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Christoph Dietrich Weber

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis, chrisweber@mweb.co.za

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READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIME:
THREE VOICES IN THE CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AS THEY RELATE TO
SEGREGATION, RACISM, AND APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA FROM 1900–1978

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis:
Department of Historical Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
Christoph Dietrich Weber
December 2021

Approved by:	Dr. Timothy Dost	Dissertation Advisor
	Dr. William Schumacher	Reader
	Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M.	Reader

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To My Wife Sigrid Karin Weber nee Köhne

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PREFACE

In March 2012, a Joint Study Group on the History of Apartheid and its Impact on Confessional Lutheran Churches Working in Southern Africa was established.¹ I was seconded to the study group as the Mission of Lutheran Churches (MLC) representative. Werner Klän wrote: “It is hoped that by the end of the process, the research done by the commission would work towards reconciliation and promote mutual respect and appreciation for one another in view of a hurtful past, and help create an amicable fellowship of confessional Lutheran churches, congregations, and church members.”² This dissertation attempts to be a reader on the topic of apartheid in the context of the confessional Lutheran church in southern Africa. I hope that it can contribute to the vision and aim of the study group. I am aware that the dissertation is written from the perspective of the organization I work for, the Bleckmar mission. Several key documents have been translated and made available in the appendices of this dissertation. Hopefully, this will allow many to access the information and deepen both the understanding and conversation about the topic. The dissertation is not about settling scores or exposing specific individuals, but neither is an attempt made to hide past transgressions, false ideologies, or heresies. As Lutherans, we recognize the existential reality of original sin and confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. It should not surprise us that our ancestors and we have been guilty of sins against our neighbor for generations. Friederich Wilhelm Hopf and Hermann Sasse would remind us that when we have political power at our disposal, we are in grave danger of abusing

¹ Werner Klän, “First Meeting of Joint Study Group on the History of Apartheid and its Impact on Confessional Lutheran Churches Working in Southern Africa was established” in *Mission und Apartheid: Ein Unentrinnbares Erbe und seine Aufarbeitung durch Lutherische Kirchen im Südlichen Afrika*, ed. Werner Klän and Gilberto da Silva (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2013), 205.

² Klän, “First Meeting,” 206.

this power for evil purposes. Apartheid was not only wrong because people in power abused it. It is terrible because of the racism, ideology, and idolatry that supports this concept. It is not only a crime against humanity, as defined by the legal definition of the United Nations, but it is a heresy contrary to the teaching of scripture. Therefore, confronting it with a concept of gradualism is not appropriate. The law must expose sin. The grace of God leads us to repentance and opens up the possibility for forgiveness and reconciliation.

The theory of social knowledge by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann is a sociological approach to explain the social construction of reality. I find this theory appealing and believe it explains many of the dynamics at play when we humans try to make sense of our world. To recognize these various dynamics is not to accept them as final or credit them with any value. Still, it can make us more aware of what is happening when we construct our worldview, or as they say, our plausibility structure. Most white South Africans struggled to withstand the coerciveness of their social context in which apartheid was justified. They did not recognize how they instrumentalized the scriptures to explain the abusive policies of apartheid. The ability to read the signs of the times appropriately correlates with the ability to withstand the peer pressure of our significant conversation partners. The outside perspective is a valuable resource not to be neglected. I believe many in the confessional Lutheran church in South Africa chose to ignore Hopf and Sasse's critical voice during their time. This dissertation attempts to give a second chance to the members of the Lutheran church in Southern Africa, even if only for the later generation, to listen to these voices after all. I believe it is beneficial to know the arguments of those who justified apartheid in the past, lest we forget.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Global Seminary Initiative (GSI) financed my Ph.D. studies at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. It was a privilege, honor, and absolute joy to study at St Louis. The various courses, the professors, the fellow students all made it an unforgettable experience. The Graduate School, especially Dr. Beth Hoeltke and Dr. Gerhard Bode, gave such brilliant support that one could focus on studying in a foreign environment without any inconvenience. The committee headed up by the doctoral advisor Dr. Timothy Dost, together with Dr. William Schumacher and Dr. Leopoldo Sánchez, made it possible for me to complete the necessary work within a reasonable time frame. Dr. Dost was especially helpful and gracious in his guidance of the writing, having had to endure some rather rough drafts.

Credit for signing up for the Ph.D. goes to Mission Director Roger Zieger. He had done the course before me and impressed all of us missionaries with the reading he was doing for the coursework when he visited us in South Africa. He has been a great running partner, and both of us are somewhat competitive, so getting the dissertation done never lacked motivation. I am grateful to the LKM for allowing me to pursue these studies. I had unlimited access to the archive and library in Bleckmar. Thank you to Rev. Martin Benhöfer for making the photos of Hopf available. My thanks also go to Mr. Mintesinot Birru, the librarian at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tshwane Pretoria, who organized access to the early editions of the mission's newsletter.

My first exposure to Friederich Wilhelm Hopf was through my parents' respect for him. He was known in our house as "*Pfarrer Hopf*." Reading his book *Lutherische Mitverantwortung für das christliche Zeugnis im Südlichen Afrika* as a youth convinced me that he was right in his assessment of apartheid and his call for the church to speak up against it. I am grateful for Dr.

Volker Stolle's mentorship in Oberursel and for guiding me in my initial studies of the writings of Hopf. Credit must go to Bishop Georg Schulz for pointing out the existence of the presentation of Karl Meister in a conversation, even though he was not sure where it could be found. Martin Meister, the grandchild of Karl Meister, helped gather personal details and made the photos of his grandfather, who is also my wife's great-grandfather, available.

My aunt Christine Ziegenhagen, working in a bookstore in Germany at the time, would regularly send book parcels to my parents. These parcels included books that were banned in South Africa. I remember receiving Steve Biko's "I write what I like" for Christmas or my birthday. Other books like Albert Luthuli's "Let my people go," or Bloke Modisane's "Blame me on History" or Ellen Khuzwayo's "Call me Women" were all in our bookshelves in the sitting room. Reading these books in my high school years was a privilege and convinced me of the inherent evil of apartheid. I look back on those years in High School with much appreciation for good friends like Richard Peattie, the son of a Methodist pastor. My interest in history was nurtured and encouraged by great teachers like Mr. Owen. I remember vividly how a group of us matrices (final year students) challenged the Army Officer, who came to give us a pep talk and excite us to fight in the South African Defense Force in 1989. All white boys had to go to the army, and conscientious objection was a criminal offense. I was called into the headmaster's office afterward and asked to explain why the officer believed we were all communists. I thought that to be a compliment at the time. I am grateful for friends like Erwin Wortman, who took me out of hostel one evening to attend a talk by Archbishop Tutu in which he humorously ridiculed the apartheid government. I remember the air of excitement and tension at the University of Pretoria when Nelson Mandela spoke in the outdoor auditorium in July 1991. From October 1992 to December 2009, I was outside of the country. That meant I did not experience the

enormous change in 1994, and much of what happened in those years firsthand, the drama of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the more or less successful process of nation-building as a new South Africa.

Dr. Werner Klän, together with the leadership of the FELSISA and LCSA initiated the study group on apartheid. I was seconded to the study group by the MLC. This dissertation serves as a humble contribution to the work of this study group to allow the local churches to have a better understanding and appreciation for the historical perspectives on apartheid and segregation. Dr. Klän has contributed considerably to the topic by publishing valuable resource books on Sasse, Hopf, and Apartheid. Dr. Klän and Dr. John Pless graciously wrote letters of recommendation for me to study in St. Louis. Bishop Modise Maragelo wrote the recommendation from my church body. He was my vicar mentor in Botswana and we spent many hours talking lively about issues related to this topic on our numerous trips in the parish.

We were fortunate to grow up in a house where books opened a worldwide perspective, and the lively discussions around the dinner table and elsewhere included us in our parents' conversations. I am grateful to them for their support and example. It is somewhat ironic that some supporters of apartheid believed that my father was a communist. He was passionately anti-communist. He appreciated Solzhenitsyn's books and was wary of the ANC because of its perceived connections to the SACP. He admitted that he initially supported the political program of apartheid and favored Bantu Education. However, he agreed with Hopf that apartheid and segregation within the church were not acceptable. His theological conviction determined his approach to all people; as a good Lutheran, he recognized the pervasiveness of sin in all humans.

Starting this Ph.D. course in 2016, traveling to the USA twice a year for two weeks, spending much time reading, on top of the regular work schedule was challenging, and many

things were placed lower down on the priority list. It was exciting to study concurrently with my children, and I enjoyed the support and motivation we shared. My wife Sigrid has been a great cheerleader and support and has engaged in the discussion and progression of the dissertation as she invariably had to listen to numerous drafts and editions. Gratefully I dedicate this dissertation to her.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	African Independent Churches
ANC	African National Congress
Ap	Apology to the Augsburg Confession
ATKV	Afrikaanse Taal– en Kultuurvereniging, Afrikaans Language and Culture Association
BOK	Book of Concord
CA	<i>Confessio Augustana</i> (The Augsburg Confession)
CRT	Critical Race Theory
DEK	Deutsche Evangelische Kirche, German Evangelical Church
DEKA	Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchenausschuss, German Evangelical Church Council
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
EKD	Evangelische Kirche Deutschland, Evangelical Church Germany
ELCSA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa
ELCSA-NT	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa Natal Transvaal
FAK	Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural associations)
FELCSA	Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa
FELSISA	Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa
FMC	Federal Mission Council
GSI	Global Seminary Initiative
HR	Hammanskraal Resolution
LC	Large Catechism
LCSA	Lutheran Church in southern Africa

LCMS	Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
LKM	Lutherische Kirchenmission (Bleckmar)
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MHELF	Mission der Hannoverschen evangelisch lutherischen Freikirche
MELF	Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen Bleckmar
MLC	Mission of Lutheran Churches
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church)
NHK	Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk
NP	National Party
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, National Socialist German Workers' Party
OB	Ossewabrandwag
SA	Smalcald Articles
SABRA	Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse-aangeleentede (South African Bureau for Racial Affairs)
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAP	South African Party
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
SELK	Selbständige Evangelische Lutherische Kirche (Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church)
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UP	United Party
VELKD	Vereinigte Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche in Deutschland, United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany

WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches
ZAR	Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek

GLOSSARY

African: A term used to describe any black person.

Afrikaner: A term used to describe a white person speaking Afrikaans.

Baaskap: An Afrikaans term used to describe the master-servant relationship

Bleckmar Mission: The Bleckmar Mission has used various names in its history. When the mission broke away from the Hermannsburg Mission, it was called the *Mission der Hannoverschen evangelisch lutherischen Freikirche* (MHELF) (the Mission of the Hannoverian evangelical Lutheran Free Church). After various other free churches joined the mission, the name was changed to *Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen Bleckmar* (MELF Mission of Evangelical Lutheran Free Churches Bleckmar). Then finally, the name was changed to *Lutherische Kirchenmission (Bleckmar)* (LKM Lutheran Church Mission Bleckmar). When a local separate Mission organization was registered in South Africa, the name used was Mission of Lutheran Churches (Bleckmar) (MLC).

Boer: A term used to describe a white person speaking Afrikaans.

Colored: A term used to describe a person of mixed race in South Africa.

Dopper: Popular name for the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

Gelykstelling: An Afrikaans term translated as leveling. Used either for racial or social leveling.

INKATHA: A political and cultural movement, re-established in 1975 by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and dedicated to promoting Zulu nationalism.

Kaffern: A derogative word that is not allowed to be used in our times but used widely at the end of the 19th century. Originally comes from the Arabic word for an unbeliever. That in itself brings its connotations of negativity, as faith and religion were essential pillars of

perceived civilization. Meister will use the term initially in his time in South Africa but will later state when he argues for apartheid that one should not use the word. The term will only be used when quoted directly in the dissertation, and then it will be quoted as “K...”.

ABSTRACT

Weber, Christoph, Reading the signs of the time: “Three voices in the confessional Lutheran Church to segregation, racism, and apartheid in South Africa from 1900–1978.” Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2022. 425 pp.

According to August Vilmar, reading the signs of the times was an essential task of all pastors and theologians. It was a part of their prophetic task to interpret the world and its context with the word of God and to proclaim the voice of the church in law and gospel. The three theologians analyzed in this dissertation: Karl Meister, Hermann Sasse, and Friederich W. Hopf respected Vilmar and used him as a theological role model. They all ventured to explain the church’s position concerning the political situation of their time. Meister defended the apartheid policy as advocated by D.F. Malan’s National Party in a presentation that Meister held at the General Lutheran Conference in Durban in 1950. Hermann Sasse’s criticism of totalitarian states in the 1930s can be viewed as a theological rebuttal of many of the theological and political positions held by supporters of segregation and apartheid. These concern the concepts of *Volk*, nation, state, government, and race. Sasse wrote to Hopf just before the latter traveled to South Africa for the first time in 1956 that no Lutheran pastor could support apartheid. Hopf dealt most clearly and critically with apartheid after the Soweto Uprising of 1976.

Foundational for both Sasse and Hopf was their ecclesiological understanding. The political positions they had against apartheid resulted from their concept of church. Understanding the church from the definition of the seventh article in the Confession of Augsburg, they would deny any other secondary aspects like culture, race, or *Volk*, and nation to play a definitive role in the constitution or existence of the church. The sufficiency of word and sacraments implied that other criteria must be excluded from the foundational ecclesiology. Sasse was critical of the pseudo-religious role that the totalitarian states played. The state and politics were usurping the part of the church, to the detriment of all. Sasse and Hopf accepted the two-realm teaching of the Lutheran church but not in a way that invariably credited the present government with unquestioned authority. From the understanding of the mandate given to both realms by God, they argued that the state was often in real danger of losing its mandate through abuse and tyranny. Hopf appreciated the Maphumulo Memorandum that called for a dynamic approach, that the church had a responsibility to call the government to account on how it fulfilled its mandate.

Sasse used the concept of vocation widely to explain the genesis of *Völker*, nations, state, and government. This allowed him to counter the racial categories and the idea of creation orders, which he found to be easily misunderstood and therefore preferred to use the term divine orders. The contingency of history and God’s sovereignty in both the call and judgment, which designates the fall of an institution, is better explained by the concept of vocation than the more rigid biological concepts of race.

Another layer is added to the analysis of the dissertation by applying the theory of social knowledge by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann to the topic. The social construction of reality attempts to explain the dynamics at work when humankind makes sense of their world. The role played by society, the significant conversation partners, and the individual describes the creation and sustaining of a plausibility structure that exerts coercive objectivity on the individual, even though it is socially constructed. This reality makes the ability to read the signs

of time objectively tricky and is an explanation of why most people tend to go with the flow. This is also true when the hegemony of an idea suddenly collapses and the plausibility structure is overhauled. Suddenly most people change sides and cannot remember ever supporting the previous view or explanation of the world.

BECAUSE I'M BLACK

Because I'm black

You think I lack

The talents, feelings and ambitions

That others have;

You do not think I crave positions

That others crave.

Psychology

And Zoology

Have proved that Race and blood are a fiction ...

All men are Man;

Diversity means not disunion –

It is God's plan;

White blood and black in test transfusions

Answer the same.

They harbour childish vain delusions

Who better claim.

Because the people eat and sing

And mate,

You do not see their suffering.

You rate

Them fools
And tools
Of those with power and boastful show;
Not Fate, but chance, has made things so –
Beware! These people, struggling, hold
The winning card;
And when they strike they will be bold –
And will strike hard!

(January 1949)¹

¹ H.I.E. Dhlomo, “Because I’m Black,” in *Voices Of This Land: An Anthology of South African Poetry in English*, ed. Molly Brown (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2018), 24.

CHAPTER ONE

APARTHEID

Introduction

Brian Lapping, in his book, *Apartheid: A History*, looks to answer the question, why South Africa would “come to adopt so inefficient a social arrangement, and why did they persist with it when all the world could see it was not working?”¹ One possible answer for this phenomenon would be to argue along with Peter Berger that the “plausibility structure” that we use to make sense of the world and our surroundings not only supports our view of the world, but also suggests that other world views are unreasonable and therefore not very plausible.²

Peter Berger argued that humans are constantly active in a dynamic process of “World—Construction.” “The fundamental dialectic process of society consists of three moments, or steps. These are externalization, objectivation, and internalization.”³ Culture plays an important role in “providing the firm structures for human life that are lacking biologically.”⁴ Both culture and society are products of human activity, but they also have “attained the status of objective reality” that makes it difficult for individuals to go against this “reality.”⁵ “The fundamental coerciveness of society lies not in its machineries of social control, but in its power to constitute and to impose itself as reality.”⁶ Thus the world is explained and rendered plausible and makes

¹ Brian Lapping, *Apartheid: A History* (New York: George Braziller, 1986), xiii.

² In *The Sacred Canopy* and *The Social Construction of Reality* Berger argues that a plausibility structure is developed by man to make sense of his world. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 45, 192. A comprehensive summary of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor, 1967), is attached as Appendix 12.

³ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 4.

⁴ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 6.

⁵ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 11.

⁶ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 12.

sense, as long as the structure is in place. Peter Berger argued in the context of religion that secularization questioned the plausibility context. In a similar process I believe, one could explain that a social construct like Apartheid can move from a hegemony in society to being discarded as evil and obsolete within a relatively short period of time, as the ability to impose itself as reality is lost. This might be compared to the paradigm shift theory of Hans Küng and Thomas Kuhn, which is used by David Bosch in his *Transforming Mission*.⁷ The plausibility context of Hopf, Sasse and Meister was not the same. The three shared some aspects of their context, for example their Lutheran heritage. Berger goes on to show that the subjective reality “of the world hangs on the thin thread of conversation. The reason why most of us are unaware of this precariousness most of the time is grounded in the continuity of our conversation with significant others. The maintenance of such continuity is one of the most important imperatives of social order.”⁸ This, I believe, explains the benefit of the theology students from South Africa studying in Germany—they got out of the “conversation” and got a new perspective on the situation in South Africa.⁹ Berger argues convincingly that “the socially constructed world is, above all, an ordering of experience. A meaningful order, or *nomos*, is imposed upon the discrete experiences and meanings of individuals.”¹⁰ Even “if the ordering activity of society never attains to totality, it may yet be described as totalizing.”¹¹ “In other words, institutional programs are endowed with an ontological status to the point where to deny them is to deny being itself—

⁷ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 181–89.

⁸ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 17.

⁹ “The world begins to shake in the very instant that its sustaining conversation begins to falter.” Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 12.

¹⁰ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 19.

¹¹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 20. Especially concerning issues of legitimation the “institutional order” is to “be so interpreted as to hide, as much as possible, its *constructed* character,” Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 33.

the being of the universal order of things and, consequently, one's own being in this order.”¹²

“When the nomos is taken for granted as appertaining to the ‘nature of things,’ understood cosmologically or anthropologically, it is endowed with a stability deriving from more powerful sources than the historical efforts of human beings.”¹³

Not surprisingly, Lutherans too tried to read the signs of the time to make sense of the world. All three theologians that I will be looking at in this dissertation, Karl Meister, Friederich W Hopf, and Hermann Sasse, view August Vilmar as one of their theological role models. Vilmar used the term “*Signatur der Zeit*,” signature of the time, to describe the necessary task of each theologian and pastor to be able to read the signs of his time.¹⁴ This necessary ability of the pastor is linked to the task of testing the spirits (1 John 4:1). Especially Hopf will constantly return to the call that pastors fulfil their prophetic calling to interpret and make judgement calls on the signs of the times.

Meister together with other Lutheran missionaries in South Africa were quick to use various approaches in society, culture, missiology, and theology to justify the reality of segregation, racism and apartheid in their context. When called upon to analyze the time one lives in, a large portion of our life belongs to common sense knowledge and needs very little explaining. One does not have to justify it. Once, however, it gets problematized or questioned, it needs to be explained, justified, re-evaluated, and assessed.

A great deal of social upheaval occurred in the 19th century. As society, culture, and the world as it was known changed. Vilmar, a theologian in Marburg, believed strongly that this

¹² Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 24.

¹³ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 25.

¹⁴ A.F.C. Vilmar, *Die Theologie der Tatsachen wider die Theologie der Rhetorik* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1876), 106.

called the church, especially the church's pastors, to give guidance in these challenging times. To describe what was happening and determine what the church's voice had to be, it was necessary to read the signs of the time.

Lutheran mission work in South Africa was established by Louis Harms from Hermannsburg in Lower Saxony in present day Germany. He sent out both missionaries and colonists, who initially lived and worked together in the so-called Hermannsburg communism. The colonists quickly established German congregations that started to exist separately from the mission congregations that were gathering the African converts. With time this segregation was "legalized." The synodical resolutions of 1906, 1907, and 1932 all endorsed segregation in the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod of South Africa (FELSISA) but did not refer to a political program.¹⁵ Remarkably, when the mission decided to create an independent Lutheran Church they did not integrate the African congregations with the FELSISA but rather established a church for Africans with the name Lutheran Church in Southern Africa in 1967.¹⁶ The reality of two confessional Lutheran churches along ethnic lines is the sad reminder of this legacy. In 1950, the missionary Karl Meister of the Mission of Hanoverian Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (MHELF)¹⁷ presented a "Lutheran" perspective on the racial issue at the General Lutheran Conference in Durban.¹⁸ It is probably the most explicit justification of Apartheid in

¹⁵ The synodical minutes of the congregation in Kirchdorf were transcribed by Pastor Peter Ahlers and are available as PDFs from the synodical office.

¹⁶ At first, Hopf suggested the name "Bantu Lutheran Church," but the African pastors pointed out, that they would not tolerate such a name. They were Lutheran by definition not "Bantu," just as much as they declined the cultural division of a Zulu or Tswana diocese, but rather accepted geographic divisions.

¹⁷ This mission organization was established on June 14, 1892 and designated the break from the Hermannsburg Mission. In the same year the first congregations (white) in South Africa left the Hermannsburg mission and established the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA).

¹⁸ Karl Meister, "Die Stellung der Lutherischen Kirche zur Rassenfrage" (paper presented at the General Lutheran Conference, Durban, South Africa, September 12, 1950). This document in German is in the archive of the Bleckmar Mission. A translation of the document is attached as appendix seven.

our church body. The response of the Synodical Council of the FELSISA to the Hammanskraal Resolution (HR) of 1974 is a definite second. However, it is more explicit in its support of the South African government as such, rather than specifically of the Apartheid policy.¹⁹ Research has shown how easily communism was instrumentalized to criticize and disqualify anyone who was against the Apartheid system. The fear of communism was especially felt in Afrikaans communities. Pastor Schnackenberg, in 1951 already criticized reports from the World Council of churches as being influenced by communists when they questioned the Apartheid policy of the South African government.²⁰

Racial segregation and, later, apartheid enjoyed a relatively uncontested hegemony in the MHELF and the FELSISA. That is until the end of the Second World War. A new mission director in Friederich Wilhelm Hopf was called to serve in Bleckmar.²¹ His experience of the church struggle in Nazi Germany and the confessional battle after the Second World War with the unification of the various state churches in Germany brought a consciousness to the discussion in the Mission that challenged the status quo of segregation and Apartheid.²² His visits to South Africa in 1956, 1966, and 1974 allowed him to engage ever more intensely with

¹⁹ Der Synodal—Ausschuss, “Stellungnahme der Freien Ev. Luther. Synode in Südafrika,” *Bekennende Lutherische Kirche*, no. 3/4 (March and April 1975): 26–28.

²⁰ Johannes Schnackenberg, “Die Tagung des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen 1950 zu Toronto in Kanada in Beziehung auf die Rassenfrage in Südafrika,” *Berichte aus der Evangelisch—lutherischen Synode in Südafrika und der Mission Evangelisch—lutherischer Freikirchen* no. 5 (May 1951): 6–7.

²¹ The Mission of Hannoverian Evangelical Lutheran Free Church was based in the small village Bleckmar. This little village just outside Hermannsburg became the abbreviated name for the Mission. In 1950 the name of the Mission Evangelisch—Lutherischer Freikirchen Mission of Evangelical Lutheran Free Churches. In 1989 the mission changed its name again to Lutherische Kirchenmission (Lutheran Church Mission). In South Africa the Mission is now called the “Mission of Lutheran Churches (Bleckmar Mission)”.

²² Markus Büttner and Werner Klän, *Friederich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart. Ein lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um Seine Haltung zur Apartheid* (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012).

South African partners.²³ Some congregations stopped supporting the Mission because of his “liberal” views against Apartheid, and the conference of missionaries in 1977 protested that they would no longer write for the “Missionsblatt” because of his tendency to “spread hate” and “call for violent change.”²⁴ Hopf, did not enjoy much support in South Africa. He did have support from his friend Herman Sasse, who in 1956 wrote to Hopf, stating that no Lutheran pastor could support Apartheid.²⁵ Most in the MHELF and the FELSISA would disagree and either supported Apartheid outright or, in later years, propagated a “gradualist” approach of slow reform. Even as late as 1987, when the writing on the wall should have been evident to most that Apartheid was fundamentally wrong, my father, Dr. E.A.W. Weber, in his evaluation of the Kairos document, which he admittedly wrote reluctantly for the “Epiphaniashandreichung” of the Bleckmar Mission, could not bring himself to acknowledge the injustices of the Apartheid system beyond the impact it might have had on some sensitive sentiments of certain Africans.²⁶ It was much easier to identify the apparent shortcomings of a “utopian” and “communist” analysis that propagated violent change.

The dissertation will look at three theologians that were all part of the confessional Lutheran Church. The first Karl Meister was a missionary of the Bleckmar Mission. The second Friederich Wilhelm Hopf became the Mission Director of the Bleckmar Mission after the Second

²³ Friederich Wilhelm Hopf, *Lutherische Mitverantwortung für das christliche Zeugnis im Südlichen Afrika* (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1975), reprinted in Büttner, *Friederich Wilhelm Hopf*, 326–65.

²⁴ Büttner, *Friederich Wilhelm Hopf*, 26, 128.

²⁵ Professor Stolle refers to this letter in his presentation at the Oberursel Symposium on Apartheid in 2010. Volker Stolle, “Die Auseinandersetzung der Bleckmarer Mission / Lutherischen Kirchenmission in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland mit der Apartheid,” in *Mission und Apartheid: Ein unentrinnbares Erbe und seine Aufarbeitung durch lutherische Kirchen im südlichen Afrika*, ed. Werner Klän and Gilberto da Silva (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2013), 25.

²⁶ Ernst Alfred Wilhelm Weber, “Noch eine Beurteilung des Kairos Dokuments,” *Epiphaniashandreichung* (1987): 65–72.

World War. The third theologian is Hermann Sasse. He was a close friend to Hopf and was widely read by the missionaries of the Bleckmar Mission and therefore can be viewed as an essential theological influencer of the Bleckmar Mission. All three theologians viewed Vilmar as a role model. And they all three attempted to read the signs of their times and give an appropriate analysis from the perspective of the confessional Lutheran church. The issues they spoke to were contested, and they attempted to clarify and position themselves and the church concerning these.

All three were strongly influenced by the conversation in which they found themselves, and they interpreted the signs of the times from their plausibility structures. It would seem most straightforward in the case of Meister to argue that he was, just like all the missionaries of the Bleckmar Mission, influenced by his conversation with white South Africans and that he justified and legitimized the status quo of the South African political establishment. He did this by explaining the subjugation of Africans under Europeans.

This dissertation will examine how Hermann Sasse read the signs of his times in the European context before the Second World War. His criticism of Nazi ideology is applicable to this dissertation. He, too, remained an outsider in his context. Possibly one could describe him with Berger's concept of an intellectual that remains on the periphery of society because his ideas do not conform to the plausibility structure of the masses.

Hopf and Sasse did not simply align themselves with the mainstream position. Although in the case of Hopf, he restrained his criticism of apartheid in the early years of his leadership in Bleckmar out of consideration for his significant conversation partners in South Africa, the white missionaries, and the white church, the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA).

One could argue that the criticism of apartheid needed to gather momentum and influence in a carrier group that could ultimately displace the hegemony of the ideology. But this took much longer than anticipated. For many years the two perceptions pro and contra apartheid stood diametrically opposed and were stuck in an unfortunate and destructive equilibrium. Hopf remained an isolated critic of apartheid in his immediate church context.

To give context to the discussion of the three theologians that are to be analyzed in this dissertation, it is advisable to provide an overview of apartheid. The broader context of apartheid is not identical to that of the three individuals. Meister passed away in 1958, before the rise of grand apartheid. The chapter on Sasse will focus on issues he dealt with in the 1930s in Nazi Germany rather than South Africa's specifics. And even Hopf was forced into retirement before the end of apartheid. Our historical perspective can include a much more expansive "landscape of history" than what was available to the three.²⁷ For example, Meister stood at the beginning of apartheid and reflected on its intentions, whereas the current perspective can include the unintended consequences and the numerous repercussions of legislation and policies. This landscape is so large that it would not fit into an introductory chapter, acceptable to any review committee. Therefore, one would have to limit this overview to certain vital aspects.

At first, contextualization of the term apartheid is given. Probably the most significant precursor of apartheid is segregation. This policy went back many years before the rise of apartheid. Following segregation, the chapter then looks at the specific South African context of Christian Nationalism as it contributed to Afrikaner nationalism and the rise of apartheid. Apartheid was not only an idea it had massive repercussions. Sometimes these consequences

²⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002).

were and are ignored, therefore the chapter focusses on these issues under the term of coercion. This section intends to clarify that this dissertation is not merely a theoretical discussion but speaks to existential issues affecting South Africa to this day.

This dissertation is an academic discussion of the topic after all, and it therefore is necessary to address the various theories about apartheid. This section concludes with a short chronological summary of apartheid.

The last section of the chapter collects and comments a selection of various statements about apartheid. The intention with these statements is to give the reader context and appreciation, how the discussion on apartheid was developing. That is the reason, why some of these documents are attached as appendices to the dissertation. The three theologians, Meister, Hopf, and Sasse did not function in a vacuum. Sasse's involvement in the ecumenical movement in the 1920s and 1930s is a valuable example of this. There were very early clear statements against racism and apartheid, that could have been heard and acknowledged. The fact that these contributions were ignored or disqualified as unreasonable by most of the white South African churches points to the argument of Berger that our conversation is influenced significantly by our decision to listen selectively to the voices in our context and by becoming a product of our society.²⁸ In the last chapter of the dissertation the theory of Berger's construction of social reality will be looked at more closely.

Apartheid

Apartheid was the political slogan used by the National Party to achieve a surprise victory in the elections of 1948 in the Union of South Africa.²⁹ Throughout the following forty years,

²⁸ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 11.

²⁹ Saul Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948–1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.

this term would be filled with various interpretations and meanings that, on the one hand, made it a universally known concept but, on the other hand, a rather complex term when one wanted to precisely explain what it entailed. Apartheid did not invent racism or segregation, and it was not the first political system that racialized legislation.³⁰ The justification and criticism of apartheid changed over time in a hotly contested space. Even today, apartheid represents not only a political term or program but rather has socio-economic, religious, theological, ideological, cultural, and anthropological aspects and connotations that explain why so much can be said about apartheid and why explaining it is complex.

Despite apartheid's variety and complexity, the General Assembly of the United Nations annually denounced apartheid from 1952 onward. It defined it as a crime against humanity because it went against the United Nations Charter Articles 55 and 56.³¹ Apartheid practically justified racial discrimination and withheld fundamental human rights from the majority of the people in South Africa.³²

Part of racism is the assertion of the superiority of one's race over and against the perceived inferiority of one or more other races. The perceived or presumed white supremacy or dominance over others was a convenient excuse to justify political, social, and economic domination and inequality long before the emergence of apartheid. This dominance or

³⁰ For the difference between "racism" arguing that one race is superior to another, and "racialism" arguing more specifically that races are just different not necessarily superior, refer to Michael MacDonald, *Why Race Matters in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006), 6.

³¹ John Dugard, "Introductory Note," written August 2008, accessed August 11, 2021, <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/cspca/cspca.html>. Articles 55 and 56 of the United Nations Charter is attached as Appendix I.

³² Remarkably Jan Smuts was responsible for including the term "human rights" in the Charter of the United Nations. He was however heavily criticized and exposed as a "hypocrite" by the representative from India Mrs. Pandit in the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1946, because of the obvious neglect of human rights in South Africa. Saul Dubow gives a fascinating account of Smuts role and understanding of human rights and their relationship to political rights and racial equality. Saul Dubow, "Smuts, the United Nations and the Rhetoric of Race and Rights," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 1 (January 2008): 43–72.

supremacy might not always have been justified along racial lines, as people referred to culture, civilization, education, religion, wealth, and military power to claim their superiority over others. With the emergence of social Darwinism, however, many of these cultural aspects were racialized. This would influence the perceptions of how one viewed the roles of education and development. Would it be necessary, desirable, or even possible for less civilized people to catch up with the dominant race, as specific characteristics would be viewed as linked or determined by race?³³ Concepts of paternalism or trusteeship were used to justify each group's various roles and justify inequality.³⁴ Most supporters of segregation believed that it would take a long time for a subordinated group to catch up and therefore expected segregation to be a long-term solution.

Supporters of apartheid as a specific type of segregation would not always argue that one race was superior to another. Instead, they would try to justify the parity of the various groups and the need to maintain their distinctness. However, in the South African context, they would virtually always speak from a *de facto* position of dominance. The whites occupied most of the land and claimed the best land and resources that were available. They claimed the right to occupy and rule the land and attempted to designate the indigenous population as foreigners. Equal segregation has always only been a theoretical possibility.³⁵

Dominance or issues of power are involved whenever political, socio-economic, or group dynamics are at play. Depending on who controlled the resources, dependencies were established and perpetuated until the control of those resources was usurped by someone else. Issues around

³³ “The logic of white supremacy welds race and cultures together, because if they were separable, Africans could have escaped subordination by switching cultures.” McDonald, *Why Race Matters*, 26.

³⁴ Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), 286.

³⁵ Refer to the separate but equal debate in the United States of America. “Separate but Equal,” accessed October 23, 2021, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/separate_but_equal.

the ownership of land and livestock in southern Africa became closely linked to the availability and accessibility of manual labor. Taking away the land and the livestock and the proletarianization of the Africans was in many ways a precursor to the political disenfranchisement of the African in South Africa. On the other hand, guaranteeing economic power and wealth for the white population of South Africa secured the loyalty of the National Party voters. Their commitment remained until the referendum in 1992 when most white South Africans realized that their economic survival would depend on giving up apartheid.

During apartheid, an Afrikaans word that designates separateness, remarkably the government categorized and combined all who were deemed “blank” as one unit but did not unite all those who were “nie-blank nie” as one group.³⁶ The challenge was that the Africans were a majority, and therefore it made sense to divide them. A Zulu person was different from a Xhosa person, and they could not be members of one social group. However, if you were German, Scandinavian, Turkish, or Spanish, you could live and function together with all others who were white South Africans. This had not always been the case. The Afrikaners worked hard on creating a new identity as a nation. Initially, after the first and second Boer wars, the focus was to build a confident Afrikaner citizen. This contrasted with the approach of the English.³⁷ After a level of economic, social, and political independence had been reached, the focus of Afrikaners had moved to differentiate white from black.³⁸ Ethnicity and nationhood played a significant role within this complex of identity. In Afrikaans, just as in German, the word “volk”

³⁶ Blank is the Afrikaans term designating a white person. Blank should rather be translated with “without color” as wit would be the Afrikaans term for white. “Nie blank nie” is the negative term, designating those who are not white. Refer to the chapter *The Logic of White Supremacy* in MacDonald, *Why Race Matters*, 11–14.

³⁷ Remarkably Giliomee points to the fact that up to the 1910 Union the two groups the English and Afrikaner were described and referred to as two races. Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 276, 278.

³⁸ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 279. “They were prepared to suspend their political rivalry only at the point where it jeopardized white supremacy itself.”

is somewhat difficult to translate into English. German romanticism and the concepts of “Volk” and “Nation” and the theology of mission’s emphasis on the collective and its cultural and ethnic value as an entity seemed to validate the moral justification of separation and apartheid. As nationhood and ethnicity grew in importance, the collective would gradually appear to overpower the significance and equal worth of all individuals.³⁹ “Christian Nationalism” became the ideological foundation of apartheid.

Segregation

Segregation was the name coined in early twentieth-century South Africa for the set of government policies and social practices which sought to regulate the relationship between white and black, colonizers and colonized. Many elements of segregation had precursors in the period of Dutch rule between 1652 and 1806 and in the nineteenth-century Boer republics and British colonies. But it was only in the twentieth century that the ideology of segregation was refined and the reach of the system fully extended. ... Modern segregation represented a response to the industrialization of the subcontinent, initiated by the discovery and exploitation of diamonds and gold from the 1860s.⁴⁰ It arose out of the modernizing dynamics of a newly industrializing society and was therefore not, as some have suggested, a mere carryover into the twentieth century of older traditions of slavery, agrarian paternalism or frontier conflict.⁴¹

William Beinart and Saul Dubow have collected and published a series of essential essays on the topic of segregation. Their introduction to the book “The historiography of segregation and apartheid” is an excellent summary of the topic.⁴² On the one hand they argue, the white population was relatively large in southern Africa when compared to the rest of Africa, on the

³⁹ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 459; Oskar Niederberger, *Kirche-Mission-Rasse: Die Missionsauffassung der Niederländisch-Reformierten Kirchen von Südafrika* (Schönbeck-Beckenried: Freiburg, 1959), 207.

⁴⁰ Early forms of segregation were implemented in the labor compounds in Kimberly and Johannesburg, which facilitated control over African labor but also entrenched inequalities in standard of living and pay.

⁴¹ William Beinart and Saul Dubow, eds. *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.

⁴² William Beinart and Saul Dubow, “Introduction: The Historiography of Segregation and Apartheid,” in *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa*, ed. William Beinart and Saul Dubow (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1–24.

other hand, the black African indigenous population “suffered no major demographic setback” and remained the majority.⁴³ “Segregation thus developed in a context in which Europeans had conquered the indigenous population but could only partially displace it.”⁴⁴ Adding to the complexity of the situation in South Africa was that other communities existed in this context whose status in the social hierarchy was ambiguous, the Coloreds in the Cape and the Indians in Natal, for example:

Social divisions in this colonial society increasingly took on a rigid racial character. After Union in 1910, white power was used to forge one of the most extreme forms of racial discrimination in the twentieth-century world. This system, which matured from segregation to apartheid in the second half of the century, has long been at the heart of political debates in the country.... As the political tension between white and black intensified, so competing explanations of segregation and apartheid proliferated. ... Segregation in South Africa encompassed many different social relationships. It is often discussed as a series of legislative Acts which removed and restricted the rights of ‘non-whites’ in every possible sphere.⁴⁵... Segregation was, however, more than a panoply of restrictive legislation: it refers as well to a composite ideology and set of practices seeking to legitimize social difference and economic inequality in every aspect of life.”⁴⁶

Beinart and Dubow argue that much of this was governed by “convention rather than law.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 2.

⁴⁴ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 2.

⁴⁵ “Among the most important of these measures were the 1911 Mines and Works Act (segregation in employment), the 1913 Natives Land Act (segregation in the countryside and prohibitions on African land purchase), the 1923 Natives Urban Areas Act (urban residential segregation), the 1936 Representation of Natives Act (abolition of the remnant African franchise) and the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act (an elaboration of the 1913 Land Act).” Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 3.

⁴⁶ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 3–4.

⁴⁷ “The system of large-scale oscillating labour migration (cited by a number of scholars as one of the core institutions of segregation and movement was certainly curtailed by passing laws. But the evolution and functioning of the migrant labour system depended too on a range of social and cultural assumptions, not all of which were legislatively enshrined.” Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 4.

Christian Nationalism

Thus, DRC ministers and missionary strategists were first in the field to formulate an apartheid ideology.⁴⁸

Christian Nationalism was “an idea that originally was developed by the Dutch neo-Calvinist, Groen van Prinsterer, and later by Abraham Kuyper, who between 1902 and 1905 headed the Dutch government.”⁴⁹ “The Reformed (Dopper) ministers and teachers who studied at the theological school in the town of Potchefstroom in the western Transvaal were among the strongest supporters.”⁵⁰ Christian Nationalism developed in prominence in opposition to Milner’s education policy which antagonized against Dutch. Many teachers in the Zuid Afrikaans Republic ZAR (Transvaal) poured their energy into establishing Christian–National private schools. The Calvinist tradition to actively remodel the world “according to distinct principles derived from or read into the Bible” proved fertile ground for establishing and developing Christian Nationalism.⁵¹ The language issue would become decisive within the debate about the role of Christian National schools.⁵² This, at first, was the recognition of Afrikaans as an official language and the development of Afrikaans as a worthwhile cultural heritage.⁵³ For Christian Nationalism, the debate around Republicanism would also grow, as “it increasingly became

⁴⁸ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 459. DRC Dutch Reformed Church.

⁴⁹ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 269.

⁵⁰ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 269.

⁵¹ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 269. Compare the rapid growth of Christian National Schools in the old republics. These emphasized God, Afrikaans or still Dutch, Afrikaner history and traditions. Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 270.

⁵² Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 272. Smuts and Botha tried to win a larger constituency including the English and therefore ignored the language issue at their own peril in the long run. As the Afrikaner nationalist movement would never forgive them.

⁵³ Afrikaans literature and culture were still relatively undeveloped. In 1925 when Afrikaans replaced Dutch as an official language, C. Louis Leipold strongly criticized this step. He said: “No language can permanently exist on official recognition alone if it lacks the strength and capacity to survive on its own merits.” Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 428.

entangled with the defeat of the republics and the trauma of the Anglo–Boer War.”⁵⁴ The National Party under the leadership of Hertzog would emphasize the need for a more exclusive Afrikaner identity.

This included a strong identification with Afrikaans as a public symbol of its ‘nationality,’ with South Africa as its only national home and with indigenous or local forms of cultural or artistic expression – new attachments that were manifested alongside older ones such as an adherence to the Reformed faith, an insistence on racial exclusivity, and a rejection of *gelykstelling* or social leveling.⁵⁵

On the way to developing Christian Nationalism, a meeting was called by D.F. Malan, a Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) pastor in the Karoo, who later, in 1948, would become the prime minister, to discuss the church’s reaction to the rebels of 1914–15.⁵⁶ The insurgents were led by some Boer Generals who wanted to fight on the side of Germany against England. The government wanted the church to call the rebels out. Still, Malan united the response by claiming the church had a responsibility,

to be national in character and to watch over our particular national interests, to teach the people to see in their history and origin the hand of God, and furthermore to cultivate among the Afrikaner people the awareness of a national calling and destiny, in which the spiritual, moral and material progress and strength of a people is laid up.⁵⁷

The emphasis of the national or *volkseie* (the people’s own) had already been discussed and appropriated within the Dutch Reformed Church’s (DRC) work among the Africans. The concept of *volk* (people) and nation were essential concepts in mission theology. The German

⁵⁴ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 277.

⁵⁵ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 356. “By the beginning of the 1930s the syntax and vocabulary of Afrikaans had, to a large extent, assumed its present form. The translation of the Afrikaans Bible appeared in 1933 and was widely acclaimed, in contrast to the first draft, which was considered written in a *stompstert Hollands*, or broken Dutch, that was neither fish nor fowl.” Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 429.

⁵⁶ See Lindie Koorts, *DF Malan: And the Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2014).

⁵⁷ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 385.

missionologists were proud of emphasizing the enduring importance of these two concepts.⁵⁸ The aim of missions would not be to westernize the Africans but rather to allow them to develop within their ethnic, national units. Emphasis was laid on work in the indigenous language, and missionaries would strive to learn as much as they could about the cultural and ethnic attributes of the indigenous population they were working with. Giliomee suggests that from the 1920s, the “English churches, both local and foreign, steadily moved toward the ideal of a common society and promoted it by providing mission education that stressed Westernization and the central importance of a good command of English language.”⁵⁹ The Colored DRC in the Cape was already established in 1881 as a daughter of the white church. The DRC in the Free State had established many African congregations that DRC ministers served. When a separate black church was established in 1910, there were 40 mission congregations with 6,839 members. “The DRC began to project the DRC’ family’ of white, colored and black churches as an association of co-equal churches, each representing different peoples, but all equal before God as peoples.”⁶⁰ The focus on the individual language, custom, and culture then extended to education, too, as this should not be “denationalized.”⁶¹ At the Synod of the Free State DRC in 1931, “the church policy rejected *gelykstelling*, or racial leveling, and with it, race degeneration and ‘bastardization’ as an ‘abomination to every right-minded white and native.’”⁶² “To justify its rejection of *gelykstelling*, the church proposed that blacks develop ‘on their own terrain, separate

⁵⁸ For reference purposes see Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk in der deutschen Missionswissenschaft* (München: Kaiser, 1967); Julius Richter ed., *Das Buch der deutschen Weltmission* (Gotha: Kotz, 1935).

⁵⁹ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 455.

⁶⁰ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 455–56.

⁶¹ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 459. “It called for Africans and colored people to be assisted in developing into self-respecting Christian nations.” Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 459. “By 1920 education in South Africa was fully segregated.” Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 456.

⁶² Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 459.

and apart.”⁶³ Giliomee highlights that Coloreds were brought into the discussion as a separate nation for the first time, and the value was seen in the self-respecting nation. In contrast, before 1935, the church had “emphasized the equal worth of all *individuals* before God.”⁶⁴

Remarkably, “the idea that blacks primarily formed separate nations rather than constituting a single black race or nation had not crystallized.”⁶⁵ The ideas of each child learning to respect the “history, customs and culture of the ethnic community in which he or she was born” linked up nicely with the concepts of Christian National education.⁶⁶ Giliomee then points out that the concern of the DRC for the poor white population was added into this mix by suggesting that separation would assist both the white and the black population. This separation now extended to the claim that residential areas or whole suburbs should be segregated. The Federal Mission Council (FMC), with its chairperson G.B.A. Gerdener took a leading role in this and in 1944, together with the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge (FAK), organized a *volkskongres*, a peoples’ congress on racial policy.⁶⁷

At this congress, J.D. du Toit, a Potchefstroom neo-Calvinist and professor of theology, presented the first published theological defense of apartheid. He argued that God had intervened to disperse the builders of the Tower of Babel, who wished to create a single nation by causing them to speak in mutually incomprehensible languages. The lesson was twofold. Those whom God had joined together had to remain united; those whom God had separated had to remain apart, and there could be no *gelykstelling* or *verbastering*—no social leveling or bastardization.⁶⁸

⁶³ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 459.

⁶⁴ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 459.

⁶⁵ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 460.

⁶⁶ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 460. Refer to Michael McDonald “The Mother of Identity Politics,” in *Why Race Matters*, 15–32. McDonald suggests that modern Multiculturalists argue similarly. He writes: “Ironically, the making of ethno-cultural solidarities into the foundation of political identities, the privileging of the cultural, resembles the claims made by white supremacists in South Africa.” McDonald, *Why Race Matters*, 23.

⁶⁷ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 461.

⁶⁸ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 462.

Giliomee refers to Richard Elphick's remark, that "the church leaders were enthralled by their utopian vision of separate peoples, each with their own mission, and would continue to justify the unjustifiable, thus paving the way for the politicians."⁶⁹

The creation of organizations like the Broederbond in 1918 and the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge (FAK) in 1929 and the Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (ATKV) in 1930 became important in their role to define what it meant to be an Afrikaner.⁷⁰ The influence that the Broederbond could exert is often exaggerated, according to Giliomee. It did exercise power and control, but this was not necessarily blindly accepted.⁷¹ The ATKV organized the widely popular ox-wagon trek as part of the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938, which saw thousands of people gather at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. The Afrikaner community was not united; there were regional differences between the Cape, the Orange Free State, and Transvaal. There were differences between small and large farmers and the large proportion of poor Afrikaners and workers. It was not immediately apparent that the workers would align themselves with communists or rather with the national cause of Afrikaner nationalism.⁷² The success of Afrikaner commerce must have contributed to the self-confidence of the Afrikaners. This success was not incidental but instead the result of its strategic approach to creating an alternative to the English capital.⁷³ It initially faced significant resistance from the "anti-capitalist sentiments in Afrikaner ranks."⁷⁴ It developed a concept of *volkskapitalisme*

⁶⁹ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 462.

⁷⁰ Ivor Wilkins and Hans Strydom, *The Super-Afrikaners: Inside the Afrikaner Broederbond*, (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1978), 98. The ATKV is described as "a cultural front organization of the Broederbond."

⁷¹ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 421. For the influence of the Broederbond on the isolation of Herzog and later Smuts and the unification of the Afrikaners see Wilkins, *Super-Afrikaners*, 53–114.

⁷² Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 423–28.

⁷³ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 433.

⁷⁴ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 435.

capitalism of the people, where the principal was that capitalism also needed to serve the nation.⁷⁵ When the Second World War broke out, Afrikaner Nationalism was challenged by National–Socialism. The Grey Shirts could not muster much support, but the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB) was a real threat.⁷⁶ Many Afrikaners were against fighting the War for England. By 1945 the Broederbond could single out the National Party (NP) as the “sole party that could help the Afrikaners attain their political aspirations.”⁷⁷

Coercion

Freedom of choice across the various spheres of our lives is something that most people in the free world take for granted now. Limitations to freedom and choice are not foreign or absent even today, but maybe our tolerance to accept these limitations, especially if they are of any ontological kind, has become small. It took a long time for the concepts of individual freedom across the board from political, social, economic, and religion to move from an idea to actual cultural reality. Looking back at apartheid and segregation, whites inappropriately claimed their freedom and partly secured that freedom and privilege by limiting the freedom of all non-whites.

Freedom to Access Land

Obviously, even today, land is not just freely available, and usually, it is prohibitively expensive. Large tracts of land in KwaZulu-Natal are owned by the Ingonyama Trust, with the Zulu King being the sole Trustee. With its various state-owned companies, the South African

⁷⁵ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 438. The success of the South African banks called Volkskas, which would later change to ABSA, and Sanlam are mentioned by Giliomee. These followed the establishment of the finance house *Federale Volksbeleggings* (FVB). This finance house financed Afrikaner business and got Afrikaners into the mining industry. The Afrikaner chamber of commerce was established to further support Afrikaner business.

⁷⁶ Wilkins, *Super-Afrikaners*, 108–14.

⁷⁷ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 445.

government owns much land just as large corporations or commercial entities do. Much land in South Africa is not economically productive due to the harsh dry climate. By the time apartheid started, most legislation about land ownership had already been passed, which made it virtually impossible for Africans to own land individually or to increase their land ownership as their means might have increased. The indigenous population and the new settlers and colonizers had relatively similar land use needs initially. They were pastoralists, and where possible, they produced crops and accessed the resources of wildlife and material—like wood or other produce.⁷⁸ Communal land ownership did not mean that an individual did not have personal rights to a particular portion of the land. Still, this concept of communal land was later used to disqualify any private land ownership of Africans.

By contrast, the white landowner was clearly the owner in his personal capacity and could accumulate more land if he had the economic means or the military and political power just to take it. In the early years, when African chiefs allocated land to settlers, this would have been within the concept and understanding how this land was given to other Africans who had chosen to settle within that tribal area the chief controlled. This could mean that the chief could reclaim that land if he no longer wanted to allow the settler to live there. Merensky's account of his life in Transvaal is an excellent example of this.⁷⁹ As long as Africans had enough land to secure their lifestyle, they did not have to accept the inevitability of manual labor but could choose to enjoy the benefits if they wanted to. As the labor needs of the mines and growing industry in the cities and on farms were not met by voluntary labor, government and commercial interests

⁷⁸ Giliomee, *Afrikaner*, 297 points to the fact that many Africans were much better farmers than their white counterparts.

⁷⁹ Alexander Merensky, *Mein Missionsleben in Transvaal: Erinnerungen des Berliner Missionars in Südafrika von 1859 bis 1882* (Berlin: Edition Ost, 1996). Refer especially to the chapter describing the removal of the congregation from MoBecho and the exit from Ga-Ratao. Merensky, "Vertreibung der Gemeinde von MoBecho und Auszug von Ga-Ratao," in *Mein Missionsleben*, 249–59.

colluded to create pressure on the African population to make the switch to manual labor. They used taxes to create the need for cash; they increased pressure on Africans to dispose of their livestock and abused the loss of their livestock to force them off their land, ultimately removing the right to land ownership.⁸⁰ In the African reserves or later the so-called *homelands*, the issue was always that the land allocated was not nearly sufficient to sustain the population. Various commissions made unequivocal findings that if these reserves were to succeed, they needed much more land, but the white landowners were unwilling to give up their land and the government did not increase the land substantially.

Freedom of Association

The fact that some people believed that it was necessary to create legislation to prevent people from freely associating with each other indicated that people would otherwise do precisely that. The reality of a large population of colored people in South Africa shows that people of all ethnic backgrounds did mix from early on. The motivation behind segregation in the South African context was the concept of white supremacy, which was apparently fragile and needed protection. Eugenics, the fear of degeneration and bastardization created a fear that threatened civilization. These fears were relatively widespread in the world of the outgoing 19th century. Perceptions around poverty, disease, and the perceived remedies influenced the political debate and the development of charity and social work. But obviously, it was not enough to regulate association by spatial segregation as legislation was passed to prevent marriages and sexual intercourse between the races. The separate amenities acts stopped the shared use of basic

⁸⁰ In contrast to when white farmers were struggling and received support and subsidies black farmers were marginalized or disadvantaged. Compare part one Ngcukaitobi, “Dispossession” in Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, *Land Matters: South Africa’s Failed Land Reforms and the Road Ahead* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2021), 13–71; refer especially to chapter four Ngcukaitobi, “About the Stolen Cattle,” in *Land Matters*, 43–57.

facilities like public transport, park benches, shop entrances, parks, and beaches and led to many conventions and practices that separated and kept people of different ethnic groups apart.

Freedom of Vocation

People have not always been free to choose what vocation they would follow. However, for the white settlers and colonizers worldwide, that might have been one of the advantages over and above their old motherland. In the new world, they could be whoever they wanted to be. In South Africa, the freedom to do and be what one wanted to be was limited by various factors, just as everywhere in the world. After the Anglo-Boer wars, many people had become poor and desolate. Urbanization and proletarianization of large sections of the population was a real problem. The focus of the government and the Afrikaner nationalism prioritized the needs of the white Afrikaner. Legislation was passed to protect the white laborer from the competition of equally poor and needy African labor. Inequalities in the standard of living, wages, and education were actively pursued and entrenched to uplift the poor white population, but this happened at the expense of the rest of the people. The government, the Dutch Reformed church, and various charity organizations were active in uplifting the poor white people. They were successful in that the poor white class virtually disappeared by the 1950s.⁸¹ The government invested heavily in state-owned companies that employed vast numbers of Afrikaners. If only people and government had realized the need to uplift the whole population as a unit, many of the social issues plaguing South Africa would not have been allowed to be perpetuated for such a long time. White labor was not only protected and privileged; black labor was actively disadvantaged and kept at a low level to perpetuate white dominance. Education for Africans

⁸¹ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 354.

was limited so that they would fulfill their designated role of servitude. Bantu Education, as it came to be known in South Africa, was publicly justified as being the appropriate cultural and ethnic education for Africans. However, with the concept of white supremacy in the background, it became clear that there was an ulterior motive in Bantu Education to keep the African down.

Freedom Before the Law

The apartheid government was not a totalitarian state even though it was an unjust, authoritarian and illegitimate regime. As more and more legislation was passed in the apartheid period, the racial categorization of an individual would determine every aspect of one's life, including the standing before the law. As the white minority was writing the laws and creating the laws first to establish and then to perpetuate white dominance South Africa was not governed by the rule of law but instead ruled by laws.⁸² In the early 20th century South Africa used the jury system, but Africans could not be part of the jury. Ngcukaitobi reminds us that Chief Justice James Rose Innes determined in a judgment of 1907 that "evidence tendered by white witnesses was more reliable than that of Africans."⁸³ Apartheid basically declared all Africans to be foreigners in South Africa, as they were deemed citizens of the homelands. The many apartheid laws quickly criminalized virtually all Africans because of violations against the pass laws, for example.

Freedom of Movement

The pass laws and influx control were measures used by the South African government to regulate and control the movement of Africans. Among the many commissions that advised the

⁸² Dubow, *Apartheid*, 251.

⁸³ Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, *The Land is Ours: Southern Africa's First Black Lawyers and the Birth of Constitutionalism*, (Cape Town: Penguin, 2018), 2.

government on dealing with various issues, the Fagan Commission and the Sauer Commission stand for two approaches that would influence the implementation of apartheid.⁸⁴

The Apartheid Museum summarizes the two approaches as following:⁸⁵

Recommendations of the Fagan Report, February 1948

- Total segregation would never work.
- Industry and commerce needed a permanent and settled black urban population.
- It was impossible to return all the existing townspeople to the reserves, which were already overcrowded.
- Migrant labor should be discouraged.
- African families should be encouraged to settle in locations under strict controls.

Recommendations of the Sauer Report, 1948

- Apartheid, or the separate development of the races, was the only way forward.
- The reserves were where Africans belonged.
- The flood of Africans into the cities was a dangerous development.
- Urban Africans must continue to be treated as visitors without political rights.
- Their numbers must be strictly controlled.
- The migrant labor system must continue.
- Black locations must be kept separate from white towns.

Colonel Stallard, who had chaired the Transvaal Local Government Commission of 1921, had presupposed that urban areas were creations of the white man and therefore inherently

⁸⁴ For a detailed discussion of influx control see Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948–1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991), especially Chapter 2, Posel, “The Legacy of the 1940s,” in *Making of Apartheid*, 23–60.

⁸⁵ Apartheid Museum, *Understanding Apartheid Learners Book* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), 42.

foreign to Africans. Africans consequently had no right to be in the urban areas unless they could prove that they were serving a need of the white population and should leave when they no longer served that purpose.⁸⁶

Freedom to Vote

Most people take the democratic right to vote for granted; however, this right has not been enjoyed by most for a long time. Even though the French Revolution and the American declaration of independence claimed equality, it still took a relatively long time for these political rights to be universally implemented. White women did not receive the vote in South Africa until 1930. Non-white males were excluded from the common voter's roll in the Union of South Africa in 1910, but there was still a qualified franchise on the voter's roll in the Cape. When the Coloreds were removed from the voter's roll in the 1950s in the Cape, it caused a great deal of resistance even among Afrikaners.⁸⁷ Later on, in the late stage of apartheid, Indians and Coloreds were incorporated into the Tri-Cameral system of P.W. Botha with limited success. Africans were usually limited to indirect representation through various councils or government departments that acted on their behalf or took over paternalistic control or trusteeship. When Verwoerd changed the focus of apartheid to the homeland policy, the concept was that Africans were not citizens in South Africa but rather citizens of their homeland. The South African government wanted these homelands to be independent states. There had been plans to incorporate the other British protectorates Lesotho, Swaziland, and Botswana, into South Africa, both at the time of Union in 1910 and again after the Second World War. Some politicians would

⁸⁶ Posel, *Making of Apartheid*, 39–40.

⁸⁷ Refer to the conclusion drawn by the Cilliers report that "Colored people belonged to European society in terms of language, culture and religion." Giliomee, *Afrikaner*, 525–27.

have hoped that the whites could have expelled all Africans living on the union's territory into these black areas. But because Africans could prevent this incorporation, the South African government had to allocate regions within South Africa for African occupation.

The idea that all these fundamental freedoms are applicable to all was obviously disputed in apartheid. Those who called for these rights to be given to non-whites were often categorized as revolutionaries, terrorists, communists, or agitators.⁸⁸ The long history of opposition to apartheid points to the diverse aspects of resistance. Dubow warns against the myth that all resistance was the same.⁸⁹ Freedom needs to be fought for and maintained on an ongoing basis; it remains a *Long Walk to Freedom*.⁹⁰

Approaches to Understanding Apartheid

P. Eric Louw divided the academic literature on apartheid into three general paradigms: “Liberal, Marxist and Afrikaner nationalist.”⁹¹ The liberal paradigm dominated the English World until the 1960s in the analyses of Afrikaners and apartheid, viewing Afrikaners as “inherently racist and bigoted people.”⁹² Having absorbed “rigid racial attitudes in the era of slavery (to 1834). Boer frontier graziers were seen to have had a harsh and conflictual relationship with the Africans they encountered, culminating in a long series of wars throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When a minority of Afrikaners trekked to the

⁸⁸ Mandela and the ANC were only removed from the list of terrorist organizations by President Bush in 2008. See Anthony Samson's description of the reception of Mandela in Westminster Hall in London in July 1996. Anthony Samson, *Mandela: The Authorised Biography* (London: Harper, 2000), xxiii.

⁸⁹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 297

⁹⁰ Nelson Mandela, *The Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. (New York: Little Brown, 1994).

⁹¹ P. Eric Louw, *The Rise, Fall and Legacy of Apartheid* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), vii.

⁹² Louw, *Rise, Fall and Legacy of Apartheid*, vii.

interior in the 1830s and 1840s, the states they established excluded non-whites from citizenship.”⁹³ So apartheid was considered as coming from the frontier mentality and having its foundation in Afrikaner history. “Pre-Enlightenment values, it was suggested, had been carried over into the political and industrial structures of the twentieth century.”⁹⁴ “Evidence of such attitudes was sought in the social and religious tenets of Calvinism and in the values of stubborn independence and exclusivity that these were supposed to have engendered.”⁹⁵

A major theme in liberal historiography from the 1930s onwards, therefore, is the idea that the tragedy of race relations in South Africa reflects the capitulation of English-speakers’ flexible views to the harshly doctrinaire approach of Afrikaner nationalism.⁹⁶

This liberal explanation of the origin of apartheid in Afrikaner racial bigotry has been broadly discredited as segregationist policies as practiced in the Cape Colony and especially in Natal were just as influential precursors for apartheid.

David Welsh took up the suggestion that the establishment of African reserves and the survival of African chieftaincy as central elements of segregation originated not in the Boer republics, but in Natal, the most British of colonies. The system of control developed by Theophilus Shepstone, for many years Secretary of Native Affairs, devolved substantial local control to African chiefs who were seen as the best guarantors of a stable order. Natal’s version of segregation, it was subsequently argued by Shula Marks, reflected distinctively British colonial racial ideas. Rather like the practice of indirect rule elsewhere in colonial Africa, its form resulted from the relative weakness of the colonial state and its dependence on the taxation of African peasants. Segregation in Natal, therefore, represented an attempt by colonial authorities both to gain access to African labor and to control the ‘still pulsating remains of powerful African kingdoms.’⁹⁷

Maynard Swanson’s study on the segregation of Cape Town in response to the bubonic

⁹³ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 5.

⁹⁴ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 5.

⁹⁵ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 5.

⁹⁶ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 6.

⁹⁷ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 6.

plague in 1901 highlighted the British imperial role in creating a segregated social order.

Swanson's analysis constituted a significant academic breakthrough. First, he located urban segregation firmly within the world of the British empire at the turn of the century, rather than as part of a Boer or specifically South African legacy. Second, he argued for the power of ideas in shaping political initiatives. Third, Swanson began to suggest how popular everyday racial imagery and ideas about pollution and infection could intersect with more formal medical theory to produce segregationist policies.⁹⁸

Through the research of Martin Legassick, the influence of Lord Milner and his Kindergarten on developing segregationist ideology became apparent.⁹⁹

Their approach was distilled in the *South African Native Affairs Commission* (1903–5), a document produced by British and English-speaking experts which in many ways systematized thinking about segregationist 'native policy' for the future. In Legassick's view, imperialism, capitalism, and segregation were inextricably linked.¹⁰⁰

Marxist and Neo-Marxist historians shifted the emphasis "to an examination of the evolution of capitalism in South Africa."¹⁰¹ This revisionist approach "challenged the notion that twentieth-century segregation represented a survival of prior racial beliefs. Racial ideas could not in themselves explain the complex and subtle changes in policy and legislation in the early twentieth century."¹⁰² In this paradigm, British capitalist's and mine owners' role and their search for cheap labor became important. "Racial beliefs were understood to be a product or rationalization of economic imperatives."¹⁰³ "More than any other work, Harold Wolpe's discussion of the cheap labor and reserve-subsidy thesis, ... became central to the radical

⁹⁸ Beinart, "Introduction," in Beinart, 7.

⁹⁹ Martin Legassick, "British Hegemony and the Origins of Segregation in South Africa, 1901–14" in Beinart, *Segregation and Apartheid*, 43–59; Milner was the High Commissioner of the Cape Colony and also the Governor of the Transvaal Colony and the Orange River Colony. Milner "commanded the loyalty of a contingent of bright Oxford graduates, called Milner's Kindergarten, brought from England to oversee reconstruction and promote imperialist goals." Giliomee, *Afrikaner*, 264.

¹⁰⁰ Beinart, "Introduction," in Beinart, 7.

¹⁰¹ Louw, *Rise, Fall and Legacy of Apartheid*, viii.

¹⁰² Beinart, "Introduction," in Beinart, 7.

¹⁰³ Beinart, "Introduction," in Beinart, 7.

analysis of segregation.”¹⁰⁴ Beinart, however, showed that the agency of African labor had been ignored as Wolpe and others had been focusing “on the state and the power structures of white society.”¹⁰⁵

Seen from the vantage point of late nineteenth-century chiefdoms, however, the origins of migrancy were revealed as rather more complex. In the early phases of labor migrancy (in some cases preceding the early phases of formal colonial control), chiefs sometimes sent out workers and tried to benefit from their earnings by encouraging the acquisition of firearms to defend the independence of their kingdoms. Subsequently, the pressures on rural men to earn wages multiplied. But many African communities wanted to retain their hold over the men who went to work and tried to devise methods of ensuring their return. As long as land was available in communal tenure systems, this also remained an attractive option for migrant men themselves. Migrancy could therefore be seen as having arisen as much out of the dynamics of African societies as the demands of the mines.¹⁰⁶

This led to an “important reassessment of the balance of power between African societies, on the one hand, and the state and capitalism, on the other. They also raised further questions about the relationship of rural Africans to segregation.”¹⁰⁷ Both liberal and early radical critiques of segregation

assumed that Africans were available for incorporation into colonial society—whether as Christian modernizers seeking a relatively privileged position or as aspirant urban workers. Some certainly were. But in the early decades of the century, many were not. In the 1920s, for example, mass movements emerged in the South African countryside which challenged white rule by linking urban strands of protest with more traditionalist rural expressions of resistance. The new spirit of ‘Africanism’ drew on black American ideas and images, including the radical separatism of Marcus Garvey. As the aspirations of the mission—educated Christian élite to be incorporated within colonial society were thwarted, so some examined alternative strategies, such as alliances with chiefs and specifically African forms of Christianity.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 8–9.

¹⁰⁷ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 9.

Segregation was not only imposed from above, and even though it is true, that

attempts by the rurally based African population to defend their old ways of life were not segregationist in the sense that whites understood the term. . . . But these could be compatible with elements of segregation in certain respects—as an expression of their own separate African identity, as a means to retain some control over their residual land, or as an expression of popular support for chiefs.¹⁰⁹

Both liberals and Marxists assumed continuity between the previous segregation and the later apartheid policy.

The rhetoric of apartheid bore considerable similarities to white supremacist statements of the segregation era, but the central appeal to Afrikaner ethnic exclusivity was a distinctive aspect of apartheid. The context in which apartheid was introduced was also markedly different from the earlier segregationist period. In the era of European colonialism, segregation in South Africa did not appear exceptional. By contrast, in the democratizing postwar world and at the time of decolonization, apartheid began to stand out internationally as an immoral system in a way that its predecessor had not.¹¹⁰

The Marxist argument that apartheid served the interests of capitalism generated a liberal-Marxist debate in South African historiography given that the liberal school argued – in contradistinction to Marxist revisionists—that apartheid was dysfunctional for capitalist profit-making. The liberal-Marxist debate ultimately revolved around the question of whether apartheid was organized around race or class. This debate was of more than academic concern because it influenced how South Africa’s future was envisioned.¹¹¹

Herman Giliomee, a renowned scholar of Afrikaner history, suggests that the motivation for apartheid, at least in the early years of the 1940s and 1950s, was Afrikaner nationalism rather than racism.¹¹² Before the 1930s, the focus of Afrikaner nationalism was directed against Anglicization. When the focus of Afrikaner nationalism changed its emphasis to resisting

¹⁰⁹ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 9–10.

¹¹⁰ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 12–13.

¹¹¹ Louw, *Rise, Fall and Legacy of Apartheid*, viii–ix.

¹¹² Hermann Giliomee, “The Making of the Apartheid Plan. 1929–1948,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 373–93; One can also compare the master’s thesis by Istvan Steven Fazekas, “Apartheid: Product or Instrument of Afrikaner Nationalism” (master’s thesis, California State University, 1998).

African nationalism, it had to broaden its perspective to include white supremacy.¹¹³

In its early phase, apartheid provided a divided and fissiparous movement with common purpose. This sense of purpose was achieved by providing the movement with a broader, external focus of activity, namely the capacity to present itself as the guarantor of white supremacy and western, Christian civilization in Africa. Apartheid thereby provided the nationalist movement with political dynamism as well as unifying philosophy.¹¹⁴ By allowing Afrikaners to protect their power and ambitions on a broader scale, it drew attention away from the issues that divided them. The conviction that they had developed a unique solution to an age-old problem—specifically, the unresolved problem of color—provided Afrikaners with heightened moral purpose, pride in belonging, and claims to political primacy. Apartheid policy therefore signified growing communal confidence, namely the capacity to think and plan in terms broader than the Afrikaner *volk* alone; in other words, to project Afrikaner nationalist thinking onto society at large and to remodel South African society in its own image. For Afrikaners who nursed feelings of inferiority and resentment towards English-speakers, one of the distinct attractions of apartheid was its intellectual coherence and even its moral vision.¹¹⁵

There was no overwhelming reason to suppose that the ideological musings of professional thinkers would prevail in the context of a new party coping with the constraints of power, unless it could be shown to be compatible with, or indeed advance, the material interests of a sufficiently broad constituency. This proposition was successfully made by ideologists who aimed to weld together different constituencies into a sense of common purpose for the purpose of ethnic mobilization. Apartheid, in other words, was not either an economic or an ideological construction: it is better thought of as the formula that allowed Afrikaner nationalism to cohere as an election-winning force.¹¹⁶

Apartheid was not the “natural fulfillment of Afrikaner nationalism. It was the means to a more immediate end: political power.”¹¹⁷ Saul Dubow argues that there is still sufficient evidence to make connections between German racial thinking, Eugenics, and Justifications of apartheid even during these early times,¹¹⁸ and he warns against ignoring “the salience of racial

¹¹³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 30

¹¹⁴ Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 446.

¹¹⁵ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 30.

¹¹⁶ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 28.

¹¹⁷ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 29.

¹¹⁸ Dubow, “Racial Irredentism, Ethnogenesis, and White Supremacy in High-Apartheid South Africa,”

ideology.”¹¹⁹ “But, although some Afrikaners were profoundly influenced by fascist ideas and supported Germany during the Second World War, the analogy (of linking Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid to fascism) breaks down in crucial respects.”¹²⁰ “Although apartheid was a theory about how to treat blacks, it was in the first instance a theory that emerged out of discussions about the special nature and God-given task of Afrikaners.”¹²¹

Deborah Posel and others have argued against an oversimplification of the theory of the origin of apartheid as if it “was the enactment of a single, long-term ‘grand plan.’”¹²² She instead suggests that apartheid “although guided by broad National Party principles,” often took a “reactive course, buffeted by a series of conflicts, negotiations, and compromise.”¹²³ Her research concentrates on the influx control legislation that regulated the migrant labor system of apartheid. Posel did not only emphasize the ambiguities and contradictions in the implementation of apartheid but also argued against the simplification of the academic debate of liberal-revisionist alternatives. She criticized the fact that liberals could only “identify economically harmful effects of the migrant labor system” whereas the revisionists “saw only its positive

Kronos 41, no. 1 (January 2015): 236–64 and also Saul Dubow, “Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid, and the Conceptualisation of ‘Race,’” (African Studies Seminar Paper September 23, 1991, University of Witwatersrand); See also: Andrew Bank, “The Berlin Mission Society and German Linguistic Roots of Volkekunde: The Background Training and Hamburg Writings of Werner Eiselen, 1899–1924,” *Kronos* 41, no. 1 (2015): 166–97; Nico Vorster, “Christian Theology and Racist Ideology: A Case Study of Nazi Theology and Apartheid Theology,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 7, no. 19 (Spring 2008): 144–61; Sipo E. Mzimela, “Nazism and Apartheid: The Role of the Christian Churches in Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa,” (PhD diss., New York University, 1981), accessed August 15, 2021, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses; and Kirch B. Sides, “Pigments of Our Imagination: Anthropological Myths, Racial Archives and the Transnationalism of Apartheid,” (PhD diss., University of California, 2014), accessed August 15, 2021, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

¹¹⁹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 29.

¹²⁰ Beinart, “Introduction,” in Beinart, 12. “From early in 1942 Malan and other NP leaders, including Verwoerd and Strijdom, were unequivocally rejecting National Socialism as an alien import into South Africa, and endorsing parliamentary democracy.” Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 444. For more detail on this issue see Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 443–446.

¹²¹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 16.

¹²² Posel, *Making of Apartheid*, vii.

¹²³ Posel, *Making of Apartheid*, vii.

contributions to the processes of capital accumulation.”¹²⁴ These prejudices prevented scholars from recognizing the paradoxes and idiosyncrasies of apartheid as experienced with influx control. Posel highlights the difference between the intention of the state and the practical implementation of influx control and thereby shows how various forces influenced not only the debate but, importantly, the implementation of policy.¹²⁵ It was not only a struggle between state and capital but rather “equally fundamental were the preferences and priorities of male and female African migrants and city-dwellers trying to maximize their room for maneuver in an increasingly constrained and repressive world.”¹²⁶ The complexity goes even further as Posel highlights the various dynamics within a state, such as the conflict between the executive and the bureaucratic state or the tension between the self-preservation of the state and its threat by electoral defeat.¹²⁷

Next to the three theories mentioned by Louw that conceptualized and concentrated on the origins of apartheid, there is a third category or approach that needs attention. It is the social history approach, a history from below, concentrating on ordinary people rather than structures of power and ideology. This social history approach became important in the research of resistance and the end of apartheid. Saul Dubow, in his preface to his book *Apartheid* in the Oxford history series, mentions that this at first marginal approach has now come to dominate the discussion:

What was once a corrective to master narratives has become the norm; popular history ‘from below’ has in many ways surpassed its staid old antagonist, ‘history

¹²⁴ Posel, *Making of Apartheid*, 11.

¹²⁵ Posel, *Making of Apartheid*, 18.

¹²⁶ Posel, *Making of Apartheid*, 13.

¹²⁷ Posel, *Making of Apartheid*, 21–22.

from above.’ These considerable gains have not come without costs, which include fragmentation of the historical experience and loss of analytical connections.¹²⁸

Dubow suggests that his book is an attempt to “reintegrate, in a broad interpretative and synoptic manner, histories of state power and of resistance in South Africa.”¹²⁹ For him, an important question is why apartheid survived for so long, rather than why it was defeated. The answer for him lies in the way the “system of apartheid worked, its sophisticated ideology, and its capacity for adaptation and reinvention. Strategies to ensure compliance and invite effective complicity were integral to apartheid’s success in sustaining itself.”¹³⁰ He looks at both the “structures of state power as well as the ideologies that sustained such power.”¹³¹ Yet, he warns not to accept ideologies too quickly without close examination as,

Ideologies themselves are dependent on ideas that are often more unsettled and less instrumental than when they are seen to cohere in support of political movements. Ideas that gain traction have lives of their own—and these often cannot simply be remade or shut down. They have distorting effects and generate unintended consequences.¹³²

‘Apartheid’ was an idea as well as an ideology. Apartheid became politically compelling to its adherents in the 1940s because the word itself condensed a powerful set of fears and hopes; reciprocally, the fact that the system of racial discrimination and exploitation came to be conveniently expressed in a single word helped the *anti-apartheid* movement, in all its many forms, to coalesce. In 1948, when South Africa was still a full member of the British Commonwealth, the ‘apartheid’ label distinguished it from several other regimes in Africa based on white minority rule. The idea of apartheid was decisive in ushering the 1948 Afrikaner alliance into power. It gave power and purpose to the apartheid state, but also rendered it vulnerable through the very act of highlighting its exceptionality.¹³³

¹²⁸ Dubow, *Apartheid*, ix. An example of this approach could be the documentation published by the Apartheid Museum. *Understanding Apartheid: Learner’s Book* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹²⁹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, ix.

¹³⁰ Dubow, *Apartheid*, x.

¹³¹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, x.

¹³² Dubow, *Apartheid*, x.

¹³³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, x.

A Brief Chronological Outline of Apartheid

1948–1959 The early phase of apartheid concentrating on the issue of *baaskap* and implementing specific legislation.

1960–1976 The second phase of apartheid was known as “high apartheid” under the leadership of Verwoerd. The change of focus to Homeland policy and massive social engineering.

1976–1984 The reinvention of neo-apartheid with minimal reforms and growing opposition.

1980–1989 The change of focus to protecting minority rights and attempts at finding an exit-strategy.

What Others Said About Apartheid

African Claims and its “Bill of Rights”¹³⁴

In 1941 Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt agreed to an Atlantic Charter in order “to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future of the world.”¹³⁵ In 1943, the African National Congress appropriated this Atlantic Charter, applied it to its South African context, and claimed a Bill of Rights, including full political equality.¹³⁶ “We desire them to realize once and for all

¹³⁴ Tembeka Ngcukaitobi’s book *The Land is Ours*, is an excellent account of the early roots of the human rights tradition in the South African opposition to apartheid and how this was based on ideas of constitutionalism and the rule of law. He starts his introduction to the book with reference to the meeting held in Bloemfontein in 1943 to draft this African response to the Atlantic Charter. This Bill of Rights “found expression in today’s South African Constitution.” Ngcukaitobi, *Land is Ours*, 1.

¹³⁵ USA and the UK. The Atlantic Charter: Declaration of Principles issued by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, August 14, 1941, accessed November 6, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_16912.htm. “The Atlantic Charter” is attached as Appendix two.

¹³⁶ “This is our way of conveying to them our undisputed claim to full citizenship.” From the Preface “The

that a just and permanent peace will be possible only if the claims of all classes, colors, and races for sharing and for full participation in the educational, political, and economic activities are granted and recognized.”¹³⁷ The failure to see the reasonableness of this claim by supporters of apartheid is astounding.¹³⁸ The South African Council of Churches, in its Hammanskraal Resolution, would point to the similarity of the first liberation wars (The Anglo-Boer Wars) and the later liberation struggle of the anti-apartheid movement.¹³⁹ Dr. Xuma pointed out in his preface to the document that Roosevelt deemed the charter and its rights to apply to all men. In contrast, Churchill viewed them more narrowly as applying only to the whites of occupied European countries. Dr. Xuma highlighted the hopes and aspirations of the African leaders that finally, they too would benefit from equal opportunities. The soldiers from across the world had laid a claim to the freedoms for which they had fought. The discrimination experienced by Africans in South Africa perpetuated the inequalities that the natural processes of cultural advancement might have mitigated. Remarkably the government under Smuts had assured the

Atlantic Charter from the Standpoint of Africans within the Union of South Africa” A.B. Xuma, ANC Conference, 1943, accessed August 11, 2021, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/african-claims-south-africa-dr-xuma-anc-conference-1943>. The document would later be called “The African Claims” it included a Bill of Rights. “This Bill of Rights would later serve as a galvanizing, rallying point for further demands for inclusion into the government of South Africa, and a share in the land. Right from these early days of resistance, black legal intellectuals were concerned about equality, justice, and a system of land allocation and administration informed by legality and fairness.” Ngcukaitobi, *Land is Ours*, 4. “The Atlantic Charter from the Standpoint of Africans within the Union of South Africa” and the “Bill of Rights” is attached as Appendix three.

¹³⁷ From the Preface “The Atlantic Charter from the Standpoint of Africans within the Union of South Africa” A.B. Xuma, ANC Conference, 1943, accessed August 11, 2021, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/african-claims-south-africa-dr-xuma-anc-conference-1943>.

¹³⁸ Giliomee refers to an essay by Cilié entitled: “Back to our belief in freedom” in which he basically argues that Afrikaners fought for their own freedom but ignored that their oppression of others was just as despicable, Giliomee, *Afrikaner*, 530. Cilié had written this essay in 1964. Even if for some it was not obvious in the 1940s it was realized by most at the end of apartheid. William de Klerk, the brother of F.W. de Klerk wrote: “For what has now become apparent is that the real sacrifice which history has come to demand from white South Africa, especially from the Afrikaners, is a voluntary relinquishment of hegemony. Proper government, in order to work, can never be the prerogative of the privileged few. It is *hubris* to believe that one people, one party, one church or one group alone can be entrusted with the future.” W. A. de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa* (Durban: Bok, 1975), 336.

¹³⁹ The Hammanskraal Resolution is attached as Appendix eight.

Natives Representative Council that the Atlantic Charter applied to Africans too. It would be only a matter of time that the segregationist policies would be abolished.

Freedom Charter¹⁴⁰

In 1955 the Congress of the People met outside Johannesburg in Kliptown to accept and adopt the Freedom Charter. Dubow calls it the “highpoint of multi-racial opposition.”¹⁴¹ The various Congresses, partners of the ANC, sent nearly three thousand delegates.¹⁴² The Charter “replaced the ANC’s *African Claims* and its *Bill of Rights* as a founding manifesto of democratic aspiration.”¹⁴³ There was some controversy about the opening statement that South Africa belonged to all who lived in it, as some Africanists would have preferred to claim “prior if not superior rights to the country.”¹⁴⁴ The other contentious issue was the apparent communist demand for nationalization of the country’s “mineral wealth, banks, and monopoly industries,” which was added in “the last minute by Congress of Democrats’ representative Ben Turok.”¹⁴⁵ One would assume that the “nationalizing” aspect of the Freedom Charter would disqualify it as “communist” for many supporters of apartheid, including their western economic allies like the US, UK, and Germany. However, at the treason trial, “under the close questioning the state’s

¹⁴⁰ The Freedom Charter is attached as Appendix four.

