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Missions in Africa: Lutheran Churches, Enculturation, and Ecumenism

The European Lutheran missions were interdenominational from the start. In the first more than one hundred years of the Evangelical mission, individual missionaries for the most part were devoutly Lutheran, as were some of the initial communities. This was not generally the case, however, for entire mission organizations. Furthermore, the meaning of “Lutheran” was defined very differently depending on the time and the location of the tradition of the respective missionaries and of the communities that sent them.

Organized Evangelical missionary work began with the Danish-English-Halle Mission in the early eighteenth century. Under the auspices of Frederick IV of Denmark (r. 1699 – 1730), the German August Hermann Francke (1663 – 1727) sent two theology students – Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719) and Heinrich Plütschau (1677–1752) – to Tranquebar (which is today Tharangambadi) in southern India. As the Lutheran mission was a European undertaking from its inception, it was also marked from the outset by different currents within Lutheranism itself and by different confessional cultures. This aspect continues to figure prominently to this day, influencing present-day Lutheran missions and churches, not only in Europe, but also and especially in Africa. What is more, only four years after the missionaries Ziegenbalg and Plütschau were sent out, the Anglican Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) also joined the Danish-Halle Mission (DEHM). Thus, even though its missionaries generally still went through training in Lutheran Halle and partly in Copenhagen, the mission was no longer exclusively Lutheran.

The Moravian Church began to proselytize outside of Europe shortly after its founding at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was only the second Evangelical community to do so. Here, too, classification according to the terms “ecumenical,” “Lutheran,” or other denominational affiliations is difficult. The Moravians are to be considered simultaneously Lutheran and interdenominational: they were equally influenced by the theology and tradition of the Czech Brethren and the specific interpretation of Lutheranism of Nicolaus Zinzendorf (1700 – 1760). Reformed theology also had a meaningful impact on the Moravian Church.

What, then, does it mean to be “Lutheran” – in the mission, in Africa, and beyond? This chapter aims to demonstrate the diversity of the “Lutheran” European missions and Lutheran churches on the African continent. Given the sheer size of the continent and the extent of the relevant period, it will only be possible to highlight some of the various Lutheran missions and churches. First of all, the present

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study will focus on German-speaking missions. A large percentage of the Lutheran mission-inspired churches established in Africa originated with German missions. There were also Lutheran missions from Sweden, Norway, Finland, and North America. The German missions concentrated on southern and eastern Africa, where the German Empire had set up colonies. Second, this chapter will concentrate on Sub-Saharan Africa. Even here, the variety of approaches, experiences, and traditions is significant. With its centuries- and indeed millennia-old Christian churches, North Africa would have to be discussed separately. Indeed, the North African encounter with the Lutherans took place in a completely different context than that of Sub-Saharan Africa. It is thus only possible to remark that Christianity has existed in Africa since its inception.¹

The following discussion intends to present an overview of the diversity of Lutheran missions, religion, and culture in Africa. For this purpose, the first part of the chapter will concern the establishment of devoutly Lutheran mission societies in the nineteenth century in relation to the mission of Lutherans in interdenominational mission societies. It will further address the relationship between confessional theology and pietistic or revivalist faith in the missions. The missionary work of the nineteenth century took place in the context of colonialism and imperialism. This reality not only shaped missionary strategies, the choice of mission areas, the respective approaches of various missions, and their views on the people of Africa, but was also directly related to the religious orientations and convictions of at least some of the missionary societies. The role of the imperialist mindset will be discussed in the second part of this study. The third part deals with the establishment of Lutheran churches in Africa, while the fourth part elucidates the conflict between European-influenced theology and religiosity and initial efforts toward contextual missionary work. The fifth part of this chapter will explain the significance of African Indigenous Churches – known as AICs. They were established early in Sub-Saharan Africa and organized independently of the mission churches. They also developed their own theology.² The sixth part deals with African theology in the second half of the twentieth century. The article then concludes with some theological perspectives for Luther research in dialogue with theologies developed in Africa.

1 For a theologically integrative approach from an African perspective, see Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992). An overview is offered in Ogbu U. Kalu, ed., *African Christianity: An African Story* (Pretoria: Africa World Press, 2005), and Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

2 On the naming and also the difficulty of classifying the AICs denominationally, from the perspective of turn of the millennium, see John S. Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu II, *African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches – A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement*, with a foreword by W. Hollenweger (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1998), ix and 3; see also Phillip D. Mazambara, *The Self-Understanding of African Instituted Churches: A Study Based on the Church of Apostles Founded by John of Marange in Zimbabwe* (Aachen: Verlag an der Lottbek, 1999), 27–38.

1 Lutheran Missionaries and Lutheran Mission Societies

The great period of the European missions began toward the end of the eighteenth century. Missionary societies were founded in many European countries, quickly superseding the relatively tentative efforts made in the early eighteenth century. The first of these new organizations emerged in Great Britain, which included the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS, 1792), the London Missionary Society (LMS, 1795), and the Church Missionary Society (CMS, 1799).³ In German-speaking countries, mission societies were not founded until the beginning of the nineteenth century. They trained the missionaries for other European societies before eventually deciding to send men (and later women) to countries outside of Europe. These first German mission societies were all interdenominational – their express concern was with the right faith, not the right religious affiliation.

The first and largest of these newly established mission societies was the Basel Mission (1815).⁴ Its governing body, the Committee, was mostly comprised of Reformed citizens of Basel. Until the twentieth century, its presidents came exclusively from the Basel bourgeoisie. The inspectors – that is, the directors of the mission school, who also conducted the daily affairs of the mission – were, with one exception, citizens of Württemberg who were shaped by Württemberg Lutheran Pietism and revivalism. As a result, the Württemberg (Lutheran) Church tried to influence the Basel Mission, especially after the putatively Reformed Anglican CMS had sent out Württemberg missionaries.

Even more important than these ecclesiastical relations, however, was the disposition of the individual missionaries. Before the Basel Mission under Joseph Josenhans (Inspectorate 1850–1879) became more organized and hierarchical, they had

³ Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992); Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795–1895*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Frowde, 1899); Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, 4 vols. (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899–1916); Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, eds., *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799–1999* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2000).

⁴ On the history of the Basel Mission in Africa, see Wilhelm Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission 1815–1915*, vol. 3, *Die Geschichte der Basler Mission in Afrika* (Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1916); Jon Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control: Organizational Contradictions in the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, 1828–1917* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2003); for more on women in the mission, see Ulrike Sill, *Encounters in Quest of Christian Womanhood: The Basel Mission in Pre- and Early Colonial Ghana* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). Because of their factual confessional orientation in Africa, Sigvard of Sicard describes the Basel Mission, as well as the Berlin Mission, as “Lutheran”; see von Sicard, *The Lutheran Church on the Coast of Tanzania, 1887–1914, with special reference to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Synod of Uzaramo-Uluguru*, (Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1970), 19. Nonetheless, there are several factual errors and mistakes in attribution, for example, of missionaries to mission societies.

particularly wide latitude to enforce their ideas of “real” Christianity in the early decades of their work in various territories. Despite the official interdenominational character of the Basel Mission, Lutheran religious affiliation and Lutheran aspects were thus also transported to some mission territories. Some missionaries introduced Lutheran confessional writings to their congregations, above all Luther’s catechisms. Other Württemberg missionaries preferred the catechism of Johannes Brenz (mainly because of his depiction of the theology of baptism).⁵ Still others wrote their own catechisms, regulations, teachings, and confessions, tailored to the circumstances of the mission.⁶ In liturgy and community organization, they generally adapted Lutheran ideas to the particular situation of the young community.

