Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa -- one ELCSA. The alternative ecclesiology, which saw

3 Georg Scriba, 1983, 'Einheit lutherischer Missionen', Rustenburg: unpublished. p.1.
4 Schlag, 1966, *op.cit.*, p.77.
5 Schlag, 1966, *op.cit.*, p.78.
6 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.14-15.
7 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.93.

spiritual unity incarnating itself in organizational unity, asserted itself in this way against the dominant one.

Despite the limitations imposed by being a compromise between these two theologies, the benefits of unity in terms of a more effective political witness already became apparent. FELCSA became the forum in which discussion around a Lutheran political witness could occur. The Federation, in cooperation with the LWF, organized numerous seminars in which positions on apartheid were debated.[8] Perhaps the most important document emerging from this process was the 'Appeal to Lutheran Christians in South Africa' (see Chapter Six). FELCSA also played an important role in distributing funds, channeling them amongst other things into development work, legal costs for political prisoners and other aid for victims of apartheid.[9]

The tensions between the white churches and the black churches ultimately split FELCSA. The two different theologies and visions of the church could not exist in one structure. The four black synods which had formed the ELCSA in 1975, left FELCSA in 1984.[10] This break-away followed serious, but finally unsuccessful attempts by the black churches to press for more effective unity and a clear and binding position on apartheid. After the break-away, FELCSA issued a statement recognizing the 'errors' of apartheid, yet the division between the black ELCSA and the Federation has remained. Neither the dominant nor the prophetic vision of the church could assert itself at this point; the result was a stalemate.

FELCSA has not accepted the departure of the black churches, claiming that they still owe the federation membership dues. ELCSA withdrew its Rev. Abrahamse, who had been serving as General Secretary of FELCSA.[11] FELCSA felt that it was being written off by the newly formed ELCSA (and the LWF). FELCSA also said that it would welcome ELCSA back into the Federation, but ELCSA clearly was not prepared to rejoin.

8 Stephan Rothe, 1986, *Kirchen in Südafrika*, Hamburg: Entwicklungspolitische Korrespondenz. p.74.
9 Rothe, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.75.
10 Rothe, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.75/6.
11 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.10.

FELCSA formed a new executive, and continued with its functions. It remains the largest federation of Lutherans in Southern Africa, and its membership is larger than that of ELCSA (ca. 725 000 and 550,000 respectively[12]).

Formation and History of ELCSA

Black church leaders saw FELCSA as a step towards forming one united church, with one church leadership and structure. The white churches, however, were determined to retain their autonomy, and wanted FELCSA to remain a federal structure in which each church would keep its own autonomy and theological direction. To form one church, one constitution had to be created. Structural differences between the black and white churches had emerged, with the black churches adopting an episcopal structure, the whites a more congregational or presbyterian approach.[13] Nonetheless, the black churches pressed for unity, and unity talks took place. With their independent organizational base in the regional churches, black Lutherans were able to assert their theological vision more clearly.

White leadership asked for more time. Factors which demanded the delay were said to be the time it had taken to reach the present degree of unity, structural difficulties, the need to explain the issues to their membership, and the legal and political implications of a united church in a divided society. As Nsibande ironically remarks, the reason always given for disunity was that "the time has not yet come".[14] No longer able to determine the theological direction of all Lutheran churches, white Lutherans sought to remain in control of their own, separate churches.

The position of the black churches was that they wanted to form one ELCSA, and that they wanted to include the white churches in this process. Theologically, they stressed that the spiritual unity of Lutherans needed to be incarnated in one church structure.

---

12 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.10.

13 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.6.

14 Aunice E. Nsibande, 1981, 'Historical Development of the ELCSA-SER', UNISA: M.Th. Thesis. p.34.

They did not want to form ELCSA without them, but felt that they could no longer wait.[15] Thus the alternative vision of the church was not a mere reversal of the old dominant position; it was more inclusive than the dominant theology had ever been. The black churches were supported in their position by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) was formed in December 1975 in Rustenburg.[16] It included the four existing black regional churches, i.e. the South Eastern, Tswana, Cape-Orange and Transvaal regions. These regional churches became the dioceses of ELCSA. The Central Diocese was soon formed, so that ELCSA had five dioceses in South Africa (seven with Botswana and Swaziland, which are not included here). The formation of each of these dioceses was a complex process, involving many different mission societies. The ELCSA South Eastern Region, for example, was formed in 1960 through the joining of American Lutheran Mission (ALM), Berlin Mission Society (BMS), Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS), Norwegian (NMS) and Church of Sweden (CSM) congregations.[17] A common Lutheran identity needed to be forged, and an alternative theological understanding to the inherited dominant one introduced. One way of doing this was through training colleges at Marang and Umpumulo, where all ELCSA ministers could train together.

The structures of ELCSA were taken from the regional churches (see above). The church was headed by a General Assembly and a Church Council. Minutes of Church Councils and Diocesan Councils were kept, but are often in such cursory form that they did not reveal what really went on. Each diocese had its bishop, and a presiding bishop was elected to be the head of ELCSA. Each diocese was divided into circuits, which in turn consisted of parishes with several congregations.

ELCSA has become a possible social base for a prophetic Lutheran theology. This

15 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.7.
16 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.9.
17 Eleanor and Wilfred Bockelmann, 1972, *An Exercise in Compassion*, Minneapolis: Augsburg. p.38.

development is inhibited, however, by some of the problems indicated below. Yet ELCSA has achieved much in its few years of existence. It has largely overcome the tribal definitions of its dioceses, and continues to work for a reduction of the differences between people and congregations from different missionary backgrounds. ELCSA has also taken some political positions, although it has been limited in this by its conservative rural base and its hierarchical structure.

A sign of hope is that ELCSA is not remaining exclusively African. Its theological commitment to unity in spirit and organization was not only theoretical, but was given shape in practice. In addition to the black regions, Indian Lutheran congregations in Durban are linked to ELCSA. Furthermore, St. Olaf's congregation in Durban, a mixed but primarily white congregation, wanted to join ELCSA. The church council of the congregation was in favour of the move, but some members were reluctant. Finally, the church council and a large number of the congregation split off and applied for membership in ELCSA.[18] ELCSA also initiated a project aimed at a ministry for whites. This has taken the shape of a mixed inner-city congregation in Doornfontein, Johannesburg. "The focus of it was that it would reach out from the black church to whites".[19]

Problems faced by ELCSA

In the formation of dioceses, the attempts made by the regional churches to overcome tribal and confessional divisions were continued. Despite these attempts to forge a new ecclesiology, some of the regions were still dominated by one group. Thus the Western is Tswana; the Northern, Pedi; the South Eastern, Zulu. The missionary ecclesiology of '*Volkskirchen*' had left deep marks on the black churches, too. In the areas where homelands exist, ELCSA leadership often has close relations with the homeland authorities. Thus Bishop Rapoo of the Western Diocese had close links with Mangope of Bophutatswana, while Bishop Dlamini of the South Eastern Diocese is an Inkatha

18 Tom Soeldner, 09/01/1989, p.8.
19 Tom Soeldner, 09/01/1989, p.1.

supporter.[20] Such links tend to perpetuate tribal divisions. On the other hand, the Central Diocese is very heterogeneous, and has caused some old divisions to be forgotten.

Another problem for the new church were its financial difficulties. Salaries are the second-lowest in comparison to other mainline churches.[21] Ministers in ELCSA presently earn R350-00 per month plus accomodation and money for transport. The average income of church workers is less than half the average income of Soweto residents.[22] "Dutch Reformed, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian African ministers all received higher stipends than even the highest Lutheran pay scale" in 1965.[23] At the same time, pastors have responsibility for many congregations, and there is a need for more church workers. Many pastors are unhappy that they are transferred so often; a quarter of all pastors are transferred each year.

There is some debate within ELCSA about part-time ministry. The General Assembly in 1984 adopted the concept, and reaffirmed it in 1986, but the Church Council has not yet acted effectively to implement this decision.[24] Many people would see part time ministers being a way of dealing with the financial problems which ELCSA faces. Full time ministry is expensive.

A structural problem it that the episcopal structure inherited by ELCSA tends towards great centralization, though this was not foreseen at the time when it was chosen.[25] The diocesan office headed by the bishop has enormous power, as does the Church Council at a national level. The Diocesan Councils, for example, receive contributions from all the congregations (87.5% of the congregation's income is sent to the diocese), and then pay ministers' salaries centrally. Some of the funds are diverted for use in the central administration. Members of the churches, and even ministers feel a lack of

20 Simon Maimela, 12/01/1989, p.4-5.
21 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.91.
22 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.92.
23 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.111.
24 Simon Maimela, 12/01/1989, p.1.
25 Simon Maimela, 12/01/1989, p.2.

control over their own church.

This problem is exacerbated in ELCSA by the dominant role which Bishop Manas Buthelezi plays. Though he is the youngest bishop, he has enormous authority within ELCSA. He will remain bishop perhaps another 25 years, and will probably soon be presiding bishop. He is the best-trained theologian in the church, having studied at Umpumulo, and then Yale and Drew.[26] Other ministers and even bishops defer to Bishop Buthelezi because of his academic background, and also his international reputation (through SACC activities). He often uses his theological knowledge to assert his position. He also knows the ELCSA constitution well, and uses it to get things done his way. Bishop Buthelezi dominates the internal politics of ELCSA.

A further problem of the hierarchical structure is that it allows conscientization and political action to be limited to a few church leaders. These leaders make occasional statements about political realities, but do not involve the ordinary membership in such activities.

The white German-speaking churches

The German Lutheran churches in South Africa have gone through a process of consolidation and unification. They had already formed their own federation, the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (UELCSA), in 1964. Having lost their dominant position, white Lutherans have consolidated their theology and organization. At the time of the formation of regional churches, the white churches constituted themselves as ELKSA (Kap), ELKSA (Tvl) and ELKSA (Hermannsburg). The Cape Church ('*Deutsche Ev.-Luth. Synode Südafrikas, Kapkirche*') in 1961 comprised of 19 congregations with 11 minsters.[27] Geographically, these congregations are situated in three areas - the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape and the Orange Free State. The

26 *ibid.*

27 Kurt Naumann, 1961, *Festschrift zum hundertjährigen Jubiläum*, Cape Town, Deutsche evangelisch-lutherische St. Martini-Kirche: ABC Druckerii. p.84.

president of the church is Präses Rohwer. The Transvaal synod was formed in 1926, and became an independent church in 1961.[28] It retained close links with the BMS, which too was represented in the church leadership. Berlin missionaries serviced the rural settler congregations, where no full-time minister could be appointed. The Natal synod was known as the '*Hermannsburger Deutsche Ev.-Luth. Synode Südafrikas*', reflecting the predominant influence of the HMS mission. Many ministers are still educated in Hermannsburg in Germany. The Natal church also still maintains a German church school in Hermannsburg (SA). In 1981, the Hermannsburg church and the Transvaal church joined to form ELKSA (NT), thus uniting two streams of German missionary work. Through UELCSA, the German Lutheran churches are united with each other and the German church in Namibia, DELKSWA.

Theological Education

For most of the history of the churches, theological education has been separated along racial lines, reflecting the broader division in the churches.[29] Only in the past few years has a centre developed where black and white Lutheran ministers are trained together, at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. Theological training institutions have been an important means of shaping the dominant theological tradition, but have also been areas from which new theological ideas have emerged. Theological education is a key site of struggle in the Lutheran churches.

Theological training for black Lutherans began in the missionary period. One of the crucial roles played by the CLM in Natal was to promote joint theological education. This work led to the establishment of a seminary at Marang, one at Oscarsberg, and a larger theological college at Umpumulo.[30] Umpumulo now offers a diploma, as well as

28 *ibid.*

29 The most extensive work on the history of theological education in the Lutheran churches has been done by Gunther Wittenberg. See Gunther Wittenberg, 1970, 'Zur Frage des Pfarrernachwuchses...' in *Brückenschlag III*, Stuttgart: Quell Verlag; and 1988, 'Lutheran Theological Education at the University of Natal', University of Natal (PMB): unpublished; see also Herman Schlyter, 1953, *The History of the CLM in Natal*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing House, on the CLM's work in theological education in the early years.