¹⁴¹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 69.

¹⁴² African National Congress, Indian Congress, Colored People’s Organization, Congress of Democrats (largely composed of white members of the outlawed Communist Party).

¹⁴³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 69.

¹⁴⁴ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 69.

¹⁴⁵ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 70. Ngcukaitobi suggests that the Charter was conceived by Z.K. Mathews and he quotes Isie Maisels, *A Life at Law* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1998), 129–216 for that. Ngcukaitobi, *Land is Ours*, 5. See Sampson, *Mandela*, 87–95. One probably needs to differentiate between conceiving of bringing people together on the one hand and then actually writing the document of the Freedom Charter on the other. Dubow writes: “It is now generally accepted that Springbok Legion and Communist Party intellectual Lionel ‘Rusty’ Bernstein was the guiding hand in the formulation of the Freedom Charter.” He references Lionel Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting* (London: Viking, 1999). Dubow, *Apartheid*, 70.

leading witness, a supposed expert academic on Communism, was forced to admit that the Freedom Charter was a response to white supremacy rather than a revolutionary document.”¹⁴⁶ “Justice Rumpff eventually ruled that the prosecution had failed to prove that the ANC advocated violence or that it had become a Communist organization.”¹⁴⁷

When Dubow discusses the negotiations at the end of apartheid and the beginning of the new dispensation, he states: “In style and in substance, the ANC’s constitutional work marked a break with its programmatic approach to revolution while in exile and began to reconnect the organization with its social democratic moment in the 1940s and 1950s.”¹⁴⁸ At the end of apartheid, many in the ANC viewed a “bill of rights as a sham form of bourgeois democracy,” and on the other hand the old apartheid government did not recognize the individual rights “viewing this as inimical to the tenets of Christian-Nationalism and the primacy of the *volk*.”¹⁴⁹ However “both the ANC and the old government found compelling practical reasons to endorse constitutionalism and individual rights.”¹⁵⁰ The current debate in South Africa about nationalization or, more specifically, the expropriation of land without compensation reflects contentious issues around constitutionality and retributive justice. The relatively new books by Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, *The Land is Ours* and *Land Matters* focus on this issue and try and reconcile the idea that our constitution is the best foundation to address requirements of justice

¹⁴⁶ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 71.

¹⁴⁷ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 71.

¹⁴⁸ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 248. See also Albie Sachs, *We, the People: Insights of an Activist Judge* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001). On the side of the ANC, Albie Sachs was instrumental in drawing up the new constitution together with Kader Asmal.

¹⁴⁹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 248.

¹⁵⁰ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 249.

and equity in South Africa's land policy.¹⁵¹

Cottesloe Consultations, 1960

December 7–14, 1960, in response to the Sharpeville massacre, the World Council of Churches (WCC) invited the eight member churches in South Africa to a consultation in the suburb of Johannesburg called Cottesloe.¹⁵² The criticism of apartheid was still reserved in this statement. The statement accepted that some form of separation might be practical and even permissible; however, it did condemn any racial discrimination and called for various reforms, especially of the migrant labor system and for the reasonableness of the right to vote in one's country of birth. The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK Dutch Reformed Church DRC) delegates accepted the statement with an addendum. The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NHK) delegates on the other hand distanced themselves from the statement. After Cottesloe, these Afrikaans reformed churches confirmed their commitment to the apartheid policy and government and separated themselves from the ecumenical movement.¹⁵³ In 1963 the Christian Institute was established and became influential in appropriating the criticism of the confessional church movement in Germany against Nazism in the discussion about apartheid. Beyers Naudé, a member of the Broederbond, was expelled from the Bond and became the director of the Christian institute.¹⁵⁴ Hopf viewed him as a friend. In 1968 the South African Council of Churches (SACC) published *A Message to the people of South Africa*, which condemned

¹⁵¹ Ngcukaitobi, *Land is Ours*; Ngcukaitobi, *Land Matters*. Albie Sachs shows how the constitutional court has been interpreting its role in the various cases he describes. Even though these cases are not limited to the land issue discussed by Ngcukaitobi. Albie Sachs, *We, the People: Insights of an Activist Judge* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001.)

¹⁵² The Cottesloe Consultation Statement is attached in Appendix five.

¹⁵³ Giliomee shows how the Broederbond sent out a circular to its members to ensure that everyone knew the Bond supported Verwoerd. Giliomee, *Afrikaner*, 528.

¹⁵⁴ Giliomee, *Afrikaner*, 529.

apartheid directly as being *false gospel* and it correlated to the Barmen Declaration and its focus on Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁵ The *Statement on Apartheid* by the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1957, had already rejected apartheid as *fundamentally* and *intrinsically evil* even though it accepted that political and social integration would take time.¹⁵⁶ In 1981 the Black Reformed Christians in South Africa declared apartheid a heresy. This decision was taken up by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) at its meeting in Ottawa in 1982, and the two white reformed churches in South Africa were excluded from the WARC.¹⁵⁷ The SACC then also declared apartheid as a heresy in 1982. At its synod in 1986, the DRC finally broke with apartheid by allowing anyone regardless of color to join. In 1990 at a conference in Rustenburg, a confession of guilt and responsibility for the wrongs under apartheid was made.¹⁵⁸

The Kairos Document

The Kairos Document was written by a group of African theologians in 1985 and caused a noticeable stir because they openly called for the justification of the armed struggle.¹⁵⁹ In the tradition of the Black Consciousness movement, they also called out the hypocrisy and complicity of the liberal white churches in perpetuating apartheid. These theologians made no excuses for using liberation theology to justify their criticism of the church, the government, and apartheid. The context of the extreme violence within the black townships needs to be

¹⁵⁵ South African Council of Churches, "1968 A Message to the People of South Africa," in *Apartheid is a Heresy*, ed. John, W. deGruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 154–59.

¹⁵⁶ South African Catholic Bishops' Conference, "1957 Statement on Apartheid," in *Apartheid is a Heresy*, ed. John, W. deGruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 145–48.

¹⁵⁷ World Alliance of Reformed Churches, "1982 Racism and South Africa," in *Apartheid is a Heresy*, ed. John, W. deGruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 168–73.

¹⁵⁸ Giliomee, *Afrikaner*, 621.

¹⁵⁹ The Kairos Document is attached as Appendix six. E.A.W. Weber, "Noch eine Beurteilung des Kairos Dokuments," *Epiphaniashandreichung* (1987): 65–72.

understood on the one hand and the stalemate in the battle between government and opposition on the other. The state of emergency had been called and would remain in place for several years. The government was in no position, even though it exerted more and more force to try to end the uprising, and Dubow described the situation as a “deadly stalemate” as “the forces of change, opposition, and reaction met in a state of violent, oscillating equilibrium.”¹⁶⁰

The Lutheran Church of Australia Statement on Apartheid

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), at its sixth assembly in Dar es Salam in June 1977, issued a statement *Southern Africa: Confessional Integrity*.¹⁶¹ The LWF invoked the *status confessionis* in rejecting the apartheid system. In 1988 the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church relations of the Lutheran Church in Australia published its statement on apartheid.¹⁶² It is remarkable how relatively late the church in Australia and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Selbständige Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche (SELK) issued statements on apartheid. But then again, it is maybe even more remarkable that the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA) and the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA) have still not made any statements at all. The Australian report clarified that apartheid was a political solution and a racial ideology, a program based on racism, and was therefore sin. Even under the guise of new names or justifications, the perpetuating apartheid legislation upheld white supremacy and privilege and was therefore wrong.

¹⁶⁰ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 242.

¹⁶¹ Lutheran World Federation, “1977 Southern Africa: Confessional Integrity,” in *Apartheid is a Heresy*, ed. John, W. deGruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 160–61.

¹⁶² Lutheran Church of Australia, “Statement on Apartheid,” accessed August 12, 2021, <https://www.lca.org.au/departments/commissions/ctict/>.

Racism and the Church: Overcoming the Idolatry (LCMS).¹⁶³

The LCMS document on racism, published in 1994 by the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations, was not explicitly directed against apartheid. A relatively lengthy document that includes a Bible study to engage discussion in the congregations, it is helpful in clarifying a range of definitions of terms and is nuanced in its approach. Therefore, it is beneficial in approaching the broader issue of racism rather than just apartheid.

Racism and Apartheid (SELK and MELF)

The Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany published a relatively short statement against racism in 1987. It was a statement drafted by the previous mission director, who by then was Professor of New Testament studies in Oberursel, Volker Stolle, and published by the theological commission of the SELK.¹⁶⁴ The mission director of Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen Bleckmar (MELF) issued this statement along with an explanation by the mission board of the MELF in its journal *Missionsblatt*.¹⁶⁵ Whereas the SELK theological commission stated that race is a modern term that is foreign to Christianity and the Scriptures and any racial discrimination is wrong, the mission board's statement differentiated between racism, which was declared categorically false, and apartheid, which was seen as a political solution to a problem. Whereas the SELK statement pointed out that it was abuse by Christians in South Africa to justify apartheid as a Christian solution as the commission saw no

¹⁶³ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Racism and the Church: Against the Idolatry*, accessed August 12, 2021, [https://files.lcms.org/#/HOME?{%22meta%22:{%22%22:\[%22Racism%20and%20the%20church%22}\]}}](https://files.lcms.org/#/HOME?{%22meta%22:{%22%22:[%22Racism%20and%20the%20church%22}]}}).

¹⁶⁴ For a discussion of this topic within the SELK refer to the presentation by Volker Stolle at the Oberursel Symposium on apartheid. Volker Stolle, “Die Auseinandersetzung der Bleckmarer Mission / Lutherischen Kirchenmission in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland mit der Apartheid,” in *Mission und Apartheid: Ein unentrinnbares Erbe und seine Aufarbeitung durch lutherische Kirchen im südlichen Afrika*, ed. Werner Klän and Gilberto da Silva (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2013), 25.

¹⁶⁵ Johannes Junker, “Rassismus bei uns und anderswo,” *Missionsblatt* 79, no. 6 (June 1987): 148–54.

categorical difference to racism when concepts were unduly elevated like ethnocentricity, tribalism, or nationalism. Segregation according to race was viewed by the commission as ethically dangerous because it would inevitably lead to racial discrimination. This was especially true when this segregation was institutionalized and combined with the law and power of the government. The commission distanced itself directly from certain wrong exegetical conclusions. Concentrating on the church's role to sharpen the consciousness of congregations and the public, the task to witness against discrimination was seen as a universal one, not limited to South Africa. Finally, the commission made the strong claim that within the church, no racial separation was permissible. The commission warned against abusing as an alibi for racial discrimination that one should take account of the weak because of Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8. On the other hand, the mission board concluded that it was not possible to disqualify apartheid as wrong or incompatible with Christianity as it was not necessarily consistently racist.¹⁶⁶ They argued for a careful examination of the aims, objectives, and achievements of apartheid and were not willing to disqualify apartheid categorically.

Within the context of the confessional Lutheran Church in southern Africa, Dr. Karl Böhmer published his dissertation on the paradigm shift that happened in the work of the Hermannsburg Mission in South Africa through the impact of the Mission superintendent Hardeland.¹⁶⁷ He pointed out in his dissertation that a shift to a harder line of racism and abuse

¹⁶⁶ Stolle points out that Junker the mission director at the time had already published a similar position in the *Ephiphany Handreichung* in 1973 while he was still pastor in Hagen. Junker had been a missionary in South Africa from 1955 to 1965. Stolle, "Auseinandersetzung," in Klän, 22.

¹⁶⁷ Karl Böhmer, *August Hardeland and the "Rheinische" and "Hermannsburger" Missions in Borneo and Southern Africa (1839–1870): The History of a Paradigm Shift and its Impact on South African Lutheran Churches* (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2016).

can be seen in the Mission in South Africa.¹⁶⁸ There has been a fair deal of research around the Mission Director of the Bleckmar Mission Friederich Wilhelm Hopf and his dealing with apartheid. This research is available in two documents by Werner Klän.¹⁶⁹ In 1975 Wilhelm Weber wrote his dissertation on the concept of responsibility in the theology of Luther and Bonhoeffer.¹⁷⁰ Radikobo Ntsimane wrote his dissertation at the University of Pietermaritzburg about the hospital work in Lutheran Missions. A trilateral commission in South Africa was called by the two churches in South Africa, the LCSA and the FELSISA and the Mission of Lutheran Churches. The purpose of this commission was to find and document information about apartheid in our context.¹⁷¹

The Legacy of Apartheid

Would it be stating the obvious, that just as racism, segregation, and inequality did not start when the NP was elected to power in 1948 with their programmatic slogan of apartheid, these manifestations of racism, discrimination, and inequality did not disappear automatically in the new South Africa post-1994?¹⁷² Dismantling the legislation of apartheid might have been the easiest part once the constitution was in place. However, the task of creating a just, equitable and

¹⁶⁸ Especially in his thirteenth chapter titled: “Conflict between August Hardeland and the Indigenous African People.” Böhmer, *August Hardeland*, 255–60.

¹⁶⁹ Büttner, *Friederich Wilhelm Hopf*. And Klän, *Mission und Apartheid*.

¹⁷⁰ Ernst Alfred Wilhelm Weber, “Der Begriff der Verantwortung in der Theologie Martin Luthers und Dietrich Bonhoeffers,” (PhD diss., University of South Africa, 1975).

¹⁷¹ Documents gathered by the study group can be accessed on a Google Drive account. The Joint Study group <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2C1Ty01ije1QTNyV0FXWmpSSEk> owns the link.

¹⁷² For the long history of inequality in South Africa refer to Sampie Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa 1652–2002* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002); For an interpretation of the ongoing issues Sampie Terreblanche, *Lost in Transformation: South Africa’s Search for a New Future Since 1986* (Johannesburg: KMM, 2012); and Michael MacDonald, *Why Race Matters in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu–Natal Press, 2006). Martin Luther’s explanations to the seventh, eight, nine and tenth commandments in the Large Catechism points to the temptation of the rich and powerful to abuse the law to achieve their nefarious aims and objectives.

fair society is more about the ongoing struggle to implement the potential given by the parameters of a good and modern constitution. As in the past the rule of law and the constitution can be abused “in defense of the privileges of apartheid.”¹⁷³ It was not the idea or ideology of apartheid that acted independently, but rather various people from various backgrounds used the concept to achieve their different goals and agendas. If the idea or the name of apartheid is no longer available for people to use because it has become discredited, they might just use a different excuse unless there is a fundamental change of heart, and the agenda and goal have significantly changed. White supremacy and white privilege stood behind the ideology of apartheid, but not only whites engaged with the apartheid ideology. The battle between INKATHA and the ANC in the years of transition accounted for the highest number of fatalities in the history of apartheid. Fighting for supremacy and domination happened before apartheid, and it will happen afterward. The large number of white South Africans that emigrated at the end of apartheid and since then is probably much too diverse and complex to just put into one basket and to simply explain as being motivated by the fear of giving up white privilege. But reading social media posts after social unrest issues in South Africa indicates that fear was a significant motivator. Remarkably though, the privileged lifestyle of the white South African was preserved and protected through the transition.¹⁷⁴ The way the Afrikaners mobilized and dug deep to uplift and improve their own “nation” could be the template for nation-building after 1994. To build a united rainbow nation as it became known in the early years after 1994 and around the Rugby World Cup of 1995 or as the Stronger Together moto that is currently going viral after the

¹⁷³ Ngcukaitobi, *Land Matters*, 10.

¹⁷⁴ “The transition from apartheid to democracy occurred through a deal. In its broadest sweep, whites traded the racial state, which expressed and favored their identity and interests, for assurances about civil liberties, property, and economic policy. The disenfranchised majority received democratic political institutions, empowering them to elect black leaders, but on condition that property rights were respected and orthodox economic policies were adopted.” McDonald, *Why Race Matters*, 178.

looting and social unrest in South Africa July 2021.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was an essential milestone in the post-apartheid era. One of the outstanding issues is the prosecution of crimes committed during apartheid. Terreblanche laments the fact that no economic retribution was called for and made as the large corporations escaped virtually unscathed and mitigated the risks of a collapse by moving their holdings overseas. The actual costs of uplifting the poor and marginalized were huge but not impossible, and tremendous strides have been made since 1994. Even on a large scale, corruption was not foreign to the apartheid government and corporate world, and it indeed has not been alien to the new South Africa. The Zondo Commission into State Capture is a sobering reminder of that.¹⁷⁵ It is also a reminder that society is constantly threatened by abuse, and unless the various sectors of society, both public and private, are engaged, the damage is often substantial. The public space is quite obviously contested, and different world views and so-called solutions that are put on the table are not always easily reconcilable. In a diverse country like South Africa, the question will probably be how well individuals and groups can identify in a common South African identity drawing on the concepts of *ubuntu* or humanity that can embrace diversity as one of our biggest strengths.

The polarized political situation in the USA is not easily understood from a South African perspective. The antagonistic discussion around Critical Race Theory (CRT) is possibly symptomatic of this situation. CRT started in an academic setting within the framework of postmodernity. In the USA, CRT has gone way beyond this scholarly discussion. The theory of Hicks's postmodernism might explain the reason for that. He said: "The failure of epistemology

¹⁷⁵ The full name of the commission is: The Judicial commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State, accessed August 14, 2021, <https://www.statecapture.org.za/>.

made postmodernism possible, and the failure of socialism made postmodernism necessary.”¹⁷⁶ There is an ideological motivation to restructure society within this movement. The challenge for academic discussion is not to ignore the intellectual values and issues pertinent to epistemology as if one could ignore the philosophical conversation and reconnect with the positivism of the 19th century, for example. Taking cognizance of the specific problems raised by Critical Race Theory could be helpful to sensitize researchers to the implications of our contextuality. This does not mean that one must fall into the trap of skepticism or nihilism or even accept the ideological foundation. In their book, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Peter Berger, and Thomas Luckmann describe how they can differentiate between the philosophical questions and problems of epistemology and the empirical epistemology used in the science of sociology.¹⁷⁷ One does not have to capitulate to the premises of skepticism. Recognizing the social constructivism of knowledge is extremely helpful in understanding the dynamics at play when people create their reality. Peter Berger argues that humans are constantly active in a dynamic process of “World-Construction.”¹⁷⁸ “The fundamental dialectic process of society consists of three moments, or steps. These are externalization, objectivation, and internalization.”¹⁷⁹ Culture plays a vital role in “providing the firm structures for human life that are lacking biologically.”¹⁸⁰ Both culture and society are

¹⁷⁶ Stephen R.C. Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault* (Ockham’s Razor, 2011), 4. See also Lucas V Woodford, “What does this mean? Responding to Social Justice & Critical Race Theory,” accessed August 14, 2021, <https://www.mnsdistrict.org/engaged-in-mission/what-does-this-mean>.

¹⁷⁷ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor, 1967).

¹⁷⁸ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 3.

¹⁷⁹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 4.

¹⁸⁰ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 6.

products of human activity, but they also have “attained the status of objective reality” that makes it difficult for individuals to go against this “reality.”¹⁸¹ “The fundamental coerciveness of society lies not in its machineries of social control, but in its power to constitute and to impose itself as reality.”¹⁸² This would explain how a social construct like apartheid can move from hegemony in society to being discarded as evil and obsolete within a relatively short period of time, as the ability to impose itself as reality is lost.

¹⁸¹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 11.

¹⁸² Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 12.

CHAPTER TWO

KARL MEISTER

Introduction

This dissertation looks at Karl Meister because he wrote and presented an appraisal of apartheid in 1950. A copy of this presentation is stored in the archives of the Bleckmar Mission. It is plausible to argue that Meister was not unique in his support of apartheid among his colleagues. His background and socialization are similar to the other missionaries. In this sense, this chapter can be viewed as an analysis of a typical Bleckmar missionary up to the end of the Second World War. The chapter starts with biographical background and then highlights what Peter Berger describes as the plausibility context.¹ This is part of what Peter Berger describes as the process of making sense of our world. In this dissertation, particular focus is directed at how Meister or others in his immediate context perceived Africans. This is reflected partly in material that Meister read or studied on the one hand and on material that he wrote in the mission's newsletter.

Three key concepts that were significant in developing and sustaining the worldview of Meister and others in the mission pertaining to Africans are then discussed in general, not necessarily limited in their application by Meister but to unpack the context of the presentation further that Meister gave in Durban.

The last part of the chapter is focused on the presentation on apartheid by Meister. This is probably the most explicit support of apartheid that was ever published within the mission or FELSISA. Even though this document was not widely distributed and quoted, it is fair to say that

¹ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 17. Berger speaks of “subjective plausibility” 17 and “plausibility structure” 45.

it represented the opinion of the missionaries of the MHELF at that time.

Figure 1. Karl Meister and Bride Henny Albrecht in Front of the Family Mill in Kreuzburg 1900.



The picture was taken in front of the mill that was owned by Karl Meister's father Gottlieb Meister, just before Karl Meister left for Africa. The mill was situated in Kreuzburg Upper Silesia, Kluczbork, today in Poland. From left to right: Klara (sister of Karl), Gustav (Karl's brother), Henny Albrecht (bride of Karl), Karl Meister, Auguste Meister (nee Kabitz, Karl's mother), Gottlieb Meister (Karl's father), Johanna Wenzel (a Kabitz relative), Anna Kabitz (sister of Auguste), Martha (Karl's sister), Robert Wenzel (Johanna's son).

Figure 2. Karl Meister and His Brothers.



From left to right: Gustav Meister (Karl Meister's brother), Karl Meister, and Richard Meister (Stepbrother of Karl Meister).

Biographical Background

On December 5, 1878, Karl Meister was born in Kreuzburg Upper Silesia, Kluczbork, today in Poland. His father owned the mill in Kreuzburg. He was confirmed in the congregation in Konstadt (Wolczyn). The congregation belonged to the *Altlutheraner* Old Lutherans. From 1896 until 1900, he studied in Bleckmar. The MHELF was only established four years earlier, in 1892, after the Hannoverian Evangelical Lutheran Free Church decided to start its own mission separated from the Hermannsburg Mission. In the same year, the MHELF began to train its missionaries in Bleckmar, a small town about thirteen kilometers outside Hermannsburg. The first student Wilhelm Wrogemann had been studying in Hermansburg and then completed his

studies in Bleckmar. Meister was the sixth student to be sent out from the new facility. He passed his exam together with Johannes Schröder in Bleckmar on March 13, 1900. On October 24, 1900, he was commissioned and sent out from Bleckmar to South Africa. He left Germany on October 31, from Hamburg by ship, and traveled via Las Palmas, Cape Town, to Durban. He arrived in Noodsberg in the middle of the night and walked the last few kilometers to Wartburg, where he arrived early at 7 a.m. to Pastor Stielau and his wife's big surprise. Pastor Stielau and the congregation of Kirchdorf were one of the congregations in South Africa that broke away from the Hermannsburg Mission and established the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa. Pastor Stielau had also founded and taken care of a large Zulu congregation that was later based at the mission station Pella just outside of Wartburg. This station was established in 1904. Meister spent some time with Missionary Oltmann in Noodsberg to learn Zulu. Oltmann had been the pastor of the German congregation in New Hannover. He was not able to bring his congregation with him when he broke away from Hermannsburg. He became a Missionary in Noodsberg. Meister started work in Umhlangeni in 1901, after the Missionary Peter Stoppel had passed away on July 3, 1900. Stoppel had left the Hermannsburg Mission in 1884 and joined the FELSISA in 1899 together with a group of both German-speaking congregants and a Zulu-speaking congregation. Meister only remained in the mission's service for one year and one month in Umhlangeni; he took a call to serve the German congregation Umhlangeni and Konstadt (Paddock). Missionary Oltmann served Umhlangeni from 1903 to 1905 before himself being called to the German congregation in Bergen. Meister married Henny nee Albrecht from Hermannsburg, Germany, in 1902. Meister then moved back to serve the congregation in Umhlangeni and lived next to the church. One of his children, who died as an infant, is buried in the graveyard on the mission station. Meister was interned during the First World War from

1914–1919 in Pietermaritzburg after being first imprisoned in the jail in Durban. His status as a pastor of the FELSISA or as a missionary of the MHELF was not self-evident during this period. The FELSISA Synod often debated the missionary's and pastor's role and differentiated between the two. The most apparent being that whites were supposed to be served by pastors and missionaries served Africans. The synodical resolutions of 1906, 1907, and 1932 all endorsed segregation in the church.² From 1920, Karl Meister was clearly in the mission's service and worked as a missionary in Pella near Wartburg. In 1925 he took on South African citizenship so that he would not be interned again. His wife, Henny, passed away on June 4, 1930, and was buried in the graveyard in Kirchdorf. In 1941, Karl Meister was called by the mission to lead the Evangelist seminary in Salem. Here he remained until his retirement in 1954, in which time he assisted mission superintendent Johannes in various ways. In 1954 Meister moved back to Wartburg to live with some of his children. He passed away on July 28, 1958 and was buried in the graveyard in Kirchdorf.

² The synodical minutes of the congregation in Kirchdorf were transcribed by Pastor Peter Ahlers and are available as PDFs from the synodical office. Some minutes like those of 1909 are missing.

Figure 3. Karl Meister's Fifty-year Anniversary of Ordination with Some of his Children and Grandchildren.



This picture was taken in 1951 at the fifty-year anniversary of Karl Meister's ordination with some of his children and grandchildren. Standing at the back from left to right: His son Richard Meister; Lisa (nee Gevers) standing next to her husband Karl Oskar Meister, Albrecht Meister and Karl Köhne. The young boy standing in front of his father Karl Oskar is Martin Meister. Sitting in the front from left to right: Mia (nee Palm) sitting in front of her husband, Lisa Meister the daughter of Albrecht Meister, the missionary Karl Robert Meister, Agneta (nee Sverd from Sweden) sitting in front of her husband Albrecht, and Henny Köhne (nee Meister) my wife's grandmother.

A Plausibility Context in 1900 and How it Developed

The historical challenge that not all evidence is just readily available to describe everything that would have influenced Meister's worldview leads the researcher to look at available resources and make connections and interpretations that come from the "fact of having an expanded horizon" and historical detachment.³ On the one hand, the most apparent resources

³ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3–4.

would be the writings of Meister himself, in which he would express his views or refer to other authors. The most important sources of his writings can be found in the mission newsletter *Missionsblatt* of the MHELFF and the newsletter of the FELSISA *Berichte*, which covered the work in the congregations of the FELSISA and those in the MHELFF. The other articles or writings in those journals can be viewed or assumed to have been read by Meister. What is not so obvious is whether Meister would have agreed with the author or not. Then there are those resources and books that can be viewed as popular or well-known at the time that one reasonably can assume were also known by Meister as they were classics or standard works. The autobiography of Merensky, for example, is an account that quickly became popular in Germany and would have probably been known at the mission training institute in Bleckmar before Meister left for Africa.⁴

The same would probably apply to Gustav Warneck's *Evangelische Missionslehre*.⁵ Part of the broader horizon that Gaddis talks about is the ability of the historian to contextualize what else was said at the time and what was written and discussed and what formed part of the general conversation at the time. In Germany, before Meister had even left for Africa, there would have been the training he received in Bleckmar, the discussion within the church, congregations, and supporters about the task at hand. In this context, the break from Hermannsburg and the validity of the separate path of the Confessional Free Church would have been essential and pervasive. More specifically, related to the issue of this dissertation, one topic that was often discussed in the *Missionsblatt* and *Berichte* was whether the more liberal approach of the English—which

⁴ Alexander Merensky, *Mein Missionsleben in Transvaal: Erinnerungen des Berliner Missionars in Südafrika von 1859–1882* (Berlin: Edition Ost, 1996). This biography by Merensky is different to Johannes Schröder's account of the Zulus.

⁵ Gustav Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre: Ein Missionstheoretischer Versuch. Erste Abteilung: Die Begründung der Sendung* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1897).

welcomed missionaries—would be better than the more restrictive Boers who dealt strictly with the Africans. The Mission Superintendent Chris Johannes was convinced that the Boer option of letting the African know his rightful place would be more appropriate and promising for future mission success. How the “other” was supposed to behave, what would be a sign of humility and decency, proper behavior for a new convert, and the most appropriate way of dealing with the Africans were all topics discussed in the mission newsletter at length.⁶ This appraisal of how to interact with Africans would also have influenced Meister in his approach to Africans. When Meister arrived in South Africa, the German congregations had already established themselves as independent congregations aligned in a synodical church body called the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA). The African congregations were not afforded the same independence and were not part of the FELSISA Synod but remained under the care of the MHELF. Not all the congregations were large, but that was not the determining factor. The small German congregations were still afforded membership, and the large African congregations in Pella and Botshabelo or Roodeport, which had members of over a thousand, were not. Reflections on the impact of the Boer War and the First World War on the people of southern Africa are instructive in that they suggest that a certain innocence on the side of the Africans had been lost.⁷ The Boer war was widely discussed in Germany and still impacted Meister. In the

⁶ Adolf Heicke a member of the mission board gave a report of his trip to South Africa in numerous parts. In part III he mentions the “attitude” of the african catechist Naphthali, and points to the fact that this seems to be more of a case in Natal than in Transvaal, because of how the whites deal with the Africans. Adolf Heicke, “Afrikanische Reiseerlebnisse und Missionserfahrungen III,” *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 2, no. 1 (January 1900): 6; Johannes Schroeder is not as subtle. Schroeder comments about the implication of political independence and its influence on various issues. Johannes Schroeder, “Die Zuluk...,” *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 2, no. 5 (May 1900): 42–43. The editor of the journal, Conrad Drewes, adds two lengthy comments from other sources about the various interpretations of Boer and English influence. Conrad Drewes, “Anmerkungen, Die Zuluk...,” *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 2, no. 5 (May 1900): 43.

⁷ Chris Johannes, “Ein Rückblick auf die Geschichte unserer Mission,” *Berichte aus der freien ev.-luth. Synode in Süd Afrika und der Mission der hann.-ev.-luth. Freikirche* no. 5 (May 1952): 4–6.

early years of the war, his fellow student Heinrich Prigge had to leave Bleckmar prematurely because he was conscripted to fight on the Boers' side. When Meister arrived in South Africa, he still experienced the war in Natal. Once in South Africa, the local conversation within the country would most likely have become more important and influential. A characteristic of the many supporters of apartheid was their perception that outsiders could not understand the context and were therefore disqualified in their criticism of apartheid.

The Bleckmar Mission, training its missionaries in Bleckmar, remained within the same cultural milieu as the Hermannsburg Mission, described as the *Bauernmission* farmer's mission. The education was not as academically focused as it was in the Leipzig Mission and other organizations. It is probably fair to say that the students were not from a highly educated background. This does not reflect on their natural capacities, but it reflects on these students' expectations and social setting.⁸ Possibly the study of theology at the mission training institute was also an alternative to an unsecured future of some students.

Johannes Schröder was a South African student who studied together with Meister in Bleckmar. As a student, Johannes Schröder regularly wrote in the *Missionsblatt*, the mission newsletter of the MHELF. His portrayal of Zulus was published in 1900, the final year of Meister's theological studies, and most likely influenced Meister's perception of Zulus before he had met any in real life.⁹ The earliest reports by Meister on his trip and his first encounter with Africans in Cape Town reflect blatant racial bigotry and cultural paternalism that he would

⁸ It probably is no coincidence that the Bleckmar mission did not bring forth exceptionally gifted multitalented missionaries like the Berlin Mission with Merensky or the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society Édouard Jacottet.

⁹ Johannes Schröder, "Die Zuluk...", *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 2, no. 1 (January 1900): 5; 2, no. 2 (February 1900): 12–13; 2, no. 3 (March 1900): 25–26; 2, no. 4 (April 1900): 33–34; 2, no. 5 (May 1900): 42–43.

foster.¹⁰ That was still obvious in his presentation in Durban 50 years later.

The *Wirkungsgeschichte* or the history of impact of an idea is less simple to trace. German idealism and nationalism, and other contemporary ideas probably influenced Meister. It is more challenging to show how that precisely unfolded.¹¹ The Bleckmar Mission was historically linked to the Hermannsburg awakening, justifying the assumption that the world view of this awakening with its confessional and pietistic characteristics would also have influenced the missionaries' approach to humans generally but to heathens specifically. The concept of sin, including original sin, and the deprivation of humankind on the one hand and the demand of God's law and the uncompromising ethical standards of God's word would determine the missionaries' anthropology. The fact that Meister owned several books by Vilmar quoted him and used his material in his teaching at the seminary in Salem does not necessarily mean that he always interpreted or represented Vilmar correctly. He appropriated the material into his context. Meister found theological justification of his view of white supremacy in his theological "mentor" AFC Vilmar, who "innocently" knew that Africans are not able or suitable for further learning as they are the descendants of the cursed Ham.¹²

From the *Berichte* we know that the pastors and missionaries read and discussed the book

¹⁰ "Am Hafen arbeiteten Hunderte von Schwarzen, die mit ihren stumpfen geistlosen Gesichtern und ihrem kindischen und rohen Gebahren nicht den Gedanken aufkommen ließen, daß sich Christen unter ihnen befänden. Aber es war mir ein das tiefste Herz in Mitleid bewegender Anblick." Karl Meister, "Reisebericht," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 3, no. 2 (February 1901): 20. (At the harbor, hundreds of blacks were working, they, with their blunt spiritless faces and their childish and raw mannerism, did not allow the thought to arise, that there were any Christians among them. Translation by C. Weber).

¹¹ "We are in fact all acting, thinking and feeling out of backgrounds and frameworks which we do not fully understand. To ascribe total personal responsibility to us for these is to want to leap out of the human condition. At the same time, no background leaves us utterly without room for movement and change." Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 387.

¹² August Friederich Christian Vilmar, *Collegium Biblicum, Das Alte Testament Erster Teil* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1881), 92.

by Diedrich Westermann, *The African: Today and Tomorrow*¹³—they probably read it in the German edition of 1937.¹⁴ The missionaries and pastors would regularly meet in combined conventions. Reading the various reports that Meister wrote in the mission newsletter gives the impression that Meister did not expect Africans to be equally gifted as, for example, Germans might be. He will often mention that he was surprised by Africans' various achievements in his context, such as the teacher or members of his congregation.

Perception of Africans by Mission Writers Read by Meister

Johannes Schröder was the son of a South African missionary. His articles in which he introduces the Zulus to the German reader in the mission newsletter reflect a negative perception of Africans that stands in contrast with much more positive accounts by Merensky or Westermann. Schröder wrote: "One also finds under the K... beautiful faces, to the extent that even Europeans cannot withstand the temptation to marry a K...girl, even though that is frowned upon."¹⁵ Schröder goes on to make harrowing statements.

When one would try to deduce from the outward appearance to the inner qualities, one would seriously miscalculate. In the large, beautiful body usually lives only a very small, common Spirit. They do not have the capacity for the higher and beautiful things. They only have a sense for the lower corporal things, food, drink, binging, the satisfaction of their desires, especially by fornication and revenge. They cannot get excited about the noble, do not rejoice about the flowers or the grasslands and forests, and are not in awe of the starry sky. They only have one question for people that express wonder and respect for things like these: "can you eat that?" But in the tangible, those things that bring immediate benefit to themselves, they show remarkable ingenuity. For example, the K... will realize immediately when one of his

¹³ Diedrich Westermann, *Der Afrikaner Heute und Morgen* (Essen: Essener Verlagsgesellschaft, 1937).

¹⁴ Missionary Bast presented the book to the conference. See: "Konferenz der Missionare u. Pastoren auf Uelzen," *Felsisa Berichte* 1, no. 5 (September and October 1946): 3.

¹⁵ "Man findet unter den K... auch hübsche Gesichter, sodaß sogar Europäer der Versuchung nicht widerstehen können, ein K...mädchen zu heirathen, obgleich das verpönt ist." Johannes Schröder, "Die Zuluk...," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen evang-lutherischen Freikirche* 2, no. 1 (January 1900): 5. Merensky refers to the discussion among missionaries about the disadvantages and advantages of missionaries marrying African women. He personally believed it was better for various reasons to marry a German woman, but he refers to some missionaries who had married African women. Merensky, *Mein Missionsleben*, 210.

herd is missing in the evenings. He knows it without counting them because even if he owns a hundred head of cattle, he knows each one by its color and appearance. Part of his natural disposition and capabilities is his extraordinary rhetorical gift. Of course, this is again limited, on mere externals, and empirically verifiable topics, because his intellectual capacities are underutilized and slumber from neglect. He is a master in lively, vivid presentation and is in no need of an advocate in judicial hearings. He is man enough to represent his own case. He possesses a good memory so that he can quote virtually verbatim speeches and narrations he heard a long time ago. These rich gifts are the reason for great expectations for future blessed work when these are sanctified through Christianity, as one can already see in the indigenous Catechists, who are of great service to the mission.¹⁶

The contradictions of Schröder's description are apparent, as he describes qualities and even beauty on the one hand but disqualifies the same from a perceived cultural superiority. Schröder's mother also contributed to the mission newsletter by writing about the difficult start of mission life on their farm Rosenen. She wrote in the March issue just before her son carried on with his description: "But with the K...s at that time one could not really achieve anything, they were usually too stupid and too lazy."¹⁷ As if taking up this idea from his mother, the description of Johannes Schröder talks about the Zulu girls.

They are very reluctant to work. Surely there are no more lazier creatures than the K...girls. ...They accept the inevitable (marriage), and out of the to the highest extent

¹⁶ "Wenn man nun von dem Aeußeren auf das Innere schließen wollte, würde man sich stark verrechnen. In dem großen, schönen Körper wohnt meistens nur ein kleiner, gemeiner Geist. Es geht ihnen der Sinn für das Höhere und Schöne ab. Sie haben nur Sinn für niedere, körperliche Dinge, für Essen, Trinken, Gelage, Befriedigung ihrer Lüste, besonders durch Unzucht und Rachgier. Sie können sich nicht begeistern für das Edle, freuen sich nicht an Blumen, Wiesen und Wäldern und werden von der Herrlichkeit des Sternenhimmels nicht ergriffen. Sie haben für Leute, die über solche Dinge Staunen und Bewunderung äußern nur die spöttische Frage: "kannst du das essen?" Aber in den greifbaren, ihnen unmittelbaren Nutzen bringenden Dingen beweisen sie mitunter großen Scharfsinn. So merkt es z.B. der K... sofort, wenn des Abends von der Herde Vieh fehlt. Er weiß es, ohne das Vieh gezählt zu haben; denn wenn er gleich hundert Kopf besitzt, so kennt er jedes an Farbe und Aussehen. Zu den natürlichen Anlagen und Fähigkeiten des K... gehört ferner seine außerordentliche Rednergabe. Freilich bewegt er sich auch hier, da seine geistigen Fähigkeiten unbenutzt und verwahrlost schlummern, nur auf äußerlichem, sinnlich wahrnehmbarem Gebiet. Er ist ein Meister in lebendiger, anschaulicher Darstellung und hat bei einer Gerichtsverhandlung keinen Anwalt nöthig. Er ist Manns genug, seine Sache selbst zu vertreten. Er besitzt ein gutes Gedächtnis, so daß er vor langer Zeit gehaltene und gehörte Reden und Erzählungen fast wörtlich wiedergeben kann. Zu großer Hoffnung einstigen gesegneten Wirkens berechtigen diese reichen Gaben, wenn dieselben, durch das Christentum geheiligt sein werden, wie man es jetzt schon an den eingeborenen Katecheten sieht, welche der Mission große Dienste leisten." Johannes Schröder, "Die Zuluk...", 5.

¹⁷ "Aber mit den K... war dazumal noch nicht viel anzufangen, sie waren meist zu dumm und zu faul." M. Schröder, "Ein Schwerer Anfang im Missionsleben," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen evang-lutherischen Freikirche* 2, no. 3 (March 1900): 25.

moody and lazy clump of fat, for that is what they are, they become according to their sort workable Housewives. In the beginning, the stick of the husband still drives them, but later on, they accept their lot and do it by themselves, until they are through the burden of years depressed, and are no longer capable.¹⁸

It might be necessary to point out that manual labor was not seen positively by the Zulus and the Afrikaners. Subordinate people were allocated to do manual work. So as long as the Zulus could maintain their independence, they did not need to take up manual labor. What was then often interpreted as laziness should probably be culturally contextualized to be understood. In the last instalment of his description, Schröder comes to talk about the loss of political independence of the Zulus. He writes:

The K...s had lost their political independence a long time ago. This loss was actually a gain for the Zulus because their despotic kings suppressed and enslaved them heavily. The life of their subjects had no value for them. And for their neighbors, they were a continual nuisance because of their regular plundering raids. Now the K...s are partly the subjects of the English or the Boer. In the English colonies of Natal and Zululand, they can attain citizenship after reaching a certain level of education. They are then treated as any other regular citizen. In the Boer republic of Transvaal, according to my knowledge, they are still excluded from citizenship. While the English treat them too leniently, so that they partly become rather rude, the Boers are too strict, which only encourages the slave mentality and prevents the free development.¹⁹

To justify white supremacy and colonialism, the Zulu was often portrayed as especially

¹⁸ “Sie sind sehr arbeitsscheu. Es kann kaum faulere Geschöpfe geben als solche K...mädchen. ... Sie Schicken sich aber bald ins Unvermeidliche, und aus den im höchsten Grade launenhaften faulen Fettklumpen, denn das sind sie, werden in ihrer Art arbeitsame Hausfrauen. Wozu sie anfangs der Stock des Mannes treiben mußte, daß tun sie bald von selbst, und sie thun es, bis sie, durch die Bürde der Jahre niedergedrückt, es nicht mehr können.” Johannes Schröder, “Die Zuluk...,” *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen evang-lutherischen Freikirche* 2, no. 3 (March 1900): 25–6.

¹⁹ “Ihre politische Selbständigkeit haben die K... ja längst verloren. Für die Zulus war dieser Verlust ein Gewinn, denn ihre despotischen Könige drückten und knechteten sie sehr. Das Leben ihrer Untertanen galt ihnen nichts. Und ihren Nachbarn waren sie durch die unablässig von ihnen unternommenen Raubzüge sehr lästig. Jetzt sind die K... theils der Engländer und theils der Buren Unterthanen. Zu den englischen Kolonien Natal und Zululand können sie bei gewissem errungenen Bildungsgrad das Bürgerrecht erlangen. Sie werden dann behandelt wie jeder ordentlicher Bürger. In der Burenrepublik Transvaal sind sie meines Wissens vom Bürgerrecht noch ausgeschlossen. Während die Engländer sie zu nachsichtig behandeln, so daß sie zum Theil recht frech werden, verfahren die Buren zu streng gegen sie, wodurch der Slavensinn gefördert und die freie Entwicklung gehindert wird.” Johannes Schröder, “Die Zuluk...,” *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen evang-lutherischen Freikirche* 2, no. 5 (May 1900): 42–3.

brutal and savage. This imagery was concentrated in a particular way on the Zulu King Shaka.²⁰ This perception also influenced how historians interpreted the mass movements of people in the 19th century in southern Africa, often described as Mfecane. Some historical revision is happening to explain that the Mfecane was not caused by Shaka alone, but rather by cross border trade and various factors of a changing society.²¹ Bongani Zulu mentions one of the main changes: the militarization of different tribes and groups with the establishment or expansion of *amabutho* (age regiments).²² The chief had to access cattle to finance these regiments, which he raided from neighboring tribes or groups. The Afrikaners also regularly undertook such cattle raids just as the Swazi King did. Merensky describes the influence of these raids on his situation among the Bapedi.²³

When Meister landed in Cape Town on his way to Durban, he wrote back to the German congregation, and his letter was published in the mission's newsletter.²⁴ It reflected some of the ideas of Schröder. "At the harbor, hundreds of blacks, who with blunt spiritless faces and in their childlike and raw demeanor do not allow the thought to come up, that any Christian would be among them. But it was an appearance that caused the deepest sympathy in my heart."²⁵

²⁰ Refer to the study by Dan Wylie, *Savage Delight: White Myths of Shaka* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000).

²¹ See Mbongiseni Buthelezi, "The Empire Talks Back: Re-examining the Legacies of Shaka and Zulu Power in Post-apartheid South Africa," in *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present*, ed. Benedict Carton and John Laband and Jabulani Sithole (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008), 23–34; Bongani Kashiemba Zulu, "From the Lüneburger Heide to Northern Zululand: A History of the Encounter Between the Settlers, the Hermannsburg Missionaries, the Amakhosi and their People, with Special Reference to Four Mission Stations in Northern Zululand (1860–1913)" (master's thesis, University of Natal, 2002), 75–90.

²² Zulu, "From the Lüneburger Heide," 84.

²³ Merensky, *Mein Missionsleben*, 43–44; 182–85; 390–414.

²⁴ Karl Meister, "Reisebericht," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 3, no. 2 (February 1901): 20.

²⁵ "Am Hafen arbeiteten Hunderte von Schwarzen, die mit ihren stumpfen geistlosen Gesichtern und ihrem kindischen und rohen Gebahren nicht den Gedanken aufkommen ließen, daß sich Christen unter ihnen befänden. Aber es war mir ein das tiefste Herz in Mitleid bewegender Anblick." Karl Meister, "Reisebericht," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 3, no. 2 (February 1901): 20.

Relatively soon, Meister will also use the term K... to describe Africans; here, he is still using the “neutral” term blacks. Later in 1950 during his presentation before the General Lutheran Conference he will argue, that one should not use the derogatory terms “K...” and “Coolie.” Like many Europeans of the time, he would draw conclusions from the foreign appearance of the Africans, trying to determine whether the Christian spirit had softened or enhanced the person, which probably just meant, made him more acceptable to the norms and expectations of what a person perceived to be beautiful or typical.

In contrast to the writings of Schröder, the Autobiography of Merensky is much more appreciative of the Africans, even though its paternalism and contextualization still color it. Remarkably, he justifies that he did not allow the Africans to sit on a chair in his house because he believed that the Africans would not know how to behave and would be more comfortable sitting on the floor.²⁶ On the other hand, Merensky highlights the many achievements and adaptations that the Africans and especially the converts he was working with had achieved, which ridicules the statement about the chair.²⁷ His autobiography helps recognize the enormous challenge faced both by missionaries and the Africans to determine how Christianity would fit into the culture and life of the Africans.²⁸ In Europe, secularization was expanding, and one could already speak of two realms and separation of church and state.²⁹ This was not the case in African culture at the time. Merensky shows how the role of the chief was not only political but

²⁶ Merensky, *Mein Missionsleben*, 324.

²⁷ Merensky, *Mein Missionsleben*, 330.

²⁸ Merensky, *Mein Missionsleben*, 335.

²⁹ For a general discussion of the process of secularization see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). With special reference to the eleventh chapter Taylor, “Nineteenth–Century Trajectories,” in Taylor, 377–419.

religious.³⁰ Therefore, if his subjects would suddenly change their allegiance to God, this would have massive repercussions in all spheres of cultural life.³¹ Invariably this meant that new converts would be separated in a sense from the community. This did not happen uniformly or consistently in the same way. With the loss of political power, the hurdle for Africans to change allegiance was much lower.³²

Meister would have probably been exposed to the mission theology book by Warneck.³³ Warneck, in his 15th chapter on the anthropological foundation of mission, highlighted the fact that no national association or nation of people (Volk) was excluded from being accessible to Christianity. The differences between the various human nations are all just gradual and not specific as the human race (Menschliches Geschlecht) is one. All humans possess the capacity for language and religion. He, therefore, denied any Christian aristocracy whether that concerns the Spirit, the School, the social standing, or culture or nationality.³⁴ “It serves no special table to the privileged human class or race, but rather offers one salvation and one truth to all without a difference.”³⁵ Christianity can adapt to all cultures, and it is not necessary to convert people to a certain manifestation of Christianity like the German or English ways. “The living Christian is not a development in a certain form from his natural humanity, but rather is a new creation.”³⁶

³⁰ Merensky, *Mein Missionsleben*, 218–35.

³¹ Compare the fact that Christians in the early church were seen as enemies of the state because they would not recognize the roman emperor as God.

³² For a collection of essays on the confrontation of western and African civilization in South Africa see: Isaac Schapera, ed. *Western Civilization and the Natives of South Africa: Studies in Culture Contact* (London: Routledge, 1934); A. Vilakazi, *Zulu Transformations: A Study of the dynamics of social change* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1965).

³³ Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, 278–341.

³⁴ Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, 278.

³⁵ “Es deckt weder für bevorzugte Menschenklassen noch Menschenrassen einen besonderen Tisch, sondern er bietet ein Heil und eine Wahrheit allen ohne Unterschied.” Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, 278.

³⁶ “Der lebendige Christ ist keine bloße Entwicklung irgendeiner Form des natürlichen Menschen, sondern eine neue Kreatur.” Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, 280.

Because the mission is concentrated on the basic fundamentals and essentials of Christ's mission, the Christian mission is able to adapt to all and different situations and contexts.³⁷ Christianity is by nature a seed and sourdough nature—that penetrates and regenerates the cultures.³⁸ Because the human heart is the same in all humans, this seed can be sewn into the heart of all people. Christianity was never indigenous, except maybe in Israel; after that, it became indigenous in various parts of the world.

Christianity starts with individuals, but it then develops into communities and can have localized structures as the various nations and people express their faith. Christianity meets God's creation orders when it comes to the nations or people and then enters these. The Afrikaners, as shown in the first chapter, did not approach the mission work uniformly. The Afrikaners in the Transvaal responded late to the mission work, possibly because they did not view Africans as worthy or capable of Christianity. Some argued that Africans had no soul.³⁹ Others argued from Social Darwinism that not all humans developed from one ancestor, even though this was probably unacceptable to most Christians. The Dutch Reformed in the Orange River Republic and the Cape had reached out to the Africans for a long time.⁴⁰

August Vilmar, the theologian in Marburg, was closely affiliated to the Lutheran confessional free churches, especially the free church in Hesse, who also supported the Bleckmar Mission.⁴¹ Meister owned several books written by Vilmar. The most important among them his

³⁷ Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, 281.

³⁸ Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, 282.

³⁹ Heinrich Prigge, "Bericht," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 10, no. 6 (June 1910): 45–46.

⁴⁰ For more information on the Dutch Reformed Church see Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), 454–71.

⁴¹ See Friederich Wilhelm Hopf, *August Vilmar als Missionsfest Prediger* (Bleckmar: Lutherische Blätter, 1965).

programmatic booklet *Die Theologie der Tatsachen, wider die Theologie der Rhetorik*, the commentary to the Bible *Collegium Biblicum*, the dogmatics in two volumes and his ethics *Theologische Moral* and his history of German literature *Geschichte der deutschen Nationalliteratur* and the collection of essays by Vilmar as a commentary to the signs of the times *Kirche und Welt oder die Aufgabe des geistlichen Amtes in unserer Zeit: Zur Signatur der Gegenwart und Zukunft* and Vilmar's pastoral theology *Lehrbuch der Pastoraltheologie*. Meister used the commentary of the Bible in his bible classes at the evangelist school in Salem. Meister described his lessons at the school as basically being a *lectio continua* of the scriptures and he would cover dogmatic questions as they arose from the context of the readings. At conferences of the pastors and missionaries Meister would often present chapters from Vilmar's ethics.

In the SELK statement on racism, the theological commission refers to Vilmar's wrong exegetical conclusions in his Old Testament Commentary. Commenting on Gen. 9:24–25, Vilmar says:

The curse of Noah over Hams descendants is essentially the following: this race *Geschlecht* (Kanaan) is since a subordinate one, and their offspring carry Hams kind *Art*. The Phoenicians, Cartagens, the Canaanites in Palestine, most coloreds *Farbigen* in Africa are known for their rampant lust and shamelessness in history. They did rule, but they did not rule over other tribes, but rather they have been subordinate to the Semites (in Palestine) and the Japhites (one thinks of Carthage, Tyrus, Egypt, Assyria). Strange is also that all the old nations saw everything that was Hamitic as being subordinate, for example, the very strong disrespect of the Romans against the Cartagens. What still remains of the Hamites are servants, subordinate and is not capable of higher world-learning.⁴²

⁴² “Der Fluch Noahs über Hams Geschlecht ist nun wesentlich der: dieses Geschlecht (Kanaan) ist seitdem ein untergeordnetes, und seine Sproßen tragen Hams Art. Die Phönizer, Karthager, die Kanaaniter in Palästina, die meisten Farbigen in Afrika sind durch zügellose Wollust und Schamlosigkeit in der Geschichte bekannt. Herrschaft hatten sie allerdings, doch nicht über andere Stämme, sondern sie sind allezeit den Semiten (in Palästina) und Japhetiten (man denke an Karthago, Tyrus, Ägypten Assyrien) unterlegen. Merkwürdig ist es auch, daß die alten Völker alles, was hamitisch war, als untergeordnet betrachteten, z.B. die überaus starke Verachtung der Römer gegen die Karthager. Was jetzt noch von den Hamiten übrig ist, sind Knechte, untergeordnet und höherer Weltbildung nicht fähig.” August Vilmar, *Collegium Biblicum: Praktische Erklärung der Heiligen Schrift Alten und Neuen Testaments. Das Alte Testament Erster Teil* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1881), 92.

In his presentation in Durban, Meister will use further passages of Vilmar to substantiate his arguments to support white superiority. In his criticism of modernity, Vilmar made use of a heuristic model of “*Bild und Gegenbild*,” a positive and negative foil against which he interpreted his times.⁴³ The past is described with all those ideal-typical attributes that the author was yearning for in his present time, but they have been corrupted to the exact opposite. Vilmar was filled with certain confidence when making statements about the current time that defied doubt and ambiguity.⁴⁴ Vilmar used the term *Signatur der Zeit*, signature of the time, to describe the necessary task of each theologian and pastor to be able to read the signs of his time.⁴⁵ This essential ability of the pastor is linked to the study of testing the spirits (1 John 4:1). Vilmar viewed the French Revolution negatively and would, consequently deny many of the liberal rights claimed in the Revolution.⁴⁶ In many ways, his history of German literature paints a picture of what Vilmar viewed as true, pure, and great about the German spirit in contrast to everything that he despised as un-German. In this history of literature, the effect of German Romanticism and Idealism is probably most apparent.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ulrich Asendorf, *Die Europäische Krise und das Amt der Kirche: Voraussetzungen der Theologie von A.F.C. Vilmar* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1967), 20.

⁴⁴ In Vilmar’s book, *Die Theologie der Tatsachen wider die Theologie der Rhetorik. Bekenntnis und Abwehr*, to which Sasse wrote a preface for the 3rd edition in 1938 this confidence is especially evident. Vilmar wrote to Hassenpflug that his intention in writing the book was based on the ecclesiastical reality—a rock solid certainty without any doubt, which he viewed as “idolatry”. Müller G. “Zur Entstehung von Vilmars ‘Theologie der Tatsachen,’” *Pastoralblatt des Ev. Pfarrervereins Kurhessen-Waldeck* 72 (1970): 23.

⁴⁵ A.F.C. Vilmar, *Die Theologie der Tatsachen wider die Theologie der Rhetorik* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1876), 106. Or even in the title of his collection of essays *Zur Signatur der Gegenwart und Zukunft*

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the political perceptions of Louis Harms, which were apparently similar to Vilmar’s compare Andrea Grünhagen, *Erweckung und Konfessionelle Bewusstwerdung: Das Beispiel Hermannsburg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2010), 222–30; See also Angelika Dörfler-Dierken, *Luthertum und Demokratie: Deutsche und Amerikanische Theologen des 19. Jahrhunderts zu Staat, Gesellschaft und Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001); Martha Wollenweber, *Theologie und Politik by A.F.C. Vilmar* (München: Kaiser, 1930).

⁴⁷ Vilmar writes in the preface to the fourth edition, that he wanted to serve the German nation with the book. He goes on to describe the German nation as being born to rule the world. He viewed the German nation as being

The newsletter *Berichte* of the FELSISA reported that the pastors and missionaries discussed the book by Diedrich Westermann, *The African: Today and Tomorrow*, at their combined meetings.⁴⁸ Westermann was an interesting person who started working in Africa as a missionary in Togo and became an authority on African languages. Later, he led the Institute for Oriental Languages in Berlin and became a professor for African languages in Berlin. Westermann was also the co-director of the African International Institute in London. He never joined the Nazi Party, and reading his Duff lectures of 1935, which were published as *Africa and Christianity* by Oxford Press in 1937, is an enlightening exercise.⁴⁹ If one thinks he was writing within the prime time of the Nazi ideology of Germany. Still, he speaks of the “dubious scientific value” of the concept of race, for example, and suggests in contrast to Vilmar that Africans can assimilate and are equal to Europeans.⁵⁰ There is no human quality according to Westermann, that does not exist in the African race.⁵¹ In an early report for the mission newsletter, in which Meister reported his first baptism of an African convert, he also spoke rather positively about Africans in comparison to Europeans.⁵² Westermann, also argued, that each race needed to develop and remain intact – as “nothing is easier than to anglicize the Bantu as far as externalities are concerned and nothing more impossible than to make them English.”⁵³ It is not

called to be a protector of “Zucht und Sitte” discipline and morality among the nations, for righteousness and for dedication, for poetry and science and for the Christian faith of the church in its world transcending glory. A.F.C. Vilmar, *Geschichte der deutschen National-Literatur* (Marburg: Elwertsche Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1864), vi.

⁴⁸ Diedrich Westermann, *Der Afrikaner Heute und Morgen* (Essen: Essener Verlagsgesellschaft, 1937).

⁴⁹ Diedrich Westermann, *Africa and Christianity: Duff Lectures 1935* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937).

⁵⁰ Westermann, *Africa*, 4.

⁵¹ Westermann, *Africa*, 3.

⁵² Meister, “Ein kleiner Anfang,” *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 7, no. 3 (March 1905): 21–22.

⁵³ Westermann, *Africa*, 24. Westermann was quoting W.C. Willoughby from the London Mission Society

apparent that Meister read more books by Westermann, but most likely, he was selective in what he accepted in his plausibility context. For Westermann, it was essential to see Christianity's regenerative and formative power on all cultures and races, and he emphasized that one should use the best education available.⁵⁴ This supports what Warneck wrote. Westermann also discussed the concept of indirect-rule or indirect-administration developed by Shepstone in Natal, an essential precursor of apartheid.⁵⁵ Westermann already pointed out that the real crux was that not enough good and equal land and resources were allocated to the African "reserves," so these segregationist policies were bound to fail.

The 75 Years Celebration of Christian Mission in Natal, 1910

The publisher of the mission newsletter of the MHELF pastor Wolf was open to print various voices from the mission field.⁵⁶ He, for example, published the statement by Dr. J.L. Dube, the first president of the South African Native National Congress, which became the African National Congress in 1923.⁵⁷ Dube had written a statement to explain the concept and idea behind forming the Congress in 1912. Wolf also published various articles by the Natal Mercury on issues relating to Africans and the political situation in South Africa.⁵⁸ The opinions

⁵⁴ Westermann, *Africa*, 28–29.

⁵⁵ For an African wide discussion of this policy by Westermann see Diedrich Westermann, "Die 'indirekte Verwaltung' in englisch-afrikanischen Besitzungen," *Zeitschrift für Politik* 27, no. 11/12 (November and December 1937): 568–72, accessed January 23, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43528188>. Merensky appreciated the role of Shepstone who according to Merensky was a realistic politician who recognized the threat and danger of the Zulu nation for all colonial powers. Merensky, *Mein Missionsleben*, 411–12.

⁵⁶ Pastor Friederich Wolf was the pastor of the congregation in Bleckmar. When the MHELF was formed he became the teacher of the seminary in Bleckmar. He led the seminary until his death in 1920. Johannes Junker, *Zeichen, Zeiten, Tage und Jahre: 1892–1992* (Groß Oesingen: Luth Buchhandlung Harms, 1992), 26.

⁵⁷ For a general study of Dr. Dube's life compare Heather Hughes, *First President: A Life of John L. Dube, founding president of the ANC* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2011). J.L. Dube, "Die Eingeborenenfrage in Südafrika. II," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 16, no. 3 (March 1914): 18–20.

⁵⁸ Wolf published various articles by Lewis Hertslet. For example Lewis Hertslet, "Unsere Eingeborenen-

were not all the same, and one can get the impression that the publisher wanted the mission supporters in Germany to make up their own minds and find a good solution to the many challenges. Wolf wrote interesting annual reports on the situation in South Africa.⁵⁹ He mentions the forced removals of Africans in 1913 for example.⁶⁰ In 1912 he spoke about the expectations of Africans after the Boer War and the threat of African Independent Churches rising up in a movement known as Ethiopianism at the time.⁶¹ Wolf in 1905 had already reported that the English were supporting the hope of Africans to reach independence.⁶² A teacher from Paulpietersburg, H.W. Stumpf, responded to the various articles in the mission newsletter with his own explanation of the solution.⁶³ A significant milestone in these early years was a celebration of 75 years of Christian mission among the Zulu-speaking nation in Durban.⁶⁴ This

Politik, III" *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 16, no. 7 (July, 1914): 50–1; Lewis Hertslet, "Ein Meinungs-austausch über Eingeborenen Angelegenheiten," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 15, no. 2 (February 1913): 11–2. In this article Hertslet suggested the policy of segregation *Absonderung* is good. Hertslet argued that the ruling races have a responsibility to rule over the weaker races. Lewis Hertslet, "Verantwortlichkeit für die Eingeborenen," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 15, no. 5 (May 1913): 34–35.

⁵⁹ Wolf, "Bericht über die Mission der Hannov.ev.-luth. Freikirche vom Jahre 1910," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 13, no. 9 (September 1911): 68–70.

⁶⁰ Wolf, "Bericht über die Mission der Hannov.ev.-luth. Freikirche vom Jahre 1912," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 15, no. 9 (September 1913): 68.

⁶¹ Wolf, "Bericht über die Mission der Hannov.ev.-luth. Freikirche vom Jahre 1911," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 14, no. 7 (July 1912): 50–53.

⁶² Wolf, "Missionsbericht über das Jahr 1904," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 7, no. 8 (August 1905): 59–60.

⁶³ In his contribution Stumpf mentioned a number of cliched perceptions of Africans. He believed, that they were still on the level of children. Africans were not ready to rule or to be ordained as pastors in the church. They needed to be educated and their national faults would need correction. They had not yet developed as a nation, *Volkswesen*. Stumpf believed that Christianity would help to create a culture, that was currently still absent. H.W. Stumpf, "Etwas zur Eingeborenenfrage in Südafrika I," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 15, no. 5 (May 1913): 35–37. In a following article he wrote, that missionaries are spoiling the K... My Grandfather Wilhelm Weber apparently quoted this sentence at the beginning of a sermon in the German congregation of Wittenberg. He apparently repeated the sentence three times, and then said, it was not true. H.W. Stumpf, "Etwas zur Eingeborenenfrage in Südafrika II," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 15, no. 6 (June 1913): 42–43.

⁶⁴ Wolf, "Das fünfundsiebenzigjährige Jubiläum der Mission unter den Zulus," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 13, no. 10 (October 1911): 74–76.

celebration was widely reported in the mission newsletter from articles in the Natal Mercury, especially by an English Missionary Lewis Hertslet that highlighted the Africans' progress.⁶⁵ The MHELF missionaries decided not to participate in the exhibition in Durban. The missionaries feared that these exhibitions would make the African arrogant and unsubmissive. On his way to a Mission festival in Kirchdorf, Meister was glad to view the exhibition on Saturday and expressed his disappointment that he would miss the show on Sunday because he had to preach in Kirchdorf. Here again, Meister admitted that he was surprised about the apparent progress and achievement of the Africans. It is instructive to read between the lines when Meister complains about the school situation—he would prefer to teach the Africans only in their mother tongue.⁶⁶ Still, if he wanted to receive Government support for the school, he had to teach English. On the other hand, he was envious of the more successful because more resourceful American mission that relied heavily on Government support.

The Conflict in Pella with Johannes Nxumalo

A burning issue of all mission churches was the need to grow and develop local church leadership and lead the church to independence. The African Independent Church movement is complex and diverse, but the tardiness of the mainline churches and missions to ordain local pastors and the general racial segregation within the church were probably significant factors in giving this movement momentum.⁶⁷ The fact, too, that the *Amakholwa* the believers could not be integrated into the citizenship after the Union of South Africa 1910 probably again led to a shift

⁶⁵ The article by Lewis Hertslet was published in four parts in 1913. L.E. Hertslet, "Fortschritt der Afrikaner," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 15, no. 9–12 (September October, November, December 1913): 71–72, 74–77, 82–83, 89–92.

⁶⁶ Meister, "Meister aus Alfredia," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 13, no. 4 (April 1911): 30–32; Meister, "Jahresbericht," *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 10, no. 3 (March 1910): 18.

⁶⁷ See Bengt Sundkler, *Bantupropheten in Südafrika* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1964), 41.

of focus and momentum to the independent church movement. The mainline churches and mission organizations discredited this movement as sectarian, which it probably was from a Lutheran confessional standpoint.

When Meister moved to the mission station in Pella in 1920, he worked in a large congregation. The mission newsletter stated that in 1900 Stielau had gathered over 1000 members in that congregation. One of the first local pastors to be ordained was Nxumalo in Pella. Rev. Aaron Ntuli's historical report on the congregation of Pella gives some details of what led to the departure of Nxumalo.⁶⁸ Meister and the German superintendent Böttcher had requested in 1925 that Nxumalo be ordained. The MHELF was, at the time, busy preparing for the independence of the African church. Ntuli indicated that the leadership had planned the independence to take place by 1928. However, at the synod in Pella in 1926, two other pastors, Pastor Nyandeni from the congregation in Mabola and Pastor Mkhaliphi from Salem, had witnessed Pastor Nxumalo engaging in traditional Zulu "medicine" targeting the mission superintendent Johannes and possibly Meister. Ntuli referred to the increased animosity among blacks and whites after the First World War and that these issues were a challenge in Pella under the influence of Nxumalo. The two pastors Nyandeni and Mkhaliphi, apparently requested Johannes to delay the independence of the church due to these issues. Nxumalo enjoyed great popularity in the congregation in Pella and had been credited with doing good work. The congregation grew substantially in the 1920s, and apparently, Meister and Nxumalo worked well together. The congregation in Pella attended services in great numbers when Nxumalo was leading, in contrast to few attendees when Meister held the service. When it became known that

⁶⁸ Aaron Ntuli, *Umlando ngePella*, in *Fundisani ukgucina konke okuyalwa nguKristu okwaseNhlanhleni 2*, ed. Ernst Alfred Wilhelm Weber (Pretoria: Lutheran Heritage Foundation, 2007), 73–80.

Nxumalo had fathered an illegitimate child, the church leadership wanted to move him to a new congregation in Keates Drift. With the support of the congregation, Nxumalo refused to leave Pella; instead, he suggested that Meister should go. Nxumalo left the Lutheran Church and started his own African Independent Church. One thousand seven hundred members decided to leave with him; only thirty-five members remained in the Lutheran Church. Suddenly facing an empty church, Meister preached to the empty benches for one or two Sundays. But when a lady from the congregation, Mrs. Cele, saw his commitment, she returned with some of the congregation. The mission was shocked and did not ordain another pastor until after World War II, and independence was moved to the backburners. Ntsimane suggested that Nxumalo was not willing to submit himself to the Mission leadership, and this probably indicates a level of assertiveness on the side of Nxumalo that the leadership would not have appreciated.⁶⁹

Some Key Concepts

Curse of Ham

By the time Meister referred to the Curse of Ham, he did not have to justify his application of this curse to Africans. It had become an accepted and known concept. In that sense, Meister was not original in his use of the curse or not even creative. In the SELK statement against racism and apartheid, the theological commission criticized the inappropriate exegesis of Genesis 9 without going into the historical details of how this passage had been interpreted through the ages. David Whitford has written an excellent account of this process in his book *The Curse of*

⁶⁹ Radikobo Ntsimane, “An Historical Evaluation of the Lutheran Medical Mission Services in Southern Africa with Special Emphasis on Four Hospitals: 1930s–1978,” (PhD diss., University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2012), 275.

Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justification of Slavery.⁷⁰ Whitford suggests that Genesis 9 is a “text of opportunity” as it is open for interpretation.⁷¹ In its application, the focus was not necessarily on the status of Ham, this was assumed as being understood, but a contentious issue was the identity of Ham and his descendants.⁷² “For Ambrosiaster, Ham was the paradigmatic representative of people who mock those to whom they rightfully owe reverence. ... Noah’s son Cham was the first to merit receiving the title slave.”⁷³ In the medieval era, many argued that the descendants of the curse were the serfs in their midst; by the nineteenth century, there was a large consensus that the cursed descendants were Africans.⁷⁴ Withford argues

the need for slaves did not give rise to the myth. Not even the beginning of the slave trade itself demanded a myth of legitimacy. It was only when that legitimacy itself was undermined that the Curse of Ham rose to the level of utility. To be of real utility, however, it had to have cultural currency.⁷⁵

In southern Africa, more specifically for Meisler, the curse of Ham was not used to justify slavery but rather apartheid and, more specifically, white supremacy. One of the most surprising facts from the book by Withford is that “nearly every royal genealogy written in the sixteenth century claimed Ham as an ancestor,” even for Emperor Charles V during the time of Luther.⁷⁶ It

⁷⁰ Withford describes his approach and methodology in the book as being “reception history”. He attempted to show how the text was used and interpreted throughout the history. David Withford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justification of Slavery*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 10–14.

⁷¹ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 4. “Its centrality to the biblical story and its brevity invite the reader or interpreter to fill in or round out the story with their own opinion or understanding.”

⁷² Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 10.

⁷³ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 32. Ambrosiaster, a later fourth-century author, believed to be St Ambrose of Milan in the Middle Ages.

⁷⁴ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 10.

⁷⁵ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 15.

⁷⁶ Whitford writes: “Ham was more than simply a serf or a slave; he was also a god and a king.” Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 16. For a detailed discussion of the process that unfolded see 66–72. “While Stabius, Godet and other

would be fascinating to have seen how Vilmar would have reacted to that fact. In creating the myth, one important building block is the elimination of Canaan from the story and the focus on Ham.⁷⁷ In the original account, Ham is not cursed, but rather one of his children, Canaan. Whitford argues that not everyone who wrote about this passage wanted to justify slavery, “and yet, as they answered other questions, they each contributed to the myth’s lexicon. Over time, that lexicon enabled the myth to become a reality.”⁷⁸ Chapter 3 in Withford’s book is entitled “Gods, Giants, and Kings.” It is important for this topic as Whitford discusses the impact and meaning of the book by Annius of Viterbo *Commentari Fratris Joannis Annii Viterbiensis super opera diversorum auctorum de Antiquitatibus Loquentium* The Commentaries of Friar Johannes Annius of Viterbo on Works of Various Authors Discussing Antiquities. This book Withford describes as a forgery. “Many who might have been skeptical of Annius’s work and motivation trusted him because he told ancient stories about their past, and thus about themselves, that they ‘wished to believe.’”⁷⁹ The connection of “sexual depravity, monstrosity, and Africa” was not unique or even original to Annius.⁸⁰ As Withford argues, “he was one of the most widely read,” which is important for the reception history of the concept.⁸¹ A challenge for exegetes has always been the harsh punishment for the relatively minor issue of seeing the father naked. Annius made

genealogists did not shy away from Cham’s sinful behavior towards his father, they did not focus on it either. It was part of the rogue baggage that came with Ham but which was marginalized in favor of the lineage that included Osiris, Isis, and Hercules. None of the earlier genealogies link Cham to later sinful behavior. Beginning with Agrippa and Bale, that will no longer be the case. In a bitter critique of nobility in the sixteenth century, Agrippa united Cham’s noble station to his sinful condition” Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 72.

⁷⁷ Withford discusses this process in his fourth chapter “Losing Canaan: Early Modern Exegesis of Genesis,” in Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 77–104.

⁷⁸ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 18.

⁷⁹ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 44. Withford summarizes this in chapter seven “The Self-Interpreting Bible,” in Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 171–77.

⁸⁰ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 51.

⁸¹ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 51.

the sin greater by reporting that Ham used satanic art to castrate his father magically, and thus connecting Ham with magic and paganism.⁸² George Best, the “best-known and most often quoted sixteenth-century source for the Curse of Ham,” wrote that God had given a command forbidding sexual intercourse on the Ark, but Ham had sex with his wife.⁸³ The curse then was a punishment because Ham disrespected God’s command and disobeyed his parents. Luther and the reformers had usually connected this story with the application of the fourth commandment. Annius also shifts the curse from Canaan to Ham and explains that Ham was exiled to Africa.⁸⁴ In Africa, he then “reintroduced the sexual debauchery that had dominated the antediluvian world.”⁸⁵ Before Annius, Africa had been a “passing reference” after him; it became “a major focus of the discussion of Ham’s sin and punishment.”⁸⁶ As George Best motivated the English to support the colonization of America,

it was to England’s advantage in the mid-sixteenth century to transfer the fear of antipodal travel off of the mythic fourth continent and onto Africa. ... According to Best, choleric behavior and black skin are not explained by proximity to the sun. If this were the case, those of the bottom tip of Africa would be as white as Englishmen—for they were just as far away from the equator. Thus, proximity to the sun could not explain black skin or the fact that a child born in England could be

⁸² Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 54, 56.

⁸³ Best “asserts that all three sons were ‘born white and their wives also.’ ... The explanation for the presence of black people lies in Ham’s sinful behavior on the Ark,” Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 105.

⁸⁴ A popular explanation before Annius had been that Canaan was cursed because Ham had been blessed by God when they came off the ark, Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 58.

⁸⁵ “By locating the source of sexual immorality in Africa, Annius provided a concrete ancient reference for those who associate Ham and Africans with hypersexuality. Following Annius, humanity’s ‘dark sin’ will increasingly be associated with Africa,” Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 59.

⁸⁶ “Africa will cease to be a ‘place’ to which Ham went; rather it will become a place to which he was ‘cursed’. The difference is enormous,” Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 61. “The Annian forgeries provided a link between Egypt—which many in the Renaissance had held Egypt in very high regard—and the rest of Africa. That link was not just geographical but cultural. After Annius, people increasingly looked at Africa and saw not the fount of learning and education, but of monstrosity and debauchery,” Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 75. Remarkably Whitford points out that George Best in describing the Inuits of America in a much more positive manner than what he did the Africans. This according to Whitford points to the fact that the “portrayals make America and Americans a less dramatic and scary ‘other’ and at the same time ameliorates fears of the ‘other’ by locating a more cursed and loathsome ‘other’ in a place that England had little or no interest in during the sixteenth century—Africa,” Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 109.

black. But a curse brought about by sexual sin could explain all these occurrences and simultaneously make Africa scarier and America less so.⁸⁷

The Spanish, Portuguese, and the English used the evangelization of the slaves as a “cover for the economic engine that helped drive” their economies.⁸⁸

Slave owners prevented slaves from seeking baptism because they feared the profession of Christian faith might bring with it emancipation. In order to overcome this fear, colonial legislatures—beginning with Maryland in 1664—wrote laws clarifying the fact that baptism did not affect the servile status of a slave.⁸⁹

Meister will argue for the perpetual servitude of Africans as a result of the Curse of Ham. Remarkably, Vilmar did not comment on Galatians 3:28 in his running commentary of the Bible *Collegium Biblicum*.⁹⁰ “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The grandson of Meister, Werner Köhne, owned the commentary *Dächsels Bibelwerk*, it is not clear whether he had received it from his Grandfather’s library and whether Meister had used it. Dächsel highlights in his commentary to Galatians 3:28 that Paul refers to the three types of differentiation, the one that was ordained by God through the law, between Jew and heathen, the other the consequence of sin which caused the unnatural divide between slave and free person, and then lastly the separation set by creation between man and woman.⁹¹ Law, power, and nature have to bow before the grace of Christ. All become one in Christ. However, Dächsel ended this comment with the reference that this will

⁸⁷ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 117. “For the classical mind, geography had physiological and psychological effects. Though lost to parts of the West during the medieval era, the *Geographia* was known and became quite popular in the Renaissance. Together with the works of Pliny, Aristotle, and others they formed a matrix of received wisdom regarding the effects of geography on body type and humors. Interestingly, many medieval and early modern writers overcame Aristotle’s statements about their particular locale while adopting his thesis.” Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 112.

⁸⁸ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 138. Refer to the “Noble Façade,” Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 139–40.

⁸⁹ Withford, *Curse of Ham*, 138.

⁹⁰ August Vilmar, *Collegium Biblicum: Praktische Erklärung der heiligen Schrift Alten und Neuen Testaments, Das Neue Testament zweiter Teil* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1880), 268–71.

⁹¹ August Dächsel, *Die Bibel oder Die Ganze Heilige Schrift Alten und Neuen Testaments*, 7 (Leipzig: Justus Naumann, 1881), 411.

only be fully realized in eternity.

Creation Orders

Meister did not invent the concept of creation orders. The idea which was gaining currency in Germany and was vehemently denied by the dialectical theology of Barth influenced many Lutheran Theologians. Sasse dealt with this issue in detail and criticized the abuse of this concept in his time. His criticism will be dealt with in the third chapter. The main challenge was to identify what belonged to the creation orders and what did not. If something was identified as belonging to the creation order, one could argue that it was not permissible to change it. Together with many of his time, Meister assigned race as a creation order, which should not be changed. This did not imply, that the human race did not originate from one common ancestor. The various races were derived from the story of the tower of Babel when God divided humanity. Dispersing humanity by dividing their language then led with time to the division of races. The logic behind this was that God had intended humankind to fill the earth, but then the people decided to remain in Babel and build the tower so that they would not be dispersed. The different races were a consequence of God's punishment. But how then would one deal with Pentecost? The bringing together of the various nations and their languages, is the New Testament beginning of the new nation in Christ the church.

Defining race in a more biological sense was a relatively new concept.⁹² Even though it suggested scientific correctness, the early so-called biological definitions were developed before the discovery of genetics. The outward appearance became the primary classification of

⁹² Saul Dubow showed in his book *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, that scientific racism only played a limited role in the history of apartheid. In later research he however highlighted the resurgence of racism in the 1960s. Saul Dubow, "Racial Irredentism, Ethnogenesis, and White Supremacy in High-Apartheid South Africa," *Kronos* 41, no. 1 (January 2015): 236; Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

differences.⁹³ Alphons Silbermann points out that the sociological issue with race is that it is not about the biological racial differences that create social issues, but rather what people think about these racial differences.⁹⁴ Walter Teschner emphasized from a modern genetics point of view, that all humans are part of one species *homo sapiens*.⁹⁵ Racial prejudice cannot be justified with modern science.⁹⁶ Saul Dubow showed how in high-apartheid in the 1960s there was a “resurgence of explicit hyper-racism.”⁹⁷ By that time Meister had already passed on.

The relevance of the various races for Meister included the assumption that God had allocated various gifts and talents to these races, which were not interchangeable. From Berger and Luckmann’s theory of social knowledge one could suggest that these racial definitions allowed the justification of white supremacy. To argue for perpetual dominance these racial differences need to be enshrined as creation orders, even though it is pretty obvious, that according to the creation story of the bible all humans share the common ancestors of Adam and Eve and Noah and his wife.

Volk, Nation, and Culture

Apart from race, the categories of *Volk* (people), nation, and culture were also viewed as part of God’s orders of creation in German theology in the 19th and early 20th centuries.⁹⁸ At the

⁹³ Walter Teschner suggests that the definition of race from a genetic point of view only became generally accepted in Germany after 1945. Walter, Teschner, “Das Rassenproblem in genetischer Sicht,” in *Rasse, Kirche und Humanum: Ein Beitrag zur Friedensforschung*, ed. Klaus-Martin Beckmann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1969), 76.

⁹⁴ Alphons Silbermann, “Erkenntnisse der Soziologie zur Rassenfrage,” in *Rasse, Kirche und Humanum: Ein Beitrag zur Friedensforschung*, ed. Klaus-Martin Beckmann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1969), 27.

⁹⁵ Teschner, “Rassenproblem,” in Beckmann, 77.

⁹⁶ Teschner, “Rassenproblem,” in Beckmann, 76.

⁹⁷ Dubow, “Racial Irredentism,” 236.

⁹⁸ For an important critical assessment of this topic compare Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk, *Kirche und*

International Missionary Conference in Tambaram in 1938, the German delegation gave the following statement:

For this time of transition between Christ's resurrection and his return there are certain orders, that God has given, and that have perpetual validity: the differences between the sexes with their persistent tensions, the structure of family and *Sippe* group, the difference between the *Völker* peoples with their different government forms, the different races with their different natural gifts. Even though God's love is directed to all human nature and there is no partiality (reference to 1 Peter 1:17), and even though the unity of all, who believe in Christ is a reality, we hold it necessary to respect the ongoing validity of these orders with the differentiation of gifts and duties. It is not allowed, to dissolve the orders of sexes and family, the nations and races.⁹⁹

A significant challenge in this approach was that an individual was only seen as part of a collective and could not move out of the group or culture without severely damaging his prospects of living a fulfilled life. Stolle quotes reports by missionaries Henning and Lürer to show that Bleckmar missionaries were also convinced that these categories of nation, people, and culture were important.¹⁰⁰ Lürer expressly denied the fact that being Christian would imply equality between the races.¹⁰¹ Even though in the article by Rev. Eisenberg from Dreihäusen in 1938, an attitude of racial superiority is criticized, the concept of equality between all people is

Volk in der deutschen Missionswissenschaft (München: Kaiser, 1967); Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St Louis: Concordia, 2009), 210–13; Roland Kurz, *Nationalprotestantisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik: Voraussetzungen und Ausprägungen des Protestantismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg in seiner Begegnung mit Volk und Nation* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007).