One of the best-known examples of such a free hand was the Rhenish missionary Carl Hugo Hahn, who came into conflict with the directors of his mission over questions of religious affiliation.⁷ Hahn not only insisted on introducing the Lutheran faith to his mission congregations, but also on excluding Reformed Christians. These positions contradicted the official denominational neutrality of the Rhenish Missionary Society (*Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft*, RMG).

In 1844, Hahn founded the first German mission in Herero territory – Neu-Barmen in Otjikango. Franz Heinrich Kleinschmidt had established the first RMG station under the Nama two years earlier.⁸ They were the first German mission stations in southwestern Africa. In West Africa, German missionaries were active in Liberia on behalf of the Basel Mission beginning in 1827 and employed in the Gold Coast (Ghana) beginning in 1828.

Though many of the mission societies are now perceived as Lutheran in hindsight, they were officially interdenominational societies, whose missionaries introduced Lutheran doctrine and rites locally. One of the primary reasons for the relative confessional indifference of most mission societies and many missionaries in the last third of the nineteenth century lay in their conceptions of piety.

Many of the Lutheran missionaries – with the exception of noteworthy figures, such as Carl Hugo Hahn – imparted Lutheran faith in their missionary work simply because they had grown up with it. It was the theology, ecclesiology, and spirituality

5 See, for example, *Der evangelische Heidenbote* 16 (1843), 5; here, a quote may be found from the Basel Mission in India, as well as the arguments of the missionary to India Hermann Gundert, in the Basel Mission Archives, C-1.7 Talatscheri 1841, no. 4, H. Gundert, April 1841, 2r.

6 See, for example, von Sicard, *The Lutheran Church*, 154–58.

7 On the Rhenish Missionary Society, see Gustav Menzel, *Aus 150 Jahren Missionsgeschichte. Die Rheinische Mission* (Wuppertal: Verlag der Vereinigten Evangelischen Mission, 1978); on Hahn, see esp. 100–03. See also Kevin Ward, “Deutsche Lutheraner und englische Anglikaner im südlichen Afrika bis 1918. Eine gemeinsame und eine divergierende Geschichte,” in *Deutsche Evangelische Kirche im kolonialen südlichen Afrika. Die Rolle der Auslandsarbeit von den Anfängen bis in die 1920er Jahre*, eds. Hans von Lessing et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011), 435–53.

8 Thorsten Altena, “Ein Häuflein Christen mitten in der Heidenwelt des dunklen Erdteils”. *Zum Selbst- und Fremdverständnis protestantischer Missionare im kolonialen Afrika 1884–1918* (Münster: Waxmann, 2003), 33.

they were familiar with and which they had also been taught was “right.” On the other hand, more than a few were willing to distance themselves from confessional theology in the mission territories when it seemed to stand in the way of the mission’s success. Other aspects – such as the “real” faith and the “right” way of life – were more important to them.

Much of what was generally influenced by European Christian history or rooted in revivalism was thus later perceived as “Lutheran” (or alternatively “Reformed” or “Anglican”) because it had become entwined in the mission territories. The silence of the congregation during worship is but one example.⁹ For the revivalists, inner and outer quietude was a defining characteristic of the “real” Christian faith and “real” conversion.¹⁰

In the 1830s, there was a return to denominational affiliations.¹¹ The interdenominational mission was now increasingly viewed with a critical eye. The Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society was founded in Dresden in 1836 as an explicit alternative to the Basel Mission. It was one of the first overtly confessional Lutheran mission societies and is one of the few to bear the denominational affiliation in its name.¹² In 1848, the Mission Society moved to Leipzig. Today, it operates under the name *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionswerk Leipzig* (The Leipzig Mission). The Leipzig Mission took over the mission station in Tranquebar from the DEHM in the 1840s. Later, it also founded mission stations in Africa. During the era of imperialism, it was especially active in what is today Tanzania.

By 1842, Wilhelm Löhe (1808–1872) from Neuendettelsau had already sent “helpers” to North America. Over the course of the following decades, an increasing number of preachers in this high-church revivalist Lutheran initiative were sent to non-European countries. Initially, their mission was to attend to the spiritual needs of German emigrants. Missionary work among indigenous people did not begin until 1886, starting in New Guinea.

Apart from these first steps, a large-scale, German, overtly Lutheran denominational mission did not exist until the period of German imperialism in 1884/1885. Here, as elsewhere, mission and colonial policy were linked much more closely

⁹ See, for example, B. J. Katabaro, “Ist das noch lutherisch? Das reformatorische Erbe der ELCT in Tansania,” *Jahrbuch Mission* 47 (2015): 83–88.

¹⁰ Cf. the example of the Basel Mission in South India in Judith Becker, *Conversio im Wandel. Basler Missionare zwischen Europa und Südindien und die Ausbildung einer Kontaktreligiosität, 1834–1860* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 244–51.

¹¹ For this, Olaf Blaschke coined the term “second-denominational age;” Blaschke, “The 19th Jahrhundert: Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter?” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (2000): 38–75.

¹² In the case of mission societies from other European countries, the denominational character of the societies supported by these churches and their members was clearer than in the German-speaking world because of the religious affiliation of the majority or state church. At the same time, these societies were less concerned with confessional boundaries due to a lack of denominational alternatives. This was especially true for the Scandinavian missions. But even there, the mission was by and large more revivalist than confessional in nature.

than before. In fact, this was a European-wide phenomenon. Missionary societies in which national and religious affiliations went hand in hand were also founded in other countries. The Lutheran Svenska Kyrkans Mission (SKM) was accordingly established as a mission society of the Swedish (state) church in 1874.¹³ Furthermore, the Church of England demonstrated an ever-growing interest in the CMS in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the final decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the Lutheran denomination was equated with “Germanness” in many parts of Germany.¹⁴ Thus Lutheranism was to be exported around the world. In this way, “German” religion and “German” culture were meant to be simultaneously introduced in the colonies.

The *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Missionsgesellschaft* (The Bethel Mission), founded in 1886 by the colonialist Carl Peters, epitomizes this combination of Lutheran mission and German imperialism. Peters left the mission in 1887, shortly after its founding, and it was then renamed the “Evangelical Mission Society for German East Africa” (EMDOA).¹⁵ After Friedrich von Bodelschwingh assumed the leadership of the EMDOA in 1890, it began to flourish. The mission moved to Bethel in 1906, earning it the name “The Bethel Mission.” It started operating in present-day Tanzania, and later also in Rwanda. In the EMDOA/Bethel Mission, the Lutheran faith merged with allegiance to the state and more or less openly colonialist ideas. Most of the missionaries had studied theology in Bethel. They were influenced by von Bodelschwingh’s idiosyncratic approach and the relationship between inner mission and foreign mission.