30 Wittenberg, 1988, *op.cit.*,p.1.

a B.Th. degree through UNISA.

German Lutherans have throughout maintained a strong belief that "the best, the most intensive, most thorough theology comes from Germany, and everything else is just a pale reflection of that".[31] The reproduction of the dominant theology was ensured by strong links to Germany. This is illustrated by the HMS and ELKSA (Hermannsburg), who still have many of their pastors and missionaries trained in the '*Missionsseminar*' in Hermannsburg, Germany. This was one reason why the white Lutheran churches were the last of the major churches to establish their own theological training institution for their own pastors. In 1958, the Board of Trustees for Lutheran Extension Work considered theological education at a university. In 1972, an agreement was signed between UNP and UELCSA to begin a course at the university as part of the Department of Religious Studies.

With the emergence of a prophetic Lutheran theology, plans for joint theological education of black and white Lutheran ministers developed. In 1983, ELCSA discussed the issue of theological education and opted to join the UNP programme, which meant that joint education has become a reality. With financial assistance from the LWF, the programme was expanded to have four full-time posts. The programme at UNP now has developed into a non-racial department, open not only to Lutherans. It is sponsored mainly by the LWF, with contributions from ELCSA and UELCSA.[32] In 1989, Theological Studies became a department in its own right, separate from Religious Studies.

31 Frank Müller, 18/01/1989, p.4.

32 'Minutes of Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa, Zamba, Malawi, March 5 to 11 1982'.

Issues facing the Lutheran Churches

The Question of Unity

"Perhaps the most noticeable blemish on the Lutheran image is the lack of unity among the Lutheran churches in Southern Africa".[33] Divisions between various missionary societies, tribes and races have fragmented the Lutheran churches. The theological debate has centered around the question whether unity is primarily spiritual (long the dominant position), or whether it also has to be incarnated in appropriate organizational structures, i.e. in one Lutheran church. Unity remains the key issue in discussions between ELCSA and the white churches. White Lutherans continue to argue that they need more time to achieve unity, and point to the problems involved in uniting diverse traditions.

Perhaps the most serious problem is the different organizational structures which have developed since ELCSA adopted the episcopal structure. In this area, recent developments have taken the white and black churches further apart, rather than bringing them closer together. Some white congregations have a strong sense of independence which they want to preserve.

> It would be simple for white synods to write what ELCSA wants, and then join. The problem is how to implement a merger, which does not result in a third church. A compromise between the congregational and episcopal structure is needed.[34]

The black churches are understandably impatient with white reluctance to change. Not only has the same argument been used since the days of the CLM (1912), but the black churches have themselves shown that the practical problems involved in uniting different missionary traditions and tribes into one black church are not insurmountable. Only fifteen years elapsed between the formation of regional churches and the formation of ELCSA. Though ELCSA has not ironed out all the problems, the fruits of unity are beginning to be seen. ELCSA also has the support of the LWF in

---

33 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.72.

34 Simon Maimela, 12/01/1989, p.3.

pressing for unity.

The struggle between different theological concepts of unity continues through the Unity Committee, which is investigating mergers between white and black Lutheran churches. Particularly the ELKSA (NT) and ELCSA are investigating possibilities for closer cooperation.[35] Joint offices may be built in Kempton Park for both churches.[36]

The Question of Language

A continuing issue for the German-speaking churches is the role of German language and culture in the Lutheran churches.[37] Even in the white congregations, there are many members who do not speak German fluently. Many Lutherans argue that the long-term survival of the churches will only be possible if other languages – most likely English – are introduced. Within the old dominant theology, language was a defining factor for the churches. On the other hand, the history and roots of these churches are so deeply embedded in German culture that such a change would clearly take many decades. The questions are not only practical, but relate to giving up the strong link between Lutheran and German identity. Those identities have been welded together in history so tightly, that separating them seems impossible to those involved.

Conclusion

The formation of regional churches, of FELCSA and ELCSA were all steps towards a united Lutheran church in South Africa. Yet progress was slow and limited, as each step was contested by two different understandings of the church. Yet even the limited unity which has been achieved enabled Lutherans to take a clearer political stand. It is the Lutheran witness with regard to social, political and economic affairs that the next chapter focuses on.

35 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.10.
36 Tom Soeldner, 09/01/1989, p.9.
37 See for example Naumann, 1961, *op.cit.*, p.87-88.

CHAPTER SIX
THE POLITICAL STANCE OF THE CHURCHES

In the last two decades, the political stance of the Lutheran churches has become more explicit than before. With the formation of regional churches, the Federation (FELCSA) and a united black church (ELCSA), the conditions for a more effective political witness were created. Black Lutherans had some control over their congregations, and could develop a prophetic theology. Unity was being achieved at many levels, although the divide between black and white churches remained. An alternative ecclesiology promoting the unity of all Lutherans was promoted vigorously. The success of these internal struggles – though limited – resulted in greater Lutheran participation in the broader struggle. The documents and events referred to below reflect both the conflicts within the Lutheran churches, and their attempts to engage their social context.

The Shift from Dominant to Prophetic Theology

When Dr. Florin wrote his report on the Lutheran churches in 1965 – that is, immediately after the formation of regional churches, but before FELCSA and ELCSA –, his assessment was that "there has been little socio-politically critical witness among Lutherans in the past".[1] He found that the Lutheran church was seen amongst urban Africans as an appendix to the Dutch Reformed Church, i.e. as very conservative.[2] The dominant theology of the Lutheran churches did not include a tradition of protest, as was the case with the English-speaking churches. For example, Lutherans did not participate in the Cottesloe Consultation, an important landmark in the history of church resistance to apartheid.[3]

Previous chapters have suggested a number of factors for the conservatism of dominant

1 Hans Florin, 1967, *Lutherans in South Africa*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing Co. p.67; with the exception of ELCSA-SER's 1963 statement on the churches and the race question.

2 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.71.

3 Wolfgang Albers, 1970, 'Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche im Südlichen Afrika', Universität Hamburg: Magisterschrift. p.148.

Lutheran theology. The missionary societies understood themselves as sojourners in the country, and did not want to participate in politics, since they saw themselves as an extension of the German church in South Africa. This apolitical attitude was reproduced in the German churches, and to some extent in the black churches as well. The strong link to the German settler community and their loose alliance with Afrikanerdom were also inherited by the churches.[4] This social base was a powerful factor inhibiting the political engagement of Lutherans. Another reason for Lutheran conservatism was the rural base of the churches, where both white settlers and black congregations tended to be conservative.

Theologically, the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms was interpreted in such a way that it legitimized political non-involvement.[5] This doctrine is dealt with in more detail below. The dominant ecclesiology determined that Lutheran churches developed along racially segregated lines. Thus social and theological factors shaped the conservative political position adopted by Lutherans.

There were, however, other factors forcing Lutherans beyond this position. Black Lutherans were experiencing the advent of apartheid. "In 1948, when the NP came into power and introduced the Group Areas Act, the people who suffered most were those on the mission farms".[6] Many congregations were forced to move off mission land, and into the Bantustans.

> For example in Hermannsburg there was a big black congregation, over a thousand people. There were forced removals. Or in Hebron near Stanger, there is a big church there standing empty.[7]

Black congregations were angry that the missionaries did nothing to prevent their removal to the homelands, which they found to be overcrowded. The different life experiences of black and white Lutherans caused tensions between them. Black Lutherans expected their churches to address the problems they experienced under

---

4 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.67.

5 See, however, Wolfram Kistner, 1977, 'The Context of the Umpumulo Memorandum' in U. Duchrow (ed), *Lutheran Churches*, Geneva: LWF, for a different approach to the Two Kingdoms Doctrine.

6 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.4.

7 *ibid.*

apartheid.

In the course of struggles within the churches, some missionaries and church leaders were challenged to defend their black fellow-Lutherans by getting involved in broader struggles. In the 1950s, some protest against apartheid legislation was raised, even though it was short-lived.

> In the meantime Lutherans collided with the Government on a number of issues which had become law and which were left to encroach upon the authority of the church. Such issues were the 'Church Clause' (1957), allocation of church sites (1957ff.), tenants on mission farms (1957ff.), and transfer of Lutheran schools to Bantu Education authorities (1959). ... In the end loyal and law-abiding timidity appeared to be the winner in these conflicts of conscience.[8]

When black Lutherans gained control over their churches, they were able to express their problems and the expectation of the church's response. The formation of regional churches was an important condition favouring a stronger political witness of the Lutheran churches.

> When the regional churches were established, it was the first time that you heard concerns about the situation in South Africa, social concerns, things that were never known during the times of the mission — the discussion of social problems. At that time, the government was still very harsh. The racial issue was at the centre of everybody's life.[9]

A prophetic theology, and in particular a prophetic ecclesiology could develop, one which addressed the divisions within Lutheranism. This prophetic ecclesiology not only sought to transform the churches internally, but encouraged them to address societal problems outside the churches as well.

It was the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa-South Eastern Region (ELCSA-SER), the first black regional church to be formed, which produced the first clear statement on the race question by a South African Lutheran church. Also in the 1960s, discussions were initiated by Theological Study Commission of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) around the question of unity, and the political witness of the churches. The Umpumulo Memorandum was the result of one such discussion.

---

8 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.68/69.

9 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.7.

The SER Statement [1963]

One of the first political statements by black Lutherans was 'The Statement of the ELCSA-SER pertaining to the Attitude of the Church towards the Race Problem'.[10] Its significance lay in the way it directly addressed the most obvious political issue in South Africa, that of racial division.

The ministers of ELCSA-SER had asked for a statement on the race issue to be worked out in August 1961. The timing of this request was not co-incidental. In the history of the churches, it came shortly after the formation of the regional churches. In the history of South Africa, it came in a time of severe repression, shortly after the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress had been banned. This was the response of the Nationalist government to protests against the many apartheid laws which they had passed since 1948. It was a time when apartheid was on everyone's agenda, and the church too needed to address the question.

A commission had prepared a draft statement, which was accepted by the Church Assembly held in June/July 1963.[11] In the statement, the points of departure were the realities of racism which affect the whole of South African society, including the churches. The root of the problem was identified as the sinfulness of humanity, and the churches were thus seen to be competent to judge this matter.[12] The statement made it clear that it was not simply a political statement of the church, but that it was based on the theology of the church, albeit an alternative understanding to dominant Lutheran theology. The unity of the church as the body of Christ was affirmed against the divisive nature of apartheid in any form. The statement called for the removal of racism within the churches, as well as a bold church witness against apartheid in broader society. The link between the internal divisions within Lutheranism and external apartheid was made clear. The statement challenged Lutherans to examine

10 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.67.
11 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.150.
12 *ibid.*

"apartheid in the Lutheran church".[13] It was a clear statement of the emerging prophetic Lutheran ecclesiology – a vision of a united church with a powerful witness.

The statement was released *inter alia* to the English-language newspapers. It was the public nature of the document more than its contents which upset the white missionaries, since they felt it did not represent all Lutherans.[14] In response, the missionaries in ELCSA-SER met for a fellowship day.[15] There were varying reactions, some feeling that this was a ray of hope, others feeling that the political had been overemphasized. Some whites restated the traditional, dominant apolitical position ["We have not been sent here to become involved in political matters but to preach the Gospel"], while others recognized the need to address the issues facing the country ["We must ... apply the justice of the Gospel to the situation ..."].[16] Not all white missionaries adhered to the previously dominant position. Some responded positively to the challenge by the black church.

The SER statement identified the link between the internal divisions within Lutheranism, and the external problem of racial separation. It took the dominant theology to task for conforming to racial separation, and pointed to an alternative vision of a united, witnessing church. The Umpumulo Memorandum examined the theological basis on which the dominant theology had been based, the Two Kingdoms Doctrine.