⁹⁹ “Für diese Zeit des Übergangs zwischen Christi Auferstehung und Wiederkunft gibt es bestimmte Ordnungen, die Gott gegeben hat, und die von dauernder Gültigkeit sind: die Unterschiede der Geschlechter mit ihren beständigen Spannungen, der Aufbau der Familie und Sippe, die Unterschiede der Völker mit ihren verschiedenen Regierungsformen, die der Rassen mit ihren verschiedenen natürlichen Gaben. Trotzdem Gottes Liebe allem menschlichen Wesen gilt und ‘kein Ansehen der Person’ kennt, und trotzdem die Einheit derer, die an Christus glauben, eine tatsächliche Wirklichkeit ist, haben wir die weitere Gültigkeit dieser Ordnungen mit der Verschiedenheit ihrer Gaben und Aufgaben zu achten. Dabei ist es nicht erlaubt, die Ordnungen der Geschlechter und Familien, der Nationen und Rassen aufzulösen.” Quoted in Hoekendijk, *Kirche und Volk*, 246–47. For the original see M. Schlunk ed., *Das Wunder der Kirche unter den Völkern der Erde: Bericht über die Weltmissionskonferenz in Tambaram (Südindien). 1938.* (Stuttgart: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1939), 217. The original is in German, the translation is mine.

¹⁰⁰ Volker Stolle, *Im Tiefen Tal: Die Bleckmarer Mission Während des Dritten Reiches* (Groß Oesingen: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung, 1986), 36–45.

¹⁰¹ Stolle, *Im Tiefen Tal*, 40–41.

also rejected. “Behind the demand for an unconditional equality of all, who have a human face, stands the old evil foe of the divine truth just as behind the idolatrous elevation of one’s own *Volkstum* people or one’s own skin color.”¹⁰² This cultural and racial manifestation of the church meant that the church’s unity in Christ was transferred into the spiritual realm and the invisible church.¹⁰³ Whereas usually, doctrinal unity was a prerequisite for fellowship of the altar, the race issue prevented fellowship in the case of the FELSISA and the congregations of the MHELFF.¹⁰⁴

The Lutheran Perspective on the Question of Race

This presentation by Meister at the General Lutheran Conference is the most explicit document directly responding to apartheid. Meister sent a copy of this presentation to the Mission Director Hopf in Bleckmar with an accompanying letter. Both the presentation and letter are in a file in the Bleckmar archive. Remarkably the presentation is written in German. It is unclear whether it needed to be translated at the conference or if all participants could understand German. No record of further reception of this presentation or its contents in the mission or the local two churches has been found.

Meister argued that he found no relevant connection of this question to the Lutheran Confessions. Hopf would later argue strongly from the *CA 7* that the church in South Africa needed to be free from any foreign concepts that would rule in the church in place of Christ alone. And Sasse, in his criticism of ideology, would argue against the pseudo-religion of doctrines promising to solve issues that only the church could solve. Interestingly Luther’s

¹⁰² “Hinter der Forderung der unbedingten Gleichheit für alle, die menschliches Antlitz tragen, steht ebenso wohl der alte böse Feind der göttlichen Wahrheit wie hinter der Vergötzung des eigenen Volkstums oder der eigenen Hautfarbe.” Stolle, *Im Tiefen Tal*, 38. He quotes from *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 40, no. 1 (1938): 9–10.

¹⁰³ Stolle, *Im Tiefen Tal*, 41.

¹⁰⁴ Stolle, *Im Tiefen Tal*, 41.

explanation of the seventh commandment in the Large Catechism has not been used in this context of apartheid. Luther speaks of great lords and princes that “rob and steal under the cloak of legality” that might fit quite appropriately to the 1913 Natives Land Act, for example.¹⁰⁵ Admittedly Meister thought that he could isolate this issue of race as a political issue, to which Lutherans would usually have nothing to contribute. From the two realms concept, apartheid would be viewed as a purely political solution. Meister said the political solution conformed to the ideas of God’s creation orders and was therefore in line with God’s word and the Lutheran Confessions.

Meister was critical of liberals and communists who argued for equalization of the various races. The apparent logical consequence of bastardization is proof enough of the unreasonableness of this claim to equality. The challenge that pure races do not exist did not trouble Meister, as he probably just presumed that each race was to make sure that it remained as pure as it could be. What Meister meant by the result of bastardization is also unclear when he refers to South America. Were the South Americans less human, or less valuable, less worthy, or less capable? He had accepted a controversial concept of eugenics, that the negative attributes of a person tend to be passed on rather than the positive attributes.¹⁰⁶ He also seemed familiar with the Nazi concepts of blood purity and the highly questionable description of the life of lower value, which led to the Euthanasia program in Nazi Germany.

Meister strangely connected collectives, in this case, races with specific mandates and duties so that the individual disappeared within the collective. Before Meister left Germany, he

¹⁰⁵ Large Catechism I.229 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 417.

¹⁰⁶ Refer to Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America’s Campaign to Create a Master Race* (Washington: Dialog, 2012)

lived in *Oberschlesien*; his father was a miller, probably giving the family a certain level of social standing. When Meister came to South Africa, he shared the collective role of all whites in their superiority over Africans.

It is interesting to note that to justify apartheid, Meister refers to the NP politicians' position that the subjugation under white supremacy would not be necessary if apartheid successfully separated the races. This later became an argument for the independence of the Homelands. However, why would it be necessary for Meister to spend so much time proving that God's creation orders ordain white superiority? Meister readily admits that hardships would be expected in the beginning. The social difficulties and disruptions of the migrant labor system were already well known at the time. This system severely disrupted the family unit of Africans. If the church were concerned to protect an order of creation, marriage and family would have been an excellent place to start. For example, the prophetic tradition in the Old Testament of Amos, preaching against the abuse of the poor at the hand of the wealthy, who accumulated land and possessions at the expense of others, would have given ample material to criticize the pauperization of the Africans. Luther's explanation of the last four commandments in the Large Catechism highlights the obligation "that all people should help their neighbors maintain their legal rights."¹⁰⁷

To challenge Meister's argument against the rights of the workers, one could point out that there was not only a difference between the worker and the boss but rather along racial lines the white worker was treated preferentially over and above the African worker.

Meister points to God giving talents and authority to certain races, and it would not be correct not to use these. Because these gifts were given to collectives when an individual would

¹⁰⁷ LC I.260 in Kolb and Wengert, 421.

have attained talents and education, that would not mean that he was now justified to step up as it were to the level of the other race. In his reports to the mission newsletter, Meister pointed out a few times that he was taken aback by the progression and ability of the Africans beyond the level he had expected.

Why the equality of the human soul and the ultimate equality of humanity in eternity had no repercussions for this time and age remains a question. Remarkably Meister does point to equality before the law. However, it is unclear where or how Meister saw equality before the law happening in South Africa. This equality before the law did not exist. Only white people were citizens of South Africa; the Africans did not have the same freedom that citizenship would afford. They could not purchase land, and they could not move around freely without a pass. They could not work wherever they wanted to but instead needed a permit to work in urban areas. Numerous laws only concerned Africans and criminalized actions that were normal for whites. The challenge here is probably the perception that equality meant all had to abide by the laws. But the laws were inherently different for the various racial groups. Meister himself points to the fact when he talks of the difference between common law or customary law. The challenge of applying these two different concepts remains a challenge in South Africa, even in 2021.

The fact that Meister points out that if the Indians, Coloreds, and Africans were allowed to vote, they would form a massive majority indicates that the main issue with the political franchise was not the lack of ability on the side of the Indians, Coloreds, or Africans to rule and govern, but instead that they would challenge white superiority and dominance. So, to justify ongoing domination, Meister resorts to historical justifications of revelatory gifted nations in contrast to subordinate nations. He talks of higher and lower dispositions of the various races and assumes that the white race possesses a higher disposition. The superiority and dominance are

then perpetuated. Remarkably to prove his point, Meister then again uses two individuals to prove his point. Miriam and Aaron were usurping their power by challenging the position of their brother Moses. This becomes a paradigm to justify the racial dominance of one race over the other, as the rebellion of Korah is linked to the disobedience of Miriam. Ironically Meister does not mention that Miriam and Aaron complained against Moses because he married a Cushite woman. Meister's understanding of this passage is dependent on Vilmar's explanation in his commentary to the Old Testament. Vilmar does comment on the fact that Moses had married a Cushite woman. Miriam took offense with this, and because, humanly speaking, she was higher than the Cushite, Vilmar argues, that she forgot to recognize the authority of Moses' office because of the lowliness of his Cushite wife. Vilmar argues, and Meister takes this up; the disrespect of the office by claiming equality leads later to the rebellion of Korah, who quote the same passage to prove that all are holy before the Lord and thus are equal. But God takes offense with Miriam criticizing Moses and therefore God himself, just as Korah will be punished because of their claim. The challenge is that Meister cannot convincingly show that God ordains white superiority or that the African race is subordinate.

To display the inherent dangers of bastardization, Meister points to the mixed multitude of people that left Egypt together with Israel, as recorded in Exodus 12:38. Meister is correct in pointing out that even liberals in South Africa at the time of his presentation in 1950 favored some form of segregation. It is, however, strange that Meister feels so strongly about the abhorrent bastardization but is not confident that the various races will act accordingly but rather would mix quickly and extensively if public perception would allow it. Therefore, it would not be enough just to recognize the need for separation, but rather actual segregation and radical apartheid would be needed to keep the races apart. Meister points to the downfall of Solomon

and Israel because of his many foreign wives. His downfall was not the racial mixing but the infidelity of Solomon and the religious mixing with the heathens.

Meister then points out that he not only wants to argue from a negative perspective but also a positive one. First he refers to the great commission pointing out that the commission is directed at all people. All people are saved by grace alone through Jesus Christ. He then refers to the unique German and Dutch Mission approach of accepting the value of the various nations and races' specific cultural and linguistic characteristics. It would never intend to incorporate the converts into a new empire but rather sanctify them within their nations and people. Therefore, Lutheran missions would not want to concentrate on civilization or education for an earthly purpose but would like to focus on the word of God alone. This again would become apparent in the approach to Bantu Education; critics would say it was a lesser education to perpetuate the subordination of the Africans, the supporters of Bantu Education would argue that it was a culturally appropriate education.

The other positive directive would be the command to love and to act out of love. Therefore, Meister argues that one should not disrespect the African or Indian. He now claimed that one should not use the term "K..." which he had used freely at the beginning of the century. Meister differentiated between true love and liberal love, which he called Monkey love. True love would recognize what is suitable for the other person and would not want to change the person.

In closing, Meister refers to the two realms and the fact that Lutherans would not get involved in politics as a church. He remarkably adds both political and social questions to this issue that do not concern the church. He then adds a summary of theses to his presentation. For Meister, Apartheid was a solution comparable to the *Heilsgeschichte* story of salvation. In this

sense, it became a pseudo-religion.

CHAPTER THREE

HERMANN SASSE

Introduction

It might not be immediately apparent why this dissertation would look at Sasse. He was never in South Africa and did not write specifically for the situation in South Africa. However, Hopf's custom of using other authors to communicate issues introduced Sasse to the community linked to the MELF. Hopf published the *Lutherische Blätter* to give Sasse a mouthpiece in Germany and among South African German-speaking pastors and missionaries. He further published collections of essays and writings of Sasse so that one could say that Sasse was well known as a theologian in the context of the MELF. The availability of Sasse's material thus forms part of the theological context of the South African German-speaking Lutheran theologians and the churches they worked in. One can view Sasse as foundational for the understanding of Hopf. It is probably fair to say that Sasse's clear confessional position on church fellowship and the sacrament of the altar was more readily accepted than his writings covered in this dissertation.

This chapter starts with a biographical background of Sasse, which already points to the vast horizon of Sasse's life and work. His involvement in the ecumenical movement opened the worldwide context of the church and its mission to Sasse. His early involvement in this movement is significant as the ecumenical movement would become instrumental in the resistance against apartheid. Unfortunately, Sasse did not play an important role after the Second World War anymore, but the fundamental positions against racism had already been clarified.

The following section is grouped around the topic of Sasse's criticism of modernity. His understanding of modernity is focused on the situation in Europe in the early 1930s. The

dissertation looks at the two editorials he wrote for the *Kirchliches Jahrbuch*, the yearbook of the evangelical church. Within these editorials and the other writings analyzed in the chapter, Sasse clarified his position and criticized others. These concepts and categories that Sasse explained are helpful to respond to the issue of apartheid and its defense by the Lutheran church in South Africa, even though he did not directly address apartheid. These are the concepts that were discussed in chapter two on Meister and include the idea of Volk, people, and nation, the ideas of orders of creation, and the obedience towards the state. Sasse's position could also be described in a sense as an extension to Hopf's position. Hopf appropriated Sasse entirely, and therefore one should probably read them together. The chapter closes with a short application of Sasse's position in relation to apartheid.

Biographical Background¹

Herman Otto Erich Sasse was born July 17, 1895, in Sonnewalde, Germany, in Lower Lusatia. He was the oldest child of five of his parents Hermann and Maria nee Berger. His father was a chemist.² The family belonged to the *Evangelische Landeskirche der älteren Provinzen Preußens*, which is commonly known as the Prussian Union. From 1913–1916 Sasse studied theology and classic philology at the University of Berlin.³ He attended lectures by Adolf von Harnack, Ernst Troeltsch and Adolf Deißmann, who would later become his *Doktorvater*. In

¹ Andrea Grünhagen, "Biographische Annäherung an Hermann Sasse (1895–1976)," in *Der Theologe Hermann Sasse (1895–1976): Einblicke in seine internationale Wirkung als Exeget, Kirchenhistoriker, Systematiker und Ökumeniker*, ed. Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2020), 230–46; Ronald R. Feuerhahn, "Hermann Sasse (1895–1976): A Biographical sketch," in Hermann, Sasse, *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters Volume 1, (1926–1939)* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002), Kindle. There are a number of discrepancies in these two accounts. See also H.F.W. Proeve, "Hermann Otto Erich Sasse," in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (April 1977): 2–5.

² Grünhagen mentions in connection with the fact that Sasse was not able to print his dissertation in 1923 that his father lost his fortune in the early 1920s. Grünhagen, "Biographische Annäherung," in Klän, 234.

³ Grünhagen mentions *Antike Philosophie*, Grünhagen, "Biographische Annäherung," in Klän, 232; Feuerhahn speaks of classic philology, Feuerhahn, "Hermann Sasse," in Sasse, Kindle loc. 193.

1916 he was conscripted into the army and fought in the trenches of Flanders.⁴ He described this traumatic experience as a vital turning point for many Christians and theologians. Sasse points out that the various theologies they had learned in the University died with the soldiers on the battlefields.⁵ The “historicism of Harnack, the history of religion school and the undogmatic theology of the religious experience” did not survive the judgment of the war.⁶ In Sasse’s opinion, the world had changed irrevocably in 1917. The USA had entered the war, and with the revolution in Russia, the new superpowers of the future entered the world stage. The anniversary of the Reformation in the same year caused some of the fundamental theological concepts of Luther to reach the soldiers. The sober realization that man cannot rely on himself but needs to build on Christ became the foundation of newfound faith. Sasse would grow in his conviction that the Lutheran Confessions were the clearest and most appropriate explanation of the scriptures.⁷

Sasse completed his first theological exam in 1918. On June 13, 1920, he was ordained in Berlin and became parish pastor in Oranienburg from 1921–1928 and 1928–1933 pastor in the oldest church building in Berlin Saint Mary’s. During this last period, he was the welfare pastor⁸ for Berlin as well. In this role, Sasse attempted to develop an evangelical social counterproposal

⁴ Hermann Sasse, “Geleitwort des Verfassers,” in *In Statu Confessionis: Gesammelte Aufsätze von Hermann Sasse*, ed. Friederich Wilhelm Hopf (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1966), 7.

⁵ Grünhagen points out that Sasse was one of six other soldiers from his battalion who survived. According to Grünhagen a battalion was made up of about 650 men, Grünhagen, “Biographische Annäherung,” in Klän, 233. Again Feuerhahn gives slightly different details, he mentions six members of a full company of 150 men surviving, Feuerhahn, “Hermann Sasse,” in Sasse, Kindle loc. 210.

⁶ “der Historismus Harnacks und der Religionsgeschichtlichen Schule, die undogmatische Theologie des religiösen Erlebnisses,” Sasse, “Geleitwort,” in Hopf, 7.

⁷ Hermann Sasse, *Sacra Scriptura: Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift*, ed. Friederich Wilhelm Hopf (Hermannsburg: Lutherische Blätter, 1981), 204.

⁸ H.F.W. Proeve, “Hermann Otto Erich Sasse,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (April 1977): 3; Christian Neddens, “Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung in ‘Weimarer Republik’ und ‘Drittem Reich,’” in *Der Theologe Hermann Sasse (1895–1976): Einblicke in seine internationale Wirkung als Exeget, Kirchenhistoriker, Systematiker und Ökumeniker*, ed. Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2020), 89–102.

to the communist and *völkisch-nationalistischen Sozialismus*.⁹ Probably in his capacity as the welfare pastor, he was the co-Ordinator of a working group of theologians and economists that discussed implications of the social upheaval and the church.¹⁰ In 1932 this working group discussed and listened to Bonhoeffer developing ideas and criticizing the concept of the order of creation and the alternative of seeing them as preservation orders.

In 1923 Sasse had completed his dissertation in the New Testament under the guidance of Adolf Deißmann.¹¹ On September 11, 1924, Sasse married Charlotte Margarete Naumann. The couple had three children. Maria, their only daughter, died on the day of her birth in 1930. Wolfgang and Hans were the two boys. Hans passed away in 1982, and Charlotte died on March 4, 1964. Sasse was an exchange student funded by the International Mission Conference and spent the academic year 1925–1926 at Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut. This period in the USA proved decisive in various ways. During his studies in Hartford, Sasse started reading the 19 century Lutheran Theologians Löhe, Vilmar, and Walther. He was exposed to the north American church and introduced to the ecumenical movement.¹² Sasse became a delegate

⁹ Hermann Sasse, “Die Soziallehren der Augsburgischen Konfession und ihre Bedeutung für die Gegenwart,” in Hermann Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis III: Texte zu Union, Bekenntnis, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene*, ed. Werner Klän and Roland Ziegler (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011), 19–29; Neddens points out, that Sasse from the perspective of Paul Piechowski, the chairman of the “Brotherhood of socialist theologians”, was only a representative of a futile conservative–civil reconciliation attempt, which no longer reached the working class, Neddens, “Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung,” 89; Paul Piechowski, *Proletarischer Glaube. Die religiöse Gedankenwelt der organisierten deutschen Arbeiterschaft nach sozialistischen und kommunistischen Selbstzeugnissen* (Berlin: Furche, 1928), 212–43.

¹⁰ Michael B. Lukens, “Bonhoeffer and the 1932 Controversy with the Deutsche Christen,” in *Polyphonie der Theologie: Verantwortung und Widerstand in Kirche und Politik*, ed. Matthias Grebe (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2019), 230; Christian Homrichhausen, “Evangelische Sozialpfarrer in Berlin und Brandenburg,” in *Protestantismus und Soziale Frage: Profile in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Traugott Jähnichen and Norbert Friederich (Münster: Lit., 2000), 51–75.

¹¹ See Volker Stolle, “Hermann Sasse als Neutestamentler,” in *Der Theologe Hermann Sasse (1895–1976): Einblicke in seine internationale Wirkung als Exeget, Kirchenhistoriker, Systematiker und Ökumeniker*, ed. Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2020), 11–49.

¹² See Hermann Sasse, *Amerikanisches Kirchentum* (Berlin–Dahlem: Wichern Verlag, 1927). Hermann Sasse, “1927: American Christianity and the Church,” in Hermann, Sasse, *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters Volume 1, (1926–1939)* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002).

of the German church to the Lausanne conference of Faith and Order in 1927. He became the editor of the official German documents of this conference and became a member of the Continuation and Executive Committee of the Faith and Order movement.¹³ He was also involved in the establishment of the Lutheran World Convention. He was scheduled as the main speaker for the Lutheran World Convention in 1936 in Paris, but the Nazis had confiscated his passport and did not allow him to travel. Feuerhahn mentions that Sasse had become “an enemy of the Nazis” because, as editor of the journal *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* he had published a scathing criticism of the Nazi program.¹⁴ Sasse was a keen observer of his time and a qualified Lutheran critic.¹⁵ Grünhagen reports how Sasse reflecting after the Second World War about what had gone wrong in Germany—that there was no inherent Lutheran teaching that led directly from Luther to Hitler, but he blamed the flawed church at failing in its task as the church.¹⁶ She quotes H.C. Brennecke, who researched the Erlangen Faculty and its role in Nazi Germany and concluded that all protestant theologians were prone to ideological temptation. This tendency did not depend on their confessional or theological background but rather on their willingness to be “modern” and their assumption that they were qualified to read the signs of the time.¹⁷

¹³ Hermann Sasse, *Die Weltkonferenz für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung: Deutscher Amtlicher Bericht Über die Weltkonferenz zu Lausanne von Hermann Sasse* (Berlin: Furche, 1929).

¹⁴ Feuerhahn, *Hermann Sasse*, Kindle loc 228. Sasse was editor from 1931 until 1934. Hermann Sasse, “Kirchliche Zeitlage” in *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932): 65–66. See Wolfgang Sommer, “Hermann Sasse im Kirchenkampf des ‘Dritten Reichs’” in *Der Theologe Hermann Sasse (1895–1976): Einblicke in seine internationale Wirkung als Exeget, Kirchenhistoriker, Systematiker und Ökumeniker*, ed. Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2020), 103–15; Maurice Schild, “Truth and Tyranny. Hermann Sasse’s 1936 Missive to Ludwig Fürbringer,” in *Der Theologe Hermann Sasse (1895–1976): Einblicke in seine internationale Wirkung als Exeget, Kirchenhistoriker, Systematiker und Ökumeniker*, ed. Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2020), 121–32; Neddens, “Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung,” in Klän, 89–98.

¹⁵ See Neddens, “Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung,” in Klän, 89–102.

¹⁶ Grünhagen, *Biographische Annäherungen*, in Klän, 224.

¹⁷ Hanns Christof Brennecke, “Die Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät der Universität Erlangen im Nationalsozialismus,” in *Distanz und Nähe Zugleich: Die Christlichen Kirchen im »Dritten Reich«*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, and Hans Günter Hockerts (München: de Gruyter, 2017), 186.

In 1933 Sasse received a call to become a Professor at the University of Erlangen.¹⁸ In Erlangen, he would become a close friend to F.W. Hopf.¹⁹ Sasse's relationship with the faculty would be complicated, especially with Elert and Althaus.

Sasse was very influential in the church struggle and worked on the Bethel Confession with Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Georg Merz.²⁰ He would also be closely involved in the drafting of the Barmer Declaration.²¹ However, Sasse did not sign or accept the Barmer Declaration because he was convinced that this declaration should have been accepted by the two different church bodies, the Lutherans and the Reformed, in two different church synods.

After the Second World War, Sasse's academic future at first seemed bright, when he was finally recognized as full Professor and then even designated the Prorector of the University of Erlangen at the insistence of the occupation forces.²² However, it was then compromised when it became apparent that he had given the American authorities a description of German academics in Erlangen and their alleged affiliation to Nazism. Sasse had been assured that this list would remain anonymous. Sasse resigned from the Erlangen faculty when a reformed theologian was

¹⁸ See Volker Stolle, "Kirchenpolitische Erwägungen anlässlich der Berufung Hermann Sasses nach Erlangen," in *Der Theologe Hermann Sasse (1895–1976): Einblicke in seine internationale Wirkung als Exeget, Kirchenhistoriker, Systematiker und Ökumeniker*, ed. Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2020), 116–20.

¹⁹ Hopf would publish many of Sasse's writings. Hermann Sasse, *Corpus Christi. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Abendmahlskonkordie*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Hermannsburg: Lutherische Blätter, 1979); Hermann Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis: Gesammelte Aufsätze von Hermann Sasse*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1966); Hermann Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis 2: Gesammelte Aufsätze und Kleine Schriften von Hermann Sasse*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Berlin: Verlag Die Spur, 1976); Hermann Sasse, *Sacra Scriptura: Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Hermannsburg: Lutherische Blätter, 1981); Hermann Sasse, *Zeugnisse: Erlanger Predigten und Vorträge vor Gemeinden 1933–1944*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Erlangen: Martin Luther Verlag, 1979). Hopf was also the publisher of the *Lutherische Blätter*, which included the letters of Sasse to Lutheran Pastors 1948–1969.

²⁰ Carsten Nicolaisen and Ernst-Alfred Scharffenorth, eds. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Berlin 1932–1933*, in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke, Band 12*, ed. Eberhard Bethge et al (München: Kaiser, 1997), 503–4.

²¹ See Arthur, A Preisinger, "The Church Struggle in Nazi Germany, 1933–34: Resistance, Opposition or Compromise," (PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 1991). Especially the chapter V. "The Synod of Barmen: Signs of Unity." 211–75.

²² Feuerhahn, "Hermann Sasse," in Sasse, Kindle loc 228.

accepted into the faculty. For Sasse, this meant that the faculty was no longer Lutheran, even though its constitution stipulated this as a requirement.²³ Sasse also resigned from the Bavarian Lutheran Church after it joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (EKD). Sasse joined the Altlutheraner, specifically the congregation in Frankfurt / Main. Sasse then took a call to Adelaide to the Immanuel Theological Seminary of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia. Sasse would become integrally involved in the unification talks and the successful formation of the Lutheran Church in Australia in 1966.

Sasse remained in close contact with the confessional Lutheran Church in Germany and the US and through his connection with Hopf and the publishing of the *Lutherische Blätter* even to South Africa.²⁴ Sasse passed away in tragic circumstances in 1976 when a fire broke out in his house.

The Ecumenical Movement

Sasse was directly involved in the Ecumenical Movement by participating in the Faith and Order Conference in Lausanne in 1927 and subsequent committees and conferences of theologians.²⁵ He was very aware and conscious of the proceedings, even those that took place behind the scenes of the whole movement, including those of the Life and Works conferences

²³ Grünhagen, *Biographische Annäherung*, in Klän, 245.

²⁴ For a description of his wide correspondence see Feuerhahn, "Hermann Sasse," in Sasse, Kindle loc 337–45.

²⁵ See R. Rouse and St. Ch. Neill: *Geschichte der Ökumenischen Bewegung 1517–1948 in 2 Teilen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1957–58). For the participation of German delegates at the Lausanne conference 1927 see footnote 433 in Hermann Sasse, "Die ökumenische Bewegung in deutsch–christlicher Kritik," in Hermann Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis III: Texte zu Union, Bekenntnis, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene*, ed. Werner Klän and Roland Ziegler (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011), 211n433, 210–14.

and the World Mission conferences.²⁶ Sasse maintained many ecumenical connections and fostered relationships across the denominational borders until the end of his life.²⁷

In his essay *Die ökumenische Bewegung und die deutsche Theologie* (1929), Sasse wrote very appreciatively of the ecumenical movement, not suggesting that it had all the answers instead, it was willing to ask the critical questions.²⁸ He felt that having more questions than answers is a signature of those times in church history, which are not very creative.²⁹ He was convinced that the solution for the ecumenical movement would be to recognize the importance of the church and the meaning of the confessions not only of the early church as the Anglicans were advocating but also including the confessions of the Reformation.³⁰ Sasse's article in 1930 on the social implications or teachings of the Augsburg Confession for contemporary society is an example of how Sasse tried to find an answer in the Lutheran Confessions to the enormous social changes in his community.³¹ He did not just assume that the solutions were already

²⁶ Refer to the following writings by Sasse, "Die ökumenische Bewegung und die deutsche Theologie (1929)," in *In Statu Confessionis III: Texte zu Union, Bekenntnis, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene*, ed. Werner Klän and Roland Ziegler (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011), 159–72; "Die Soziallehren der Augsburgischen Konfession und ihre Bedeutung für die Gegenwart (1930)," in *In Statu Confessionis III: Texte zu Union, Bekenntnis, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene*, ed. Werner Klän and Roland Ziegler (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011), 19–29; "Die Einigung der Kirchen und das lutherische Bekenntnis, (1935)," in *In Statu Confessionis III: Texte zu Union, Bekenntnis, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene*, ed. Werner Klän and Roland Ziegler (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011), 185–93; "Una Sancta: Gedanken zu den kirchlichen Weltkonferenzen von 1937, (1937)," in *In Statu Confessionis III: Texte zu Union, Bekenntnis, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene*, ed. Werner Klän and Roland Ziegler (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011), 200–9; "Die zweite Weltkonferenz für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung," in *In Statu Confessionis III: Texte zu Union, Bekenntnis, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene*, ed. Werner Klän and Roland Ziegler (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011), 194–9; "Die ökumenische Bewegung in deutsch-christlicher Kritik, (1937)," in *In Statu Confessionis III: Texte zu Union, Bekenntnis, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene*, ed. Werner Klän and Roland Ziegler (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011), 210–14.

²⁷ See Ronald R. Feuerhahn, "Hermann Sasse as an Ecumenical Churchman," (PhD. diss. University of Cambridge, 1991). Feuerhahn records Sasse that after 1945 both Barth and Niemöller prevented him from taking part in the ecumenical conferences. Feuerhahn, *Hermann Sasse*, Kindle loc. 328.

²⁸ Sasse, "Ökumenische Bewegung Deutsche Theologie," in Klän, 159–72.

²⁹ Sasse, "Ökumenische Bewegung Deutsche Theologie," in Klän, 161.

³⁰ See Sasse's explanation of the origins of the Faith and Order movement against the Unitarians in the USA. He compares the similar suggestions for a basic confession of Jesus as Lord in the footnote 343. Sasse, "Einigung der Kirchen," in Klän, 180n343, 179–81, 185.

³¹ Sasse, "Soziallehren," in Klän, 19–29.

developed. In fact, he lamented that the Lutheran Church had neglected to unpack the confessions to respond to current life issues, which in many ways were very different from those of the Reformation period.³² For example, the concept of possession and property had changed, and the concept of the state as it had developed since the Reformation time was completely different. None the less some important concepts did not change, and primary among these would be the recognition and reality of the fall of man.³³

Sasse did not take apparent sides in the Ecumenical Movement as he pleaded for understanding on all sides. In his rebuttal (1937) of the criticism by a German Christian, Wilhelm Brachmann, Sasse highlighted the willingness of Oldham and his other co-workers in the Ecumenical movement to listen to the critical voices of the Germans.³⁴ In contrast to the German Christians, whom Sasse did not want to recognize as a legitimate church movement, Sasse pointed out that in the ecumenical movement, the questions were directed at the church, rather than being general questions of world view and political opinion. This striving for an ecclesiological answer to the challenges of the times was so attractive to Sasse. He tried to show that the seemingly contrasting approaches of the western (English and American) social gospel and the theological position of the continentals, especially his German colleagues of the undogmatic theology of the Christian experience going back to Schleiermacher, were not that different.³⁵ According to Sasse, both the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and the *Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchenausschuss* (DEKA), German Evangelical Church Council, were as close or far away from the gospel and the confessions of the Reformation. Both

³² Sasse, "Soziallehren," in Klän, 26.

³³ Sasse, "Soziallehren," in Klän, 25.

³⁴ Sasse, "Ökumenische Bewegung Kritik," in Klän, 212.

³⁵ Sasse reckons the misunderstandings in Stockholm were largely based on the different vocabulary used, Sasse, "Einigung der Kirchen," in Klän, 174–75.

understood the

Christian message in the sense of that pitiful rest that remained of the substance of faith left behind by pietism, methodism, enlightenment, and idealism. What Christianity is, one no longer expected an answer from the catechisms of the reformation, but one had learned it from Schleiermacher's "*Reden*."³⁶ One saw the task of the church to be to satisfy the 'religious need' (R. Seeberg) of the human, to educate them to become religious, moral personalities and 'so to make the world a better place to live in' as the American spirit uninhibitedly expresses itself, while the German spirit prefers more spiritual expressions. But if one talks of Christianizing the social order or of saturation of the *Volksleben*, the life of the nation, with the spirit of the gospel, whether one saw the image of a Christian humanity appearing on the horizon or of an image of a Christian *Volk*, nation: in any case one believed in the ideal of Edinburgh, and the ideal of a Christian world. It was not only the faith of the Anglo-Sachsen; it was the secret faith of the whole modern Christianity.³⁷

For Sasse, it was evident that a return to the confessions of the Reformation would assist the whole ecumenical movement. He argued that the Lutheran confessions were not a mere contribution from a national or regional or even worse ethnic church but were written for the universal Christian church. The questions raised by the *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide* of the confessions would have to be answered by all churches. Forcing unity before these unresolved questions were clarified would be doomed to fail, Sasse believed.³⁸

When he reflected on the two world conferences that were to take place in 1937, Sasse in his article *Una Sancta*, expressed his gratitude that the ecumenical movement had matured to the

³⁶ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Reden über die Religion* (Braunschweig: Schweschte, 1879).

³⁷ "Auf beiden Seiten verstand man die christliche Botschaft im Sinne jenes kümmerlichen Restes der alten Glaubenssubstanz, den Pietismus, Methodismus, Aufklärung und Idealismus noch hatten gelten lassen. Was Christentum sei, das ließ man sich nicht mehr von den Katechismen der Reformationszeit sagen, sondern man lernte es aus Schleiermachers Reden. Man hielt es für die Aufgabe der Kirche, 'den religiösen Bedarf' (R. Seeberg) der Menschen zu befriedigen, sie zu religiös-sittlichen Persönlichkeiten zu erziehen und so to make the world a better place to live in, wie das amerikanische Gemüt sich unbefangen ausdrückte, während das deutsche Gemüt spirituellere Ausdrücke bevorzugte. Aber ob man nun von einem Christianizing the social order sprach oder von einer Durchdringung des Volkslebens mit dem Geiste des Evangeliums, ob man das Bild einer christlichen Menschheit am Horizont auftauchen sah oder das Bild eines christlichen Volkes: in jedem Falle glaubte man an das Ideal von Edinburgh, and das Ideal einer christlichen Welt. Es war nicht nur der Glaube der Angelsachsen, es war der heimliche Glaube der ganzen modernen Christenheit." Sasse, "Einigung der Kirchen," in Klän, 174–75.

³⁸ Sasse, "Einigung der Kirchen," in Klän, 186–87.

point that everyone had to take cognizance of it.³⁹ In the early years of Stockholm and Lausanne, he said, people viewed the ecumenical movement merely as one of the international movements that were in vogue. Sasse pointed out that if that had been the case, the ecumenical movement would have disappeared just as these passing movements had passed. Sasse mentioned the League of Nations,⁴⁰ Disarmament,⁴¹ Pacifism,⁴² the socialist Internationals.⁴³ Sasse pointed out that in contrast the ecumenical movement was carried by the faith in the real Church of Christ and what this faith expected from us. He admitted that, many in the movement had initially focused on the Christian experience and the utopian concepts of unity created by man, but that this had changed. Both the enthusiasm and utopianism had given way to a more realistic outlook, not only of the world but also about the role the church would play in it.⁴⁴

Among many issues, the question of race and racism was very relevant in the Ecumenical Movement, obviously more so in the Life and Work section rather than in the Faith and Order

³⁹ Sasse, "Una Sancta," in Klän, 201.

⁴⁰ See Matthias Schulz, *Deutschland, der Völkerbund und die Frage der europäischen Wirtschaftsordnung 1925–1933* (Hamburg: Krämer, 1997).

⁴¹ Sasse is probably referring to the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments generally known as the World Disarmament Conference in Geneva that ran from February 2, 1932 to November 6, 1934. Germany had already withdrawn from the conference in 1933.

⁴² See Karl Holl, *Pazifismus in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988).

⁴³ Sasse is probably referring to the various socialist internationals that were formed since the first "International Workingmen's Association" was established in London on September 28, 1864, and dissolved in 1876 in Philadelphia. The "Second International" was formed in Paris in July 14, 1889 but was dissolved in World War I in 1916. Before the "Third International" was formed at a meeting in Moscow in March 1919, also known as the "Comintern" the "Communist International," the "International Socialist Commission" also known as the "Berne International" was formed in February 1919. A third group formed the "Vienna Union" or "Two-and-a-Half International" in February 1921 in Vienna. These last two groups joined to form the "Labor and Socialist International" in May 1923 in Hamburg. This International was dissolved in 1940. After the Second World War the "Socialist International" was formed in Frankfurt in July 1951. See Karl-Ludwig Günsche and Klaus Lantermann, *Kleine Geschichte der Sozialistischen Internationale* (Bonn Bad Godesberg: Neue Gesellschaft, 1992).

⁴⁴ Sasse, "Una Sancta," in Klän, 201–2.

conferences.⁴⁵ Sasse had contextualized these questions within the church by asking, “What consequences for the human life, also for the life of the nations, must it have, that we confess together over the differences of *Volkstum*, of race, of worldview, of language, yes even across boundaries of church and denominations, confess the large truths of faith of the Nicaean creed?”⁴⁶ Concepts of Truth, Sin, and Church necessitated an ecclesiological response that was not the same for organizations or communities outside of the church. However, this did not mean that Sasse believed the state could just accept injustice and wrong or just create its own criteria to determine right from wrong. The important point for Sasse’s understanding of the two realms was that the State derived its authority from God. Only when the government fulfilled its task of the office as the government was it a *Rechtsstaat*, a legal state. It has the task of securing peace and upholding justice through outward means. The just government differentiates itself from any unregulated power, not only by possessing power but using it to serve justice. If it no longer fulfils this purpose, it is no longer a just state and is no longer a legitimate government. Sasse mentioned a few examples of when the state had replaced its legitimate authority with tyranny and thuggery.

A government that removes the concepts of “*Recht*” justice, and “*Unrecht*” wrong, from its criminal law and replaces them with ‘useful’ and ‘harmful,’ ‘healthy’ and ‘sick,’ ‘socially valuable’ and ‘socially inferior,’ that replaces the principle of retribution with the concept of *Unschädlichmachung*, annihilating, a state that in its civil law dissolves marriage and the family, stops being a *Rechtsstaat*, legal state and

⁴⁵ See Klaus–Martin Beckmann, “Die Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage: Die Rassenfrage in der Geschichte der ökumenischen Bewegung,” in *Rasse, Kirche und Humanum: Ein Beitrag zur Friedensforschung*, ed. Klaus–Martin Beckmann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 1969), 339–64; K.M. Beckmann ed., *Die Kirche und die Rassenfrage, Kirche im Volk, Heft 4* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1967); J.H. Oldham, *Christianity and the Racial Problem* (London: SCM–Press, 1924); W.A. Visser’t Hooft, *The Ecumenical Movement and the Racial Problem* (Paris: UNESCO, 1954).

⁴⁶ “Was bedeutet es, dass die Kirchen aller Völker und Konfessionen sich zu dem Glauben an die Eine, Heilige Kirche bekennen? Was für folgen für das menschliche Leben, auch für uns das Leben der Völker, muss es haben, dass wir über alle Unterschiede des Volkstums, der Rasse, der Weltanschauung, der Sprache, ja auch über die Grenzen der Kirchen und Konfessionen hinweg die großen Glaubenswahrheiten des Nizänischen Bekenntnisses gemeinsam bekennen?” Sasse, “Ökumenische Bewegung Kritik,” in Klän, 212.

therefore government. A government that consciously or unconsciously elevates the interests of rank or class to the norm of *Rechtsbildung* and *Rechtssprechung* or that only accepts as a norm for its law the contemporary consciousness of justice *Rechtsbewusstsein*, has sunken to a level of raw power.⁴⁷

Sasse emphasized that this temptation was especially dangerous for modern forms of government in democracies and dictatorships but was a challenge for all governments of all times and all places. Sasse recognized that this did not feature in the Augsburg confession. Sasse recognized the fearful power of the secularization process that had removed a consciousness of absolute and permanent concepts of norms for justice. He stated, where that happens, the God-given authority changes to demonic power.⁴⁸

Sasse commenting on the ecumenical movement in 1935, had mentioned how much the relationship among the races had changed in the last 25 years.⁴⁹ For example, he referred to the perception of white racial superiority that was still prevalent at the first World Mission Conference in Edinburgh but which had been shattered by the experiences of war and revolution since then.⁵⁰ Not only was there no reason to believe in white superiority, the confidence of Christian superiority over and against other religions had also been radically questioned, and other religions refused to accept Christianity.⁵¹ Sasse pointed to the destruction of the Russian church after the revolution, which he compared to the conquering of North Africa and Spain by

⁴⁷ “Ein Staat, der die Begriffe ‘Recht’ und ‘Unrecht’ aus dem Strafrecht entfernt und sie durch ‘nützlich’ und ‘schädlich,’ ‘gesund’ und ‘krank,’ ‘sozial wertvoll’ und ‘sozial minderwärtig’ ersetzt, der an die Stelle des Prinzips der Vergeltung das Prinzip der Unschädlichmachung setzt, ein Staat der in seinem Zivilrecht Ehe und Familie auflöst, hört auf, Rechtsstaat und damit Obrigkeit zu sein. Eine Obrigkeit, die bewusst oder unbewusst das Interesse von Ständen und Klassen zur Norm der Rechtsbildung und Rechtssprechung macht oder die sich die Normen des Rechts allein von dem so genannten Rechtsbewusstsein der Zeit diktieren lässt, sinkt zur rohen Gewalt herab.” Sasse, “Soziallehren,” in Klän, 27.

⁴⁸ Sasse, “Soziallehren,” in Klän, 27.

⁴⁹ Sasse, “Einigung der Kirchen,” in Klän, 173–93.

⁵⁰ Sasse, “Einigung der Kirchen,” in Klän, 175.

⁵¹ Sasse refers to the Japanese reluctance to accept Christianity, Sasse, “Einigung der Kirchen,” in Klän, 175.

Islam. Sasse pointed out that the challenges facing the Christian world had their origin right within the Christian civilization and society. The advertisement of atheism came from the West and reached the heathen cultures much more effectively than the Christian mission.⁵² The challenge for the Ecumenical movement was to come to terms with these massive social changes in our world. Sasse spoke of a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft der Kirche*, a community of fate of the church and the challenges faced by the church were in a way helping to unify the church because the church had to learn to respond to the challenges appropriately.⁵³ As much as there was a community of fate for the Church, Sasse also spoke of a considerable solidarity of guilt.⁵⁴ No church should judge the other and be willing to exercise judgment on God's behalf on a church. Sasse argued that if we do not recognize the solidarity of guilt, the eyes of our adversaries should teach us, as they viewed all Christians together. The rediscovery of these truths in the past years had changed the relationship of the denominations to each other. The true church was not a spiritual relic of the lost paradise or the never attained ideal of a platonic republic, but rather it is the reality of church history.⁵⁵ Sasse stated:

Not the reformation, but rather the spiritual currents of the 18th century, pietism and the enlightenment, caused the real church split, in that they denied the reality of the Church of God, also denied and destroyed its unity. The ecumenical movement of the

⁵² Sasse, "Einigung der Kirchen," in Klän, 177.

⁵³ Sasse, "Una Sancta," in Klän, 205.

⁵⁴ Sasse, "Una Sancta," in Klän, 205.

⁵⁵ Sasse, "Una Sancta," in Klän, 206; Apology of the Augsburg Confession VII and VIII.20 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 177; Hermann Sasse, "1930 Church and Churches: Concerning the Doctrine of the Unity of the Church," in Hermann Sasse, *The Lonely Way*, Kindle loc 1753. Hopf as editor added a remark at the end of this essay that was reprinted by Hopf in the *Statu Confessionis* collection, noting that Sasse had actually reluctantly agreed to the reprinting of this essay, because he had now realized that the expectation of the visible completed *Una Sancta* on this earth stood against the Lutheran faith. Hermann Sasse, "Kirche und Kirchen: Über den Glaubenssatz von der Einheit der Kirche 1930," in Hermann Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis: Gesammelte Aufsätze von Hermann Sasse*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1966), 155–167.

current time is leading Christianity back to the days before Leibniz and Bossuet where the possibility to talk to one another ended.⁵⁶

It would be obvious that one could not identify Sasse's personal opinion within the official statements of the ecumenical movement; however, unless he specifically would have distanced himself from the statements, one could assume that Sasse had aligned himself to the statements made by the ecumenical movement. Focusing on the Life and Works conferences and the World Mission conferences within the ecumenical movement, Beckmann suggested that one could accept as a general thesis for denouncing racial discrimination within the movement as becoming "consistently stronger and more urgent."⁵⁷ All would agree that racial pride and discrimination were wrong, but disagreement about the value and status of the various races caused tensions within the movement. In this context, it is clear that Sasse distanced himself from giving race or *Volk* an elevated position in the church. According to Visser't Hooft, race did not play a significant role in Edinburgh 1910.⁵⁸ Oldham's book *Christianity and the Racial Problem* from 1924 influenced the meetings in Stockholm 1925 and Jerusalem 1928.⁵⁹ After the First World War in the 1920s, the discussion was still dominated by the colonial context.

The Germans, according to Beckman played a "reactionary" role up to the Second World

⁵⁶ "Nicht die Reformation, sondern die geistigen Strömungen des 18. Jahrhunderts, der Pietismus und Aufklärung, haben die wirkliche Kirchenspaltung herbeigeführt, indem sie mit der Kirche Gott auch ihre Einheit leugneten und zerstörten. Die ökumenische Bewegung der Gegenwart aber führt die Christenheit dorthin zurück, wo in den Tagen von Leibnitz und Bossuet die Möglichkeit des Miteinander-Redens aufhörte." Sasse, *Una Sancta*, in Klän, 207.

⁵⁷ "immer stärker und dringlicher betont wird." Beckmann, "Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage," in Beckmann, 340.

⁵⁸ Visser Hooft, *Ecumenical Movement*, 46–51. Sasse paraphrases the feeling of white superiority in his description of Edinburgh with terms of the stronger race over and against the weaker. See Sasse, "Die Einigung der Kirchen," in Klän, 171.

⁵⁹ J.H. Oldham, *Christianity and the Racial Problem* (London: SCM, 1924). Adolf Deißmann the Doktorvater of Sasse published the official German documents of the Stockholm meeting, just as Sasse would later publish the meeting of Lausanne 1927. Adolf Deißmann, *Die Stockholmer Weltkirchenkonferenz: Vorgeschichte, Dienst und Arbeit der Weltkonferenz für Praktisches Christentum 19 bis 30 August 1925* (Berlin: Furche, 1926).

War as they were influenced by the theology of ordinances.⁶⁰ Maybe even more so at the World Mission Conferences. At the conference in Stockholm 1925, Professor Julius Richter from Berlin, who had organized the study opportunity for Sasse in Hartford in the same year, was the chairman of the commission responsible for race. He was also part of the German delegation to the World Mission Conference in Jerusalem in 1928. Beckmann summarized the concept of race held by the conference:⁶¹ The presupposition was that there is a unique and ruling status of the white race over and above the others, which included the duty and heightened responsibility of the white race.⁶² It followed that the different races play a role in God's plan for the world.⁶³ Concerning access to God, the differences among the races were irrelevant; however, within the secular world, the differences or characteristics were not removed but rather emphasized as part of God's creation orders and received their dynamic of independent importance. This differentiation between the races could justify, according to the conference, certain forms of legitimate segregation. However, these technical issues need to be guided by *Gerechtigkeit, Brüderlichkeit, Wohlwollen*, justice, fraternity, and goodwill; the conference did not want to prescribe how these should be enforced practically.⁶⁴ Beckmann pointed to the fact that this was already the central issue at the time because the conflict situation of the racial problems was taking place within these practical applications.⁶⁵ Two further questions related to race were dealt

⁶⁰ "Reaktionäre Rolle," Beckmann, "Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage," in Beckmann, 340.

⁶¹ Beckmann, "Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage," in Beckmann, 341. Deißmann, *Stockholm*, 79–85.

⁶² See as an example of this from earlier times the poem by Rudyard Kipling, "The white man's burden 1899," accessed August 12, 2021, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5478/>.

⁶³ Deißmann, *Stockholm*, 80.

⁶⁴ Deißmann, *Stockholm*, 81.

⁶⁵ Beckmann, "Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage," in Beckmann, 342.

with by the conference, the issue of race movement and mixed marriages. Beckmann pointed out that the conference realized that the movement of races had not been a problem when white people moved into foreign lands, but then became an issue when non-whites were moving into white areas.⁶⁶ In respect to mixed marriages, the conference concluded that the church could not forbid mixed marriages. And the conference explicitly prohibited as unchristian any discrimination against colored children.⁶⁷ The report of the conference also distanced itself from those who would call for racial purity. The report said: “Their thesis may scientifically be correct or wrong, it cannot claim to be a Christian principal.”⁶⁸ In Sasse’s description of the north American church written in 1927, he highlighted positively the unity of the very diverse population of the USA.⁶⁹ Sasse at the time did not refer to any segregationist policies in the USA. Later in his rebuttal of Bachmann (1937), he explicitly called out South Africa and the USA as examples of modern racism.

At the World Mission Conference in Jerusalem 1928, the tension between the German delegation and the conference was expressed by the fact that the Germans felt it was necessary to publish a supplementary statement clarifying the positive connotations of race and *Volk* and included a positive evaluation of the differences among these.⁷⁰ Sasse’s assessment mentioned

⁶⁶ Deißmann, *Stockholm*, 83.

⁶⁷ Deißmann, *Stockholm*, 84.

⁶⁸ “Ihre These mag wissenschaftlich richtig oder falsch sein—sie kann sicher nicht als ein christliches Prinzip in Anspruch genommen werden.” Deißmann, *Stockholm*, 84.

⁶⁹ Sasse, “1927, American Christianity,” in Sasse, Kindle loc 818.

⁷⁰ J.H. Oldham, *The World Mission of Christianity: Messages and Recommendations of the I.M.C. held at Jerusalem, March 24th–April 8th 1928* (London: IMC, 1928). See also M. Schlunk, *Von den Höhen des Ölbergs: Bericht der Deutschen Abordnung über die Missionstagung in Jerusalem* (Stuttgart: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1928). Beckmann points out that the German report did not include the texts from the Conference. Beckmann, “Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage,” 344. See C. Ihmels, “6. Das Rassenproblem,” in M. Schlunk, *Von den Höhen des Ölbergs: Bericht der Deutschen Abordnung über die Missionstagung in Jerusalem* (Stuttgart: 1928), 156–67.

above that the continental theologians did not understand the vocabulary of the Anglo–Sachsen pointed to the fact, that Sasse did not necessarily align himself to the German position.⁷¹ He saw the problem in a false theology. Beckmann wrote:

In conclusion, the following can be summarized, that the statement of the conference in Jerusalem in 1928 to the question of race itself is surely positive and could be deemed as giving the correct orientation.⁷² It is an important contribution of the World Mission Conferences for the history of the ecumenical movement to this question. The reaction of the ‘continentals’ to both Stockholm 1925 and Jerusalem 1928 allows the conclusion that it concerned questions of democracy and Christian Conservatism.⁷³ The thinking in Europe was still determined by colonialism. Especially the German conservative theologians found it difficult after the lost World War and the loss of the colonies to develop any positive relationship to democracy and its principles. A *völkische* creation theology already is in place, and the soil for a new nationalism is already prepared. One can agree to certain social, ethical fundamentals; however, the application of these one wants to leave up to the government. One is adamant about showing that one will not interfere with the secular realm. In the question of race, one implies that here too the creation orders are relevant and one accepts a clear above and below in their relationship to each other.⁷⁴

The issues and questions of *Volk* and nation pushed themselves onto the agenda in the 1930s.⁷⁵ Germany did not send delegates to the Oxford 1937 (Life and Work) or the Edinburgh 1937 (Faith and Order) meeting because of the conflict between the confessing church and the

⁷¹ Sasse, “Einigung der Kirchen,” in Klän, 174–75.

⁷² Oldham, *Jerusalem*, 40–45. Beckmann also refers to the large eight volume report to the conference especially four. *The Christian Mission in the Light of Race Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928).

⁷³ Sasse admits that the German Lutherans vehemently criticised the “western concepts of democracy and the enthusiastic pacifism,” Sasse, “Ökumenische Bewegung Kritik,” in Klän, 211. Sasse in his article on the social teachings of the *CA* says, that any form of political power can become a legitimate government. However the concept, that government authority comes from the people, Sasse says, is against Lutheran teaching. All authority is derived from God. Sasse, “Soziallehren,” in Klän, 27.

⁷⁴ “Es sei abschließend nochmals festgestellt, daß die Erklärung der Konferenz von Jerusalem 1928 zur Rassenfrage selbst durchaus positiv und richtungweisend zu werten ist. Sie ist ein bedeutender Beitrag der Weltmissionskonferenzen zur Geschichte der Ökumenischen Bewegung in dieser Frage. Die Reaktion der ‘Kontinentalen’ auf Stockholm 1925 und Jerusalem 1928 läßt erkennen, daß es um die Frage von Demokratie und christlichen Konservatismus geht. Noch bestimmt in Europa der Kolonialismus das Denken. Gerade die deutschen konservativen Theologen fanden nach dem verlorenen Weltkrieg und dem Verlust der Kolonien kein Verhältnis zur Demokratie und ihren Grundsätzen. Eine völkische Schöpfungstheologie ist schon da, und der Boden für einen neuen Nationalismus, ist bereit. Man läßt deutlich erkennen, daß man nicht in ihr Regiment eingreifen wird. In der Rassenfrage läßt man durchschimmern, daß es auch hier um schöpfungsmäßige Ordnungen geht, die ein deutliches Oben und Unten markieren.” Beckmann, “Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage,” in Beckmann, 346.

⁷⁵ Beckmann, “Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage,” in Beckmann, 340, 347–49.

German Christians in the Deutsche Evangelische Kirche (DEK).⁷⁶ Sasse recognized in 1935 already that the confessing church would not be able to take part in those conferences. He said the Lutheran Churches of the Scandinavian and Baltic countries needed to step up to the plate.⁷⁷ But he took comfort in the fact that hundreds of people from various vocations had been involved in the planning and preparing of these meetings.⁷⁸ Referring specifically to Oxford 1937, Oldham summarized the preparation as being a reaction to the church's challenge responding to the absolute claim on everything by *des völkischen Lebens*.⁷⁹ The question of race appeared in virtually all sections of the conference. The presupposition was that everyone from birth was a child of God and therefore brothers and sisters and were called into the church's fellowship. However, it was remarkable again how the conference report agreed to the German concept of creation orders and the differences of the races, even using terminology like *Bindungen von gemeinsamem Blut und Boden*, the connections of shared blood and soil.⁸⁰ In his critique of Wilhelm Bachmann, Sasse responded to the German Christian ideas of listening to the language of blood. The ecumenical movement was conscious of how the language of blood and race took on a whole new meaning in countries like South Africa and the USA.⁸¹ Sasse added that the church's responsibility was not only to recognize that the voice of blood and race existed

⁷⁶ Beckmann, "Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage," in Beckmann, 347–49. For the Oxford conference report see: J. Oldham and A.A. Visser't Hooft, *Kirche und Welt in Ökumenischer Sicht: Bericht der Weltkirchenkonferenz von Oxford über Kirche, Volk und Staat* (Genf: ÖRK, 1938); See Hermann Sasse, "Die zweite Weltkonferenz für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung," in Hermann Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis III: Texte zu Union, Bekenntnis, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene*, ed. Werner Klän and Roland Ziegler (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011), 194–99; Sasse, "Die Einigung der Kirchen," in Klän, 188; Leonard Hodgson, *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order Held at Edinburgh, August 3–18, 1937* (New York: Macmillan, 1938); Hermann Sasse, "Una Sancta" in Klän, 200–209.

⁷⁷ Sasse, "Einigung der Kirchen," in Klän, 188.

⁷⁸ Sasse, "Una Sancta," in Klän, 200.

⁷⁹ Beckmann, "Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage," in Beckmann, 347.

⁸⁰ Oldham, *Oxford*, 82, 91.

⁸¹ See Sasse, "Ökumenische Bewegung Kritik," in Klän, 213.

but also what this voice actually said. Sasse reminded Bachmann that this voice being part of the fallen world, would not tell the whole story. In fact, it would hide crucial information, and it lied. The voice of blood, according to Sasse, has never declared anyone a sinner. The Voice of God said: “Through Adam’s fall, the human nature and being is completely destroyed.”⁸² The German Christians Sasse contended would instead change the Word of God until it aligns itself with the voice of blood. But that would be the end of the church in this world. The church lives because there is a word that judges us, not that we judge it. The word of God is the measure and criteria by which we determine race and its consequences for the church.

Beckmann pointed to the other statements of the conference in Oxford in 1937.⁸³ The conference repeated the assertion that there was no pure race and that Christians should work for the rights of all people to be recognized in the legislation and life of their countries.⁸⁴ The congregation or church that accepted discrimination betrayed the gospel.⁸⁵ In summary, the conference concluded:

The existence of different races belongs, according to our Christian understanding, to the plan of God, who has enriched humanity through the diversity of his gifts. The church must unconditionally fight against all racial pride and racial conflict as a revolt against God. Especially there may not be any barrier in the life of the church or divine service, founded in the race or color of the skin ... Completely the deification of the *Volk*, the race or the class ... is idolatry. It can only lead to intensification of the contrasts and to terrible tragedy.⁸⁶

⁸² See Sasse, “Ökumenische Bewegung Kritik,” in Klän, 213. The beginning of a hymn by Lazarus Spengler (Evangelisch-Lutherisches Kirchen Gesangbuch ELKG 243) “Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt menschlich Natur und Wesen.”

⁸³ Beckmann, Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage,” in Beckmann, 347–49.

⁸⁴ Oldham, *Oxford*, 97–98.

⁸⁵ Oldham, *Oxford*, 99.

⁸⁶ “Das Bestehen verschiedener Rassen gehört nach unserer christlichen Auffassung zum Plan Gottes, der die Menschheit durch die Mannigfaltigkeit seiner Gaben bereichern will. Die Kirche muß deshalb allen Rassenhochmut und allen Rassenkampf als Auflehnung gegen Gott bedingungslos bekämpfen. Vor allem darf es im kirchlichen Leben und im Gottesdienst keine Schranken geben, die in der Rasse oder der Hautfarbe begründet liegen ... Vollends

Similar to the Jerusalem Conference 1928, the World Mission Conference in Tambaram–Madras 1938 was relatively clear in denouncing racism and discrimination. The German delegation again published a separate statement to clarify that it held fast to the concepts of creation orders and thereby accepting the differences between races. Possibly in an attempt to distance itself from the social gospel of the Anglo-Saxon world, the German delegation emphasized the separation of acts of mercy and charity from the proclamation of the gospel and evangelization. Ihmels had pointed to the fact that the government took good care of the people in Germany, insinuating that this was not the case in the rest of the world. This reference was all the more remarkable, as Beckmann pointed out, because the persecution of the Jews was already a terrible reality, and then by the time the report was published, the war had started.⁸⁷

As for so many things, the Second World War marked a significant turning point. In the context of this discussion, it marked the end of the colonial period and imperialism. Issues of black minority rights in the USA and the black majority in South Africa moved into the focus of the ecumenical movement, and its dealing with race and racism. In preparation for the World Mission Conference in Whitby, Ontario 1947, the ‘continentals’ especially the Germans, presented a statement accepted in Whitby to the topic of “Mission and Nation.”

Nation, State, and Race are today powers, which are attributed public and secret divine characteristics. ... The current situation in the world, however, in which racial ideology and a narrow nationalism threaten to destroy the life of humanity, demands from us a clear and living conscience for the reality that missionaries are messengers of Jesus Christ and carriers of a message, that is a witness to a community that transcends and bridges all *völkischen* and racial borders, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither German nor Englishman, neither European nor Asian. ... In hindsight, over the years preceding the war and the events leading up to it, we are conscious of the fact that in this critical issue, we had failed a great deal. We all took it too lightly; we unquestioningly accepted our *völkisches* and racial heritage and

ist die Vergottung des Volkes, der Rasse oder der Klasse ... Götzendienst. Sie kann nur zur Verschärfung der Gegensätze und zu furchtbarem Unglück führen.” *Oxford*, 261.

⁸⁷ Beckmann, “Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage,” in Beckmann, 349–51.

identified ourselves with it, whereas we should have in the name of Jesus opposed it.⁸⁸

In Amsterdam, 1948, the World Council of Churches (WCC) was established.⁸⁹ In his reaction to the second world conference of Faith and Order in Edinburgh in 1937, Sasse had already alluded to the fact that the Germans had been part of the decision to form the WCC. At the time when it was discussed in Edinburgh, no Germans were allowed to attend the conference. Sasse was not against forming a truly unified church body. He, however, always warned against an impatient construction of unity by ignoring differences as these differences were not just misunderstandings or prejudices but rather dangerous heresies. Sasse felt that in Lausanne, one was still very open to talking about the critical challenge to differentiate between truth and heresy; however, he thought that that was already not the case anymore in Edinburgh. Sasse was excited in 1937 that a permanent institution of the Ecumenical movement was to be established, which he believed would be to ensure the dogmatic conversation between the churches would not end. He hoped that the confessional world associations would work together with the WCC to ensure that it remained an ecumenical endeavor.⁹⁰ The Amsterdam conference recognized its guilt in the issue of race and racism. It clarified that the church could not expect to make statements on matters that itself was not implementing. As long as the church tolerated racial

⁸⁸ “Nation, Staat und Rasse sind heute Mächte, denen öffentlich und insgeheim göttliche Eigenschaften zugeschrieben werden. ... Die gegenwärtige Weltlage jedoch, in der Rassenideologie und ein enger Nationalismus das Leben der Menschheit zu zerstören drohen, fordert von uns ein ganz offenes und lebendiges Bewußtsein für die Tatsache, daß Missionare Gesandte Jesu Christi und Träger einer Botschaft sind, die das Zeugnis einer alle völkischen und rassischen Grenzen überbrückenden Gemeinschaft in sich trägt, in der es weder Juden noch Griechen, weder Deutsche noch Engländer, weder Europäer noch Asiaten gibt. ... Im Rückblick auf die Jahre des Krieges und die Vorgänge, die zu ihm führten, sind wir uns bewußt, an diesem besonderen kritischen Punkt viel versagt zu haben. Wir alle haben es zu leicht genommen, haben ungefragt unser völkisches und rassisches Erbe hineingenommen und uns mit demselben gleichgesetzt, wo wir demselben im Namen Jesu hätten kritisch gegenüberstehen sollen.” Walter Freytag, *Der große Auftrag: Weltkrise und Weltmission im Spiegel der Withby-Konferenz des I.M.R.* (Wuppertal Barmen: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1948), 95.

⁸⁹ F. Lüpsen, ed., *Amsterdamer Dokumente. Berichte und Reden auf der Weltkirchenkonferenz in Amsterdam 1948* (Bethel: 1948), 50.

⁹⁰ Sasse, *Zweite Weltkonferenz*, 198–9.

segregation in its ranks, it could not call others to change. This concern was taken up again in Uppsala 1968. The conference also highlighted the issue of non–theological factors in separating churches along racial lines, for example, which was a disgrace for the body of Christ.⁹¹ Racial discrimination was not limited to the church, but the Christians needed to stand up against it in whatever context the discrimination might arise. The WCC got involved in South Africa after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 at the Cottesloe Consultations, discussed in chapter one. At the Conference in Evanston 1954, the most explicit statement against racism was made.⁹² For the first time in the ecumenical movement, the conference decided to accept and adopt resolutions, which Beckmann stated was against its constitution.⁹³ Its first resolution was concerning racial discrimination.

“The second general assembly of the Ecumenical Council of Churches declares its conviction, that every racial segregation due to race, color or ethnic origin stands in contrast to the gospel and is irreconcilable with the Christian doctrine of man and with the essence of the Church of Christ.”⁹⁴ This meant that apartheid was a heresy. The churches needed to separate themselves from those who supported apartheid.⁹⁵ In New Delhi 1961 the programs of apartheid

⁹¹ Lüpsen, *Amsterdamer Dokumente*, 34.

⁹² F. Lüpsen, ed., *Evanston Dokumente: Berichte und Reden auf der Weltkirchenkonferenz in Evanston 1954* (Witten: Luther, 1954).

⁹³ See Sasse’s explanation that these conferences were not supposed to take binding decisions, but their reports could lead churches to accept them and they in turn would make binding decisions for their church body. Sasse, *Die zweite Weltkonferenz*, 195. Beckmann, “Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage,” 354.

⁹⁴ “Die zweite Vollversammlung des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen erklärt ihre Überzeugung, daß jede Rassentrennung aus Gründen der Rasse, Farbe, oder ethnische Herkunft im Gegensatz zum Evangelium steht und daß sie unvereinbar ist mit der christlichen Lehre vom Menschen und mit dem Wesen der Kirche Christi.” Lüpsen, *Evanston Dokumente*, 115–6.

⁹⁵ This task of ecumenical responsibility to declare not only the truth, but also to identify the lie or the heresy was an important aspect of both Sasse and Bonhoeffer in the ecumenical discussions before the Second World war. For the theological impact of these issues see Reinhardt Slenczka, “Dogma und Kircheneinheit,” in *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte Band 3 Die Lehrentwicklung im Rahmen der Ökumenizität*, ed. Carl Andresen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 426–603.

as “separate development” and the US segregation slogan of “separate but equal” were explicitly denied.⁹⁶ At the World Mission Conference of Mexico 1963, a step further was taken to take up the responsibility of the church to transform all forms and structures of oppression. Beckmann pointed out that here the questions of race and racism had at last been removed from the “pseudo–Biology,” or “pseudo–biblical orders” or “self–righteous allocations of higher and lower races” and placed in the categories of peace, justice, and social relationships, where they belong.⁹⁷ From here, one can recognize certain trajectories that would lead to transformative justice movements and the critical race theory.

Sasse’s Criticism of Modernity

Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 1931

Hermann Sasse’s assessment of his contemporary time in the 1930s is recorded in editorials he wrote as the publisher of the *Kirchliches Jahrbuch*.⁹⁸ In his first edition of 1931, he broadly outlined the evangelical theology since 1917 as two parallel and contradictory movements of dialectical theology under Barth and the Luther Renaissance under Holl, both rediscovering the Reformation.⁹⁹ Neddens points out that it was essential for Sasse’s interpretation of the most recent history of theology that it was impossible to reconcile

⁹⁶ Visser’t Hooft, ed., *Neu–Delhi 1961: Dokumentarbericht über die 3. Vollversammlung des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen* (Stuttgart: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1962).

⁹⁷ “Hiermit ist nun auch der angemessene Zusammenhang zur Erörterung der Rassenfrage erkannt. Es handelt sich in der Tat um eine Problemstellung, die im Bereiche des Friedens, der Gerechtigkeit und der sozialen Beziehungen erforscht werden muß, nicht in den Bereichen einer Pseudo-Biologie, pseudo-biblicher ‘Ordnungen’ und selbstgerechter Einteilung in höhere und niedere Rassen.” Beckmann, “Herausforderung der Kirchen durch die Rassenfrage,” in Bekmann, 358.

⁹⁸ See Neddens, “Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung,” in Klän, 91–98. Hermann Sasse, ed., “Kirchliche Zeitlage,” in *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelische Landeskirchen Deutschlands 1931: Ein Hilfsbuch zur Kirchenkunde der Gegenwart, in der Nachfolge von D. Johannes Schneider* 58, (1931).

⁹⁹ Sasse, “Kirchliche Zeitlage,” *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 58, (1931): 4–22.

Christianity with modernity.¹⁰⁰ Neddens points to the fact that Sasse orientated himself in this conception of history according to Elert;¹⁰¹ it is also reasonable to expect that Sasse orientated himself according to Vilmar, whom Sasse described as a remarkable prophet of the church.¹⁰² Ulrich Asendorf had shown how Vilmar used the template of *Bild und Gegenbild* to criticize modernity, viewing his own time as being in constant crisis mode; the distant past appeared nearly perfect.¹⁰³ Sasse distanced himself from such a simplistic approach in his article about the state, claiming there had never been an ideal past in the history of the German nation.¹⁰⁴ However, the rediscovery of the Reformation gave renewed relevance to the orientation according to the Word of God, and according to the church dogma and the understanding of the church as being the genuine social reality in stark contrast to the optimistic view of humankind, against the subjectivity and personality cult, the focus on the world as opposed to heaven and the criticism of revelation of modernity.¹⁰⁵ Neddens points to similarities between Sasse's analysis of his times and the "Dialectic of the Enlightenment" by Adorno and Horkheimer.¹⁰⁶ He also shows the similarities to Hannah Arendt, who identified the various totalitarian movements of the 1930s

¹⁰⁰ Neddens, "Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung," in Klän, 92.

¹⁰¹ Werner Elert, *Der Kampf um das Christentum seit Schleiermacher und Hegel* (München: Beck, 1921). Neddens also refers to the *Morphologie* of Elert, but these were only published in 1931 and 1932, so after Sasse's editorial. Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums, Band 1 und 2* (München: Beck, 1931 and 1932).

¹⁰² Not only the *Theologie der Tatsachen wider die Theologie der Rhetorik*, to which Sasse wrote an introduction to the edition reprinted in the Martin Luther Verlag in Erlangen in 1938, but also the *Kirche und Welt: oder die Aufgaben des geistlichen Amtes in unserer Zeit. Zur Signatur der Gegenwart und Zukunft. Gesammelte pastoral-theologische Aufsätze von Dr. A.F.C. Vilmar*, (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1872).

¹⁰³ Ulrich Asendorf, *Die Europäische Krise und das Amt der Kirche: Voraussetzungen der Theologie von A.F.C. Vilmar*, (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1967), 20–21.

¹⁰⁴ Hermann Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates 1932," in Hermann Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis II: Gesammelte Aufsätze und Kleine Schriften von Hermann Sasse*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Berlin: Die Spur, 1976), 331–66.

¹⁰⁵ Neddens, "Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung," in Klän, 92.

¹⁰⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2003). Neddens, "Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung," in Klän, 100–101.

as variations of the same model.¹⁰⁷ In this sense, Neddens suggests that Sasse was very similar in his analysis to those who discussed totalitarianism and political religion in the 1950s and after 1989.¹⁰⁸

Even though the worldviews of the mass movements of Sasse's time were fundamentally hostile towards the church, especially communism and national socialism, they developed forms of society that were similar to religious forms and exerted strong attachments that the church could only dream of.¹⁰⁹ Protestant liberalism had destroyed the capacity of the church to maintain its ties to the people, as the church was privatized and replaced by other social organizations. Sasse lamented that whether it was the religious socialists or national preachers, the focus was always on the political.¹¹⁰ The main danger Sasse perceived was in the absolute claim in the political convictions that manifested themselves as anti-religious and contra-churches.¹¹¹ Two years before Hitler would grasp political power, Sasse already warned against those preaching national socialism as salvation for the church and world. Sasse said that already prophets were writing a "theology of the Swastika and of the third Reich," the "faith in the *Volk* and *Volkstum*" were laying claim to Christian terminology and placing the church in the services of the secular.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1955), 640.

¹⁰⁸ Hans Maier, ed., *'Totalitarismus' und 'Politische Religionen: 'Konzepte des Diktaturvergleichs, Band 1–3* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996–2003); Wolfgang Wippermann, *Totalitarismustheorien: Die Entwicklung der Diskussion von den Anfängen bis heute* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1997).

¹⁰⁹ Sasse, "Kirchliche Zeitlage," *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 58, (1931): 64.

¹¹⁰ Neddens, "Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung," in Klän, 92.

¹¹¹ Neddens, "Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung," in Klän, 92.

¹¹² "Entwürfe einer Theologie des Hakenkreuzes und des Dritten Reiches ... Glaube an Volk und Volkstum," Sasse, "Kirchliche Zeitlage," *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 58, (1931): 69.

In the editorial of 1932, Sasse identified the cause of the political, social, and economic instability of the recent years in the secularization process.¹¹³ However, the remarkable thing was that this secularization was taking on religious forms that were hiding “behind a thin veil of Christian tradition, but that were actually hidden secret religions of the European nations.”¹¹⁴ He then unpacked these religious–secular powers in the second part of his editorial *Die Kirche und die politischen Mächte der Zeit*.¹¹⁵ Sasse identified communism and national socialism as “secularized churches,” which Neddens equates to “political religion.”¹¹⁶ Political leaders like Lenin or Hitler were viewed as messianic saviors.¹¹⁷ “The dynamic of these messianic movements in contrast to the Church lies in the fact that they offered concrete answers to the life questions of society and economy and are promising real salvation.”¹¹⁸ Sasse used this apparent attraction of these secularized churches to lay claim that it was only the true church that could fulfil its task, and it was necessary for the church to stand up and proclaim the truth against the various falsehoods, among which Sasse explicitly mentioned the false race theories.¹¹⁹ Sasse

¹¹³ Hermann Sasse, “Kirchliche Zeitlage,” *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die deutschen evangelischen Landeskirchen*, 59 (1932): 1–113.

¹¹⁴ “... hinter einer dünnen Schicht christlicher Tradition verborgene heimliche Religion der europäischen Völker,” Sasse, “Kirchliche Zeitlage,” *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 59 (1932): 8.

¹¹⁵ Sasse, “Kirchliche Zeitlage,” *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 59 (1932): 30–68. Reprinted Hermann Sasse, “Die Kirche und die politischen Mächte der Zeit,” in Hermann Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis: Gesammelte Aufsätze von Hermann Sasse*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1966), 251–64.

¹¹⁶ “Säkularisierten Kirchen,” Sasse, “Kirchliche Zeitlage,” *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 59 (1932): 34. Sasse lists a number of fascinating examples of these religious features. “Politische Religion,” Neddens, “Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung,” in Klän, 94. See also Christian Neddens, “‘Politische Religion’ Zur Herkunft eines Interpretationsmodells totalitärer Ideologien,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 109 (2012): 307–36.

¹¹⁷ Sasse, “Kirche und politischen Mächte der Zeit,” in Hopf, 255.

¹¹⁸ “Die Dynamik dieser messianischen Bewegungen im Gegensatz zu den Kirchen liege darin, dass sie konkrete Antworten auf die Lebensfragen der Gesellschaft und Ökonomie böten und reale Rettung versprechen.” Neddens, “Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung,” in Klän, 95.

¹¹⁹ Sasse, “Kirche und politischen Mächte der Zeit,” in Hopf, 257.

unpacked the understanding of the two realms to clarify that the total state was not acceptable to the church and constantly referred the political and church program of the Nazis back into its bounds.¹²⁰ Sasse's criticism climaxed in his critique of paragraph 2 of Article 24 of the party program. He quoted,

We demand the freedom of all religious confessions in the state, as long as they do not threaten the status or go against the concept of decency and moral feeling of the German race. The party represents the position of a positive Christianity without aligning itself confessionally to a certain confession. It fights against the Jewish materialistic spirit in and outside of ourselves, and it is convinced that permanent healing of our nation can only happen from within based on: solidarity above self-interest.¹²¹

Sasse was disgusted by this statement. He admitted that one could talk to the Nazis about many things, but this paragraph was not open for negotiation from the perspective of the church.¹²² The reason behind Sasse's criticism was his conviction that the Christian witness would be a permanent violation of this paragraph, as it would permanently proclaim God's law against the religious and moral feeling of the German race.¹²³ Original sin did not leave out the Nordic race, Sasse quipped sarcastically. The *sola gratia* and the *sola fide* would mark the end of any human moral. Sasse said the Jews, when they crucified Jesus for blasphemy, did it on behalf of the Nordic race too. The church had to fight against the Jewish materialistic spirit and the German idealistic spirit.

Sasse did not recognize the German Christians as a legitimate group within the church but

¹²⁰ Sasse, "Kirche und politischen Mächte der Zeit," in Hopf, 259–61.

¹²¹ "Wir fordern die Freiheit aller religiösen Bekenntnisse im Staat, soweit sie nicht dessen Bestand gefährden oder gegen das Sittlichkeits- und Moralgefühl der germanischen Rasse verstoßen. Die Partei als solche vertritt den Standpunkt eines positiven Christentums, ohne sich konfessionell an ein bestimmtes Bekenntnis zu binden. Sie bekämpft den jüdisch materialistischen Geist in und außer uns und ist überzeugt, daß eine dauernde Genesung unseres Volkes nur erfolgen kann von innen heraus auf der Grundlage: Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz." Sasse, "Kirche und politischen Mächte der Zeit," in Hopf, 262.

¹²² Neddens, "Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung," in Klän, 95. Neddens points out that Sasse's critic is all the more remarkable as many in the church believed this paragraph proved the church could work with the NSDAP.

¹²³ Sasse, "Kirche und politischen Mächte der Zeit," in Hopf, 262–63.

viewed it as a political party, an extension of the NSDAP. So the church struggle was never an inner church struggle, but rather a battle of the true church against state interference. He quoted Vilmar, who commented on how in various southern German states, the government had negotiated treaties with the Roman Catholic church, and he described this as revolutionary Caesarism or papal Caesarism, over whose shoulder the “sharp and sparkling eyes of the murderer and the firebrand of the future” peers.¹²⁴ The loss of justice and freedom would be the consequence. The state of law, or even better the constitutional state, manifested itself in that the government recognizes a law above itself. The government needs to protect this law and essentially acknowledge that it may not interfere in the realm of the church. The church is responsible for its church government and confession. Neddens points out that Sasse’s ideal would have been a constitutional state, in which the fundamental rights are guaranteed and in which through a strict division of powers, law certainty and civil liberty are secured. Specifically, Sasse denied theories of determination of inner laws and *völkische* national determinations of law as they were supported by Paul Althaus and Wilhelm Stapel.¹²⁵ Instead, he was looking like Barth at the binding of the state to a higher legal norm.¹²⁶ Sasse did not see this as Barth in Christology but instead as later Hans Joachim Iwand in the ethics of the decalogue.¹²⁷ The last section of the editorial Sasse spent describing the impacts of mixing politics and religion

¹²⁴ “Schaut das scharfe funkelnde Auge des Mörders und Brenners der Zukunft,” A.F.C. Vilmar, *Confessionelle Friedensstellung nach Recht und Wahrheit. In Kirche und Welt: oder die Aufgaben des geistlichen Amtes in unserer Zeit. Zur Signatur der Gegenwart und Zukunft. Gesammelte pastoral–117theologische Aufsätze von Dr. A.F.C. Vilmar* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann 1872), 57–58.

¹²⁵ Paul Althaus, *Staatsgedanke und Reich Gottes* (Langensalza: Beyer, 1931), 21; See the Bethel Confession in Carsten Nicolaisen and Ernst–Alfred Scharffenorth, eds. “Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Berlin 1932–1933,” in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke, Band 12*, ed. Eberhard Bethge and others (München: Kaiser, 1997), 366–7, and 381.

¹²⁶ Karl Barth, *Rechtfertigung und Recht (Theologische Studien 1)* (Zollikon–Zürich: Evangelische Buchhandlung, 1938).

¹²⁷ Hans J. Iwand, *Kirche und Gesellschaft* (Nachgelesene Werke. Neue Folge, Band 1), ed. Ekkehard Börsch (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998), 142–87.

in the conflict around Professor Günther Dehn's call to the University of Halle, which the NSDAP students prevented.¹²⁸

Sasse did not publish an editorial in the *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* in 1933, and in 1934 only the statistics were printed; in 1935, the yearbook was stopped entirely.¹²⁹

Vom Sinn des Staates, 1932

The Essence of Community

H. Richard Niebuhr titled the first chapter of his famous book *Christ and Culture* “The Enduring Problem.”¹³⁰ In 1932 Sasse wrote an extensive essay on the purpose of the state to grapple with this contentious issue.¹³¹ Sasse pointed out that the discussion about the essence and the orders of human society, their purpose, and their origins, had been going on since the reflections over life and the world began.¹³² Sasse identified a new urgency that he believed had never been as acute, and that was because these worldviews had taken on a religious character with their teachings being defended like doctrine or dogma. Sasse asked how these social teachings had become, what the religious teachings used to be.¹³³ He responds by pointing out that they have given answers to the existential crisis experienced in the world due to the upheaval and dissolution of society, which he described as a true world revolution.¹³⁴ Whereas the church was called upon to answer, the response by the church had not been convincing, and many of the

¹²⁸ Sasse, “Kirchliche Zeitlage,” *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* 59 (1932): 77–126.

¹²⁹ See Neddens, “Theologische Gegenwartsdeutung,” in Klän, 97–98.

¹³⁰ H.R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Collins, 1951), 1.

¹³¹ Hermann Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates 1932,” in Hermann Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis II: Gesammelte Aufsätze und Kleine Schriften von Hermann Sasse*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Berlin: Die Spur, 1976), 331–66.

¹³² Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 331.

¹³³ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 332.

¹³⁴ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 332.

secular social teachings had entered the church and attempted to gain a religious consecration, like the religious socialists and nationalists.¹³⁵

Before Sasse could explain the concept of the state, he attempted to clarify the relationship between the individual and the community. Sasse summarized the various theories represented on the one hand by the individualism in the *Contrat social* of Rousseau and the atomistic interpretation of society and on the other hand the concept of organisms.¹³⁶ In the theory of organisms the whole is more than the sum of its parts, so the reality of race or tribe, or nation are more important than the individual.¹³⁷ This concept of the organism was connected to the Romantic and conservative world view of *Volk* and state, Spencer's sociology, Spengler's theory of culture, and the modern race theories.¹³⁸ They pointed to those connections of life that go beyond the individual and recognize social institutions as having a life of their own.¹³⁹ Sasse maintained that the unavoidable weakness of this theory was that it could not grasp the essence of the human person.¹⁴⁰ When trying to understand the individual from within the social community's organism, the individual's reality would always fall short.¹⁴¹ It would not recognize the essence of the individual as rational, willing "I."¹⁴²

Sasse pointed to a third theory, apart from the atomistic and organism theories, namely the idealistic philosophy, where the spirit was beyond the empirical person and community but

¹³⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 333.

¹³⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 335.

¹³⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 336.

¹³⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 336.

¹³⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 336.

¹⁴⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 336–37.

¹⁴¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 337.