These Lutheran societies operated alongside the still-successful missionary work of interdenominational societies and the Lutheran work of denominationally committed missionaries within the interdenominational missionary societies. This broad spectrum of mediators and lines of mediation already suggests the diversity of Lutheran cultures in the missions.

2 Missions and Colonialism

The EMDOA/Bethel Mission is one prominent example of the link between Lutheran missions and colonialism. Although the Rhenish Missionary Society at the beginning of the 1880s was even more influenced by colonialist views than the EMDOA, unlike the latter, it was officially interdenominational. Nonetheless, the inspector of the

¹³ At the same time, Sweden had no colonies and deliberately refrained from imperialism.

¹⁴ A chronology is offered by G. Scriba, “Chronologie der lutherischen Kirchengeschichte Südafrikas (1652–1928),” in *German Evangelical Church*, 285–305.

¹⁵ For the history of the Bethel Mission, see Gustav Menzel, *Die Bethel-Mission. Aus 100 Jahren Missionsgeschichte* (Neukirchen/Vluyn: Vereinte Evangelische Mission, 1986).

RMG, Friedrich Fabri (1824–1891), is considered one of the most important representatives of imperialism in the missionary movement.

The Rhenish Missionary Society was headed by Friedrich Fabri beginning in 1857. Fabri had increasingly and intensively engaged in the German colonial movement, and he published a treatise under the title *Bedarf Deutschland der Colonien? Eine politisch-ökonomische Betrachtung*¹⁶ (*Does Germany Need Colonies? A Political and Economic Consideration*) in 1879. In 1884, he left the RMG to devote himself to colonial policy and its propagation. His colonial activities had gradually become incompatible with mission leadership.

Fabri was not a “mission insider”; until he was called to Barmen, he had dedicated himself to the inner rather than the foreign missions. The RMG, which was entangled in serious sectarian disputes, became interested in Fabri due to his support of the denominational union (the fact that, as a southern German, his understanding of the union was inconsistent with that of the RMG, which had been established in the church of the Old Prussian Union, only became apparent later).¹⁷

Unlike other missiologists, Fabri integrated racist conceptions into his theology: the various peoples stood at different proximities to the kingdom of God. Some supposedly participated in the apostate movements referenced in biblical prehistory – which could be detected in their cultures, their social orders, and even in their physiognomies.¹⁸ Fabri thus located humanity’s division into different peoples in prehistoric times, which resulted in the dominant position of the one – namely, white people – and the subjugation (though not necessarily suppression) of the other.

In addition, Fabri was convinced that it was the Christians’ task to engage the world. This view – along with his unquestioned assumption that obedience to secular authority was indispensable to a Christian way of life – bolstered his commitment to German imperialism. He also advocated the separation of church and state.¹⁹

Fabri’s support for colonialism, however, was informed by his social engagement. Before he began working for RMG, he had already been engaged in the Inner Mission. He saw only one solution to increasing poverty in Germany in the 1870s: “guided emigration overseas.” In Fabri’s view, this was the reason Germany needed colonies. As a result of his treatise, Fabri became famous in the German colonial movement and, ultimately, “a key figure in the colonial movement.”²⁰ He obtained leading positions in various colonial societies and was later even an adviser to Otto von Bismarck. That said, in 1889, ten years after his treatise appeared, he published a condemnatory retrospective of previous colonial policy.²¹

¹⁶ See Friedrich Fabri, *Bedarf Deutschland der Colonien? Eine politisch-ökonomische Betrachtung* (Gotha: Perthes, 1879).

¹⁷ See Menzel, *Rheinische Mission*, 71f.

¹⁸ See Menzel, *Rheinische Mission*, 76.

¹⁹ See Menzel, *Rheinische Mission*, 77.

²⁰ See Menzel, *Rheinische Mission*, 78.

²¹ See Fabri, *Fünf Jahre deutscher Kolonialpolitik. Rück- und Ausblicke* (Gotha: Perthes, 1889).

Gustav Warneck (1834–1910) and Franz Michael Zahn (1833–1900) endorsed a fairly prominent alternative position. They were strongly opposed to any “secularization” of the missionary work. For this reason, they were against the merging of processes of evangelizing and of “civilizing” as well as the organizational and institutional linking of missionary work with colonial/imperial administration.²² Of course, this did nothing to alter the fact that the missions were not just part of the colonial system, but also benefitted from it. What is more, very few missionaries questioned colonialism. Indeed, the contemporary interpretation of the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms seemed to legitimize this view theologically.

By the turn of the century, four German-speaking societies had started missions in German East Africa: the EMDOA, the Basel Mission, the Moravian Church, and the Leipzig Mission.²³ Here, they would become colonial missions. Other German missionary societies followed shortly before the First World War.

In those regions of Africa where Germany had no colonies, the missionary societies had to pick sides regarding the respective colonial administration. Most of the mission societies supported the colonial administrations – at least insofar as it was to their benefit.²⁴ This was even true, though to a lesser extent, for faith missions.

3 Three Lutheran Churches in Africa

Beginning in the nineteenth century, several missionary societies, first and foremost the CMS, demanded that the newly established churches become independent as soon as possible. Henry Venn’s three-self principle (self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating) became a famous slogan for this viewpoint.²⁵ In fact, it took many decades before the Western mission societies determined that communities of missionaries could actually stand on their own.²⁶ In most countries, it was not the decision of Western mission societies that led to the independence of the indigenous churches, but rather the end of political colonialism. In the German mission

²² See esp. Gustav Warneck, *Abriß einer Geschichte der protestantischen Missionen von der Reformation bis auf die Gegenwart. Mit einem Anhang über die katholischen Missionen* (1882), (Berlin: Verlag Martin Warneck, 1910).

²³ See Altena, “Häuflein Christen,” 52–71.

²⁴ See the comprehensive studies on English missions under colonialism in Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollon, 1990).

²⁵ Rufus Anderson took the same view for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. See Dana L. Robert, “Introduction,” in *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706–1914*, ed. Dana L. Robert (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 1–20, here 13–16.

²⁶ See the interpretation of the “not yet” in Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

churches, the First World War – which resulted in the detention or deportation of German and Swiss missionaries in many places – served as a catalyst, allowing the indigenous churches to venture a first step toward independence. The specific situation on the ground, however, varied enormously in different parts of Africa. In the following, two exemplary approaches will be presented, with reference to the Lutheran churches in today's South Africa and the Lutheran Church in Tanzania. In southern Africa, the first Lutheran churches arose among white immigrants; in East and West Africa, however, Lutheran churches date back to the actual mission among indigenous Africans.