The Umpumulo Memorandum [1967]

The formation of FELCSA was seen by black Lutherans as a step towards a united church, which would bear more radical social witness. In 1967, FELCSA held a pastoral conference in Umpumulo to discuss the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, with the aim of clarifying the theological basis of a Lutheran political witness.[17] This

13 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.69.
14 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.152.
15 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.69.
16 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.152.
17 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.153.

doctrine had been a decisive influence in the formation of dominant Lutheran theology, ecclesiology and social teaching. The document produced by the conference became known as the Umpumulo Memorandum. It was the first common rejection of separate development by most Lutheran churches in Southern Africa.[18]

Several factors had put a discussion of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine on the agenda. Dr. Florin in his report on Lutherans in South Africa had encouraged such discussion[19]. The churches had become more aware of the effects of separate development on their own internal life, and had identified the Two Kingdoms Doctrine as the theological basis of this ecclesiological mis-development. The unity negotiations had shown clearly that the churches in fact reproduced social divisions, and this had been highlighted in the SER Statement. The churches had developed different theological understandings of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine.[20] The debate around the Umpumulo Memorandum turned into a theological battle between dominant and prophetic theologies over a key doctrine.

The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms

The understanding of the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms which had become popular during the missionary period was based on a confusion of the two dualisms operating in the doctrine. Since the doctrine remains the theological basis for Lutheran attitudes to politics, it is appropriate to examine the doctrine in more detail, as well as the different ways in which it can be applied.[21]

An antithetical dualism existed for Luther between good and evil, between God and the Devil.[22] This must not be confused with God's two ways of governing the world through his spiritual government (on the right hand) and his temporal government (on the

18 Kistner, 1977, *op.cit.*, p.165.
19 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.75.
20 Kistner, 1977, *op.cit.*, pp.166-175.
21 Two collections of essays reflect the extensive deliberations in international Lutheran circles on the Two Kingdoms Doctrine: Ulrich Duchrow (ed), 1977, *Lutheran Churches - Salt or Mirror of Society?*, Geneva: LWF; and Karl Hertz, 1976, *Two Kingdoms and One World*, Minneapolis: Augsburg.
22 Duchrow, 1977, *op.cit.*,p.3

left).[23] In this case, a distinction needs to be made, but not a dualistic division. Both forms of government are of God. The dualism in the Two Kingdoms Doctrine is not between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world (as Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* and the medieval church had held), but a dualism between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Devil, both seeking to gain control over the world.[24] To equate the world with the kingdom of the Devil, as some Lutheran missionaries did, is to misunderstand the doctrine.

This conflict is carried out in "three major institutional complexes: *ecclesia*, the church; *politia*, political institutions; and *economia*, the domestic economy".[25] The struggle between God and Satan occurs in all these institutions. God has two means of waging the struggle, the spiritual and the temporal authority. Christians are subject to both authorities; first, however, to the spiritual authority. Both are means by which God governs the world, yet there is a distinction in their functions. "The civil regime cannot determine how the Gospel is to be preached, nor can the spiritual regime rule the world, for that would lead to chaos".[26]

The distinction between God's way of governing different spheres of life was separated in dualistic fashion in liberal German Lutheranism in the nineteenth century. In secular society, the different spheres of life were being understood as autonomous.[27] This division between public and private, between economic, political and spiritual spheres was then explained by a misapplication of Luther's doctrine. The dualism, instead of being between good and evil, was seen to be between God's two ways of governing, between secular and spiritual spheres. The complete separation of religion and politics was legitimated in this way. It is this false understanding that Lutheran missionaries duplicated in the mission field, and that became incorporated into the dominant theology of the Lutheran churches. It provided for the missionaries the

23 Karl Hertz, 1976, *Two Kingdoms and One World*, Minneapolis: Augsburg. p.16.
24 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.74
25 Hertz, 1976, *op.cit.*, p.16.
26 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.74.
27 Duchrow, 1977, *op.cit.*, p.13.

theological basis for an apolitical position. The dominant social ethics of the Lutheran churches (that of non-involvement) was based on this understanding of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine.

The Doctrine was used to relieve Christians of political responsibility on the grounds that they were only responsible for the spiritual sphere. Since the political and spiritual spheres were understood to be autonomous, the missionaries felt that they should not interfere in that area.[28] This feeling was reinforced by their understanding that they were culturally different from others, that they were only sojourners in a foreign land, and thus should not become involved in the political affairs of the country they worked in.

Another important consequence of this false dualism has already been noted in the development of the dominant ecclesiology. This ecclesiology justified the development of separate congregations on the basis that spiritual unity was more important than visible, structural unity. True union must flow spontaneously from an inner unity, the argument ran, and should not be forced.[29] This statement invariably had the effect of deferring structural unity indefinitely. This understanding was based on the assumption that the Christians proper sphere was the spiritual, not the temporal, derived from a misunderstanding of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine. Thus the way the Two Kingdoms Doctrine was interpreted had implications not only for the political position of the churches, but also for the internal development of the churches themselves.

The Memorandum

The Umpumulo conference recognized that the Two Kingdoms Doctrine had been "understood in terms of dualistic, passive adaptation to existing power structures".[30] This dominant theology of non-involvement grew mainly out of white Lutheran pastors'

28 See for example Lukas de Vries, 1978, *Mission and Colonialism in Namibia*, Johannesburg: Ravan. p.198ff.

29 See Charles Villa-Vicencio, 1983, 'Church Unity' in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, p.35-45 on the same sentiment in the other South African churches.

30 Kistner, 1977, *op.cit.*, p.169.

need to remain outside of conflict between English and Afrikaner interests. A second interpretation emerged during unity talks between black and white churches. Here the principle of unity was seen to apply to the church in the world, it was only a spiritual unity which did not apply to the secular sphere, i.e. organizational questions.[31] This principle was also used by the dominant theology to avoid facing the internal divisions within Lutheranism. The third interpretation came mainly from black pastors, who saw the relevance of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine for the political witness of the church.[32] This interpretation held that the Two Kingdoms Doctrine does differentiate between church and state, but that the political realm, the kingdom to the left, is also subject to the criterion of the Word of God. It is also part of the efforts to establish God's kingdom. On this theological basis, the church has a responsibility to point out to the state where it falls short of those criteria.[33] Politics is not removed from the authority of God, and the church therefore has a responsibility to involve itself in political life from that perspective. It was this alternative interpretation that the Memorandum followed, calling Lutherans to more active political engagement with the state and society.[34] The document explicitly rejected apartheid, and the use of the Bible to legitimate apartheid.[35]

In contrast to the ELCSA-SER statement, the Umpumulo Memorandum was not to be released publicly, but was addressed internally to the churches. However, the document inadvertently did reach the newspapers, and controversy arose again.[36] The reaction of the white churches to the Umpumulo Memorandum was decidedly cool. One response was that while the "policy of 'separate development' cannot be justified on the basis of a single passage of Scripture – something that holds true for every other form of government as well – ... neither can it be condemned on the basis of the Bible. Since, however, this policy represents an attempt to prevent chaos among the people

31 Kistner, 1977, *op.cit.*, p.188.
32 Kistner, 1977, *op.cit.*, p.189.
33 Friedrich Hopf, 1979, *Lutherische Mitverantwortung für das christliche Zeugnis*, Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission. p.30.
34 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.154.
35 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.155.
36 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.156.

entrusted to the state's care, it can be endorsed whole-heartedly by the Christian on the basis of his (*sic*) sense of responsibility for the world".[37]

White support for Apartheid

As the black churches became more vocal in expressing the suffering of their members, and FELCSA was compelled to discuss the theological basis of its political position, some white Lutherans were still explicitly supporting apartheid. Kondirektor Wickert of the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) assured the government of his mission's support in the early 1960s, "because we too have children and grandchildren in this country. And we are concerned what would happen if a big mixing of the races were to occur. We have never failed to say this back home".[38] The dominant theology was not dead yet.

The response to the 'Message' published by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) in 1968 was typical of white Lutheran responses to critical political statements by other churches.[39] The contribution of the 'Message' was formally welcomed, but its theological reasoning was considered suspect. White Lutherans also felt that the unity of Christians should be put above any political statement -- an unconsciously ironic statement, given the disunity of Lutherans. The Cape Church similarly felt that such a statement did not take seriously the solidarity of all people in sin, and that it made statements which were too sweeping about a complex situation.

The dominant theology which the missionaries had established was carried over into the churches as well. The missionaries had shown support for policies of racial segregation. Their own practice of establishing separate congregations was in line with this policy. At times missionaries openly supported the political policy of separate

37 Cited in Kistner, 1977, *op.cit.*, p.186.

38 Fritz Hasselhorn, 1988, *Bauernmission in Südafrika*, Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission. p.214, my translation; "Denn auch wir haben unsre Kinder und Kindeskinder in diesem Lande, und wir können nur mit Bangen fragen, was werden wird, wenn hier einst ein großes Durcheinander von Rassen entstehen würde. Wir haben uns auch nie gescheut das drüben in der alten Heimat auszusprechen".

39 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, pp.158-164.

development.[40] The mission retained similar relations in later periods. This was confirmed in 1956 by then Secretary of State Eiselen – the son of a Berlin Mission Society (BMS) superintendent – when he paid tribute to the HMS's contribution to apartheid: "This missionary society and the Bantu Administration get on well with each other because in practice they both supported a policy which today is known as apartheid and which aims at the independent development of the Bantus".[41]

The root of this continued conservatism lay in the social base of white Lutheranism. In the missionary period, the social basis of the white Lutheran church had been the German settler community, especially the farmers. This was now supplemented by German immigrants in the cities, who often worked on contract for German multinational companies. The politics of German Lutherans remained conservative. Consequently, the internal divisions within South African Lutheranism could not be resolved. It was this internal apartheid which was called into question in the FELCSA Appeal of 1975. It was the same apartheid within the churches that led to the suspension of the white Lutheran churches in Budapest in 1984.

FELCSA Appeal to Lutheran Christians (1975)

In 1975, FELCSA unanimously adopted an 'Appeal to Lutheran Christians in Southern Africa concerning the Unity and the Witness of Lutheran Churches and their Members in Southern Africa'. This 'Appeal' was one of the clearest statements of a prophetic Lutheran theology, a theology which stressed unity and accepted the political responsibility of the churches. It linked the ability of the churches to bear effective political witness to the emergence of an ecclesiology which stressed unity. It argued theologically against the principles which had long underpinned the dominant theology of the Lutheran missions and churches.

The document identified certain "alien principles" which threatened to undermine the

40 See Fritz Hasselhorn, 1987, *Mission, Land Ownership and Settlers' Ideology*, Johannesburg: SACC. p.34-5.
41 V.X.X. Eiselen, cited in Hasselhorn, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.37/8.

faith of Lutherans and their unity in doctrine, witness and practice.[42] These principles were named:

> 1. An emphasis on the loyalty to the ethnic group which induces Lutheran Christians to worship in a Lutheran church dependent on birth or race or ethnic affinities which insist that the Lutheran churches in Southern Africa remain divided into separate churches according to ethnic principles;
>
> 2. The belief that the unity of the Church is only a spiritual unity which need not be manifested;
>
> 3. The belief that the structures of society and the political and economic system of our country are to be shaped according to natural laws only, inherent in creation or merely according to considerations of practical expediency,without being exposed to the criterion of God's love as revealed in the biblical message.[43]

The thrust of the document was to challenge the internal divisions within Lutheranism. The challenge was based on basic doctrines accepted by the churches.[44] Justification by grace was seen to apply to all people, regardless of race. The spiritual unity of the church needed to be manifested in the organizational aspects of the church.[45] Apartheid in society at large was also addressed.

> We affirm that the political system in force in South Africa, with its discrimination against some sectors of the population, its acceptance of the break-up of many families, its concentration of power in the hands of one race only, and the limitations it imposes on freedom, cannot be reconciled with the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.[46]

In concluding that the political system, because of a number of errors and misunderstandings, cannot be reconciled to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lutheran churches affirmed a theological basis for opposition to apartheid. They accepted that they themselves could not effectively oppose apartheid in society until they had addressed divisions between their own churches.

---

42 FELCSA, 1975, 'Appeal to Lutheran Christians in Southern Africa', adopted by conference of FELCSA 11-13 February 1975. p.1.