¹⁴² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 337.

formed the foundation of both in a higher metaphysical reality.¹⁴³ There were elements of truth within this theory, but the answers of idealism have always been viewed as insufficient, as it sacrificed the reality of the person and community.¹⁴⁴ As an example of this rejection, Sasse saw the emergence of materialistic Marxism from the idealistic philosophy of Hegel.¹⁴⁵ Against these theories, Sasse then placed the Christian teaching of the Christian faith.¹⁴⁶ The Christian teaching was not just an extension to the other theories but was instead based on the word of God as the revelation.¹⁴⁷ Therefore statements made about man and his community in a Christian sense were strictly speaking faith statements.¹⁴⁸ They could not be deduced or derived by philosophical or empirical research.¹⁴⁹ The Christian teaching of man came from the reality of the word of God, God speaks.¹⁵⁰ This word of God was always a personal address.¹⁵¹ The essence of the human person is understood as being the result of being addressed to by God.¹⁵² God's creative word gives everything its being.¹⁵³ So the world was not just nature, but rather creation.¹⁵⁴ The

¹⁴³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 337.

¹⁴⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 337–38.

¹⁴⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 338.

¹⁴⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 339.

¹⁴⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 339.

¹⁴⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 339.

¹⁴⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 339.

¹⁵⁰ Remarkably Sasse quotes Emil Brunner, *Gott und Mensch: Vier Untersuchungen über das personhafte Sein* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1930) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: Eine Dogmatische Untersuchung zur Soziologie der Kirche* (Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1930), Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 339. See the reference to Sasses co-ordinating work in Berlin in Michael B. Lukens, "Bonhoeffer and the 1932 Controversy with the Deutsche Christen," in *Polyphonie der Theologie: Verantwortung und Widerstand in Kirche und Politik*, ed. Matthias Grebe (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2019), 230. Lukens refers to Bonhoeffer leaning on Brunner in this context.

¹⁵¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 339.

¹⁵² "By the address: "I have called you by name" the personality of the human is constituted." Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 340.

¹⁵³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 340.

¹⁵⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 340.

differentiating characteristic of humanity was that man was created in the image of God.¹⁵⁵ The personality of man existed in the relationship to the person of God. That is why no philosophical theory of man could define humanity because one cannot deduce it from nature or participation of a metaphysical spirit, but rather from the creative word of God: “I have called you by your name.”¹⁵⁶ However, this relationship was different from the atomistic approach, or the organism concept of community, or that of idealism.¹⁵⁷ God could deal with the individual and confront him as a single personality, but he also placed the individual within a community.¹⁵⁸ The sin of the one Adam is the sin of all; the righteousness of the one Christ is the righteousness of all who believe in him.¹⁵⁹ The reality of the individual is constituted by the same word that constitutes the community.¹⁶⁰ So in the creation, the large communities of society have their foundation, and within the creation, the original unity of person and community is found.¹⁶¹ However, that is where the problem lies. This unity has been destroyed because man is no longer what he was supposed to be according to the creator’s will.¹⁶² Because man went away from God because he became a sinner, an enemy of God, that is why the true person and the true community are destroyed.¹⁶³ The unity of person and community, which was grounded in the creation, is broken.¹⁶⁴ That is the answer of the Christian faith to the questions about the origin of the great

¹⁵⁵ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 340.

¹⁵⁶ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 341.

¹⁵⁷ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 341.

¹⁵⁸ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 341.

¹⁵⁹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 341.

¹⁶⁰ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 341.

¹⁶¹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 341–42.

¹⁶² Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 342.

¹⁶³ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 342.

¹⁶⁴ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 342.

contradictions between personal and social realities.¹⁶⁵ It does not say, as the philosophy does, that man is not yet what he should become, but instead that he no longer is, what he was made to be; not that the unity of person and community is still to be found in a future form, but rather that this original unity has been lost.¹⁶⁶ Our adversity against God is the reason why we are against each other.¹⁶⁷

The State

Sasse realized that the concept of the state was used for such a large variety of different forms of government that he believed it was not feasible in the context of this essay, at least, to come up with a fixed definition of the term.¹⁶⁸ He focused on two characteristics that were present in all forms of government: *Volk*, nation, and *Obrigkeits*, government.¹⁶⁹ These two terms were often neglected in modern sociology and law philosophy, according to Sasse.¹⁷⁰ He believed it was not possible to separate the nation from the government.¹⁷¹ His definition of the nation was that group of people united within a *Staatswesen*, political system, which according to Sasse, was the natural and conventional understanding of the term.¹⁷² He specifically mentioned the concept of *Volk and Volkstum*, nation and nationhood, as understood in Germany as being modern terms that were not shared universally with other nations.¹⁷³ These recent terms were not scientific;

¹⁶⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 342.

¹⁶⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 342.

¹⁶⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 342.

¹⁶⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 342.

¹⁶⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 342.

¹⁷⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁷¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁷² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁷³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

even if they were defined with strict scientific terms, they were based on an ideal that did not necessarily correspond to the ideal of other nations.¹⁷⁴ Sasse advocated using the term nation as wide as possible to accommodate all the different concepts.¹⁷⁵

To define his term of government, he did not want to use words like *Staatsgewalt*, state power, power, and justice, but instead of living people, who were the carriers of the state power.¹⁷⁶ Government could take on so many different forms, from monarchy in various manifestations to democracy in different forms, even under certain circumstances, tyranny and dictatorship or a foreign government.¹⁷⁷ But wherever there was talk of the life of a state, there was also government.¹⁷⁸ It belonged to the essence of the state, that there was command and obedience, as anarchy and lack of government was the opposite of state.¹⁷⁹ Even democracy was about rule and authority, and only living people could exercise these.¹⁸⁰ Laws cannot rule, power does not rule, and therefore living people belong to the essence of the state that exercises rule, which is called government.¹⁸¹ Sasse pointed out in a footnote that it was not by coincidence that the Lutheran Reformers chose to develop the teaching of the state as the teaching of government.¹⁸² They had specific inner and objective reasons for doing so.¹⁸³ Even the English and French, who had much more complicated and higher developed forms of state and possessed

¹⁷⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁷⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁷⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁷⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁷⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁷⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁸⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁸¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343.

¹⁸² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343n2.

¹⁸³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 343n2.

the beginnings of influential theories of the state, still followed the example of the Augsburg Confession.¹⁸⁴

The Nation

“What constitutes a nation? How does a group of people become a nation? Various answers have been given in the past.”¹⁸⁵ First, the mutual origin, blood relation, or the fellowship of blood were all answers that have been used for a long time and were enjoying new currency in the German context.¹⁸⁶ The knowledge of the fellowship of the blood belonged to the consciousness of the nation.¹⁸⁷ The nation’s unity was often the highest and last level of community created by blood relation, combining families, clans, and tribes to a nation.¹⁸⁸ Sasse pointed to the recent connection of these ancient concepts with the modern theories of race that had developed in modern science.¹⁸⁹ Race research differentiated strictly between race and nation but recognized connections between the two.¹⁹⁰ “Where these race theories have become dogma, a confession of faith, one is prone to mistakenly confuse the blood relationship that belongs to the nation’s essence with those manifestations of biological characteristics that belong to a certain race.”¹⁹¹

“Fundamentally, the unquestionable reality of the division of mankind into different races, which

¹⁸⁴ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 343n2.

¹⁸⁵ “Was ist ein Volk? Wodurch wird eine Gruppe von Menschen zu einem Volk? Zahlreiche Antworten sind darauf gegeben worden.” Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁸⁶ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁸⁷ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁸⁸ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁸⁹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁹⁰ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁹¹ “Und wo die wissenschaftliche Rassentheorie zu einem Dogma, einem Glaubensbekenntnis geworden ist, da ist man geneigt, die zum Wesen eines Volkes gehörige Blutsgemeinschaft mit dem in der Tatsache der Rasse in Erscheinung tretenden biologischen Lebenszusammenhang zu verwechseln.” Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

are exceedingly meaningful for the life of people, has got virtually nothing to do with the division into nations.”¹⁹² Race and nation were two terms that should not be mixed, as they do not belong on the same level.¹⁹³ Race was an anthropological natural science term, whereas nation was a historical term, that was not accessible to the natural sciences.¹⁹⁴ Race belonged to all living species, nation only existed among humans.¹⁹⁵ A cursory look into the various nations of the world would show that only tiny isolated nations would have sustained racial unity.¹⁹⁶ All large nations of world history, especially the nations of Europe, were the result of biologically defined racial mixing.¹⁹⁷ The racial connections of Nordic Germans with the Scandinavian people were not sufficient to establish a fellowship that had been established among different races that constituted the German nation.¹⁹⁸ Race could not create community, according to the definition Sasse developed at the beginning of his essay.¹⁹⁹ Sasse referred to the modern reality of creating a new nation from mixed races in the example of the USA.²⁰⁰ Sasse mentioned that it would be good for the race theorists in Germany not only to look at prehistoric movements of man but rather to study this modern example carefully.²⁰¹ According to Sasse, the aspect of truth in racial

¹⁹² “Grundsätzlich ist hier zu sagen, daß die unzweifelhaft vorhandene, für das Leben der Menschen außerordentlich bedeutsame Tatsache der Gliederung in Rassen mit der Gliederung in Völker kaum etwas zu tun hat.” Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁹³ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁹⁴ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁹⁵ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁹⁶ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁹⁷ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁹⁸ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

¹⁹⁹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344. Sasse refers back to page 333–42.

²⁰⁰ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344. Remarkably my son David, who is studying law at the University of Pretoria, was told by his professors, that South Africa is not a nation state, because of its diverse population.

²⁰¹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 344.

theory, but more importantly, the limitations of this theory were made clear in the example from the USA.²⁰² It showed that there were other much more critical powers at work to create a nation than the power of blood.²⁰³

A second response to the origin of nations was the cultural theory.²⁰⁴ According to this theory the nation was constituted by a mutual culture, the mutual possession of intellectual treasures, manifested in language and the world of ideas, religion and worldview, technology and art, and economy and political institutions that have developed over a long time.²⁰⁵ The essence of a nation was recognized not in the natural biological, but rather in the intellectual, spiritual realm, even though it was recognized that this somehow was connected to the natural, to the same blood, and connected to the *Heimat* homeland.²⁰⁶ Sasse admitted that there were apparent truths in these aspects that belonged to the essence of a nation.²⁰⁷ However, the limitations were just as obvious. He listed examples of nations that were not unified in their cultural heritage, like Switzerland, or showed the cultural connection of a northern German farmer in East Friesland and his neighbor in Holland, with whom he shared a great deal more than with a catholic lumberjack of Bavaria, or an atheist proletarian from Berlin.²⁰⁸

The third response to the question how a nation was formed pointed to the shared history.²⁰⁹ To compensate for some of the above limitations of blood and cultural heritage, the mutual

²⁰² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 344.

²⁰³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 344.

²⁰⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 345.

²⁰⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 345.

²⁰⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 345.

²⁰⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 345.

²⁰⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 345.

²⁰⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 345.

experiences of history in creating a nation were significant.²¹⁰ “The complete irrationality of history, the arbitrary and seemingly meaningless decisions of history exert their influence on the creation of nations.”²¹¹ Thus Sasse concluded it was not possible for philosophy, sociology, or even history to determine the final purpose of the nation.²¹²

Everything, that man designates as the purpose of history, for example, the idea of progressive cultural advancement or the fulfilment of mankind in a future life, everything that philosophers, utopians, philanthropists and poets say about the purpose of world history has got nothing to do with science, but it belongs into the realm of faith.²¹³

Sasse then attempted to give the Christian faith response to the question of how a nation was formed.²¹⁴ Again Sasse highlighted that the Christian response was not a continuation of one of the philosophical or other theories.²¹⁵ The presupposition was that the Christian revelation unfolded historically.²¹⁶ This was against idealistic tendencies of seeking an eternal revelation that was not connected to reality as in mysticism and pantheism.²¹⁷ Revelation and history belonged together, as did nation and history.²¹⁸ The story of the revelation was the story of a nation, both in the Old and New Testaments.²¹⁹ It was the story of the people of God Israel and

²¹⁰ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 345.

²¹¹ “Die völlige Irrationalität der Geschichte, die Zufälligkeit und scheinbare Sinnlosigkeit der geschichtlichen Entscheidungen wirkt sich in dem Werden der Völker aus.” Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 345.

²¹² Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 345.

²¹³ “Alles, was die Menschen als Sinn der Geschichte bezeichnet haben, etwa die Idee eines unendlichen Kulturfortschritts oder einer Vollendung der Menschheit in einem vollkommenen Leben der Zukunft, alles was Philosophen, Utopisten, Philanthropen und Dichter über einen Sinn der Weltgeschichte gesagt haben, hat nichts mehr mit Wissenschaft zu tun, sondern gehört in den Bereich des Glaubens.” Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 346.

²¹⁴ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 346.

²¹⁵ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 346.

²¹⁶ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 346.

²¹⁷ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 346.

²¹⁸ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 346.

²¹⁹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 346.

the Church of Christ.²²⁰ So when Christianity said something about the essence of the nation, it could only be understood from this background and could be understood only by those who believed in God.²²¹ The Christian faith believed that that what made a nation was the call of God: “I will be your God, you will be my people.”²²² This was not only true of Israel, but God called all nations in a certain sense into being.²²³ This call of God was similar to the way he called individuals.²²⁴ That was why the other theories could not fully grasp the essence because they excluded God from the equation.²²⁵

Sasse pointed to the reality that nations in the early stages of their existence and at the height of their being recognized the relationship of their nation and God.²²⁶ That was why religion and nation belonged so close together.²²⁷ But as the nation was grounded in this relationship to God, all nations were affected by the law of death because mankind has walked away from God.²²⁸ Where the recognition of God as the foundation of the nation is forgotten, other substitutes are placed in his place.²²⁹ Sasse viewed nationalism as a modern replacement of God as the nation’s foundation, with devastating effects.²³⁰ But also individualism would lead to the end of the nation.²³¹ That was why the history of the world was full of accounts of new

²²⁰ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 346.

²²¹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 346.

²²² Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 346–47.

²²³ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 347.

²²⁴ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 347.

²²⁵ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 347.

²²⁶ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 347.

²²⁷ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 347.

²²⁸ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 348.

²²⁹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 348.

²³⁰ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 348.

²³¹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 348.

nations arising and old nations dying because they have dethroned God, and had been discarded by God, and ultimately physically disappeared to make room for new nations to be called by God.²³²

The Government

The second characteristic of the state after the nation was the government.²³³ No nation could exist without government.²³⁴ Government was linked to the exercise of authority, as anarchy and the lack of government signified the absence of a state.²³⁵ The function of government was to rule as powerful will in contrast to the will of individuals within the nation and in contrast to the will of other nations.²³⁶ This powerful will manifested itself as an authoritative will that demanded obedience, not only as a stronger will but also as a superior will, claiming authority, not only power.²³⁷ Thus thirdly, the will expressed itself as normative, which was codified in law to determine what was right and wrong.²³⁸ It was impossible to determine the historical beginning of government, but the question was what was the essential foundational concept that allowed government to be formed.²³⁹ The first answer might be that it was a question of power.²⁴⁰ The individual was faced with a powerful opposite foreign will that subdued him.²⁴¹

²³² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 348.

²³³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 348.

²³⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 348.

²³⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 348.

²³⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 348.

²³⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 348.

²³⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 348.

²³⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 348–49.

²⁴⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 349.

²⁴¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 349.

According to this principle, government was established by the strongest and most powerful.²⁴² Power was indeed related to the essence of government, but it cannot be the only constituting aspect.²⁴³ Otherwise, there would be a fundamental divide between government and nation, but all governments wanted to belong in a relationship to the nation.²⁴⁴ Government wants authority, not only power.²⁴⁵ The fundamental question was how did authority develop?²⁴⁶ Why do we humans bow to the authority of government? One answer was that the authority was based on the people's will to subjugate themselves under it.²⁴⁷ The nation itself gave the government the authority, either by recognizing the existing power as an authoritative government or identifying a new government in a time of anarchy.²⁴⁸ The government then was made up of representatives of the people and executed the will of the people.²⁴⁹ When the people no longer recognized them as their government, their authority ended.²⁵⁰ Sasse referred to Friederich Gogarten's book *Wider die Ächtung der Autorität* as helping him to formulate some of these ideas.²⁵¹ The free individual who was used as the foundation for ethical principles undermined all authority and destroyed the connection of man being tied to a community.²⁵² If an individual was completely free and

²⁴² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 349.

²⁴³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 349.

²⁴⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 349.

²⁴⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 349.

²⁴⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 349.

²⁴⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 349.

²⁴⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 349.

²⁴⁹ Refer to the concept of "public policy" as a legal concept in South Africa, where the public perception is used as a legal standard among others to determine the validity of laws. Extra marital infidelity was previously seen as unacceptable and was sufficient reason to get a divorce. That is no longer a sufficient reason, as apparently public perception of infidelity has changed.

²⁵⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 350.

²⁵¹ Friederich Gogarten, *Wider die Ächtung der Autorität* (Jena: Diederichs 1930); Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 350.

²⁵² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 350.

independent, authority could only exist where one person recognized the authority of the other.²⁵³ Therefore, community and fellowship among man were always secondary and dependent on the participants' free will to voluntarily give up some of their freedom, which they were prepared to do in a preliminary sense until a stage was reached when the authority was no longer needed.²⁵⁴ However, Sasse invited his readers to suppose the community and fellowship of man was something that pre-existed the individual.²⁵⁵ In that case, the community was something that each individual already found existing, and he always already existed in a relationship determined by authority.²⁵⁶ Therefore Sasse concluded that authority could not be based on the individual who stood under the government's authority or any authority for that matter.²⁵⁷ The authority Sasse contended was instead founded in the office that the person in authority was entrusted with.²⁵⁸ Sasse suggested that virtually all nations in modern Europa had accepted the sovereignty of the people; however, he saw a remnant of the recognition that there was a higher order in the authority of the government by the recognition of the laws.²⁵⁹ Sasse believed that everywhere in history where a nation had existed in a healthy condition, the people had recognized the universal validity of a normative system of laws independent of an individual's arbitrary will but which were based on a metaphysical truth.²⁶⁰ In modern times Sasse suggested that most people still believed in this norm, even if strictly speaking, judgment was passed in the people's name.²⁶¹

²⁵³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 350.

²⁵⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 350.

²⁵⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 350.

²⁵⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 350.

²⁵⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 351.

²⁵⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 351.

²⁵⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 351.

²⁶⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 351.

²⁶¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 351.

However, Sasse said, this perception of a universal norm was a remnant of earlier times and was under severe threat.²⁶² He was not sure if it would be possible to re-establish the respect for the majesty and holiness of the law that transcended the human will.²⁶³ He believed that with faith in this law, the government's authority and existence stood or fell.²⁶⁴

An obvious challenge for this concept was the continual change over time of the various concepts of legality.²⁶⁵ Sasse referred to abortion, being allowed in Roman law, outlawed by the church.²⁶⁶ Then this forbidding of abortion became the norm of law over time, to be questioned again in modernity.²⁶⁷ He again highlighted the changes of concepts of property as he did in his article on the social teachings of the Augsburg confession in 1930.²⁶⁸ He mentioned the change of perspective on the legality of the strike as another example.²⁶⁹ And thus, it would be legitimate only to describe as absolute the concept of law itself and not the individual manifestations of the law.²⁷⁰ He quoted Paul Althaus in this sense who reckoned, that "no individual law content as such can be defended in the name of God against new ideas. It participates in the change, the conditioning and the transience nature of historical life relationships."²⁷¹ So there was a category of law that is not man-made, but the positive concrete law did not have the same claim.²⁷² There

²⁶² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 351.

²⁶³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 351.

²⁶⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 351.

²⁶⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 352.

²⁶⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 352.

²⁶⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 352.

²⁶⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 352. See Sasse, "Soziallehren," in Klän, 26.

²⁶⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 352.

²⁷⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 352.

²⁷¹ "Kein einzelner Rechtsinhalt als solcher darf gegenüber neuen Gedanken im Namen Gottes verteidigt werden. Er hat dem Wechsel, der Bedingtheit und Vergänglichkeit aller geschichtlichen Lebensbeziehungen Anteil." Paul Althaus, *Staatsgedanke und Reich Gottes* (Langensalza: Beyer, 1931), 21.

²⁷² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 352.

were categories of right and wrong that could not be changed in the sense of what was happening in Germany, the categories of “healthy” and “sick,” or “useful for the community” or “detrimental for the community.”²⁷³ A sick person must be judged by what was right or wrong.²⁷⁴ Sasse argued against this view that law did not exist in an empty category.²⁷⁵ Law was always connected to the content of the law.²⁷⁶ It was not possible to maintain a legal system while not defining what was right or wrong.²⁷⁷ All jurisdiction and judgment were fallible because they were human actions.²⁷⁸ However, there had to exist certain law concepts that were irrevocable.²⁷⁹ Government had to be able to identify what was right and what was wrong.²⁸⁰ The fact that many people were not sure about the rules and norms of society was partly because of the reluctance of the government to define these terms with concrete content.²⁸¹ Sasse maintained the people did not believe in ideas. They wanted to know what was right and what was wrong.²⁸² Sasse believed that the legal state would collapse when one was not able to fill the content of law.²⁸³ And he believed the governments in Europe were close to collapse because they were not willing to accept this.²⁸⁴ He was not sure if the philosophers, sociologists, or the legal profession would be

²⁷³ “‘Gesund’ und ‘krank’ ‘für die Gesellschaft nützlich’ oder ‘für die Gesellschaft schädlich,’” Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 352–3.

²⁷⁴ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

²⁷⁵ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

²⁷⁶ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

²⁷⁷ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

²⁷⁸ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

²⁷⁹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

²⁸⁰ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

²⁸¹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

²⁸² Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

²⁸³ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

²⁸⁴ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 353.

able to re-establish the state in the soul of the people.²⁸⁵ He was only trying to answer from the perspective of Christianity and the Church.²⁸⁶ He re-emphasized the connection between religion and law, as it was found in all religions and nations.²⁸⁷ This went back to the *Uroffenbarung*, the first revelation.²⁸⁸ Sasse presented an interesting interpretation of the *Urgeschichte*, the first history of man.²⁸⁹ He said creation, the fall of man, and the first revelation all belong together and must be taken together.²⁹⁰ These big events were indescribable and not imaginable for us, so we needed to look at the truths behind the pictures that the people used to illustrate reality.²⁹¹ We could not interpret them as a chronological description that would lead us to Mythology.²⁹² We were not able to say much in detail about the *Urstand*, the first origin of man.²⁹³ There was a consciousness of the origin of law in the revelation of the will of God, that even if it got distorted, still kept the idea alive of a remnant of holiness in law.²⁹⁴ What would we know of the original law of God? With that question, we stand before the issue of the *Naturrecht*, natural law.²⁹⁵ Sasse summarized the concept of natural law. Coming from the antique philosophy, it entered the realm of the church.²⁹⁶ Thomas Aquinas took up the idea of natural law as part of

²⁸⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 353.

²⁸⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 353–54.

²⁸⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 354.

²⁸⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 354.

²⁸⁹ Dr. E.A.W. Weber once mentioned in a conversation to the author that if only Sasse had accepted the "it is" for creation as he had for his understanding of Holy Communion. Sasse's understanding of Scripture was controversial. See Jeffrey J. Kloha and Ronald R. Feuerhahn, eds., *Scripture and the Church: Selected Essays of Hermann Sasse* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1995). See especially the Appendix by Jeffrey Kloha, 337–423.

²⁹⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 354.

²⁹¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 354.

²⁹² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 354.

²⁹³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 354.

²⁹⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 354.

²⁹⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

²⁹⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

God's revelation in a dualism of nature and grace, not as contradictory but rather as two levels of the divine order of the world.²⁹⁷ The natural law active in the secular realm was the preparation for the grace administered by the church.²⁹⁸ The Roman Catholic social teaching was based on this concept. Sasse mentioned that the natural law became influential again in the enlightenment where it became the foundation of the legal theory until the new concept of history in the 19th century sidelined it for a time at least as historically insufficient.²⁹⁹ Sasse believed that natural law was experiencing a comeback in various forms in his time.³⁰⁰ The evangelical church was faced with a challenge in its dealings with natural law. It opposed the philosophical rationalism in the concept on the one hand, but it had to accept the partial validity of the concept.³⁰¹ The concept of nature in antique philosophy is not the same as the concept of creation.³⁰² The view of man was different because the evangelical church took original sin and the fall of man more seriously than the Roman Catholics. The value of natural law as revelation was restricted.³⁰³ There is no natural knowledge of God that just needs to be topped up by the revelation of God.³⁰⁴ The natural knowledge of God is merely a remote idea, a corrupted understanding of God.³⁰⁵ The anthropology of the Reformation is more pessimistic and darker than that of the Roman Catholic church.³⁰⁶ Sasse suggested that the creation ordinances are at least comparable to the concept of

²⁹⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

²⁹⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

²⁹⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

³⁰⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

³⁰¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355. See Robert C. Baker, ed., *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011).

³⁰² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

³⁰³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

³⁰⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

³⁰⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

³⁰⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 355.

natural law.³⁰⁷ He refers to the Ap 16 paragraph 1 Man remained a creation of God, even after the fall of man.³⁰⁸ God permitted man to retain a certain *Ahnung* idea of God and the remnants of a higher norm in law.³⁰⁹ These could not lead him to reconcile himself with God. However, they were the things that constitute the fact that he remains a creation of God, in which he remains human.³¹⁰ God preserved humankind through these things. Sasse stated that the decalogue reflected these remnants of the will of God in natural law clearly and concisely.³¹¹ The decalogue could be used as the template of all fundamental legal norms.³¹² Sasse reckoned that the decalogue corresponded on the evangelical side to what the Roman Catholics identified as “natural law.”³¹³

From this fact that the law was founded in God’s divine law, it became clear what the New Testament and the evangelical confessions understood under the term of government as an order of God.³¹⁴ Romans 13 was the key passage for the understanding of government for the church.³¹⁵ Luther translated power with government, but Sasse said it was clear from the context that this did not mean raw power.³¹⁶ It was presumed that the government would differentiate between right and wrong, punish evil, and protect the law.³¹⁷ By doing that, the government exercised the

³⁰⁷ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 355. See Armin Wenz, “Natural Law and the Orders of Creation,” in *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal*, ed. Robert C. Baker (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 79–95.

³⁰⁸ Ap XVI.1 in Kolb and Wengert, 231. Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 356.

³⁰⁹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 356.

³¹⁰ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 356.

³¹¹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 356.

³¹² Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 356.

³¹³ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 356.

³¹⁴ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 357.

³¹⁵ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 357.

³¹⁶ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 357.

³¹⁷ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 357.

office that it had received from God. She is God's servant, and therefore claims to have authority and demands obedience and respect. Revolt against the government is seen as a revolt against God.

The critical question for Sasse was, whether all ruling power needed to be viewed as legitimate government, or if certain power did not qualify as government.³¹⁸ First, he stated that the faith of the individuals making up the government was irrelevant in this context.³¹⁹ As long as the government knew and protected law and justice, it remained a legitimate government, irrespective of the faith of its officials.³²⁰ There is no Christian State.³²¹ This was a fundamental Lutheran conviction, which was different from the other confessions, the Catholics, Reformed, and those that have developed from the enthusiasts of the Reformation period.³²² No more fateful distortion of the teaching of government in our confessions has been caused according to Sasse than by introducing the concept of a Christian state.³²³ Sasse distanced himself from Friederich Julius Stahl, who was the most prominent representative of the conservative teaching of the state.³²⁴ Sasse pointed out that even when Luther expected his Christian government to support the church, this did not contradict the above understanding.³²⁵ He obviously would not have anticipated this support from the Turks, even though he recognized them as the legitimate government.³²⁶ The Evangelical Confessions claim to be valid for all governments of all times.

³¹⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 357.

³¹⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 357.

³²⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 357.

³²¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 357.

³²² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 357.

³²³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 357.

³²⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 358.

³²⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 358.

³²⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 358.

They are not similar to the Anglican 39 Articles, which mentioned the King of England, because they were meant only for the Kingdom of England.³²⁷ Sasse stated that the Lutherans feared that the State would become a church in a Christian state, spiritual and secular power would be mixed, and law and gospel would be exchanged.³²⁸ The gospel would degenerate to a new law.³²⁹ This had happened all over where one tried to make the state as such and the world Christian, make it a church or convert it, and that would mean the end of the Gospel as Luther understood it.³³⁰

Second, the outside form or manifestation of the government was irrelevant.³³¹ Against any prescription from the church to the state how to establish its institutions, Sasse quotes *CA 28*, paragraph 13 “It should not invade an alien office It should not make or prescribe laws for the secular power concerning secular affairs.”³³²

Third, the concept of the legitimacy of a government according to the Christian faith was not simply the same as what one would say in a political or legal sense designated the legitimacy of a government.³³³ This Sasse suggested was very important in contexts of political upheaval.³³⁴ The legitimacy of the government was a critical question for Germans since 1918, but rather even more pressing in the previous century during the revolutions and the changes in

³²⁷ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 358.

³²⁸ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 358.

³²⁹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 358.

³³⁰ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 358.

³³¹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 358.

³³² Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 358. *Confessio Augustana XXVIII.13* in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 92.

³³³ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 358–9.

³³⁴ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 359.

governments in Germany between the time of Napoleon (1803) and Bismarck (1866).³³⁵ When a legally recognized government was overthrown either through war or revolution, the citizens were only free from their commitment to obey this old government when it completely disappeared or had released the citizens from its oath of allegiance.³³⁶ In this way, the relationship between government and citizens could end.³³⁷ But how did the new legitimacy develop, which had brought a new government either by revolution or war or out of a state of anarchy.³³⁸ Most if not all changes of government took place in this rather violent transition.³³⁹ This did not justify the revolution; it only accepted that revolution just as war belonged to the large historic creative powers in this world of sin.³⁴⁰ The principle of legitimacy in a legal and political sense, which is the justification of government's authority in a historical law, could never be something absolute because there was no uninterrupted continuity of the current state law in history.³⁴¹

Government did not derive its authority from the will of the people, even if no government could survive for long if it did not enjoy some form of support from the people.³⁴² There was nothing wrong with a government being formed through the process of democratic elections.³⁴³ A ruling power attained the authority of the government if it fulfilled the functions of the

³³⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

³³⁶ It is an accepted principle of ethics that the one who is the oath bearer, in this case, the government, can absolve the one who has taken the oath from his commitment. Sasse remarks in a footnote that one should only swear an oath to the government. All other oaths are sin and therefore invalid. Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

³³⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

³³⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

³³⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

³⁴⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

³⁴¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

³⁴² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

³⁴³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

government.³⁴⁴ There was no other characteristic or mark of true legitimacy.³⁴⁵ After a revolution, it is an existential question for a nation whether a new government would be possible.³⁴⁶ A revolution should not be taken lightly. Its consequences were devastating and long-lasting.³⁴⁷ A revolution against a legitimate government is never justified.³⁴⁸ Revolution remained sin. It was not on the same level as war.³⁴⁹ No war impacted the nation quite as substantially as a revolution, something would die in the soul of a nation in a revolution.³⁵⁰ That was why one said the revolution eats its own children.³⁵¹ Even when God allowed the revolution and used it in his foreign work to bring about judgment due to his anger, the revolutionary remains guilty before God.³⁵² Sasse claimed that a revolutionary himself cannot become the government, but a government can come forth out of revolutionary chaos.³⁵³ It is important to state that resistance against an illegitimate government is no revolution.³⁵⁴

The two necessary functions of the government were the maintenance of the legal order and the preservation of inner and outer peace.³⁵⁵ It depended on the historical development of a nation and, from the specific conditions of the time, whether the government would take on any

³⁴⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

³⁴⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359.

³⁴⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 359–60.

³⁴⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁴⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁴⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁵⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁵¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁵² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁵³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁵⁴ Sasse describes the resistance against an illegitimate power as self-defence. This is important for the perception of the resistance movement in South Africa and even the use of force as discussed in the Kairos document. Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 364.

³⁵⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

other tasks.³⁵⁶ And it could be that when it took on too many different tasks, it might have alienated itself from the actual functions it was supposed to fulfil.³⁵⁷ The nation's life was not limited to the government but also expressed itself in technology, economy, science, art, religion, and all other spheres of life one describes with culture.³⁵⁸ In Germany, the state had taken on the responsibility for all these aspects, and it remained a question whether that was advisable or desirable.³⁵⁹ According to Sasse, the idea of the culture state was a product of German idealism, but it was not necessarily an improvement of the real purpose of government.³⁶⁰ The state had become an absolute or total state.³⁶¹ The modern state, according to Sasse, had become a cultural state, educational institute, economic driver, charity organization.³⁶² That was what people expected and demanded, but they did not want it to be government.³⁶³ The failure to recognize the value of the office of government and of service founded in the divine orders of law to protect justice and preserve peace, and thereby fulfilling an office, that God had given fallen humanity to save it from its own self-destruction, threatened the very existence of the modern state.³⁶⁴ "From Hegel to Marx, from the idealization of a certain concept of state to the denial and destruction of the state is only a step."³⁶⁵

³⁵⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁵⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁵⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁵⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁶⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁶¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 360.

³⁶² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 361.

³⁶³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 361.

³⁶⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 361.

³⁶⁵ "Von Hegel zu Marx, von der Verabsolutierung eines Staatsideals zur Verneinung und Zerstörung des Staates ist nur ein Schritt." Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 361–62.

The office of the government served the preservation of humanity.³⁶⁶ God used the natural orders to preserve his creation, and he used the large orders of human society to protect fallen humanity.³⁶⁷ Sasse referenced Apology 16 to connect both these divine orders of creation in which the patience and forbearance of God are revealed.³⁶⁸ Humankind needs the natural orders just as it needs the orders of law and justice.³⁶⁹ Sasse argued against the common utopian wish to create a world where freedom, equality, and fraternity would make a peaceful commonwealth possible.³⁷⁰ Sasse pointed out that even in the kingdom of God, there was still the rule of law and coercion, as God was the King and demanded obedience.³⁷¹ Natural man is the enemy of God and, therefore, also the enemy of his fellow man.³⁷² Everyone who recognizes the depravity of sin will realize that to abandon the order of law in this world would mean the destruction of humanity.³⁷³ No other Christian church, according to Sasse, had recognized the extent and depth of human sinfulness quite as the church of the Reformation.³⁷⁴ That is why the reformers emphasized the role of government and its office as a servant of God to punish evil.³⁷⁵ That is why they acknowledged the necessity of the government to carry the sword and to use it.³⁷⁶ When a government fulfils this task and office, even if it does not recognize that it is doing it on

³⁶⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 362.

³⁶⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 362.

³⁶⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 362.

³⁶⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 362.

³⁷⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 362.

³⁷¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 362.

³⁷² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 362.

³⁷³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 362.

³⁷⁴ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 363.

³⁷⁵ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 363.

³⁷⁶ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 363.

God's behalf, it can claim authority and demand respect and obedience.³⁷⁷ The obvious limitation to this authority is expressed in Acts 5:29 that one has to be more obedient to God than to humankind.³⁷⁸ But Sasse further said that the government also transgresses its boundaries when it claims to have authority over us in areas limited to God's sovereignty.³⁷⁹ There is an apostasy of the state from its divine vocation, and Sasse pointed out that all governments in this world are continuously in danger of this apostasy.³⁸⁰ Sasse cited various examples of this apostasy. The most common example for Sasse was when rulers declare their power to be absolute or idolize themselves, their office, or the state.³⁸¹ Sasse contended that a government stopped being government when it would forget or ignore its task; for him that meant, when it no longer differentiated between right and wrong; or when the principle of justice no longer guided its jurisdiction but rather was dictated to by various interest groups; this included when the government no longer dared to exercise its rights that always included responsibilities, or when itself sabotaged the orders of law; for example in family law when the government would destroy parental authority or the integrity of marriage.³⁸²

Sasse admitted that it might be challenging to recognize in each individual case if a governing authority was still fulfilling its governmental functions.³⁸³ This judgment call could lead to difficult conflicts of conscience. "However, essentially the situation is possible, and has

³⁷⁷ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 364.

³⁷⁸ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 364.

³⁷⁹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 364.

³⁸⁰ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 364.

³⁸¹ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 364.

³⁸² Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 364.

³⁸³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 364.

happened frequently in history, that a government ends being a government.”³⁸⁴ In these cases, Sasse pointed out, that one could still submit obediently under the overwhelming power—but it was no longer possible to demand obedience.³⁸⁵ Sasse pointed out that if a church recognized such power as government and showed it the respect due to a legitimate government the church would make itself guilty of grave sin.³⁸⁶ Resistance against such a power was not revolution, according to Sasse, but comparable to a war of self-defence and the act of self-defence undertaken to reinstate the orders of the law.³⁸⁷ Sasse suggested that this specific situation had happened in Russia.³⁸⁸ He said that it was possible that this would also occur in other countries of Europe, as he carefully acknowledged that the foundations of the order of law had already been severely shaken in Germany.³⁸⁹ Sasse contended that the political parties were not the only ones guilty of destroying the orders of God, but rather those that loudly argued for divine orders, that were in truth only orders that humankind had invented itself, were also responsible.³⁹⁰ “The sick person who did not know that he was sick and how sick he was could not be healed.”³⁹¹

Sasse believed that it was necessary for the church in the world to give witness to the orders of God, with which he preserved and sustained his people, both in nations and in the church.³⁹² We are citizens of two worlds. Our vocations are reflected in this task, as we do not

³⁸⁴ “Aber grundsätzlich ist der Fall denkbar, und er ist immer wieder in der Geschichte Wirklichkeit geworden, daß eine Obrigkeit aufgehört hat, Obrigkeit zu sein.” Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 364.

³⁸⁵ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 364.

³⁸⁶ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 364.

³⁸⁷ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 364.

³⁸⁸ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 364.

³⁸⁹ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 364.

³⁹⁰ Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 365.

³⁹¹ “Der Kranke ist unheilbar, der nicht weiß, daß er krank ist und wie krank er ist.” Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 365.

³⁹² Sasse, “Vom Sinn des Staates,” in Hopf, 365.

fall into the temptation to construct a utopian kingdom of God in this world and time, but to serve our neighbor in this world and time and witness to the coming glory of the new world and the new creation.³⁹³

Das Volk Nach der Lehre der Evangelischen Kirche, 1934

In his essay on the nation (*Volk*), according to the church's teaching, Sasse spent a great deal of time describing the church and how the confessional writings of the Reformation withstood the temptation to define a national church.³⁹⁴ By developing an ecumenical dogmatic universal concept of the church, the confessions were not limited to a particular time and place or to a specific sociological manifestation in a *Volk* nation.³⁹⁵

Sasse often complained about the inability of the current church to speak with one voice to the questions that troubled humankind. In contrast, the confessions of the Reformation were witnesses of an ability to do precisely that. They spoke with a "*magnus consensus*."³⁹⁶ Secularization, privatization, and individualization were all forces that made it virtually impossible for the church to confess together and thereby add to the confessional writings of the church.³⁹⁷ But this vacuum was filled by secular worldview movements that became religious and comparable to denominations.³⁹⁸

Taking up ideas from the German mission theology, Sasse wrote appreciatively about the ability and necessity of the church to adapt itself in its various social manifestations to the

³⁹³ Sasse, "Vom Sinn des Staates," in Hopf, 366.

³⁹⁴ Hermann Sasse, *Das Volk nach der Lehre der evangelischen Kirche* (München: Kaiser, 1934). This is reprinted in Hermann Sasse, *The Lonely Way* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002), 1:3–16.

³⁹⁵ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 11.

³⁹⁶ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 3.

³⁹⁷ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 3–4.

³⁹⁸ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 4.

various national realities and customs.³⁹⁹ The idea behind this was the church's universality on the one hand, but the necessity of proclaiming the gospel in the widest sense of the word to the local situation on the other so that the gospel would develop deep roots within the nation. "That is why the national language has to become the language of the worship service."⁴⁰⁰ Sasse, in this case, could even say: "The Word of God can only be proclaimed in the national language; otherwise, it remains without effect."⁴⁰¹ In a letter to Lutheran Pastors in 1950 Sasse spoke of the practical advantage of giving up one's language to reach more people in a multicultural setting.⁴⁰² Because even if these principles of *Volksmision* community evangelism were valid, they did not destroy the universality or catholicity of the church.⁴⁰³ They did not belong to the essence of the church.⁴⁰⁴ The nation was not a "*notae ecclesiae*."⁴⁰⁵ It was, according to Sasse intentional, that the Reformers differentiated the church from the *Volk*, like the two realms concept, it was to ensure that the church remained committed to its task of proclaiming the gospel.⁴⁰⁶ The church could exist, where nation and *Volk* did not exist, Sasse used the multicultural example of the "*Imperium Romanum*," especially in its large cosmopolitan cities and pointed to the social reality of the New Testament church.⁴⁰⁷ Otherwise, Sasse argued, one would have to believe in the

³⁹⁹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 9.

⁴⁰⁰ "Darum muß die Volkssprache zur Sprache des Gottesdienstes werden." Sasse, *Das Volk*, 9.

⁴⁰¹ "Das Wort Gottes kann man nur in der Volkssprache verkünden, oder es bleibt ohne Wirkung." Sasse, *Das Volk*, 9.

⁴⁰² Hermann Sasse, "Ecclesia Migrans" in Hermann Sasse, *In Satu Confessionis: Gesammelte Aufsätze von Hermann Sasse*, ed. Friederich Wilhelm Hopf (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1966), 340–41.

⁴⁰³ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 10.

⁴⁰⁴ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 10.

⁴⁰⁵ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 12.

⁴⁰⁶ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 11.

⁴⁰⁷ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 11.

eternity of the nation.⁴⁰⁸ The definition of the church in the confessions was always theological and not anthropological or sociological.⁴⁰⁹ The specific language or cultural traditions did not make it impossible to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel.⁴¹⁰ In this sense, Sasse denied that there was an *Artgemäße*, appropriate for the kind, version of the faith.⁴¹¹ There was only a true or false version of faith.⁴¹² Faith being the work of the Holy Spirit, was not biological or hereditary.⁴¹³ “In this concept of church, man as an individual or as a nation can never maintain a role of founding or helping to found the church.”⁴¹⁴ This gave the Reformers great flexibility to allow various social manifestations of the church to exist next to each other.⁴¹⁵

Even though the confessions focused on the church, they did not ignore the world or humanity living within this world.⁴¹⁶ Both were still understood and explained in their relation to God, on the one hand by being God’s creation and on the other by God’s ongoing preservation after the fall of man.⁴¹⁷ The concept of preservation, according to Sasse, played a considerable role in the Lutheran understanding and faith in God.⁴¹⁸ God’s reign over the world was revealed in this preservation of the fallen creation right up to the last judgment day.⁴¹⁹ It is the time of God’s

⁴⁰⁸ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 12.

⁴⁰⁹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 12.

⁴¹⁰ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 13. CA VII.1–4 in Kolb and Wengert, 42.

⁴¹¹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 13.

⁴¹² Sasse, *Das Volk*, 13.

⁴¹³ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 14.

⁴¹⁴ “In diesem Kirchenbegriff kann der Mensch als Individuum oder als Volk niemals eine die Kirche begründende oder mitbegründende Rolle spielen.” Sasse, *Das Volk*, 14.

⁴¹⁵ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 15.

⁴¹⁶ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 16.

⁴¹⁷ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 16.

⁴¹⁸ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 17.

⁴¹⁹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 17.

patience. Sasse critically viewed the focus on creation, creation orders, and creation faith during his time because most people ignored the connection of creation to the end and judgment day.⁴²⁰ Creation was not eternal.⁴²¹

“God’s preserving grace, God’s patience reveals itself in the unbreakable orders, with which he rules the World.”⁴²² These divine orders were first the natural orders, like the change of seasons, or of day and night (Gen. 8:22. and Ap 16, 7).⁴²³ These remained valid and true until they come to an end in the new world, in which there will be no night. (Rev. 21:23).⁴²⁴ Marriage belonged to these natural orders because man and wife are to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28).⁴²⁵ But in marriage, these natural orders touched on the second level of orders called the legal orders (Ap 23, 6).⁴²⁶ Sasse pointed out that only in this context of marriage do the confessions use the terminology of natural law.⁴²⁷ He suggested that they consciously decline to use this term in connection with other orders of human life, which are the *ordinationes civiles* the public legal orders that are divided into the *oeconomia* and the *politia*.⁴²⁸ The economic orders include marriage and family in their civil legal dimension and the economy including work, possession, economy, etc.⁴²⁹ The political orders in the strict sense include the political, legal

⁴²⁰ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 17.

⁴²¹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 17.

⁴²² “Gottes erhaltende Gnade, Gottes Geduld offenbart sich in den unverbrüchlichen Ordnungen, durch die er die Welt regiert.” Sasse, *Das Volk*, 17.

⁴²³ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 17.

⁴²⁴ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 18.

⁴²⁵ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 18.

⁴²⁶ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 18.

⁴²⁷ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 18.

⁴²⁸ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 19.

⁴²⁹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 19.

institutions, government, legislation and jurisdiction, *Strafgewalt*, war, and *Staatsführung*.⁴³⁰ Sasse emphasized that these orders were not developed into a complete system by the confessions or Luther, even though Luther did unfold parts of the ideas in his explanation to the fourth Commandment in the Large Catechism and later Lutheran ethicists spoke of the “*triplex ordo*.”⁴³¹ The main question was, what within these orders could be recognized as divine.⁴³² What was important first of all was that Sasse differentiated between the second level of divine orders as such and the human orders that are developed in the concrete local situation.⁴³³ The Augsburg Confession Article 16 speaks of “*legitimae ordinationes*” that are to be respected, and this implies that some of the human orders are no longer legitimate nor wanted by God.⁴³⁴ The qualification of legitimate orders is similar to the “*clausula Petri*” (Acts 5:29) and the “*iure bellum*,” just war criteria as limitations on these orders.⁴³⁵ The legal orders were limited just like the natural orders in that they only belonged within the time frame between the fallen world and the judgment day.⁴³⁶

A further question that Sasse pursued was the issue around these orders being linked to the original creation so that they were valid even before the fall of man.⁴³⁷ It is unnecessary to repeat Sasse’s explanation of the *Urgeschichte*, which was covered in his essay on the state above. The main point was that creation, and the fall of man were not limited to the chronological beginning

⁴³⁰ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 19.

⁴³¹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 19. Sasse points in a footnote to Werner Elert’s description of this concept and its critique in Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums II* (München: Beck, 1932), 49–65.

⁴³² Sasse, *Das Volk*, 19.

⁴³³ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 19.

⁴³⁴ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 19.

⁴³⁵ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 20.

⁴³⁶ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 20.

⁴³⁷ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 21.

of human nature as they were still happening currently.⁴³⁸ We believed in the reality of creation and the fall due to the word of God as statements of faith.⁴³⁹ Therefore, Sasse argued against developing a chronological first history, in which one then traced the various orders.⁴⁴⁰ Instead, it was only possible to refer to the inner connection of the individual orders to creation and the fall of man, whereby we are dependent on scripture to guide us.⁴⁴¹ For Sasse, all orders must be aligned to both creation and the fall.⁴⁴² It was not possible to differentiate between creation orders and preservation orders.⁴⁴³ Initially, the natural orders are deemed to be independent of the fall, but Sasse quoted many passages to highlight the connection.⁴⁴⁴ Even though most of the legal orders were limited to after fall, the link via the concept of the government being an extension of the role of the father connected it to before the fall.⁴⁴⁵ Sasse, therefore, said one should best not even use the term creation orders; he pointed out that they were not used in the confessions.⁴⁴⁶ The order of the state was also not directly linked to creation, and even the term preservation order was misleading, according to Sasse.⁴⁴⁷ The question was, what was being preserved, the world, or just the fallen world. Sasse suggested that theology should go back to

⁴³⁸ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 21.

⁴³⁹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 21.

⁴⁴⁰ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 21.

⁴⁴¹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 21.

⁴⁴² Sasse, *Das Volk*, 22.

⁴⁴³ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 22. See Grünhagen who suggest, that Sasse preferred to call the orders preservation orders. Grünhagen, “Biographische Annäherung,” in Klän, 241. She quotes Sasse from the appendix to the first part, “Offenbarung Gottes und Philosophie der Menschen: Theologie und Religionswissenschaft,” in Hermann Sasse, *Sacra Scriptura: Studien zur Lehre von der Heiligen Schrift*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Hermannsburg: Lutherische Blätter, 1981) 186–7. Sasse speaking about the validity of orders, said, that whether to call the orders creation orders or not, was beside the point in this context.

⁴⁴⁴ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 22.

⁴⁴⁵ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 22.

⁴⁴⁶ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 22.

⁴⁴⁷ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 22.

the old terminology of divine orders or God's orders.⁴⁴⁸

Remarkably Sasse only, on page 23, got to discussing the role of the *Volk* nation.⁴⁴⁹ He maintained the concept of *Volk* nation did not belong within the teaching of the orders.⁴⁵⁰ The *Volk* was obviously connected to these orders, but it did not belong to the orders themselves.⁴⁵¹ The *Volk* existed within these orders, and no *Volk* can exist without them.⁴⁵² But these orders existed before and independently of the *Volk*, just as there was human existence outside of the *Volk*.⁴⁵³ Sasse highlighted the heresy when one deduced the law and government from the existence of the *Volk*.⁴⁵⁴ The *Urgeschichte*, prehistory of man, and the history of the destruction of *Völker* clearly show that human existence was not dependent on the presence of a *Volk*.⁴⁵⁵ Sasse pleaded that one should stop talking of *Volk* as a creation order.⁴⁵⁶ He said that one would miss the concept's significance when one looked for the origin in the wrong place.⁴⁵⁷

Again, it is unnecessary to repeat Sasse's theory of the origin of a *Volk*, as discussed above in the section on the state. He highlighted the contingency of history and its effect of perpetual change and contrasted this with the continuity of the natural and legal orders.⁴⁵⁸ Even if the concrete laws might change with time, the norms of the decalogue remained.⁴⁵⁹ The order of the

⁴⁴⁸ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 22.

⁴⁴⁹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 23.

⁴⁵⁰ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 23.

⁴⁵¹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 23.

⁴⁵² Sasse, *Das Volk*, 23.

⁴⁵³ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 23.

⁴⁵⁴ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 23.

⁴⁵⁵ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 24.

⁴⁵⁶ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 24.

⁴⁵⁷ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 24.

⁴⁵⁸ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 24.

⁴⁵⁹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 25.

Volk was always in movement.⁴⁶⁰ It was a very particular and individual manifestation that depended on several influences and powers to create a new identity of community that was always unique.

Remarkably Sasse described the emergence of the concept of the German *Volk* in the “national revolution of the year 1933” as being something that was not shared with other nations and was not built upon the long, illustrious history of the German nation.⁴⁶¹ There were nations that emphasize the role of race within their concept of *Volk*.⁴⁶² There were others that did not. There was no definition or concept of *Volk* that has been valid throughout history.⁴⁶³ Therefore one should not be surprised that neither the New Testament nor the confessions had canonized their concept of first or 16th-century concept of *Volk* for all times.⁴⁶⁴

The Christian faith recognized that God was the God of history and stood behind the seemingly arbitrary direction of history.⁴⁶⁵ It recognized the intimate relationship of God and the *Volk*.⁴⁶⁶ *Volk* was a vocation because it was linked to the call by God.⁴⁶⁷ The *Volk* did not exist because of any natural elements that were part of the natural orders, but by the call of God that reached it in history.⁴⁶⁸ Sasse explained that obviously, there were natural elements that existed,

⁴⁶⁰ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 25.

⁴⁶¹ “... seit der nationalen Revolution des Jahres 1933,” Sasse, *Das Volk*, 26. Sasse warns using the term revolution lightly. It is significant that Sasse in 1934 is brave enough to describe the ascent to power of the NSDAP with this term.

⁴⁶² Sasse, *Das Volk*, 26.

⁴⁶³ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 26.

⁴⁶⁴ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 26.

⁴⁶⁵ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 26.

⁴⁶⁶ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 26.

⁴⁶⁷ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 27.

⁴⁶⁸ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 27.

but they could not form the foundation of the existence of the *Volk*.⁴⁶⁹ If they were the condition of the *Volk*, it would be virtually impossible for any *Volk* to be formed, limited possibly to prehistoric times.⁴⁷⁰ The naturalist view was, to a certain degree, according to Sasse, a legitimate reaction to the idealistic view.⁴⁷¹ Christians took creation seriously—Sasse pointed to the bodily resurrection.⁴⁷² The Bible also knows the concepts of blessing and curse in hereditary transmission—Sasse pointed to the concept of original sin.⁴⁷³

God’s call in the specific historical situation highlighted not only the beginning of a nation, but was relevant also for its end as a nation which would come as a result of the rejection of this nation by God.⁴⁷⁴ This consequence of the judgment by God cannot be prevented by a level of culture or the nobility of race.⁴⁷⁵ The secret of the *Volk* was the strange “us” as *Volksgemeinschaft*, which is a collective personality made possible by God’s call.⁴⁷⁶ “This call to a certain historical vocation as a *Volk*, share the same blessing and curse, carry the same guilt, and are dependent on the same grace and will one day—specifically as *Volk*—will be judged by God.”⁴⁷⁷

Sasse used Paul’s sermon on the Areopagus to explain the history of the nations.⁴⁷⁸ All

⁴⁶⁹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 27.

⁴⁷⁰ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 27.

⁴⁷¹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 27.

⁴⁷² Sasse, *Das Volk*, 27.

⁴⁷³ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 27.

⁴⁷⁴ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 28.

⁴⁷⁵ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 28.

⁴⁷⁶ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 28.

⁴⁷⁷ “... sind vor Gott eins durch den ‘Beruf’ zu einer geschichtlichen Sendung, haben teil an demselben Segen und demselben Fluch, tragen gemeinsam dieselbe Schuld, sind angewiesen auf dasselbe Erbarmen und werden einst—gerade auch als Volk—von Gott gerichtet werden.” Sasse, *Das Volk*, 28.

⁴⁷⁸ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 29.

nations originated from one blood. The various nations were to find and serve God. He had been patient with the nations whilst they fell into idolatry. Now the new nation was to be called in Christ. Sasse connected all nations, even those that had disappeared before the incarnation, to Christ.⁴⁷⁹ The relationship to Christ gave the nation purpose and unity. God's call to repentance was a call to all nations to be united in the new nation of the church, which was the truest and real *Volk* because in it, the true essence of the *Volk* was fulfilled: "You will be my people, and I will be your God."⁴⁸⁰

The function of the church within a nation was not similar to a cultural institute that tried to improve or uplift a nation, but it was rather about the very existence of the nation as a nation.⁴⁸¹ It was about constantly making the call of God audible. The place where that happened was in the church. Therefore, it was existentially important for the nation to have the church visible in its *notae ecclesiae* in its midst.⁴⁸²

Criticism of Apartheid

Hopf and Sasse would not attach any theological significance to the category of race. They accepted race as an anthropological category. Sasse, in a sermon dated June 18, 1939, the second Sunday after Trinity, argued against the premise of the French Revolution that all people were equal.⁴⁸³ However, Sasse did not dwell on the differences visible between races but emphasized the equality of all people as being sinners before God and dependent on God's mercy. In his essay on the nation as a category, Sasse would explain that race was not necessary to create a

⁴⁷⁹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 29.

⁴⁸⁰ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 29.

⁴⁸¹ Sasse, *Das Volk*, 30.

⁴⁸² Sasse, *Das Volk*, 30.

⁴⁸³ Hermann Sasse, *Zeugnisse: Erlanger Predigten und Vorträge vor Gemeinden 1933–1944* (Erlangen: Martin Luther, 1979), 117–25.

nation or people.

1937 in a criticism of the German Christians, Sasse pointed out that the members of the ecumenical movement were aware of the racial ideologies prevalent in South Africa and the US. Sasse wrote a letter to Hopf before Hopf traveled to South Africa for the first time in 1956. In this letter, Sasse stated that no Lutheran pastor could support the apartheid ideology.⁴⁸⁴ Hopf had unfortunately misplaced this letter, and it is deemed lost. But Hopf had shown it to certain people and referred to it in the conflict with the missionaries in 1977. Both Hopf and Sasse argued from an ecclesiological perspective that race, segregation, or cultural categories could not have a determining role to play in the church. The church would otherwise forfeit its independence and freedom, which it derives by depending on Christ alone. Sasse argued against the concepts of creation orders and the idealization of race, culture, and nation as if these categories could save the world. He was willing to recognize some value and meaning in the various classifications, but not when they marginalized the word of God in law and gospel.

Sasse's assessment of the state and government could have been a good template to work off, to assess the apartheid government in its function to uphold peace and ensure justice. His assessment was very similar to the Umpumulo memorandum discussed in the fourth chapter.

⁴⁸⁴ Dr. E.A.W. Weber, interviewed by C.D. Weber, in September 2016. Question: "What did you missionaries think of Sasse's assessment, that no Lutheran Pastor could support Apartheid?" Answer: "We missionaries thought that Sasse was wrong in his assessment of Apartheid."

CHAPTER FOUR

FRIEDERICH WILHELM HOPF

Introduction

Reading the signs of the times implied that one had to be aware of one's context. Hopf was placed into the context of apartheid by his call to become the mission director of the Mission of Hanoverian Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (MHELF). However, at first the specific context of the mission directed Hopf's attention to the issue of the independence of the church. Hopf's own experience with the unification of the church in Germany was an important template, that he would use again in the issues he faced in South Africa. Within this process, Hopf sharpened many of his ideas about the church, which would be applied to the problem of apartheid in later years. His understanding of *CA 7* and its application in South Africa would give this discussion a very confessional alignment.

This chapter will attempt to describe this process. After a short biographical history, the context of independence within the broader framework of the general mission and the specific situation in the MHELF at the time of Hopf's call to become mission director is described. The following section in the chapter unpacks Hopf's ecclesiology and the consequences for his missiology. The chapter then describes various aspects of the apartheid policy or aspects of segregation practiced in South Africa and how these impacted the work of the mission. The following section then moves to the period in which Hopf became more and more vocal about his opposition to apartheid. This, unfortunately, also led to the end of his career as mission director. After his retirement, Hopf published a summary of the conflict about apartheid in the context of the MELF. In contrast to Meister's presentation in Durban, this document is possibly the most explicit condemnation of apartheid in the mission. Whereas the obscurity of Meister's

presentation from public discourse in the mission perhaps allowed those ideas to be perpetuated in South Africa for several years unchallenged, Hopf's retirement and being sidelined in the public discourse in the context of the Bleckmar mission in Germany and South Africa silenced his voice and possibly allowed apartheid to go on unchallenged within the LCSA, FELSISA, and SELK for many years.

Biographical Background

Friederich Wilhelm Hopf was born on May 31, 1910, in Melsungen.¹ His father Wilhelm Hopf (1842–1921) had married his second wife, Frieda Hopf nee Deichmann (1882–1968). F.W. Hopf was the only child of this marriage, but he had eight stepsiblings from the first marriage. Both his father, who was an extraordinary pastor in the *Renitenten Kirche Ungeänderter Augsburgischer Konfession* and F.W. Hopf's mother were related to A.F.C. Vilmar. The close connection to Vilmar is also theological as Vilmar became the mentor for the free church in Hesse. Wilhelm Hopf was the editor of the *Hessischen Blätter*, a newsletter regularly quoted in the *Missionsblatt*, the mission journal in Bleckmar of the MHELF. One of F.W. Hopf's older stepbrothers fought in the Second Anglo Boer War on the side of the Boers in the Utrecht Commando.² The *Missionsblatt* gave regular updates about the war's progress, and they made no secret out of the fact that they supported the Boers. F.W. Hopf learned to appreciate the theological commitment to the Lutheran Confessions and the importance and relevancy of contemporary issues for the church from his father.³ As a teenager, F.W. Hopf had contributed to

¹ No author: "Friederich Wilhelm Hopf: Lebenslauf" in *Lutherische Blätter* 35 (1982/83): 131–39.

² Conrad Dreves, "Anmerkungen zu 'Die Zuluk...: beschrieben von Missionskandidat Johannes Schroeder,'" *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-luth Freikirche* 2, no. 5 (1900): 43.

³ Dominik Bohne, *Friederich Wilhelm Hopf 1910–1982: Pfarrer, Kirchenpolitiker, Theologischer Publizist, Mann der Mission* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2001), 5.

the Newsletter of the MHELF, and from 1925–1930 he published the *Melsunger Missionsbrief an die jungen Freunde der Mission*. He was 15 years old when he started to publish that newsletter. He studied in Erlangen and then worked in the Bavarian Lutheran Church until his dismissal in 1949. His church in Hessa did not have space for him, and he was granted leave to join the Bavarian Lutheran Church. F.W. Hopf was vicar in Coburg in 1932, then became *Pfarrverweser* parish curate in Lonnersstadt, and city vicar in Aschaffenburg (1933–1936). After which, he became pastor of the congregation in Mühlhausen. Before the establishment of the EKD, just after the Second World War, the Old Lutherans (*Altlutheraner*) were in church fellowship with the Bavarian Lutheran Church. Due to F.W. Hopf's resistance against incorporating the Bavarian Lutheran Church into the *Evangelische Kirche Deutschland* Evangelical Church Germany (EKD), he was dismissed from the ministry and requested together with a part of the congregation in Mühlhausen to be accepted into the SELK.⁴ He then became the Mission director of the Mission of Evangelical Lutheran Free Churches in Bleckmar until his retirement (1950–1978).

F.W. Hopf had worked and published a fair deal on issues of ecclesiology, focusing on the subject of freedom of the church within the church struggle.⁵ During this time, the main points

⁴ For a description of these conflicts after 1945 see: Hans–Siegfried Huß, “Friederich Wilhelm Hopf: Evangelisch–Lutherischer Pfarrer zu Mühlhausen / Oberfranken (1936–1951),” in: *Unter einem Christus sein und 158traiten. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Friederich Wilhelm Hopf, D.D.*, ed. J. Schöne and V. Stolle (Erlangen: Ev.–Luth. Mission, 1980), 208–12.

⁵ For a general bibliography of Hopf refer to Rudolf Keller, “Ausgewählte Bibliographie Friederich Wilhelm Hopf,” in: *Unter einem Christus sein und streiten: Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Friederich Wilhelm Hopf, D.D.*, ed. J. Schöne and V. Stolle (Erlangen: Ev.–Luth. Mission, 1980), 221–23; Friederich Wilhelm Hopf, *Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 385–8; See F.W. Hopf, “Die Freiheit der Kirche” *Lutherische Kirche* (1936): 117–19, reprinted in Hopf, “Freiheit der Kirche” in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012) 52–55.

for his ecclesiology that would become important for his understanding of mission were crystallized. He stood in the tradition of A.F. Vilmar, just as his father had, and would also refer to Löhe as a theological authority in church and altar fellowship questions. His friendship with Professor Hermann Sasse and Professor Arno Lehmann would also prove to be significant. F.W. Hopf had a long history connecting him to the mission.⁶ He was the publisher of the *Jahrbuch für Mission* Yearbook of mission in 1947/48, was the chairman of the Bavarian Mission Conference since 1942, and was also a member of the directorate for the *Evangelisch Lutherischer Zentralverein für Mission unter Israel* Evangelical Lutheran Central Association for Mission under Israel. So, by the time he was called to succeed, pastor Adolf Blanke, the mission inspector of the MHELF Hopf, was a proven man of the mission. His efforts were directed to unite the various Lutheran Free Churches in their combined mission outreach and to lead the young South African church to independence. These efforts were strongly influenced by his experience of the confessional battles he had fought in Mühlhausen. His criticism of apartheid marked the last years of his career. This was especially the case after the Soweto Uprising in 1976, after which Hopf dealt with the issue of ideology and the sin of racial segregation within the church and the state. For him, apartheid constituted a “*status confessionis*.” He was controversial in his church and mission in this respect. Still, he did not withdraw from the conflict but instead viewed it as his responsibility to appeal to take the Lutheran co-responsibility for the Christian witness seriously.

⁶ Huß, “Hopf,” in Schöne, 206–7.

The Context of the Mission

Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen (MELF) after the Second World War⁷

The work of the MELF virtually came to a complete halt in Germany in the years before and during the Second World War.⁸ The last missionaries were sent out in 1937, and the newsletter *Missionsblatt* had to stop being published in 1939. In 1943 the work in Germany ended. The war, in that sense, drew an unmistakable line in the history of the German mission. The question was whether the work of the mission would be taken up again and how this task should be done after the war.⁹

The MELF, since its inception, had understood itself as a church mission that wanted to be carried by the church, and the various free churches that supported the mission also wanted to express their conviction that mission belonged to the essence of the church. What was later claimed at the Mission Conferences in New Delhi and Accra, namely the integration of church and mission, was already realized in principle by the MELF from its beginning. When the support base of the MELF was extended in 1950, the work could not only be taken up but could be substantially extended again.¹⁰ Pastor Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf was called to the MELF with

⁷ From 1982–1950 the Mission was known as *Mission der Hannoverschen Evangelisch Lutherischen Freikirche* (MHELFL), from 1950–1989 the name was *Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen* (MELF), since 1989 it is known as *Lutherische Kirchenmission (Bleckmarer Mission)* (LKM). Refer to Volker Stolle, *Im Tiefen Tal: Die Bleckmarer Mission Während des Dritten Reiches* (Groß Oesingen: Lutherischen Buchhandlung, 1986). Refer to Johannes Junker, *Zeichen, Zeiten, Tage, Und Jahre 1892–1992: Hundert Jahre Lutherische Kirchenmission (Bleckmarer Mission)* (Groß Oesingen: Lutherischen Buchhandlung, 1992). F.W. Hopf, “Missionsbericht für die Kirchensynode,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 65, no.8/9 (August and September, 1973): 171–73.

⁸ Stolle, *Tiefen Tal*, 9–18; and 28–32.

⁹ Refer to F.W. Hopf, “Dank an Arno Lehmann zum 23. Mai 1981,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 73, no.6 (June 1981): 132.

¹⁰ Initially the MHELFL had been supported by the Hannoverian ev.Luth. Freechurch, the Independent ev.Luth Church of hessian countries, and the Renitent church of unchanged Augsburg Confession, and the Free Ev.Luth. Synod in South Africa. In 1950 the Ev.Luth Church (Old Lutherans) and the Ev.Luth. Free Church joined the support. This combined work in the mission was an important impulse for the unification of these churches that led to the establishment of the SELK (Independent Ev.Luth. Church) in 1976.

the following tasks, advertising the mission work in Germany, taking care of the relations with the mission field, publishing the newsletter, and representing the MELF in the general Missions conference. In 1951 he also became the theological teacher and leader of the mission seminary in Bleckmar, which was reopened, and he was inducted in the office of the mission inspector.¹¹ On the mission field in South Africa, the position of mission superintendent was immediately established in 1892 when the congregations broke away from Hermannsburg. The Mission superintendent had the ecclesiastical power over the congregations of the MELF. The first intake of students at the mission seminary in Bleckmar after the Second World War was in 1948. That first intake completed the studies in 1955 and was sent out to South Africa. Several candidates who had studied at different institutions were sent out as missionaries of the MELF between 1946 and 1955.¹²

In South Africa, the mission work was confronted with various new challenges. In 1932 first initial steps were taken to start work in Swaziland with the establishment of the mission station in Itjelejuba on the border of Swaziland. Apart from Swaziland, the large area in Msinga in the vicinity of Enhlanhleni, where the new seminary was later established in 1955, posed a large heathen community of traditional African societies. But apart from this rural outreach to heathens, the work in the cities became more and more urgent. Many of the church members had moved to cities, and the new urban areas became a primary focus of the mission. A large church was built in Sophiatown in 1943 by missionary Schnell and in Piet Retief in 1935 by mission superintendent Christoph Johannes. The work on the so-called Goldfield around Johannesburg became the focus of the mission work. Before the seminary began in Enhlanhleni, an evangelist

¹¹ The designation of mission inspector changed to mission director in 1971.

¹² Refer to F.W. Hopf, "Missionsbericht für die Kirchensynode" in *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 65, no.8/9 (August and September 1973): 173. Junker, *Zeichen*, 52.

seminary was established in Salem near Piet Retief by Johannes, and Meister was called as the first teacher in 1941. By 1948 twenty evangelists had finished their studies there.¹³ Even though there had been substantial progress in the mission until the end of the Second World War, many missionaries were close to retirement age or past it already. The work was expanded in the next few years. The mission work among the Indian community that had started with missionary Weinert in Glencoe was then taken up in Durban by missionary Johannes Schulz. Some missionaries were sent to Australia and Brazil; later, others were sent to Swaziland and Botswana. A significant aspect of the mission work was the works of mercy in the hospitals. The mission sent out nurses and doctors to the hospitals owned by the MELF. The MELF and its missionaries and pastors of the LCSA had been closely involved with the translation projects of the Book of Concord (BOC) in Zulu and in Tswana. The MELF and LCSA also were involved in Bible translations into Kalanga and Zulu.

Independence of the Churches on the Mission Field

Peter Beyerhaus wrote his dissertation on the topic *Die Selbständigkeit der jungen Kirche als missionarisches Problem* The independence of the young church as a missional problem, at a time after the Second World War when the issue was very acute.¹⁴ Even though the problem is not a uniquely modern issue, it formed part of a more significant independence movement after the war, including political freedom from colonial powers. Often the discussion on the independence of the churches ran parallel and interconnected to the political activities striving for independence. It is probably not surprising that issues of administration and finance then

¹³ Junker, *Zeichen*, 41.

¹⁴ Peter Beyerhaus, *Die Selbständigkeit der jungen Kirche als missionarisches Problem* (Wuppertal: Rheinischen Missions Gesellschaft, 1956).

often dominated the discussion when possibly ecclesiological matters were at stake instead.

The Topic of Independence Within the MELF

From the end of the Second World War until the synod of the LCSA in Roodeport in 1967, when the LCSA was constituted, the topic of independence was widely discussed within the MELF. Important dates within this discussion were the trips to South Africa by Pastor F.W. Hopf in 1956, 1966 before the synod, and 1974 which was obviously after the synod. The trips to Germany by African Christians Nun Mokone 1957, Isachaar Dube, and Frans Segoe 1967 were significant. The synod in Salem of 1956 was a crucial convention as principles of independence were discussed and agreed upon. The first steps to independence were taken much earlier, but they were often accompanied by processes that worked against the realization of autonomy.¹⁵ The process was, therefore, not just gradual and progressive all the time. Until 1967 the work of the mission in South Africa was organized as several individual Mission stations that constituted the church together with the aligned congregations.¹⁶ These congregations were not independent. The area that the MELF worked in was divided into two population groups the Tswana and Zulu. The distance between the mission stations was significant, and one can probably assume that the various members of the congregations did not share a collective identity. Later on, the collection of Zulu and Tswana-speaking congregations in the urban areas of Johannesburg and the combined seminary training at Enhlanhleni of all its future pastors would lead to the formation of regional districts or dioceses rather than language or ethnic boundaries of the LCSA.

From the beginning every missionary trained catechists who did a great deal of the

¹⁵ Refer to Aaron Ntuli, *Umlando ngePella*, in *Fundisani ukugcina konke okuyalwa nguKristu okwaseNhlanhleni 2*, ed. Ernst Alfred Wilhelm Weber (Pretoria: Lutheran Heritage Foundation, 2007), 75–76.

¹⁶ Schulz talks of a mentality of the mission station. Georg Schulz, “Der Weg zur Kirchwerdung,” in *Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission: Festschrift zum 75jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Bleckmar: MELF, 1976), 112.

missionary work together with teachers. This training on an individual basis would not suffice forever, so the missionaries wanted to organize good theological training for local co-workers.¹⁷ The catechists or evangelists were gathered at co-worker meetings for fellowship and further training.¹⁸ It took a long time for the establishment of a seminary for evangelists. It was only established in 1941 in Salem, and then the seminary moved to Enhlanhleni in 1955. But Schulz pointed out that the training of evangelists and pastors was one of the most critical prerequisites or conditions for establishing an independent church.¹⁹ Remarkably during this whole time, the candidates of the FELSISA or the MELF had to study in Germany. This possibly reflected the German emphasis on culturally specific training and prevented the mission from sending promising African students overseas to study. The first African pastor in the MELF, Piet Mokone, was ordained in 1918. At the synodical convention of 1956, there were only two African ordained pastors. The lack of suitably trained co-workers was always felt, and it probably remains an area where more research can be made to determine the various factors of why so few Africans were ordained.²⁰ The African pastors were not involved in the joint meetings and conferences of the FELSISA pastors and the MELF missionaries. They were also not involved in the forum discussing the possibility of joining the various Lutheran Churches and Missions in South Africa in 1953.²¹

¹⁷ Schulz, "Weg," in Hopf, 105.

¹⁸ The first convention of was held in 1914. See Schulz, "Weg," in Hopf, 105. The FELSISA pastors had been meeting in conventions and meetings with the missionaries since 1892.

¹⁹ Schulz, "Weg," in Hopf, 107.

²⁰ Schulz lists a few other names of people that were ordained and mentions that the criteria of 'faithfulness and probation' remained critical for the missionaries in assessing the suitability of the candidates, Schulz, "Weg," in Hopf, 108-9.

²¹ Schlyter refers to a new effort of the Executive Committee of the Cooperating Lutheran Missions (CLM) to invite the Hermannsburg Mission and the MHELF to cooperate. Both did not respond according to Schlyter:

In an essay by missionary Heinrich Prigge, who later became the first superintendent of the MHELF, while he was still working in the Hermannsburg mission in 1888, wrote that the independence of the mission congregations as a church was the apparent goal of mission work.²² These sentiments were widely shared at conferences. Since 1905 all financial contributions from the congregations would be used for their benefit, so that the congregations would be able to be self-sustaining.²³ Especially in the 1920s, the topic of independence dominated the meetings of the conferences and convocations. Between 1919 and 1926, drafts of church and congregational constitutions were drawn up. The minutes of the meetings confirm that missionaries presumed that the church would be independent within a few years.²⁴ Ntuli suggested that 1928 was the targeted year; however, the crisis around the issue of pastor Nxumlao in 1926 brought these plans to an end.²⁵ Remarkably, the missionaries had apparently said they would leave the church to allow the local leadership to take over. The missionaries were probably thinking of moving on to new areas.²⁶

After so much had been planned and put in place, it still took a long time until 1967 for the church to be declared independent. Early voices among the missionaries warned that the Africans were not ready to carry the burden of independence. The young Christians had not been

“probably because these missions had no real constitutions but were patriarchally ruled by the white missionaries.” Herman Schlyter, *The History of the Co-Operating Lutheran Missions in Natal 1912–1951* (Durban: Lutheran, 1953), 58.

²² For background to Prigge see: Hans-Jürgen Oschadleus, “Der Lutherische Heidenmissionar als Mensch: Heinrich C. Prigge im Dienst der Hermannsburger und der Bleckmarer Mission,” in *Kirchenmission nach Lutherischem Verständnis: Vorträge zum 100jährigen Jubiläum der Lutherischen Kirchenmission (Bleckmarer Mission)*, ed. V. Stolle (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1993), 75–76.

²³ Schulz mentions, that in the minutes of this meeting the mention of an independent church was made for the first time, Schulz, “Weg,” in Hopf, 109–10.

²⁴ Schulz, “Weg,” in Hopf, 110–11.

²⁵ Ntuli, *Umlando ngePella*, 75.

²⁶ Schulz, “Weg,” in Hopf, 110.

permeated by Christianity enough, and the threat of apostasy was too significant.²⁷ But Ntuli pointed out that the pastors Nyandeni and Mkhalihi also warned mission superintendent Johannes in 1926 not to proceed with the intended independence. They referred to the animosity between black and white and the role Nxumalo played in driving these sentiments.²⁸ The challenge of pastor Nxumalo leaving the church in Pella with around 1700 congregants in 1926 put an end to any and all attempts at establishing independence. On the other hand, the German congregations that had broken away from Hermannsburg in 1892 were established as independent congregations gathered in the synod of the FELSISA. After they were sent out from Germany, the missionaries Hellberg, Stielau, and Schwarz, soon took calls to take care of the German congregations and, adjacent to that work, also took care of African congregants in segregated services. It might be interesting to investigate if these German congregations had set a certain standard for independence in the minds of the missionaries in the way they had established their congregations and churches.

Within the broader South African context, many Africans left the mainline churches at the beginning of the 20th century and joined African Independent Churches (AIC). These AICs were then again the negative foil and negative example for the missionaries to be extra careful not to rush the pursuit of independence.

²⁷ See Oltmann, "Vom Arbeitsfeld draußen," in *Missionsblatt der Hannoverschen Evang-Lutherischen Freikirche* 1, no. 1 (January 1899): 4; Prigge claimed that the Africans were lacking civilization to receive independence. It would probably be worth while researching how the perception of sin and the sinfulness of man from the Hermannsburg awakening and pietism had a negative effect on the way missionaries viewed Africans, Oschadleus, "Prigge," in Stolle, 76.

²⁸ Ntuli, *Umlando ngePella*, 76.

The Ecclesiology of Hopf and the Consequences for His Approach to Mission

Lutheran Mission Must Lead to Lutheran Church

At the 75th anniversary of the MELF in 1967, Hopf gave the foundational presentation *Lutherische Kirche treibt Lutherische Mission* Lutheran Church does Lutheran Mission.²⁹ The two programmatic sentences developed by Pastor Heinrich Wilhelm Gerhold of Verden on June 18, 1889, designated the confessional character of the MELF.³⁰ *Lutherische Kirche kann nur lutherische Mission treiben* Lutheran Church can only do Lutheran Mission and *Lutherische Mission kann nur von einer lutherischen Kirche getrieben werden* Lutheran Mission can only be done by a Lutheran Church. In 1953, so just after Hopf had joined the Mission in Bleckmar, a third sentence was added to signify the confessional character of the young church. *Lutherische Mission muss zu Lutherischer Kirche führen* Lutheran Mission must lead to Lutheran Church.³¹ For the early fathers of the mission the issue was the perceived danger of the Hannoverian Lutheran Church being undermined by the Prussian Union and losing its identity as Lutheran. Initially, even after the Free Church split from the Hanoverian Lutheran Church one still believed, that one could work together on the mission field. However as time went on the split in Germany had its repercussions on South Africa too and an independent Mission was established.

²⁹ F.W. Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission,” in *Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission: Festschrift zum 75jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Bleckmar: MELF, 1976), 13–47. This is reprinted in Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission,” in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 219–54.

³⁰ Refer to Werner Klän, “Die Fortentwicklung des Missionsimpulses der Erweckung unter den Bedingungen konfessioneller Kirchenbildungen,” in *Kirchenmission nach Lutherischem Verständnis: Vorträge zum 100jährigen Jubiläum der Lutherischen Kirchenmission (Bleckmarer Mission)*, ed. V. Stolle (Münster: Lit., 1993), 5–19; Andrea Grünhagen, *Erweckung und Konfessionelle Bewusstwerdung: Das Beispiel Hermannsburg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Lit., 2010).

³¹ Various, “Erklärung zur Frage nach der Zusammenarbeit lutherischer Missionen in Südafrika (1953),” in *Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission. Festschrift zum 75jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Bleckmar: MELF, 1976), 165–66.

The starting point for Hopf was the ecclesiology based on Augsburg Confession Article 7. The church's teaching and its true unity with all its consequences was the essential foundation for the church's identity, whether that was in Europe or on the mission field in Africa. CA 7 refers to the universal "one holy apostolic church" and not a specific Lutheran manifestation of this church.³² This one church would remain until Christ returned and was a comforting object of our faith, as one confessed in the Apostles Creed, even in the face of perceived reality, that the church had ended or did not exist. The unity of this church across various boundaries was not based on similar rituals or customs but rather in the unity of one gospel, one Christ, one baptism, the sacraments, and being ruled by the one Holy Spirit. Hopf emphasized that this teaching of the church was the foundation for the correct Lutheran understanding of mission. Through word and sacrament, the church was being built, as people who initially had been far from Christ have been incorporated into the holy people of God. Quoting Löhe, Hopf pointed to the fact that the mission was the one church in its movement. This unity overcame the various aspects that might have separated the different nations and people and created one people of God. The confession of faith that there was a universal church was based on the promise of Christ that he was present and active in his church, especially in his means of grace. Therefore the word and the sacraments were the *notae ecclesiae*, the signs of the church by which it could be recognized. The universal holy church could only be identified by these "*notae ecclesiae*." "The binding of the acts of Christ to word and sacrament, determines the service of the church to save lost mankind."³³ The obedience towards the command of Christ was essential, and therefore the responsibility to care

³² Unity and Truth are seen in close correlation. Refer to Sasse, "Die Frage nach der Einheit der Kirche auf dem Missionsfeld," *Jahr Buch des Martin Lutherbundes* (1947): 109–12; F.W. Hopf, *Unsere Verantwortung für die Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche heute* (Stuttgart: Rudolf Helén, 1950), 3–4.

³³ "Die Bindung der Christustaten an Wort und Sakrament bestimmt den Dienst der Kirche zur Rettung verlorener Menschen." Hopf, "Lutherische Kirche," in Hopf, 20.

for the purity of the means of grace was huge. The means of grace were not effective because of the intention, motivation, and piety of the people using them, but due to the promise of Christ. However, that did not absolve the church from taking up the ongoing struggle within the church and mission to make sure these means of grace remained pure. The battle with heresy and the separation from heresy must be executed, even if God's ultimate judgment over heresy would only be revealed on judgment day. This battle with heresy was not only fought at the borders and periphery of the church but rather everywhere where the gospel was proclaimed, and the sacraments were used.³⁴ This was the context where the church needed to prove its true independence.

The Lutheran Church, which defined itself through the *notae ecclesiae*, understood itself as the “one holy church of Jesus Christ in its for us on earth unambiguous recognizable appearance.”³⁵ Two statements clarified this understanding, first there would always be “false Christians, hypocrites, and even public sinners among the righteous,” and second, there were also Christians outside of the Lutheran Church throughout the world.³⁶ The confidence of the unambiguous self-perception was based on the true teaching and the demarcation against heresy. The content of the true teaching was thus defined and clarified; it was not enough to say “no” to heresy; it was also necessary to define what the true gospel was.³⁷ The responsibility for this teaching was not taken by individual pastors or individual congregations for themselves, because the teaching was collected in the confessional writings of the church. The validity of the

³⁴ Hopf, *Unsere Verantwortung*, 4.

³⁵ “die Eine Heilige Kirche Jesu Christi in ihrer für uns auf Erden eindeutig erkennbaren Gestalt.” Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche,” in Hopf, 19. See also Hopf, *Unsere Verantwortung*, 3. Hopf explains the use of the name “Luther” in designating the church by referring to Luther and Vilmar, Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche,” in Hopf, 17.