White settlers began emigrating to South Africa in the seventeenth century, partly for economic and partly for religious reasons. In 1652, the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) established a supply station in South Africa.²⁷ Germans also arrived in the country at this time, along with the Dutch traders. The first religious refugees included Huguenot – French Reformed – exiles who sought to escape persecution in France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Until the nineteenth century, the spiritual care of both the Reformed and the Lutherans was directed almost exclusively by white people. Nonetheless, the boundaries at this time were fluid. Some Europeans began relationships with indigenous slaves, while others married Africans.²⁸ Still, the population was not yet divided into completely separate groups based on skin color.²⁹ From the early eighteenth century, the Moravian Church was the first and only European society to also carry out missionary work among the indigenous black population.³⁰

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Cape Colony passed over into British possession. Beginning in 1814, it was a British colony.³¹ In terms of religious-historical development, this meant a reinforcement of Lutheranism. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the church had still been officially Reformed; the Lutherans were merely permitted to participate in worship and communion. In the last third of the eighteenth century, an unofficial Lutheran community developed in Cape Town. In 1779, Lutherans were given religious freedom in the Cape; in 1780, the first Lutheran church was founded, of which 400 of the 401 founding members

27 See Christian Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen. Lutherische Missions- und Siedlergemeinden in Südafrika im Spannungsfeld der Rassentrennung (1652–1910)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 22; see also Hohmann, “Die Beziehungen der deutschsprachigen lutherischen Gemeinden in der Kapregion zur Lutherischen Kirche in Hannover (1862 bis 1895),” in *German Evangelical Church*, 393–418. A list of events can be found in Scriba, *Chronologie*.

28 See Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen*, 26.

29 This also points to the problem of assigning the terms “black” and “white” in a coherent way. Though the categorizations were refined over time, the difficulty of classification remained. It illustrates the impossibility of dividing up humanity into categories based on specific features.

30 On the Moravians as a global community, see Gisela Mettele, *Weltbürgertum oder Gottesreich. Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine als globale Gemeinschaft 1727–1857* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).

31 See Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen*, 32.

originally came from Germany. At the end of the year, the first Lutheran pastor was appointed. His successor was provided by the Lutheran Church in Hanover, after the Lutheran consistory in Amsterdam had ignored the church's requests for a new pastor.³² As a result, the Hanoverian Church gained influence over religious developments in the Cape Colony. Over the course of the nineteenth century, new Lutheran churches were founded at the Cape (partly due to schisms). In 1861, the German Lutheran congregation emerged in Cape Town, after splitting off from the Dutch congregation. In 1895, the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of South Africa was established.³³

Evangelism among the indigenous population was not undertaken until the time of the Moravian Mission – among other reasons, because baptism would have put the converted blacks on a par with white settlers legally and economically.³⁴ The Moravian Georg Schmidt (1709–1785) conducted missionary work at the Cape beginning in 1737.³⁵ The mission, however, was soon interrupted for several decades; Schmidt had to return to Europe in 1744, and the next Moravian missionaries did not arrive at the Cape until 1792.³⁶ In 1829, the Rhenish Mission began with evangelism in South Africa; the Berlin Mission followed in 1834. As in other African countries, the acquisition of the German South West-Africa Colony (what is today Namibia) in southern Africa in 1884 marked the beginning of the colonial mission. Due to the different Lutheran missionary societies in southern Africa, a variety of Lutheran churches were built. There are accordingly three Lutheran churches in Namibia alone, due to the history of competing European missions.³⁷

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Moravian Mission promoted the independence of the African missionary communities.³⁸ Nonetheless, the congregations were not actually granted independence until the beginning of the First World War. The Europeans had always found reasons to maintain their dominant position. The Moravian communities increasingly sought independence, partly due to the disparity between indigenous Africans and missionaries in financial, economic, and organizational matters. They were also motivated by their lower standing regarding theology and church leadership as well as by the paternalism of the Europeans. Some of them tended to align themselves with the newly emerging AICs.³⁹

32 See Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen*, 66–72.

33 See Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen*, 117–28.

34 See Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen*, 74 and 76–78.

35 See Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen*, 81.

36 See Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen*, 90.

37 See Ward, *Deutsche Lutheraner und englische Anglikaner*. On the Hermannsburg Mission in Southern Africa, see Karl E. 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).

38 See Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen*, 175–77.

39 See *Auf getrennten Wegen*, 202f. On the designation of the AICs, see note 2 above.

Lutheran missionary work among indigenous Africans began in West Africa in the early nineteenth century, when the Anglican CMS sent Lutheran Germans. In 1806, the Lutheran ordained missionaries Gustav Reinhold Nylander and Leopold Butscher were sent to Sierra Leone. They had both been trained in the Berlin Mission seminar of Johannes Jaenicke.⁴⁰ Despite the Lutheran faith of the first missionaries, Anglican churches were later founded on the basis of the work of the CMS. Similarly, because of the interdenominational orientation of the Basel Mission, the missionary work of the Basel missionaries in West Africa (which emerged beginning in 1827 and were also mainly carried out in the early years by Lutherans) did not result in the establishment of devoutly Lutheran churches, but rather in Reformed and Union churches.

The situation was different in East Africa. There, distinctly Lutheran evangelism was carried out, especially during the era of German imperialism. For the most part, the missionary work was attributed to the expeditions and plans of two Basel-trained missionaries, Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810–1881) and Johannes Rebmann (1820–1876), even though the mission appeared much later. Krapf and Rebmann arrived in East Africa in 1844.⁴¹

Nevertheless, from the outset, missionary work was not only a Western undertaking. African Christians ably and effectively evangelized among their relatives, neighbors, and friends, and even in remote areas outside of their native territory. Without this indigenous missionary work, Western missionary efforts would have quickly failed. In addition, indigenous people were critical in a number of related roles: as language teachers for the missionaries, as school teachers (and later female school teachers) for the local children, as translators and sources of information about local customs and traditions, and in many other roles.⁴² When missionaries went into new areas to establish a mission, they were usually accompanied by local catechists or other staff from neighboring regions. Of course, these African employees were only rarely mentioned in mission history, generally not until recent times.⁴³

40 *Church Missionary Society, Register of Missionaries (Clerical, Lay & Female), and Native Clergy, From 1804 to 1904*, in two parts; University of Birmingham, Special Collections Archives, Sign.: CMS BV 2500, [1904], nos. 3+4.

41 See Karl F. Ledderhose, “Krapf, Johann Ludwig,” *General German Biography* 17 (1883): 49–55, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd118715496.html#adbcontent>; see also Ledderhose, “Rebmann, Johann,” *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 27 (1888): 485–89, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd116368705.html#adbcontent>.

42 One example among many is provided by G.D. Yigbe, “Von Gewährsleuten zu Gehilfen und Gehilfen. Der Beitrag afrikanischer Mitarbeiter zur Entstehung einer verschriftlichten Kultur in Deutsch-Togo,” in *Mission global. Eine Verflechtungsgeschichte seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, eds. Rebekka Habermas and Richard Hölzl (Köln: Böhlau, 2014), 159–75. See also, from the perspective of an appreciation of the mission, Joseph W. Parsalaw, *A History of the Lutheran Church, Diocese in the Arusha Region from 1904 to 1958* (Erlangen: Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 1999).