43 FELCSA, 1975, 'Appeal', p.1.

44 Hopf, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.19.

45 FELCSA, 1975, 'Appeal', p.2.

46 FELCSA, 1975, 'Appeal', p.3.

Politics since ELCSA

The FELCSA 'Appeal' was something of a high point in the development of a prophetic Lutheran theology. One of the reasons for the emergence of such a position was the pressure exerted by black Lutherans. With the formation of ELCSA in 1975, black Lutherans were able to assert such positions more vigorously. Yet the process was not an unambiguous one. Even within ELCSA, different theological and political positions were adopted.

As political resistance increased after 1976, the pressures on the Lutheran churches to take a clearer position in relation to the movement for liberation increased. ELCSA took political positions similar to those taken by the English-speaking churches. In 1982, it joined the English-speaking churches in declaring the theological legitimation of apartheid a heresy. It also passed resolutions against forced removals, migrant labour and the tri-cameral parliament.[47] Since this time, the political and social responsibilities have received far more attention in the ELCSA than before. Experiences such as the detention and torture of ministers of ELCSA in Venda, including Dean Farisani, have contributed to the politicization of sectors of the black churches. However, ELCSA has also been limited in its political commitment, and has tended to remain in the area of formal protest, rather than direct political involvement.

ELCSA has attempted to challenge apartheid and the inadequate structures they have inherited from the missionary period.[48] The ELCSA central office has established a Human Rights and Social Affairs (HR&SA) Desk, which is to coordinate HR&SA Commissions in the dioceses.[49] However, the degree to which these commissions manage to involve ordinary church members is limited. A *Human Rights Newsletter* was published for the first time in January 1989.[50]

---

47 Stephan Rothe, 1986, *Kirchen in Südafrika*, Hamburg: Entwicklungspolitische Korrespondenz. p.72.

48 See *Handbook of the E.L.C.S.A.*, 1984 Edition, pp.91-113; also 'ELCSA's Contribution to the Liberation Struggle in South Africa', unpublished collection of resolutions and statements.

49 W.B. Khumalo, 21/3/1989, p.2.

50 ELCSA, 1989, *Human Rights News Letter*, vol. 1. January 1989.

The most immediate issue for ELCSA members has tended to be forced removals.[51] Apart from protest against the state's actions, this has also become an internal issue between ELCSA and the missions. Difficulties have arisen where ELCSA has attempted to have mission land signed over from the mission society to the church. This is illegal in 'white areas', but has happened in homelands. An ELC Property Management Company has been formed to attempt to overcome this problem.[52]

Before the formation of ELCSA, Lutheran participation in the South African Council of Churches (SACC, formerly CCSA -- Christian Council of South Africa) was limited.[53] Since the formation of ELCSA, black Lutherans have participated more fully in the SACC. Lutherans have been influential in the SACC, despite their small numbers. Three Lutherans have been elected presidents of the SACC, Pastor Habelgaarn, Bishop Pakendorf[54] and presently Bishop Manas Buthelezi. This influence is partly explained by the fact that much of the overseas funding received by the SACC comes from Lutheran churches in Germany and Scandinavia.[55]

The white churches have become isolated from black Lutherans in South Africa, and from Lutherans in other countries. They have remained observers in the SACC, but have often distanced themselves from decisions taken by the ecumenical movement. The white churches did not participate eagerly in the All African Conference of Churches or the World Council of Churches (WCC). The suspensions of the white churches from the LWF in 1984 further isolated German Lutherans in South Africa. Even the Lutheran church in Germany, the '*Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands*' (EKD), is becoming critical of their traditional relationship with the white churches, and is asking the UELCSA churches to improve their relations with ELCSA.

---

51 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.139.
52 Albers, 1970, *op.cit.*, p.144.
53 Florin, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.67.
54 Ottermann, 1973, 'Lutheran Church in Southern Africa', Kenilworth: unpublished. p.12.
55 Simon Maimela, 12/01/1989, p.3.

Initially, ELCSA (and before it the regional churches) was preoccupied with internal issues -- the different tribal and missionary traditions, the formation of dioceses, financial questions, the homeland issue, etc.[56] Yet internal concerns could not forever provide an excuse for not engaging apartheid.

> They (ELCSA) are involved insofar as they make a few statements by the General Assembly of Church Council from time to time. I think it is not enough. ... We have been rather hesitant. Also the agendas of synods do not reflect the problems, the conflicts [of our people]. Just to give you an example, the synod of the Central Diocese in 1984 ... when there were these upheavals about the school boycotts ... I remember, we devoted a day to discussing church attire. There was nothing on the agenda, no mention of the upheavals.[57]

Perhaps the clearest Lutheran political witness comes from some individuals, Christians like Dean Farisani, Hanna Lechler, Molefe Tsele, Dr. Kistner, Zwo Nevhutalu, Frank Müller, and others. Tshenuwani Farisani has been active in the Northern Transvaal, and has been detained and tortured for his prophetic ministry.[58] Hanna Lechler was a white missionary whom Farisani experienced as "one of the living angels on earth", who worked tirelessly for his release.[59] Molefe Tsele has been active in the National Education Crisis Committee, and was recently detained for two years for his stand for justice.[60] Dr. Wolfram Kistner has worked for many years in the LWF and the SACC, seeking to show and apply the liberating dimensions of the Lutheran message. Zwo Nevhutalu is one of the many young pastors in Venda who have successfully resisted the incorporation of their church as the national church of the homeland.[61] Frank Müller is a young white Lutheran minister who has chosen to live and work with a black congregation rather than following the usual pattern. There are more examples than can be quoted here, but it is in prophetic witnesses like these -- a 'faithful remnant' -- that hope for a liberative witness of Lutherans in South Africa can be found.

---

56 Wolfram Kistner, 08/01/1989, p.5-6.

57 Simon Maimela, 12/01/1989, p.4.

58 See Tshenuwani Simon Farisani, 1987, *Diary from a South African Prison*, Philadelphia: Fortress; and also Ev.-luth. Missionswerk in Niedersachsen, 1983, *Mit Gott im Kerker*, Hermannsburg: Missionshandlung.

59 Tshenuwani Farisani, 1987, *Diary from a South African Prison*, Philadelphia: Fortress. p.14.

60 Tom Soeldner, 09/01/1989, p.8.

61 Farisani, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.91.

The Budapest Suspensions [1984]

At the 1984 Conference of the Lutheran World Federation in Budapest, the membership of the white Lutheran churches was suspended. The international Lutheran community expressed its support for the prophetic theology which had been developing. It required that unity between the Lutheran churches be taken seriously, and that the churches also address themselves to the political situation, before the white churches would be readmitted to the LWF. The international campaign to isolate apartheid and all its supporters had affected even the Lutheran churches.

The decision to suspend the white churches was the result of a long process.[62] Already in 1970 the LWF had made appeals for unity, In the 1977 conference in Daressalaam, the LWF called the white churches to unity with black Lutherans. The conference expressed clearly that the patience of the LWF was running out, and that this would be one of the last appeals. In effect, the LWF was asking the white churches to commit themselves in more concrete ways to eradicating apartheid both within and outside of the churches, and to give up their dominant position. The concern for unity across racial lines was again aired at a LWF Consultation in Switzerland Jan./Feb. 1982.[63] This consultation also raised the issue whether the South African situation represented a status confessionis. Despite these repeated calls for unity, the UELCSA churches did not change their position substantially. They did cause considerable debate within the churches, but were most often dismissed as interference.

Leading up to the Conference, ELCSA had made representations pointing out the divisions within South African Lutheranism. The basic difficulty lay in the fact that "most members of the Cape Church and the Natal-Transvaal church, while not explicitly pro-apartheid, are in more or less support of the system".[64]

---

62 Hopf, 1979, *op.cit.*, p.20.

63 Christoph Brandt, 1982, 'Pastoralia', Cape Town: St. Martini, unpublished letter.

64 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.10, my translation; "Erschwerend bleibt das Faktum, daß die meisten Gemeindeglieder in der Kapkirche und in der Natal-Transvaal Kirche, wenn auch nicht ausgesprochen pro-Apartheid sind, aber das System doch mehr oder weniger bejahen."

At the Budapest conference, the issue came to a head, and the membership of the 'Evangelische Lutherische Kirche in Südafrika (Kapkirche)' and the 'Deutsche Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche in Südwestafrika' were suspended.65 The 'Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche in Südafrika (Natal-Transvaal' had intended to apply for membership that year, but given the conditions, decided to withdraw its planned application.66 The churches were exhorted to "publicly and unambiguously reject the system of apartheid (separate development) and end the racial division of the church".67 The suspension would be lifted if the churches created the practical and judicial conditions for the removal of apartheid practices in the church.68 Thus the acceptance of an alternative ecclesiology of unity was made the precondition for the readmittance of the white churches to the world community of Lutherans.

The suspensions were widely reported in South African newspapers, and caused a strong reaction from the white churches. The white churches felt they had been written off by the black churches and the LWF.69 Rather than examining themselves critically, white Lutherans tended to retreat into their German-Lutheran circles, isolated themselves further from ecumenical relations, and restated their old theological positions. The suspensions have, however, put ELCSA in a stronger bargaining position in the on-going unity talks, having the explicit support of the international Lutheran community for a united church in South Africa.

Germiston Statement and Confessing Fellowship (1985)

The above examples have tended to show ELCSA as supporting a prophetic theology, being committed to Lutheran unity and a clear political witness. This does not reflect

65 Rothe, 1986, *op.cit.*, p.77.

66 LWB Report, 1984, *Budapest 1984: Bericht der Siebenten Vollversammlung*, Geneva: LWB Report no. 19/20. p.187-188.

67 LWB Report, 1984, *op.cit.*, p.187, my translation; Der LWB ruft die Kirchen auf, "das Apartheidsystem (getrennte Entwicklung) öffentlich und unzweideutig abzulehnen und die aus rassischen Gründen bestehende Spaltung der Kirche zu beenden".

68 LWB Report, 1984, *op.cit.*, p.188.

69 Walter Johannsmeier, 11/01/1989, p.10.

sufficiently the ambiguities and struggles within ELCSA itself. The events around the Germiston Statement and the Lutheran Confessing Fellowship demonstrate that some black Lutherans had internalized the dominant theology to a high degree. The prophetic theology was alive only amongst some Lutherans.

The uprisings which erupted in the country between 1984 and 1986 produced many theological reflections on the crisis, especially the *Kairos Document*. In ELCSA, too, some pastors gathered together to discuss the situation and the response of their churches to it. From the middle of 1985, they met "regularly (at least once a month) to study Scripture, give assistance to each other on sermon preparation, and to share and support each other in the face of the problems in the townships, and the whole issue surrounding the struggle in the country".[70] Particular concerns were that ELCSA members were participating in homeland governments, and that the church was not responding much to detentions of ELCSA workers. The pastors sought to develop a Lutheran theology which could address this situation.

In November 1985, as a result of a national meeting, they drew up the 'Germiston Statement'. The statement briefly outlines the shape of the crisis, and ELCSA's response to the crisis. "It became clear to us that ELCSA has not responded adequately to the above-mentioned crisis".[71] The ministers wanted to set up a Lutheran Confessing Fellowship in each of the dioceses, which would attempt to respond to the needs of its members affected by the crisis.

Since there had been negative reactions to publicly released statements (e.g. the ELCSA-SER statement in 1963), the group decided to keep the document internal. Copies were sent to all the bishops. Nonetheless, the response of ELCSA's hierarchy was harsh. They decided to call in all pastors involved, to accuse them of spreading untruths, to threaten them with dismissal if they continued, and thus to crush the

70 Tom Soeldner, 09/01/1989, p.1.
71 'The Germiston Statement', unpublished paper. p.2

fledgling organization.[72] The leadership of ELCSA felt that it needed to assert its authority, rather than allow its members to express their political witness in forms of their own choosing. "It is pathetic sometimes to see the church behaving exactly like the government. When you suppress these meetings, you are doing what the government is doing, suppressing everything that is not coming from it".[73] Thus one of the most promising initiatives in the Lutheran churches was suppressed by the church itself. A group which might have been an important instrument for developing a prophetic Lutheran theology was stifled.