³⁶ CA VIII.1–3 in Kolb and Wengert, 42.

³⁷ See Hopf, “Die Freiheit der Kirche,” *Lutherische Kirche* (1936): 117–19.

confessions was dependent on their congruence and agreement with scripture. By claiming this congruence, the confessions claimed validity and the need to be accepted by all Christianity.³⁸ Through this congruence, the confessions shared in the “dynamic of the living and powerful word of God.”³⁹ This claim demanded a clear confessional stand.

For Hopf this confessional stand was initially a legal term.⁴⁰ This was because pastors were bound to a specific confession in their ordination vows, and congregations and church bodies were grouped around the confessions. This meant that contradicting confessions could not stand unopposed next to each other in the same body. So that pastors and congregations could adhere to this confessional position, they needed to receive the gift of faith from their Lord Jesus Christ. The prayer for this gift was the first prerequisite of “actual effective confessional commitment (*Bekennnisbindung*).”⁴¹ The second prerequisite this time in the human realm was the confessional commitment of the *Kirchenregiment* church government in its episcopal power.⁴² The church government had to fight for the purity of doctrine on behalf of the whole church and had to defend it against heresy. Hopf referred to the practical experience of the 19th century and how church governments were able to repel various unionistic attempts during the church struggle.

From this self-understanding of the Lutheran Church, Hopf suggested that it was self-explanatory to accept the programmatic first sentence of the MELF as correct. *Lutherische*

³⁸ Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche,” in Hopf, 23. Refer to Sasse’s discussion of the claim of validity of the confessions “in as far as” or “because” of their congruence with scripture. Hermann Sasse, “Quatenus oder Quia,” in Hermann Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis III: Texte zu Union, Bekenntnis, Kirchenkampf und Ökumene*, ed. Werner Klän and Roland Ziegler (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011), 123–28.

³⁹ “Dynamik des lebendigen und kräftigen Gotteswortes.” Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche,” in Hopf, 24.

⁴⁰ *Ein kirchenrechtlicher Begriff*. A church law term.

⁴¹ “An der tatsächlichen Bekenntnisbildung,” Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche,” in Hopf, 24.

⁴² Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche,” in Hopf, 24. Refer to *CA XXVIII*.21–29 in Kolb and Wengert, 94; Hopf, *Unsere Verantwortung*, 6.

Kirche kann nur lutherische Mission treiben Lutheran church can only do Lutheran mission. The Lutheran church recognized the church's responsibility and could therefore not act any differently on the mission field as it would at home in its own country. Even at home, in its own country, the church was not bound by any tradition or culture but rather to its Lord Jesus Christ. "The decision for a confessionally bound Lutheran Mission approach is therefore inseparable from the fundamental ecumenical vantage point of the Lutheran Church."⁴³ Any other approach to mission would call into question the "Lutheran" designation of any church. This confessional consciousness, especially its connection of the church to the confession on the mission field, only really happened in the 19th century in various mission agencies.⁴⁴

The second sentence, *Lutherische Mission kann nur von einer lutherischen Kirche getrieben werden*, Lutheran mission can only be done by a Lutheran church, reflected the fear of the founding fathers of the MELF, that the Hermannsburg Mission would lose its Lutheran identity because of the un-lutheran church of Hannover. The split on the Mission field reflected the lack of confidence in the confessional integrity of the church and mission leadership in Hermannsburg and Hannover.⁴⁵ Hopf pointed out that the sentence did not mean a structure in which a Lutheran church government had to be constituted above the mission legally. Various

⁴³ "Die Entscheidung für eine bekenntnisgebundene lutherische Missionsarbeit ist deshalb nicht zu trennen von der grundsätzlich ökumenischen Blickrichtung der Lutherischen Kirche." Hopf, "Lutherische Kirche," in Hopf, 26. See also Hopf, *Unsere Verantwortung*, 8.

⁴⁴ Refer to Klän, "Fortentwicklung des Missionsimpulses," in Stolle, 5–19, especially 10–13; Volker Stolle, "Das Missionsverständnis bei der konfessionell–lutherischen Missionswirksamkeit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," in *Kirchenmission nach Lutherischem Verständnis: Vorträge zum 100jährigen Jubiläum der Lutherischen Kirchenmission (Bleckmarer Mission)*, ed. V. Stolle (Münster: Lit., 1993), 124–48; Hopf, "Lutherische Kirche," in Hopf, 27–36; Volker Stolle, *Wer seine Hand an den Pflug legt: Die missionarische Wirksamkeit der selbständigen evangelisch–lutherischen Kirchen in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert* (Groß Oesingen: Lutherischen, 1992), 95; Andrea Grünhagen, *Erweckung und Konfessionelle Bewusstwerdung: Das Beispiel Hermannsburg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Lit., 2010).

⁴⁵ See Volker Stolle, "Die Mission der Hannoverschen evangelisch–lutherischen Freikirche als Fortsetzung der Hermannsburger Mission und als Neugründung," in *Kirchenmission nach Lutherischem Verständnis: Vorträge zum 100jährigen Jubiläum der Lutherischen Kirchenmission (Bleckmarer Mission)*, ed. V. Stolle (Münster: Lit., 1993), 47.

historical realities had prevented this from happening.⁴⁶ The MELF was an independent association. Hopf pointed out that in an ideal world, where the church and mission were free from external pressures and influences, it would always be the logical solution to organize the mission as part of the church body. Even though the MELF was an independent association, the churches took over their ecclesiastical responsibility for the mission.

This rather practical alignment of the mission with the church remained secondary, as the most essential was the ecclesiastical alignment by the mutual confessional position. This combined confessional position constituted the fellowship of the mission and the church.

Irrespective of the high significance of a legally perfect confessional stand, the confession of the church remains a living, powerful and active thing because the Holy Spirit works it, and maintains it, and constantly gifts it to the church as an answer to the revelation of God. Mission is only possible where the Holy Spirit “calls people through the gospel, collects, enlightens, sanctifies and keeps in Jesus Christ in the right unifying faith.” Where this happens, people are added to the church of God and added in the pre-existing fellowship of faith and confession.⁴⁷

Hopf quite clearly understood mission as ecclesiastical work, and because the church was always understood from *CA 7*, the certainty of this work lied in the *notae ecclesiae*. The confession, that was, to secure the purity of the means of grace, lost its regulating power if the church government no longer acted according to its task regulated by *CA 28*.⁴⁸ Lutheran mission could no longer integrate into the Lutheran church when the fellowship broke because of the lack of confessional unity. The issue was unity, and only the confessions could determine this unity.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche,” in Hopf, 39–40.

⁴⁷ “Ganz unabhängig von der hohen Bedeutung eines juristisch einwandfreien Bekenntnisstandes, bleibt das Bekenntnis der Kirche immer lebendig, kräftig und wirksam als die vom Heiligen Geist gewirkte, erhaltene und der Kirche stets neu geschenkte Antwort auf die Offenbarung Gottes. Mission ist nur dort möglich, wo der Heilige Geist Menschen ‘durch das Evangelium beruft, sammelt, erleuchtet, heiligt und bei Jesu Christo erhält im rechten einigen Glauben.’ Wo dies geschieht, werden diese Menschen zur Kirche Gottes ‘hinzugetan’ und damit eingefügt in die bereits vorher vorhandene Gemeinschaft des Glaubens und Bekennens.” Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche,” in Hopf, 42.

⁴⁸ Refer to F.W. Hopf, *Warum Bekenntniskirche? Eine Handreichung für Lutherische Christen* (Erlangen: 1934), 4.

⁴⁹ Hopf, *Warum Bekenntniskirche?* 9.

The correct *Sitz im Leben* position of the second programmatic sentence *Lutherische Mission kann nur von einer Lutherischen Kirche getrieben werden* Lutheran Mission can only be done by a Lutheran church, therefore was in the ordination, the commissioning, and the ecclesiastical integration of the mission work. Hopf was convinced that the ordination vows could create a genuine confessional binding.⁵⁰ This commitment involved both the missionary and the church ordaining the missionary. A confessionally bound missionary would only allow himself to be ordained and commissioned by an equally confessionally bound church body. Ordination and commissioning were not just arbitrary human actions but rather seen as actions of the Lord of the Church himself. The office of the missionary could not be distinguished from the office of the ministry in the church. That presupposed that the service in the mission was not invented by humans but instead stood under prayer and God's command and promise. The first programmatic sentence clarified the confessional nature of its work; the second sentence clarified the legitimacy of its *Trägerschaft* sponsorship.

The third sentence, *Lutherische Mission führt zu Lutherischer Kirche* Lutheran mission leads to Lutheran church incorporated the young church on the mission field into the perspective and therefore signified the goal of Lutheran mission work. Again from *CA 7*, this sentence did not reflect on the church's organizational structure, as these were not necessary for the unity of the church. These organizational matters just needed to fulfil the purpose of all human church orders that they supported the office of the ministry and edification of the congregations.⁵¹ In its task to take care of the purity of the means of grace by "watchfully fighting and prayerfully

⁵⁰ F.W. Hopf, "Bekenntnisfragen in Jungen Kirchen," in *De Fundamentis Ecclesiae*, FS Lieberg, E. ed. Wagner (Braunschweig: 1973), 165.

⁵¹ Hopf, "Lutherische Kirche," in Hopf, 45.

working,” the young church was no different than the sending church.⁵² The confessional statements could and possibly even had to be formulated anew and actualized in corresponding situations, as long as they corresponded to the content of the ‘old’ confessions.⁵³

The confessional commitment could not be guaranteed through human action, but it was connected to the responsibility of the “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1). The bearers of the office of the ministry had an obligation to faithfully do their work, which related to the task of separating truth and heresy. This responsibility followed the ecumenical commitment, to not remain in demarcation and isolation of the Lutheran Church only, but rather from the responsibility for the pure doctrine to witness to the truth before the complete Christianity. It is not about *Besitzstandswahrung* to preserve the status quo but rather about the proclamation of the salvation truth. In this task, the responsible always stepped beyond the church separating boundaries.⁵⁴

For his mission theology, it was important that Hopf started with the self-perception of the church when he talked of mission. It was the one church that spreads across the world. The expansion happened only because of the gathering of the sanctified by the Holy Spirit, who worked through the means of grace. This collection or gathering was already church. It was not permissible to only speak of the church when the young church starts to manifest the same outward characteristics as the sending church.⁵⁵ With the programmatic sentence *Lutherische Mission muß zu Lutherischer Kirche führen* Lutheran mission must lead to Lutheran church Hopf’s mission theology was ecclesiastically grounded and focused on independence. It was

⁵² “... wachend kämpfen und betend arbeiten,” Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche,” in Hopf, 45.

⁵³ Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche,” in Hopf, 46.

⁵⁴ Refer to Stolle, “Missionsverständnis,” in Stolle, 146–8.

⁵⁵ Refer to Schulz, “Weg,” in Hopf, 103; Stolle, “Missionsverständnis,” in Stolle, 146–8; Stolle, *Hand an den Pflug*, 94–97.

essential that this independence was not dependent on any administrative or financial independence but instead understood as the fundamental freedom of the church from any extra-ecclesial conditions and dependencies.

The Concept of Independence

Theses on Independence, 1951

After the Second World War Hopf had hoped that a new fellowship of confessionally bound churches would be established to overcome the challenges of unionism. He was hugely disappointed and did not agree with establishing the *Vereinigte Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche in Deutschland* United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) and the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). Even in South Africa, there were various attempts to unite churches. The MELF was also invited to discussions, but it did not join any other church body due to its confessional position. This was the context in which the LCSA was established. Hopf was eminently involved in the discussions, and he drafted various documents to clarify the confessional position of the church. Hopf had written the theses on independence in connection with the preparations for the Lutheran World Federation meeting in Hannover 1952 concerning “The Lutheran Concept of Independence of a church.” They were first published in the *Lutherische Blätter* Lutheran Papers (1951) and then reprinted in the mission newsletter in 1966.⁵⁶

In the first thesis, Hopf defined independence as independent of external and internal

⁵⁶ Reprinted F.W. Hopf, “Selbständigkeit der Kirche” nach evangelisch-lutherischer Lehre: Eine Thesenreihe von Friederich Wilhelm Hopf,” in *Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission. Festschrift zum 75jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission*, ed F.W. Hopf (Bleckmar: MELF, 1976), 161–4. First published F.W. Hopf, “Selbständigkeit der Kirche” nach evangelisch-lutherischer Lehre,” *Lutherische Blätter* 3 (1951): 10–13; and then again F.W. Hopf, “Selbständigkeit der Kirche” nach evang.-luth. Lehre: Eine Thesenreihe von Friederich Wilhelm Hopf,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 58, no. 8 (August 1966): 189–93.

church powers and institutions that did not belong to that church body.⁵⁷ In Germany, the discussion of autonomy of the church concentrated on issues of state and church. In contrast, on the mission field, independence was mainly seen in relation to the sending church. In both cases, purely constitutional independence would not guarantee genuine autonomy. More decisively, it needed to be possible that the regulations and structures of the individual congregations and the combined church body could be designed in true freedom from all outside institutions and standards. Essentially it was about the critical question if the exclusive royal rule of Christ in his church was preserved against any false claims of authority to rule by other powers, regulations, ideologies, or institutions.⁵⁸

Constitutive to the church's independence was the living presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who acted as the present Lord in his congregations. He worked in word and sacrament, which at the same time were the unambiguous signs for the presence of the church in the world. The relatively broad definition of thesis one was clarified in that it expressed itself in the internal and external freedom, to administer the means of grace according to the command of Christ.⁵⁹ The ecclesiology was defined with *CA 7* as the means of grace that were the unmistakable signs of the church. Independence refers to the visible church, the administration of the means of grace, and the gathering of believers that Christ worked through the means of grace.⁶⁰ From this understanding of independence, the church stood before the double task of the confessions, preserving unity and keeping the church's purity.⁶¹ For Hopf, the freedom of the office of the

⁵⁷ Hopf, "Selbständigkeit," in Hopf, 161.

⁵⁸ Hopf, "Selbständigkeit," in Hopf, 161–2, Thesis 2–5.

⁵⁹ Hopf, "Selbständigkeit," in Hopf, 162, Thesis 6–7. Refer also to Hopf, *Warum Bekenntniskirche*, 17–18.

⁶⁰ Hopf, "Selbständigkeit," in Hopf, 162, Thesis 8.

⁶¹ "On the one hand the preservation of what the orthodox church has recognized , confesses, and fixed the

ministry, which was instituted for the administration of the sacraments, was the precondition for the freedom of the church.⁶² The proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments had to be possible without any interference or limitations in complete independence of all bindings, concessions, and borders that contradict the command of Christ.

The congregation, which was essentially bound to the office of the ministry, must have been able to unfold its teaching and praxis in freedom.⁶³ Each local congregation had the right to choose a regulation and to change it.⁶⁴ However, the freedom to develop church regulations could become a deadly danger to the church; if it was abused to accommodate destructive plans of the enemies of God, then these issues became confessional issues that needed courageous defence.⁶⁵

What were the consequences for the independence of the young churches? Hopf approached these deliberations from the perspective of the sending church, which he viewed as being independent. His own context in the struggles around the establishment of the EKD influenced his thoughts. The question for Hopf was if the young churches would be able to withstand the temptations directed at them or whether they would just disappear within a “unionism and syncretism of a Protestant world church.”⁶⁶ This was a question of faith, just as the question remained if one believed the promise of Christ given in Matthew 16 that the gates of

contents in the *consensus de doctrina* (Written confessions, confessional stand, confessional commitment, confessional practice), on the other hand about the ecclesial separation from all, that hold onto false teaching (borders of church fellowship, especially concerning pulpit and altar).” Hopf, “Selbständigkeit,” in Hopf, 162, Thesis 9. Refer further to Hopf, *Unsere Bekenntniskirche*, 17–18.

⁶² Hopf, “Selbständigkeit,” in Hopf, 162, Thesis 10.

⁶³ Hopf, “Selbständigkeit,” in Hopf, 162, Thesis 11.

⁶⁴ Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord X.9 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 637.

⁶⁵ Hopf, “Selbständigkeit,” in Hopf, 163, Thesis 12.

⁶⁶ “Unionismus und Synkretismus einer protestantischen Weltkirche?” Hopf, “Selbständigkeit,” in Hopf, 164, Thesis 18.

hell would not overcome the church.⁶⁷ The confidence of this faith was the prerequisite of a theologically grounded reflection about the church's independence. It was essential to determine the motivation and intention behind all efforts to secure autonomy. Were these motivations the result of such faith, or were they seeking legitimacy elsewhere?

The realization of the responsibility to preach the word and administer the sacraments and the own demarcation against heresy was the proof of independence.⁶⁸ The local congregation would be independent, where it independently took responsibility for the Christian life. This included the ecclesiastical discipline, the diaconic acts of mercy, and the missionary outreach. The further organizational independence from the sending church, which would only offer assistance moving forward, would follow naturally. Hopf recognized that the need to assist the young church with the theological training of its pastors would be an essential task of the sending church so that the young church could assert itself within the broader context of the universal church.

The young church and its congregations would need to keep an awareness beyond the local community and extend its view to the church's horizon as a whole to allow for a consciousness of a larger church fellowship to develop.⁶⁹ The young church was not turning itself away from the sending church but instead was taking up its position among others in the ecumenical fellowship of the faithful church.

The call to independence in these discussions always implied the responsibility to ensure that word and sacrament were administered according to scripture and confession. From this foundation, all other decisions and alignments were made. The hermeneutical presupposition was

⁶⁷ Hopf, "Selbständigkeit," in Hopf, 163, Thesis 13.

⁶⁸ Hopf, "Selbständigkeit," in Hopf, 163, Thesis 14. Refer to Hopf, *Bekennnisfragen*, 154.

⁶⁹ Hopf, "Selbständigkeit," in Hopf, 164, Thesis 15.

that the scriptural and confessional response, viewed as an act of the church, was aligned to the activity of the Lord in word and sacrament. The correlation of instruction and application determined independence. The independence was lost as soon as a wrong alignment was made because then the sole rule of Christ as Lord in that specific church body was impaired. Independence was thus not just an arbitrary mandate to act independently but the spiritual ability to determine the church issues according to the will of God, which was revealed in Holy Scripture. Independence in theological perspective was thus the spiritual gift to differentiate the spirits, that was, to distinguish between true and false teaching. False teaching was not just a wrong opinion but corresponded to the devil's rule, just as the Holy Spirit stood behind the truth (1 Cor 12:3). The talk of independence of the church was thus a question of faith because it presumed the pneumatic reality that God repeatedly separated truth from heresy by his word.

Statement on Cooperation, 1953

In the ecumenical discussions of the various Lutheran missions working in South Africa, the MELF was also asked to position itself in this cooperation venture.⁷⁰ The statement on cooperation was signed by the mission council and broader leadership of the MELF in Germany, the missionaries of the MELF in South Africa, and the pastors of the FELSISA.⁷¹ The statement clarified that cooperation was only possible when church and altar fellowship already existed. The third programmatic sentence of the mission, *Lutherische Mission muß zu Lutherischer Kirche führen* Lutheran mission must lead to Lutheran church, was added to the previous two

⁷⁰ Various, "Erklärung" in Hopf, 165–6. Also printed Various, "Erklärung zur Frage nach der Zusammenarbeit lutherischer Missionen in Südafrika (1953)," *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 45, no. 7 (July, 1953): 117–8. Refer to Herman Schlyter, *The History of the Co-Operating Lutheran Missions in Natal 1912–1951* (Durban: Lutheran, 1953).

⁷¹ *Missionskollegium* Mission collegiate, which forms the AGM of the MELF and encompassed delegates of the various churches supporting the MELF.

that had stood at the beginning of the mission work. Identifying the young church as a mission church was not necessary, but rather that it was part of the universal faithful church determined its ecumenical decisions. It was about clarifying and preserving the *notae ecclesiae* of CA 7. The challenge posed by these discussions was the fact that the churches were all Lutheran. One can recognize three steps in this process of clarification of preconditions for cooperation among the Lutheran Churches. The confessions, an indispensable medium to attain and maintain church unity, were a secondary standard to clarify the relationship between the application and administration of word and sacrament.⁷² Word and sacrament were therefore not clear enough as criteria to solve the issue of church unity. But even having the same confessional writings was not sufficient to clarify the conditions because a third aspect was added in need to define church boundaries of fellowship. One part of determining true teaching and doctrine according to church tradition was to renounce heresy. This then included the execution and recognition of church boundaries as proclaimed by the confessions.⁷³ The call for full altar and pulpit fellowship as prerequisites for cooperation prevented any further meaningful partnership of the MELF with the other Lutheran Churches in South Africa that had been possible on a limited basis before.⁷⁴ In the realms of education, there might have been potential to work closer together.⁷⁵ There was some cooperation in the general Lutheran Conference, in translation work, and the sharing of some

⁷² Various, "Erklärung," in Hopf, 165.

⁷³ The declaration refers to Melancthon's *Tractatus de potestate papae*. Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope 42 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 337.

⁷⁴ Schlyter refers to Blanke saying, that the MHELF had no money, and could therefore not work together, Schlyter, *History of the Co-Operating Lutheran Missions*, 59. See also Georg Scriba and Gunnar Lislud, "Lutheran Missions and Churches in South Africa," in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social & Cultural History*, ed. Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), 180–1.

⁷⁵ Scriba, "Lutheran Missions," in Elphick, 189–90.

resources.⁷⁶

Wegweisung Für die Junge Kirche, 1956

At the synodical convention in 1956 in Salem, a paper drafted by Hopf, which later became known as the *Wegweisung für die junge Kirche* Instruction to the young church, was discussed.⁷⁷ Hopf intended it to guide the young church on its path to independence and wanted the synod to accept it as a common declaration.⁷⁸ The synod then took ownership of the document, added point 7, and changed the proposed name of the church. Remarkably Hopf had suggested using “Bantu Evangelical Lutheran Church.”⁷⁹ At no point, was the possibility discussed of integrating the congregations of the MELF into the existing FELSISA.⁸⁰ The mission and its missionaries were so contextualized in the South African segregated context that it was self-evident that they would establish a separate church for Africans.⁸¹ Even though this

⁷⁶ Meister held his presentation at the General Lutheran Conference in 1950; For Translation work refer to Wilhelm Weber, “Die Tswana-Übersetzung der Lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften,” in *Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission. Festschrift zum 75jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Bleckmar: MELF, 1976), 130–2. Johannes Schröder, “Die Lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften in Zulu,” in *Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission. Festschrift zum 75jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Bleckmar: MELF, 1976), 117–8; For the sharing of other resources refer to the unpublished minutes of the synodical convention of the *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche im Südlichen Afrika* (Hannoverian Evangelical Lutheran Free Church Mission), October 2–4, 1956 held in Salem, Piet Retief. 22.

⁷⁷ F.W. Hopf, “Wegweisung für die Junge Kirche,” in *Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission. Festschrift zum 75jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Bleckmar: MELF, 1976), 167–68.

⁷⁸ Minutes of the Synod, 1956, 52.

⁷⁹ Minutes of the Synod, 1956, 24.

⁸⁰ Possibly Hopf refers to this failure, when in 1977 in his letter to the missionaries he regrets not having taken up Sasse’s warning about apartheid clearly and strongly enough that he did not “directly intervene in decisions of our mission.” Hopf, “Mission Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen,” in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 322; See the article by Dieter Schnackenberg, “Die Auswirkungen der Apartheid auf das Leben und Handeln der FELSISA,” in *Mission und Apartheid: Ein Unentrinnbares Erbe und Seine Aufarbeitung durch Lutherische Kirchen im Südlichen Afrika* ed. Werner Klän and Gilberto da Silva (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2013), 127–32.

⁸¹ Hopf published an article “Noch nicht zu spät in Südafrika,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer*

stood diametrically opposed to everything that Hopf had argued to be essential for the church's independence. Fortunately, the Africans decided correctly to drop the ethnic reference and just keep "Evangelical Lutheran Church."⁸² By the time the LCSA was constituted in 1967, the name Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) had already been used by the other Lutherans. The name accepted by the LCSA was Lutheran Church in Southern Africa.⁸³

The instruction in its final form encompassed eight points that could be grouped into three sections. The first three points determined the preconditions of the existence of the congregations and their teaching. Points 4 and 5 defined the requirements of church and altar fellowship, and then lastly the points 6 through 8 regulated conditions that the young church would be able to manage its task as a church, mission, and in its works of mercy. A scripture verse supported every point.

With 1 Cor. 3:11, "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," it was clearly stated the church was grounded on Christ. The young church was not founded on its independence or its ethnic character, or even its relation to the sending church. The church confessed itself to Christ as the present and only Lord in the church (Col. 1:18), "And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent."

The knowledge base of faith and teaching was the word of God as it was recorded in the

Freikirchen 58, no. 3 (March 1966): 66–7. The article was an extract from the book *Kreuz zwischen Weiß und Schwarz* by a Lutheran Pastor Karl Friederich Weber. Weber had written the book after a trip to South Africa and in this extract that formed the article in the mission newsletter highlighted the challenge of missionaries and pastors from Germany being drawn into the German congregations and accepting their political views. K.F. Weber, *Kreuz zwischen Weiß und Schwarz* (Brekum: Christian Jensen Verlag, 1966),.

⁸² Minutes of the synod 1956, 24. Hopf appreciated the fact that the African pastors could resist temptations of African nationalism, as well as against racism and state ideologies. See Hopf, "Der Weg unserer Kirchenmission," *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 49, no. 1 (January 1957): 6.

⁸³ Hopf, "Wegweisung," in Hopf, 168.

scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The confessions of the Lutheran BOC were accepted as the true and binding exposition of the holy scriptures.⁸⁴ It was suggested that all congregations should know the Small Catechism, the Evangelists, the Augsburg Confession, and the pastors should be familiar with the complete BOC. This idea was later taken up in the constitution of the LCSA.⁸⁵ There was a staggered approach to responsibility, and everyone should live according to his calling and vocation and be appropriately prepared. The instruction assumed that the confessions enabled decision-making.⁸⁶ The commitment and obligation on the teaching and the corresponding responsibility found their New Testament precedent in 2 Tim. 3:14–17:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

The MELF did not attempt to integrate the congregations into the FELSISA. The instruction included a reference to a specific ethnic or racial target group in point seven. The instruction aimed to lead to an independent “Lutheran Bantu Church.”⁸⁷ At first, the membership of the church was not decided by non-theological criteria. Culture, race, or social status were irrelevant, as the church fellowship was determined by teaching. The fact that in point 7, the reference was made to the “Bantu church” was really disappointing. In 1932 the FELSISA had decided at a synodical convention in Uelzen that no person of color could be a member of the FELSISA.⁸⁸ Theoretically, in the instruction, these issues were solved differently. Whoever

⁸⁴ Hopf, “Wegweisung,” in Hopf, 167.

⁸⁵ Lutheran Church in southern Africa, *Constitution*, ¶ 1.2.1

⁸⁶ Refer to Weber, “Tswana-Übersetzung,” in Hopf, 125.

⁸⁷ Hopf, “Wegweisung,” in Hopf, 168.

⁸⁸ Schnackenberg, “Auswirkung der Apartheid,” in Klän, 131.

confessed the same foundation and would accept the regulation of the LCSA would be accepted. The realized unity was a pneumatic reality according to Ephesians 4:3–6 “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

It is interesting to note that it was assumed that the new bishop of the church would be the mission superintendent who had up to now led the congregations.⁸⁹ Georg Schulz became the new mission superintendent in 1961, then became the LCSA bishop in 1967, and remained the bishop until 1992 when the first black bishop was elected, David Tswaedi. Even after the LCSA was established the missionaries, that lived and worked in close vicinity of the FELSISA usually sent their family to attend the FELSISA.⁹⁰ Their children were typically confirmed within the FELSISA and not the LCSA.

⁸⁹ In the unpublished minutes of the pastor’s convention of July 26–28, 1966 in Enhlanhleni, 3, Hopf clearly states, that the German Mission board had already, when the present mission superintendent was elected 5 years previously, stated unequivocally that after 5 years the church would be approached to determine, if an African candidate was ready to take over the leadership. At that time, it was agreed, that if that was the case, the missionary would have to willingly step aside. The minutes of this meeting indicate that the discussion did not really take off. The African pastors responded to question, why they were not engaging, that they were still thinking. The discussion was postponed to the next day. See Tswaedi’s comment about the restraint Africans exercised when a missionary was among them. David Tswaedi, “Apartheid in South Africa: Its Impact on the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa,” in *Mission und Apartheid: Ein Unentrinnbares Erbe und Seine Aufarbeitung durch Lutherische Kirchen im Südlichen Afrika*, ed. Werner Klän and Gilberto da Silva (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2013), 80–81. However Steve Biko might have responded scathingly that that was the problem of black “complicity.” Steve Biko, *I write what I like* (Johannesburg: Picador, 2004), 31.

⁹⁰ See footnote 2, in Tswaedi, “Apartheid in South Africa,” in Klän 81n2. Tswaedi mentions the various perceptions of the African Christians, when their missionary who had worked among them for a long time was willing to bury his family in the church graveyard of his African church (Botshabelo Schnell) or rather in the FELSISA graveyard of a neighboring congregation (Salem, Johannes).

The Early Years of Apartheid

“Experienced and Endured Segregation at the Lord’s Table.”⁹¹

Figure 4. Mission Superintendent Christoph Johannes and Mission Director Friederich Wilhelm Hopf, 1951



Hopf related a visit of Mission superintendent Christoph Johannes in Bleckmar in 1951.⁹²

The respected visitor from South Africa was sitting with Hopf and several students discussing the situation in South Africa when he dropped the comment that he had never received Holy Communion within the black congregations or from a fellow African pastor. He and his family had always received Holy Communion in the neighboring German congregation in Wittenberg.

⁹¹ “Erlebte und erlittene Trennung am Tisch des Herrn.” F.W. Hopf, *Lutherische Mitverantwortung für das christliche Zeugnis im südlichen Afrika* (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.Luth. Mission, 1979). Reprinted F.W. Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung für das christliche Zeugnis im südlichen Afrika,” in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 326–65. A small edition of an English translation by Claudia Ringlemann (nee Stallmann) was commissioned by the LCSA and funded by LUCSA. The quoted heading is taken from this edition. F.W. Hopf, *Lutheran Co-Responsibility for Christian Witness in Southern Africa* (Pretoria: LCSA, 2010), 6.

⁹² Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” Klän, 329–31.

This was the usual practice of all missionaries, especially in cases where there was a FELSISA congregation in the vicinity of their work. This was not the case in the work in Botshabelo and Roodeport, the two large Tswana congregations, but in most Zulu-speaking congregations. If the missionaries did not receive Holy Communion with their African fellow Christians, then it would be virtually equally unheard of that the FELSISA members would have received Holy Communion in the African congregations of the MHELF. Hopf wrote that this was one of the first things he felt he had to address when traveling to South Africa in 1956.⁹³ At the missionaries' conference held at the beginning of this trip, this topic was discussed. Hopf had pointed out that the fellowship at the altar was one of our confession's most fundamental and essential aspects.⁹⁴ The FELSISA and the MHELF did not share altar fellowship with any other churches in South Africa because of their confessional standpoint, but then they could not deny this fellowship among each other for non-confessional reasons, in this case for racial or cultural reasons. Some missionaries had pointed out that Africans would become arrogant if they were to hand Holy Communion to their missionaries. Hopf wrote of breakthroughs in the following days and weeks, as most if not all missionaries accepted the logical consequence and necessity of this altar fellowship emanating from their confessional standpoint on church and altar fellowship.⁹⁵ Practiced fellowship would be an issue that extended into the present time, as missionaries and sometimes their families were the only ones that partook of Holy Communion within the African congregations. For many years African members of the MELF and LCSA were not permitted to

⁹³ Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Klän, 329–30.

⁹⁴ Alan Boesak argues along the same lines. Alan Boesak, "Foreword," in *Apartheid is a Heresy*, ed. John deGruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 1–9.

⁹⁵ The original booklet of this document was published with a picture on the cover of a white elderly women receiving Holy Communion from an African pastor. F.W. Hopf, *Lutherische Mitverantwortung für das christliche Zeugnis im südlichen Afrika* (Erlangen: Ev.Luth. Mission, 1979).

receive Holy Communion in the FELSISA congregations.⁹⁶ Racial segregation had been accepted and internalized to the point that it was not necessary to enforce it by law. David Tswaedi related a story that a missionary in Johannesburg would gather with his African congregation in the garage attached to the house to hold church services. This probably happened after the church in Sophiatown had been demolished, presumably, before the church in Mofolo North had been built. The missionary, however, would do the service in his lounge with the white FELSISA members, probably before the church was built in Fairland.

Group Areas Act and Forced Removals

Throughout the years of forced removals, virtually all the established congregations of the MELF around their mission stations were affected. The large church built in Sophiatown with an adjacent school was demolished, and the people relocated to Soweto in 1954.⁹⁷ The large congregation of Botshabelo, which had been living on their property which belonged to the Tlou tribe, was relocated and dispersed to various parts of the established Bophuthatswana Homeland.⁹⁸ The large church and hospital built by the MELF were demolished. The large church in Roodeport near Ventersdorp was not destroyed. Still, the people that had filled the vibrant congregation of sustainable size were relocated to the border of South Africa and Botswana. Their members scattered and dispersed; the task of the mission and church was now to gather them again and try and consolidate the work. Small churches were built to

⁹⁶ As a scholar in 1989 in Wartburg, the author attended a tense congregational meeting in the FELSISA congregation in Kirchdorf after the pastor Peter Ahlers was forced to uninvite the missionary Burkhard Hecklau, who was working among Indians in Durban, because Hecklau had intended to bring his Indian choir along, when he was invited for a mission festival.

⁹⁷ Mission director Nietzke was invited to the 50th anniversary of Mofolo North in 2009. A brochure was published by the mission to commemorate this anniversary. *From Sophiatown to Mofolo North*. (Bleckmar: Mission of Lutheran Churches, 2009). Nietzke officially read the answers to the nine questions the LCSA had asked the LKM at that anniversary and asked the LCSA for forgiveness. The document is attached as appendix ten.

⁹⁸ See Friederich Dierks, *Tlou! Tlou! Die Elefantensänger von Botschabelo* (Bleckmar: MELF, 1960).

accommodate the congregations, but they had lost their critical mass to maintain sustainability. The large confirmation schools that had run in these congregations of Botshabelo and Roodepoort were no longer possible, as the people were now scattered. The impact was tragically huge. The large church in Salem similarly became a relic of the good old times, when people still lived in the vicinity. The people were relocated to KwaNgema and other homelands on the Swaziland border. For many years, the large church in Ebenezer near Glencoe was a silent reminder of what had been, as it remained standing in an open field isolated before it finally was demolished. The people had been moved to the Homeland of KwaZulu in Washbank or Limehill. In Durban, the congregations were scattered from Cato–Manor, near the present-day Pavilion Shopping center, to the various townships in Umlazi, KwaMashu, and Inanda.

For many years during these removals, the mission newsletter would report on the need to build new churches. Whereas previously, the large congregations had grown organically to sustainable sizes, suddenly, the number of preaching stations and congregations exploded. This meant the church suddenly had to spread its resources; it needed to build new churches and place many more pastors or evangelists to cover the various new sites. Even in the face of all these challenges, neither Hopf nor the church seriously questioned or complained about these measures by the state, they were begrudgingly accepted.⁹⁹ As these removals affected the church and established congregations and buildings, one can just imagine its impact on the members of the church and the broader African community. The removal from ancestral land and the burial sites of the communities was a significant issue to the African community but largely ignored by the government. This impact, however, was not covered in the newsletter or reported.

⁹⁹ Hopf, “Ein Jahr der Bewährungsproben,” in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 260–1.

One of the factors of forced removals that might explain the lack of unified resistance against the removals was the differentiated perception of those removed. Often the areas that were declared as “black spots” and needed to be removed according to the apartheid policy of segregation were congested. Owners of land in these areas often leased smaller portions of their land to tenants. On an elementary economic level, the promise to receive one’s piece of land was attractive to tenants but meant a loss of income to the owner.

Bantu Education and Nun Mokone

The appreciation for cultural and ethnic appropriate mission work has been described as a characteristic of the German mission theology and approach. This appreciation probably extended to the point that it was viewed as the only correct way. Work in the indigenous language was seen as paramount. Missionaries who wanted to work in the MELF needed to learn the language of the community in which they were working. The MELF and later the LCSA would work among Zulu and Tswana-speaking people. The LCSA was always a bilingual church. Theology students studying at the seminary in Enhlanhleni had to learn the corresponding other language so that all pastors in the LCSA could speak Tswana and Zulu. Not all missionaries spoke both languages.

The Bantu Education system of the apartheid government probably took up some of these ideas from the mission churches. However, it then probably developed its own dynamics and momentum within the apparatus of the apartheid program.¹⁰⁰ The Soweto uprising would be triggered by the introduction of compulsory Afrikaans in the curriculum, which obviously would not have been part of the concept of cultural and ethnic appropriate education in the mission

¹⁰⁰ For a good summary of the impact of Bantu Education and its connection to the Soweto Uprising see: *The Soweto Youth Uprising* accessed August 29, 2021, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/june-16-soweto-youth-uprising>. See Dubow, *Apartheid*, 184.

theology sense of the word. When Treurnicht introduced Afrikaans, it was motivated more by the equal rights of English and Afrikaans. What belonged to the curriculum and the desired outcome of education was determined by various presuppositions, and these might have varied among the individuals in the mission and those in the education department. David Tswaedi, in his presentation at the Apartheid symposium in Oberursel, lamented the fact that the LCSA did not have a number of highly qualified professionals.¹⁰¹ This obviously might have had different reasons. Scriba pointed to the historical world view of the Lutheran missions working in South Africa from the 19th century as being influenced by “pre-industrial Europe, with a mistrust of urbanization and modernization.”¹⁰² “In contrast to many Anglo–Saxon missions, therefore, Lutherans were slow to adapt to the new conditions of twentieth-century South Africa.”¹⁰³ On the one hand, there was a reluctance to move into the cities and increase the level of education at their schools. Scriba pointed out that by 1925 “18% of all African missionary school pupils were in Lutheran schools, but only 5% of aspirant teachers were in Lutheran training colleges, and there was no Lutheran secondary or ‘industrial’ schools.”¹⁰⁴ “As a consequence, Lutherans were slow to develop an African elite attuned to modernity;”¹⁰⁵ Hans Florin even pointed out that many Lutheran Africans avoided the Lutheran church in town because of a “lack of an appealing program, lack of prestige, and an indistinct socio-political identification.”¹⁰⁶ In 1967 Florin wrote that “the number of intellectuals in the Lutheran Church is today, smaller than in the Anglican

¹⁰¹ Tswaedi, “Apartheid in South Africa,” in Klän, 85–7.

¹⁰² Scriba, “Lutheran Missions,” in Elphick, 190.

¹⁰³ Scriba, “Lutheran Missions,” in Elphick, 190. Among others to follow their parishioners into the city.

¹⁰⁴ Scriba, “Lutheran Missions,” in Elphick, 190.

¹⁰⁵ Scriba, “Lutheran Missions,” in Elphick, 190.

¹⁰⁶ Hans Florin, *Lutherans in South Africa* (Durban: Lutheran Publishing House, 1967), 71.

and Methodist churches.”¹⁰⁷ Scriba concluded, “as the Lutheran churches entered the era of apartheid, they were consequently less prepared to grapple with questions of structural justice and national policy than some other mainstream Protestant churches.”¹⁰⁸

The level of general education among the African population in South Africa was deficient immediately after the Second World War. As much as the Bantu Education system was hated by many, it did provide a much-improved level of basic education for a large portion of the population more than had been experienced before.¹⁰⁹ This would most likely have been used as an example of how positive the apartheid government was taking care of the African people by providing education and housing. The sinister reality was that the government spent way more money on a white child than an African child.¹¹⁰

Table 1. Government Spending on Education

Government budget per child per year in British Pounds	White	Black
1945	43,88 £	2,66 £
1953	127,84 £	17,08 £
1969	282,00 £	16,97 £
1976	605,00 £	39,53 £

Source: David Tswaedi, “Apartheid in South Africa: Its Impact on the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa” in *Mission und Apartheid: Ein Unentrinnbares Erbe und seine Aufarbeitung*

¹⁰⁷ Florin, *Lutherans in South Africa*, 72.

¹⁰⁸ Scriba, “Lutheran Missions,” in Elphick, 190.

¹⁰⁹ See Dubow, *Apartheid*, 119.

¹¹⁰ Tswaedi cites the various amounts in pounds that were spent by the South African government for education of white and black individuals respectively on an annual basis. Tswaedi, “Apartheid in South Africa,” in Klän, 86.

durch Lutherische Kirchen im Südlichen Afrika, Werner Klän and Gilberto da Silva, eds., (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2013) 86.

Figure 5. The MELF Mission Board Together with Nun Mokone in Front of the Headquarters of the MELF in Bleckmar Germany 1953.



From left to right: unknown, unknown, F.W. Hopf, unknown, Superintendent Jakob Böttcher, Nun Mokone, Superintendent Rothfuchs, unknown, Rev. Adolf Heicke.

Nun Mokone was an important figure within the MELF. As a young child, he was given to the missionary couple Johannes Schnell and his wife by the Tlou tribe that they were working among. The Schnell's did not have a child of their own. Nun Mokone became a prominent member of the community and worked within the Bantu Education system as a school inspector. He was invited and traveled to Germany and was referred to by Hopf as father Mokone.¹¹¹ Mokone's view of Bantu Education at least, as reflected by the MELF and its newsletter, might

¹¹¹ See the little booklet F.W. Hopf, *Vater Mokone erzählt: Ein Lutherischer Bantu-Christ aus Südafrika spricht mit seiner Mutterkirche in Deutschland* (Bleckmar: MELF, 1960).

be very different from how his children and descendants in South Africa view it.¹¹² Hopf believed that Mokone supported Bantu Education as the appropriate form of education to help Africans attain independence. This view probably confirmed the general perception and acceptance of Bantu Education within the MELF. The negative aspects of Bantu Education, which would have been the low level of education and the limitation in the curriculum that would not be comparable to the typical European curriculum, were based on the fact that Verwoerd wanted to equip Africans to fulfil their subordinate role within the economy of South Africa.¹¹³ Thus the specific Bantu education was not geared to uplift Africans to be competitive in the open market but rather to perpetuate their inferior status as unskilled labor.¹¹⁴

Mission Hospitals and Schools

When the LCSA sent the so-called nine questions to the LKM, they included a question about why the LKM agreed to give up the control of their hospitals and schools to the apartheid government.¹¹⁵ Rev Markus Nietzke answered with a pragmatic answer that reflected the attitude of the mission. There was no money in the mission to support the ever-expanding costs of medical facilities. This practical financial answer probably also corresponded to the pragmatic perception that organized medical and educational services rightly belonged to the realm of

¹¹² Volker Stolle, "Apartheid and the Bleckmar Mission," in: *Mission und Apartheid: Ein Unentrinnbares Erbe und Seine Aufarbeitung durch Lutherische Kirchen im Südlichen Afrika*, ed. Werner Klän and Gilberto da Silva (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2013), 40. See Dubow, *Apartheid*, 165 for the role of Black Consciousness questioning the principals of Bantu Education.

¹¹³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 85 "Perhaps the clearest signal of the government's intention to subordinate Africans was the Bantu Education Act of 1953." Dubow goes on to quote Verwoerd who had said in Senate 1954: "The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor. Within his own community, however all doors are open."

¹¹⁴ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 119; Tswaedi, "Apartheid in South Africa," in Klän, 85–7.

¹¹⁵ The nine questions are attached as appendix 10.

government rather than the specific task of the church.¹¹⁶ The church and mission had taken on the responsibility of taking medical and educational care of the community because the government had not fulfilled its rightful duty. Radikobo Ntsimane, in his dissertation, was critical about the approach of the MELF in this regard, and he would not accept the pragmatic answer as sufficient reason for the decision.¹¹⁷ Hopf, in his report to the AGM of the MELF in 1967, recognized the fact that financially the mission had been supported by the government and donations by organizations like *Brot für die Welt*.¹¹⁸ However, he emphasized the need to recognize that this medical work belonged essentially to the core of mission work and should not be separated from clerical work. Therefore he viewed it as essential that this medical work too would be led to independence within the young church because, as a church, it needed to realize its diaconic task. Thus in his report, he called for renewed efforts to train local African staff and nurses who would take on this missional-diaconic work of the church.

Many schools were run by the MELF, especially in the area of Mpumalanga. Ninety percent of all African schools or education of Africans in South Africa before the Second World War were under the authority of church and mission organizations that had always received some government funding. The apartheid government changed this arrangement after the Eiselen report.¹¹⁹ The government took over the responsibility for all schools. The development of the agricultural school in Themba Dirkiesdorp was a much later development that happened many years after the time of Hopf.

¹¹⁶ The author remembers a conversation with his father E.A.W. Weber, who confirmed that he and Georg Schulz agreed on this point, that “organized works of mercy, should not distract from the priority of the actual mission work.”

¹¹⁷ Radikobo P Ntsimane, “An historical evaluation of the Lutheran medical mission services in southern Africa with special emphasis on four hospitals: 1930s–1978,” (PhD diss., University of KwaZulu Natal, 2012).

¹¹⁸ Hopf, “Bewährungsproben,” in Büttner, 262.

¹¹⁹ See Dubow, *Apartheid*, 59–63.

How Do We Stand in Respect to the Problems of South Africa?

In the year 1967, at the AGM of the MELF, Hopf wrote the following in his report:

Belastungs- und Bewährungsproben, challenges that test us and our resolve, in our work in and for South Africa are confronting us from a completely different side, to what we have been used to. The request for a clear position of the Lutheran Church to the political and social problems of South Africa cannot the longer, the more be overheard even by us. We are not thereby in any way thinking of interfering in the politics of a country in which only a small part of our *Sendboten*, messengers, are citizens. In which most of them remain “guests and foreigners,” who recently no longer receive permission for entry with permanent residence but rather need to apply annually for an extension of their permit to stay. Therefore, we will have to seriously take care that from this status of being foreign and from the fact of being granted guest status, we exercise the necessary restraint just as we have in the past and in the future. Nonetheless, we are not allowed to close our eyes, that the consequences of these political programs and social regulations impact the people, to whom our service is directed, and that it therefore also concerns the church, which the Lord Christ has gathered from all nations of this land over and above all the differences and contrasts. It concerns the duty of the church to witness that in all countries and before all *Völker*, nations it needs to exercise its prophetic office. One cannot, in the long run, be responsibly involved with the mission work and with the ecclesiastical building (of a church structure) in a country, without taking a position to questions and decisions, through which a witness of the church in the precise application of the Word of God is demanded. And if one holds the answers that other churches have given as wrong or insufficient, then especially one may not remain completely silent. By the way, as is well known, no answer is also an answer. Up to now, the Lutheran Churches in South Africa have not only shown the necessary restraint in these questions but have remained completely silent. Now, however, in 1967, Lutheran voices have been made loud. They come from circles of Churches, with whom we are not united by church fellowship. One can ask if their word is the truly relevant Lutheran witness to the effects of the South African race politics. One can criticize them. However, one cannot in the future act as if nothing had happened and if no Lutheran had ever said anything to this problem of South Africa. Also, our brothers will not be able to remain silent forever or should be allowed to remain silent forever. More than that will not be said at the moment. We in Germany have, in any case, cause, apart from the prayer of intercession, to let our fraternal encouragement in this situation become loud. In this context, we will have to orientate the mission congregation that is standing behind us about the various church voices that are being heard to the questions of South Africa.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ “Belastungs- und Bewährungsproben unserer Arbeit in und für Südafrika stehen uns noch von einer ganz anderen Seite her bevor, als wir es bisher kennenlernten. Die Frage nach einer klaren Stellungnahme der Lutherischen Kirche zu den politischen und sozialen Problemen Südafrikas kann auch von uns je länger desto

The Latter Years of Apartheid

As supporters of apartheid did not engage with the legitimate claims of Africans, their criticism of the liberation movement concentrated on the revolutionary character and basically “criminalized the freedom movement.”¹²¹ Trying to maintain white dominance or at least white privilege, even those who recognized the legitimate reform process viewed it as essentially gradual and slow. Hopf referred to the article by pastor Ernst August Albers that he had written for the anniversary of the MELF in 1967 as an example of the justified hope and expectation that things would improve.¹²² In the same article, Hopf referred to the bishop of the LCSA, Georg

weniger einfach überhört werden. Wir denken dabei in keiner Weise an irgendeine Einmischung in die Politik eines Landes, in dem nur ein kleiner Teil unserer Sendboten das Bürgerrecht besitzt, indem die meisten von ihnen jedoch ‘Gäste und Fremdlinge’ bleiben, die neuerdings auch keine Erlaubnis mehr für eine Einreise zum Daueraufenthalt bekommen, sondern in jedem Jahr neu um eine Verlängerung ihrer Aufenthaltsgenehmigung bitten müssen. Wir werden uns deshalb ernstlich bemühen müssen, die aus dieser Tatsache unserer Fremdlingschaft und des uns gewährten Gastrechtes sich ergebende Zurückhaltung wie in der Vergangenheit so auch in der Zukunft zu bewahren. Trotzdem dürfen wir die Augen nicht davor verschließen, dass es bei den Auswirkungen politischer Programme und sozialer Ordnungen um die Menschen geht, denen unser Dienst gilt, und das es dabei auch um die Kirche geht, die der Herr Christus aus den Völkern dieses Landes über alle Unterschiede und Gegensätze hinweg sammelt. Es geht dabei auch um die Zeugnispflicht der Kirche, die in jedem Land und gegenüber allen Völkern ein prophetisches Amt wahrzunehmen hat. Man kann nicht auf die Dauer an der Missionsarbeit und am kirchlichen Aufbau in einem Land verantwortlich beteiligt sein, ohne irgendwie Stellung zu nehmen zu Fragen und Entscheidungen, durch die ein Zeugnis der Kirche in klarer Anwendung des Wortes Gottes gefordert wird. Und wenn man die von anderen Kirchen gegebenen Antworten für falsch oder unvollkommen hält, dann darf man erst recht nicht völlig schweigen. Im Übrigen ist bekanntlich keine Antwort auch eine Antwort. Bisher war es so, dass die lutherischen Kirchen Südafrikas gegenüber vielen Fragen dieses Landes nicht nur die gebotene Zurückhaltung bewahrten, sondern völlig schwiegen. Nun aber sind im Jahr 1967 lutherische Stimmen dazu laut geworden. Sie kommen aus dem Kreis der Kirchen, mit denen wir nicht durch Kirchengemeinschaft verbunden sind. Man kann fragen, ob ihr Wort das wirklich zutreffende lutherische Zeugnis zu den Auswirkungen der südafrikanischen Rassenpolitik ist. Man kann daran Kritik üben. Aber man kann in Zukunft nicht so tun, als sei nichts geschehen und als habe kein Lutheraner zu diesen Problemen Südafrikas etwas gesagt. Auch unsere Brüder werden auf die Dauer nicht schweigen können und dürfen. Mehr soll darüber an dieser Stelle nicht gesagt werden. Wir von Deutschland aus haben jedenfalls Anlass, neben der Fürbitte auch unseren brüderlichen Zuspruch in dieser Lage laut werden zu lassen. Im Zusammenhang damit werden wir die hinter uns stehende Missionsgemeinde über manche kirchliche Stimme orientieren müssen, die sich zu den Fragen Südafrikas hören lässt.” Hopf, “Bewährungsproben,” in Büttner, 262–63.

¹²¹ Stolle, “Apartheid and the Bleckmar Mission,” in Klän, 47.

¹²² Ernst–August Albers, “Von der Freien Evangelisch–Lutherischen Synode in Südafrika,” in: *Lutherische Kirche Treibt Lutherische Mission. Festschrift zum 75jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission*, ed. F.W. Hopf (Bleckmar: MELF, 1976), 150–58. Hopf, “Wir werden gefragt: Was sagt ihr zu den Problemen Südafrikas?” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch–Lutherischer Freikirchen* 64, no. 3 (March 1972): 65–67. Reprinted in F.W. Hopf, “Wir werden gefragt: Was sagt ihr zu den Problemen Südafrikas?” in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 265–68.

Schulz, who clarified that racial segregation in the church was not allowed as Christ had overcome the differences between the races.¹²³ This fellowship created by Christ in the church needed to find expression in the life of the Christians outside of the church. The challenge experienced was that supporters of apartheid would disqualify any claims that called for quicker progress or the abolition of apartheid as unreasonable. The Soweto uprising of 1976 was a point of no return for the liberation movement and the resistance to apartheid in the international and ecumenical movement.¹²⁴ Before the uprising, the South African government was actually in a position of strength.¹²⁵

The Hammanskraal Resolution

In 1974 the South African Council of Churches made the Hammanskraal Resolution (HR), which positioned the church concerning conscientious objection.¹²⁶ The statement clarified that it had always been possible to abstain from military service due to moral reasons. These had become ever more pressing in South Africa as the soldiers were requested to fight in an unjust war. The border conflict with Angola had escalated after the independence of Angola from Portuguese colonial rule. The government of South Africa was seen as the aggressor, and

¹²³ Hopf, “Wir werden gefragt,” in Büttner, 266. Schulz had sent a word of greeting in 1972 to the mission which was printed in the mission newsletter. Schulz included a section of his report to the general synod of the MELF in Mofolo North September 25–27, 1971. In the last section he wrote against the temptation of segregating the church along ethnic and nationalist lines. He refers to the negative example of the white church, but calls on his synod not to follow that example, Georg Schulz, “Wir sind Christi Knechte: Grußwort zum Jahresanfang 1972,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 64, no. 1 (January 1972): 6; Stolle refers to a presentation that Schulz held at a combined conference of pastors of FELSISA and missionaries of MELF in Kirchdorf June 6, 1979, Stolle, “Apartheid and the Bleckmar Mission,” in Klän, 47.

¹²⁴ In an article for Christmas 1976 Hopf reacted to criticism, that he exaggerated the effect of Soweto. He emphasized the need to recognize the impact of the uprisings. Hopf, “Weihnachten 1976 im Schatten von Soweto,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 68, no 12 (December 1976): 276–80.

¹²⁵ Dubow in his Oxford history of Apartheid titles his fourth chapter “Apartheid Regnant,” in Dubow, *Apartheid*, 99–130.

¹²⁶ The Hammanskraal Resolution is attached as appendix eight.

therefore participation in the army was seen as highly questionable.

In a rare incident, the synodical Council of the FELSISA made a counter declaration.¹²⁷ At the synodical convention of the FELSISA in Pretoria August 6–7, 1974, a motion by the Wittenberg congregation had been accepted that the president and synodical council would publicly, possibly in the media, clarify the FELSISA’s position and relationship as related to the WCC, the LWF, and the FELCSA. However, right at the end of the synodical convention, a general motion was unanimously accepted to make a public statement against the HR. A resolution for immediate release to the media was agreed upon.

The Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa resolved unanimously at its convention on the 6 and 7 August 1974 to publish the following declaration: The Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa is not a member of the South African Council of Churches and does not align itself to the decision and recommendation that this body recently took in Hammanskraal. The synodical council will, after a thorough study of the complete resolution will make a further announcement. Pretoria, 7 August 1974 – G. Scharlach, Moderator.¹²⁸ (translation mine)

It published it in the public media to distance itself from the HR and declared its loyalty to the South African Government and its just cause, at least in the written response.¹²⁹ The struggle

¹²⁷ The expanded FELSISA response to the HR is attached as appendix nine. The FELSISA published its expanded response in its newsletter “Dokumentation,” *Bekennende Lutherische Kirche* 2, no. 3/4 (March and April 1975): 26–28. The name of the newsletter must have grated Hopf in its obvious association to the confessing church in Germany.

¹²⁸ “Die Vrye Evangelies–Lutherse Sinode in Suid–Afrika het op sy sinode sitting te Pretoria op 6 and 7 Augusts 1974 die volgende verklaring eenparig uitgereik: Die Vrye Evangelies–Lutherse Sinode in Suid–Afrika is nie ‘n lide van die Suidafrikaanse Raad van Kerke en vereenselwig hom nie met die besluit en aanbevelings wat onlangs deur hierdie liggaam in Hammanskraal geneem en gemaak is nie. Die sinodale raad sal na deeglike bestudering van die volledige besluit ‘n verdere verklaring uitreik. Pretoria, 7 Augusts 1974 – G. Scharlach, Moderator.” “Dokumentation,” *Bekennende Lutherische Kirche* 1, no. 9/10 (September and October 1974): 63.

¹²⁹ Hopf writes, that they quickly responded in a radio message soon after the synod, and then a year later published the expanded response. See Footnote 48 in Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 349n48. In an unpublished presentation to the combined conference of missionaries of MELF and the pastors of the FELSISA, in Botshabelo February 20–21, 1973, by E.A.W. Weber on the topic *Die ökumenische Verantwortung der Kirche nach dem Lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften*, The ecumenical responsibility of the church according to the Lutheran confessions, pointed to various confessional references where the church is mandated to call the authorities to repentance. The fact that people working in the state are not just good, when they receive the mandate of government should be obvious. Original sin as confessed in CA 2 should answer that. They are not free from sin, in

in South Africa against apartheid was often compared to the Church struggle in Germany. Hopf was hugely disappointed and drew the analogy to the Ansbacher Ratschlag, which Althaus and Elert had signed in contrast to the perceived Barthian Barmer Declaration.¹³⁰ Althaus and Elert basically had endorsed Hitler and his regime, even though they later withdrew from the Ansbacher circle.¹³¹ Hopf had asked the FELSISA council if it was not perceivable that they would have misread the current situation. He tabled the FELSISA's response to the HR before the larger church council of the SELK, which incorporated the church council and its district president's council.¹³² One literarily gets the feeling that Hopf would like to ask: "How could you come up with such a response?" His implied answer probably was, only if you have not taken cognizance of the South African situation; in that sense, your response was not appropriate. He had prepared nine questions together with the HR and the FELSISA response in the material for the meeting.¹³³

After the ANC's initial success in its battle against apartheid, it was outlawed or banned and had to go underground. After the treason trial, much of the leadership was incarcerated. The South African government became more powerful and effective in enforcing apartheid and extending its so-called petty apartheid. On the other hand, the international fight against

fact they are in grave danger to be corrupted and abuse their power. Therefore, the church should warn its members, not to place too much hope in a politician. Weber specifically mentioned the need to point this out to the crisis fellowship in Greytown.

¹³⁰ The Ansbacher Ratschlag is attached as appendix eleven.

¹³¹ Green, mentions Hopf's sermon after the Reichskristallnacht, but Hopf does admit later on in his life, that he wished that he and his colleagues had had said more in defense of the Jews. Lowell Green, *Lutherans against Hitler: The Untold Story* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007), 147; See F.W. Hopf, "40 Jahre nach dem Novemberpogrom Mühlausener Pfarrer klagt wegen eigener Untätigkeit," in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 380–83.

¹³² Unpublished document: "Vorlage für die Sitzung der Kirchenleitung und dem Kollegium der Superintendenten 1975." In the archive of the MELF in Bleckmar.

¹³³ Hopf, "Vorlage," 1–2.

apartheid also gained momentum at the end of the '60s and the '70s. The World Council of Churches (WCC) had increased its resistance and called for disinvestment and sanctions. The WCC was seen as a significant threat by the South African state and by many supporters of apartheid in South Africa.¹³⁴ Many people saw the South African Council of Churches (SACC) as a branch of the WCC and therefore felt compelled to resist its influence.

The threat and reality of an armed struggle grew in the early parts of the 1970s. The South African government punted the argument of a communist threat to justify its military defense of all things good and Christian.¹³⁵ The basic assumption that all communists were atheists did not work for many of the political leaders in Africa, even though the South African government narrative about the communist threat wanted to make this connection. In 1973 SA was expelled from the UN. The border war in Namibia—at that time still known as South West Africa—escalated, especially as Angola received its independence from Portugal. The border war with Angola lasted until the end of the 1980s.¹³⁶

The HR by the SACC did not criticize the whole issue of apartheid and racism but instead focused on conscientious objection. But the HR was relevant because it pointed out that the South African Government was fundamentally unjust. The referral to the Anglo Boer War as Freedom Wars was a clever move to put these various conflicts into context and compared them with the current legitimate liberation movement. The SACC, probably through the considerable influence of the Methodist church, emphasized the non-violent call for change at this time of the

¹³⁴ See the documentation concerning the Eloff Commission, that investigated the SACC. Gisela Albrecht and Hartwig Liebich, eds. *Bekennnis und Widerstand: Kirchen Südafrikas im Konflikt mit dem Staat. Dokumente zur Untersuchung des Südafrikanischen Kirchenrats durch die Eloff-Kommission* (Hamburg: Missionshilfe, 1983).

¹³⁵ See Michael S. Lerner, "A Convenient Excuse: Apartheid South Africa and the 'Soviet Menace' during the Cold War," *Journal of Political Inquiry* 5, no. 5 (2012): 1–9.

¹³⁶ See Dubow, *Apartheid*, 177.

struggle. This aspect would become important in the racism debate of the ecumenical movement as this was linked to the peace movement. Many found it difficult to justify the support of the liberation movement because of its call for the use of violence as a legitimate form of resistance. The Kairos document would at a later point call for the justification of the armed struggle in 1985. The challenge in this later discussion was focused on the use of violence and distracted from the legitimate claims of the liberation movement.

Hopf correctly asked himself and the district presidents: Why would you respond, and why now? In the following years, because of Hopf's unrelenting criticism of apartheid, some FELSISA congregations would terminate their subscription of the mission newsletter, and in 1977 the missionaries conference decided to refuse writing for the newsletter.¹³⁷

In its response to the HR, the FELSISA defended the South African government without really looking at the situation of its black brothers and sisters in South Africa and never really looking critically at all the abuses of justice and peace that were happening in South Africa. It was farcical when they suggested that they could work and do their mandated task as the church in peace and quiet. An especially pertinent point that Hopf raised in his document for the district presidents was that the government was probably a prime candidate to be corrupted by sin and temptation due to its access to power and authority. In the experience of the church struggle in

¹³⁷ Stolle, "Apartheid and the Bleckmar Mission," in Klän, 38n17; See the documentation: "Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Missionarskonferenz vom 11.–13.1.1977," in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 297; "Auszug aus dem Brief von Bischof Georg Schulz vom 18.1.1977 an den Vorsitzenden der Missionsleitung Superintendent Wolfgang Kühn" in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 298–9; Hopf's responding letter: "Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen" in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 319–22.

Germany, one recognized the challenge when a government could declare laws that were fundamentally unjust and wrong. This called into question the whole concept of the legitimacy of the state *per se*. The legitimacy had to be shown in the appropriate actions of the state.

It was evident for Hopf that this was not an appropriate response by the FELSISA. But Lutherans typically found it difficult to criticize government. How was the church to deal with injustices perpetrated by the government or authority? Was it sufficient to use the fundamental law of God in the decalogue to call governments back to order? Hopf's background in the "Hessischen Renitenz" gave him much more freedom to be critical of secular government.

The confessing church and many of our free churches have used the *status confessionis* concept to legitimize the orthodox church body. Could this concept be used against a political government to declare that it has, through its actions, left the foundation of its mandate, and therefore is no longer the valid government? Could a new government representing the true old government be called out and established by the people? The principle of declaring true doctrine and demarcating heresy was not used in the parallel situation, where true government was demarcated from illegitimate government.

Hopf was disappointed because he believed that the FELSISA had missed an opportunity to witness a prophetic voice in the current situation of South Africa. The FELSISA was probably proud that it had stood firm against any outside communist agitation. Remarkably, the declaration was made by the FELSISA in Greytown, where a small group of white Lutherans had left the ELCSA-NT to form a Crisis-fellowship that had joined the FELSISA, because of various complaints against their church among which was the issue that the World Council of Churches

wanted them to celebrate combined services with blacks.¹³⁸

The Years Before Soweto, 1976

In 1974 Hopf had traveled to South Africa for the third and last time. He published his impressions in sections in the mission newsletter at the end of 1974 and 1975, but next to his report, he published two articles by Peter Beyerhaus on the issue of racism in the church.¹³⁹ This was typical of how Hopf used other voices to let them say what he believed needed to be said. In his annual report at the AGM of the mission on March 24 and 25, 1976, Hopf referred back to these travel reports of 1974.¹⁴⁰ At the time, Hopf said, people were expectant that South Africa was standing before significant changes, and they were excited and believed that apartheid would come to an end. Hopf made the following statement: “Behind that always stood the desire of the black African, to be fully recognized as human and as a brother, and to receive the related legal recognition that would come with that.”¹⁴¹ There was much talk about a gradual relaxation of the restrictions of a *détente* in the Republic of South Africa, however as Dubow showed in his history of apartheid, the partial relaxation of the rules did not appease the resistance movement

¹³⁸ Their acceptance into the FELSISA was announced in the FELSISA presidents report to the synod in 1974 in Pretoria. For documentation of the issue see: Hans Wolfgang Heßler, *EKD und Kirchen im südlichen Afrika: Das Problem der kirchlichen Einheit im Rassen Konflikt, Dokumente und andere Texte* (Frankfurt: Evangelischer Presse Dienst, 1974), 230–67; See Hopf, “*Lutherische Mitverantwortung*,” in Büttner, 341n30–342n30.

¹³⁹ “Zum dritten Mal in Südafrika,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 66 no. 9/10 (September and October, 1974): 181–91; Part two, 66, no. 11 (November 1974): 211–23; Part three, 67, no. 1 (January 1975): 17–21; Part four, 67, no. 2 (February 1975): 36–43; Part five, 67, no. 3 (March 1975): 56–9; Peter Beyerhaus, “Warum muß uns Christen das Thema ‘Rassismus’ quälen?” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 66, no. 9/10 (September and October, 1974): 197–200; Peter Beyerhaus, “Wie kann die christliche Mission den Rassismus überwinden helfen?” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 66, no. 11 (November 1974): 229–34.

¹⁴⁰ Hopf, “Bericht des Missionsdirektors bei der Jahreshauptversammlung des Missionskollegiums und der Missionsleitung am 24./25.3.1976,” in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 272–97.

¹⁴¹ “Dahinter stand immer die Sehnsucht der schwarzen Afrikaner, als Menschen und Brüder voll anerkannt zu werden und die damit gegebene Rechtsstellung zu erhalten.” Hopf, “Bericht 1976,” in Büttner, 273.

but instead intensified the opposition.¹⁴² Hopf reflected on this issue of time running out, everyone was nervous that the powder keg would explode, and a few months later, with Soweto in June 1976, it did. However, at the time, Hopf was looking across the border to Angola and possibly Mozambique as the possible future arenas of war.¹⁴³ In this report, Hopf mentioned the establishment of the united ELCSA, but that even here, the three white ELCSA churches did not join the African churches to become one.

The Soweto Uprising, 1976

In the September edition of the mission newsletter, Hopf responded to the Soweto Uprising of June 1976 with an article titled: *Das furchtbare Geschehen in Südafrika*, the terrible events in South Africa.¹⁴⁴ After a general recap of what had happened, he expanded on the specific relevance of the situation to the mission in various forms. He wrote:

In the mission newsletter, we are merely concerned about the people that are immediately impacted, among whom and next to many other churches and mission organizations our church mission is working. That means: that we are concerned about our proper understanding of the *Anliegen*, concerns or issues, and claims of the overwhelming large black majority. We are also concerned about the attitude and behavior of the white minority, that has up to now ruled over the whole land and its many *Völker* nations but is now fearful of its future. We are also not lastly concerned about our *Sendboten*, messengers, among black and white Africans. We are worried about their witness in this time and their path into the future. Within this context, we think on the one hand about the multiple connections our brothers and sisters have with the whites in South Africa. On the other hand, the deciding question about the probation and preservation of their lasting relationship to the black Africans.

¹⁴² Dubow titles his seventh chapter as “The Limits and Dangers of Reform,” in Dubow, *Apartheid*. Dubow referred to De Tocqueville’s reflections on Louis XVI “experience teaches that the most critical moment for bad government is the one which witnesses their first steps towards reform ... Never had the feudal system seemed so hateful to the French as at the moment of its proximate destruction. In the case of South Africa’s popular masses, the common rallying call was wholesale abolition of apartheid, not merely its reform.” Dubow, *Apartheid*, 205.

¹⁴³ Hopf, “Bericht 1976,” in *Büttner*, 273–74.

¹⁴⁴ Hopf, “Das furchtbare Geschehen in Südafrika,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 68, no. 9 (September 1976): 184–185. Again Hopf in the August edition printed a letter by Archbishop Tutu to Vorster. D. Tutu, “Ein Brief an Premierminister Voster,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 68, no. 7/8 (July and August 1976): 155–9.

What do we now as church and mission want to say in the face of the responsibility for our service in South Africa to the terrible events there? Because it should be clear to us all that we are not allowed to close our eyes or remain silent. The expressed intercession for southern Africa and its *Völker* nations and its Christians among them should not be missing from any of our divine services. In this context, the following has to be clearly seen and clearly recognized and be witnessed unmistakably: That what is happening in South Africa now and will probably be happening for the foreseeable future are heavy judgments of the holy and living God, which have been foreseen and preannounced by many for a long time, for many others apparently surprisingly and absolutely unexplainable. They are God's judgments over whites and blacks. They are God's judgments also over the church and its mission work. They are God's judgments also over our service in this land and therefore over us, who carry this work. We also have to ask ourselves: What was not right? What did we fail? Where and when and before whom did we remain silent when we should have said something? What must be different in the future? Was the specific intercessory prayer neglected among us even though there was much love and willingness to sacrifice? How did we become indirectly and directly complicit that it often lacked practical manifestations for a true fellowship between white Christians and their black brothers and sisters?

And how does it now stand with the willingness for self-criticism, for humble diffraction under God's mighty hand, for the overcoming of defiance and resignation, for repentance from incorrect paths to a new beginning with fruit in keeping with repentance?

We do not want to presume that we know what our white and black brothers in South Africa need to say now. We cannot prescribe to them how they must talk under the heavy pressure lying on them. However, we can pray for them to receive the authority to say the right word for the right time and at the right place. We are allowed to give our brothers advice according to the measure of our own understanding, for their land and their *Völker*, nations, to take head and to express, what was once said for our land and *Volk*, nation, by Luther's friend Johann Walter in the hymn: *Wach auf, wach auf, du deutsches Land*, wake up, wake up, you German land. We experienced in the years after 1933 and then during the Second World War how this hymn was able to touch hearts and consciences. We think that corresponding application for South Africa and its Christians is urgent from line to line, all the way to the conclusion.

God warns daily, forever and ever, that is witnessed by His signs because God's punishment is before the door. ...

Thus help us God all together, that we would leave off sinning, and he would lead us to His kingdom, that we would hate the wrong. Lord Jesus Christ, help us now, and give us your Spirit for it, that we would grasp Your warning.¹⁴⁵

The challenge for Hopf was that his missionaries were not willing to write reports about the situation in South Africa. So, he resorted to printing other voices. Hopf, in the August edition,

¹⁴⁵ “Es geht uns im Missionsblatt lediglich um die davon unmittelbar betroffenen Menschen, unter denen und für die neben vielen anderen Kirchen und Missionswerken auch unsere Kirchenmission arbeitet. Das heißt: es geht uns um das rechte Verständnis für die Anliegen und Forderungen der überwältigend großen schwarzen Mehrheit. Es geht uns ebenso um die Haltung und das Verhalten der weißen Minderheit, die bisher das ganze Land und seine vielen Völker beherrscht, nun aber um ihre Zukunft bangt. Es geht uns nicht zuletzt um unsere Sendboten unter schwarzen und weißen Afrikanern. Es geht uns um ihr Zeugnis in dieser Zeit und um ihren Weg in die Zukunft. Dabei denken wir auf der einen Seite an die vielfachen Verbindungen unserer Brüder und Schwestern mit den Weißen in Südafrika. Auf der anderen Seite bewegt uns die entscheidende Frage nach der Bewährung und Bewahrung ihrer bleibenden Verbundenheit mit den schwarzen Afrikanern.

Was wollen wir nun als Kirche und Mission angesichts der Verantwortung für unseren Dienst in Südafrika zu dem furchtbaren Geschehen dort sagen? Denn dass wir weder die Augen davor verschließen noch dazu schweigen dürfen, müsste uns allen klar sein. Die ausdrückliche Fürbitte für das Südliche Afrika und seine Völker sowie für die Christenheit unter ihnen sollte in keinem unserer Gottesdienste unterbleiben. In diesem Zusammenhang muss vor allem anderen deutlich gesehen, klar erkannt und unüberhörbar bezeugt werden: Was in Südafrika jetzt geschieht und aller Voraussicht nach weiterhin geschehen wird, sind schwere Gerichte des heiligen und lebendigen Gottes, von vielen seit langer Zeit vorausgesehen und vorausgesagt, für viele andere offenbar überraschend und völlig unbegreiflich. Es sind Gottes Gerichte über Weiße und Schwarze. Es sind Gottes Gerichte auch über die Kirchen und ihre Missionsarbeit. Es sind Gottes Gerichte auch über unseren Dienst in diesem Land und damit auch über uns, die wir diese Arbeit tragen. Auch wir müssen uns fragen: Was war nicht richtig? Was haben wir versäumt? Wo und wann und vor wem haben wir geschwiegen, wenn wir hätten reden müssen? Was muss in Zukunft anders werden? Hat es nicht trotz großer Liebe und vieler Opfer bei uns weithin gefehlt an gezielter Fürbitte? Wieweit sind wir direkt oder indirekt daran mitschuldig geworden, dass es oft mangelte an Tatbeweisen für eine wirkliche Gemeinschaft weißer Christen mit ihren schwarzen Brüdern und Schwestern?

Und wie steht es jetzt mit der Bereitschaft zur Selbstprüfung, zu demütiger Beugung unter Gottes gewaltige Hand, zur Überwindung von Trotz und Verzagtheit, zur Umkehr von verkehrten Wegen, zu einem Neuanfang mit rechtschaffenen Früchten der Buße?

Wir wollen uns nicht anmaßen zu wissen, was unsere weißen und schwarzen Brüder in Südafrikajetzt sagen müssen. Wir können ihnen auch nicht vorschreiben, wie sie reden müssen unter dem harten Druck, der auf ihnen lastet. Wir können aber für sie bitten um die Vollmacht des rechten Wortes zur rechten Zeit und am rechten Ort. Wir dürfen unseren Brüdern auch nach dem Maß unserer Erkenntnis außerdem den Rat geben, für ihr Land und seine Völker jetzt zu bedenken und auszusprechen, was einst für unser Land und Volk von Luthers Freund Johann Walther gesagt worden ist in dem Gesang: ‘Wach auf, wach auf, du deutsches Land.’ Wir haben in den Jahren nach 1933 und dann während des Zweiten Weltkrieges erfahren, wie dieses Lied Herzen und Gewissen zu treffen vermag. Wir meinen, die entsprechende Anwendung auf Südafrika und seine Christen sei von Zeile zu Zeile vordringlich, —bis zum Schluss:

Gott warnet täglich für und für, das zeugen seine Zeichen, denn Gottes Straf ist vor der Tür. ... Das helfe Gott uns allen gleich, dass wir von Sünden lassen, und führe uns zu Seinem Reich, dass wir das Unrecht hassen. Herr Jesu Christe hilf uns nu und gib uns Deinen Geist dazu, dass wir Dein Warnung fassen.” Hopf, “Das furchtbare Geschehen in Südafrika,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 68, no. 9 (September 1976): 184–85.

printed a letter by Archbishop Tutu to Vorster.¹⁴⁶ Just after that article, Hopf published an article by missionary Friederich Dierks but deemed it necessary to include a few preliminary remarks. Hopf distanced himself at least subtly from the report by his missionary. Here Hopf, for the first time, distanced himself from the use of the term “Bantu.” He said that this in the future should be limited to anthropological studies; one should now use the phrase “schwarzen Afrikaner”, black Africans.¹⁴⁷

In a conference of January 11–13, 1977, the missionaries decided to voice their discontent with the articles in the newsletter, especially one titled *Folterung in Südafrika*, Torture in South Africa.¹⁴⁸ They said these reports were irresponsible and sowed hate because they were one-sided and biased.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, they concluded they would no longer contribute to the newsletter. The complete letter responding to this decision by the missionaries and informing the mission board chairman by Bishop Georg Schulz showed how he was criticized in South Africa for being the informer of the mission director in Germany and was a supporter of the liberal media and even designated as a communist.¹⁵⁰ Schulz felt that Hopf had not published his full report in Germany in the newsletter, and it had been misconstrued as if he supported revolution and unrest.¹⁵¹ It was

¹⁴⁶ Desmond Tutu, “Ein Brief an Premierminister Vorster,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 68, no. 7/8 (July and August 1976): 155–59.

¹⁴⁷ Hopf, “Soweto, die südwestlichen Bantustädte von Johannesburg,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 68, no. 7/8 (July and August 1976): 160.

¹⁴⁸ No author, “Folterung in Südafrika,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 68, no. 11 (November 1976): 243. See the documentation: “Auszug aus dem Protokoll,” in Büttner, 297; G. Schulz, “Auszug aus dem Brief,” in Büttner, 298–9; Hopf’s responding letter: “Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen” in Büttner, 319–22.

¹⁴⁹ “Auszug aus dem Protokoll,” in Büttner, 297.

¹⁵⁰ G. Schulz, “Auszug aus dem Brief,” in Büttner, 298–9.

¹⁵¹ Hopf had published two articles immediately before the controversial article “Torture,” the first a sermon by G. Schulz “Veränderung durch Erneuerung des Sinnes!” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 68, no. 11 (November 1976): 234–7. The second an article by Hopf, “Begegnungen mit Bischof Georg Schulz,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 68, no. 11 (November 1976): 238–42.

important for Schulz to appropriate judgment and guilt on both sides, black and white in South Africa, but he felt that it was not possible to take a position critical of apartheid unopposed in South Africa. Hopf would, in a later edition of the newsletter, take up some of these concerns of Schulz.¹⁵² But he carried on publishing articles of others.¹⁵³

On January 21, 1977, Hopf responded in a long letter to the missionaries.¹⁵⁴ The first part of the letter lamented that he had had minimal contact with the employees. He had limited his communication to the bishop, which he was unsure whether it had been the right decision. One of the reasons he published other material was that he had received no reports from the missionaries. However, he disagreed that the reports that he had published were unreliable or unsubstantiated. He trusted his sources and believed that he knew many things about the situation in South Africa despite the silence of his missionaries. If he lacked insight, they should have assisted him. He then referred to the reality that there would be different opinions and positions that were not always reconcilable among serious Christians. He referred to schisms and separations in recent German history and asked if this might have been a crisis in which they all had to ask what God's intention with this situation was and what the evil foe was planning with these situations. The missionaries had asked for a spiritual word of guidance from the mission board. Stolle would point out in his article about apartheid in the LKM that a united position in

¹⁵² Hopf, "Zum Bericht über 'Folterungen in Südafrika,'" *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 69 no. 1 (January 1977): 23; Hopf, "Zur Ergänzung unserer Berichterstattung," *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 69, no. 2 (February 1977): 44–6; Hopf, "Weitere Ergänzungen zu unsern Berichten," *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 69, no. 3 (March 1977): 62–9. Hopf in this last article, includes a critical letter by Mr. B.A. Hambrock from Lüneburg South Africa and adds a response to it.

¹⁵³ Hopf, "Ein Hermannsburger Soweto Bericht," *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 69, no. 1 (January 1977): 12–9; Hopf, "Bischofspredigt eines schwarzen Südafrikaners," *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 69, no. 2 (February 1977): 41–3; The Roman Catholic Bishops conference, "Die römisch-katholischen Bischöfe Südafrikas," *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 69, no. 3 (March 1977): 60–1; Hopf, "Im Leichenhaus von Soweto," *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 69, no. 3 (March 1977): 69–70.

¹⁵⁴ Hopf, "Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen," in Büttner, 319–22.

the LKM was not possible.¹⁵⁵ In fact, in a meeting of the mission board and the SELK church council, a decision was taken on November 1, 1977, that Hopf would be placed into retirement with effect of June 1, 1978. He was requested to stay on until a successor was found, but his offer to carry on beyond the age of 67 was not accepted. On March 16, 1978, Volker Stolle was elected as mission director and was inducted into this office. It was a relatively short period since the uprising in Soweto in 1976 that Hopf remained in the position of mission director. In Hopf's letter to the missionaries from January 1977, he wanted to respond personally but said he could not separate his person from his office.¹⁵⁶ He wrote:

It was and remained my intention to talk in a spiritual manner in the newsletter of the mission to those events and processes that move us. Thereby however, to mention facts, share remarkable voices of others, and refer to things that must be known, if the mission congregation wants to stand behind their messengers in concrete intercession and wants to accompany the young church on its path in true mutual responsibility, but also not allowed to forget the "white" sister church with which it is connected. Please, check everything in the newsletter published since 1976 and signed by me personally against these following viewpoints: Call for intercession, Remembrance of the black and white fellow believers, especially to the messengers, deep fright over revolt, bloodletting and unrighteous violence, support for suffering and depressed, efforts to understand the "signs of the time," calls for conscious and decisive steps to cross the racial barriers in the life among Christians, calls for a united together with us humble diffraction below God's righteous judgments, encouragements to what you especially have been calling for the concrete witness by word and deed.

Tell me, please openly and fraternally, what was not spiritual in my words. Let me know what you have been missing and would like to have heard. But do not expect, please, to receive words of reassurance and belittling of the events, which I hold for much more severe and threatening than what I have been able to clarify till now.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Stolle, "Apartheid and the Bleckmar Mission," in Klän, 43–44.

¹⁵⁶ Hopf, "Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen," in Büttner, 320.