43 See, for example, Leonard A. Mtaita, *The Wandering Shepherds and the Good Shepherd: Contextualization as the Way of Doing Mission with the Maasai in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanza-*

The early strategy of using Africans as missionaries in Africa was instituted less out of an appreciation for the indigenous population than out of the experience that German missionaries often did not survive their first year in Africa. European missionary societies assumed that blacks, no matter where they were born, were best suited for the climate and living conditions in Africa. In 1843, the Basel Mission started using Christians from Caribbean churches for evangelism in West Africa.⁴⁴

The CMS ordained the first African bishop, Samuel Crowther (1809–1891), in 1881 in what is today Nigeria. In the wake of the First World War, all German missionaries were expelled from Tanzania in 1920. This brought about a dramatic change, as the African communities were now independent – at least until the stations were taken over by other mission organizations and/or the missionaries returned a few years later. Teachers and evangelists assumed control of both the church leadership and the missionary initiatives.⁴⁵ The churches, however, did not gain broad autonomy until after the Second World War. The first indigenous bishop of the Lutheran Church of Northern Tanganyika, Stefano Ruben Moshi (1906–1976), was elected in 1960. He was the son of the first indigenous missionary of the Leipzig Mission, Ruben Moshi.⁴⁶

4 European Missions and African Cultures

The Lutheran missionaries' access to the indigenous African religions and cultures varied widely. It generally depended on the time, place, and the personality of the missionaries.⁴⁷ The respective African culture they encountered also played a role. In most cases, African religion and culture had less of an impact on the missionaries' perceptions than the prejudices that were manifested in Europe. Southern Africa had an entirely different history than West and East Africa. By the time the large wave of European and North American missionaries arrived in southern Africa, the region had already witnessed relatively prosperous white settler communities, and in some areas, there were established Lutheran churches. In southern Africa, the indigenous communities existed alongside the white communities, which in fact often re-

nia, *Pare Diocese* (Erlangen: Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 1998), 116 f, on the beginnings of the mission among the Maasai.

⁴⁴ Cf. Katja Füllberg-Stolberg, "Ein Sauerteig christlichen Lebens in der Masse afrikanischen Heidentums". Westindische Konvertiten an der Goldküste (1843–1850)," in *Mission global*, 31–57; Schlat-ter, *Basler Mission*, 6–12 and 32–36.

⁴⁵ See Sundkler and Steed, *History*, 879 f.; Maanga, *Church Growth*.

⁴⁶ See Sundkler and Steed, *History*, 882. In 1963, the church joined with two other regional churches to form the ELCT.

⁴⁷ An analysis and categorization of the cultural access of German missionaries during imperialism is found in Altena, "Häuflein Christen," 98–144.

jected the former. In contrast, the missionaries in West and East Africa were more strongly oriented toward the indigenous population.

After a brief overview, the following section will discuss an example from East Africa Tanzania. In most regions the missionaries rarely transmitted confessions, catechisms, and rituals from Europe to Africa unaltered. Much more often, they adapted them to the local conditions and needs.⁴⁸

The first Lutheran German missionaries, sent by the CMS, arrived in West Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They were explicitly charged with making amends for the evils of European slavery through Christian proselytizing. In other words, they were to lead the local population to the kingdom of God and eternal bliss.⁴⁹ They were quite open-minded toward the Africans as people. They sometimes equated the locals with Europeans or even attributed higher intelligence or greater skill to them in their mission reports.⁵⁰ At the same time, they typically described the African culture they encountered negatively. They traced the problematic characteristics, however, back to the long period of oppression and slavery. As in Europe, revivalist Lutherans hoped that evangelization would solve social problems. The idea of progress was inherent to this early mission. The goal of progress in the world entailed Europeanization, albeit without the perceived negative aspects of contemporary Europe (industrialization, urbanization, pauperism, de-Christianization, and “moral decline”). The missionaries attempted early on to establish “purely Christian” locations in Africa that were organized according to their ideas of Christian life. Simultaneously, they not only fought against the slave trade and slavery, but they fought also intensely against the liquor trade and other practices imported from Europe, which in their view contributed to “moral decay.”⁵¹

When it was recognized that the Africans could not be converted either quickly or *en masse* to the Christian lifestyle that the missionaries propagated, a period of disillusionment set in. From this point onward, African religions, cultures, and people were no longer viewed in a positive light. Concurrent to these experiences, and largely independent of them, theories of a hierarchy of the “races” were beginning to take hold in Europe. People with dark skin landed on the lower end of the

48 See, for example, von Sicard, *The Lutheran Church*, 154–58 and 180–83. Some missionaries undertook these adaptations with the approval of the mission leadership, others without its knowledge. They rarely contravened specific instructions. There are abundant discussions about the right form of confession and catechism in the mission sources.

49 The original name of the CMS, the “Society for Missions to Africa and the East,” already hinted at this focus. An explicit justification is provided in the first issue of the newly established journal of the CMS, the *Church Missionary Record* 1 (1830): 1f.

50 See, for example, *Der evangelische Heidenbote* (1840): 89: “seitdem hat es sich auch hinlänglich bewiesen, daß der Neger dieselbe Fähigkeit besitze, wie der Europäer.”

51 For one example among many, with illustrative pictures and, above all, captions, see *Der evangelische Heidenbote* (1914): 64–66. The Hermannsburg Mission took the concept of “Christian” villages to the furthest extreme by deliberately sending out non-academically educated farm laborers and craftsmen. See, for example, Bohemian, *August Hardeland*, 173–75.

scale, although they had previously been regarded as “noble savages” and as role models for Europeans.⁵²

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, the mission theology changed once again. Put simply, there were now two approaches: one direction sought to transmit European – more precisely, German, British, or French – culture to Africa by way of Christianity. African communities were to be founded and organized according to the European model. Thus, Lutheranism in Africa was meant to closely resemble Lutheranism in Germany.⁵³ Not only would this strengthen the unity of Lutheran churches worldwide, but it also allowed for the export of German culture – which was entirely deliberate. Sometimes the mission stood in the service of imperialism; in other cases, it used colonial and imperial structures for its own work. Around the turn of the century, the missionaries also viewed themselves increasingly as Germans (or as English, French, or Swedish, respectively).

Mission work also went in another direction, however. Precisely because of the increasing prominence of the nation and ethnicity in Europe, mission work in the mission territories emphasized local culture and language and everything that was thought to belong to a people – “das Volk.” Christianity was to be integrated into the indigenous culture, thus transforming it from the inside out. To this end, it was deemed necessary to preserve the local culture.