Conclusion

The political stance which the Lutheran churches have adopted in the last two decades have been limited above all by the divisions within the Lutheran community. Confessional divisions (between congregations deriving from different missionary societies) have begun to be overcome with the formation of regional churches and ELCSA among black congregations, and the merger of the Natal and Transvaal white churches. Divisions along ethnic and confessional lines have also been challenged to some degree by the formation of ELCSA, though the German churches still struggle to move away from the old dominant, ethnic definition of the church. This created the conditions for some political initiatives by Lutherans. Perhaps the most powerful statement emerging from the unity created through FELCSA and ELCSA was the recognition that 'alien principles' such as ethnicity should not be allowed to determine the shape of the church. Yet limits on the effectiveness remain, such as the lack of participation by the laity, the lack of action rather than resolutions and public statements, and the reactionary attitude of the ELCSA hierarchy towards prophetic organization within the church. But the most serious obstacle is that the white and black churches are still separate.[74] It is this division which calls into question any statement by the churches against apartheid in society.

---

72 Tom Soeldner, 09/01/1989, p.4.; also Frank Müller, 18/01/1989, p.6.

73 Rev. Nsibande, 21/03/1989, p.10.

74 See B.H. Lange, 1988, 'One Root Two Stems', University of Natal (PMB): Church History III project. p.33ff.

It is the internal apartheid of the church – its division into different races and tribes – which has been the most powerful factor preventing Lutherans from witnessing to unity in Christ against the divisions of apartheid. "Although the black churches have been highly critical of the race situation in the country, a great deal of their struggle has centered on the unity of the Lutheran Church. This struggle for unity has been extremely difficult because of the conservative position adopted by most German-speaking Lutheran congregations".[75] Thus the struggles in the Lutheran churches have been somewhat different from those of the English-speaking churches or the Catholics, where black and white were at least formally united in one church. There, the struggle is to examine the depth of unity and the issue of black leadership, while engaging apartheid in society. Here, even formal unity is has been a key issue on the churches' agenda for decades. The failure of the struggle for unity within the Lutheran churches, has been the greatest obstacle to Lutherans as a whole to engage in the struggle outside of the church.

[75] John W. de Gruchy, 1979, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, Cape Town: David Philip. p.100.

CONCLUSION

The thesis which has been argued is that the present social location of the Lutheran churches can be explained by examining the history of their internal divisions and their relation to broader struggles in society. Having presented a narrative account of the growth of Lutheranism in South Africa, and some analysis of its relation to society, it becomes apparent that the politically conservative position adopted by Lutherans is the result of its internal divisions. The failure of the internal struggle for unity has been the greatest stumbling block for greater Lutheran participation in the broader struggle for liberation. These internal divisions, in turn, are related to both social and theological factors. The social base of Lutherans has been divided, and this has been reflected in ecclesial division. Ecclesial divisions have been backed up by the dominant theological conceptions of mission, the church and the Two Kingdoms Doctrine.

A History of Divisions

Throughout their history, the Lutheran missions and churches have been divided in many ways. From the first mission congregations, through the formation of synods, to the present churches, there have been divisions along confessional, ethnic and racial lines. Many of the struggles in the history of the Lutheran churches have been waged between those who implemented these divisions and those who opposed them.

Confessional divisions resulted from the differences between the missions working in South Africa, the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) and the Berlin Mission Society (BMS). They introduced confessional differences which had arisen through church struggles in Germany into the mission field. They established congregations separately, and guarded their specific identity jealously, so that even black Lutherans identified themselves as '*Berlin*' or '*Hermannsburg*' rather than simply Lutheran.

A second source of division was the missiology of the German missions, based on the

concept of '*Volkskirchen*'. The mission worked amongst tribal groups, and had as their aim to establish one church in each ethnic group. The consequences of this approach proved disastrous, as it dove-tailed with the policies of separate development and apartheid.

Thirdly, black and white Lutheran congregations developed separately right from the beginning. Lutherans followed the norms of colonial society in establishing separate mission congregations. Even when unity was achieved at higher levels (in the Federation, FELCSA, for instance), congregations remained separate. When apartheid was legalized, this division became entrenched.

Yet this history of divisions has not gone unchallenged. The vision of one united Lutheran church in South Africa has been alive throughout the history of the churches. Initially, resistance to the dominant theology took the form of withdrawal by black Lutherans from the mission stations, and the formation of independent churches. Some white missionaries also saw the need for unity, and established the CLM, although this excluded black Lutherans. For a short period, all Lutheran churches were united in a federal structure, but the unwillingness of whites to go beyond this to one church, and the desire of blacks for unity led to a split. ELCSA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, was meant to be the one church for all Lutherans, able to develop a unified, prophetic witness. As it has turned out, it has become the 'black church' (though it is not exclusively black). Black Lutherans have finally achieved control over their own church. At the same time, they have remained the strongest proponents of the need for unity among Lutherans in South Africa. Internally, ELCSA has attempted to overcome tribal and confessional divisions, and it has remained open to forming one church with the white churches.

The history of the Lutheran churches has been a history of the struggle for unity, against the many divisions marring the oneness of the body of Christ. It is in the failure to achieve complete unity that the roots of the political conservatism of the

Lutheran churches lies.

The Roots of Lutheran Conservatism

The political positions taken by the Lutheran churches have historically, with a few exceptions noted above, been conservative. In the spectrum of churches in South Africa, the Lutherans can fairly be located between the liberal English-speaking churches and the conservative Afrikaner churches.[1] The Lutheran churches do not have the same tradition of protest as the English-speaking churches. On the other hand, they have not been as directly linked to the Afrikaner ruling class as the Dutch Reformed Church, nor to British capital as the English-speaking churches.

There are both social and theological factors which account for the conservatism of Lutherans. The social location of white Lutherans predisposed them towards conservative politics, while black Lutherans were often not in a position to resist domination by whites effectively. Separate churches developed in line with the racial divisions in society. From these different ecclesial bases, two different theologies emerged (though the dominant theology managed to extend its influence to large sections of the black church, too).

What were the social factors accounting for the conservative position of the Lutheran churches? Firstly, the dominance of the white minority within the churches determined that their political positions became those of the churches. The foundations for this dominance were laid by the almost complete control which German missionaries exercised over their mission stations – in terms of access to land, education, morality and Christianity. Whites controlled the whole development of Lutheranism in South Africa. Even in the black churches, white missionaries and superintendents were the leaders up to the formation of the regional churches, and sometimes even thereafter. Their 'caution', or their conservative political opinions have shaped the position of the

1 Charles Villa-Vicencio, 1988, *Trapped in Apartheid*, Cape Town: David Philip. p.37.

whole church.

The black church had its base in the rural areas, and when the focus moved more to the towns, among the poorer sections of the urban communities. In relation to the missionaries, they were always less powerful. On the mission stations, the white Lutherans occupied positions of power as land-owners, teachers and preachers. It was only with the formation of regional churches that black Lutherans had some control over their church.

At a deeper level, the conservatism of South African Lutheranism is rooted in the social position which white Lutherans have occupied historically. The social basis of this dominant group within Lutheranism was the German settler community. In the missionary period, this grouping was largely a farming community; in more recent times, it has been supplemented by urban German communities, a significant part of which are employed on contract by German multi-national companies. The social base of white Lutherans is, broadly speaking, part of the ruling bloc. In terms of political alliances, it became clear how the interests of the German missionaries were closest to those of the Boers, rather than the English. The political interests of the black population were never an important factor shaping the thinking of white Lutherans. Since the Afrikaners came to power in 1948, Lutherans have thus been in a comfortable position, living alongside the government.

The political alliances of Lutherans are one factor accounting for their conservatism, their economic position is another. Historically, the economic impact of the missionaries was to encourage the development of an independent African peasantry. Missionaries contributed to the process of peasantization by giving black people access to land on the mission stations, but at the same time introducing them to a Protestant work ethic, and making demands on them (e.g. clothes and tithes) which forced Africans to enter the money economy. After the discovery of gold and diamonds, missionaries were able to direct labour to the centres of industry because of their

control over people living on the mission stations. Furthermore, the labour they provided was already used to European standards of 'civilization and industry'. Missionaries also often aided the imposition of taxes (e.g. Merensky and the ZAR), which placed further pressure on Africans to enter the money economy. Missionaries played a role in the proletarianization of Africans as well.

These economic activities of the missionaries had a dual impact. On the one hand, the missionaries themselves and white settler congregations managed gradually to accumulate some capital. In particular, they had access to land, the most crucial form of capital in an agricultural economy. Being located in rural areas, their control of land was an important means of economic advancement. The black population, on the other hand, was subjected to the changes of the developing capitalist mode of production. Their contact with the missionaries may have served to ease their entry into that mode of production, but did little to ease their plight. In other words, the class location of black and white Lutherans was likely to be opposite. White Lutheran congregations were generally middle class, while black Lutherans were drawn from the peasantry and working class. The dominant position of whites within the church ensured that the more conservative political position of the white middle class congregations prevailed.

Theologically, the basis for the conservative position of Lutheranism in South Africa was provided by the Two Kingdoms Doctrine. The Two Kingdoms Doctrine was interpreted in such a way as to supply a theological rationale which supported the missionaries' attitude that they were guests in the country, who had come here to spread the gospel, and thus should not get involved in politics. In terms of the Two Kingdoms, Lutherans saw themselves as responsible only for the one kingdom, namely the spiritual. The political realm ostensibly was to be ignored, though the work of the missionaries and later Lutherans did have political impact.

The missiology of the Lutheran missions, which saw the development of '*Volkskirchen*' as the ecclesiological goal of their work, was the theological basis for the separate

development of congregations. This ethnically defined ecclesiology preceded the advent of legalized apartheid. It emerged from the same social context as the political policy of separate development. It also, however, had roots in the dominant Lutheran theology.

For Lutherans, the church is centered around the Word. Lutherans would traditionally hold to a kerygmatic ecclesiology, i.e. a view of the church as herald announcing the gospel. Richard McBrien characterizes this ecclesiological approach as follows:

> The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Word of God to the whole world. The Church cannot hold itself responsible for the failure of men (*sic*) to accept it as God's Word; it has only to proclaim it with integrity and persistence. All else is secondary. The Church is essentially a kerygmatic community which holds aloft, through the preached Word, the wonderful deeds of God in past history.[2]

This ecclesiology reflects Luther's emphasis on the Word (rather than the deed). A theological critique of this model is that it does not take seriously enough the Incarnation, the fact that the Word has become flesh. It therefore tends to focus on proclamation and verbal witness to the exclusion of action and witness through one's life. It tends to expect the world to listen humbly to the wisdom passed on by the church, and does not take seriously the problems of the world.[3] It is this uncritical approach to ecclesiology which allowed ethnic factors to become the basis of defining Lutheran churches.

These dominant theological positions were not left unchallenged. As black Lutherans gained more control over their own churches, alternative interpretations of Lutheran theology emerged. An ecclesiology developed which emphasized the Incarnation of the Word, and therefore the visible expression of the spiritual unity of the churches. The Two Kingdoms Doctrine was understood as a theological basis for Lutheran social involvement. The dominant ecclesiology was challenged for separating spiritual and organizational unity, and the vision of one united Lutheran church in South Africa was asserted.

---

2 Richard McBrien cited in Avery Dulles, 1974, *Models of the Church*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan. p.70-71.

3 Dulles, 1974, *op.cit.*, p.81.

The dominance of whites within South African Lutheranism has only really been effectively challenged by the formation of ELCSA, and the Budapest suspensions. The formation of a black church functioning independently of the white churches has meant that white Lutherans have to relate to black Lutherans as equals (not, as before, as missionary objects, or as daughter churches). With the suspension of the white churches from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), ELCSA has acquired more powerful position. White Lutherans can only be readmitted to the world body if they cooperate with the black church. Unity talks now take place more on ELCSA's terms. The price of a more assertive black Lutheran church, however, has been the continued division of Lutheranism in South Africa.

A Theological Vision of the Church

The present reality of the church has been explained in historical terms. It is a picture of the Lutheran churches as a "church-in-contradiction"[4] which reflects the divisions and contradictions of society. The Lutheran churches have divided along racial lines, in conformity with the policies of separate development and apartheid.