¹⁵⁷ "Es war und ist mein Anliegen, im Missionsblatt zu den uns bewegenden Ereignissen und Vorgängen in geistlicher Weise zu sprechen, dabei allerdings Tatsachen zu erwähnen, beachtliche Stimmen anderer mitzuteilen und auf Dinge hinzuweisen, die bekannt werden müssen, wenn die Missionsgemeinde in gezielter Fürbitte hinter ihren Sendboten stehen und den Weg der Jungen Kirche in echter Mitverantwortung begleiten soll, aber auch die mit ihr verbundene 'weiße' Schwesterkirche nicht vergessen darf. Bitte, prüfen Sie alles im Missionsblatt seit Juli 1976 Gedruckte und von mir persönlich Gezeichnete auf folgende Gesichtspunkte: Aufruf zur Fürbitte, Gedenken an die

In the following passage, Hopf explained that he was very aware of the interconnectedness of the economy and the implications of the cold war. He realized that some, like the former United States secretary of state Henry Kissinger, had suggested that one might have to accept the lesser evil of apartheid in the face of the more significant threat of communism.¹⁵⁸ As much as Hopf was aware of this *realpolitik*, he could not consider it as decisive when it concerned,

... the need to apply God's word to the things of this world—in clear witness against revealed wrong including structures that have become dangerous and unjust, sure also in the witness against revolt and any kind of bloodletting, but not less in the fellowship of deep and true suffering with persecuted and disenfranchised. It is far removed from me to try and discuss and analyze the interconnectedness of world politics in the South African conflict in the newsletter. We should especially be frightened of any sounds of a crusade ideology. But everything for me relates to the way of the church under the mandate of its Lord and in his *Nachfolge*, following—concerning the path of the church to the black and white South Africans there, where they today live and suffer, fighting and hoping, being fearful and depressed.

You know, dear brothers, that I do not have a different position today, as I have tried to have always had. No one will expect me to change my mind and talk, from the way I have always tried to speak and think, unfortunately, due to false consideration not clear enough and not sharp enough. Before I traveled to South Africa for the first time in 1956, Professor Sasse wrote me a letter that I had misplaced, unfortunately. Unforgotten, however, is one sentence: “No Lutheran Missionary is allowed ever to represent or defend Apartheid!” This was clear to me even before that. I sometimes read this letter in silent moments to some brothers that became very thoughtful, among them mission director D. Elfers (Hermannsburg), who visited me shortly before my trip in Bleckmar, and superintendent Christoph Johannes. But I, unfortunately, did not follow up on this clear and correct instruction with enough sharpness and clarity in public, neither with my students in the mission seminary, nor in the newsletter of the mission, nor the direct intervention of decisions of our

schwarzen und weißen Glaubensgenossen, vornehmlich an die Sendboten, Tiefes Erschrecken über Aufruhr, Blutvergießen und ungerechte Gewalttaten, Eintreten für Leidende und Bedrückte, Bemühung um Erkennen der ‘Zeichen der Zeit,’ Forderung bewusster und entschiedener Überschreitung der Rassenschanke im Leben von Christen untereinander, Aufforderung zu einer mit uns gemeinsamen Beugung unter Gottes gerechte Gerichte, Ermutigung zu dem vor allem von Ihnen geforderten konkreten Zeugnis durch Worte und Taten.

Sagen Sie mir, bitte, offen und brüderlich, was an meinen Worten ungeistlich war. Lassen Sie mich wissen, was Sie vermisst haben und gern gehört hätten. Aber rechnen Sie, bitte, nicht auf Worte der Beruhigung und Verharmlosung des Geschehens, das ich für viel ernster und bedrohlicher halte, als ich es bisher habe deutlich machen können.” Hopf, “Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen,” in Büttner, 320–1.

¹⁵⁸ See Dubow, *Apartheid*, 175

mission. The false consideration for the whites in South Africa exercised their paralyzing effect for decades.

Even though we have tried several things and probably achieved some things, I have nevertheless failed in many ways in this respect, and I remained silent over many things. Now it is happening just like we experienced it often in the great German Church struggle: Decisions, which we believed to have good reasons to ignore, would come back to request a response from us in much more complex situations. But only then if God wanted to give us another opportunity and would not deny us the possibility to catch up on the failed attempt.¹⁵⁹

Hopf, in closing, pointed to the various information he had received along the grapevine and in letters.¹⁶⁰ He closed with reference to 1 Cor. 4:1–5:

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce

¹⁵⁹ “Wenn es darum geht, Gottes Wort anzuwenden auf die Dinge dieser Welt—im klaren Zeugnis gegen offenes Unrecht einschließlich gefährlich gewordener ungerechter Strukturen, gewiss ebenso im Zeugnis gegen Aufruhr und jegliches Blutvergießen, aber nicht minder in der Gemeinschaft eines tiefen und echten Leidens mit Verfolgten und Entrechteten. Es liegt mir fern, die weltpolitischen Verflechtungen der südafrikanischen Konflikte im Missionsblatt zu behandeln und zu analysieren. Vor allem sollten wir uns fürchten vor irgendwelchen Klängen einer Kreuzzugsideologie. Es liege mir aber alles am Weg der Kirche unter dem Auftrag ihres Herrn und in seiner Nachfolge—am Weg der Kirche zu den schwarzen und weißen Südafrikanern dort, wo sie heute leben und leiden, kämpfen und hoffen, geängstigt sind und verzagen.

Sie wissen, liebe Brüder, dass ich heute keine andere Stellung habe, als ich sie immer vertreten wollte. Keiner von Ihnen wird von mir erwarten, dass ich jetzt anders denke und rede, als ich es immer versucht habe, leider aus falscher Rücksicht nicht deutlich und scharf genug. Ehe ich 1956 erstmalig nach Südafrika reiste schrieb mir Professor Sasse einen Brief, der mir leider nicht mehr zu Hand ist. Unvergesslich ist mir ein Satz: ‘Kein lutherischer Missionar darf jemals die Apartheid vertreten oder verteidigen!’ Mir war dies schon vorher klar. Ich habe damals diesen Brief in stillen Stunden manchen Brüdern vorgelesen, die dabei sehr nachdenklich wurden, u.a. Missionsdirektor D. Elfers (Hermannsburg), der mich noch kurz vor meiner Abreise in Bleckmar besuchte, und Superintendent Christoph Johannes. Aber ich habe leider diese klare und richtige Wegweisung nicht scharf und deutlich genug öffentlich befolgt, weder vor meinen Schülern im Missionsseminar, noch im Missionsblatt, noch im direkten Eingreifen in Entscheidungen unserer Mission. Die falsche Rücksicht auf die Weißen in Südafrika wirkte jahrzehntelang lähmend.”

Obwohl wir manches versucht haben und wohl einiges erreichten, habe ich trotzdem in dieser Hinsicht viel versäumt und zu manchem geschwiegen. Nun geht es so, wie wir es im großen deutschen Kirchenkampf oft erlebt haben: Entscheidungen, denen wir aus—wie wir meinten—guten Gründen ausweichen wollten, werden uns später unter viel härteren Umständen erneut abgefordert—aber nur dann, wenn uns Gott noch eine Gelegenheit dazu gibt und uns nicht Möglichkeit versagt, das Versäumte nachzuholen.” Hopf, “Mission Evangelisch Lutherischer Freikirchen,” in Büttner, 321–2.

¹⁶⁰ He is probably referring to the letter by Hambrock, which he published in the newsletter and possibly also the newsletter that Dierks had written to friends and relatives which had been published in the newsletter *Bekennende Kirche* of the FELSISA. Hopf, “Weitere Ergänzungen zu unsern Berichten,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 69, no. 3 (March 1977): 62–9.

judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

He expressed the hope that they might be one or become one again in the future to speak these verses with the heathen apostle, both as individuals and together.

In the following editions of the newsletter, Hopf would continue to publish voices from different quarters, he would try and take up the concerns and complaints of the various people. He positioned himself in relation to theologians like Beyers Naudé and defended his position that as long as Lutherans would not respond, he would allow other voices to be heard.¹⁶¹ The crisis of apartheid also diminished the impact of certain boundaries between churches, as the need to respond to the issue at hand was so urgent.¹⁶²

The report of Hopf to the AGM in March 1977 again picked up on the conflict between missionaries and Hopf about the reporting in the newsletter.¹⁶³ Hopf highlighted that Schulz had not suggested any criticism of the reporting during his visit to Germany in autumn of 1976. However, Schulz was heavily attacked by members of the FELSISA when he returned to South Africa, apparently also from his clergy colleagues. Hopf pointed out that there was an obviously different perception and conviction about apartheid on his side when compared to the missionaries. He then summarized an analysis of the South African situation and apartheid by a Berlin mission society worker who had been in South Africa recently.¹⁶⁴ He pointed to the fact

¹⁶¹ Hopf, "Zum Bericht über 'Folterungen in Südafrika,'" *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 69, no. 1 (January 1977): 23.

¹⁶² See Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 326.

¹⁶³ Hopf, "Bericht des Missionsdirektors am 24. März 1977 in Bleckmar vor der Jahresversammlung des Missionskollegiums und der Missionsleitung," in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 300–318. The conflict is mentioned by Hopf, "Bericht 1977," in Büttner, 301–2.

¹⁶⁴ Hopf, "Bericht 1977," in Büttner, 304.

that apartheid was bound to fail, and the industrialization of South Africa basically condemned total segregation to an utopian ideal that would not work because the cities could not be incorporated into the homeland policy.

Remarkably Hopf then referred to the various theories of what was behind the uprising. Many whites, among them the missionary Friederich Dierks viewed the uprising as being caused by revolutionary forces with communist backing. Schulz had denied these connections as wishful thinking and as historical falsification.¹⁶⁵ However, this was one of the critical points that Schulz was criticized for in South Africa.¹⁶⁶ Hopf then quoted a lengthy section from the Berlin mission society worker who tried to find reasons for the Soweto uprising in the growing Black consciousness movement and the radicalization of the youth.¹⁶⁷ Hopf referred to the fabricated security laws of the South African government that would be ridiculed in any legitimate democracy, as he questioned the approach of the government to try and control the uncontrollable with violence.¹⁶⁸ This was the context that Hopf described as the “South Africa after Soweto,” the place in which the mission was to be the salt and light of the earth.¹⁶⁹

Everyone outside of the South African government and the white supporters of apartheid seemed to realize that no simple offer of reform or gradual adaptation would suffice, but that a radical change and total turnaround was necessary. Hopf had pointed to the disappointing fact that he had been waiting in vain for a clearing response from South Africa. He had hoped that the South African church and mission would have realized what the necessary word of a way

¹⁶⁵ Hopf, “Bericht 1977,” in Büttner, 304.

¹⁶⁶ See G. Schulz, “Auszug aus dem Brief,” in Büttner, 298–9.

¹⁶⁷ Hopf, “Bericht 1977,” in Büttner, 304–6.

¹⁶⁸ Hopf, “Bericht 1977,” in Büttner, 306.

¹⁶⁹ Hopf, “Bericht 1977,” in Büttner, 306.

forward would mean. Everyone in the mission and the church was united in the conviction that the church's task remained the same, even if, as a missionary apparently had said at a mission festival in the FELSISA: "Christ remains, even if South Africa becomes communist."¹⁷⁰ However, Hopf bemoaned the fact that the church chose to ignore the second aspect, namely the task to appropriate the word of God to the situation and things of the world. This was cause for much pain and disappointment on the side of Hopf, and he was not sure what the cause of this silence was. Hopf deduced from this silence that active signs of compassion and assistance to people in need were probably not that common.¹⁷¹ He critically assessed the role of prayer and intercession and explicitly questioned if one could fittingly pray if one did not know the situation.¹⁷² He warned against fleeing into a haven of prayer, whereas one was not willing to take a clear stand against the issues of the times.¹⁷³ Hopf clarified that the church always needed to be the suffering church as it followed its Lord on the path of the cross. He quoted bishop Schulz's reflection on how the white missionaries were beneficiaries of white privilege and how this impacted their role as missionaries.¹⁷⁴ These critical questions had also been asked at the missionary's conference. Hopf pointed out that "Who asks like this, confesses clearly, the way he sees the black South African: despised, persecuted, disenfranchised!"¹⁷⁵ Hopf quoted Manas Buthelezi, who had called on the church to become poor and oppressed so that it could proclaim the gospel to the poor and oppressed.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ "Christus bleibt, auch wenn Südafrika kommunistisch wird." Hopf, "Bericht 1977," in Büttner, 307.

¹⁷¹ Hopf, "Bericht 1977," in Büttner, 307.

¹⁷² Hopf, "Bericht 1977," in Büttner, 308–9.

¹⁷³ Hopf, "Bericht 1977," in Büttner, 309.

¹⁷⁴ Hopf, "Bericht 1977," in Büttner, 309.

¹⁷⁵ "Wer so fragt, bekennt damit eindeutig, wie er die Lage der schwarzen Südafrikaner sieht: Verachtet, Verfolgt, Entrechtet!" Hopf, "Bericht 1977," in Büttner, 309.

¹⁷⁶ Hopf, "Bericht 1977," in Büttner, 310.

Hopf wanted to expand on the topic of mutual responsibility, but due to time constraints just limited himself to a few points.¹⁷⁷ He started out by highlighting the crisis and temptation within the mission that it was not only a challenge to receive reports about events, but even the received reports and the analysis of the events varied so drastically that the reception of these reports was not possible without critical review, that again had severe repercussions for the unity in the mission.¹⁷⁸ Hopf then made a remarkable statement about solidarity and identification, and neutrality.¹⁷⁹ He pointed out that some missionaries wanted to remain neutral and therefore did not want to identify with one specific side. Hopf made three observations: 1. As a Christian, and even more so as an ordained minister, no one could identify with wrong and violence, irrespective of whites or blacks. 2. Whoever decided to remain silent and neutral automatically aligned himself with the current dominant power, therefore, gave up his neutrality. 3. As a white person, the missionaries of the MELF in South Africa were automatically identified with the privileged white population. If the missionaries wanted to align themselves with the black South Africans, they had to prove it by word and action, which would have distanced them from the white population. Where the missionary belonged had to be decided by themselves. Because the MELF sent them, the missionary's response to this question was also the responsibility of the mission. Hopf suggested that the mission would have to live with the fact that they were one-sided in their alignment to the black South Africans.

Nonetheless the Mission clearly belongs on the side of the black Africans—as attorney and advocate, comforter and counselor, but also as *Wegweiser*, instructor, and warner against all the mistakes and confusions, and not least with the recognition

¹⁷⁷ He had probably finished his manuscript “Lutherische Mitverantwortung für das christliche Zeugnis im südlichen Afrika,” but it was much too long for an AGM. He presented the document at the Lauenburgischen Missions conference in Ratzeburg, May 1978. He published this document in Advent 1978.

¹⁷⁸ See his preface to the report by Dierks on Soweto. Hopf, “Soweto, die südwestlichen Bantustädte von Johannesburg,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 68, no. 7/8 (July and September 1976): 160.

¹⁷⁹ Hopf, “Bericht 1977,” in Büttner, 311.

and confession of all those things, by which the whites have become guilty against the blacks and repeatedly become guilty. Whoever can agree to this general position will be able to accept the criticism of “one-sidedness.”¹⁸⁰

The challenge for the mission at this time was to recognize whether they still needed to send white missionaries to South Africa or not. The white missionaries in South Africa were very quickly integrated into the FELSISA and took on all the accepted norms and conventions of racial segregation.¹⁸¹

In the second to last edition of the newsletter that Hopf published, he placed a meditation on Psalm 96:10 “Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity” under the heading *Das Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi*, the witness of the royalty or majesty of Christ.¹⁸² Hopf wrote that the church in its mission needed to witness to the claim of royalty or majesty of Christ in both word and action, partly in contrast to old or other foreign gods, also against “all wrong claims of authority of worldly powers”¹⁸³ The old command was actualized again in new ways: “Say among the nations, ‘the Lord reigns!’” “This message entailed a gift to the nations and a claim to the nations that they accept the rule of Christ. Hopf emphasized that Christ’s salvation was not the rescue from political oppression or social hardship, but rather the salvation of the one who came into the

¹⁸⁰ “Trotzdem gehört die Mission eindeutig auf die Seite der schwarzen Afrikaner—als Anwalt und Fürsprecher, als Tröster und Berater, aber auch als Wegweiser und Warner gegenüber aller Verirrung und Verwirrung, nicht zuletzt mit dem Erkennen und Bekennen alles dessen, wodurch die Weißen an den Afrikanern schuldig geworden sind und immer schuldig werden. Wer diese Gesamthaltung bejaht, weiß den Vorwurf der ‘Einseitigkeit’ zu tragen.” Hopf, “Bericht 1977,” in Büttner, 311.

¹⁸¹ Refer to the article by K.F. Weber, “Noch nicht zu spät in Südafrika,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 58, no. 3 (March 1966): 66–67.

¹⁸² Hopf, “Das Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 70, no. 6 (June 1978): 106–8. Reprinted Hopf, “Das Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi,” *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 323–5.

¹⁸³ Hopf, “Das Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 70, no. 6 (June 1978): 106.

world and still comes to all nations to save sinners 1 Timothy 1:15. “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”¹⁸⁴

Whoever proclaims this message, will always make the experience that the missionary St Paul made: “of whom I am the foremost” (1 Tim 1:15). However, even the painful recognition of own and foreign sin has not been the same throughout the ages but needs to grow and expand continually. In our time, it is at least necessary for a full and true appreciation of our sinfulness, that we—probably clearer and sharper than some previous generations—be able and should have before our eyes, how deeply we all have been interwoven in the large sins of our time, in the deep guilt of our own nation, also in the wrong perpetrated by our race against other humans of other races and nations. The all-encompassing offer of forgiveness from king Christ should never be limited to the sins of our private life. But rather, it must be proclaimed as the only solution to where, according to human perception, only revenge is expected instead of forgiveness. The witness of the kingdom of Christ is nothing else as the remaining offer: “that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” (Acts 10:43)¹⁸⁵

Hopf went on to show that this offer of Christ’s rule corresponded to the claim of his authority. Christ ruled even now already in the “blood-stained, from acts of violence trembling old world.”¹⁸⁶

Especially simultaneously to all horrors of this world and time the good news of the royal rule of Christ is to be proclaimed in all the world to a witness for all nations (Mk 13:10; Mt 24:14). Who could waiver the claim for the rule of king Christ with this message? Who could conceal that this claim time and again forces people to contradict and to resist the forces and powers of the passing world? “Let everyone

¹⁸⁴ Hopf, “Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi,” in Büttner, 324.

¹⁸⁵ “Wer diese Botschaft ausrichtet, wird immer wieder die Erfahrung des Missionars St. Paulus machen: ‘unter welchen ich der erste bin’ (1 Tim 1,15). Aber auch die schmerzliche Erkenntnis eigener und fremder Sünde ist nicht zu allen Zeiten dieselbe, sondern sie muss ständig zunehmen und weiter um sich greifen. Un unserer Zeit gehört zu einem echten Sündenbewusstsein jedenfalls, dass wir—wahrscheinlich klarer und schärfer als manche frühere Generation—vor Augen haben können und müssen, wie tief wir alle verflochten sind in die großen Sünden unserer Zeit, in die tiefe Schuld unseres eigenen Volkes, auch in das Unrecht unserer Rasse, an den Menschen anderer Rassen und Völker. Das umfassende Vergebungsangebot des Königs Christus darf deshalb niemals beschränkt werden auf Sünden in unserem Privatleben. Sondern es muss verkündigt werden als der einzige Ausweg dort, wo nach menschlicher Voraussicht statt Vergebung nur noch Vergeltung erwartet werden kann. Das Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi ist nichts anderes als das bleibend gültige Angebot, ‘dass durch seinen Namen alle, die an ihn glauben, Vergebung der Sünden empfangen sollen’ (Apg 10,43).” Hopf, “Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi,” in Büttner, 324.

¹⁸⁶ “... unserer blutgetränkten von Gewalttaten durchzitterten alten Erde,” Hopf, “Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi,” in Büttner, 324.

who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” (2 Timothy 2:19). Furthermore, the king Christ has told us in his promise of the world judgment (Mt 25:31–46) very clearly, who He recognizes as his “least of these my brothers”: the hungry, the thirsty, those foreigners who have become guests, the naked, the sick, the prisoners. How are these treated by us Christians? And how do we respond to the way others treat them? On these things, it is decided whether our witness to the Kingdom of Christ in this world among the nations is credible or if it remains powerless.

The application of what has been said to South Africa as to our own land lies on hand. God preserve our church both here and yonder from accommodating the message that we have been entrusted with to the criteria of this world in any way or to subjugate them. May he awaken us and those, who come after us, the black Africans and those whites belonging to them, always to a concrete joyful and fearless witness of the Kingdom of Christ and of the freedom of his church that is grounded in that rule.¹⁸⁷

At his farewell and the induction of the new mission director Volker Stolle on June 25, 1978, in Hannover, Hopf quoted a passage on a card that he had received at his farewell from the congregation in Mühlhausen.¹⁸⁸ The passage was taken from 2 Timothy 2:19 “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” After greeting all dignitaries, he specifically mentioned those he knew that he shared a genuine fellowship in the combined responsibility for the Christian witness in southern Africa.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ “Gerade gleichzeitig zu allen Gräueln dieser Welt und Zeit soll die Frohbotschaft von der Königsherrschaft Christi in der ganzen Welt ausgerufen werden zu einem Zeugnis für alle Völker (Mk 13,10; Mt 24,14). Wer könnte bei dieser Botschaft verzichten auf den Herrschaftsanspruch des Königs Christus? Wer dürfte dabei verschweigen, dass dieser Anspruch immer wieder Menschen dazu zwingt, den Mächten und Gewaltigen der vergehenden Welt zu widersprechen oder auch zu widerstehen? ‘Es lasse ab von Ungerechtigkeit, wer den Namen des Herrn nennt’ (2Tim 2,19). Im Übrigen hat uns der König Christus in der Weissagung vom Weltgericht (Mt 25,31–46) eindeutig gesagt, wen ER als seine ‘geringsten Brüder’ anerkennt: die Hungrigen, die Durstigen, die zu Gästen gewordenen Fremdlinge, die Nackten, die Kranken, die Gefangenen. Wie werden sie von uns Christen behandelt? Und wie verhalten wir Christen uns zu ihrer Behandlung durch andere? Daran entscheidet sich, ob unser Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi in dieser Welt und Zeit unter den Völkern glaubwürdig ist oder kraftlos bleibt.

Die Anwendung des Gesagten auf Südafrika wie in unserm eigenen Lande liegt auf der Hand. Gott bewahre unsere Kirche hüben und drüben davor, die uns aufgetragene Botschaft den Maßstäben dieser Welt irgendwie anzupassen oder unterzuordnen. ER erwecke uns und die, welche nach uns kommen, die schwarzen Afrikaner und die zu ihnen gehörenden Weißen allezeit zu einem konkreten, freudigen, furchtlosen Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi und von der darin begründeten Freiheit Seiner heiligen Kirche.” Hopf, “Zeugnis vom Königtum Christi,” in Büttner, 324–5.

¹⁸⁸ Hopf, “Der feste Grund,” *Missionsblatt Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen* 70, no. 7/8 (July and August 1978): 140.

¹⁸⁹ Hopf, “Der feste Grund,” 140.

Everyone present at the function would have known what he meant by that.

Hopf had first emphasized that Christ was the foundation of the church and mission. This allowed us to be comforted and courageous in our work as church and mission and also made us grateful for what had been achieved.¹⁹⁰ Second, that we had a responsibility to distance ourselves from unrighteousness. Hopf said we should fear that the Lord would disown us because of our lack of faith or disobedience and declare that he did not know us. The confidence that the Lord knows his own corresponded to the promise of the shepherd that his own sheep knew his voice. “We are free from the criteria of this passing world and its claims. Because we are fully committed, that our Lord would recognize us as his own, we find the courage and power to contradict and to resist, even against worldly powers.”¹⁹¹ With direct reference to the situation in South Africa, Hopf went on to say, that “we allow ourselves to be reminded about their and our responsibility for the witness through contradiction and resistance against obvious *Unrecht*, wrong.”¹⁹²

Lutheran Co-Responsibility for Christian Witness in Southern Africa

At the end of that year 1978, during Advent season, Hopf published a summary of the conflict in South Africa.¹⁹³ He had presented this already in May 1978 at the *Lauenburgischen*

¹⁹⁰ Hopf, “Der feste Grund,” 140–41.

¹⁹¹ “Wir kommen los von den Maßstäben dieser vergehenden Welt und von ihren Forderungen. Weil uns alles darauf ankommt, daß unser Herr uns als die Seinen kennt und anerkennt, finden wir den Mut und Kraft zum Widerspruch und zum Widerstand, auch gegen irdische Machthaber,” Hopf, “Der feste Grund.”

¹⁹² “Wir lassen uns erinnern an ihre und unsere Verpflichtung zum Zeugnis durch Widerspruch und Widerstand gegen offenkundiges Unrecht.” Hopf, “Der feste Grund,” 142.

¹⁹³ F.W. Hopf, *Lutherische Mitverantwortung für das christliche Zeugnis im südlichen Afrika* (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.Luth. Mission, 1979). Reprinted in Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 326–65. A small edition of an English translation by Claudia Ringelmann (nee Stallmann) was commissioned by the LCSA and funded by LUCSA. The quote is taken from this edition. F.W. Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility for Christian Witness in Southern Africa* (Pretoria: LCSA, 2010).

Missions Konferenz in Ratzeburg. This publication theoretically was a readily accessible document for the German-speaking Lutherans in Germany and in South Africa to orientate themselves about the topic of apartheid, as it concerned the MELF, FELSISA, and LCSA context.

In his writings and positions to church and altar fellowship, Hopf was very strict and drew very tight borders. His ecumenical openness to engage and unite with others across these recognized borders was just as remarkable. In responding to matters of this world, he believed that Christians shared a mutual responsibility that did not ignore the boundaries but existed despite them.¹⁹⁴ As an example of this, “consonance in Christian witness,” he quoted Dr. Beyers Naudé at length.¹⁹⁵ Trying to clarify and express what the mutual responsibility entailed, he used Naudé to explain the world’s interconnectedness. Hopf reckoned that no one in Germany could withdraw himself into neutrality or indecisiveness.¹⁹⁶ But Hopf also recognized that there was a steep learning curve. He wrote of a meeting with African teachers during his first visit to South Africa in 1956.¹⁹⁷ The teachers asked him what the Lutheran Church said about apartheid. He admitted in this document of 1978 that the inner-Lutheran Discussion on the “hot iron” topic of apartheid was still in its infancy at that stage in 1956. In his careful and restrained answer, he had pointed to the reluctance of the Lutheran Church to get involved in politics. Still, he did say that if revealed injustice and violence happened, even Lutherans had to engage with the authorities, maybe not openly in big demonstrations or declarations but with personal communication with authorities. He added that as Zulu Christians, they too had to confront their chiefs and tribes if

¹⁹⁴ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 326.

¹⁹⁵ Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility*, 3. Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 326–8.

¹⁹⁶ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 328.

¹⁹⁷ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 332.

injustice happened.¹⁹⁸

Figure 6. Hopf in a Discussion with An Unknown Delegate on His First Trip to South Africa, 1956



Hopf pointed out in his document in 1978 that he readily admitted that even though he had always been fundamentally against apartheid, his eyes had been held not to recognize the terrible consequences of apartheid at the time.¹⁹⁹ In 1974 during his third and last trip to South Africa, Hopf met one of those teachers again, and this time this teacher was very expectant that apartheid would end soon. He was convinced that this was the intention of the Vorster government from the very beginning.²⁰⁰ This view possibly explained why many Africans were patient and resisting the more violent liberation movements because they thought things would change given enough time.

¹⁹⁸ Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 332.

¹⁹⁹ Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 333.

²⁰⁰ Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 333.

Hopf contextualized the discussion about the church's independence within this discussion of political autonomy by referring to Nun Mokone.²⁰¹ Who warned the church in Germany that unless the churches received true independence relatively soon, they would break away from the church as the many African Independent Churches had done. This held true according to Hopf for the political situation. Unless true independence was given to Africans, a revolutionary breakaway would happen, led by rising African nationalism.²⁰²

Essentially there were four questions for Hopf that related to the witness of Christians and needed to be answered.²⁰³

1. The question of witness concerning a practiced fellowship between black and white within churches of the same confession.

2. The question of Christian witness concerning the policy of 'separate development' (Apartheid) and its ramifications.

3. The question of Christian witness concerning the abuse of government— and police force.

4. The question of Christian witness concerning the acknowledgment of a rebellion as being a 'just revolution.'

The Question of Witness Concerning a Practiced Fellowship Between Black and White Within Churches of the Same Confession

The "experienced and endured segregation at the Lord's Table" has been mentioned earlier.²⁰⁴ Hopf related the custom of missionaries not receiving Holy Communion in the African congregations in which they had worked. It had been relatively simple for Hopf to change this

²⁰¹ Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 334.

²⁰² Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 334.

²⁰³ Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 335.

²⁰⁴ Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility*, 6–10.

custom at least as far as it involved the missionaries. However, the issue of segregated Lutheran Churches in southern Africa would remain a contentious issue for some time. Hopf noted in a rather long footnote the opinion of white congregations and their reaction to the LWF pressure to celebrate combined services. All the white churches were in support of apartheid and segregation also as it pertained to church fellowship.²⁰⁵ In this footnote, reference was made to the Greytown group's decision to join the FELSISA because it supported apartheid. Hopf pointed out, though, that the Hermannsburg president Hahne also expressed his support for the existing segregation in South Africa.²⁰⁶

Hopf reported on the various LWF associated churches and their discussions around this topic; these were a declaration in Swakopmund in Namibia in 1975 and then Gaborone in 1977 as a precursor to the LWF meeting in Dar es Salaam of the same year.²⁰⁷ Hopf emphasized that one could recognize the progression and effects of a learning process in the discussions of the ecumenical movement.²⁰⁸ In Swakopmund, the delegates of most Lutheran Churches in southern Africa highlighted the need for the church to withstand external foreign principles that threatened to subvert the faith and the unity of doctrine, witness, and practice. The three primary alien principles were listed as:

1. An emphasis on the attachment to an ethnic group, whereby Lutheran Christians are induced to conduct their Lutheran church service as being dependent on birth,

²⁰⁵ Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility*, 19n13–20n13; Hans Wolfgang Heßler, *EKD und Kirchen im südlichen Afrika: Das Problem der kirchlichen Einheit im Rassen Konflikt, Dokumente und andere Texte* (Frankfurt: Evangelischer Presse Dienst, 1974), 230–67.

²⁰⁶ See the letter of President Hahne to the congregation in Greytown in which he refers to the demand to celebrate combined services with blacks. Hahne writes: "Even the church council is of the opinion, that interference from others in our circumstances is not allowed, and we turn them down. The church council just as the general synod are not thinking of dissolving our congregations and church or about fundamentally changing our structures and regulations," in Hans Wolfgang Heßler, *EKD und Kirchen im südlichen Afrika: Das Problem der kirchlichen Einheit im Rassen Konflikt, Dokumente und andere Texte* (Frankfurt: Evangelischer Presse Dienst, 1974), 231–4.

²⁰⁷ Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 337 (Swakopmund), 338 (Gaborone), and 345 (Dar es Salaam).

²⁰⁸ Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 337.

race or ethnicity, and to insist that the Lutheran churches in Southern Africa remain individual churches, segregated along ethnic principles.

2. The notion that, where the unity of the Church is concerned, it is only a matter of spiritual unity, which does not need to be made visible.

3. The notion that the social structure and the political and economic system of our country should only be structured along the lines of natural laws determined by creation, or only according to considerations as to their practical expediency, without being subjected to the criterion of the Love of God as revealed to us in the message of the Bible.²⁰⁹

The consequence of these principles was that the fellowship of the churches was not allowed to develop and manifest itself in a structure of unity. Furthermore, the churches were usually not able to respond to the needs of the people in a straightforward manner. “In many cases, it is not possible for our churches to decisively speak up for people whose freedom and rights are being curtailed and whose dignity is being infringed by the political, social, and economic structures, as well as by the legislation of the Republic of South Africa.”²¹⁰ According to the Swakopmund appeal, belonging to the unity of the church and congregation were not just secondary aspects; therefore, if someone denied another person fellowship because of race, this person excluded himself from the church fellowship. In Gaborone, in 1977, the delegates of the white churches of southern Africa were confronted by their African brothers that their churches were guilty of not seeking fellowship with their black Lutheran partners. They had been given time to pursue this fellowship after nearly being kicked out of the LWF seven years earlier, but the black bishops from southern Africa had pleaded for patience. This patience was now running out, and the LWF meeting in Dar es Salaam would be the last chance for the white churches to show significant progress in this regard, which was understood to mean that the white churches

²⁰⁹ Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility*, 15.

²¹⁰ Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility*, 16.

needed to be integrated into the indigenous black church bodies.²¹¹

The Question of Christian Witness Concerning the Policy of “Separate Development” (Apartheid) and its Ramifications

Hopf had pointed to the challenge that all Lutherans faced if they wanted to remain faithful to the differentiation of the two offices (*potestates*) that God had instituted, that of the church and that of secular government (CA 28). In a footnote again, Hopf distanced himself from the terminology of the two kingdoms or two realms as too ambiguous.²¹² He preferred to use the language of the confessions referring in the Latin text to the powers and the German text to the offices of the two authorities.²¹³ All Christians Hopf contended have been called to give witness of both sin and grace in the most precise and concrete way possible to call to repentance to receive eternal salvation. Primarily this call concerned the carriers of the office of the ministry. Still, it was not limited to them because all Christians also in their life as congregation and church had this responsibility.²¹⁴

With every contribution towards a Lutheran assessment of the question of Apartheid, one has to, at the outset, object to that fatal defensive attitude with which South Africans repeatedly declare uncomfortable words from Christians worldwide to be unlawful ‘interference in foreign affairs,’ for them to subsequently fail to hear these words and to hush them up. One should rather bear in mind the solidarity that has its roots in the New Testament, and that knows something about the suffering of one’s brothers in the world (1 Peter 5:9; Hebrew 13:3), transcending all civil and political boundaries.²¹⁵

At the LWF meeting in Dar es Salaam, most delegates agreed that the situation of apartheid, specifically in its manifestation within the white Lutheran churches in South Africa,

²¹¹ The previous LWF meeting in France had already condemned racial division at the Lord’s table.

²¹² Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 344n36.

²¹³ CA XXVIII.12 and 18 in Kolb and Wengert, 92–93.

²¹⁴ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 345.

²¹⁵ Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility*, 23.

was a “*status confessionis*.” Hopf pointed out that everyone knew that this did not concern the confessional status of the churches but rather their confessional action.²¹⁶ Hopf related how this concept took up ideas from the German church struggle, that through confessional acts that correspond to the confessional status, a confessional attitude was manifested. The LWF talked about “confessional integrity,” which demanded Lutheran Christians to denounce apartheid. Hopf warned that one should not use the term “*status confessionis*” lightly, as it implied “deathly seriousness.”²¹⁷ It meant either confessing or renouncing; either the living and present Lord was being confessed, or he was being denounced. That had serious consequences for all in the churches who accepted that apartheid constituted such a “*status confessionis*.” If one assumed this status, then one had to advise the officers of the ministry, congregations, and individual members of the severe consequences thereof, otherwise Hopf said, one should not have claimed that status. Hopf, in a footnote, again tried to clarify that this issue of confessing and renouncing was closely linked to the rather personal concept of the level of understanding.²¹⁸ If a person had reached a level of conviction and knowledge due to the Word of God, this person could no longer fall behind that level of understanding. He might help his fellow Christians reach a similar level, but he could not force them. However, he could not renounce his Lord by backing off from his position. Therefore, hopefully only temporarily, the fellowship was broken as attempts were made to reach a common understanding again.

In 1967 the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (FELCSA) called its first conference at the theological seminary in Umpumulo and discussed the application

²¹⁶ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 345.

²¹⁷ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 346.

²¹⁸ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 346n41.

of the Lutheran two kingdoms doctrine to the issue of apartheid.²¹⁹ This document was widely circulated and discussed and became known as the Umpumulo Memorandum. In a certain sense, this memorandum represented a conclusion to the discussion. Hopf referred to the Lutheran theologian and apartheid critic Wolfram Kistner who wrote an article explaining the background and genesis of the memorandum.²²⁰ Kistner pointed to the fact that in South Africa, the doctrine of the two kingdoms was only introduced into the discussion after the Second World War and in response to the apartheid policy. There were two contradicting positions. On the one hand, the traditional assessment in which the church was limited to the spiritual realm and thus separated from all things of this world, for which the political realm was responsible. Christians were obliged to be obedient to the state, with the only exception or boundary being the *clausula Petri* Acts 5:29 “We must obey God rather than men.” But this was important; Kistner pointed out that this exceptional case was limited to when the state interfered with the proclamation and the life of the faith in the church. One apparently did not include the option of refusing obedience in political situations.²²¹ Kistner described this approach based on Romans 13 as: “dualistically influenced ‘passive adaptation to existing power structures.’”²²² Hopf emphasized each word that Kistner used here and argued that one tried to remain neutral, but in fact, took sides by aligning to the power structures and preventing advocacy for those who were oppressed and disenfranchised. The consequence was that one would not attempt to change the current status

²¹⁹ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 347.

²²⁰ Kistner, Wolfram, “Der Hintergrund des Umpumulo–Memorandums von 1967,” in *Zwei Reiche und Regimente: Ideologie oder evang. Orientierung? Internationale Fall- und Hintergrundstudien zur Theologie und Praxis lutherischer Kirchen im 20. Jh. Zur evangelischen Ethik*, ed. Ulrich Duchrow (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1977), 161–87.

²²¹ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 348.

²²² “eine dualistisch geprägte ‘passive Anpassung an bestehende Machtstrukturen,’” Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 348.

quo. The acceptance of this view then progressed to a critical distancing from any other perspective and, by default, landed up defending apartheid using the argument that apartheid prevented the threatened chaos. “The initially passive adaptation to the existing power structures eventually turns into its active, uncritical, almost unconditional affirmation.”²²³ Hopf again, in a footnote, referred to the “particularly embarrassing” FELSISA response to the Hammanskraal Resolution that was previously discussed.²²⁴

In contrast to the dualistic passive assessment, there was a fundamentally different approach that Hopf called the “dynamic assessment and interpretation.”²²⁵ This approach still held to the fundamental separation of the realms; however, it did not exclude the secular realm from the criteria of the Word of God and its application. The two realms teaching had only one purpose of separating church and state. The church had to remind the state about its actual responsibility. “She has the right and duty to protest and to refuse obedience if the State in its own realm transgresses the will of God.”²²⁶ Therefore it was a misunderstanding and abuse of the two realm teaching when one granted the state a *Freibrief*, unrestricted license to do its thing.²²⁷ This dynamic approach demanded a continuous assessment of the church’s times and structures

²²³ Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility*, 26.

²²⁴ “Ein besonders peinliches Beispiel,” Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 348n48–49n48.

²²⁵ “... die dynamische Auffassung und Deutung,” Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 349. In their introduction to the collection of Hopf material, Markus Büttner and Werner Klän suggest, that Hopf took on this for him new approach of a “dynamic two-realms-teaching, in which the church exercises its *Wächteramt* for the state, to remind the state about God’s command and to proclaim God’s judgement against it, even though the church will not enforce the judgement over the state,” Markus Büttner and Werner Klän, “Einleitung,” in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 27.

²²⁶ “Sie hat Recht und Pflicht zu Protest und Gehorsamsverweigerung, wenn der Staat in seinem eigenen Tätigkeitsbereich den Willen Gottes verletzt.” Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 349–50.

²²⁷ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 350.

and those conditions that come into existence because of those structures.²²⁸

For the South African situation, this meant that no church could just excuse itself from taking a position to apartheid. One had to recognize further that apartheid had repercussions on the structures of the churches to be separated and segregated. And lastly, one had to realize that there would be consequences if the church criticized the unjust laws and measures of the state.²²⁹

Hopf added a personal note that he had tried over the years to argue,

That the fellowship between black and white Christians should be lived and practiced on an ongoing basis—most profoundly during a church service and at the altar of the Lord, but by no means only inside church buildings but also in the entire living space of the South African environment, and, by doing so, to consciously and purposefully transcend racial boundaries. Wherever the risk of this implication is taken, not only in exceptional cases, but abundantly, and daily, its effect will be that of an erected “sign,” and, in this way, will also become a “political issue.”²³⁰

As a theologian, Peter Beyerhaus moved further right in the church political spectrum in Germany in his later years and became an advocate of the German Evangelical movement. He had been a missionary of the Berlin Mission in South Africa. His dissertation *Die Selbständigkeit der jungen Kirche als missionarisches Problem*, The independence of the young churches as mission problem, was prepared under the guidance of Prof Bengt Sundkler in Upsalla.²³¹ He was a teacher at the Umpumulo seminary until 1965, after which he was called as Professor to Tübingen. Beyerhaus had written a *Wegweisung* instruction on the Lutheran message in the current society in 1966. He referred to issues of resistance against the state that became necessary if the state did not listen to the warning voice of the church. Hopf quoted several

²²⁸ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 350.

²²⁹ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 350.

²³⁰ Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility*, 28.

²³¹ Peter Beyerhaus, *Die Selbständigkeit der Jungen Kirche als Missionarisches Problem* (Wuppertal: Rheinischen Missions Gesellschaft, 1956).

theses from Beyerhaus' instruction.²³²

Thesis 15: Our current inner political situation that is determined by the current apartheid laws places a considerable percentage of the African population in unbearable social and economic conditions. Their legitimate wishes for civil equality are foiled, and they are being denied the elementary preconditions of a stable society: the right to a fixed place of residence and a normal family life.

Thesis 16. Because the apartheid laws on the one side are an expression of the collective selfishness of the ruling minority and, on the other hand, have devastating consequences for the social development and morals of the African majority, they do not reflect the divine laws that should form the foundation of any organization in God's secular kingdom. That is why they are not binding on the conscience according to the principles of Romans 13:5.

Thesis 17: Even though the church does not have a political mandate in administration duties, she does have the responsibility to exercise the prophetic corrective by pressurizing the state institutions to respect the will of God, who determines all human relations, in his secular kingdom.

Thesis 18: When the secular institutions ignore the warning voice of the church, the church has the right and the duty to render support for civil resistance against the laws that attack the rule of Christ.

Thesis 19: In the resistance, it is necessary to differentiate degrees between various actions: spiritual resistance, legal, political resistance, illegal passive resistance, illegal, violent resistance. Only to the two latter forms of resistance can the church not call.

Thesis 20: While the church only uses legal means, it must encourage its members as citizens only to take up more radical forms of resistance once other legitimate forms have already been used.

Thesis 21: The political witness of the Lutheran Church in South Africa is being hindered to a large extent by the fact that its own church structures share in the general racial and tribal fragmentation of the South African society.

Thesis 22: Before the Lutheran Church can start to exert emphatic political witness, it, therefore as most urgent duty, needs to set its own house in order and should do its utmost to create the greatest possible unity among the various groups to whom its members belong.

Conclusion: In summary, we must conclude that our apparent missionary stagnation of our Lutheran Church in South Africa is, to a large extent, the result of the gospel not being perceived by our listeners or us in its social relevance. The old Lutheran

²³² Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 351–2.

message that mankind is declared righteous through the death of Jesus before God contains social explosives. It liberates humankind to serve God in his twofold rule, his spiritual kingdom, and every form of ordered society.²³³

Hopf then referred to the Umpumulo Memorandum, which he summarized with the following sentence by Häselbarth: “The church has from the basis of the dynamically understood two-kingdom doctrine the duty before the state of both to serve and in the case of injustice the

²³³ “These 15: Unsere gegenwärtige, von der Apartheid-Gesetzgebung bestimmte innenpolitische Situation versetzt einen hohen Prozentsatz der afrikanischen Bevölkerung in unerträgliche gesellschaftliche und wirtschaftliche Umstände. Es werden dadurch ihre berechtigten Wünsche nach bürgerlicher Gleichheit vereitelt, und sie werden der elementaren Voraussetzungen für eine stabile Gesellschaft beraubt: des Rechts auf einen festen Wohnsitz und auf ein normales Familienleben.

These 16: Indem die Apartheid-Gesetzgebung einerseits der Ausdruck kollektiver Selbstsucht der herrschenden Minderheit ist und andererseits verheerende Auswirkungen auf die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung und die Moral der afrikanischen Mehrheit hat, widerspiegeln sich die jeder Organisation in Gottes weltlichem Reich zugrundeliegenden göttlichen Gesetze in diesen Gesetzen nicht. Deshalb sind sie auch nicht im Sinne von Röm 13,5 für das Gewissen bindend.

These 17: Obwohl die Kirche in Verwaltungsaufgaben keinen politischen Auftrag hat, hat sie einen Dienst als prophetisches Korrektiv dadurch zu leisten, dass sie die staatlichen Behörden drängt, den Willen Gottes, der alle menschlichen Beziehungen bestimmt, in seinem weltlichen Reich zu achten.

These 18: Wenn die warnende Stimme der Kirche von den weltlichen Behörden nicht beachtet wird, ist die Kirche sowohl berechtigt als auch verpflichtet, zivilen Widerstand gegen Gesetze, die die Herrschaft Christi angreifen, zu unterstützen.

These 19: Bei diesem Widerstand sind Maßnahmen verschiedenen Grades zu unterscheiden: geistiger Widerstand, legaler politischer Widerstand, illegaler passiver Widerstand, illegaler gewaltsamer Widerstand. Nur zu den beiden letztgenannten darf die Kirche nie aufrufen.

These 20: Während die Kirche also solche nur legale Mittel anwenden darf, muss sie ihren Mitgliedern in ihrer Eigenschaft als Staatsbürger nahelegen, dass sie nur dann auf radikalere Formen des Widerstandes zurückgreifen, wenn alle anderen legitimen Formen bereits angewendet wurden.

These 21: Das politische Zeugnis der lutherischen Kirche in Südafrika wird weitgehend durch die Tatsache behindert, dass ihre eigene kirchliche Struktur an der allgemeinen rassen- und stammesmäßigen Zersplitterung der südafrikanischen Gesellschaft teilhat.

These 22: Bevor die lutherische Kirche damit beginnt, nachdrücklich politisches Zeugnis abzulegen, ist es deshalb ihre vordringliche Aufgabe, zuerst ihr eigenes Haus zu bestellen und ihr Äußerstes zu tun zur Schaffung von größtmöglicher Einheit unter den verschiedenen Gruppen, denen ihre Mitglieder angehören.

Zusammenfassung: Zusammenfassend müssen wir feststellen, dass der offensichtliche missionarische Stillstand unserer lutherischen Kirche in Südafrika größtenteils durch die Tatsache verursacht ist, dass das Evangelium von uns und unseren Zuhörern nicht in seiner sozialen Bedeutung wahrgenommen wird. Die alte lutherische Botschaft, dass der Mensch durch den Tod Jesu vor Gott gerecht erklärt ist, enthält sozialen Sprengstoff. Sie befreit den Menschen dazu, Gott in seiner zweifachen Herrschaft zu dienen, seinem geistlichen Reichen und jeder Form geordneter Gesellschaft.” Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 351–52.

duty to protest. From this perspective, the politics of the country is rejected.”²³⁴ Part of the service of the church, according to the memorandum, was the duty of the church to advise the government on how to interpret the ordinances of creation and to advise on how to support and fulfill human life in marriage, family, civil society, and culture.²³⁵ The memorandum was clear that the apartheid solution was not only not practical but wrong because of the various limitations on human rights it placed on the black majority. But significantly, the memorandum highlighted the ideological foundation of apartheid. Supporters of apartheid abused scripture to defend the policy and claimed its Christian character. The memorandum rejected this.

The Question of Christian Witness Concerning the Abuse of Government and Police Force

Hopf recognized the right of the state and its police institutions to use force, however, in the allocated boundaries.²³⁶ In reaction to the government’s use of force in the Soweto Uprising of 1976 and since then, the American theologian Lazareth at the LWF meeting in Dar es Salaam in 1977 pointed out that Rom. 13 did not justify any and all use of arbitrary power, especially if it concerns tyrannical or unjust dictatorships. The authority or sword given to the state by God is to be used to protect the innocent from the oppression of evil people.²³⁷ Lazareth connected Rom. 13 with Rev. 13 and argued that the apartheid government was quickly losing moral and legal authority.²³⁸ He differentiated between the task of the church and the individual members. The church could not do more than preach the word; however individual Christians could and had to

²³⁴ “Die Kirche hat von der Basis der dynamisch verstandenen Zwei-Reiche-Lehre her vor dem Staat die Aufgabe des Dienstes und im Fall des Unrechts die Aufgabe des Protestes. Von dieser Sicht her wurde die Politik des Landes abgelehnt.” Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 352.

²³⁵ Remarkably the memorandum still talks of creation ordinances. Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 352–3.

²³⁶ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 353.

²³⁷ LWB Daressalaam, 145.

²³⁸ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 354.

reflect and decide whether they would take part in war and revolution in “fear and trembling” as a last resort. The prayer and hope remained that there would be another solution, and the combined witness of a unified church would be a strong signal in that direction.²³⁹

The Question of Christian Witness Concerning the Acknowledgment of a Rebellion As Being a “Just Revolution”

Hopf believed it was necessary to understand the concept of the tyrant and the tyrannical perversion of government’s use of force to clarify the abuse of state power.²⁴⁰ Hopf had written a lengthy article in 1937 about the secular government and the need for Lutherans to come to terms with the new forms of government.²⁴¹ At that time, his focus and issue were another. Here Hopf pointed out the issue of the tyrant was dealt with in the confessions with the connection with the abuse of power by the bishops and the pope.²⁴² The tyrant was someone who would not tolerate a law above himself. Hopf then went on to quote various and numerous examples from the confessions referring to tyrants. The point, in summary, was that the authority could make the laws; however, the lawgiver remained bound to the law of God that ruled over him. Hopf concluded that in applying this issue to South Africa,

the tragedy is, that it is not only limited to the tyrannical abuse of power by state and police, but rather about the complete legal system of apartheid, that is as such seen as tyrannical and that can never be recognized by Christians as a good order of God, but

²³⁹ LWB Daressalaam, 158.

²⁴⁰ Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 354–55.

²⁴¹ Hopf, “Vom weltlichen Regiment nach evangelisch–lutherischer Lehre,” in *Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: Kritische Standpunkte für die Gegenwart: Ein Lutherischer Theologe im Kirchenkampf des Dritten Reichs, über seinen Bekenntniskampf nach 1945 und zum Streit um seine Haltung zur Apartheid* ed. Markus Büttner and Werner Klän (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2012), 89–115.

²⁴² Hopf, “Lutherische Mitverantwortung,” in Büttner, 355.

can only be endured as a judgment of God in humble diffraction under God's almighty hand, in a continuous pleading for a complete change of conditions.²⁴³

The challenge that Hopf recognized and struggled with was how to deal with tyranny. Was revolution aloud? He took up both the theses of Beyerhaus and the comments made by Lazareth and pointed to the inconsistency that both made room for individual Christians to resort to violent revolt but excluded the church from this option. Hopf then referred to Bishop Dietzfelbinger, who reflected on these issues as they were dealt with in Dar es Salaam. He pointed to the experience in Germany with the resistance movement, and Hopf would agree with him on heeding the call of Luther to trust the cross, which tested and proved everything, but which demanded a willingness to suffer and therefore not to overstep the boundary to revolution.

Hopf closed his publication on mutual responsibility with an attempt to clarify his position.²⁴⁴

1. We are asked whether we must acknowledge any resistance against the system of apartheid itself with all its consequences and effects as being a just resistance, which is absolutely necessary and entirely possible. Such an acknowledgment of resistance presupposes the clear recognition that the prevailing system in South Africa has fundamentally and practically turned into tyranny and abuses its power in a tyrannical way.

2. With this presupposition, a revolutionary awakening against the system of apartheid, with the aim of abolishing it as a judgment of God, has to be clearly recognized and attested to unequivocally. On the one hand, the church will bear witness to this judgment of God as being a just one; on the other hand, it will, together with its members and all who are directly threatened and affected by it, bow to this judgment.

²⁴³ "... muss der furchtbaren Tatsache Rechnung tragen, dass es sich hier nicht nur um den tyrannischen Missbrauch staatlicher und polizeilicher Gewalt handelt, sondern um die Handhabung und Ausübung der offiziell anerkannten Gesetzgebung eines Systems, das als solches tyrannisch ist und von Christen niemals als gute Ordnung Gottes anerkannt, sondern nur als Gericht Gottes erlitten werden darf—in demütiger Beugung unter Gottes gewaltige Hand, im ständigen Flehen um einen völligen Wandel der Verhältnisse." Hopf, "Lutherische Mitverantwortung," in Büttner, 356n69. Hopf refers to Vilmar in this context and appropriates the language from Vilmar.

²⁴⁴ Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility*, 38–40.

3. It is denied to the church to proclaim itself as being the bailiff of God. It may also not call on others to execute God's judgments.

4. Despite refraining from active participation in a just revolution, the church may leave no doubt that it stands up for all who are oppressed and threatened, both for those who are affected by tyranny and who are now rebelling, as well as for those whose plight is desperate due to the eruption of revolutionary forces.

5. Even a justified and necessary resistance with grave revolutionary consequences places all those responsible and those involved under God's impending judgment, as well as under the promise of his redeeming and healing grace.

6. Lutheran co-responsibility for Christian witness in South Africa also extends to the co-responsibility for the existence of white people in this country and their future. The urgently required solidarity with black people at present, and their struggle for justice and freedom may not be allowed to prevent one from taking the concerns and fears of white people seriously and from assisting them towards an understanding for the necessary total change of circumstances.

7. The call then can frequently be heard for genuine reconciliation between black and white people in Southern Africa remains, in its credibility and effect, essentially dependent on the prerequisite that the substantial incriminations and barriers preventing a genuine reconciliation can be removed, that flagrant guilt is identified, admitted, and forgiven, that a new beginning can be made with confidence in God's mercy. The Church of Jesus Christ, with all its congregations and its individual members, is under obligation to the promise of its Lord to prove itself to be a 'city set on a hill,' the 'light of the world,' the 'salt of the earth.' However, when salt loses its savor, it is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on by people. (Mt 5:13)

If one reviews the general situation in Southern Africa in terms of Lutheran co-responsibility for Christian witness among the people of this subcontinent, one repeatedly feels the paralyzing pressure of a certain helplessness and hopelessness. It is easy to distance oneself from certain unbiblical and, therefore, un-Lutheran comments made by some ecumenists or liberation theologians. Still, this undoubtedly necessary distancing is only meaningful if we, as Lutherans, have, for the black people of South Africa, a better, relevant word that is biblically founded beyond reproach. A word that does not skirt the issue of their hardships but rather addresses explicitly their questions and lamentations, and that will, above all, directly respond to their cry for liberation. It will not be too difficult for us as Lutherans to resist fanciful expectations and utopian hopes for the future of 'Azania.' We might even succeed in encouraging our black Lutheran brothers to criticize, of their own accord, any African nationalistic distortions of the gospel. With this undertaking, impartations of our emphatic 'no' to the erring ways of pseudo-Lutheranism in Germany could be of assistance. Notwithstanding the deep sympathy for the liberation demands of black people, we can, however never, in our own experience,

conceal the fact that even a true liberation of oppressed people is still in no way tantamount to true freedom of the church and its proclamation.

What has hitherto been done or left undone in South Africa will in all probability force the church of the near and more distant future onto a crossroads, insofar as it will not, in its external form, anyway, be annihilated and steamrolled by the powers of this world, we cannot be humble and modest enough when speaking of insights of this nature. With such considerations, we may, in any event, never give the impression that we would now want to continue to earlier patronization towards our black brothers in a new way.

And yet, even concerned and resigning prognoses, shall not deter us from confidently exercising our co-responsibility for South Africa—in our mission work among black, colored, Indian, and white people; we do this without diminishing our resoluteness in the struggle for a pan-Christian witness in view of current political developments. With our contribution towards this witness, may God grant us Lutherans that we are in actual accord with the witness to Christ, borne by many Christians and churches segregated from us, whose false teachings we continue to condemn, without forgetting at the same time that our Lord Jesus Christ has His people and resurrects His witnesses among them too.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Hopf, *Lutheran Co-responsibility*, 38–40.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

It is an obvious advantage to look back on history with the help of hindsight. When analyzing apartheid, this is especially true as one can recognize the unintended consequences together with all the manifestations of this political program and social engineering accumulated over time. On the other hand, Meister was standing at the beginning of this program and was relying on the political promises and intentions of the architects of apartheid. One of the significant motivators for holding back on a critique of apartheid by the western world was the fear of communism and the reality of the Cold War. In hindsight, the collapse of communism might be used as an argument that this fear was unfounded. However, during the Cold War, it proved to be an effective retardant against reform. As was shown in the analysis of the ecumenical movement, which is probably true for all society, there was a definite progression and development of thoughts and convictions concerning racism, segregation, and apartheid. In many ways, white South Africa represented a vanguard of resistance against this liberalization and recognition of human rights and equality of all people. This dissertation attempted to show some of the aspects that played a role in this process, explicitly referencing the confessional Lutheran perspective.

Volker Stolle once commented on Hopf's premise that pastors had to read the signs of the time and articulate the church's voice in response to that analysis, that pastors were not inherently better equipped or able to do so. Most people cannot withstand the peer pressure of the plausibility context of their significant conversation partners. It takes a certain level of assertiveness and reflective fortitude to stand against the mainstream and articulate an explicit critique of the status quo.

Karl Meister did not stand out among his colleagues as the most “racist.” He appropriated a commonly held position of white South Africans. Together with his missionary associates, he added to this the flair of German missiology to justify the ethnic differentiation and segregation of the people of South Africa. He was willing to use the scriptures to justify his arguments and believed he was dealing with these issues appropriately as a Lutheran. A significant challenge in virtually all defenses of the policy of apartheid is that the abuses and negative impacts of these policies were ignored, denied, or significantly underestimated. Often segregation, disenfranchisement, and pauperization of large portions of the population were accepted without reflecting on how this status quo was reached. Why, after colonization, did the indigenous population end up with virtually nothing, and the colonizers were in power and control.

Martin Luther’s explanations of the ten commandments in the Large Catechism could have been an authentic Lutheran starting point to critique social injustice and elaborate the appropriate response of the church to these ongoing issues in our communities. Instead of focusing on the social conditions driving people to demand a more equitable society, supporters of apartheid focused on the threat of communism. Instead of focusing on the fatal consequences for the family caused by the pass laws that prevented Africans from moving to the cities together with their families and arguing for the benefits of social cohesion, one emphasized the need to separate the various ethnic African groups. Single men were forced to live in so-called hostels that became hotbeds of violence and crime. The threat and reality of ethnic violence in South Africa were often used during apartheid to substantiate tribal segregation. The fact that this segregation perpetuated and increased this violence was often ignored.

In contrast to all these negative aspects of apartheid that are so obvious to the contemporary observer, the white supporter of apartheid was often not honest in recognizing that

the suffering of black labor paid for his social benefits of white privilege. Justifying white privilege took on many forms and is still a challenge in current South African society. Even within the polarizing context of critical race theory and the different contexts across the world, it is necessary to reflect and evaluate these issues as they continue to influence our communities. If only the supporters of apartheid, especially in the context of this dissertation, the supporters within the Lutheran Church, had been willing to recognize the critical voices that had been raised from outside of their immediate context. Unfortunately, they ignored these voices as being disqualified and ignorant of their specific needs and context. Possibly one could say the best antidote to hubris would be the willingness to listen to outside voices attentively. As Christians, we recognize with Matt. 25 that Christ will judge us on how we treated the “least of his brothers.”

In the Smalcald Articles, Martin Luther highlights the value of “the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters.”¹ The context of Europe and Germany was obviously different from that of southern Africa; no one would argue against that. However, just because Hermann Sasse was a prominent Lutheran theologian, the Lutherans in South Africa would have done well not to ignore or discard his advice on apartheid. His exposure and repertoire of writings show the vast and extensive horizon of his thoughts and reflections. His interaction with the ecumenical movement and his time spent in the USA allowed Sasse to look beyond the proverbial edge of the plate. His criticism of the concepts of nation, race, creation orders, and others were not just petty arguments but rather driven by a desire to get to the real issues and deal with them consistently and substantially in a reflected theological manner. Understanding

¹ Smalcald Articles IV in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 319.

the anthropology, ecclesiology, and soteriology from the Lutheran Confessions led him to a deep understanding of the sinfulness of humanity, the role of the church, and the unique solution of the gospel that was exclusively available to the world through the proclamation of law and gospel by the church. The exposure to the pseudo religions of the various totalitarian systems he was confronted with in Europe during his time made him alert to the dangers of the plausibility contexts these systems were propagating. He was convinced that the confessional voice would be the necessary antidote against these heresies. Sasse recognized the threat that emanated from the political systems, as they threatened to replace the churches.

Friederich Wilhelm Hopf had helped the young church in South Africa to reach independence. He helped the confessional Lutherans in their ecumenical journey to remain true to their confessional heritage. However, he challenged the churches when it came to his understanding of confessional integrity. It was not enough to postulate confessional boundaries that demarcated the possible fellowship to other Christians if one would ignore the precepts of God's law calling for justice and righteousness and serving the neighbor. Hopf and Sasse recognized the temptation and danger that faced all political governments to abuse their position of power. They were convinced that the churches needed to hold the government accountable to God's law and stand up for those suffering injustice. This was necessary because of their conviction that Christ was king and not because they thought the church should get involved in politics. The reality of sin in all humanity and society at large belonged to their plausibility context and included the government specifically. The solution to the problem of evil was twofold. The church proclaims the gospel as the only means by which our sins can be forgiven through Christ. The government is part of God's rule to control and limit the impact of evil using the sword, in that the government is to protect and take care of justice and peace by punishing

the wicked. As much as Sasse and Hopf were willing to take on the confessional battle against heresy in the ecumenical discussion, they were also not reluctant to voice their disapproval of government when it did not fulfill its divine mandate. That is because the church is not limited in its proclamation to the gospel alone but must unequivocally pronounce the law of God too. This law of God exposes all sinfulness in its various facets and manifestations.

In his correspondence with the missionaries in 1977, Hopf clearly showed that he did not naively believe that all would just agree with his position. However, he was convinced that this disagreement did not mean that he should stop exposing the sinfulness of apartheid and all its manifestations. He had prayed that God would grant him and the missionaries a time in the future when they would be able to agree on these issues. Unfortunately, Hopf died before the official end of apartheid. And unfortunately, most supporters of apartheid have just quietly moved on, not acknowledging their sin and complicity. Possibly this dissertation could help in a small way to explain some of the issues and highlight the severe consequences of the political policies. Would it be expecting too much to hope for opportunities for repentance, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation, especially among the Lutheran Christians living in South Africa?

Areas of Possible Future Inquiry

An academic dissertation takes part in an ongoing discussion. Here I will suggest various areas of possible future research that could contribute to a more comprehensive appreciation of the issues in this discourse.

Motivation and Justification of Conquest

Conquest and expansion of political and economic power were not limited to the modern era. However, the colonization of Africa by European nations and the modern slave trade is a

relatively recent phenomenon.² Understanding and appreciating the various aspects of colonization is historically relevant and would be helpful in the current debate about restorative justice and the decolonization debate. The agency of African political leaders and power structures throughout this time should not be ignored or underestimated. From the perspective of this dissertation, a specific question could be, why it seemed legitimate to usurp the traditional governments in the African context and replace them with white government or at least place them under the “protectorate” read “control” of a white government.

Bantu Education From the Particular Perspective of the Mission

The German missiology of *Volkskirche* by Gutman, Keyser, and others was touched on in the dissertation. However, even beyond this background, the broad acceptance of the Bantu education concept by the Mission could be further researched. The role of Nun Mokone and the legacy of the Bantu Education concept in the context of the LCSA would be an important area of research.

The Homeland Policy

The impact of the various commissions established early in the history of the homeland policy and the unwillingness of the South African government to invest appropriately in the development and expansion of the homelands to make them viable reveal that apartheid was always doomed to fail economically. The dangerous farce of this policy and its contrast to the upliftment of the Afrikaners, as explained by Giliomee, is an instructive area of research.

² Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent From 1876 to 1912* (New York: Avon, 1991); See Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States* (New York: Norton, 2018) 20–22. For an instructive discussion on the development of the perception of Africans by the English see John Samuel Harpham, “The Intellectual Origins of American Slavery,” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2019) accessed December 24, 2021, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:42013111>.

However, as Dubow points out, the ambiguous agency of Africans in the homeland policy and especially the role played by the traditional leadership is a contentious issue. Albie Sachs highlights the challenge of how these traditional leadership structures could perpetuate patriarchal domination in contrast to the constitutional concepts of equality.³

The Issue of Land

In the current political debate about the redistribution of land in South Africa, the Native Land Act of 1913 is often viewed as the “original sin” of South Africa, the issue that started the whole problem. I do not believe that many white South Africans understand the extent of devastation that this piece of legislation caused. Sol Plaatje’s book on this topic is an essential resource, along with the work by Tembeka Ngcukaitobi.⁴ Questions of restorative justice and the accumulation of land and wealth are all aspects that are relevant in this context. Resolving the land issue is an emotive and controversial issue that many political analysts view as the prerequisite for sustainable reconciliation.

The Political Franchise and Human Rights

When ideas of equality of man were declared both in the American and French Revolution, people did not immediately jump to the conclusion to extend the universal franchise to all people. It took considerable time to imagine the full impact of the liberties that were claimed with those revolutions. Women and people of color were excluded for lengthy periods right into

³ Albie Sachs, *We, the People: Insights of an Activist Judge* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016), 295–7.

⁴ Sol Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa: Before and Since the European War and the Boer Rebellion* (London, P.S. King, 1916.); Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, *The Land is Ours: South Africa’s First Black Lawyers and the Birth of Constitutionalism* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2018); Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, *Land Matters: South Africa’s Failed Land Reforms and the Road Ahead* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2021).

the 20th century. The franchise was not equally distributed in South Africa before the establishment of the Union in 1910. In the Cape Colony and Natal, few propertied and educated blacks were on the common voter's role. Sol Plaatje, for example, could vote. However, in the Cape, the black population was an insignificant minority, and in Natal, most blacks lived in the segregated self-governed territory of the Zulu reserves. It was a major disappointment for many educated blacks that England conceded to the Afrikaners and accepted that the colored franchise was removed even in the Cape at the establishment of the Union.

Democracy in Germany until after the Second World War was not viewed positively by many. Vilmar and Harms were strictly against democracy, but even in the 20th century after the First World War, the Weimar Republic was severely challenged by undemocratic forces.

The history of the reception and acceptance of human rights opens a large area of research. Saul Dubow has written a Jacana Pocket History titled: *South Africa's Struggle for Human Rights*. This book could be used as a starting point for the research in the South African context; for the reception of human rights in the Lutheran Church in Germany, the context of the peace movement would be relevant.⁵

The gradual shift from an ontological understanding of humanity towards a relational conception of humankind and society has significantly impacted the way people perceive themselves and others.

Pass Laws and Job Reservation

One of the most restrictive bureaucratic inventions of the white rulers was the implementation of pass laws. No black man was allowed to move around in a white area without

⁵ Saul Dubow, *South Africa's Struggle for Human Rights* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2012).

a pass. The struggle and protest against the pass laws were among the first crystallization points for the fight against apartheid.

The Immorality Act

Marriage between various ethnic and racial groups was not necessarily common, but it did happen. The relationship between man and woman across different perceived borders of social and ethnic groups was an area of great hardship during apartheid. Sexual dominance, abuse, and violence against women of all races have a long history in South Africa and extend right into our present times. As seen in the many abuse cases brought against the clergy recently, the Mission and Church tended to cover up the incidents rather than expose them. My grandfather, for example, was “silently” forced to retire when it became known that he had tried to force the daughter of an elder to gratify his sexual desires.

Structural Inequality

Sampie Terblanche has written two fascinating books on structural inequality in South Africa.⁶ One of the ongoing legacies of apartheid in South Africa is our extremely unequal South African situation. In Germany, it was accepted that the West would have to pay for many years to rebuild and reintegrate the East into the German nation. In South Africa, after the new dispensation, virtually no new taxes were raised to pay for the reintegration of a massively divided country. The budget was kept at much the same level and only re-distributed. Sampie Terblanche wrote of the many concerns that arose from the compromise that the ANC leadership accepted in secret meetings with the corporate white business at the end of the apartheid era and

⁶ Sampie Terblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa 1652-2002* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002); Sampie Terblanche, *Lost in Transformation: South Africa's Search for a New Future Since 1986* (Johannesburg: KMM, 2012).

the start of the new dispensation. Terblanche argued that it was too high a price to be paid, and the poor and marginalized were those who lost out again.

Truth and Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was successful. At least in how it brought the stark reality of the terrible abuses committed during the South African reign of terror into public consciousness. What was not so effective was the repatriation or compensation of the victims. As only cases of gross human rights violations were considered, the many more subtle issues of white privilege and economic exploitation by large corporations were largely ignored and bypassed. But even those cases that were handed over to the National Prosecuting Agency (NPA) were not prosecuted, apparently because of political interference. The trauma of violence and black-on-black violence in the last years of apartheid was only partially addressed.

In the more localized context of the confessional Lutheran Church, minimal opportunity has been given to reconcile, meet, and share, even though the FELSISA took the first steps in this direction at its last two Synodical conventions and at the meeting with the LCSA in January 2018.

When the LCSA sent its document containing nine questions to the Mission to clarify various issues around apartheid, the initial reaction of the Mission board was indignation. However, typical for German thoroughness, all missionaries that were still alive were invited to come and find combined answers to these questions in two various sessions. One meeting took place in Germany under the facilitation of Pastor Wroblewski and another in South Africa facilitated by members of the Mission board. In the end, Markus Nietzsche responded as Mission director to the questions and handed over his answers to the questions at the 50th anniversary of the Mofolo North congregation. It seemed to Markus and me that the LCSA did not appreciate

the answers as a final response. Apparently, they always wanted something else, but I have not understood what.

It is blatantly obvious to Lutherans, who regularly confess their sins in confession, that we recognize our sinfulness. However, it was remarkable how difficult people find admitting their complicity or guilt for a structural sin or an issue of earlier transgressions by their ancestors. This aspect of reconciliation could still be investigated further.

Ethnicity and Cultural Sensitivity

Saugestad, in *The Inconvenient Indigenous*, argues that in Botswana, a government approach to uplift the rural poor was bound to fail until they would recognize the specific ethnic problem of the Basarwa in this context.⁷ However, the Botswana government did not want to fall into the trap of tribalism or South African Bantustan policy. Therefore, they chose to ignore the reality of ethnic diversity in their country and incorporate it under the Tswana umbrella.

On the other side of the world, Donald McGavran in the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary developed Church Growth concepts, among others, focusing on the appropriate cultural responses to proclaim the gospel to groups rather than individuals.⁸ This acceptance of specific conditions suggested that it was ok to focus on culturally homogenous read separate congregations along ethnic and cultural lines. In a multicultural and diverse country like South Africa, is this a legitimate approach, or should the church focus on creating a diverse congregation reflecting the demographics of our broader society?

⁷ Sidsel Saugestad, *The Inconvenient Indigenous. Remote Area Development in Botswana, Donor Assistance and the First People of the Kalahar* (Boras: Centraltryckeriet Ake Svensson, 2001).

⁸ Van Engen, *The State of Missiology Today* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), Kindle Loc 302.

The Vision of One Confessional Lutheran Church in South Africa

Recognizing that our reality is socially constructed means that it can be changed. The point is not to change just for changes' sake but instead to find and manifest an appropriate social structure that corresponds to our vision of church and life as confessional Lutheran churches in southern Africa. Is our ethnic and cultural identity more important than our confessional Lutheran identity? The reality that the FELSISA and LCSA still exist as two ethnic churches is a constant reminder of the legacy of apartheid. Indeed, this is not acceptable, even if one could find historical arguments to explain its genesis. This dissertation attempts to give historical perspective to the issue of segregation, racism, and apartheid in the context of the confessional Lutheran church. It hopes to clarify that there is no excuse for ongoing racism, segregation, and perpetuating the historical legacy of apartheid. There should be no space granted, or opportunity tolerated to belittle the seriousness of discrimination, abuse, and racism both in its contemporary forms and its structural and historical manifestations.

In Eph. 6, Paul puts our life in this world into context with words that can function as the conclusion for this dissertation.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Eph. 6:10–20.)

APPENDIX ONE

United Nations Charter Preamble and Articles 55 and 56

Preamble¹

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

AND FOR THESE ENDS

to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS.

Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.

¹ United Nations, United Nations Charter, accessed August 11, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>.

Article 55

With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, the United Nations shall promote:

higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development;

solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation; and

universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

Article 56

All Members pledge themselves to take joint and separate action in co-operation with the Organization for the achievement of the purposes set forth in Article 55.

APPENDIX TWO

Atlantic Charter

Declaration of Principles issued by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 14 Aug. 1941.¹

The President of the United States and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, have met at sea. They have been accompanied by officials of their two Governments, including high-ranking officers of their military, naval, and air services.

The whole problem of the supply of munitions of war, as provided by the Lease-Lend Act, for the armed forces of the United States, and for those countries actively engaged in resisting aggression, has been further examined.

Lord Beaverbrook, the Minister of Supply of the British Government, has joined in these conferences. He is going to proceed to Washington to discuss further details with appropriate officials of the United States Government. These conferences will also cover the supply problems of the Soviet Union.

The President and the Prime Minister have had several conferences. They have considered the dangers to world civilization arising from the policies of military domination by conquest upon which the Hitlerite government of Germany and other governments associated therewith have embarked, and have made clear the steps which their countries are respectively taking for their safety in the face of these dangers.

¹ NATO, Atlantic Charter, accessed August 12, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_16912.htm.

They have agreed upon the following joint declaration:

“The President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future of the world.

First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;

Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;

Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all states, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;

Fifth, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement, and social security;

Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

Seventh, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance;

Eighth, they believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea, or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

APPENDIX THREE

“The Atlantic Charter From the Standpoint of Africans Within the Union of South Africa” and “Bill of Rights,” Adopted by the ANC Annual Conference

PREFACE²

In the following pages the reader will find what has been termed “*Bill of Rights*” and “*The Atlantic Charter from the African’s Point of View*.” This document was drawn up after due deliberations by a special committee whose names appear at the end of this booklet. Their findings were unanimously adopted by the Annual Conference of the African National Congress at Bloemfontein, on the 16th of December, 1943. We realise as anyone else the apparent inappropriateness and vagueness of the expressions when adopted by us. We have, however, adapted them to our own conditions as they give us, the most dynamic way of directing the attention of our Government in the Union of South Africa, the European population of our country to the African position and status in this land of our birth-South Africa-because the Government and the European section alone have the absolute legislative and administrative power and authority over the non-Europeans. We know that the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa and his delegation to the Peace Conference will represent the interests of the people of our country. We want the Government and the people of South Africa to know the full aspirations of the African peoples so that their point of view will also be presented at the Peace Conference. We want the Government of the United Nations to know and act in the light of our own interpretation of the “Atlantic Charter” to which they are signatories. This is our way of conveying to them our undisputed claim to full citizenship. We desire them to realise once and

² A.B. Xuma, African Claims in South Africa by Dr Xuma, ANC Conference, 1943, accessed August 11, 2021, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/african-claims-south-africa-dr-xuma-anc-conference-1943>.

for all that a just and permanent peace will be possible only if the claims of all classes, colours and races for sharing and for full participation in the educational, political and economic activities are granted and recognised.

Already according to press reports there seem to be differences of opinion as to the applicability of the ‘ Atlantic Charter ‘ as between the President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister of Great Britain. It would appear that President F. D. Roosevelt wanted the Atlantic Charter to apply to the whole world while the Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill, understood it to be intended for the white people in the occupied countries in Europe. In South Africa, Africans have no freedom of movement, no freedom of choice of employment, no right of choice of residence and no right of freedom to purchase land or fixed property from anyone and anywhere. Under the guise of segregation, they are subjected to serious educational, political and economic disabilities and discriminations which are the chief causes of their apparent slow progress.

We urge that if fascism and fascist tendencies are to be uprooted from the face of the earth, and to open the way for peace, prosperity and racial good-will, the ‘ Atlantic Charter ‘ must apply to the whole British Empire, the United States of America and to all the nations of the world and their subject peoples. And we urge that South Africa as a prelude to her participation at the Peace Conference in the final destruction of Nazism and Fascism in Europe, must grant the just claims of her non-European peoples to freedom, democracy and human decency, as contained in the following document since charity must begin at home, and if to quote B.B.C. Radio News Reel: “We Fight for World Democracy.”

The soldiers of all races Europeans, Americans, Asiatics and Africans have won their claim and the claims of their peoples to the four freedoms by having taken part in this war which can

be converted into a war for human freedom if the settlement at the Peace Table is based on human justice, fair play and equality for opportunity for all races, colours and classes.

We deliberately set up a committee composed exclusively of Africans in South Africa to deal with this matter so that they can declare without assistance or influence from others, their hopes and despairs. The document that follows is their deliberate and considered conclusion as well as their conviction. Others who believe in justice and fair play for all human beings will support these rightful claims from Africans themselves.

The list of names of the members of the committee who produced this document tells a story for those who would understand. These fruits of their labours are a legacy, nay a heritage which they will leave behind for future generations to enjoy. For it, and to them, we are all forever indebted.

As African leaders we are not so foolish as to believe that because we have made these declarations that our government will grant us our claims for the mere asking. We realise that for the African this is only a beginning of a long struggle entailing great sacrifices of time, means and even life itself. To the African people the declaration is a challenge to organise and unite themselves under the mass liberation movement, the African National Congress. The struggle is on right now and it must be persistent and insistent. In a mass liberation movement there is no room for divisions or for personal ambitions. The goal is one, namely, freedom for all. It should be the central and only aim for *[sic]* objective of all true African nationals. Divisions and gratificational *[sic]* of personal ambitions under the circumstances will be a betrayal of this great cause.

On behalf of my Committee and the African National Congress I call upon chiefs, ministers of religion, teachers, professional men, men and women of all ranks and classes to

organise our people, to close ranks and take their place in this mass liberation movement and struggle, expressed in this Bill of Citizenship Rights until freedom, right and justice are won for all races and colours to the honour and glory of the Union of South Africa whose ideals-freedom, democracy, Christianity and human decency cannot be attained until all races in South Africa participate in them. I am confident that all men and women of goodwill of all races and nations will see the justice of our cause and stand with us and support us in our struggle. If you ever feel discouraged in the struggle that must follow remember the wise and encouraging words of the Prime Minister, Field Marshal the Right Honourable J. C. Smuts who says: "Do not mind being called agitators. Let them call you any names they like, but get on with the job and see that matters that vitally require attention . Native health . Native food, the treatment of Native children and all those cognate questions that are basic to the welfare of South Africa are attended to."

*A. B. XUMA, President-General of the African National Congress
Secretary - Organiser Atlantic Charter Committee, South Africa.*

THE ATLANTIC CHARTER AND THE AFRICANS.

1 . The Atlantic Charter, agreed upon by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Great Britain in their historic meeting of August 14, 1941, and subsequently subscribed to by the other Allied Nations, has aroused widespread interest throughout the world. In all countries this summary of the war aims of the Allied Nations has aroused hopes and fired the imagination of all peoples in regard to the new world order adumbrated in its terms .

2. For us in South Africa particular significance attaches to this document because of its endorsement on more than one occasion by Field-Marshal Smuts, who has announced that the

post war world will be based upon the principles enunciated in the Atlantic Charter. The Honourable Deneys Reitz, speaking on behalf of the Government, to the African people, when he opened the sixth session of the Natives Representative Council in December, 1942, indicated that the Freedoms vouchsafed to the peoples of the world in the Atlantic Charter were indicated for the African people as well.

3. In view of these pronouncements and the participation of Africans in the war effort of various Allied Nations, and to the fact that the Atlantic Charter has aroused the hopes and aspirations of Africans no less than other peoples, the President-General of the African National Council decided to convene a conference of leaders of African thought to discuss the problems of the Atlantic Charter in its relation to Africa in particular and the place of the African in post-war reconstruction. In other words, the terms of reference of the conference were to be:-

- (a) To study and discuss the problems arising out of the Atlantic Charter in so far as they relate to Africa, and to formulate a comprehensive statement embodying an African Charter, and
- (b) to draw up a Bill of Rights which Africans are demanding as essential to guarantee them a worthy place in the post war world.

4. The President-General accordingly invited various African leaders to become members of the Atlantic Charter Committee which would meet in Bloemfontein on December 13 and 14, 1943 to perform this important national duty, as he saw it. At the same time the President-General called upon those invited to submit memoranda on different aspects of this subject for the subsequent consideration of the whole committee on the dates indicated above.

5. The response to the President-General's invitation as indicated by the number of well prepared and thought provoking statements submitted from different parts of the country was proof that his action was timely and in line with the thinking of Africans on the vital subject of

post war reconstruction.

6. The Committee met at Bloemfontein and deliberated on Monday and Tuesday, December 13 and 14, 1943. The Committee elected Mr. Z. K. Matthews as Chairman and Mr. L. T. Mtimkulu as Secretary, and a Sub-Committee consisting of Messrs. S. B. Ngcobo, M. L. Kabane and J. M. Nhlapo, with the chairman and the secretary as ex officio members, to draft the findings of the Atlantic Charter Committee. Throughout its deliberations the committee acted under the able guidance of the President-General, Dr. A. B. Xuma.

7. As already indicated above, the work of the committee fell into two parts, viz ., (a) the consideration and interpretation of the Atlantic Charter, and (b) the formulation of a Bill of Rights. In dealing with the first part of its work the Committee discussed the articles of the Atlantic Charter one by one and made certain observations under each article.

8. In considering the Charter as a whole, the Committee was confronted with the difficulty of interpreting certain terms and expressions which are somewhat loosely and vaguely used in the Atlantic Charter. Among the terms or words to which this stricture applies are ‘ nations ,’ ‘ states ,’ ‘ peoples’ and ‘ men .’ Whatever meanings the authors had in mind with regard to these terms, the Committee decided that these terms, words or expressions are understood by us to include Africans and other Non-Europeans, because we are convinced that the groups to which we refer demand that they shall not be excluded from the rights and privileges which other groups hope to enjoy in the post-war world.