Bruno Gutmann (1876–1966) undertook this type of Lutheran mission from 1902 to 1938 (which was temporarily interrupted by his expulsion, due to the First World War, from 1920 to 1926). He worked on Kilimanjaro in what is today Tanzania after a training period, first with the Chaga (Chagga) in Masama and later in Moshi. Gutmann was sent by the Leipzig Mission. Theologically, he stood in the tradition of the mission’s first inspector, Karl Graul (1814–1864). He was otherwise heavily influenced by the first chair of mission studies in Germany, Gustav Warneck. In this tradition, Gutmann also emphasized the importance of ethnicity, “national character,” and local traditions for Christianization.

In Masama and Moshi, he consequently made an effort to preserve the indigenous culture. On the one hand, he collected traditional stories and narratives and put them down in writing. The Chaga, as a result, have records of their history that would otherwise have been lost. Indeed, when they returned to their heritage in the second half of the twentieth century, the traditional accounts that Gutmann and other missionaries had collected were a critical resource.

On the other hand, the appreciation of the indigenous culture had a negative impact on the Chaga. Gutmann, who wanted to preserve the culture, in the process also actively inhibited the Chaga’s cultural development. As a conservative missionary, moreover, he wanted to preserve the past. A number of progress-oriented Chaga

⁵² See, for example, Ute Frevert, *Eurovisionen. Ansichten guter Europäer im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Perlenbacher, 2003), 82.

⁵³ On mimesis and the presumption that Africans were not entirely equal to Europeans, see especially Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2012 [1994]), 121–31.

therefore turned away from the mission; they sought to strengthen their influence and importance by dressing like Europeans, speaking European languages – mainly English –, and adopting European practices. Gutmann moved to prevent this, however.⁵⁴ The preservation of indigenous culture went hand in hand with the relegation of the indigenous people to a subordinate status to that of the Europeans. Both culture and hierarchy needed to be upheld.

For both political and ecclesiastical order, this meant that groups which had previously occupied a minor leadership role gained influence. There was no change in ecclesiological theory, only in actual practice. In Moshi, for example, the church elders – who supported the missionary – gained increasing clout, while teachers and other full-time employees lost their standing.⁵⁵

Gutmann devised a theology that related to the Chaga culture, as he perceived it. It reconciled elements that had developed under European Christianity with those of the Chaga culture. The community thus stood at the center of his theological preaching because of the great importance that community had for the Chaga. In this *topos*, Gutmann saw an opportunity to combine Christianity and indigenous culture.

The emphasis on community, and particularly its elevation as an absolutely essential element of indigenous culture, implied for Gutmann that no social differentiation should be allowed to take place. This was yet another reason he was opposed to the development of the Chaga and to social stratification (a position which his prominent standing as a white missionary would have relativized over time). According to Gutmann's interpretation, the preservation of culture meant preserving the past – an understanding that others of his religious persuasion also represented in Europe. In the African context, the European missionaries construed this view in such a way that they decided for themselves (or at least they sought to decide) which elements of African cultures were important and worth preserving. Therefore, the appreciation of African cultures at the turn of the twentieth century was all too often accompanied by the incapacitation of the African people.

To be sure, this form of indigenization of Lutheran churches by giving priority to “dem Volk” also raised awareness of the importance of ethnicity and nation in Africa. Early advocates of African independence – ecclesiastical and political alike – were often trained in mission schools or had close contact with missions that intervened in the indigenous culture and pursued strategies influenced by an appreciation of the “Volk” concept when they were growing up. The incapacitation of African Christians in connection with nationalization was also one of the factors that led to the establishment of AICs.

However, from the beginning, mission work was not only a European enterprise. The first generation of African converts already had a missionary effect. The longer

⁵⁴ See Klaus Fiedler, *Christentum und afrikanische Kultur. Konservative deutsche Missionare in Tansania 1900–1940* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1983), 111.

⁵⁵ See Fiedler, *Christentum und afrikanische Kultur*, 52.

Christianity existed in a region, the more central the role of indigenous Christians became in spreading it. This was evident in Tanzania, especially for the Chaga, from the mid-1910s.⁵⁶ It is worth noting that the Chaga primarily thought of themselves as Lutherans, and only secondarily as Christians. Denominational loyalty was so inherent to this group that Christianity and Lutheranism were put on the same level.⁵⁷ They even transmitted this peculiar feature in their missions.

The mission among the Maasai, who were also in Tanzania, began in the region of Arusha in 1904⁵⁸ and spread more widely in 1927, between the First and Second World Wars. The African communities founded by German-speaking missionaries before the First World War had since won their independence. Among the Maasai, in addition to the Leipzig missionaries, indigenous evangelists from other areas of Tanzania were active. Their involvement contributed significantly to the success of the mission among the Maasai, whose nomadic lifestyle was not only foreign to the German missionaries, but also contradicted the latter's understanding of sedentariness as a fundamental condition for a Christian lifestyle.⁵⁹ Here, too, ecclesiological concepts were translated into the local context. The Church, for instance, was "the New Brotherhood of God."⁶⁰ The Maasai understanding of brotherhood (*or-porror*) as solidarity within an age group was thus extended to the community of all Christians.

5 African Lutheran Churches and AICs

Generally, African Lutheran churches emerged from a specific mission. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), for example, consists of a merger of the early mission churches of the EMDOA/Bethel Mission, the Berlin and Leipzig Missionary Societies, and Lutheran missions from Scandinavia and the USA.⁶¹ Most African Lutheran churches refer positively to their mission history and emphasize their similarities. Some feel more strongly connected to the Lutheran heritage than is the case in today's European Lutheran churches. The influence of European missions has remained in a number of these churches for some time.

Broadly speaking, it is possible to distinguish between three types of African churches: conservative denominational churches, moderate traditional churches,

56 See Godson S. Maanga, *Church Growth in Tanzania: The Role of Chagga Migrants within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania* (Neuendettelsau: Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 2012).

57 See Maanga, *Church Growth in Tanzania*, 18 and 404.

58 On the mission in Arusha, see Parsalaw, *History of the Lutheran Church*.

59 On the Maasai mission, see Mtaita, *Wandering Shepard*; Kiel, *Christen in der Steppe*. On sedentariness, see Becker, "'Gehet hin in alle Welt ...' Sendungsbewusstsein in der evangelischen Missionsbewegung der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Evangelische Theologie* 72 (2012): 134–54.

60 See Mtaita, *Wandering Shepards*, 162.

61 See Katabaro, "Ist das noch lutherisch?" 83f. The ELCT was founded in 1963.

and AICs – which, after a history of more than one hundred years, may have acquired conservative traits, too. AICs developed in the second half of the nineteenth century as a counter-movement to the mission churches. An AIC was founded in Basutoland in 1872.⁶² They gained great visibility from the 1890s onward and distanced themselves from the cultural, theological, and, for the most part, the religious heritage of European missions. Most emphasized characteristics that were perceived to be African. These include certain practices, such as polygamy, as well as a specific way of interacting with spirits; they display an interest in salvation and healing as well as other issues that have receded into the background in Europe in most Protestant churches and ecclesial communities since the Enlightenment.⁶³

Efforts to discipline the AICs with the help of categorization have been made several times. One of the oldest approaches comes from the Swedish mission scholar and former bishop in Tanzania, Bengt Sundkler (1908–1995). He distinguished between two types of AICs: Ethiopian and Zionist churches.⁶⁴ The Ethiopian churches often resembled the mission churches in ecclesiology and theology – using elements understood as genuinely African. The Zionist churches, in most cases, could be assigned to the category of Pentecostal churches. Encounters with the Holy Spirit and healings stood in the foreground.