What the church is, and what it should be, are often two different things. "The Church is itself a sign of deep contradiction, at the same time as it proclaims itself ... the sign of the kingdom of God".[5] The transformation of the church from what it is to what it should be requires the development of an alternative vision of the church, a prophetic ecclesiology. This should not be an idealistic notion of the church which ignores the real divisions that divide the body of Christ and romanticizes the church. "The experience of this contradiction has led many to seek an understanding of the Church that contrasts the defective, visible body with its ideal, invisible image."[6] This is a false use of the vision of the church. Rather, the theological vision of the church should serve as a measure by which the reality of the church is evaluated, and a vision to

4 Cochrane, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.223.
5 Cochrane, 1987, *op.cit.*, p.220.
6 *ibid.*

which it can aspire. It is the theological reality of the church as the Body of Christ by which the existing church is appraised. "The theological imperative is to know that the resurrected Lord offers the entire church together with all of creation the opportunity for renewal."[7]

The historical reality of the Lutheran churches is that they have been divided, racially, ethnically and according to confessions. The Lutheran body in South Africa remains split by the division of the church which have plagued it from the beginnings in the missionary period. In the life of the church, the vision of the Body of Christ demands unity. If the church is the Body of Christ, it cannot be divided into many different '*Volkskirchen*'.[8] The church should be a witness to the one Body in the world. In our context of racial division, this means that the Church must visibly manifest its unity.

This poses a theological challenge to Lutherans. Since "the root of the lack of unity lies in a false understanding of the church, one defined by ethnic groups", its solution must lie in asserting the prophetic ecclesiology.[9] This is not a political imperative, it is a theological condition without which no effective Lutheran witness in South Africa is possible. Neither is this a new requirement, since a prophetic ecclesiological tradition is evident throughout the history of the churches. If the churches do not want to continue in division, they need to transform not only their politics, but also their theology, that which holds them together internally.

The experience of the early church is instructive in this regard. One of the difficulties faced was that Aramaic-speaking Jews and Greek-speaking Jews had to find one another. Despite the practical problems involved, they did not form separate churches, or hold separate services. Even when non-Jews came into the church, the unity of the church was maintained.[10] Although the social norm of the time was separation of

7 Villa-Vicencio, 1988, *op.cit.*, p.191.

8 See Gerhard Brennecke, 1954, *Brüder im Schatten*, Berlin: Ev. Verlagsanstalt. p.323.

9 Gunther Wittenberg, 20/03/1989, p.5, my translation; "Die Wurzel der fehlenden Einheit liegt in einem falschen Kirchenverständnis, bezogen auf ethnische Gruppen".

10 Frank Müller, 18/01/1989, p.5.

different groups, the church managed to unite people from different backgrounds. This was not an easy process, nor one free of internal conflict, but the unity of being Christians was finally valued more than group identity. It took seriously the role of the church as servant, identifying with the world as God did in Christ (Phil.2:6-11). The reality of Lutheranism in South Africa does not measure up to this vision.

A propethic Lutheran ecclesiology is a vision of a united church with a bold social witness. The basis for realizing such a vision has been laid in the struggles of many Lutherans. The struggles of early black Lutherans for control over their own churches, the struggle for the reinterpretation of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine as a basis for Lutheran political involvement, and the prophetic witness of Lutherans like Molefe Tsele and others are the greatest sign of hope for the future of Lutheranism in South Africa. The struggle for Lutheran unity, from the times of the Cooperating Lutheran Missions in Natal, through the Council of Churches on Lutheran Foundation, and the formation of FELCSA and ELCSA , is a history on which further unity can be built. Documents like the ELCSA-SER Statement, the Umpumulo Memorandum, the FELCSA 'Appeal', and the Germiston Statement constitute a collection of prophetic Lutheran witnesses. A prophetic Lutheran tradition, though limited, does exist.

This prophetic tradition presents white Lutherans with the challenge to lose their fear of changes in the church, and to recognize the possibilities that God is offering them in such changes. Some young white Lutherans are affirming this.

> Can it be that the crisis in South Africa and the Church is not a mistake, the consequence of unfortunate historical circumstances, but of God Himself? Does not it suggest itself to us that we are experiencing and living through that which is shown to us by the example of Israel in the Old Testament: That the God of Israel lets his own land, his own chosen people collapse pitifully, so that it returns to the essence of things?.[11]

For black Lutherans, the challenge is to rediscover and develop the prophetic tradition

---

11 Hans Eggers, 1987, 'Zur Gegenwart und Zukunft der Lutherischen Kirchen in Südafrika', Cape Town: unpublished paper. p.11, my translation; "Kann es sein, daß die Krise Südafrikas und der Kirche nicht eine blinde Panne, eine Folge unglücklicher geschichtlicher Umstände, sonder von Gott selbst ist? Drängt sich uns der Gedanke nicht auf, daß auch wir das erleben und durchmachen, was im Alten Testament an Israel vorgeführt wird: daß der Gott Israels sein eigenes Land, sein eigenes auserwähltes Volk kläglich zusammenbrechen läßt damit es wieder zum Wesentlichen zurückfindet

which does exist in the history of the churches. The prophetic witness remains few, and do not regenerate the churches as a whole. It is only if this small remnant is able to transform the broader church membership, that an effective Lutheran witness in South African will become possible. It is only if they struggle to overcome the divisions within the churches, that the church can play a prophetic role in society.

The vision of a united Lutheran church in South Africa which serves all communities has been alive in the hearts of many Lutherans, black and white, for many decades. Yet that unity has not yet been realized. And consequently, the churches have not been able to be the prophetic witness that they could have been. When Lutherans are united, then the Lutheran Church will start to be a witness to what the gospel really means in South Africa today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

General

Beinart, William and Bundy, Colin
1987 *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape, 1890-1930*, Johannesburg: Ravan

Beinart, William; Delius, Peter and Trapido, Stanley
1986 *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930*, Johannesburg: Ravan

Boff, Leonardo
1986 *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, London: Collins

Boff, Leonardo and Boff, Clodovis
1987 *Introducing Liberation Theology*, New York: Orbis

Boff, Clodovis
1987 *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*, New York, Orbis

Bosch, David
1982 'Mission and Alternative Community' in *Journal for Theology in Southern Africa*, no.41. pp.6-10

Brookes, Edgar H.
1943 *The Bantu in South African Life*, Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations

Bundy, Colin
1979 *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* London: Heinemann

Bundy, Colin
1986 *Re-making the Past: New Perspectives in South African History*, UCT: Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies

Callinicos, Lulu
1981 *Gold and Workers: A People's History of South Africa*, vol. 1, Johannesburg: Ravan

Cochrane, James R.
1987 *Servants of Power: The Role of the English-speaking Churches in South Africa: 1903-1930*, Johannesburg: Ravan

Cuthbertson, Greg
1987 'The English-speaking Churches and Colonialism', in C. Villa-Vicencio (ed) *Theology and Violence: The South African Debate*, Johannesburg: Skotaville.

De Gruchy, John W.
1979 *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, Cape Town: David Philip

De Gruchy, John W.
1985 'Christians in Conflict: The Social Reality of the South African Church', in *Journal for Theology in Southern Africa*, no. 51. pp. 16-26

De Kiewiet, C.W.
1937 *The Imperial Factor in South Africa*, Cambridge: University Press

Du Plessis, J.H.
1965 *A History of Christian Missions*, Cape Town : Struik; original 1911

Dulles, Avery
1974 *Models of the Church: A Critical Assessment of the Church in all its Aspects*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan

Gerhart, Gail
1978 *Black Power in South Africa*, Berkeley: UCLA Press

Hinchliff, Peter
1968 *The Church in South Africa*, London: SPCK

Hodgson, Janet
1986 'Soga and Dukwana: The Christian Struggle for Liberation in Mid 19th Century South Africa', in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. XVI, no. 3, pp. 187-207

Hope, Marjorie (ed)
1986 *South African Christian Handbook, 1986/87*, Florida: World Vision

Innes, Duncan
1983 'Monopoly Capitalism in South Africa', in B. Bozzoli (ed), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal*, Johannesburg: Ravan; also in *South African Review One*, Johannesburg: Ravan

Johnstone, F.A.
1976 *Class, Race and Gold*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Karis, Thomas and Carter, Gwendolyn
1972 *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa: 1882-1964*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press

Keto, C. Tsheloane
1976 'Race Relations, Land and the Changing Missionary Role in South Africa' in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, X, 4, pp.600-627

Kistner, Ulrike
1979 'Die Politische Rolle der Unpolitischen: Entwicklungen und Tendenzen in der südafrikanischen Gesellschaft im Spiegel des deutschen Missionsschrifttums über Südafrika, 1880-1920', University of the Witwatersrand: BA Honours Dissertation

Kruss, Glenda
1985 'Religion, Class and Culture – Indigenous Churches in South Africa, with special reference to Zionist-Apostolics', University of Cape Town: MA Thesis

Leatt, James; Kneiffel, Theo; and Nürnberger, Klaus
1986 *Contending Ideologies in South Africa*, Cape Town: David Philip

Lehmann, Paul
1983 'Piety, Power and Politics: Church and Ministry between Ratification and Resistance' in *Journal for Theology in Southern Africa*, no.44. pp. 58-72

Lodge, Tom
1983 *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, Johannesburg, Ravan

Majeke, Nosipho
1952 *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*, Johannesburg: Society of Young Africa

Marks, Shula
1970 *Reluctant Rebellion: The 1906-1908 Disturbances in Natal*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Maylam, Paul
1986 *A History of the African People of South Africa: From the Early Iron Age to the 1970s*, London: Croom Helm and Cape Town: David Philip

Metz, Johan-Baptist
1980 *Faith in History and Society: Towards a Practical Fundamental Theology*, London: Burns and Oates

Nürnberger, Klaus
1983 'Socio-Political Ideologies and Church Unity', in *Journal for Theology in Southern Africa*, no.44. pp.47-57

Nürnberger, Klaus
1985 'How does the Church address the structure-related Convictions of its Members?' in *Journal for Theology in Southern Africa*, no.53. pp. 22-35

O'Meara, Dan
1983 *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Rahner, Karl
1983 *The Shape of the Church to Come*, translated by E. Quinn, New York: Crossroad

Simons, H.J. and R.E.
1969 *Class and Colour in South Africa: 1850-1950*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Simons, H.J. and Simons, R.E.
1969 *Class and Colour in South Africa: 1850 - 1950* Harmondsworth: Penguin

Southey, N. D.
1988 'History and Church History in South Africa', UNISA: unpublished.

Verryn, T.D.
1972 *A History of the Order of Ethiopia*, Cleveland: Central Mission Press

Villa-Vicencio, Charles
1983 'Church Unity and Political Diversity' in *Journal for Theology in Southern Africa*, no. 43. pp. 35–45

Villa-Vicencio, Charles
1988 *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-speaking Churches*, Cape Town: David Philip and New York: Orbis

Webster, Eddie
1978 *Essays in South African Labour History*, Johannesburg: Ravan

Wilson, Monica
1983 'Missionaries: Conquerors or Servants of God?' in *South African Outlook* no.113, January 1983, pp. 13-16; reprint of an address given in King William's Town, January 1976

Wilson, Monica and Thompson, Leonard (eds)
1982 *A History of South Africa*, Cape Town: David Philip

Wolpe, Harold
1972 'Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa: From segregation to apartheid' in *Economy and Society*, no.1

General Works on the Lutheran Churches

Albers, Wolfgang
1970 'Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche im Südlichen Afrika: ELCSA (SER), ELCSA (Tswana Region)', Universität Hamburg: Magisterschrift

Baudert, S.
1932 'Zinsendorf's Thought on Missions related to his views of the World' in *International Review of Missions*, vol. 21

Duchrow, Ulrich (ed)
1977 *Lutheran Churches – Salt or Mirror of Society?: Case Studies on the Theory and Practice of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine*, Geneva: Lutheran World Federation

Eggers, Hans
1987 'Zur Gegenwart und Zukunft der Lutherischen Kirchen in Südafrika', Cape Town: unpublished paper.

epd dokumentation
1977 *Daressalaam 1977: Sechste Vollversammlung LWB*, Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Otto Lembeck

Farisani, Tshenuwani Simon
1987 *Diary from a South African Prison*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press. Edited by John A. Evenson.