9 . The Committee noted with satisfaction that the twenty-six other nations which subscribed to the Atlantic Charter on January 2, 1942 made it quite clear that the freedoms and liberties which this war is being fought to establish in countries which have been victims of aggression in this war, must be realised by the Allied Powers “in their own lands as well as other

lands.” This is the common cry of all subject races at the present time.

10 . The articles of the Atlantic Charter and the observations of the Committee under each are as follows:

THE ATLANTIC CHARTER

From the standpoint of Africans within the Union of South Africa.

First Point-No Aggrandisement.

*“Their countries seek no aggrandisement, territorial or otherwise.” In this article there is very important assurance which is intended to exonerate the Allied Nations from the charge of having entered into this war for territorial gains or imperialistic reasons. With that understanding we support the principle contained in this article and hope that the rejection of aggrandisement in the War Aims of the Allied Nations is genuine and well meant. Having regard, however, to the possible danger of aggrandisement in the form of the extension of the Mandates System which was instituted after the last Great War, in spite of similar assurances in President Wilson’s *FOURTEEN POINTS*, and also to the possibility of ‘ annexation ‘ of certain African territories through their economic strangulation under veiled forms of assistance, we have deemed it necessary to make these three reservations.*

Firstly , the status and independence of Abyssinia and her right to sovereignty must be safeguarded, and any political and economic assistance she may need must be freely negotiated by her and be in accordance with her freely expressed wishes. Abyssinia should be afforded a corridor into the sea for purposes of trade and direct communication with the outside world.

Secondly , we urge that as a fulfilment of the War Aim of the Allied Nations namely, to liberate territories and peoples under foreign domination, the former Italian colonies in Africa should be granted independence and their security provided for under the future system of World

Security.

Thirdly, there are the anxieties of Africans with regard to British Protectorates in Southern Africa. It is well known that the Union of South Africa is negotiating for the incorporation of the three Protectorates of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland and that incorporation might be pressed during or after this present war as part of South Africa's price for participation in this war. The schedule to the South Africa Act of 1909 did envisage the transfer, under certain conditions, of the territories to the Union of South Africa, but Africans were not contracting parties to these arrangements and they do not regard the provisions of the schedule as morally and politically binding on them. They would deprecate any action on the part of Great Britain which would bring about the extension of European political control at the expense of their vital interests. Africans, therefore, are definitely opposed to the transfer of the Protectorates to the South African State.

Second Point-No Territorial Changes. ‘

‘ They desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned. ‘

This statement is intended to refer to territorial changes which have been brought about in Europe by military aggression . It is clear, however, that territorial changes are also being discussed in regard to other parts of the world. We are mainly concerned with such changes in so far as they relate to the African continent, and in this connection mention has to be made to the suggested territorial changes in regard to West Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa under a system of regional regrouping as outlined in the recent speeches and writings of Field Marshal Smuts.

We hope that the mistakes of the past whereby African peoples and their lands were treated

as pawns in the political game of European nations will not be repeated, and we urge that before such changes are effected there must be effective consultation and that the suggested changes must be in accord with the freely expressed wishes of the indigenous inhabitants. Further, where territorial changes have taken place in the past and have not resulted in the political and other advancement of the Africans living in those territories or colonies it would be a mistake to continue to maintain the *status quo* after the war. The objective of promoting self government for colonial peoples must be actively pursued by powers having such lands under their administrative control, and this objective should also be a matter of international concern more than has been the case in the past.

Third Point-The Right to Choose the Form of
Government.

‘ ‘ They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.’ ’

The principle of Self Determination made famous by President Wilson in his *FOURTEEN POINTS* on behalf of small nations has been reaffirmed by this article of the charter. This principle of self determination necessarily raises not only issues relating to the independent existence of small nations besides their more powerful neighbours but those also concerning the political rights and status of minorities and of Africans now held under European tutelage. In the African continent in particular, European aggression and conquest has resulted in the establishment of Alien governments which, however beneficent they might be in intention or in fact, are not accountable to the indigenous inhabitants. Africans are still very conscious of the loss of their independence, freedom and the right of choosing the form of government under

which they will live. It is the inalienable right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live and therefore Africans welcome the belated recognition of this right by the Allied Nations.

We believe that the acid test of this third article of the charter is its application to the African continent. In certain parts of Africa it should be possible to accord Africans sovereign rights and to establish administrations of their own choosing. But in other parts of Africa where there are the peculiar circumstances of a politically entrenched European minority ruling a majority European population the demands of the Africans for full citizenship rights and direct participation in all the councils of the state should be recognised. *This is most urgent in the Union of South Africa.*

Fourth Point-The Open Door Policy in Trade and Raw Materials.

“They will endeavour, with due regard for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment of all states, great and small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.”

There is envisaged by this article an Open Door Policy in regard to trade and the distribution of the world's resources. Africa has figured prominently in the discussions on the better distribution of the world resources and of free international trade because of her rich raw materials most of which have not as yet been fully tapped. The exploitation that is suggested by the above article, judging by past experiences and present economic evils, raises in our minds considerable misgivings as likely to bring about a continuation of the exploitation of African resources to the detriment of her indigenous inhabitants and the enrichment of foreigners.

We are, however, in agreement with the necessity for the technical and economic utilisation of a country's resources with due regard for the human welfare and the economic

improvement of the indigenous inhabitants. The primary obligation of any government is to promote the economic advancement of the peoples under its charge and any obligation, agreement, contract or treaty in conflict with this primary obligation should not be countenanced. In our view it is essential that any economic assistance that might be rendered to weak and insufficiently developed African States should be of such a nature as will really promote their economic progress.

Fifth Point-Economic Collaboration and Improved
Labour Standards.

“They -desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations on the economic field with the object of securing for all improved labour standards, economic advancement and Social Security.”

This article of the charter has reference to the International Labour Office as the machinery by which nations shall collaborate in economic affairs. The Governments of African states have fully participated in the deliberations and exchange of ideas in regard to the promotion of improved living standards and industrial peace . For this reason Africans are vitally interested in the decisions and conventions of the International Labour Office.

But it is regrettable that conventions dealing with the welfare of African labour - Forced Labour, Migrant or Recruited Labour, Health and Housing, Wage Rates - that have been drawn up at Geneva and accepted by the majority of civilised states have, for selfish reasons, been either rejected or half-heartedly applied by African governments whose protestations at being civilised have been loudest. Thus Africa has not to any large extent felt the beneficent influence of the International Labour Organisation.

Hitherto the International Labour Organisation has been representative mainly of the

interests of Governments and the capitalist class. We claim that collaboration between all nations in the economic field must include consideration of the interest of labour as well as of capital, and that all workers, including African workers, must be fully and directly represented in this collaboration. In order to make participation by the workers effective it is essential that their right to collective bargaining should be legally recognised and guaranteed.

We shall understand, ‘ improved labour standards ,’ ‘ economic advancement ‘ and ‘ social security ‘ as referred to in this article to mean the following:-

(a) the removal of the Colour Bar; (b) training in skilled occupations; (c) remuneration according to skill; (d) a living wage and all other workers’ benefits; (e) proper and adequate housing for all races and colours.” The policy of economic collaboration is probably more applicable to economic relations between sovereign states rather than to relations with weak and insufficiently developed states or territories. In our view it is essential that any economic assistance that might be rendered to weak and insufficiently developed African territories should be of such a nature as will really promote their economic improvement and not pauperise them.

The Sixth Point- The Destruction of Nazi Tyranny.

“After the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.”

Africans are in full agreement with the war aim of destroying Nazi tyranny, but they desire to see all forms of racial domination in all lands, including the Allied countries, completely destroyed. Only in this way, they firmly believe, shall there be established peace which will afford to all peoples and races the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and

which will afford the assurance that all men in all lands shall live out their lives in freedom from fear, want and oppression.

The Seventh Point-The Freedom of the Seas.

“Such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance.”

We agree with the principle of the freedom of the seas.

Eighth Point-The Abandonment of the Use of Force ‘

“They believe that all the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no further peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten or may threaten aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential . . . They will likewise aid and encourage all other practical measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.”

We are in agreement in principle with the idea of the abandoning of the use of force for the settlement of international disputes, but we do not agree with the idea envisaged in this article of the character concerning the armament of some nations and the disarmament of other nations as this policy is provocative of future wars. As a preliminary, steps must be taken to nationalise the armament industry.

While recognising the necessity for the use of force within a country as part of its policing machinery, we must nevertheless deplore the fact that force, especially in South Africa, is frequently resorted to as a method of suppressing the legitimate ventilation of their grievances by oppressed, unarmed and disarmed sections of the population.

BILL OF RIGHTS.

Full Citizenship Rights and Demands

We, the African people in the Union of South Africa, urgently demand the granting of full citizenship rights such as are enjoyed by all Europeans in South Africa. We demand:-

1. Abolition of political discrimination based on race, such as the Cape “Native” franchise and the Native Representative Council under Representation of Natives Act, and the extension to all adults, regardless of race, of the right to vote and be elected to parliament, provincial councils and other representative institutions.

2. The right to equal justice in courts of law, including nomination to juries and appointment as judges, magistrates, and other court officials.

3. Freedom of residence and the repeal of laws such as the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, Native Land Act and the Natives Law Amendment Act that restrict this freedom.

4. Freedom of movement, and the repeal of the pass laws . Natives Urban Areas Act, Natives Laws Amendment Act and similar legislation.

6. [sic] Right of freedom of the press.

7. Recognition of the sanctity or inviolability of the home as a right of every family, and the prohibition of police raids on citizens in their homes for tax or liquor or other purposes.

8. The right to own, buy, hire or lease and occupy land and all other forms of immovable as well as movable property, and the repeal of restrictions on this right in the Native Land Act, the Native Trust and Land Act, the Natives (Urban Areas) Act and the Natives Laws Amendment Act.

9. The right to engage in all forms of lawful occupations, trades and professions, on the same terms and conditions as members of other sections of the population.

10. The right to be appointed to and hold office in the civil service and in all branches of public employment on the same terms and conditions as Europeans.

11. The right of every child to free and compulsory education and of admission to technical schools, universities, and other institutions of higher education.

12 . Equality of treatment with any other section of the population in the State social services, and the inclusion on an equal basis with Europeans in any scheme of Social Security .

Land.

We demand the right to an equal share in all the material resources of the country, and we urge:

1. That the present allocation of 12 % of the surface area to 7,000,000 Africans as against 87 % to about 2,000,000 Europeans is unjust and contrary to the interest of South Africa, and therefore demand a fair redistribution of the land as a prerequisite for a just settlement of the land problem.

2. That the right to own, buy, hire or lease and occupy land individually or collectively, both in rural and in urban areas is a fundamental right of citizenship, and therefore demand the repeal of the Native Land Act, the Native Trust and Land Act, the Natives Laws Amendment Act, and the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in so far as these laws abrogate that right.

3. That African farmers require no less assistance from the State than that which is provided to European farmers, and therefore demand the same Land Bank facilities . State subsidies, and other privileges as are enjoyed by Europeans.

Industry and Labour.

(1) We demand for the Africans-

(1) equal opportunity to engage in any occupation, trade or industry. In order that this

objective might be realised to the fullest extent, facilities must be provided for technical and university education of Africans so as to enable them to enter skilled, semi-skilled occupations, professions, government service and other spheres of employment;

(2) equal pay for equal work, as well as equal opportunity for all work and for the unskilled workers in both rural and urban areas such minimum wage as shall enable the workers to live in health, happiness, decency and comfort;

(3) the removal of the Colour Bar in industry , and other occupations;

(4) the statutory recognition of the right of the African worker to collective bargaining under the Industrial Conciliation Act.

(5) that the African worker shall be insured against sickness, unemployment, accidents, old age and for all other physical disabilities arising from the nature of their work; the contributions to such insurance should be borne entirely by the government and the employers;

(6) the extension of all industrial welfare legislation to Africans engaged in Agriculture, Domestic Service and in Public institution or bodies.

Commerce.

(1) We protest very strongly against all practices that impede the obtaining of trading licences by Africans in urban and rural areas, and we equally condemn the confinement of African economic enterprise to segregated areas and localities.

(2) We demand the recognition of the right of the Africans to freedom of trading.

Education.

(1) The education of the African is a matter of national importance requiring state effort for its proper realisation. The magnitude of the task places it beyond the limits of the resources of the missionary or private endeavour. The right of the African child to education, like children of

other sections, must be recognised as a State duty and responsibility.

We, therefore, demand that-

(a) the state must provide full facilities for all types of education for African children.

(b) Education of the African must be financed from General Revenue on a per caput basis.

(c) The state must provide enough properly built and equipped schools for all African children of school-going age and institute free compulsory primary education.

(d) The state must provide adequate facilities for Secondary, professional, technical and university education.

(2) We reject the conception that there is any need of a special type of education for Africans as such, and therefore we demand that the African must be given the type of education which will enable him to meet on equal terms with other peoples the conditions of the modern world .

(3) We demand equal pay for equal educational qualifications and equal grade of work for all teachers irrespective of their race or colour. We also urge that pensions, conditions of service, and other privileges which are enjoyed by European teachers should be extended to African teachers on equal terms.

(4) We claim that the direction of the educational system of the African must fall more and more largely into the hands of the Africans themselves, and therefore we demand increased and direct representation in all bodies such as Education Advisory Boards, School Committees, Governing Councils, etc., which are responsible for the management and the shaping of policy in African schools . Institutions and Colleges and/or adequate representation in all bodies moulding and directing the country's educational policy. Public Health and Medical Services.

“ç We regard it as the duty of the state to provide adequate medical and health facilities for the entire population of the country. We deplore and deprecate the fact that the state has not carried out its duty to the African in this regard, and has left this important duty to philanthropic and voluntary agencies. As a result of this gross neglect the general health of the entire African population has deteriorated to an alarming extent. We consider that the factors which contribute to this state of affairs are these:-

“ç the low economic position of the African which is responsible for the present gross malnutrition, general overcrowding, higher mortality and morbidity rates;

(b) the shortage of land resulting in the congestion in the reserves and in consequence the bad state of the African’s health and the deterioration of his physique;

(c) the slum conditions in the urban areas;

(d) neglect of the health and the general education of the Africans;

(e) neglect of the provision of water supplies, proper sanitary and other conveniences in areas occupied by Africans both in urban and rural areas.

2. To remedy this state of affairs we urge and demand-

(a) a substantial and immediate improvement in the economic position of the African;

(b) a drastic overhauling and reorganisation of the health services of the country with due emphasis on preventive medicine with all that implies in modern public health sense.

3. We strongly urge the adoption of the following measures to meet the health needs of the African population.-

(a) the establishment of free medical and health services for all sections of the population;

(b) the establishment of a system of *School Medical Service* with a full staff of medical practitioners, nurses and other health visitors;

(c) increased hospital and clinic facilities both in the rural and in urban areas;

(d) increased facilities for the training of African doctors, dentists, nurses, sanitary inspectors, health visitors, etc;

(e) A co-ordinated control finance of health services for the whole Union;

(f) the creation of a proper system of vital statistics for the whole population including Africans;

(g) the appointment of District surgeons in rural areas with a large African population.

Discriminatory Legislation.

1. We, the African people, regard as fundamental to the establishment of a new order in South Africa the abolition of all enactments which discriminate against the African on grounds of race and colour. We condemn and reject the policy of segregation in all aspects of our national life in as much as this policy is designed to keep the African in a state of perpetual tutelage and militates against his normal development.

2. We protest strongly against discourteous harsh and inconsiderate treatment meted out to Africans by officials in all state and other public offices and institutions. Such obnoxious practices are irreconcilable with Christian, democratic and civilised standards and are contrary to human decency.

We, therefore, demand-

(a) the repeal of all colour-bar and/or discriminatory clauses in the Union's Constitution, that is the South Africa 1909 Act;

(b) the repeal of the Representation of Natives Act 1936;

(c) the repeal of the Natives' Land Act 1913 and the Natives Land Amendment and Trust Act 1936;

(d) the repeal of the Pass Laws, Natives Urban Areas Acts as amended, the Natives Administration Act 1927;

(e) Repeal of the "Colour Bar" Act or Mines and Works Act 1926, Natives Service Contract Act, Masters and Servants Act, the Natives Labour Regulation Act and the amendment of all discriminatory and disabling clauses against African workers contained in the Industrial Conciliation Act. In short, we demand the repeal of any and all laws as well as the abandonment of any policy and all practices that discriminate against the African in any way whatsoever on the basis of race, creed or colour in the Union of South Africa.

LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

(1) Mr. R. G. Baloyi, Treasurer-General, African National Congress,

(2) Dr. R. T. Bokwe M.B., Ch.B., Medical Practitioner, Executive Member A.N.C.,
Additional District Surgeon, Middledrift.

(3) Rev. James Calata, Priest, Secretary-General, African National Congress.

(4) Mr. R. H. Godio, Member of Native Representative Council. President Location
Advisory Board, Executive Member A.N.C.

(5) Mr. M. L. Kabane, B.A., Teacher, President O.F.S. African Teachers' Association.

(6) Mr. Moses Kotane, Secretary S.A. Communist Party, Member of the African National
Congress.

(7) Mr. S. Mac. Lepolisa, Trader, Organiser O.F.S. African National Congress, Deputy
Speaker, A.N.C.

(8) Rev. Z. Mahabane, Minister, Chaplain, A.N.C.

(9) Mr. G. Makabeni, Trade Unionist, President Council of non-European Trade Unions,
Johannesburg.

(10) Mr. T. M. Mapikela, Honorary Life Speaker, A.N.C ., Executive member of African National Congress.

(11) Mr. Z.K. Matthews, M. A ., LL.B., Lecturer, Fort Hare College, member of the Representative Council, Executive member ‘ A.N.C.

(12) Mr. C. Mbata, B.A ., Teacher, Chairman African Study Circle, Johannesburg.

(13) Mr. G. A. Mbeki, B.A ., B.Com., Trade Secretary, Federation of Organised Bodies, Transkei.

(14) Mr. M. T. Moerane, B.A ., Secretary, Natal Bantu Teachers’ Association.

(15) Mr. E. T. Mofutsanyane, member National Executive African National Congress.

(16) Dr. S. M. Molema, M.B ., Ch.B., Medical Practitioner, Executive member of the African National Congress.

(17) Dr. J. S. Moroka, M.B ., Ch.B ., Member of the Native Representative Council, Treasurer All African Convention.

(18) Rev. Mpitso, Mendi Memorial Fund, Secretary-Organiser African Ministers Association, Executive Member A.N.C.

(19) Rev. Abner Mtimkulu, Minister, Acting-President, Natal A.N. Congress.

(20) Mr. Don. Mtimkulu, M.A., President, African Teachers’ Federation.

(21) Mr. Leo. Mtimkulu, Attorney.

(22) Mr. J. M. Nhlapo, B.A., Wilberforce Institution, Executive member, A.N.C.

(23) Mr. Selby Ngcobo, B.A ., B.Econ., Principal Loram Secondary School.

(24) Dr. I. P. Ka Seme, B.A ., LL.D., Attorney at Law, Congress National Executive.

(25) Dr. R. Setlogelo, M.B ., Ch.B ., Medical Practitioner.

(26) Mr. R. V. Selope-Thema, Editor, *Bantu World*, Member Native Representative

Council, Speaker African National Congress.

(27) Mr. B. B. Xiniwe, Member Native Representative Council.

(28) Dr. A. B. Xuma, M.D., B. Sc. (U.S.A.), L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S. (Edin.), L.R.F.P. & S. (Glas), D.P.H. (Lond.), Medical Practitioner, Medical Officer of Health Alexandra Health Committee, Physician-in-Charge Cragman Community, Clinic, Evaton.

APPENDIX FOUR

Freedom Charter

As adopted at the Congress of the People, Kliptown, on June 26, 1955.³

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;

that our people have been robbed of their birth right to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birth right without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this Freedom Charter;

And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

The People Shall Govern!

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws;

³ African National Congress, The Freedom Charter, accessed August 12, 2021, <https://www.anc1912.org.za/freedom-charter>.

All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;

The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex;

All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government .

All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races;

All people shall have equal right to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs;

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime;

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

The People Shall Share in the Country`s Wealth!

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!

Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided

amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger;

The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;

Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.

All Shall be Equal Before the Law!

No-one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial; No-one shall be condemned by the order of any Government official;

The courts shall be representative of all the people;

Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes against the people, and shall aim at re-education, not vengeance;

The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people;

All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour or belief shall be repealed.

All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!

The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children;

The privacy of the house from police raids shall be protected by law;

All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad;

Pass Laws, permits and all other laws restricting these freedoms shall be abolished.

There Shall be Work and Security!

All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers;

The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits;

Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work;

There shall be a forty-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers;

Miners, domestic workers, farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work;

Child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished.

The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace;

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children; Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit;

Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;

Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;

The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;

Unused housing space to be made available to the people;

Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no-one shall go hungry;

A preventive health scheme shall be run by the state;

Free medical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children;

Slums shall be demolished, and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, creches and social centres;

The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state;

Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all:

Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished, and laws which break up families shall be repealed.

There Shall be Peace and Friendship!

South Africa shall be a fully independent state which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations;

South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation – not war;

Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all;

The people of the protectorates Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland shall be free to

decide for themselves their own future;

The right of all peoples of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognised, and shall be the basis of close co-operation.

Let all people who love their people and their country now say, as we say here:

THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGHOUT OUR
LIVES, UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY

APPENDIX FIVE

The Cottesloe Consultation Statement

CONSULTATION STATEMENT⁴

PART I

We have met as delegates from the member churches in South Africa of the World Council of Churches, together with representatives of the World Council itself, to seek under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to understand the complex problems of human relationships in this country, and to consult with one another on our common task and responsibility in the light of the Word of God. Our worship, Bible study, discussion and personal contacts have led us to a heightened appreciation of one another's convictions and actions. Our next task will be to report to our several churches, realising that the ultimate significance of our meeting will consist in the witness and decisions of the churches themselves in consequence of these consultations.

The general theme of our seven days together has been the Christian attitude towards race relations. We are united in rejecting all unjust discrimination. Nevertheless widely divergent convictions have been expressed on the basic issues of apartheid. They range on the one hand from the judgment that it is unacceptable in principle, contrary to the Christian calling and unworkable in practice, to the conviction on the other hand that a policy of differentiation can be defended from the Christian point of view, that it provides the only realistic solution to the

⁴ World Council of Churches, "The Cottesloe Statement 1961" in: John, W. deGruchy and Charles Villavicencio, eds. *Apartheid is a Heresy* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans 1983), 148–53. deGruchy did not include the response by the DRC which is included here in the Appendix. For the full report of the Cottesloe Consultations and the responses of the DRC and the NHK see: Cottesloe Consultation: The Report of the Consultation among South African Member Churches of the World Council of Churches 7-14 December 1960 at Cottesloe, Johannesburg, accessed August 11, 2021, <http://www.aluka.org/action/showMetadata?doi=10.5555/AL.SFF.DOCUMENT.ydlwcc2079>.

problems of race relations and is therefore in the best interests of the various population groups.

Although proceeding from these divergent views, we are nevertheless able to make the following affirmations concerning human need and justice, as they affect relations among the races of this country. In the nature of the case the agreements here recorded do not-and we do not pretend that they do-represent in full the convictions of the member churches.

The Church of Jesus Christ, by its nature and calling, is deeply concerned with the welfare of all people, both as individuals and as members of social groups. It is called to minister to human need in whatever circumstances and forms it appears, and to insist that all be done with justice. In its social witness the Church must take cognisance of all attitudes, forces, policies, and laws which affect the life of a people: but the Church must proclaim that the final criterion of all social and political action is the principles of Scripture regarding the realisation of all men of a life worthy of their God-given vocation. We make bold therefore to address this appeal to our churches and to all Christians, calling on them to consider every point where they may unite their ministry on behalf of human being in the spirit of equity.

PART II

I. We recognise that all racial groups who permanently inhabit our country are a part of our total population, and we regard them as indigenous. Members of all these groups have an equal right to make their contribution towards the enrichment of the life of their country and to share in the ensuing responsibilities, rewards and privileges.

2. The present tension in South Africa is the result of a long historical development and all groups bear responsibility for it. This must also be seen in relation to events in other parts of the world. The South African scene is radically affected by the decline of the power-of the West and by the desire for self determination among the peoples of the African continent.

3. The Church has a duty to bear witness to the hope which is in Christianity both to White South Africans in their uncertainty and to non-White South Africans in their frustration.

4. In a period of rapid social change the Church has a special responsibility for fearless witness within society.

5. The Church as the Body of Christ is a unity and within this unity the natural diversity among them is not annulled but sanctified.

6. No-one who believes in Jesus Christ may be excluded from any church on the grounds of his colour or race. The spiritual unity among all men who are in Christ must find visible expression in acts of common worship and witness, and in fellowship and consultation on matters of common concern.

7. We regard with deep concern the revival in many areas of African society of heathen tribal customs incompatible with Christian beliefs and practice. We believe this reaction is partly the result of a deep sense of frustration and a loss of faith in Western civilisation

8. The whole Church must participate in the tremendous missionary task which has to be done in South Africa, and which demands a common strategy.

9. Our discussions have revealed that there is not sufficient consultation and communication between the various racial groups which make up our population. There is a special need that a more effective consultation between the Government and leaders accepted by the non-White people of South Africa should be devised. The segregation of racial groups carried through without effective consultation and involving discrimination leads to hardship for members of the groups affected.

10. There are no Scriptural grounds for the prohibition of mixed marriages. The well-being of the community and pastoral responsibility require however that due consideration should be

given to certain factors which may make such marriages inadvisable.

11. We call attention once again to the disintegrating effects of migrant labour on African life. No stable society is possible unless the cardinal importance of family life is recognised, and, from the Christian standpoint, it is imperative that the integrity of the family be safeguarded.

12. It is now widely recognised that the wages received by the vast majority of the non-White people oblige them to exist well below the generally accepted minimum standard for healthy living. Concerted action is required to remedy this grave situation.

13. The present system of job reservation must give way to a more equitable system of labour which safeguards the interest of all concerned.

14. Opportunities must be provided for the inhabitants of the Bantu areas to live in conformity with human dignity.

15. It is our conviction that the right to own land wherever he is domiciled, and to participate in the government of his country, is part of the dignity of the adult man, and for this reason a policy which permanently denies to non-White people the right of collaboration in the government of the country of which they are citizens cannot be justified.

16. (a) It is our conviction that there can be no objection in principle to the direct representation of Coloured people in Parliament.

(b) We express the hope that consideration will be given to the application of this principle in the foreseeable future.

17. In so far as nationalism grows out of a desire for self realization. Christians should understand and respect it. The danger of nationalism is however, that it may seek to fulfil its aim at the expense of the interests of others and that it can make the nation an absolute value which takes the place of God. The role of the Church must therefore be to help to direct national

movements towards just and worthy ends.

PART III

1. Judicial Commission on the Langa and Sharpeville Incidents.

The Consultation expresses its appreciation for the prompt institution of enquiries into the recent disturbances and requests the Government to publish the findings as soon as possible.

2. Justice in Trial.

It has been noted that during the recent disturbances a great number of people were arrested and detained for several months without being brought to trial. While we agree that abnormal circumstances may arise in any country necessitating a departure from the usual procedure, we would stress the fact that it belongs to the Christian conception of law, justice and freedom that in normal circumstances men should not be punished except after fair trial before open courts for previously defined offences. Any departure from this fundamental principle should be confined to the narrowest limits and only resorted to in the most exceptional circumstances.

3. Position of Asians in South Africa.

We assure the Indian and other Asian elements in the population that they have not been forgotten in our thoughts, discussions and prayers. As Christians we assure them that we are convinced that the same measures of justice claimed here for other population groups also apply to them.

4. Freedom of Worship.

Bearing in mind the urgent need for the pastoral care of non-White people living on their employer's premises, or otherwise unable without great difficulty to reach churches in the recognised townships or locations, the Consultation urges that the State should allow the provision of adequate and convenient facilities for non-White people to worship in urban areas.

The Consultation also urges European congregations to cooperate by making their own buildings available for this purpose whenever practicable.

5. Freedom to Preach the Gospel.

The Church has the duty and right to proclaim the Gospel to whomever it will, in whatever the circumstances, and wherever possible consistent with the general principles governing the right of public meetings in democratic countries. We therefore regard as unacceptable any special legislation which would limit the fulfilment of this task.

6. Relationship of Churches

The Consultation urges that it be laid upon the conscience of us all that whenever an occasion arises that a church feels bound to criticise another church or church leader it should take the initiative in seeking prior consultation before making any public statement. We believe that in this way reconciliation will be more readily effected and that Christianity will not be brought into disrepute before the world.

7. Mutual Information.

The Consultation requests that means be found for the regular exchange of all official publications between the member churches for the increase of mutual understanding and information. Furthermore, churches are requested to provide full information to other churches of their procedures in approaching the Government. It is suggested that in approaches to the Government, delegations, combined if possible, multi-racial where appropriate, should act on behalf of the churches.

8. Co-operation in Future.

Any body which may be formed for co-operation in the future is requested to give its attention to the following :

(a) A constructive Christian approach to separatist movements:

(b) The education of the Bantu:

(c) The training of non-White leaders for positions of responsibility in all spheres

of life:

(d) African literacy and the provision of Christian literature:

(e) The concept of responsible Christian society in all areas in South Africa, including the

Reserves:

(f) The impact of Islam on Southern Africa.

9. Residential Areas.

The Consultation urges, with due appreciation of what has already been done in the provision of homes for non-White people, that there should be a greater security of tenure, and that residential areas be planned with an eye to the economic and cultural level of the inhabitants.

10. The Consultation urges the appointment by the Government of a representative commission to examine the migrant labour system, for the Church is painfully aware of the harmful effects of this system on the family life of the Bantu. The Church sees it as special responsibility to advocate a normal family life for the Bantu who spend considerable periods of time, or live permanently, in White areas. We give thanks to Almighty God for bringing us together for fellowship and prayer and consultation. We resolve to continue in this fellowship, and we have therefore made specific plans to enable us to join in common witness in our country. We acknowledge before God the feebleness of our often divided witness to our Lord Jesus Christ and our lack of compassion for one another. We therefore dedicate ourselves afresh to the ministry of reconciliation in Christ.

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE
NEDERDUITSCH HERVORMDE KERK OF AFRICA

We as delegates of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk are grateful for the opportunity we had to listen to, and partake in the witness of the different churches.

We wish, however, to state quite clearly that it is our conviction that separate development is the only just solution of our racial problems. We therefore reject integration in any form as a solution of the problem. The agreement that has been reached contains such far-reaching declarations that we cannot subscribe to it. We can therefore not identify ourselves with it. We further wish to place on record our gratefulness to the Government for all the positive steps it has taken to solve the problem, and to promote the welfare of the different groups.

The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk will in future as in the past accept its responsibility to witness to the government and people in accordance with the Word of God.

(Signed A. J. G. Oosthuizen, T. F. J. Dreyer. J. G. M. Dreyer.

P. M. Smith, S. P. Engelbrecht. B. J. Engelbrecht, F. J. van Zyl. P. S. Dreyer, Ign.
Coertze, J. P. Oberholzer.)

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE NEDERDUITSE GEREFORMEERDE
KERKE OF THE CAPE AND TRANSVAAL

The delegations of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke of the Cape and Transvaal wish to state that we have come to consult with other churches under the Word of God and with deep concern for the various and complicated problems of race relations in the country. We realise with deep Christian concern the needs of all the various population groups and that the Church has a word to speak to them. We wish to confirm that, as stated in the preamble to the

Consultation Statement, a policy of differentiation can be defended from the Christian point of view, that it provides the only realistic solution to the problems of race relations and is therefore in the best interests of the various population groups.

We do not consider the resolutions adopted by the Consultation as in principle incompatible with the above statement. In voting on Resolution 15 the delegations of the two churches recorded their views as follows: "The undersigned voted in favour of Point 15. provided it be clearly understood that participation in the government of this country refers in the case of White areas to the Bantu who are domiciled in the declared White areas in the sense that they have no other homeland."

(Signed by the delegations of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Churches of the Cape Province and Transvaal.)

APPENDIX SIX

The Kairos Document

September 25, 1985 Johannesburg.⁵

CHAPTER ONE

The Moment of Truth

The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the KAIROS or moment of truth not only for apartheid but also for the Church.

We as a group of theologians have been trying to understand the theological significance of this moment in our history. It is serious, very serious. For very many Christians in South Africa this is the KAIROS, the moment of grace and opportunity, the favorable time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action. It is a dangerous time because, if this opportunity is missed, and allowed to pass by, the loss for the Church, for the Gospel and for all the people of South Africa will be immeasurable. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He wept over the tragedy of the destruction of the city and the massacre of the people that was imminent, “and all because you did not recognize your opportunity (KAIROS) when God offered it” (Lk 19: 44).

A crisis is a judgment that brings out the best in some people and the worst in others. A crisis is a moment of truth that shows us up for what we really are. There will be no place to hide and no way of pretending to be what we are not in fact. At this moment in South Africa the

⁵ The Kairos Document, accessed August 12, 2021, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985>.

Church is about to be shown up for what it really is and no cover-up will be possible.

What the present crisis shows up, although many of us have known it all along, is that the Church is divided. More and more people are now saying that there are in fact two Churches in South Africa--a White Church and a Black Church. Even within the same denomination there are in fact two Churches. In the life and death conflict between different social forces that has come to a head in South Africa today, there are Christians (or at least people who profess to be Christians) on both sides of the conflict--and some who are trying to sit on the fence!

Does this prove that Christian faith has no real meaning or relevance for our times? Does it show that the Bible can be used for any purpose at all? Such problems would be critical enough for the Church in any circumstances but when we also come to see that the conflict in South Africa is between the oppressor and the oppressed, the crisis for the Church as an institution becomes much more acute. Both oppressor and oppressed claim loyalty to the same Church. They are both baptized in the same baptism and participate together in the breaking of the same bread, the same body and blood of Christ. There we sit in the same Church while outside Christian policemen and soldiers are beating up and killing Christian children or torturing Christian prisoners to death while yet other Christians stand by and weakly plead for peace.

The Church is divided and its Day of Judgment has come

The moment of truth has compelled us to analyze more carefully the different theologies in our Churches and to speak out more clearly and boldly about the real significance of these theologies. We have been able to isolate three theologies and we have chosen to call them 'State Theology,' 'Church Theology' and 'Prophetic Theology.' In our thoroughgoing criticism of the first and second theologies we do not wish to mince our words. The situation is too critical for that.

CHAPTER TWO

Critique of State Theology

The South African apartheid State has a theology of its own and we have chosen to call it 'State Theology.' 'State Theology' is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonizes the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy.

How does 'State Theology' do this? It does it by misusing theological concepts and biblical texts for its own political purposes. In this document we would like to draw your attention to four key examples of how this is done in South Africa. The first would be the use of Romans 13:1-7 to give an absolute and 'divine' authority to the State. The second would be the use of the idea of 'Law and Order' to determine and control what the people may be permitted to regard as just and unjust. The third would be the use of the word 'communist' to brand anyone who rejects 'State Theology.' And finally there is the use that is made of the name of God.

2.1 Romans 13:1-7

The misuse of this famous text is not confined to the present government in South Africa. Throughout the history of Christianity totalitarian regimes have tried to legitimize an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility towards the state by quoting this text. The well-known theologian Oscar Cullman, pointed this out thirty years ago:

As soon as Christians, out of loyalty to the gospel of Jesus, offer resistance to a State's totalitarian claim, the representatives of the State or their collaborationist theological advisers are accustomed to appeal to this saying of Paul, as if Christians are here commended to endorse and thus to abet all the crimes of a totalitarian State. (*The State in the New Testament*, SCM 1957 p 56.)

But what then is the meaning of Rom 13:1-7 and why is the use made of it by ‘State Theology’ unjustifiable from a biblical point of view?

‘State Theology’ assumes that in this text Paul is presenting us with the absolute and definitive Christian doctrine about the State, in other words an absolute and universal principle that is equally valid for all times and in all circumstances. The falseness of this assumption has been pointed out by numerous biblical scholars (see, for example, E Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans*, SCM, p 354-7; O Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament*, SCM, p 55-7).

What has been overlooked here is one of the most fundamental of all principles of biblical interpretation: every text must be interpreted in its context. To abstract a text from its context and to interpret it in the abstract is to distort the meaning of God’s Word. Moreover the context here is not only the chapters and verses that precede and succeed this particular text nor is it even limited to the total context of the Bible. The context includes also the circumstances in which Paul’s statement was made. Paul was writing to a particular Christian community in Rome, a community that had its own particular problems in relation to the State at that time and in those circumstances. That is part of the context of our text.

Many authors have drawn attention to the fact that in the rest of the Bible God does not demand obedience to oppressive rulers. Examples can be given ranging from Pharaoh to Pilate and through into Apostolic times. The Jews and later the Christians did not believe that their imperial overlords, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks or the Romans, had some kind of divine right to rule them and oppress them. These empires were the beasts described in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelations. God allowed them to rule for a while but he did not approve of what they did. It was not God’s will. His will was the freedom and liberation of Israel. Rom 13:1-7 cannot be contradicting all of this.

But most revealing of all is the circumstances of the Roman Christians to whom Paul was writing. They were not revolutionaries. They were not trying to overthrow the State. They were not calling for a change of government. They were, what has been called, ‘antinomians’ or ‘enthusiasts’ and their belief was that Christians, and only Christians, were exonerated from obeying any State at all, any government or political authority at all, because Jesus alone was their Lord and King. This is of course heretical and Paul is compelled to point out to these Christians that before the second coming of Christ there will always be some kind of State, some kind of secular government and that Christians are not exonerated from subjection to some kind of political authority.

Paul is simply not addressing the issue of a just or unjust State or the need to change one government for another. He is simply establishing the fact that there will be some kind of secular authority and that Christians as such are not exonerated from subjection to secular laws and authorities. He does not say anything at all about what they should do when the State becomes unjust and oppressive. That is another question.

Consequently those who try to find answers to the very different questions and problems of our time in the text of Rom 13:1-7 are doing a great disservice to Paul. The use that ‘State Theology’ makes of this text tells us more about the political options of ‘those who construct this theology than it does about the meaning of God’s Word in this text. As one biblical scholar puts it: “The primary concern is to justify the interests of the State and the text is pressed into its service without respect for the context and the intention of Paul.”

If we wish to search the Bible for guidance in a situation where the State that is supposed to be “the servant of God” (Romans 13:16) betrays that calling and begins to serve Satan instead, then we can study chapter 13 of the Book of Revelations. Here the Roman State becomes the

servant of the dragon (the devil) and takes on the appearance of a horrible beast. Its days are numbered because God will not permit his unfaithful servant to reign forever.

2.2 Law and Order

The State makes use of the concept of law and order to maintain the status quo which it depicts as 'normal.' But this law is the unjust and discriminatory laws of apartheid and this order is the organized and institutionalized disorder of oppression. Anyone who wishes to change this law and this order is made to feel that they are lawless and disorderly. In other words they are made to feel guilty of sin.

It is indeed the duty of the State to maintain law and order, but it has not divine mandate to maintain any kind of law and order. Something does not become moral and just simply because the State has declared it to be a law and the organization of a society is not a just and right order simply because it has been instituted by the State. We cannot accept any kind of law and any kind of order. The concern of Christians is that we should have in our country a just law and a right order.

In the present crisis and especially during the State of Emergency, 'State Theology' has tried to re-establish the status quo of orderly discrimination, exploitation and oppression by appealing to the consciences of its citizens in the name of law and order. It tries to make those who reject this law and this order feel that they are ungodly. The State here is not only usurping the right of the Church to make judgments about what would be right and just in our circumstances; it is going even further than that and demanding of us, in the name of law and order, an obedience that must be reserved for God alone. The South African State recognizes no authority beyond itself and therefore it will not allow anyone to question what it has chosen to define as 'law and order.' However, there are millions of Christians in South Africa today who

are saying with Peter: “We must obey God rather than man (human beings)” (Acts 5:29).

2.3 The Threat of Communism

We all know how the South African State makes use of the label ‘communist.’ Anything that threatens the status quo is labeled ‘communist.’ Anyone who opposes the State and especially anyone who rejects its theology is simply dismissed as a ‘communist.’ No account is taken of what communism really means. No thought is given to Why some people have indeed opted for communism or for some form of socialism. Even people who have not rejected capitalism are called ‘communists’ when they reject ‘State Theology.’ The State uses the label ‘communist’ in an uncritical and unexamined way as its symbol of evil.

‘State Theology’ like every other theology needs to have its own concrete symbol of evil. It must be able to symbolize what it regards as godless behavior and what ideas must be regarded as atheistic. It must have its own version of hell. And so it has invented, or rather taken over, the myth of communism. All evil is communistic and all communist or socialist ideas are atheistic and godless. Threats about hell-fire and eternal damnation are replaced by threats and warnings about the horrors of a tyrannical, totalitarian, atheistic and terrorist communist regime--a kind of hell-on-earth. This is a very convenient way of frightening some people into accepting any kind of domination and exploitation by a capitalist minority.

The South African State has its own heretical theology and according to that theology millions of Christians in South Africa (not to mention the rest of the world) are to be regarded as ‘atheists.’ It is significant that in earlier times when Christians rejected the gods of the Roman Empire they were branded as ‘atheists’--by the State.

2.4 The God of the State

The State in its oppression of the people makes use again and again of the name of God. Military chaplains use it to encourage the [South African Defence Force](#), police chaplains use it to strengthen policemen and cabinet ministers use it in their propaganda speeches. But perhaps the most revealing of all is the blasphemous use of God's holy name in the preamble to the new apartheid constitution.

In humble submission to Almighty God, who controls the destinies of nations and the history of peoples; who gathered our forebears together from many lands and gave them this their own; who has guided them from generation to generation; who has wondrously delivered them from the dangers that beset them.

This god is an idol. It is as mischievous, sinister and evil as any of the idols that the prophets of Israel had to contend with. Here we have a god who is historically on the side of the white settlers, who dispossesses black people of their land and who gives the major part of the land to his "chosen people."

It is the god of superior weapons who conquered those who were armed with nothing but spears. It is the god of the casspirs and hippos, the god of teargas, rubber bullets, sjamboks, prison cells and death sentences. Here is a god who exalts the proud and humbles the poor--the very opposite of the God of the Bible who "scatters the proud of heart, pulls down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the humble" (Lk 1:51-52). From a theological point of view the opposite of the God of the Bible is the devil, Satan. The god of the South African State is not merely an idol or false god, it is the devil disguised as Almighty God--the antichrist.

The oppressive South African regime will always be particularly abhorrent to Christians precisely because it makes use of Christianity to justify its evil ways. As Christians we simply cannot tolerate this blasphemous use of God's name and God's Word. 'State Theology' is not

only heretical, it is blasphemous. Christians who are trying to remain faithful to the God of the Bible are even more horrified when they see that there are Churches, like the White Dutch Reformed Churches and other groups of Christians, who actually subscribe to this heretical theology. 'State Theology' needs its own prophets and it manages to find them from the ranks of those who profess to be ministers of God's Word in some of our Churches. What is particularly tragic for a Christian is to see the number of people who are fooled and confused by these false prophets and their heretical theology.

CHAPTER THREE

Critique of 'Church Theology'

We have analyzed the statements that are made from time-to-time by the so-called 'English-speaking' Churches. We have looked at what Church leaders tend to say in their speeches and press statements about the apartheid regime and the present crisis. What we found running through all these pronouncements is a series of inter-related theological assumptions. These we have chosen to call 'Church Theology.' We are well aware of the fact that this theology does not express the faith of the majority of Christians in South Africa today who form the greater part of most of our Churches. Nevertheless the opinions expressed by Church leaders are regarded in the media and generally in our society as the official opinions of the Churches. We have therefore chosen to call these opinions 'Church Theology.' The crisis in which we find ourselves today compels us to question this theology, to question its assumptions, its implications and its practicality.

In a limited, guarded and cautious way this theology is critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition

and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation. The stock ideas used by almost all these Church leaders that we would like to examine here are: reconciliation (or peace), justice and non-violence.

3.1 Reconciliation

‘Church Theology’ takes ‘reconciliation’ as the key to problem resolution. It talks about the need for reconciliation between white and black, or between all South Africans. ‘Church Theology’ often describes the Christian stance in the following way: “We must be fair. We must listen to both sides of the story. If the two sides can only meet to talk and negotiate they will sort out their differences and misunderstandings, and the conflict will be resolved.” On the face of it this may sound very Christian. But is it?

The fallacy here is that ‘Reconciliation’ has been made into an absolute principle that must be applied in all cases of conflict or dissension. But not all cases of conflict are the same. We can imagine a private quarrel between two people or two groups whose differences are based upon misunderstandings. In such cases it would be appropriate to talk and negotiate to sort out the misunderstandings and to reconcile the two sides. But there are other conflicts in which one side is right and the other wrong. There are conflicts where one side is a fully armed and violent oppressor while the other side is defenceless and oppressed. There are conflicts that can only be described as the struggle between justice and injustice, good and evil, God and the devil. To speak of reconciling these two is not only a mistaken application of the Christian idea of reconciliation, it is a total betrayal of all that Christian faith has ever meant. Nowhere in the Bible or in Christian tradition has it ever been suggested that we ought to try to reconcile good and evil, God and the devil. We are supposed to do away with evil, injustice, oppression and sin—not come to terms with it. We are supposed to oppose, confront and reject the devil and not try

to sup with the devil.

In our situation in South Africa today it would be totally unchristian to plead for reconciliation and peace before the present injustices have been removed. Any such plea plays into the hands of the oppressor by trying to persuade those of us who are oppressed to accept our oppression and to become reconciled to the intolerable crimes that are committed against us. That is not Christian reconciliation, it is sin. It is asking us to become accomplices in our own oppression, to become servants of the devil. No reconciliation is possible in South Africa *without justice* .

What this means in practice is that no reconciliation, no forgiveness and no negotiations are possible *without repentance*. The Biblical teaching on reconciliation and forgiveness makes it quite clear that nobody can be forgiven and reconciled with God unless he or she repents of their sins. Nor are we expected to forgive the unrepentant sinner. When he or she repents we must be willing to forgive seventy times seven times but before that, we are expected to preach repentance to those who sin against us or against anyone. Reconciliation, forgiveness and negotiations will become our Christian duty in South Africa only when the apartheid regime shows signs of genuine repentance. The recent speech of [PW Botha](#) in Durban, the continued military repression of the people in the townships and the jailing of all its opponents is clear proof of the total lack of repentance on the part of the present regime.

There is nothing that we want more than true reconciliation and genuine peace--the peace that God wants and not the peace the world wants (Jn 14:27). The peace that God wants is based upon truth, repentance, justice and love. The peace that the world offers us is a unity that compromises the truth, covers over injustice and oppression and is totally motivated by selfishness. At this stage, like Jesus, we must expose this false peace, confront our oppressors

and sow dissension. As Christians we must say with Jesus: “Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth. No, I tell you, but rather dissension” (Lk 12:51). There can be no real peace without justice and repentance.

It would be quite wrong to try to preserve ‘peace’ and ‘unity’ at all costs, even at the cost of truth and justice and, worse still, at the cost of thousands of young lives. As disciples of Jesus we should rather promote truth and justice and life at all costs, even at the cost of creating conflict, disunity and dissension along the way. To be truly biblical our Church leaders must adopt a theology that millions of Christians have already adopted—a biblical theology of direct confrontation with the forces of evil, rather than a theology of reconciliation with sin and the devil.

3.2 Justice

It would be quite wrong to give the impression that ‘Church Theology’ in South Africa is not particularly concerned about the need for justice. There have been some very strong and very sincere demands for justice. But the question we need to ask here, the very serious theological question is: What kind of justice? An examination of Church statements and pronouncements gives the distinct impression that the justice that is envisaged is *the justice of reform*, that is to say, a justice that is determined by the oppressor, by the white minority and that is offered to the people as a kind of concession. It does not appear to be the more radical justice that comes from below and is determined by the people of South Africa.

One of our main reasons for drawing this conclusion is the simple fact that almost all Church statements and appeals are made to the State or to the white community. The assumption seems to be that changes must come from whites or at least from people who are at the top of the pile. The general idea appears to be that one must simply appeal to the conscience and the

goodwill of those who are responsible for injustice in our land and that once they have repented of their sins and after some consultation with others they will introduce the necessary reforms to the system. Why else would Church leaders be having talks with PW Botha , if this is not the vision of a just and peaceful solution to our problems?

At the heart of this approach is the reliance upon ‘individual conversions’ in response to ‘moralizing demands’ to change the structures of a society. It has not worked and it never will work. The present crisis with all its cruelty, brutality and callousness is ample proof of the ineffectiveness of years and years of Christian ‘moralizing’ about the need for love. The problem that we are dealing with here in South Africa is not merely a problem of personal guilt, it is a problem of structural injustice. People are suffering, people are being maimed and killed and tortured every day. We cannot just sit back and wait for the oppressor to see the light so that the oppressed can put out their hands and beg for the crumbs of some small reforms. That in itself would be degrading and oppressive.

There have been reforms and, no doubt, there will be further reforms in the near future. And it may well be that the Church’s appeal to the consciences of whites has contributed marginally to the introduction of some of these reforms. But can such reforms ever be regarded as real change, as the introduction of a true and lasting justice. Reforms that come from the top are never satisfactory. They seldom do more than make the oppression more effective and more acceptable. If the oppressor does ever introduce reforms that might lead to real change this will come about because of strong pressure from those who are oppressed. True justice, God’s justice, demands a radical change of structures. This can only come from below, from the oppressed themselves. God will bring about change through the oppressed as he did through the oppressed Hebrew slaves in Egypt. God does not bring his justice through reforms introduced by

the Pharaoh's of this world.

Why then does 'Church Theology' appeal to the top rather than to the people who are suffering? Why does this theology not demand that the oppressed stand up for their rights and wage a struggle against their oppressors? Why does it not tell them that it is their duty to work for justice and to change the unjust structures? Perhaps the answer to these questions is that appeals from the 'top' in the Church tend very easily to be appeals to the 'top' in society. An appeal to the conscience of those who perpetuate the system of injustice must be made. But real change and true justice can only come from below, from the people--most of whom are Christians.

3.3 Non-Violence

The stance of 'Church Theology' on non-violence, expressed as a blanket condemnation of all that is called violence, has not only been unable to curb the violence of our situation, it has actually, although unwittingly, been a major contributing factor in the recent escalation of State violence. Here again non-violence has been made into an absolute principle that applies to anything anyone calls violence without regard for who is using it, which side they are on or what purpose they may have in mind. In our situation, this is simply counter-productive.

The problem for the Church here is the way the word violence is being used in the propaganda of the State. The State and the media have chosen to call violence what some people do in the townships as they struggle for their liberation i.e. throwing stones, burning cars and buildings and sometimes killing collaborators. But this excludes the structural, institutional and unrepentant violence of the State and especially the oppressive and naked violence of the police and the army. These things are not counted as violence. And even when they are acknowledged to be 'excessive,' they are called 'misconduct' or even 'atrocities' but never violence. Thus the

phrase 'Violence in the townships' comes to mean what the young people are doing and not what the police are doing or what apartheid in general is doing to people. If one calls for nonviolence in such circumstances one appears to be criticizing the resistance of the people while justifying or at least overlooking the violence of the police and the State. That is how it is understood not only by the State and its supporters but also by the people who are struggling for their freedom. Violence, especially in our circumstances, is a loaded word.

It is true that Church statements and pronouncements do also condemn the violence of the police. They do say that they condemn *all violence*. But is it legitimate, especially in our circumstances, to use the same word violence in a blanket condemnation to cover the ruthless and repressive activities of the State and the desperate attempts of the people to defend themselves? Do such abstractions and generalizations not confuse the issue? How can acts of oppression, injustice and domination be equated with acts of resistance and self-defence? Would it be legitimate to describe both the physical force used by a rapist and the physical force used by a woman trying to resist the rapist as violence?

Moreover there is nothing in the Bible or in our Christian tradition that would permit us to make such generalizations. Throughout the Bible the word violence is used to describe everything that is done by a wicked oppressor (e.g. Ps 72:12-14; Is 59:1-8; Jer 22:13-17; Amos 3:9-10; 6: 3; Mic 2:2; 3:1-3; 6:12). It is never used to describe the activities of Israel's armies in attempting to liberate themselves or to resist aggression. When Jesus says that we should turn the other cheek he is telling us that we must not take revenge; he is not saying that we should never defend ourselves or others. There is a long and consistent Christian tradition about the use of physical force to defend oneself against aggressors and tyrants. In other words there are circumstances when physical force may be used. They are very restrictive circumstances, only as

the very last resort and only as the lesser of two evils, or, as [Bonhoeffer](#) put it, “the lesser of two guilts.” But it is simply not true to say that every possible use of physical force is violence and that no matter what the circumstances may be it is never permissible.

This is not to say that any use of force at any time by people who are oppressed is permissible simply because they are struggling for their liberation. There have been cases of killing and maiming that no Christian would want to approve of. But then our disapproval is based upon a concern for genuine liberation and a conviction that such acts are unnecessary, counter-productive and unjustifiable and not because they fall under a blanket condemnation of any use of physical force in any circumstance.

And finally what makes the professed non-violence of ‘Church Theology’ extremely suspect in the eyes of very many people, including ourselves, is the tacit support that many Church leaders give to the growing militarisation of the South African State. How can one condemn all violence and then appoint chaplains to a very violent and oppressive army? How can one condemn all violence and then allow young white males to accept their conscription into the armed forces? Is it because the activities of the armed forces and the police are counted as defensive? That raises very serious questions about whose side such Church leaders might be on. Why are the activities of young blacks in the townships not regarded as defensive?

In practice what one calls ‘violence’ and what one calls ‘self-defence’ seems to depend upon which side one is on. To call all physical force ‘violence’ is to try to be neutral and to refuse to make a judgment about who is right and who is wrong. The attempt to remain neutral in this kind of conflict is futile. Neutrality enables the status quo of oppression (and therefore violence) to continue. It is a way of giving tacit support to the oppressor.

3.4 The Fundamental Problem

It is not enough to criticize 'Church Theology' we must also try to account for it. What is behind the mistakes and misunderstandings and inadequacies of this theology?

In the first place we can point to a lack of social analysis. We have seen how 'Church Theology' tends to make use of absolute principles like reconciliation, negotiation non-violence and peaceful solutions and applies them indiscriminately and uncritically to all situations. Very little attempt is made to analyze what is actually happening in our society and why it is happening. It is not possible to make valid moral judgment: about a society without first understanding that society. The analysis of apartheid that underpins 'Church Theology' is simply inadequate. The present crisis has now made it very clear that the efforts of Church leaders to promote effective and practical ways of changing our society have failed. This failure is due in no small measure to the fact that 'Church Theology' has not developed a social analysis that would enable it to understand the mechanics of injustice and oppression.

Closely linked to this, is the lack in 'Church Theology' of an adequate understanding of *politics and political strategy*. Changing the structures of a society is fundamentally a matter of politics. It requires a political strategy based upon a clear social or political analysis. The Church has to address itself to these strategies and to the analysis upon which they are based. It is into this political situation that the Church has to bring the gospel. Not as an alternative solution to our problems as if the gospel provided us with a non-political solution to political problems. There is no specifically Christian solution. There will be a Christian way of approaching the political solutions, a Christian spirit and motivation and attitude. But there is no way of bypassing politics and political strategies.

But we have still not pinpointed the fundamental problem. Why has 'Church Theology' not developed a social analysis? Why does it have an inadequate understanding of the need for

political strategies? And why does it make a virtue of neutrality and sitting on the side-lines?

The answer must be sought in *the type of faith and spirituality* that has dominated Church life for centuries. As we all know, spirituality has tended to be an other-worldly affair that has very little, if anything at all, to do with the affairs of this world. Social and political matters were seen as worldly affairs that have nothing to do with the spiritual concerns of the Church. Moreover, spirituality has also been understood to be purely private and individualistic. Public affairs and social problems were thought to be beyond the sphere of spirituality. And finally the spirituality we inherit tends to rely upon God to intervene in his own good time to put right what is wrong in the world. That leaves very little for human beings to do except to pray for God's intervention.

It is precisely this kind of spirituality that, when faced with the present crisis in South Africa, leaves so many Christians and Church leaders in a state of near paralysis.

It hardly needs saying that this kind of faith and this type of spirituality has no biblical foundation. The Bible does not separate the human person from the world in which he or she lives; it does not separate the individual from the social or one's private life from one's public life. God redeems the whole person as part of his whole creation (Rom 8:18-24). A truly biblical spirituality would penetrate into every 'aspect of human existence and would exclude nothing from God's redemptive will. Biblical faith is prophetically relevant to everything that happens in the world.

CHAPTER FOUR

Towards a Prophetic Theology

Our present KAIROS calls for a response from Christians that is biblical, spiritual, pastoral and, above all, prophetic. It is not enough in these circumstances to repeat generalized Christian

principles. We need a bold and incisive response that is prophetic because it speaks to the particular circumstances of this crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand.

Social Analysis

The first task of a prophetic theology for our times would be an attempt at social analysis or what Jesus would call “reading the signs of the times” (Mt 16:3) or “interpreting this KAIROS” (Lk 12:56). It is not possible to do this in any detail in the document but we must start with at least the broad outlines of an analysis of the conflict in which we find ourselves.

It would be quite wrong to see the present conflict as simply a racial war. The racial component is there but we are not dealing with two equal races or nations each with their own selfish group interests. The situation we are dealing with here is one of oppression. The conflict is between an oppressor and the oppressed. The conflict between two irreconcilable *causes or interests* in which the one is just and the other is unjust.

On the one hand we have the interests of those who benefit from the status quo and who are determined to maintain it at any cost, even at the cost of millions of lives. It is in their interests to introduce a number of reforms in order to ensure that the system is not radically changed and that they can continue to benefit from the system because it favors them and enables them to accumulate a great deal of wealth and to maintain an exceptionally high standard of living. And they want to make sure that it stays that way even if some adjustments are needed.

On the other hand we have those who do not benefit in any way from the system the way it is now. They are treated as mere labor units, paid starvation wages, separated from their families by migratory labor, moved about like cattle and dumped in homelands to starve--and all for the benefit of a privileged minority. They have no say in the system and are supposed to be grateful

for the concessions that are offered to them like crumbs. It is not in their interests to allow this system to continue even in some 'reformed' or 'revised' form. They are determined to change the system radically so that it not longer benefits only the privileged few. And they are willing to do this even at the cost of their own lives. What they want is justice for all.

This is our situation of civil war or revolution. The one side is committed to maintaining the system at all costs and the other side is committed to changing it at all costs. There are two conflicting projects here and no compromise is possible. Either we have full and equal justice for all or we don't.

The Bible has a great deal to say about this kind of conflict, about a world that is divided into oppressors and oppressed.

Oppression in the Bible

When we search the Bible to a message about oppression we discover, as others throughout the world are discovering, that oppression is a central theme that runs right through the Old and New Testaments. The biblical scholars who have taken the trouble to study the theme of oppression in the Bible have discovered that there are no less than twenty different root words in Hebrew to describe oppression. As one author says, oppression is "a basic structural category of biblical theology" (TD Hanks, *God So Loved the Third World*, Orbis 1983 p 4).

Moreover the description of oppression in the Bible is concrete and vivid. The Bible describes oppression as the experience of being crushed, degraded, humiliated, exploited, impoverished, defrauded, deceived and enslaved. And the oppressors are described as cruel, ruthless, arrogant, greedy, violent and tyrannical and as the enemy. Such descriptions could only have been written originally by people who had had a long and painful experience of what it means to be oppressed. And indeed nearly 90 percent of the history of the Jewish and later the

Christian people whose story is told in the Bible, is a history of domestic of international oppression. Israel as a nation was built upon the painful experience of oppression and repression as slaves in Egypt. But what made all the difference for this particular group of oppressed people was the revelation of Yahweh. God revealed himself as Yahweh, the one who has compassion on those who suffer and who liberates them from their oppressors.

I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians.... The cry of the sons of Israel has come to me, and I have witnessed the way in which the Egyptians oppress them. (Ex 3:7-9)

Throughout the Bible God appears as the liberator of the oppressed. He is not neutral. He does not attempt to reconcile Moses and Pharaoh, to reconcile the Hebrew slaves with their Egyptian oppressors or to reconcile the Jewish people with any of their late oppressors. Oppression is sin and it cannot be compromised with, it must be done away with. God takes sides with the oppressed. As we read in Psalm 103:6 (JB) “God who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed.”

Nor is this identification with the oppressed confined to the Old Testament. When Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth to announce his mission he made use of the words of Isaiah.

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour. (Lk 4:18-19)

There can be no doubt that Jesus is here taking up the cause of the poor and the oppressed. He has identified himself with their interests. Not that he is unconcerned about the rich and the

oppressor. These he calls to repentance. The oppressed Christians of South Africa have known for a long time that they are united to Christ in their sufferings. By his own sufferings and his death on the cross he became a victim of oppression and violence. He is with us in our oppression.

Tyranny in the Christian Tradition

There is a long Christian tradition relating to oppression, but the word that has been used most frequently to describe this particular form of sinfulness is the word 'tyranny'. According to this tradition once it is established beyond doubt that a particular ruler is a tyrant of that a particular regime is tyrannical, it forfeits the moral right to govern and the people acquire the right to resist and to find the means to protect their own interests against injustice and oppression. In other words a tyrannical regime has no *moral legitimacy*. It may be the *de facto* government and it may even be recognized by other governments and therefore be the *de iure* or legal government. But if it is a tyrannical regime, it is, from a moral and theological point of view, *illegitimate*. There are indeed some differences of opinion in the Christian tradition about the means that might be used to replace a tyrant but there has not been any doubt about our Christian duty to refuse to co-operate with tyranny and to do whatever we can to remove it.

There are indeed some differences of opinion in the Christian tradition about the means that might be used to replace a tyrant but there has not been any doubt about our Christian duty to refuse to co-operate with tyranny and to do whatever we can to remove it.

Of course everything hinges on the definition of a tyrant. At what point does a government become a tyrannical regime?

The traditional Latin definition of a tyrant is *hostis boni communis* - an enemy of the common good. The purpose of all government is the promotion of what is called the common

good of the people governed. To promote the common good is to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, all the people. Many governments fail to do this at times. There might be this or that injustice done to some of the people. And such lapses would indeed have to be criticized. But occasional acts of injustice would not make a government into an enemy of the people, a tyrant.

To be an enemy of the people a government would have to be hostile to the common good in principle. Such a government would be acting against the interests of the people as a whole and permanently. This would be clearest in cases where the very policy of a government is hostile towards the common good and where the government has a mandate to rule in the interests of some of the people rather than in the interests of all the people. Such a government would be in principle irreformable. Any reform that it might try to introduce would not be calculated to serve the common good but to serve the interests of the minority from whom it received its mandate.

A tyrannical regime cannot continue to rule for very long without becoming more and more violent. As the majority of the people begin to demand their rights and to put pressure on the tyrant, so will the tyrant resort more and more to desperate, cruel, gross and ruthless forms of tyranny and repression. The reign of a tyrant always ends up as a reign of terror. It is inevitable because from the start the tyrant is an enemy of the common good.

This account of what we mean by a tyrant or a tyrannical regime can best be summed up in the words of a well-known moral theologian: “a regime which is openly the enemy of the people and which violates the common good permanently and in the grossest manner” (B Haring, *The Law of Christ* , Vol 3, p 150).

That leaves us with the question of whether the present government of South Africa is

tyrannical or not? There can be no doubt what the majority of the people of South Africa think. For them the apartheid regime is indeed the enemy of the people and that is precisely what they call it: the enemy. In the present crisis, more than before, the regime has lost any legitimacy that it might have had in the eyes of the people. Are the people right or wrong?

Apartheid is a system whereby a minority regime elected by one small section of the population is given an explicit mandate to govern in the interests of, and for the benefit of, the white community. Such a mandate or policy is by definition hostile to the common good of all the people. In fact because it tries to rule in the exclusive interests of whites and not in the interests of all, it ends up ruling in a way that is not even in the interests of those same whites. It becomes an enemy of all the people. A totalitarian regime. A reign of terror.

This also means that the apartheid minority regime is irreformable. We cannot expect the apartheid regime to experience a conversion or change of heart and totally abandon the policy of apartheid. It has no mandate from its electorate to do so. Any reforms or adjustments it might make would have to be done in the interests of who elected it. Individual members of the government could experience a real conversion and repent but, if they did, they would simply have to follow this through by leaving a regime that was elected and put into power precisely because of its policy of apartheid.

And that is why we have reached the present impasse. As the oppressed majority becomes more insistent and puts more and more pressure on the tyrant by means of boycotts, strikes, uprisings, burnings and even armed struggle, the more tyrannical will regime become. On the one hand it will use repressive measures: detentions, trials, killings, torture, bannings, propaganda, states of emergency and other desperate and tyrannical methods. And on the other hand it will introduce reforms that will always be unacceptable to the majority because all its

reforms must ensure that the minority remains on top.

A regime that is in principle the enemy of the people cannot suddenly begin to rule in the interests of all the people. It can only be replaced by another government--one that has been elected by the majority of the people with an explicit mandate to govern in the interests of all the people.

A regime that has made itself the enemy of the people has thereby also made itself the enemy of God. People are made in the image and likeness of God and whatever to the least of them we do to God (Mt 25:49, 45).

To say that the State or the regime is the enemy of God is not to say that all those who support the system are aware of this. On the whole they simply do not know what they are doing. Many people have been blinded by the regime's propaganda. They are frequently quite ignorant of the consequences of their stance. However, such blindness does not make the State any less tyrannical or any less of an enemy of the people and an enemy of God.

On the other hand the fact that the State is tyrannical and an enemy of God is no excuse for hatred. As Christians we are called upon to love our enemies (Mt 5:44). It is not said that we should not or will not have enemies or that we should not identify tyrannical regimes as indeed our enemies. But once we have identified our enemies, we must endeavor to love them. That is not always easy. But then we must also remember that the most loving thing we can do for both the oppressed and for our enemies who are oppressors is to eliminate the oppression, remove the tyrants from power and establish a just government for the common good *of all the people* .

A Message of Hope

At the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and at the very centre of all true prophecy is a message of hope. Nothing could be more relevant and more necessary at this moment of crisis

in South Africa than the Christian message of hope.

Jesus has taught us to speak of this hope as the coming of God's kingdom. We believe that God is at work in our world turning hopeless and evil situations to good so that his "Kingdom may come" and his "Will may be done on earth as it is in heaven." We believe that goodness and justice and love will triumph in the end and that tyranny and that tyranny and oppression cannot last forever. One day "all tears will be wiped away" (Rev 7:17; 21:4) and "the lamb will be down with the lion" (Is 11:6). True peace and true reconciliation are not only desirable, they are assured and guaranteed. This is our faith and our hope.

Why is it that this powerful message of hope has not been highlighted in 'Church Theology,' in the statements and pronouncements of Church leaders? Is it because they have been addressing themselves to the oppressor rather than to the oppressed? Is it because they do not want to encourage the oppressed to be too hopeful for too much?

As the crisis deepens day-by-day, what both the oppressor and the oppressed can legitimately demand of the Churches is a message of hope. Most of the oppressed people in South Africa today and especially the youth do have hope. They are acting courageously and fearlessly because they have a sure hope that liberation will come. Often enough their bodies are broken but nothing can now break their spirit. But hope needs to be confirmed. Hope needs to be maintained and strengthened. Hope needs to be spread. The people need to hear it said again and again that God is with them.

On the other hand the oppressor and those who believe the propaganda of the oppressor are desperately fearful. They must be made aware of the diabolical evils of the present system and they must be called to repentance but they must also be given something to hope for. At present they have false hopes. They hope to maintain the status quo and their special privileges with

perhaps some adjustments and they fear any real alternative. But there is much more than that to hope for and nothing to fear. Can the Christian message of hope not help them in this matter?

There is hope. There is hope for all of us. But the road to that hope is going to be very hard and very painful. The conflict and the struggle will have to intensify in the months and years ahead because there is no other way to remove the injustice and oppression. But God is with us. We can only learn to become the instruments of his peace even unto death. We must participate in the cross of Christ if we are to have the hope of participating in his resurrection.

CHAPTER FIVE

Challenge to Action

5.1 God Sides with the Oppressed

To say that the Church must now take sides unequivocally and consistently with the poor and the oppressed is to overlook the fact that the majority of Christians in South Africa have already done so. By far the greater part of the Church in South Africa is poor and oppressed. Of course it cannot be taken for granted that everyone who is oppressed has taken up their own cause and is struggling for their own liberation. Nor can it be assumed that all oppressed Christians are fully aware of the fact that their cause is God's cause. Nevertheless it remains true that the Church is already on the side of the oppressed because that is where the majority of its members are to be found. This fact needs to be appropriated and confirmed by the Church as a whole.

At the beginning of this document it was pointed out that the present crisis has highlighted the divisions in the Church. We are a divided Church precisely because not all the members of our Churches have taken sides against oppression. In other words not all Christians have united themselves with God "who is always on the side of the oppressed" (Ps 103:6). As far as the

present crisis is concerned, there is only one way forward to Church unity and that is for those Christians who find themselves on the side of the oppressor or sitting on the fence, to cross over to the other side to be united in faith and action with those who are oppressed. Unity and reconciliation within the Church itself is only possible around God and Jesus Christ who are to be found on the side of the poor and the oppressed.

If this is what the Church must become, if this is what the Church as a whole must have as its project, how then are we to translate it into concrete and effective action?

5.2 Participation in the Struggle

Christians, if they are not doing so already, must quite simply participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society. The campaigns of the people, from consumer boycotts to stayaways, need to be supported and encouraged by the Church. Criticism will sometimes be necessary but encouragement and support will also be necessary. In other words the present crisis challenges the whole Church to move beyond a mere 'ambulance ministry' to a ministry of involvement and participation.

5.3 Transforming Church Activities

The Church has its own specific activities: Sunday services, communion services, baptisms, Sunday school, funerals and so forth. It also has its specific way of expressing its faith and its commitment i.e. in the form of confessions of faith. All of these activities must be re-shaped to be more fully consistent with a prophetic faith related to the KAIROS that God is offering us today. The evil forces we speak of in baptism must be named. We know what these evil forces are in South Africa today. The unity and sharing we profess in our communion services or Masses must be named. It is the solidarity of the people inviting all to join in the

struggle for God's peace in South Africa. The repentance we preach must be named. It is repentance for our share of the guilt for the suffering and oppression in our country.

Much of what we do in our Church services has lost its relevance to the poor and the oppressed. Our services and sacraments have been appropriated to serve the need of the individual for comfort and security. Now these same Church activities must be reappropriated to serve the real religious needs of all the people and to further the liberating mission of God and the Church in the world.

5.4 Special Campaigns

Over and above its regular activities the Church would need to have special programmes, projects and campaigns because of the special needs of the struggle for liberation in South Africa today. But there is a very important caution here. The Church must avoid becoming a 'Third Force,' a force between the oppressor and the oppressed. The Church's programmes and campaigns must not duplicate what the people's organizations are already doing and, even more seriously, the Church must not confuse the issue by having programmes that run counter to the struggles of those political organizations that truly represent the grievances and demands of the people. Consultation, co-ordination and co-operation will be needed. We all have the same goals even when we differ about the final significance of what we are struggling for.

5.5 Civil Disobedience

Once it is established that the present regime has no moral legitimacy and is in fact a tyrannical regime certain things follow for the Church and its activities. In the first place the Church cannot collaborate with tyranny. It cannot or should not do any thing that appears to give legitimacy to a morally illegitimate regime. Secondly, that Church should not only pray for a

change of government, it should also mobilize its members in every parish to begin to think and work and plan for a change of government in South Africa. We must begin to look ahead and begin working now with firm hope and faith for a better future. And finally the moral illegitimacy of the apartheid regime means that the Church will have to be involved at times in civil disobedience. A Church that takes its responsibilities seriously in these circumstances will sometimes have to confront and to disobey the State in order to obey God.

5.6 Moral Guidance

The people look to the Church, especially in the midst of our present crisis, for moral guidance. In order to provide this the Church must first make its stand absolutely clear and never tire of explaining and dialoguing about it. It must then help people to understand their rights and their duties. There must be no misunderstanding about the moral duty of all who are oppressed to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation and justice. The Church will also find that at times it does need to curb excesses and to appeal to the consciences of those who act thoughtlessly and wildly.

But the Church of Jesus Christ is not called to be a bastion of caution and moderation. The Church should challenge, inspire and motivate people. It has a message of the cross that inspires us to make sacrifices for justice and liberation. It has a message of hope that challenges us to wake up and to act with hope and confidence. The Church must preach this message not only in words and sermons and statements but also through its actions, programmes, campaigns and divine services.

Conclusion

As we said in the beginning, there is nothing final about this document. Our hope is that it

will stimulate discussion, debate, reflection and prayer, but, above all, that it will lead to action.

We invite all committed Christians to take this matter further, to do more research, to develop the themes we have presented here or to criticize them and to return to the Bible, as we have tried to do, with the question raised by the crisis of our times.

Although the document suggests various modes of involvement it does not prescribe the particular actions anyone should take. We call upon all those who are committed to this prophetic form of theology to use the document for discussion in groups, small and big, to determine an appropriate form of action, depending on their particular situation, and to take up the action with other related groups and organizations.

The challenge to renewal and action that we have set out here is addressed to the Church. But that does not mean that it is intended only for Church leaders. The challenge of the faith and of our present KAIROS is addressed to all who bear the name Christian. None of us can simply sit back and wait to be told what to do by our Church leaders or anyone else. We must all accept responsibility for acting and living out our Christian faith in these circumstances. We pray that God will help all of us to translate the challenge of our times into action.

We as theologians (both lay and professional), have been greatly challenged by our own reflections, our exchange of ideas and our discoveries as we met together in smaller and larger groups to prepare this document or to suggest amendments to it. We are convinced that this challenge comes from God and that it is addressed to all of us. We see the present crisis or KAIROS as indeed a divine visitation.

And finally we also like to call upon our Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world to give us the necessary support in this regard so that the daily loss of so many young lives may be brought to a speedy end.

We, the undersigned, take joint responsibility for what is presented in this document, not as a final statement of the truth but as the direction in which God is leading us at this moment or our history.

[There follows a list of 156 signatories from over 20 South African denominations.]

APPENDIX SEVEN

The Position of the Lutheran Church Concerning the Race Issue

Presentation at the General Lutheran Conference, September 12, 1950, in Durban
by Missionary Karl Meister.⁶

Mission Station Salem, near Piet Retief, Transvaal (Mission of the Hannoverian
Evangelical Freechurch)

We Lutherans are possibly the last amongst the church communities in South Africa to discuss the race question amongst ourselves.

As Lutheran Church, we should question our Lutheran Confessions on this. But in as much as I thought about it, I could not think of one single text in our Lutheran Confessions that could supply an answer for such a specific question. Despite this, as Lutherans, we cannot just walk past such a highly relevant question and want to try and answer according to our insight that has been formed by God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions.

Our country's government has staggered from side to side in answering the race question, depending on which party was or is at the helm. In the U. P. various streams can be recognized; namely, the openly expressed liberal opinion held by the deceased minister Hofmeyer, which had the goal of the complete equalization of all races as a Christian solution; and secondly, those in the party who possess so much foresight that they recognize that complete equalization between all races would lead to a process of bastardization in South Africa, as in South America. And therefore, they have a certain trepidation for complete equalization but are not willing to embark

⁶ A copy of the presentation was sent to the Bleckmar headquarters and is kept in the archive in the file 1950. Translated by Christoph Weber and Werner Klän.

on clear paths to solve the problem, hoping it will somehow “come right.” The National Party, which is currently holding the rudder of government in its hand, has summarized the race question’s solution in one singular word, namely in the word “Apartheid.” Apartheid is the direct opposite of liberal equalization. Apartheid means “Separation of all races regarding the area of living, all administrative and official and social spheres.”

The synod of the Reformed Church in Bloemfontein, which has no insignificant influence on the National Party, also took a position in this question and endorsed radical apartheid, that is, the separation and consolidation of specific areas as residential areas for all natives. The present government cannot seem to decide to implement this radical apartheid but has designated apart from the existing reserves to add a few scattered places close to larger cities and industrial centres as residential areas for all non-whites, separated along the lines of races and tribes.

Associations such as the “Institute of Race Relation” and other Churches have given official statements in response to the National Government program. They reject the national government’s program as “inhuman” and as “unchristian,” as “master race politics,” since one part of the nation (Volk) wants to perpetually humiliate the other part to “Woodcutters and carriers of water.” But it is not true that the National Government intends to suppress the colored races to slaves and bind them legally to this status forever. The leaders of the government have repeated this time and again, assuring this is not their intention. Instead, they will also give the colored races complete freedom, socially and culturally; but they should exercise their freedom in their designated residential areas. They should not interfere in the affairs of the whites, just as the whites do not wish to interfere in the affairs of coloreds. It is to be expected that the execution of this problem will cause hardship for some individuals, to begin with, but only to start with. Subsequently, it should seriously contribute to peace and friendship. In this sense, we

definitely cannot describe this solution as inhuman.

But for us, the other question is more important, namely, “is it unchristian to separate races through legislation so that they are no longer mixed together but separated spatially and socially, only living alongside each other?”

To begin with, we remind ourselves of God’s order of creation. It is God that gave the races peculiar gifts. God is not like a machine factory, producing exactly equal articles, equally valuable or equally worthless. Instead, in his manifold wisdom, he creates and sustains archangels and angels, Gabriel and Michael, Cherubim and Seraphim, thrones and dominions, principalities and authorities in heaven and on earth, Japhetites, Semites, and Hamites, or Caucasians, Mongolians, the red Americans, the brown Ethiopians, the yellow Malayans. God has assigned all angels and archangels in heaven, all races, and peoples on earth, each their place and extent of authority. Neither all angels in heaven nor all men on earth are appointed to the same authority nor exercise the same rights. Therefore it is against God’s order of creation, and therefore also unchristian when people do not respect other’s God-given rights and meddle in foreign offices. When the adult son or daughter wants to govern their parents or dictate how homes should be ruled, sons and daughters and workers demand equal rights with parents and masters, which is also against love. They destroy the bond of love through such demands. In the now current acute race question, which is coming to a head in our country due to the mixed living of Europeans and coloreds, with the demand for equality of rights both legally and in social institutions, we can respond as follows due to the above mentioned: it is not fitting that those who have been charged by God with greater responsibility should either relinquish their commission and authority to those who have received neither talent nor commission from God or draw them into these positions. God himself created distinctions between those governing and

those governed, between higher commissioners and subjects. God will revenge violation of these distinctions He himself made by destroying community: He has led it in such a way that they must destroy themselves. And, of course, we must not forget that those with a higher commission must do their duty in the presence of God and are accountable to God.

There is a distinction between the races which God has manifested. Admittedly the soul is equal to the soul before God. For everyone, irrespective of which race they belong to, Jesus has shed his blood. All races can only be saved in the one and same way: “out of grace, without any merit, alone through faith in Jesus Christ.” The heavenly glory applies for the redeemed members of all races; for the redeemed of all races, the promise that we shall be equal to Jesus pertains. God has also ordained some equalities here on earth. For example, equality before the judgment seat: (Leviticus 24:22 ESV) “You shall have the same rule for the sojourner and the native, for I am the Lord your God.” No-one in this country disputes the rights of the various races in this respect, and when wrongful judgments happen, appeals to a higher court can be made. Before the judge, all races are equal in this country. Furthermore, in marriage and inheritance matters, the judge does not apply Roman or English laws to the various races but decides based on each race’s inherited or particular law. This judicial practice appears to us Europeans as a specific concession to the multiple races. But especially those natives who consider themselves civilized demand the abolition of this inequality and demand conformity⁷ in marriage and inheritance under European law. As messengers of the Gospel, we could reply in this conflict with the words of Jesus (Luke 12:14 ESV) “But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” But since we are discussing retaining or abolishing an ancient native custom and it is also our duty to give our Christian congregations advice, we could

⁷ „Gleichschaltung”

reconsider this question in our conference. Apart from that, we can say that all races are equal before the judge.

Despite this, God has considered it good and right to give the various races various talents and gifts. There are Revelation-nations⁸ and subordinate nations.⁹ As in the time of the Old Testament and the New Testament. At first, in our Christian era, he gave the nations from the Mediterranean high insight; later particularly the Germanic nations who were allowed to stride from one insight to the next and were thereby able to serve other nations. But there must always also be subordinate members, nourishing members.¹⁰ So it was in the house of Jacob and indeed in the apostolate. Not all were like Peter and John or Paul. How can one allege and demand with the liberals and communists that we are all equal? That all races have the right to elect people representatives, to make laws, and to govern? We may not forget that if the natives, coloreds, and Indians were given the same electoral franchise as the Europeans, that is that they could elect members of parliament, the legislative assembly, then according to democratic law, they themselves would have the right to be elected as members of the legislative assembly. Since they are three times as many, nobody could hinder them from occupying the prime minister's chair. Every objective observer would say without reservation that these races are still entirely incapable of administering such positions, that indeed there is a significant difference between races with higher and lower disposition and that it would lead us to destruction if complete equality were proclaimed. The aspiration is not new. In the Old Testament, we see how Miriam and Aaron demand this right from Moses. Perhaps someone would like to reply that that was quite different then and inappropriate for this issue. If we concentrate their insurrection in a few

⁸ "Offenbarungsvölker"

⁹ "Volk"

¹⁰ "Ernährungsglieder"

words, then their actions boil down to this: “the lower talent and the lower function is presumptuous towards, the higher talent and the higher mandate,” proclaims complete equality, making no distinction of mandate and function and aspires not only to degrade the higher mandate but to establish oneself independently from it, ultimately making from the aspired equality an actual inequality which is the opposite of the inequality of talent and mandate which God himself ordained. Although it was only an insurrection by two people, it happened in the heart of the nation, the people’s representative before God, the High Priest Aaron, goaded by his sister Miriam. This insurrection prepared the way for the great defection in general in Paran and, more specifically, in Korah’s rebellion. Korah’s rebellion is only an escalation of Miriam’s insurrection. Korah’s insurrection comes from pride, and this sin is to be covered by God’s Word itself: “the whole nation is holy, so the Lord said himself” (Ex. 19:5).¹¹ Consequently, Moses has no claim or right to guide his people, Aaron has no right to carry out the sacrificial duty ... Korah is the prototype for all who are of lower standing but claim to lead others, to guide them towards God; the model for the destruction of all authority in the divine economy; the model for all egalitarian aspirations which reach out to grasp everything; the model for all those who claim and insist in incorrigible wantonness that the highest, too, is befitting both those that have not been made capable and those that have been made capable, given or achievable; the model lastly for all who argue from the Word of God against the Word of God, who try to divide God from himself.” (Vilmar)¹²

This equalization is against God’s order. It is a sign of the Antichrist, who desires to make everything equal, to mash all nations into one mass and one porridge until even God is also only

¹¹ The ESV translation of Exodus 19:6 reads: “and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

¹² A.F.C. Vilmar, *Collegium Biblicum AT Teil 1* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1881), 296, 304–305.

one tiny particle in the mass. Therefore, we can say with a good conscience; apartheid must be!