In the 1890s, the idea emerged that the Ethiopian church was a genuine African church, and it became a model for many other African churches.⁶⁵ With recourse to Psalm 68:32, in which Kush (Nubia, Egypt) “[will] stretch out his hands to God,”⁶⁶ the

⁶² See Hohmann, *Auf getrennten Wegen*, 195. Mazambara (*Self-Understanding*, 23) dates the earliest AIC to 1815.

⁶³ A contextualizing discussion of polygamy is found in Mtaita, *Wandering Shepard*, 211–31; on possession, see 236–54.

⁶⁴ Sundkler, *Bantupropheten in Südafrika* (Stuttgart: Evangelische Verlag Werk, 1964), esp. 60–67. On the role of apostles in AICs, see Mazambara, *Self-Understanding*; here there is also a discussion of different kinds of typologization, 52–76.

⁶⁵ Edward W. Blyden, *African Life and Customs. Reprinted from the Sierra Leone Weekly News* (London: African Publication Society, 1969); J. Hanciles, “Back to Africa: White Abolitionists and Black Missionaries,” in *African Christianity*, 191–216; Ogbu, “Ethiopianism in African Christianity,” in *African Christianity*, 258–77; Kalu, “West African Christianity: Padres, Pastors, Prophets, and Pentecostals,” in *Introducing World Christianity*, ed. Charles E. Farhadian (Chichester/Malden, MA: Wiley, 2012), 36–50. There was a large Orthodox church in Ethiopia. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, Evangelical mission societies began to work in Ethiopia. In the twentieth century, various Lutheran missions found success, especially among those who belonged only to the governing group, the Amhara. In 1959, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) was founded, and it was renamed the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Ethiopia (ECMY) in 1969. It is a Lutheran Union Church. See Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (Stockholm/Addis Abeba: The Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, 1978); Øyvind M. Eide, *Revolution & Religion in Ethiopia: The Growth & Persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church, 1974–85* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000); Olav Sæverås, “On Church-Mission Relations in Ethiopia 1944–1969, with Special Reference to the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Lutheran Missions” (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 1974).

⁶⁶ In Ethiopia today, Cushitic languages are spoken, among others.

Ethiopian church was attributed to the oldest tradition. Furthermore, Ethiopia was the only African country to successfully repel a European colonial invasion.⁶⁷ The AICs, which wanted to actively reject the paternalism of European missionaries while emphasizing tradition, took their cue from the Ethiopian church.⁶⁸

The conservative denominational churches in particular, together with some AICs, share a strict biblical literalism. They are also united by a theology that is often based less on a theological system than on certain practices, which engender the theology. “Doing theology” is usually considered to be more important than theological theory and systematic theology. It is combined with a specific form of biblicism, which attempts to derive answers to current problems directly from the Bible.⁶⁹

A third characteristic of many African churches is an explicit discussion of questions of spirituality and a belief in spirits. The approaches vary, but in most regions and churches of Africa, European – enlightened – answers were perceived as unsatisfactory. Indeed, African Christians often felt as though they were not being taken seriously by the European missions – which was yet another reason for the establishment of AICs. In addition, many AICs emerged out of spiritual or prophetic movements.⁷⁰ By the end of the twentieth century, almost all AICs had rejected divination and sorcery. Nonetheless, their attitude toward ancestor worship was ambiguous.⁷¹

Given that the AICs have such a large number of members and such far-reaching influence in Africa, Zimbabwe-born mission scholar Allan Anderson likened them at the turn of the twenty-first century to the European Reformation of the sixteenth century. He suggests that they have a similarly comprehensive meaning for global Christianity as did the Reformation.⁷²

6 Theology in Africa in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

Christian theology in Africa is characterized by a wide spectrum. African Christians reacted to the very different influences of the various missionary societies and missionaries in diverse ways, which in turn led to a multiplicity of approaches and positions. The following section will discuss four theological currents: first, conservative religious positions from consciously Lutheran churches; second, a supplemental Lutheran approach, which attempts to show how Luther’s teachings could be transferred to the African context; third, conceptions of Black Theology;

⁶⁷ See Allan Anderson, *African Reformation. African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001), 16.

⁶⁸ See Pobe and Ositelu, *African Initiatives*, 21–23.

⁶⁹ See Anderson, *African Reformation*, 222.

⁷⁰ See Anderson, *African Reformation*, 34.

⁷¹ Cf. Anderson, *African Reformation*, 195 and 202.

⁷² See Anderson, *African Reformation*, 4 and 7.

and fourth, theologies that work out the similarities between African and European Christian history, and in the process draw on the Reformation experiences in Europe. They do this in order to integrate a central event for European Christianity into their theology and thereby to emphasize the similarities to a greater extent, in the sense of a World Christianity.

In Africa, conservative confessional Lutheran theology looks back on the Lutheran theology mediated in the nineteenth century as “truly” Christian. The Africans’ point of reference is the respective founding history of their church. In this way, positions are set out in theological thought – as well as in the ecclesiological order and in ethical attitudes – that are rooted in the European revivalist Lutheran confession-alism of the nineteenth century. This theology considers a departure from the concepts of the missionaries of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a falling away from the “real” faith. It applies to developments in Africa – such as, for example, when traditional music is included in church services –, but also to those in Europe and across global Christendom. It also includes positions that are represented in the Lutheran World Federation.

Brighton Juel Katabaro, a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), sees “the Lutheran heritage” as being at risk due to the preaching of the prosperity gospel, healing prayers, and exorcism, as well as “crying out in prayer.” He notes, “In general, the silence in worship that we have inherited as the ELCT from the Lutheran missionaries is missing.”⁷³ Katabaro identifies the cause of these changes as the influence of Pentecostal and charismatic churches, whose practices have also been adopted in the ELCT. He seeks to preserve the Lutheran tradition as it was mediated in its European guise. At the same time, he unwittingly sees this incarnation, which is entirely in the spirit of the first missionaries, as constitutive of Lutheran doctrine.

In Wittenberg in 2004, Bishop Walter Obare Omwanza spoke on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) about defending so-called “true” Lutheran positions by means of his church.⁷⁴ As correct positions, he singled out the teachings of the Lutheran German and Scandinavian missionaries from the pietistic traditions, represented in the territories that now belong to Kenya, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These appear to have greater influence on the definition of “Lutheranism” in the ELCK – or the current within the ELCK that Obare Omwanza represents – than genuine Reformation Lutheran teachings. Unions and ecumenism are rejected for confessional, theological, ecclesio-political, and ethical reasons – along with, for example, the Lutheran World Federation, which Obare Omwanza accuses of having abandoned central Lutheran positions. He cites the rejec-

⁷³ Katabaro, “Ist das noch lutherisch?” 84 and 86f.