Florin, Hans W.
1967 *Lutherans in South Africa*, revised report to LWF, original 1965, Durban: Lutheran Publishing Co.

Hertz, Karl H.
1976 *Two Kingdoms and One World: A Sourcebook in Christian Social Ethics*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House

Hopf, Friedrich W.
1979 *Lutherische Mitverantwortung für das christliche Zeugnis im Südlichen Afrika*, Erlangen: Verlag der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Mission

Kamphausen, E. and Ustorf, W.
1979 'Deutsche Missionsgeschichtsschreibung: Anamnese einer Fehlentwicklung' in *Verkündigung und Forschung*, Heft 2, pp. 2-57

Kistner, Wolfram
1977 'The Context of the Umpumulo Memorandum of 1967' in U. Duchrow (ed), *Lutheran Churches - Salt or Mirror of Society?*, Geneva: Lutheran World Federation. pp. 165-191

Kistner, Wolfram
1988 'Missed Chances: Mission Work in South Africa in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', Johannesburg: unpublished

LWB Report
1984 *Budapest 1984: Bericht der Siebenten Vollversammlung*, Geneva: LWB Report No. 19/20

Nsibande, Aunice Ernest
1981 'Historical Development of the Evangelical Lutheran Church - South Eastern Region', UNISA: M.Th. Thesis

Ottermann, R.
1973 'Lutheran Church in Southern Africa: Its identity and contribution within the family of Churches', paper read at the Convention of the Christian Academy in Southern Africa, Kenilworth 20/10/1973

Pierard, R.V.
1978 'Julius Richter and the Scientific Study of Christian Missions in Germany' in *Missiology*, vol. VI, no.4

Richter, Julius
1922 *Geschichte der evangelischen Mission in Afrika*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann

Richter, Julius
1940 *Deutsche evangelische Missionsfelder: Geschichte und gegenwärtiger Stand*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann

Rothe, Stephan
1986 *Kirchen in Südafrika*, Hamburg: Entwicklungspolitische Korrespondenz

Schlag, Heinrich
1966 'Lutherische Zusammenarbeit und Einigungsversuche im Südlichen Afrika', Universität Hamburg: Magisterschrift

Schlyter, Herman
1953 *The History of the Co-operating Lutheran Missions in Natal, 1912 - 1951*, Durban: Lutheran Publishing House

Warneck, Gustav
1897-1903 *Evangelische Missionslehre: Ein Missionstheoretischer Versuch*, Gotha: n.p.

Wittenberg, Gunther
1970 'Zur Frage des Pfarrernachwuchses in der Vereingiten Evanglisch-lutherischen Kirche im Südlichen Afrika', in *Brückenschlag III: Berichte aus den Arbeitsbebieten des Kirchlichen Außenamtes der EKD*, Stuttgart: Quell Verlag; pp.110-120

Wittenberg, Gunther
1988 'Lutheran Theological Education at the University of Natal', Pietermaritzburg: unpublished

On the Berlin Mission Society

Brennecke, Gerhard
1954 *Brüder im Schatten: Das Bild einer Missionsreise durch Südafrika*, Berlin: Ev. Verlagsanstalt. NB: see his bibliography for further references on the BMS

Delius, Peter
1983 *The Land Belongs to Us: The Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in Nineteenth Century Transvaal*, Johannesburg: Ravan

Delius, Peter
1984 *The Conversion: death cell conversations of 'Rooizak' and the missionaries, Lydenburg 1875*, Johannesburg: Ravan

Fricke, Karl
1907 *Die Berliner Mission*, Berlin: Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft

Gründler, Willy
1923 *Hundert Jahre Berliner Mission*, Berlin: n.p.

Knak, Siegfried
1924 *Die Eigenart der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft im Spiegel von Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, Berlin: Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft

Kratzenstein, Eduard
1893 *Kurze Geschichte der Berliner Mission in Süd-und Ost-Afrika*, Berlin: Berliner Missionsgesellschaft

Lehmann, Helmut
1974 '150 Jahre Berliner Mission', Erlangen: Verlag der Evangelisch Lutherischen Mission

Lombaard, B.V.
1965 'Bydraes tot Bronne oor Johannes Dinkwanyane' in *Historia*, vol. X, no.1

Merensky, Alexander
1899 Erinnerungen an das Missionsleben in Transvaal, Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft

Richter, Julius
1924 *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft 1824-1924*, Berlin: Buchhandlung der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft

Schiele, Bernhard
1927? *Ein Ritt durch das Innere Swazilands: Tagebuchblätter*, Berlin: Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft

Schoeman, Karel
1985 *Die huis van die armes: die Berlynse Sendingsgenootskap in die O.V.S., 1834-1869: 'n bloemlesing*, Kaapstad: Human en Rosseau

Schwencker, Friedrich
1928 *Bilder aus der Berliner Mission von Kampf und Sieg*, Berlin: Berliner Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft

Van der Merwe, Daniel Werner
1976 'Johannes Dinkwanyane, 1842-1876' in *S.A. Historiese Joernaal*, no.8

Van der Merwe, Daniel Werner
1980 *Van paternalisme to self-beskikking: die Berlynse Sendingsgenootskap en kerk-stigting in die Transvaal, 1904-1962* [microform], Pretoria: UNISA

Van der Merwe, Daniel Werner
1983 'Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal, 1860 -1900' in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suidafrikaanse Geskiedenis*, Deel I. Pretoria: Staatsdrukker

Van der Merwe, Daniel Werner
1987 'Die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap en Kerkstigting in Transvaal, 1904-1962' in *Argiefjaarboek vir Suidafrikaanse Geskiedenis*, Deel II. Pretoria: Staatsdrukker'; NB: see his extensive bibliography

Wangemann, Theodor
1872-1877 *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft und ihre Arbeiten in Südafrika*, 4 vol.s, Ev. Missionshaus, Berlin

Wangemann, Theodor
1969 *Lebensbilder aus Südafrika*, facsimile reprint, Pretoria: State Library

Zöllner, Linda and Heese, J.A.
1984 *The Berlin missionaries in South Africa and their descendants*, Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council

On the Hermannsburger Mission Society

Bodenstein, Wilhelm
1937 *25 Jahre der Hermannsburger deutsch evangelisch-lutherischen Synode in Südafrika*, Hermannsburg: Verlag der Missionshandlung

Haccius, Georg
1899 *Ein Rückblick auf das letzte Jahrzehnt in Afrika*, Hermannsburg: Verlag der Missionshandlung

Haccius, Georg
1914 *Hannoversche Missionsgeschichte*, Zweiter Teil; Dritter Teil, erste und zweite Hälfte; vol. 2; vol. 3, parts 1 and 2, Hermannsburg: Verlag der Missionshandlung

Hasselhorn, Fritz
1987 *Mission, Land Ownership and Settlers' Ideology*, Johannesburg: SACC

Hasselhorn, Fritz
1988 *Bauernmission in Südafrika: Die Hermannsburger Mission im Spannungsfeld der Kolonialpolitik, 1880 - 1930*, Erlangen: Verlag der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Mission

Lange, B.H.
1988 'One Root Two Stems: A study on the origin and consequences of the constitution of the first missionary congregation of the Hermannsburg Mission Society in South Africa', University of Natal (PMB): Church History III project

Leuschke, A.M.H.
1985 'The Hermannsburg Mission Society in Natal and Zululand', University of Natal (PMB): BA Honours Project

Wickert, Winfried
1949 *Und die Vögel des Himmels wohnen unter seinen Zweigen: Hundert Jahre Bauernmission in Südafrika*, Hermannsburg: Missionshandlung

On the Rhenish Mission Society

Baumann, Julius (ed)
1967 'Van sending tot kerk: 125 jaar Rynse sendingsarbeid in Suidwes-Afrika', Wuppertal: Verlag der Rheinischen Mission

Bonn, Alfred
1928 *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, Barmen: Verlag des Missionshauses

De Kleine, H.
1967 'Um Einheit und Auftrag: 125 Jahre Kirche und Mission in Südwest-Afrika', Wuppertal: Verlag der Rheinischen Mission

De Vries, J. Lukas
1978 *Mission and Colonialism in Namibia*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press

Engel, Lothar
1972 'Die Stellung der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft zu den politischen und gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen Südwestafrikas und ihr Beitrag zur dortigen kirchlichen Entwicklung bis zum Nama-Herero-Aufstand 1904 bis 1907', Universität Hamburg: Doctoral Thesis

Engel, Lothar
1976 *Kolonialismus und Nationalismus im deutschen Protestantismus in Namibia 1907-1945*, Frankfurt a.M.: Herbert Lang, Bern und Peter Lang

Jensen, Ferdinand
1922 *Treue Herero im Innern Afrikas*, Barmen: Verlag der Missionshandlung

Loetty, Seppo
1971 *The Ovambo Sermon: A Study of the preaching of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavanago Church in South West Africa*, Keskuspaino: Tampere

Luckhoff, August G.
1952 *Rynse Gemeente Stellenbosch, anderhalf eeufees 1902-1952: korte geskiedenis van sy ontstaan en ontwikkeling*, Stellenbosch: NG Gemeente

Meyer, G
1960 *Uit die verre noord-weste*, Kaapstad: NG Kerkuitgewers

Moritz, Walter A.W.
1980a *Namibia: Begegnungen, Erfahrungen, Erinnerungen*, Schwäbisch-Gmünd: Lempp

Moritz, Walter
1980b *Scheppmannsdorf/Rooibank und die älteste Druckerei in Südwestafrika/Namibia*, Schwäbisch-Gmünd: Lempp

Pennti, J.
1958 *Die Finse Sendingsgenootskap en die Evangeliese Lutherse Ovambokavangokerk*, Finse Sendingsdrukkery

Spiecker, J.
1907 *Die Rheinische Mission im Hereroland*, Barmen: Verlag des Missionshauses

Strassberger, Elfriede
1969 *The Rhenish Mission Society in South Africa 1830-1950*, Cape Town: C. Struik

Sundermeier, T.O.H.
1962 *Mission, Bekenntnis und Kirche*, Wuppertal: Verlag der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft

On the Moravians

Balie, Isaac (ed)
1987 'Genadendal: Historical Outline', Cape Town: South African Library and the Church of Moravian Brethren

Hamilton, John T.
1901 *A history of the missions of the Moravian Church during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*, Bethlehem: Times Publishing Co.