No human has the power to eradicate racial differences. And when people beget bastards by mixing racial blood, this is abhorrent to natural human sentiment. It is an innate feeling that warns us not to act against God's order of creation. Even simple, honorable natives share this feeling with us; mongrels are despicable to them. Experience also teaches us that the worst features of their disparate parents develop more strongly in bastards than the good ones so that people of inferior value develop. When Israel left Egypt, "A mixed multitude also went up with them"¹³ (Ex. 12:38). What Luther translated as rabble is literally "mixed race," that is not pure Israelites but probably many related by marriage, bastards, and servants. Without a doubt, these people were induced to seek their salvation in Israel by the Lord's signs and wonders in Egypt and joined the exodus. Israel could not reject them, for Israel was to be the salvation of all peoples. But according to Num. 11:4, precisely these people were to become Israel's snare. Israel lapsed into a sullen mood after leaving Sinai. God punished them with fire in the camp of Taberah. Israel's sullen mood made the mixed races even more sullen, and now the mixed races returned this disgruntlement with interest. "Now, the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, "Oh, that we had meat to eat!"⁵ We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. ⁶But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at." Therefore, the mixed peoples were the first to be wary of God's gifts and considered the meat pots of Egypt (and here they evidently exaggerate) to have been thousands of times better than the spiritual gift of manna. Israel allows itself to be seduced, and God's wrath becomes manifest. Mixed races are often, thus, a danger for the Kingdom of God. "Admittedly,

¹³ "viel Pöbelvolks"

the newer moral rightly forbids us to call lesser peoples a mob, but just as much the eternal moral of God's word likewise forbids us to call the mob the people." (Lange) Enough. The infection of wicked homesickness springs from the mob; it spreads over the whole community. Thus we are warned sufficiently against bastardization.

The so-called liberals surely do not desire complete bastardization either, but they are too indolent and lazy, others are too stupid, to consider this problem astutely and to see the logical consequences which inevitably arise when our children visit communal schools and universities with blacks, Indian and bastards according to the principles of the liberals. The law then stipulates that they do sport and recreation together. For the present, a deeply inborn sentiment and public opinion preserve our young generation from blood mixing. But if liberal opinion becomes upgraded to the public, legal opinion, then all the protective barriers will fall quickly, oh how terribly quickly. Then there will certainly be no stopping the bastardization and thus the self-destruction of everything good and striving for higher things. Let us think of Solomon, the wisest of all men, the liberal king who took wives from all peoples, that is from all races, against God's command. He was so liberal and so enlightened that he accompanied each of these women to serve their idols, for each of these women had their ideal, and one cannot ridicule human ideals! And what did the so liberal Solomon do with that, that he gave all races equal rights? He laid the foundation for the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel. Of course, we know that the Canaanites, Tamar and Rahab, and the Moabite Ruth became members of the people of Israel, indeed part of the tribe of promise, the tribe of Judah, although God's express command forbade it. This could also only happen when a member of another race was utterly converted to the God of Israel and accepted Him as his only God. But despite these exceptions, it remains true that taking away the distinctions between the races produces bastardization, and with that, the

dissolution and demise of the nations concerned. And this is not God's nor Christ's will.

Hitherto we have only tried to clarify the negative side of the relationship between the races amongst each other and to each other. How are we to position ourselves in a positive sense? Two words of our Lord give us clear direction here: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." The second word is: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you."

First of all, therefore, it is Jesus' will that the gospel is proclaimed to all peoples, that is, to all races, the whole gospel without any curtailments. All of them should become children of God. But in this process, the gospel does not destroy the natural gifts and racial differences but instead purifies and sanctifies them. The apostles understood their Lord in this way and did not make Greeks out of Jews or Jews out of Greeks but left each race its own characteristics. They only had to renounce the devil and his works and nature and henceforth walk in the splendor that has risen over them, and kings and nations have brought their sanctified gifts, whether material or spiritual, to the Lord. In this way, Christ is glorified through the manifold gifts and talents which he has sanctified. And this has been the endeavor of particularly Lutheran missionaries, whether in New Guinea or in Africa, not to make the peoples into English or German or Dutch Christians but simply to make them Jesus' disciples amidst their own people. They never intended to nurture the people for a particular empire and do not intend it today, but only to elevate them to good and holy members of their own people. And therefore, it is the Lutheran missionaries in particular who do not preach in a foreign tongue through translators but instil a love of their own language in each people, teaching them to respect it as a language given by the Holy Spirit. They do not despise their customs and uses but only eradicate what is impure, what is demonic. They

sanctify and bring to perfection the remnants of the primeval revelation which the peoples have preserved from paradise. In all this preservation and furtherance, consideration and emulation of “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise,” (Phil 4:8) is not ruled out but included. We missionaries also teach our fellow countrymen in South Africa to act in this way towards the various races and request time and again that the lay members of our congregations help us on this path and to these ends. Thus our approach to the race question is first and foremost to make of other races Jesus’ disciples by the word alone. We regret that the Department for Religious/Cultural Affairs and certain church denominations force us by their actions to place worldly education as the highest while the main issue, to make the peoples Jesus’ disciples through the word, has to take the last place in our educating. This may make people civilized individuals but estranges them from their own traditions.¹⁴ One may rid them of various superstitions, but the heart is left empty. Through the elevated civilization, one might rid them of old heathenism, but one gives them new heathenism, for one cannot deny that the fashionably dressed native, the one who understands only half or even less of civilization, chase after a European civilization, especially in the towns as if it was a god who can give them all salvation. They have learned to value civilization more than God or the divine service. How abhorrent to a Lutheran missionary is this confusion between an eternally good divine service and such empty idols leading to eternal damnation! If one had followed the missionaries’ principles, this would be quite different today. The first missionaries could still nurture the people for their own people according to the missionaries, own wish and conviction. Of course, this was a slow path to follow but well-grounded, for it was grounded in God’s order of creation

¹⁴ “Volkstum”

and sanctification. In those days, a missionary was respected for giving them what the world could not and did not give. Today civilization and its worshippers have managed to swindle into the hearts of our natives and other colored races their own achievements as the highest good. They have become lecherous for the treasures of this world entrapped in avarice, hatred, jealousy, rebellion, and any way to all evil. Despite all the endeavors of the Ministry of cultural affairs and the liberals, it must be the greatest objective of the Lutheran Church and Mission to peddle the Word of God and to teach the word more zealously if possible and to testify to the black peoples: civilization cannot save you and make you happy, Jesus and His Word alone can achieve this.

No Christian may water down Jesus' other Word "love one another; as I have loved you," nor treat it as being of secondary importance. No missionary, and therefore also no church who sends out a missionary, can achieve anything among other peoples without holy love. They would only incur the hatred of others. A missionary, a Christian, who talks down to other peoples, even if they are the most primitive, can be glad if they do not kill him or throw him out of the country.

What is love? Love is the complete commitment of one to another without changing either his own self or that of the other. Love is the inclusion of the other in one's own self without changing the other's self or one's own. God loves like this. He gives himself entirely and still remains the unchangeable God. He does not deify the person he accepts, leaving him a person but a sanctified person because he loves him. We should love just like this! Give entirely of ourselves, remaining a person of a particular race with God-given characteristics, accepting the other without changing his God-given characteristics, sanctifying everything and everyone by love.

The liberals consider this specific love to be unchristian. They think it is Christian to give everyone everything, even if this gift destroys themselves and the recipient people. This is not love and definitely not Christian love. Instead, it is carnal softness, in God's eyes not only of no value but abhorrent. Carnal softness is essentially self-love, aesthetically embarrassed to see others suffering, but when the one suffering has recovered, they do not concern themselves further with him, do not notice him and leave him on the side, talk of him again as a "K...". This is Monkey love. Holy love wants to improve, most of all morally and rejoices when the other, morally improved, strives towards God. Holy love refuses every request which would cause damage, particularly eternal harm. We can describe love's action more briefly: "holy love does and suffers everything for the truth, but nothing against the truth." Truth, for our considerations here, means that God has created the races; it is His will that they remain in existence as a reflection of His manifold wisdom. He revenges every violation of His will, where attempts are made to mix the races with the demise of such peoples. True love, therefore, does not act against this will. We must think of the great love of the first Brethren missionaries in the Cape lands. No insightful Christian would dare to deny the holy love of these brothers. Without great reflection on the matter, they intuitively knew that they should never give the natives their daughters as wives. Holy love made them wise (indeed, love should not be without wisdom) and gave them the knowledge that bastardization and equalization of all races are against God's order.

Since we should love each other, we honor those who deserve it and are careful in holy sincerity not to hurt the feeling of other races. Therefore, we do not call a native "K..." nor an Indian "Coolie" because we know that we injure them with such names in their deepest hearts. We revere native parents who do their duty as parents according to their customs and traditions; we respect an old man or woman, even if they are heathens and do not behave unfittingly, as

persons God has placed a crown on their head; we respect the lord of a kraal who wisely rules as is fitting; we gladly honor the heathen king as a king. It pains us greatly when the younger black generation, enlightened by civilization, are rude and disobedient to their parents, lords, and kings. In all this, we do not forget that as God's messengers, we must punish everything which is punishable according to God's will. And even then, we do not forget love which angers itself when it sees people on the wrong path. Paul speaks in anger of the Cretan's "The Cretans *are* always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." In his judgment, he refers to the Cretans' own prophet, founding his judgment on this so that the Cretans are not offended but know themselves justly punished.

"According to the Lutheran confessions, the church should not occupy itself with politics. Politics are exclusively the concern of the worldly government. So-called "Christian solutions" for the present urgent political and social questions are not the obligation of the Lutheran Church. If we were to make resolutions to solve the questions, they would not only be futile since, as churches, we have no power to implement them, it would distract our attention from the task which only we have been set, to preach the Gospel and to teach. The churches do not have the right to meddle in foreign offices or desire to prevail in things that are not our task. God's word says that Christ's Church and the believers should pray for all that are in authority (I Tim. 2:2) and seek the peace of the city (Jer. 29:7). As members of their nation, they should be faithful and serve their country diligently when they take part in elections and if they are called to take office, sincerely serving their neighbor in selfless love, whether as businessman or laborer, official or employee, each fulfilling his duty according to his status. The church should not force itself into the authorities' responsibility; it should freely and publicly proclaim what God has declared to be the foundation of his order of creation and life in his holy and inviolable law once

and for all. Above all, we should ceaselessly pray that he fills the hearts of statesmen with wisdom and godliness.” (Lutheraner?)

To summarize this briefly, we come to the following theses:

The manifold races are not the work of man but God’s creation.

It is God’s will that the races with their particular characteristics remain, are not blurred, but rather sanctified.

Mixing races, bastardization always has bad consequences; it does not build God’s Kingdom but often harms it.

If we determine legally that equality for all races means equal franchise and social conditions in our so colorfully inhabited country, the still existing disgust of bastardization will surely disappear within two or three generations.

“To make disciples” of all people according to Jesus’ command does not mean the equalization of all races but the salvation of all languages and tongues from the kingdom of the devil and establishing them in Jesus’ kingdom through Word and sacrament. The God-given or natural abilities of the various races should not be blurred but sanctified. The races should not be estranged from their tradition or mixed with other races but shown how to hallow their particular gifts and talents within their race through Christ and to offer them to Christ as a sweet sacrifice.

Since Christians strive faithfully to keep Christ’s new command to love each other as Christ has loved us, they cannot want to destroy or change the God-given characteristics of other races.

In the early years of the Mission in South Africa, it was not dangerous for Europeans and natives to live side by side. But the Western civilization introduced into the country by various events, undermining the moral improvement of the natives through God’s Word, has invoked so

many great dangers (bastardization) that a geographical separation of residential areas for the various races appears to be imperative.

Such separation or apartheid may entail hardship, to begin with, but will eventually contribute to all peace amongst the races. Indeed it will encourage each race to seek the best in their own tradition¹⁵ and to build up their own, now sadly neglected, culture, serving the glorification of God if it is done in the power of God's Word.

The introduction of such an Apartheid is not the task of the church but of the worldly government.

Whether grand apartheid according to the resolution of the Reformed Church, which desires cohesive areas to be assigned to the various races, or whether smaller, disconnected places are allocated; we church people should leave this to wise government officials gifted by God with the talents of order and government.

After all, we have stated above; we cannot be against the principle of the National Party and the government. We pray privately and publicly for all wisdom from above for the authorities and for men full of wisdom, love, and power to solve the race question.

In conclusion, we quote the Wisdom of Solomon. 16:12 "For neither herb nor poultice cured them, but it was your word, O Lord, that heals all people."

In brief, our theses for "the position of the Lutheran Church in the race question" are as follows:

As far as the race question is in the political realm, the Lutheran church, according to its confessions, should not concern itself with the issue.

The church's task is to make all peoples Jesus' disciples by preaching the gospel and

¹⁵ "Volkstum"

administering the sacraments.

“Making disciples” does not mean the introduction to a particular civilization, but an introduction to the kingdom of God, sanctifying the personalities and their gifts and talents.

The church must serve all races in love, in that love which does everything for the truth and nothing against the truth revealed in God’s Word.

APPENDIX EIGHT

South African Council of Churches (SACC) - Hammanskraal Resolution, 1974

Resolution:¹⁶

The National Conference of the South African Council of Churches acknowledges as the one and only God, Him who mightily delivered the people of Israel from their bondage in Egypt and who in Jesus Christ still proclaims that He will “set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18) He alone is supreme Lord and Savior and to Him alone we owe ultimate obedience. Therefore “we must obey God rather than men” in those areas where the government fails to fulfill its calling to be “God’s servant for good” rather than evil and for oppression (Acts 5:29; Romans 13:4).

In the light of this the Conference declares:

1. that Christians are called to fight for justice and true peace, which can only be founded on justice.
2. that it does not accept the opinion, which suggests that it is automatically the duty of those who follow Christ, the Prince of Peace, to participate in violence and war, or to prepare to engage in violence or war, whenever the state demands it.
3. that it reminds its member Churches that both Catholic and Reformation theology has regarded the taking up of arms as justifiable, if at all, only in order to fight a “just war.”
4. that the theological definition of a “just war” excludes a war in defense of a fundamentally unjust and discriminatory system.

¹⁶ Hopf made a copy of this resolution available to the meeting of the district presidents in 1974. This documentation is available in the archive of the Bleckmar Mission. The German was made available by the Evangelischer Presse Dienst and was printed in “Die Hammanskraaler Erklärung, 1974,” *Junge Kirche* no. 8/9 (1974), 497–8. The translation is mine.

5. that in the Republic of South Africa currently a fundamentally unjust and discriminatory order of society exists and that this injustice and discrimination constitutes the primary, institutionalized violence which has provoked the counter-violence of the terrorists or freedom fighters.

6. that the military forces of our country are being prepared to defend this unjust and discriminatory societal order and that the threat of military force is in fact already being used to defend the status quo against moves for radical change from outside the white electorate.

7. that it is hypocritical to deplore the violence of terrorists or freedom fighters while we ourselves prepare to defend our society with its institutionalized violence by means of yet more violence.

8. that the injustice and oppression under which the black peoples of South Africa labor is far worse than that against which Afrikaners waged their First and Second Wars of Independence. If we have justified the Afrikaners' resort to violence (or the violence of the imperialism of the English) or claimed that God was on their side, it is hypocritical to deny that the same applies to the black people in their struggle today.

9. that it questions the basis upon which chaplains are seconded to the military forces lest their presence indicate moral support for the defense of our unjust and discriminatory society.

The Conference, therefore, concludes:

1. It deplores the violence as a means to solve problems.
2. It calls on its member Churches to challenge all their members to consider in view of the above whether Christ's call to take up the cross and follow Him in identifying with the oppressed does not, in our situation, involve becoming conscientious objectors.
3. It calls on those of its member Churches who have chaplains in the military forces to

reconsider the basis on which they are appointed and to investigate the state of pastoral care available to the communicants at present in exile or under arms beyond our borders and to seek ways and means of ensuring that such pastoral care may be properly exercised.

4. It commends the courage and witness of those who have been willing to go to jail in protest against unjust laws and policies in our land and who challenge all of us by their example.

5. It requests the SACC's task force on Violence and Non-violence to study methods of non-violence action for change which can be recommended to its member Churches.

6. It prays for the government and people of our land and urgently calls on them to make rapid strides towards radical and peaceful change in our society so that the violence and war to which our social, economic, and political policies are leading us may be avoided.

APPENDIX NINE

Statement of the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa to the Hammanskraal Resolution

In the name of and tasked by the Free Evangelical-Lutheran Synod in South Africa, the Synodical Council responds to the “Declaration of the South African Council of Churches” with the following answer:¹

1. According to the Lutheran Confessions, the church is the “congregation of saints (believers) in which the Gospel is purely taught, and the Sacraments are correctly administered.” (Augsburg Confessions VII).

In the proclamation of the word and the administration of the sacraments, the church has its foundational existence and its recognizable signs.

Through the proclamation of law and gospel, the church mediates the **freedom from sin** because “everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin” (John 8:34). “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36)

In the faith of believing in the message with which Jesus Christ entrusted his church, the Christians receive the **freedom from the rule of death** because our Savior has “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:10).

Through its message, the church helps the believer attain **freedom from the devil** and resist him (1 Peter 5:8–11).

This spiritual freedom is not to be mistaken for political freedom. The latter is not part of the task of the church as such. Therefore, the apostle Paul speaks as a servant of the church: “For

¹ “Stellungnahme der Freien Ev.Luther. Synode in Südafrika,” published “Dokumentation,” *Bekennende Lutherische Kirche* 2, no. 3/4 (March and April, 1975): 26–28. Translated by Christoph Weber

I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthian 2:2).

“For the Gospel teaches an eternal righteousness of the heart. At the same time, it does not require the destruction of the civil state or the family. The gospel very much requires that they be preserved as God’s ordinances and that love be practiced in such ordinances.” (Augsburg Confession XVI)

2. According to the witness of Holy Scripture, we recognize in the government a good order of God. “For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Romans 13:1).

The secular government allows human existence within the world that is threatened by sin and selfishness. It is “an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer” (Romans 13:4).

The secular government also allows the church to fulfill its service and proclaim the gospel to the world; where anarchy and chaos reign, the church cannot complete its work in silence and order.

Therefore, the church teaches its members to show the government the necessary obedience: “Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment” (Romans 13:2).

We also recognize in our present south African Government God’s Ordinance and Order.

We are grateful that it is possible today for the church of Jesus Christ in our land to carry out its given task unobstructed.

3. We serve up petitions as church for our government, “that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Timothy 2:2).

We are also convinced that through the church’s work in the proclamation of God’s word, the consciousness of the listeners will be sharpened, and right political decisions will be made

possible.

The church knows of the preliminary character of this secular time (Weltzeit) before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is her duty to contribute to the salvation of many from this world.

Even though the church knows that this world is moving toward its end, the church admonishes its members to also take up their political duties within the orders to take part in public life and seek the city's welfare (Jeremiah 29:7).

As the order of this world is constantly threatened by sin, the evil powers of disorder and discord, these powers of destruction must be countered with force. The church, therefore, endorses the service of police and the military. She teaches her members to view the service of police and the army as an obligation of love for one's neighbor and love for one's enemy.

4. We, therefore, turn against the fact that in the declaration of the "South African Council of Churches," the power (violence) of the terrorists is placed on the same level with the power (the original here is "Gewalt" can be translated with "violence," "force" and "power") of our "Ordnungsmächte" (Government-powers to ensure order). The unlawful power (violence) of the terrorists wants to destroy the divinely ordered structures in which we live and work, in which the very "South African Council of Churches" can hold its conferences.

We further turn against the fact that our state is described as "a fundamentally unjust and discriminatory society."

We are missing the love and understanding in this judgment call against the honest attempt of those responsible in our country to create a righteous order and the lack of willingness to credit this attempt.

We are missing the sober realization that no one will be able to create a completely just

society in this passing world.

We are missing the grateful recognition that our state-order still protects law and order and secures peace.

We are missing the biblical knowledge that “no authority except from God” (Romans 13:1) exists.

We regret the encouragement of conscientious objection. This is founded on the false presupposition that our state is an unlawful state. We recognize, on the other hand, in our state an order of God. Therefore, it is not correct for this order of God to be threatened by a general conscientious objection.

Because through the existing order, the existence of the collective and the individual is made possible, the Christian may not refuse to participate in sustaining this order.

Because the service in police and military also stands in the service of love, it is not a sign of a higher Christian value or virtue when someone withdraws from this service.

5. We regret with the “Declaration of the South African Council of Churches”; that the churches represented there were not able to distinguish between the spiritual and secular reign of God.

When Churches interfere in the ministry of the secular government, they are leaving their actual task behind, and they are not conforming or fulfilling their self-chosen task adequately.

May all churches refocus on their actual duty and task, namely, to proclaim Christ, because:

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

The Synodical Council of the Free Evangelical-Lutheran Synod in South Africa.

(Signed) G. Scharlach President

APPENDIX TEN

“Ansbacher Ratschlag” - “Ansbacher Advice”

Accompanying letter:¹ “Honorable Sirs and brothers in the ministry! We deliver the following sentences in the conviction that it is finally necessary to make heard the genuine Lutheran voice in the theological and church discussions. Whoever, therefore, can agree with this Ansbacher Advice of 1934 is asked to send his notice to the secretary of our circuit, Pastor Werlin in Kleinhaslach via Ansbach. We direct these sentences firstly to our brothers in the ministry in the National-socialist Evangelical Pastors association, but then also to all brothers in the ministry in our church so that from the start, the baseline of our Ansbacher circuit is clearly stated. With brotherly respect and hail Hitler!”

The “Ansbacher Advice”: “The tensions within the German Evangelical Church that have arisen since its formation in 1933 demand all its members to contemplate the foundation and the scope of their own church affiliation. Especially all the bearers of the public ministry are obliged by their office to answer the questioning members of the church and those who have been led astray and help them. Therefore, we align ourselves in faith to the promise of our Lord to all, who gather in his name, to commit to common theological work. Thereby we discern the basics (foundation) and the task of our work as follows:

A. The basics (Foundation)

1. The Church of Jesus Christ as the workplace of the Holy Spirit is bound to God’s Word.

¹ Kurt Dieter Schmidt, *Die Bekenntnisse und grundsätzlichen Äußerungen zur Kirchenfrage. 2: Das Jahr 1934* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1935), 102–04; Also Gerhard Niemöller, *Die erste Bekenntnissynode der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche zu Barmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 142–44. Translated by Christoph Weber.

Therefore, her members are obliged to be obedient to the Word of God. In the confessions of our evangelical Lutheran church, we recognize the pure exposition of the contents of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, the members of the church are also bound to remain loyal to them. We agree with Wilhelm Löhe's Understanding of the Reformation: "She is completed in the doctrine, she is uncompleted in the consequences of the doctrine."² Just as well as we agree with the word of the Erlanger theologian Gottfried Thomasius: "I recognize myself in the house of my church not as servant, but as child and find in this standing both, the being bound to piety and child-liberty."

2. The word of God speaks to us in Law and Gospel. The church proclamation must orient itself accordingly. The gospel is the message of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us sinners and who was resurrected for our righteousness.

3. The law, 'the unchangeable will of God' (FC, Epit. VI,6), meets us in the complete reality of our lives, as it³ is brought into the light through the revelation of God. It⁴ binds everyone to the estate (standing-order), into which God has called him, and it binds us to the natural orders, under which we have been subjected, as family, people⁵ race (that means Blood-coherence⁶). And we are allocated to a particular family, a specific people, and a certain race. In that God's will furthermore always strikes us in our today and our location, he binds us also to the particular historical moments of the family, people, race, that means to a particular moment in their history.

² Wilhelm Löhe, "Drei Bücher von der Kirche," in *Wilhelm Löhe Gesammelte Werke*, Band 5, ed. Klaus Ganzert (Neuendettelsau: Freimund, 1954), 160.

³ "Gesamtwirklichkeit unseres Lebens"—the complete reality of our life.

⁴ The law of God.

⁵ Volk—nation or people. Very important term for Elert.

⁶ Blutzusammenhang—could also just be blood—relation, connection.

4. The natural orders do not only give us the demanding will of God. Through their interconnectedness, they form the foundation of our complete natural existence; they are at the same time means through which God creates and sustains our earthly lives. In faith in Jesus Christ, whoever becomes sure of the grace of the father experiences in these the 'pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy.' As Christians, we honor with thanksgiving to God every order, therefore also every government, even in the distortion, as a divine tool of sustaining. Still, we differentiate also as Christians good and strange lords, healthy and perverted orders.

5. In this knowledge, we thank God the Lord as believing Christians, that he has gifted our people in its need the leader as 'pious and faithful overlord' and wants to prepare for us in the national-socialist order of government, a government with "discipline and honor." We acknowledge, therefore, our responsibility before God to support the work of the leader in our Vocation and Estate.

B. The Task

6. The church has got a threefold relationship to the natural orders. Firstly, she must proclaim the law of God. In this sense, her task is the same throughout all the ages. That means an explanation of the order in its sovereignty and reminding about its task. Secondly, the members of the church are themselves subordinate to the orders. In that, they are always allocated as it were to a particular people in a specific moment of time. The concrete content of its obligation to its own people is its present national state government. In this sense, the members' relationship to the natural order is contingent on the historical change. What remains unchanged is only the obligation as such. Thirdly the church carries specific characteristics of orders that are attached to the particular natural order. It follows, for example, a specific language; in this sense, the order is also contingent on historical change.

7. Because of the change in the relationship to the natural orders in the third sense, the church is continually tasked to test its own orders. The absolute valid criterion for this test is the task that she has received from her Lord. It encompasses the carrying out and the content of her proclamation on the administration of the sacraments and the office of the keys through the orderly office of the ministry. All other characteristics of her historical manifestation, especially its constitution and worship, are to be measured by this criterion. In this sense, the task of the reformation of the church is a new one at each moment.

8. Our theological work and our church deployment should also serve the fulfillment of this task in the church of our days.

APPENDIX ELEVEN

The nine questions from the LCSA to the LKM and the response by Markus Nietzsche

Nine Questions from the LCSA to the Lutherische Kirchenmission⁷

Most honoured Members of the Church Council, Most honoured Bishop,

For a number of years the “9 Questions” that you have tabled 2003 have been on our Agenda. It is therefore time to come forward with a statement by the leader of the Lutherische Kirchenmission-Bleckmar Mission-e.V. Est. 1892 finally.

Before I attempt to answer each question individually, allow me please to share introductory words with you. There are as it seems several and different approaches to dealing with the past. History is not letting us off to give answers on the issues raised. For many outsiders it might seem possible to relegate these issues to the (irrelevant) past. I realise that this is not possible. It becomes especially emotional and personal when our approach to this history or our past is evaluated with a different perceived prejudice perspective. In my capacity as CEO of the Lutherische Kirchenmission (LKM) I want to answer the tabled questions and give perspective on the raised issues, just as previous Missiondirectors in our society have given their perspective to these issues trying to influence the policy of the Mission organisation.

I find it helpful to use the following categories to differentiate between memory (Gedächtnis), pride (Stolz), conscience (Gewissen) and prejudice (Vorurteil). Our Mission society serving over hundred years in Africa has all of that: memories, pride, conscience and prejudice. Our Missionaries usually are on the one hand very humble and on the other hand quite proud about their work in Africa. That makes the answering of your questions ambiguous.

⁷ Antwort des Missionsdirektors auf die 9 Fragen der LCSA an die LKM zur Mission in der Zeit der Apartheid (2009) accessed August 15, 2021, <https://www.mission-bleckmar.de/downloads/>. I have here excluded the German translation which is included in the original.

Let me illustrate this: Our Memory reminds us of the things we have done, words we have used, actions we have taken. But our pride is more selective in its memories, refusing to accept that we have done certain things, becoming guilty by the choice of our words and deeds. As we know, our conscience needs sensitising and sharpening and that happens as we know, through God's Law and the voice of people around us. The memories of others of history aids weight to our conscience. But our prejudice disqualifies and denies this judgement of others. If we are not careful to protect and nurture our memories and conscience our pride and prejudice will deprive us of the truth of our past.

Our universal desire for recognition is sometimes lead astray by fear of embarrassment, fear of losing credibility, fear, to be considered as bad. Our Mission-society recognizes these aspects as relevant in the discussion of these issues. We as Mission-Board decided 2003 not to answer these questions just internally as a Board but rather to invite all missionaries and former leadership (including former Missiondirectors) to discuss these questions. We used the expertise of a professional mediator who has experience in dealing with similar topics concerning the German history after World War II. In Germany this happened 2005, in South Africa 2006. I want to be very honest with you: Not all Missionaries and former leadership accepted the invitation to contribute.

I interpret their decision as fear to deal with the past. Others contributed in various ways. The memories of the past vary. Some have acted with Pride. Some have said: We have seen your tears in the time of the oppression and we have not wiped them off. We are sorry. For all our missionaries their pastoral care and ministry was the appropriate and mandated response to all people involved during the whole period of our missional ministry in South Africa. This indicates how different the answers to the "Nine Questions" can be.

Especially through the process of TRC in South Africa many atrocities have been made known and have shocked all. And to be honest, I believe that the true extent of the oppression has become clearer in hindsight, even for little and smallest actions taken, causing guilt and shameful behaviour. Therefore I would like to take the opportunity to express our sincere apology for any guilt caused (if then caused by any missionary of our society).

When I look at our Mission and part of its history in South Africa, especially during the time of oppression there can't be any other word than: Please, forgive. We sometimes have seen tears and have not wiped them away. We apologize. We have been silent, where we could have and should have raised our voices. Now we do not want to remain silent again. We sometimes were ignorant of the situation that people that we served with God's Word and Sacrament have suffered and we could not and have not given comfort to them. I ask you to forgive us our negligence. Especially I ask you to forgive us our prejudice and pride leading to distrust our brothers and sisters in Christ as being able to take responsibility and ownership of relevant issues of the church. I believe that we as a Organisation have at times made terrible mistakes during different periods of time in doing mission work in South Africa. I regret that and apologize for those that even today treat these issues with indifference or judge these issues differently.

Let us now turn towards the questions and answers:

(1) When the apartheid regime dominated the political arena in South Africa, what was the position of the Bleckmar Mission and the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa?

We would like to really differentiate our answer: What period of time is considered: Starting 1899? 1910? 1948? Ending when? 1989? Apartheid had many faces and has changed often. Some Missionaries were in favour of it, —just like some of their flock!—, some were against it, but without going into direct confrontation with the government and its structures. It

seems now as if the topic was discussed among Missionsupporters much more often in Germany than in South Africa. In Germany, the Bleckmar Mission was participating in discussions on the topic in ecumenical structures (EMW). Reasons for not dealing with it in public either in Germany or in South Africa could have been the very small size of the Bleckmar Mission and the LCSA; the understood difference —since 1967— between “Mission” and “LCSA”, meaning that the Mission understood it in this way, that it was left to the LCSA to act independently; also because of very different opinions within the Mission and among the Leadership in that time, the “Missionsgemeinde” (Donors) and also among Missionaries. This can be illustrated as follows: 1910 the “Missionsblatt” brought the Manifest of the ANC to the attention of its readers. 1978 Discussion amongst the Missionaries in South Africa arose, since there were Articles on Apartheid etc. published by CEO F.W. Hopf, condemning Apartheid and its structures, which caused Missionaries to dismiss the Arguments brought forward and resist a further discussion about that. From today’s view that is seen as a mistake and regretted.

Missionaries also always knew that they could have been sent back to Germany very instantly, should they have spoken out loud on the political topics. They preferred to do their Missionwork and pastoral care and stay out of politics. Some Missionaries have given statements, referring to LCSA-Leaders of those days, requesting the Missionaries to stop talking and proceed with their spiritual work. Especially in the 1980ies Congregations in Berlin, the Youth Ministry Board of the SELK and an number of individuals of the SELK questioned in published letters and requests towards the Church-Leadership of both Churches in South Africa, the Church Council of SELK and the Mission Board in Germany (e.g. 8.9.1986 a letter by Bishop Schöne of SELK towards Mission Director Junker and the Mission Board) to come forward and deliver a clarification on the topic of Apartheid and especially Racism and

demanded that there should be a declaration by the Officials to declare Apartheid and racism along with that as sin. The Mission Board, after discussion, answered with a letter on December 4, 1986. Some of the given Material was published 1987: “Racism, no matter when and where is practised without any doubt is Sin.” On Apartheid it was declared: “Apartheid is not in every case identical with Racism. ... Whenever though Apartheid is used by Government officials and others, white or black Inhabitants with racist motifs, then Apartheid is sin.”

Also, the Mission Board published the Declaration by the Australian Lutheran Church on Apartheid (and its condemnation) for the Annual Meeting of 25.3.1987. A number of Publications like “Epiphaniashandreichungen” (1988) and the “Missionsblatt” have dealt with the topic of Apartheid from different angels.

(2) How did the Bleckmar Mission or its successor, the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa react to the introduction of Bantu Education?

In short: Not at all. In those days the Bleckmar Mission did not operate schools. Farmschools were started later on, to forward the Education in the mother tongue, but not as a reaction to or against the “Bantu Education” laws.

(3) Why was the Bleckmar Mission and its successor willing to hand over schools and hospitals into the control of the apartheid when other churches refused?

Neglecting the accusing sound underscoring this question there are two pragmatic answers: There was no money at hand to continue with some schools, and secondly the scholars themselves wanted to learn English instead of being taught in their own language, which the Missionaries or helpers were willing to provide. This can be proved by documentation in our archives and journals at several instances. Please refer in this view also the establishing of THEMBA. Concerning Hospitals, the same reason (no money) is given for handing them over to

the government.

(4) Why did the Bleckmar Mission and its successor remain silent when the brutal System which caused some of its members to flee the country, leaving families and dependants behind, some dying in the hands of the oppressor, and many more of the Black population were detained in solitary confinement?

In our Hearings some Missionaries said: “We were terrified and afraid”. Other Missionaries declined to answer this question until the LCSA shows its own involvement in this question. Some other Missionaries feel that there is a lack of proof on the side of the LCSA that it reacted any different than stated about the Mission.

(5) Why did the Bleckmar Mission and its successor the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa choose to cooperate with the government of the oppressors to dispossess the Black majority of their land rights as well as land / property-ownership?

In most of the cases nothing could be done to change the situation. Missionaries tried to comfort those that were resettled, and also saw the oppression. But there cannot be any talk on “Cooperation”. The closest would be to consider it whitewashed.

(6) What was the reason behind the Bleckmar Mission’s and its successor the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa’s support of the homeland System, a System that further legitimized the divide and rule policy of the oppressors?

The Bleckmar Mission did not support the establishing of Homelands. They lived with the fact, that they were there, their flock moved there and had to take care of that.

(7) When some churches in South Africa came together to formulate a Document that condemned apartheid, (the Kairos Document), the leadership of the Bleckmar Mission or its successor the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa showed no desire to either debate or discuss

publicly the possibility of signing this document with other churches thereby pledging solidarity with the suffering masses. What was behind this behaviour?

This understanding is wrong. The Kairos-Document was printed in a German version in several theological Journals and debated. LKM participated by printing and distributing it. 1986 the KAIROS-Document was officially published by the Evangelisches Missionswerk (EMW), together with an answer by the Leadership of EMW. The Bleckmar Mission was part of EMW (and still is) and has had a chance to participate there as well. It was used, though without real effect, as it seems today.

(8) Why after a formally constituted Synodical Convention of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa held in Ventersdorp on the 20th – 22nd October 1989 in which a resolution was adopted to condemn racism and pronounce apartheid as a sin, the leadership of the Bleckmar Mission and the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa refused to publicly condemn the apartheid atrocities? The leadership refused to send the resolution to the relevant state department nor even to ensure that it was publicly released for use within the congregations (see Art. 7 Resolution about Racism, 20th – 22nd October, 1989).

This “Resolution” was tabled in our Hearings. The need to publicise anything was considered at that time as not necessary and to late anyway. One could have opted differently, but chose not to do so.

(9) Lastly the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided an opportunity for all those who directly or indirectly, willingly or unwillingly colluded with or allowed the state to dictate to them into silence, to come forward and state their position and apologize, why did the leadership of the Bleckmar Mission or its successor the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa opt to maintain a deafening silence?

The Leadership of the Mission of that time took note of the fact, but not as an Impulse for its own dealing with the topic. The question arose in our Hearings with our Missionaries, why the Leadership of the LCSA did not give an Impulse to come forward itself and give a testimony. Statements given by the Bleckmar Mission in Germany dated 1986, 1992 and 1995 give account on the opinion at that time. Even though that Missionaries were also members of the Church Council of those days, their view on Leadership in the Church varied.

The majority of Missionaries felt that further research seems necessary and that also the leadership of the LCSA should provide their answers. It is also felt strongly that any “real” given leadership by the Mission ended 1967 with the independence of the LCSA from its mother, the Lutherische Kirchenmission -Bleckmar Mission.

I am personally quite sorry that this letter took so long, as it may seem as if I deny the leadership of the LCSA of today recognition of allowing them to justly raise these questions. But this would be a wrong estimation. It took me time as well, because I am someone who grew up in South Africa during that time, loving our Mission and loving the people of the LCSA I met in my childhood (and today). It also took me time to realise, recognize and understand, that not dealing with these issues is a denial of love and recognition towards you as well.

I would like to close with a suggestion by our Church-Historian, Prof. Dr. Werner Klän: He recommends that this topic is touched at the level of seminary education at the LTS in Tshwane and dealt with there, for continued research. My letter may be just a first start in that.

With fraternal and heartily greetings.

Markus Nietzke, P. Missionsdirektor / CEO

APPENDIX TWELVE

The Social Construction of Reality

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann presented a theory of the knowledge of social reality in the late 1960s in their book *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the sociology of knowledge*.⁸ Their premise was that this reality was socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge analyzed this process.⁹ In their conclusion, they wrote:

More generally, we would contend that the analysis of the role of knowledge in the dialectic of individual and society, of personal identity and social structure, provides a crucial complementary perspective for all areas of sociology. This is certainly not to deny that purely structural analyses of social phenomena are fully adequate for wide areas of sociological inquiry, ranging from the study of small groups to that of large institutional complexes, such as the economy or politics. Nothing is further from our intention than the suggestion that a sociology-of-knowledge “angle” ought somehow to be injected into all such analyses. In many cases this would be unnecessary for the cognitive goal at which these studies aim. We are suggesting, however, that the integration of the findings of such analyses into the body of sociological theory requires more than the casual obeisance that might be paid to the “human factor” behind the uncovered structural data. Such integration requires a systematic accounting of the dialectical relation between the structural realities and the human enterprise of constructing reality—in history.¹⁰

Their description of the knowledge of everyday life made sense and allowed a “complementary perspective” when reviewing the attempts of the three theologians to explain the contemporary issues they were dealing with.¹¹ This chapter will present the basic ideas of Berger and Luckmann and can be viewed as a summary of their book. The chapter will also look at the *Sacred Canopy* of Peter Berger and refer to the appendix “Sociological and Theological

⁸ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor, 1967). Peter Berger applied this theory to religion in his book *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor, 1969).

⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 1.

¹⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 186.

¹¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 186.

Perspectives.”¹² The two volumes by Jean and John Comaroff investigating the “colonization of consciousness and the consciousness of colonization in South Africa” can be viewed as a case study of the social construction of reality.¹³ On a much more humble and less significant scale the three theologians discussed in this dissertation can be shown to have argued from a certain position or plausibility structure. Meister legitimizing the symbolic universe of apartheid. Sasse as a critical intellectual not being accepted by the mainstream community. Hopf engaging both in therapy and nihilation with his employees.

The Foundations of Knowledge of Everyday Life

1. The Reality of Everyday Life

Berger and Luckmann analyzed the “knowledge that guides conduct in everyday life.”¹⁴ They did not attempt to solve the epistemological problems that confronted the philosopher or did not delve too deeply into the theory of methodology but rather accepted reality perceived as common sense in society. This was the reality experienced by individuals in society and taken for granted by them. Sociologists were not interested in evaluating this reality prescriptively but instead attempted to describe it phenomenologically.¹⁵ This knowledge varied and was relative to the society in which it existed.¹⁶ “Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world.”¹⁷

But even the unproblematic sector of everyday reality is so only until further notice, that is, until its continuity is interrupted by the appearance of a problem. When this

¹² Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 179–85.

¹³ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991 and 1997). Comaroff, *Revelation and Revolution Vol 1*, xi.

¹⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 19.

¹⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 20.

¹⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 3.

¹⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 19.

happens, the reality of everyday life seeks to integrate the problematic sector into what is already unproblematic.¹⁸

The knowledge of this reality did not focus primarily on ideas and worldviews.

“Theoretical thought, “ideas” and *Weltanschauungen* are not *that* important in society. Although every society contains these phenomena, they are only part of the sum of what passes for “knowledge.” Only a very limited group of people in any society engages in theorizing, in the business of “ideas” and the construction of *Weltanschauungen*.¹⁹

This is an essential aspect of this dissertation. There was a great deal of pretheoretical knowledge that influenced reality before the theologians even started reflecting on contemporary issues.

A significant reason for the social construction of reality was the “world openness” of humanity.²⁰ In contrast to the world of animals which was “closed” and ruled by instinct, humans needed to construct their world and created meaning. The social order that was created led to a closing of this world, inhibiting change.²¹

The social construction of reality could be described simply as a process of externalization, objectivization, and lastly as internalization. These were not consecutive or in chronological order but rather represented an ongoing dynamic dialectical process.²² The social orders were not derived from “laws of nature” but were instead products of human activity.²³

2. Social Interaction in Everyday Life

This human activity took place in social interaction. “The most important experience of

¹⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 24.

¹⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 15.

²⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 47.

²¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 51.

²² Berger, *Social Construction*, 61 and 128. Berger and Luckmann warn against “mere rhetoric about dialectics, such as commonly engaged in by doctrinaire Marxists” as “obscurantism.” 187.

²³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 52.

others takes place in the face-to-face situation, which is the prototypical case of social interaction. All other cases are derivatives of it.”²⁴ The immediate interaction between two people facing each other made it difficult to generalize or uphold opinions that the other person could negate by his quick response. In contrast, it was much easier to generalize and sustain stereotypes of people that one did not meet face to face.²⁵ Berger and Luckmann described this as “typification,” which took place on a “continuum” from my “inner circle” to “highly anonymous abstractions.”²⁶ “Social structure is the sum total of these typifications and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by means of them. As such, social structure is an essential element of the reality of everyday life.”²⁷

3. Language and Knowledge in Everyday Life

Apart from these typifications mentioned above, humans were constantly involved in objectivation. With this, Berger and Luckmann described the human ability to create objects that were available not only to themselves but also to others that retained meaning beyond the immediate face-to-face interaction.²⁸ Berger and Luckmann spoke of signification and the use of language as a primary form of this objectivation.²⁹ “As a sign system, language has the quality of objectivity. I encounter language as a facticity external to myself and it is coercive in its effect on me.”³⁰ “Because of its capacity to transcend the “here and now,” language bridges different

²⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 28.

²⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 30.

²⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 31 and 33.

²⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 33.

²⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 34.

²⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 35.

³⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 38.

zones within the reality of everyday life and integrates them into a meaningful whole.”³¹ ”Put simply, through language an entire world can be actualized at any moment.”³² It was even possible to create a world, that was not directly reflective of the “real world.”

Any significative theme that thus spans spheres of reality may be defined as a symbol, and the linguistic mode by which such transcendence is achieved may be called symbolic language. On the level of symbolism, then, linguistic signification attains the maximum detachment from the “here and now” of everyday life, and language soars into regions that are not only de facto but a priori unavailable to everyday experience. Language now constructs immense edifices of symbolic representations that appear to tower over the reality of everyday life like gigantic presences from another world.³³

Language is capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of “bringing back” these symbols and appresenting them as objectively real elements in everyday life. In this manner, symbolism and symbolic language become essential constituents of the reality of everyday life and of the commonsense apprehension of this reality. I live in a world of signs and symbols every day.³⁴

”Language builds up semantic fields or zones of meaning that are linguistically circumscribed. Vocabulary, grammar and syntax are geared to the organization of these semantic fields.”³⁵

Thus language builds up classification schemes to differentiate objects by “gender” (a quite different matter from sex, of course) or by number; forms to make statements of action as against statements of being; modes of indicating degrees of social intimacy, and so on.³⁶

Within the semantic fields thus built up it is possible for both biographical and historical experience to be objectified, retained and accumulated. The accumulation,

³¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 39.

³² Berger, *Social Construction*, 39.

³³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 40.

³⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 40.

³⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 41.

³⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 41.

of course, is selective, with the semantic fields determining what will be retained and what “forgotten” of the total experience of both the individual and the society.³⁷

By virtue of this accumulation a social stock of knowledge is constituted, which is transmitted from generation to generation, and which is available to the individual in everyday life. I live in the commonsense world of everyday life equipped with specific bodies of knowledge. What is more, I know that others share at least part of this knowledge, and they know that I know this. My interaction with others in everyday life is, therefore, constantly affected by our common participation in the available social stock of knowledge.³⁸

The social stock of knowledge includes knowledge of my situation and its limits. For instance, I know that I am poor and that, therefore, I cannot expect to live in a fashionable suburb. This knowledge is, of course, shared both by those who are poor themselves and those who are in a more privileged situation. Participation in the social stock of knowledge thus permits the “location” of individuals in society and the “handling” of them in the appropriate manner. This is not possible for one who does not participate in this knowledge, such as a foreigner, who may not recognize me as poor at all, perhaps because the criteria of poverty are quite different in his society—how can I be poor, when I wear shoes and do not seem to be hungry?³⁹

Berger and Luckmann pointed to the fact that man did not use the complete stock of knowledge all the time, but rather only that part deemed necessary. They called this “recipe knowledge.”⁴⁰ This recipe ensured that one could complete routine actions and conceptualized the “workings of human relationships.”⁴¹ “Typically, I have little interest in going beyond this pragmatically necessary knowledge as long as the problems can indeed be mastered thereby.”⁴² “The validity of my knowledge of everyday life is taken for granted by myself and by others until further notice, that is, until a problem arises that cannot be solved in terms of it. As long as my knowledge works satisfactorily, I am generally ready to suspend doubts about it.”⁴³

³⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 41.

³⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 41.

³⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 41–2.

⁴⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 42.

⁴¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 42.

⁴² Berger, *Social Construction*, 43.

⁴³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 44.

The following example by Berger and Luckmann clarified that the individual lived in various “worlds” simultaneously and understood these from multiple perspectives.

For instance, as a businessman I know that it pays to be inconsiderate of others. I may laugh at a joke in which this maxim leads to failure, I may be moved by an actor or a preacher extolling the virtues of consideration, and I may concede in a philosophical mood that all social relations should be governed by the Golden Rule. Having laughed, having been moved and having philosophized, I return to the “serious” world of business, once more recognize the logic of its maxims, and act accordingly. Only when my maxims fail “to deliver the goods” in the world to which they are intended to apply are they likely to become problematic to me “in earnest.”⁴⁴

“My knowledge of everyday life is structured in terms of relevances. Some of these are determined by immediate pragmatic interests of mine, others by my general situation in society.”⁴⁵ “The basic relevance structures referring to everyday life are presented to me ready-made by the social stock of knowledge itself.”⁴⁶ Therefore Berger and Luckmann could say that: “I encounter knowledge in everyday life as socially distributed, that is, as possessed differently by different individuals and types of individuals.”⁴⁷

Knowledge of how the socially available stock of knowledge is distributed, at least in outline, is an important element of that same stock of knowledge. In everyday life I know, at least roughly, what I can hide from whom, whom I can turn to for information on what I do not know, and generally which types of individuals may be expected to have which types of knowledge.⁴⁸

Society as Objective Reality

1. Institutionalization

Despite the obvious physiological limits to the range of possible and different ways of becoming man in this double environmental interrelationship the human organism manifests an immense plasticity in its response to the environmental forces at work on it. This is particularly clear when one observes the flexibility of man’s biological

⁴⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 44.

⁴⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 45.

⁴⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 45.

⁴⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 46.

⁴⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 46.

constitution as it is subjected to a variety of socio-cultural determinations. It is an ethnological commonplace that the ways of becoming and being human are as numerous as man's cultures.⁴⁹

“While it is possible to say that man has a nature, it is more significant to say that man constructs his own nature, or more simply, that man produces himself.”⁵⁰ “The genetic presuppositions for the self are, of course, given at birth. But the self, as it is experienced later as a subjectively and objectively recognizable identity, is not.”⁵¹ Man needed society to create and sustain the stability that man needed to live.⁵²

That is, world-openness, while intrinsic to man's biological make-up, is always pre-empted by social order. One may say that the biologically intrinsic world-openness of human existence is always, and indeed must be, transformed by social order into a relative world-closedness. While this reclosure can never approximate the closedness of animal existence, if only because of its humanly produced and thus “artificial” character, it is nevertheless capable, most of the time, of providing direction and stability for the greater part of human conduct.⁵³

Through a process of externalization that Berger and Luckmann described as an “anthropological necessity,” social order was created.⁵⁴ They described this process with a theory of “institutionalization,” “habitualization,” and “objectivation.”⁵⁵ “Habitualization provides the direction and the specialization of activity that is lacking in man's biological equipment.”⁵⁶ “Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors.”⁵⁷ “Institutions further imply historicity and control. Reciprocal typifications of

⁴⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 48–9.

⁵⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 49.

⁵¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 50.

⁵² Berger, *Social Construction*, 51.

⁵³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 51–2.

⁵⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 52.

⁵⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 52–3, 60.

⁵⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 53.

⁵⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 54.

actions are built up in the course of a shared history.”⁵⁸

Institutions also, by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible. It is important to stress that this controlling character is inherent in institutionalization as such, prior to or apart from any mechanisms of sanctions specifically set up to support an institution.⁵⁹

The institutions, as historical and objective facticities, confront the individual as undeniable facts. The institutions are there, external to him, persistent in their reality, whether he likes it or not. He cannot wish them away. They resist his attempts to change or evade them. They have coercive power over him, both in themselves, by the sheer force of their facticity, and through the control mechanisms that are usually attached to the most important of them. The objective reality of institutions is not diminished if the individual does not understand their purpose or their mode of operation. He may experience large sectors of the social world as incomprehensible, perhaps oppressive in their opaqueness, but real nonetheless. Since institutions exist as external reality, the individual cannot understand them by introspection.⁶⁰

The institutional world is objectivated human activity, and so is every single institution. In other words, despite the objectivity that marks the social world in human experience, it does not thereby acquire an ontological status apart from the human activity that produced it.⁶¹

Berger and Luckmann describe the social construction of reality in the following way.

The relationship between man, the producer, and the social world, his product, is and remains a dialectical one. That is, man (not, of course, in isolation but in his collectivities) and his social world interact with each other. The product acts back upon the producer. Externalization and objectivation are moments in a continuing dialectical process. The third moment in this process, which is internalization (by which the objectivated social world is retrojected into consciousness in the course of socialization), will occupy us in considerable detail later on. It is already possible, however, to see the fundamental relationship of these three dialectical moments in social reality. Each of them corresponds to an essential characterization of the social world. Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product. It may also already be evident that an analysis of the social world that leaves out any one of these three moments will be distortive. One may further add that only with the transmission of the social world to a new generation (that is, internalization

⁵⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 54.

⁵⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 55.

⁶⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 60.

⁶¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 60–1.

as effectuated in socialization) does the fundamental social dialectic appear in its totality.⁶²

At the same point, the institutional world requires legitimation, that is, ways by which it can be “explained” and justified. This is not because it appears less real. As we have seen, the reality of the social world gains in massivity in the course of its transmission. This reality, however, is a historical one, which comes to the new generation as a tradition rather than as a biographical memory.⁶³

It follows that the expanding institutional order develops a corresponding canopy of legitimations, stretching over it a protective cover of both cognitive and normative interpretation. These legitimations are learned by the new generation during the same process that socializes them into the institutional order.⁶⁴

It is important to stress that this does not exclusively or even primarily involve a preoccupation with complex theoretical systems serving as legitimations for the institutional order. Theories also have to be taken into account, of course. But theoretical knowledge is only a small and by no means the most important part of what passes for knowledge in a society. Theoretically sophisticated legitimations appear at particular moments of an institutional history. The primary knowledge about the institutional order is knowledge on the pretheoretical level.⁶⁵

On the pretheoretical level, however, every institution has a body of transmitted recipe knowledge, that is, knowledge that supplies the institutionally appropriate rules of conduct.⁶⁶

Such knowledge constitutes the motivating dynamics of institutionalized conduct. It defines the institutionalized areas of conduct and designates all situations falling within them. It defines and constructs the roles to be played in the context of the institutions in question. Ipso facto, it controls and predicts all such conduct. Since this knowledge is socially objectivated as knowledge, that is, as a body of generally valid truths about reality, any radical deviance from the institutional order appears as a departure from reality.⁶⁷

In this way, the particular social world becomes the world tout court. What is taken for granted as knowledge in the society comes to be coextensive with the knowable,

⁶² Berger, *Social Construction*, 61.

⁶³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 61.

⁶⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 62.

⁶⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 65.

⁶⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 65.

⁶⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 65–6.

or at any rate provides the framework within which anything not yet known will come to be known in the future.⁶⁸

Knowledge, in this sense, is at the heart of the fundamental dialectic of society. It “programs” the channels in which externalization produces an objective world. It objectifies this world through language and the cognitive apparatus based on language, that is, it orders it into objects to be apprehended as reality. It is internalized again as objectively valid truth in the course of socialization. Knowledge about society is thus a realization in the double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objectivated social reality, and in the sense of ongoingly producing this reality.⁶⁹

”The objectification of the experience in the language (that is, its transformation into a generally available object of knowledge) then allows its incorporation into a larger body of tradition by way of moral instruction, inspirational poetry, religious allegory, and whatnot.”⁷⁰

This necessitates some form of “educational” process. The institutional meanings must be impressed powerfully and unforgettably upon the consciousness of the individual. Since human beings are frequently sluggish and forgetful, there must also be procedures by which these meanings can be reimpresed? and rememorized, if necessary by coercive and generally unpleasant means. Furthermore, since human beings are frequently stupid, institutional meanings tend to become simplified in the process of transmission, so that the given collection of institutional “formulae” can be readily learned and memorized by successive generations.⁷¹

Berger and Luckmann pointed to the significance of roles and how these “share in the controlling character of institutionalization” and how they reveal “the mediations between the macroscopic universes of meaning objectivated in a society and the ways by which these universes are subjectively real to individuals.”⁷² Compliance was not optional even though “the severity of sanctions may vary from case to case.”⁷³ Even though institutions have a “tendency to

⁶⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 66.

⁶⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 66.

⁷⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 69.

⁷¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 70.

⁷² Berger, *Social Construction*, 74 and 79.

⁷³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 74.

persist,” they do not last forever and can be “deinstitutionalized.”⁷⁴ It posed a particular challenge that the rate of change was not always the same.⁷⁵ Berger and Luckmann referred to the private sphere in modern industrial society as being “considerably deinstitutionalized as compared to the public sphere.”⁷⁶ The “institutional segmentation” led to “socially segregated subuniverses of meaning.”⁷⁷ As examples of “full-blown subuniverses of meaning,” Berger and Luckmann referred to “Hindu castes, the Chinese literary bureaucracy, or the priestly coteries of ancient Egypt.”⁷⁸

Like all social edifices of meaning, the subuniverses must be “carried” by a particular collectivity, that is, by the group that ongoingly produces the meanings in question and within which these meanings have objective reality. Conflict or competition may exist between such groups. On the simplest level, there may be conflict over the allocation of surplus resources to the specialists in question, for example, over exemption from productive labor.⁷⁹

In advanced industrial societies, with their immense economic surplus allowing large numbers of individuals to devote themselves full-time to even the obscurest pursuits, pluralistic competition between subuniverses of meaning of every conceivable sort becomes the normal state of affairs.⁸⁰

”It goes without saying that this multiplication of perspectives greatly increases the problem of establishing a stable symbolic canopy for the entire society.”⁸¹ Berger and Luckmann referred to the “special problems of legitimation *vis-à-vis* both outsiders and insiders” and spoke of a “legitimizing machinery” needed to make this happen.⁸²

⁷⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 81.

⁷⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 88.

⁷⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 81.

⁷⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 84–5.

⁷⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 85.

⁷⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 85.

⁸⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 86.

⁸¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 86.

⁸² Berger, *Social Construction*, 87–8.

Berger and Luckmann described the objectivation of institutions with the term reification.⁸³ In this process, the institution was no longer viewed as a human production but instead the result of “facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will.”⁸⁴ Therefore man believed he cannot change it. “The basic “recipe” for the reification of institutions is to bestow on them an ontological status independent of human activity and signification.”⁸⁵ Berger and Luckmann pointed out that this reification occurred on all levels of externalization—the institution, the role, and even the identity. The reified role or identity was viewed as being ontologically given, so one cannot change it. “There is then a total identification of the individual with his socially assigned typifications. He is apprehended as nothing but that type.”⁸⁶

The analysis of reification is important because it serves as a standing corrective to the reifying propensities of theoretical thought in general and sociological thought in particular. It is particularly important for the sociology of knowledge, because it prevents it from falling into an undialectical conception of the relationship between what men do and what they think. The historical and empirical application of the sociology of knowledge must take special note of the social circumstances that favor dereification—such as the overall collapse of institutional orders, the contact between previously segregated societies, and the important phenomenon of social marginality.⁸⁷

2. Legitimation

Berger and Luckmann provided a description of a process they called “legitimation” that gave a “second-order objectivation of meaning” over and above the meaning that had already been established in the institutional process.⁸⁸ It was a process of “explaining” and “justifying”

⁸³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 88.

⁸⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 89.

⁸⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 90.

⁸⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 91.

⁸⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 91–92.

⁸⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 92.

the social reality.⁸⁹ Berger and Luckmann differentiated between four levels of legitimation. From the first pretheoretical “system of linguistic objectifications of human experience” which “is the foundation of self-evident “knowledge.”⁹⁰ “The second level of legitimation contains theoretical propositions in a rudimentary form.”⁹¹ The third level is already “pure theory” and is “frequently entrusted to specialized personnel who transmit them through formalized initiation procedures.”⁹² “Symbolic universes constitute the fourth level of legitimation.”⁹³

The symbolic universe is conceived of as the matrix of all socially objectivated and subjectively real meanings; the entire historic society and the entire biography of the individual are seen as events taking place within this universe.⁹⁴

This included the marginal situations in life, represented by dreams and fantasies, “these situations constitute the most acute threat to taken-for-granted, routinized existence in society.”⁹⁵ Berger and Luckmann referred to the latter as the “daylight side” and the former as the “night side” of human life.⁹⁶ The roles and identities of individuals were placed within the parameters of the symbolic universe.⁹⁷ The individual did not have to reflect on his role or identity consciously all the time, but the symbolic universe gave the standard by which these were measured and understood.⁹⁸ Who belonged to the group and who was excluded was explained and justified in the symbolic universe.⁹⁹ In contemporary South Africa, the concept of ubuntu (humanity) is

⁸⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 93.

⁹⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 94.

⁹¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 94.

⁹² Berger, *Social Construction*, 95.

⁹³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 95.

⁹⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 96.

⁹⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 98.

⁹⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 98.

⁹⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 99–100.

⁹⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 100.

⁹⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 102.

extended to include all humans. In contrast, the traditional concept in African culture probably was limited to a certain degree to the members of the own tribe. Death, in many ways was the biggest challenge to the legitimation of the symbolic universe.¹⁰⁰ The death of a prominent member of society could often disrupt the stability of social reality, and Berger and Luckmann pointed to the immediate need to reaffirm the stabilizing symbols.¹⁰¹

”All social reality is precarious. All societies are constructions in the face of chaos. The constant possibility of anomic terror is actualized whenever the legitimations that obscure the precariousness are threatened or collapse.”¹⁰² Berger and Luckmann described the ongoing need to maintain the symbolic universe because no society existed in perfect harmony, in which the symbolic universe was not challenged or threatened. It was always just a question of to what degree it was challenged or viewed as problematic.¹⁰³ This was since socialization was never complete or perfect.¹⁰⁴ This problem became accentuated when groups shared the heretical alternative view of reality and started creating sub universes of meaning.¹⁰⁵ The history of heresy and orthodoxy is used as an example by Berger and Luckmann to show the interdependence of the two in the development and definition of its various teachings.¹⁰⁶

Berger and Luckmann pointed out that a society was very creative and busy developing its symbolic universe when confronted by a society with another history.¹⁰⁷ This was a more

¹⁰⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 101.

¹⁰¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 104.

¹⁰² Berger, *Social Construction*, 103.

¹⁰³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 106.

¹⁰⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 106.

¹⁰⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 106.

¹⁰⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 107.

¹⁰⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 107.

significant challenge to the community than when a heretical group developed within its ranks.¹⁰⁸ The alternative symbolic universe proved the possibility of an alternative and questioned the validity of the old universe.¹⁰⁹ The confrontation of these two universes involved the issues of power.¹¹⁰ Berger and Luckmann suggested that better weapons rather than superior arguments usually won these battles.¹¹¹ This Berger and Luckmann meant is also true for fighting within a society, that “he who has the bigger stick” usually wins the argument.¹¹²

Berger and Luckmann also elaborated on other forms of universe maintenance they describe as “therapy” and “nihilation.”¹¹³ Whereas therapy aimed to keep everyone in the relevant universe,¹¹⁴ nihilation tried to negate everything outside of the universe as not valid.¹¹⁵ There were various methods of negative legitimation used. For example, nihilation could assign lesser ontological importance to the issue or group: “the neighbors are a tribe of barbarians,” or it incorporated the group and annihilated it by inclusion.¹¹⁶

“All socially constructed universes change.”¹¹⁷ There were various dynamics at play in this process of change. Berger and Luckmann emphasized the fact that humans remained the definers of reality. Therefore it was essential not to be distracted by conceptual machineries that

¹⁰⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 107.

¹⁰⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 108.

¹¹⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 108.

¹¹¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 109.

¹¹² Berger, *Social Construction*, 109.

¹¹³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 112. They had discussed the role of mythology, theology, philosophy and science in the preceding pages (110–2). For the role religion plays in the construction of reality refer to Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor, 1969).

¹¹⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 113.

¹¹⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 114.

¹¹⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 115. Refer to J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (New York: Penguin, 1982).

¹¹⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 116.

maintained the universe to forget that reality was socially defined.¹¹⁸ It was not only important to look at what was being said, but instead by whom.¹¹⁹ With the specialization of knowledge and labor, certain people and groups could claim to be experts in a particular field and that they had exclusive jurisdiction over this knowledge or expertise.¹²⁰ Competition among experts may arise. A specific group may lay claim to the ultimate learning and expertise, making them universal experts.¹²¹ Berger and Luckmann mentioned the tendency of traditionalism and conservatism in these groups and how institutions and traditions and abstract theories tended to inertia and resistance to change.¹²² Berger and Luckmann highlighted the potential social conflict with the emergence of full-time legitimators of the universe. This conflict could be between various groups for various reasons. Berger and Luckmann quoted the Brahmins' role in the Indian cast system and how the resistance against them grew from within "Kshatriyas, the military and princely caste."¹²³ "Not accidentally the two great theoretical rebellions against the Brahman universe, Jainism and Buddhism, had their social locations in the Kshatriya caste."¹²⁴ Berger and Luckmann spoke to the fact that it was not only on a theoretical and rational level that the groups dealt with their conflict but may have resorted to resources of power and influence to ensure the success of their proposals.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 116.

¹¹⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 116.

¹²⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 117.

¹²¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 117.

¹²² Berger, *Social Construction*, 117–8.

¹²³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 118–9.

¹²⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 119.

¹²⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 119.

These considerations imply that there will always be a social-structural base for competition between rival definitions of reality and that the outcome of the rivalry will be affected, if not always determined outright, by the development of this base.¹²⁶

Especially once social groups become carriers of the ideas, it became less a question of the theory which idea would become dominant. Instead, it was a question about the impact of the group.¹²⁷ If an expert group held a monopoly in a society, it was relatively easy to maintain the legitimizing universe.¹²⁸ The skeptics had not yet been socially organized to offer substantial competition to the monopoly.¹²⁹ This society had a unified power structure.¹³⁰ Berger and Luckmann described Medieval Christendom as such a society.¹³¹ “Monopolistic situations of this kind presuppose a high degree of social-structural stability, and are themselves structurally stabilizing. Traditional definitions of reality inhibit social change.”¹³² “Conservative political forces tend to support the monopolistic claims of the universal experts, whose monopolistic organizations in turn tend to be politically conservative.”¹³³ “When a particular definition of reality comes to be attached to a concrete power interest, it may be called an ideology.”¹³⁴ “The distinctiveness of ideology is rather that the same overall universe is interpreted in different ways, depending upon concrete vested interests within the society in question.”¹³⁵ It was instructive to see that Berger and Luckmann did not refer to Medieval Christianity as an ideology

¹²⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 120.

¹²⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 120.

¹²⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 121.

¹²⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 121.

¹³⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 121.

¹³¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 122.

¹³² Berger, *Social Construction*, 122.

¹³³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 123.

¹³⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 123.

¹³⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 124.

because everyone was part of the Christian universe. In contrast, in the Industrial Revolution, they spoke of a Christian ideology of the bourgeoisie that used their influence over the church in contrast to the working class that no longer inhabited the church universe.¹³⁶ “Every group engaged in social conflict requires solidarity. Ideologies generate solidarity.”¹³⁷

It is important to bear in mind that most modern societies are pluralistic. This means that they have a shared core universe, taken for granted as such, and different partial universes coexisting in a state of mutual accommodation. The latter probably have some ideological functions, but outright conflict between ideologies has been replaced by varying degrees of tolerance or even co-operation. Such a situation, brought about by a constellation of non-theoretical factors, presents the traditional experts with severe theoretical problems. Administering a tradition with age-old monopolistic pretensions they have to find ways of theoretically legitimating the demonopolization that has taken place.¹³⁸

The pluralistic situation goes with conditions of rapid social change, indeed pluralism itself is an accelerating factor precisely because it helps to undermine the change-resistant efficacy of the traditional definitions of reality. Pluralism encourages both skepticism and innovation and is thus inherently subversive of the taken-for-granted reality of the traditional status quo. One can readily sympathize with the experts in the traditional definitions of reality when they think back nostalgically to the times when these definitions had a monopoly in the field.¹³⁹

Berger and Luckmann described the intellectual as a unique expert who was not appreciated by society because he did not confirm the common sense knowledge, “he appears as the counter-expert in the business of defining reality.”¹⁴⁰ Hermann Sasse might have belonged to this category in his criticism of Nazi Germany. “The intellectual is thus, by definition, a marginal type.”¹⁴¹

”All socially meaningful definitions of reality must be objectivated by social processes.

¹³⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 123.

¹³⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 124.

¹³⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 125.

¹³⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 125.

¹⁴⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 126.

¹⁴¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 126.

Consequently, subuniverses require subsocieties as their objectivating base, and counter-definitions of reality require counter-societies.”¹⁴² “Consequently, social change must always be understood as standing in a dialectical relationship to the “history of ideas.” Both “idealistic” and “materialistic” understandings of the relationship overlook this dialectic, and thus distort history.”¹⁴³ “What remains sociologically essential is the recognition that all symbolic universes and all legitimations are human products; their existence has its base in the lives of concrete individuals, and has no empirical status apart from these lives.”¹⁴⁴

Society as Subjective Reality

1. Internalization of Reality

Internalization is the base from which an individual understands his counterpart and secondly “the apprehension of the world as a meaningful and social reality. This apprehension does not result from autonomous creations of meaning by isolated individuals, but begins with the individual “taking over” the world in which others already live.”¹⁴⁵

The ontogenetic process by which this is brought about is socialization, which may thus be defined as the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it. Primary socialization is the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he becomes a member of society. Secondary socialization is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society.¹⁴⁶

Berger and Luckmann elaborated on the “significant others” that introduced the individual to society.¹⁴⁷ These significant others were important in that they presented the world to the

¹⁴² Berger, *Social Construction*, 127.

¹⁴³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 128.

¹⁴⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 128.

¹⁴⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 130.

¹⁴⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 130.

¹⁴⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 131.

individual and chose what they would transmit. Using the example of a lower-class child Berger and Luckmann pointed out that not only would the child be introduced to a different world than the upper-class child, but the world will also be different from the child next door.¹⁴⁸ The process of identification was closely linked to socialization and internalization. The individuals initially took over the identification from the significant others, which always included a socially constructed world. In the process of generalization and abstraction, the roles and norms of the significant others were extended to have a larger group of generalized others.¹⁴⁹ The identification with and by this generalized other gives “stability and continuity” to the individual.

The formation within consciousness of the generalized other marks a decisive phase in socialization. It implies the internalization of society as such and of the objective reality established therein, and, at the same time, the subjective establishment of a coherent and continuous identity.¹⁵⁰

This process is concurrent with the internalization of language.¹⁵¹ Primary socialization is in many ways more important and dominant than secondary socialization.¹⁵² Even though no socialization is ever complete and total, the primary socialization comes to an end “when the concept of the generalized other (and all that goes with it) has been established in the consciousness of the individual.”¹⁵³

”Secondary socialization is the internalization of institutional or institution-based “subworlds.” Its extent and character are therefore determined by the complexity of the division

¹⁴⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 131.

¹⁴⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 133.

¹⁵⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 133.

¹⁵¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 133.

¹⁵² Berger, *Social Construction*, 131–7.

¹⁵³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 137.

of labor and the concomitant social distribution of knowledge.”¹⁵⁴ ”Secondary socialization is the acquisition of role-specific knowledge, the roles being directly or indirectly rooted in the division of labor.”¹⁵⁵ ”The “subworlds” internalized in secondary socialization are generally partial realities in contrast to the “base-world” acquired in primary socialization.”¹⁵⁶ Berger and Luckmann discussed the need to maintain and transform the social reality along similar lines to the process they described in legitimizing the objective social reality. Without going into too much detail, reference is made to the most crucial mechanism they describe, namely conversation.¹⁵⁷

One may view the individual’s everyday life in terms of the working away of a conversational apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs his subjective reality. Conversation means mainly, of course, that people speak with one another. This does not deny the rich aura of non-verbal communication that surrounds speech. Nevertheless speech retains a privileged position in the total conversational apparatus. It is important to stress, however, that the greater part of reality-maintenance in conversation is implicit, not explicit. Most conversation does not in so many words define the nature of the world. Rather, it takes place against the background of a world that is silently taken for granted.¹⁵⁸

”Subjective reality is thus always dependent upon specific plausibility structures, that is, the specific social base and social processes required for its maintenance.”¹⁵⁹ ”Disruption of significant conversation with the mediators of the respective plausibility structures threatens the subjective realities in question.”¹⁶⁰ ”The plausibility structure is also the social base for the particular suspension of doubt without which the definition of reality in question cannot be

¹⁵⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 138.

¹⁵⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 138.

¹⁵⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 138.

¹⁵⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 152.

¹⁵⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 152.

¹⁵⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 154.

¹⁶⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 155.

maintained in consciousness.”¹⁶¹ “In crisis situations the procedures are essentially the same as in routine maintenance, except that the reality-confirmations have to be explicit and intensive.”¹⁶²

Berger and Luckmann described the process and possibility of changing and transforming the social reality as “alternation,” a typical example being religious conversion.¹⁶³ This process required a re-socialization.¹⁶⁴

A “recipe” for successful alternation has to include both social and conceptual conditions, the social, of course, serving as the matrix of the conceptual. The most important social condition is the availability of an effective plausibility structure, that is, a social base serving as the “laboratory” of transformation. This plausibility structure will be mediated to the individual by means of significant others, with whom he must establish strongly affective identification.¹⁶⁵

The plausibility structure must become the individual’s world, displacing all other worlds, especially the world the individual “inhabited” before his alternation. This requires segregation of the individual from the “inhabitants” of other worlds, especially his “cohabitants” in the world he has left behind. Ideally this will be physical segregation. If that is not possible for whatever reasons, the segregation is posited by definition; that is, by a definition of those others that nihilates them.¹⁶⁶

Alternation thus involves a reorganization of the conversational apparatus. The partners in significant conversation change. And in conversation with the new significant others subjective reality is transformed.¹⁶⁷

2. Internalization and Social Structure

Socialization always takes place in the context of a specific social structure. Not only its contents but also its measure of “success” have social-structural conditions and social-structural consequences. In other words, the micro-sociological or social-psychological analysis of phenomena of internalization must always have as its background a macro-sociological understanding of their structural aspects.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 155.

¹⁶² Berger, *Social Construction*, 156.

¹⁶³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 157–8.

¹⁶⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 157.

¹⁶⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 157.

¹⁶⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 158.

¹⁶⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 159.

¹⁶⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 163.

By “successful socialization” we mean the establishment of a high degree of symmetry between objective and subjective reality (as well as identity, of course). ... As we have seen, totally successful socialization is anthropologically impossible. Totally unsuccessful socialization is, at the very least, extremely rare.¹⁶⁹

”Maximal success in socialization is likely to occur in societies with very simple division of labor and minimal distribution of knowledge.”¹⁷⁰ ”Put simply, everyone pretty much is what he is supposed to be.”¹⁷¹ This does not mean the individual is happy with his identity.¹⁷² Berger and Luckmann referred to the unpleasantness of being a peasant.¹⁷³ If socialization was not successful, groups could form and create alternative plausibility structures. They needed to be large and durable enough to sustain a plausibility structure.¹⁷⁴ Berger and Luckmann used a leper colony as an example, in South Africa the African Independent Churches that started at the beginning of the twentieth century could be viewed as such an alternative plausibility structure that created a “counter-definition of reality.”¹⁷⁵

Berger and Luckmann made an example that was very relevant to many white South African families.

For example, a child may be raised not only by his parents but also by a nurse recruited from an ethnic or class subsociety. The parents mediate to the child the world of, say, a conquering aristocracy of one race; the nurse mediates the world of a subjugated peasantry of another race. It is even possible that the two mediations employ completely different languages, which the child learns simultaneously but which the parents and the nurse find mutually unintelligible.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 163.

¹⁷⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 164.

¹⁷¹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 164.

¹⁷² Berger, *Social Construction*, 164.

¹⁷³ Berger, *Social Construction*, 164.

¹⁷⁴ Berger, *Social Construction*, 166.

¹⁷⁵ Berger, *Social Construction*, 166. Refer to Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

¹⁷⁶ Berger, *Social Construction*, 169.

The child could choose from two different worlds, opening up the opportunity of “individualism” as Berger and Luckmann pointed out.¹⁷⁷ Berger and Luckmann suggested that in contemporary industrial society, there were “discrepant worlds ... available on a market basis.”¹⁷⁸ This meant that individuals could pick and choose a variety of options, obviously within the constraints of society. Still, it became accepted that the worlds are relative and often seen concerning the role one needs to play or chooses to play.¹⁷⁹

What should be stressed is that such a situation cannot be understood unless it is ongoingly related to its social-structural context, which follows logically from the necessary relationship between the social division of labor (with its consequences for social structure) and the social distribution of knowledge (with its consequences for the social objectivation of reality). In the contemporary situation this entails the analysis of both reality and identity pluralism with reference to the structural dynamics of industrialism, particularly the dynamics of the social stratification patterns produced by industrialism.¹⁸⁰

The Sacred Canopy

Peter Berger applied his theory of knowledge of sociology to the phenomenon of religion. The “fundamental purpose” of culture is to “provide the firm structures for human life that are lacking biologically.”¹⁸¹ “The socially constructed world is, above all, an ordering of experience.”¹⁸² Berger pointed to the “threat” of “anomy” as a significant driver of the dialectic process of world-building.¹⁸³ “The anthropological presupposition for this is a human craving for meaning that appears to have the force of instinct.”¹⁸⁴ “Religion is the human enterprise by which

¹⁷⁷ Berger, *Social Construction*, 169 and 171.

¹⁷⁸ Berger, *Social Construction*, 172.

¹⁷⁹ Berger, *Social Construction*, 172–3.

¹⁸⁰ Berger, *Social Construction*, 173.

¹⁸¹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 6.

¹⁸² Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 19.

¹⁸³ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 21.

¹⁸⁴ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 22.

a sacred cosmos is established.”¹⁸⁵ “Religion implies that human order is projected into the totality of being. Put differently, religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant.”¹⁸⁶

“All socially constructed worlds are inherently precarious. Supported by human activity, they are constantly threatened by the human facts of self-interest and stupidity.”¹⁸⁷ Berger highlighted the importance of “legitimation” in this process, and that religion was the “most widespread and effective instrumentality of legitimation.”¹⁸⁸ Berger argued that this was also connected to the “alienating propensity of religion.”¹⁸⁹ His third chapter, “The Problem of Theodicy,” was instructive in reference to legitimation.¹⁹⁰ “It is not happiness that theodicy primarily provides, but meaning.”¹⁹¹ Berger summarized the process of “reality maintaining” in the following way:

Worlds are socially constructed and socially maintained. Their continuing reality, both objective (as common, taken-for-granted facticity) and subjective (as facticity imposing itself on individual consciousness), depends upon specific social processes, namely those processes that ongoingly reconstruct and maintain the particular worlds in question. Conversely, the interruption of these social processes threatens the (objective and subjective) reality of the worlds in question. Thus each world requires a social ‘base’ for its continuing existence as a world that is real to actual human beings. This ‘base’ may be called its plausibility structure.¹⁹²

Berger’s discussion of the “over-all decline in the plausibility of Christianity” in short on pages 78–80 and in the complete chapter five, “The Process of Secularization” sounds very

¹⁸⁵ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 25.

¹⁸⁶ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 28.

¹⁸⁷ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 29.

¹⁸⁸ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 32.

¹⁸⁹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 87.

¹⁹⁰ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 53–80.

¹⁹¹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 58.

¹⁹² Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 45.

reasonable.¹⁹³

“Secularization has resulted in a widespread collapse of the plausibility of traditional religious definitions of reality.”¹⁹⁴ The collapse of traditional definitions implied that these definitions needed to be replaced even though secularization was not necessarily a process of ending religion in the broadest sense of the word. But Berger, in his sixth chapter, showed how specific traditional tasks of religion have been disrupted and were changing the scope of religion and its plausibility structures. “The plausibility structures lose massivity because they can no longer enlist the society as a whole to serve for the purpose of social confirmation.”¹⁹⁵ Berger’s description of the church’s changing role and the shift to consumer options, bureaucratization, ecumenism, and others are helpful. “The re-establishment of a monopoly situation - in other words, the notion of an eventual ‘world-church’ is very unlikely to be realized empirically.”¹⁹⁶

Sociological and Theological Perspectives

Peter Berger’s description of the various methodological approaches of sociology and theology in Appendix II, “Sociological and Theological Perspectives,” is very instructive.¹⁹⁷ His sociological arguments and explanations are from a “closed empirical” perspective; he wrote of a “methodological atheism.”¹⁹⁸ All agency is limited to human action, and he does not have to deal with revelation from a divine agency point of view. One could quote Charles Taylor, “In that

¹⁹³ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 78–80 and 105–25.

¹⁹⁴ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 127.

¹⁹⁵ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 151.

¹⁹⁶ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 144. Refer to Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (New York: Orbis, 2008). See also James D Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁹⁷ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 179–85.

¹⁹⁸ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 100.

case, a purely cultural account of religion would be like Hamlet without the Prince.”¹⁹⁹ To be fair, Berger himself pointed this out and warns theologians not to jump onto the sociological bandwagon, but they should realize a different methodological approach. Barth’s differentiation between “religion and Christian faith” is an example, and Berger argued that it is “quite inadmissible.”²⁰⁰ Berger called for openness on both sides of sociology and theology “in the absence of such partners, silence is by far the better course.”²⁰¹ Sasse argued that sociology could not grasp the full extent of various phenomena because it ignored the agency of God. Berger might have responded that sociology can still analyze this theological response to explain the reality of the world. The question is whether this theological definition will still be plausible to the contemporary person.

¹⁹⁹ Charles Taylor, “Foreword” in Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xv.

²⁰⁰ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 183.

²⁰¹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 185.

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VITA

Christoph Dietrich Weber

June 28, 1971

Dundee, South Africa

Collegiate Institutions Attended

University of Pretoria, Bachelor of Arts, 1992

Lutherisch Theologische Hochschule Oberursel, Erstes Theologisches Examen, 1998

University Göttingen

University Erlangen

Graduate Institutions Attended

Previous Theses and Publications

Current Memberships in Academic Societies