Heyns, Henrice
1980 'Wupperthal 150 jaar, 1830-1980', Wupperthal: Evangeliese Broederkerk Kerkraad

Holmes, J.B.
1827 'Historical sketches of the missions of the United Brethren', London: printed for the author

Krüger, B.
1957 *The beginnings of the Moravian church*, Genadendal: Mission Press

Krüger, B.
1966 *The pear tree blossoms: the history of the Moravian Mission Stations in South Africa*, Genadendal: Moravian Book Depot

Krüger, B. and Plüddemann, H.
1981 *Das Tagebuch und die Briefe von Georg Schmidt, dem ersten Missionar in Südafrika, 1737-1744*, Bellville: Wes-Kaaplandse Instituut vir Historiese Navorsing

Krüger, B. and Schoberg, P.W.
1984 *The pear tree bears fruit: the history of the Moravian Church in South Africa-West, 1869-1960*, Genadendal

Latrobe, Christian I.
1818 *Journal of a visit to South Africa in 1815 and 1816, with some account of the missionary settlements of the United Brethren*, London: L.B. Seeley

Schaberg, P.W.
197? *Ons werk in die Broederkerk*, Genadendal: Moraviese Boekdepot

Schaberg, Willibald
1937? *Georg Schmidt en sy opvolgers: 200 jaar Evangeliese Broederkerk in Suid-Afrika, 1737-1937*, Herrnhut: Winter

Schmidt, Rudolf
1932 *Die begin van die sendingswerk van die Broederkerk*, Genadendal: Genadendalse Drukkery

Schmidt, Rudolf
1935 *Die Kweekskool van die Moraviese Sendingsgenootskap in Suid-Afrika*, Genadendal: Genadendalse Drukkery

Schmidt, Rudolf
1940 'Die Broederkerk (die wortel waaruit ons spruit) en die Broederkerk in Suid-Afrika-Wes ('n korte skets uit die verlede)', Genadendal

Local Histories

Anonymous
1847 *The Evangelical Lutheran Church at the Cape of Good Hope: its present position briefly considered by a member of the church*, Cape Town: C.J. Pike, Printer

Blumer, Wilhelm J.L.
1959 *75 Jahre Pflanzgarten im Dünensand: Phillipi-Vlakte am Kap*, Wynberg: Metropolitan

Brandt, Christoph
1976 'Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische St. Petri-Gemeinde Paarl, 100 Jahre, 1876-1976', Paarl: Kirchenvorstand

Eberle, Gerhard
1978 '100 Jahre lutherische Kirche Heidelberg, 1878-1978' Heidelberg: Kirchenvorstand

Gemeinde Bloemfontein
1975 'Hundert Jahre Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde, Bloemfontein-Oranje-Freistaat, 1875-1975', Bloemfontein: Gemeinde

Hasselhorn, Johannes
1975? '175 Jahre Kirche am Kap der guten Hoffnung', Cape Town, St. Martini Gemeinde: unpubl. paper

Hillermann, H.-G.
1981 'Christusgemeinde Kirchdorf', Wartburg, Natal: Gemeinde Kirchdorf

Hillermann, H.-G.
1983 'Die Geschichte Neu-Hannovers zum 125-jährigen Gemeindejubiläum, 15. Mai 1858-1983', Neu-Hannover, Natal: Lutherische Gemeinde

Hoge, John
1939 *Die Geschichte der ältesten evangelisch-lutherische Gemeinde in Kapstadt: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Deutschtums in Südafrika*, München: Reinhardt

Ludewig, H.
1911 *Geschichte der deutschen evangelisch lutherischen St.Johannis Gemeinde zu Wynberg bei Kapstadt: eine Festgabe zur Feier ihres fünfzigjährigen Bestehens, 1861-1911*, Braunschweig: A. Limbeck

Lüdemann, E. (ed)
1979 *A family of faith: Lutherans in greater Durban*, Durban: Lutheran Ministers' Fraternal

Naumann, Kurt
1961 *Festschrift zum hundertjährigen Jubiläum*, Cape Town, Deutsche evangelisch-lutherische St. Martini-Kirche: ABC Druckerii

Pakendorf, Gustav A.
1980 'A Short History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Strand Str., Cape Town, 1780-1980', Cape Town: brochure by the Bicentennial Celebrations Committee

Trümpelmann, G.
1950 'Deutsches Schaffen im Oranje-Freistaat: Festgabe zur Feier des 75-jährigen Bestehens der deutsch-lutherischen Gemeinde zu Bloemfontein', in *Die Eiche*, Beilage 8

Biographies

Knaut, Hermann
1899 *Louis Harms: ein Lebensbild des Begründers der Hermannsburger Mission*, Göttingen: Vandenhoek und Ruprecht

Krüger, B.
1956 *Die graaf van Zinsendorf, die stigter van die Hernude Broederkerk*, Genadendal: Boekdepot

Moritz, Walter A.W.
1973 *Dr. Heinrich Vedder: Vom Ravensburger Seidenweber zum berühmten Afrika-Missionar*, Schwäbisch-Gmünd: Lempp

Moritz, Walter A.W.
1976 *Hermann Heinrich Kreft: der Diamantenmissionar aus Wallenbrück*, Schwäbisch-Gmünd: Lempp

Pagel, A.
1958 *Ludwig Harms: Gottes Rufer in der Heide*, Gießen: Brunnen Verlag

Posselt, Karl W.
1887 *Wilhelm Posselt, der Kaffernmissionar*, Berlin: Berliner Missionsgesellschaft

Schmidt, Rudolf
1937 *Die ou suster Magdalena: een van die dopelinge van die leeraar Georg Schmidt in Baviaanskloof*,Genadendal: Genadendalse Drukkery

Schmidt, W.
193? *Bauer und Gottes Knecht: aus dem Leben des alten Missionar Behrens*, Hermannsburg: Missionshandlung

Thorne, Eudore E.E.
1971 *Indomitable Spirit: The story of Hanna and Carl Meyer of Kimberley*, KimberleyHistorical Society of Kimberley and the Northern Cape

Documents and Miscellaneous

Anonymous
1985 'Entwurf II: Wort der Synode der Kapkirche zur allgemeinen Lage in Südafrika und zur Stellung der Christen bzw. der Kirchen', unpublished

Bockelmann, Eleanor and Wilfred
1972 *An Excercise in Compassion: The Lutheran Church in South Africa*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House

Brandt, Christoph
1977 'An explanatory word of the Church Council of the Cape Church to the congregations concerning the decisions taken at Daressalaam, Lutheran World Federation General Assembly', Cape Town, St. Martini Gemeinde: Cape Church Office, unpubl.

Brandt, Christoph
1982 'Pastoralia' and 'Declaration of Intention concerning Church Unity', Cape Town, St. Martini: unpublished letters

FELCSA
1975 'Appeal to Lutheran Christians in Southern Africa', adopted by the conference of FELCSA, 11-13 February 1975.

Kremkau, Klaus (ed)
1974 *epd dokumentation: EKD und Kirchen im Südlichen Afrika*, Bielefeld: Eckart Verlag

Minutes of Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa, Zamba, Malawi, March 5 to March 11 1982, unpublished

Pakendorf, P.G.
1969 'Letter to SACC: Response of FELCSA to the "Message to the People of South Africa" ', unpublished letter

Scriba, Georg
1983 'Einheit lutherischer Missionen und Kirchen in Südafrika', Rustenburg: unpublished graphic representation of the historical development of the Lutheran missions and churches

Strand Street Church
1961 'Constitution and By-Laws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Strand Str., Cape Town', Cape Town: Strand Street Congregation

Von Delft, H.
1969 'Comment by the Convocation of Pastors of the ELCSA (Cape Church) regarding the "Message" ', unpubl.

APPENDICES

Statistical Information

Lutherans form a relatively small part of the South African population — 4.0% in 1960, 4.3% in 1970 and 3.5% in 1980.[1] The 1980 figures show some distortion, since they exclude the so-called 'independent homelands'; this explains the lower figures in 1980. The 1985 Census did not include a question on religion.

The full figures, broken down into racial categories by the census, were (the figures in brackets give the percentage of the population group)[2]:

	1960	1970	1980
Whites	34,000 (1.1%)	42,000 (1.1%)	43,000 (0.9%)
Coloureds	73,000 (4.8%)	95,000 (4.6%)	102,000 (3.8%)
Asians	---	---	700 (.08%)
Blacks	542,000 (5.0%)	812,000 (5.2%)	742,000 (4.3%)
TOTAL	649,000 (4.0%)	949,000 (4.3%)	887,000 (3.5%)

Using these figures, the percentages of Lutherans according to racial groups were: In 1960, Africans were 83.6% of all Lutherans in South Africa, Coloureds 11.2%, and whites 5.2%; in 1970, Africans 85.6%, Coloureds 10.0%, and whites 4.4%; in 1980, Africans 83.6%, Coloureds 11.53%, whites 4.8% and Asians .07%.

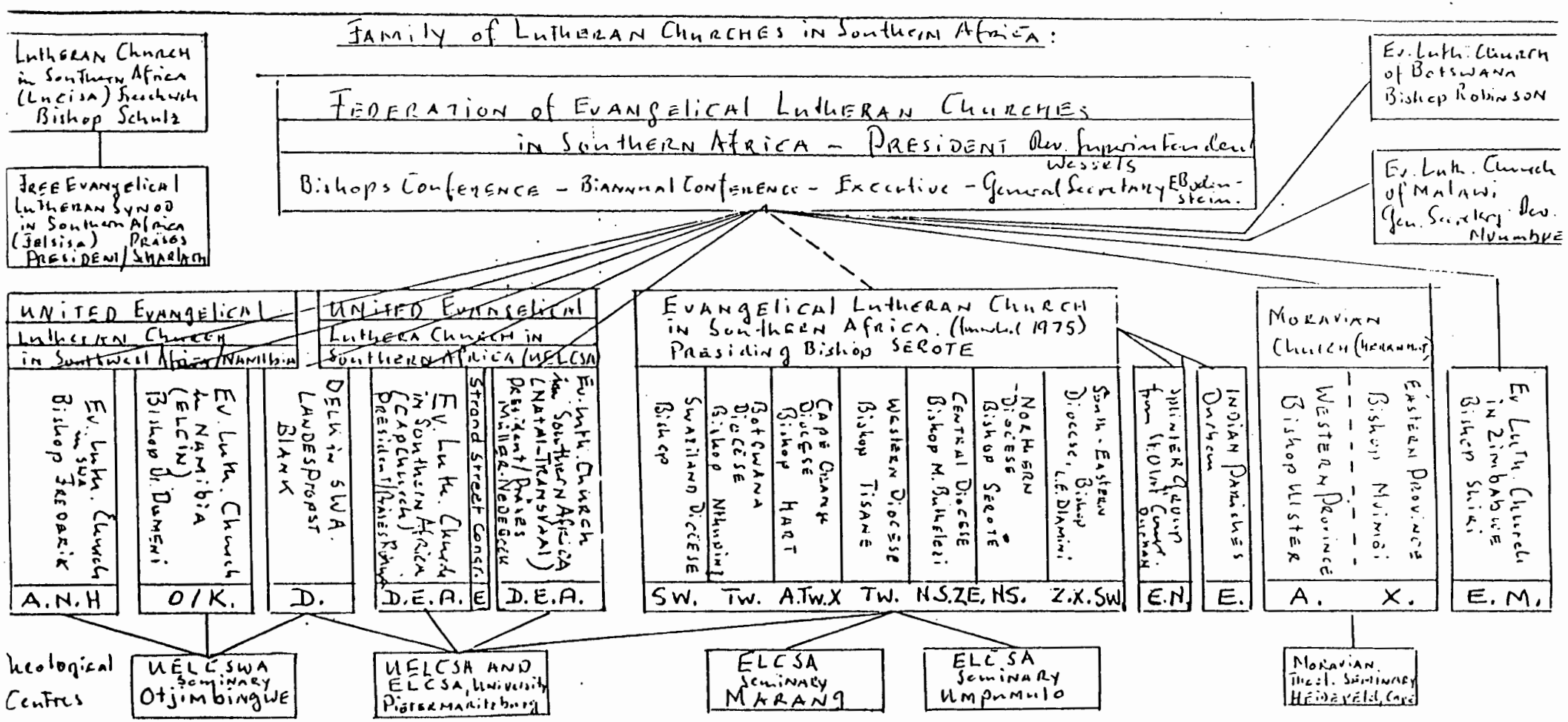
The Lutheran churches are smaller than the African Independent, Dutch Reformed (taken together), Roman Catholic, Methodist and Anglican churches, but larger than the Apostolic, Presbyterian and Congregational churches.

---

1 Census figures cited in Marjorie Hope (ed.), 1986, *South African Christian Handbook, 1986/87*, Florida: World Vision. pp.1-3.

2 Hope, 1986, *op.cit.*, pp.1-3; the figure for Coloureds in 1970 must be incorrectly given as 9,500, since this cannot constitute 4.6% of the Coloured population, and would also indicate a dramatic drop from 1960. Thus it is taken that the total figure is 949,000, which is 4.3% of the total population.

Current Structures



Sprachen: Languages

A - Afrikaans
D = Deutsch, German
E = English

E/N = English + Scandinavian
H. = Herero
N = Nama

NS = Northern Sotho
O/K = Owambo/Kavango
SW = Swazi

TW = Tswana
X = Xhoza
Z = Zulu

M = Mashona
Matabe

drawn by P. Muller. Neudeck
16.3.1987.