⁷⁴ See W.O. Omwanza, “Konfessionelles Luthertum in Ostafrika,” *Lutherische Beiträge* 10 (2005): 43–51.

tion of women's ordination and the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* as evidence of the confessional loyalty of his church.⁷⁵

How little these positions are considered tenable in Europe is demonstrated in the introductory note to Obare Omwanza's contribution to the religiously conservative *Lutherische Beiträge* of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany: "Naturally, an African sees the currents that influenced modern history, philosophy, and theology in Europe through *his own eyes*."⁷⁶ The footnote simultaneously illustrates the editor's desire to distance himself from the positions represented in the article and to make an appeal to the reader's understanding. At the same time, it also points to the expected sense of superiority of German-speaking readers who might find this contribution backward.

In addition to these conservative conceptualizations, there are a few approaches which, from a decidedly Lutheran standpoint and perspectives based on genuine Lutheran research, evince a confessionally non-conservative African Lutheran theology.⁷⁷ In an essay from 2014, Tom Joseph Omolo presents a concise overview of Lutheran teachings and their potential importance in the African context. He cites, among others, the concept of the human as a relational being. "Such an anthropological framework would perhaps be more applicable to African socio-religious life than to any other continent in the twenty-first century."⁷⁸ Previously, however, such approaches have failed to garner attention, either among the global Lutheran congregation or in African theologies.

Many African theologies were heavily influenced by the liberation theological conceptions of Black Theology. They applied approaches from Latin American liberation theology and combined them with specific African experiences. In this regard, the South African theologian Allan Aubrey Boesak, one of the most influential representatives of Black Theology, can be cited as an example. Responding to the experience of Apartheid, in which even black and white churches of the same denomination were segregated and white Christians oppressed their black peers, he developed a theology – in dialogue with the Bible and the Christian tradition – that centered on the experience of oppression (of "blackness"). As in the Lutheran tradition (although without direct reference to it), he explained that the doctrine of justification be-

75 See Omwanza, "Konfessionelles Luthertum," 49.

76 Omwanza, "Konfessionelles Luthertum," 43.

77 See T.J. Omolo, "Luther in Africa," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, eds. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Lubomir Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 621–26, here 621. See also K.G. Appold, "Luther's Abiding Significance for World Protestantism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 598–610. See also the depiction of Naaman Lâiser's theology by Christel Kiel, *Christen in der Steppe. Die Máasai-Mission der Nord-Ost-Diözese in der Lutherischen Kirche Tansanias* (Erlangen: Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 1996), 357–69.

78 Omolo, *Luther in Africa*, 623.

longed to the heart of faith.⁷⁹ Here, justification is not primarily intended to mean spiritual justification, but rather, as Boesak puts it, “the truth of the biblical revelation is God’s liberation of the oppressed.”⁸⁰ On this basis, he developed an ethic of liberation and the equality of all people.

In relation to the Lutheran doctrine and way of life, his approach stands out in two respects. First, the doctrine of justification is employed fruitfully for the African context. It emerges against a different backdrop and has much more profound political and social implications than Omolo’s explicitly Lutheran theology of almost forty years later. Of course, the doctrine of justification is not an exclusively Lutheran approach, and Boesak himself belonged to the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. Nonetheless, the fact that the doctrine of justification was placed so unambiguously at the center of this theology alluded to the Reformation and provided a starting point for reformatory-liberation theological discussions.

On the other hand, Boesak also dealt explicitly with the history of Christianity. He described it as a history of decline – the pre-Constantine church, in which all people were equal, became the discriminatory state church. He accused the Reformers of having been neither interested in peoples outside of Europe, who were enslaved and oppressed even then, nor engaged on behalf of the oppressed within Europe (whom Boesak also defines as “black”). In terms of historical impact, the factual correctness of this view was undoubtedly less important than the fact that it was embedded in a convincing theological conceptualization, relating the history of the Reformation to the experiences of black people in Africa.

The Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako (1945–2008) was especially concerned with how European and African religious histories can be related to each other in the sense of World Christianity. He sought to present African religious history as an integral part of the global history of Christianity, which in fact it is, and to highlight historical similarities.⁸¹ In this vein, he explicitly deals with the history of the Reformation in an essay from 2011 – one of the very few attempts to do so by an African theologian.⁸² Like Boesak, he detects structural parallels, but on a completely different level – namely, that of cultural mediation. Thus, where it is the task of theology in contemporary Africa to communicate and translate in African cultures a Christian faith that has been shaped over a long European history, the Refor-

⁷⁹ See also Eberhard Jüngel, *Das Evangelium von der Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen als Zentrum des christlichen Glaubens. Eine theologische Studie in ökumenischer Absicht* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

⁸⁰ Allan A. Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence: A Social-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Wipf & Stock, 1977), 105.

⁸¹ This approach can already be found in his dissertation. See Bediako, *Theology and Identity*.

⁸² See Bediako, “Conclusion: The Emergence of World Christianity and the Remaking of Theology,” in *Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*, eds. William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik, and Janice A. McLean (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 243–55. For more detail on historiography and African theology, see Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

mation was similarly a time when a Latin Christian faith, dominated by longstanding academic and monastic tradition, had to be communicated and translated into the languages of the “barbarians” in the north.⁸³ In both cases, it was a matter of transcending cultural boundaries. With his description of uneducated Christians during the European Reformation as “barbarians,” Bediako highlights another parallel between Africans and the people of the sixteenth century – one of perception, not reality – and, at the same time, puts the Europeans in their rightful place, from which one can then initiate a dialogue among equals.

7 The Lutheran Reformation and Africa: Theological Perspectives

The history of Lutheranism in Africa is long and varied. Today, there are some Lutheran churches that are members of ecumenical communities, others that are members of the Lutheran World Federation, and still others – like the ELCK – that accuse the LWF of having abandoned basic Lutheran doctrine.

In addition, there are not only churches of other Western denominations, but also genuinely African AICs, and in theology African concerns are usually – though certainly not always – deemed to be more important than differences in confessional teachings. Both the conscious belonging to the Lutheran denomination and the intentional demarcation from Western confessionalism developed out of the encounter with Western missionaries and in dialogue with a theology influenced by European history. One current within this wide-ranging African theology seeks to devise ways of aligning African and Western concerns or even of shaping Christian historiography internationally by referring back to the European Christian tradition, and especially to the Reformation as the central event in the history of Protestantism. In this manner, similarities are demonstrated in order to stress the linkages between Africa and the West.

Western theologies in general, and Lutheran theology in particular, could view this as a starting point. In dialogue with Lutheran theologies from Africa, as well as interdenominational African theologies, approaches could be developed that mediate the knowledge and experience of the Reformation in the present in a way that is viable for the future. This applies both to the theological interpretation of the teachings of Luther and the Reformation and to cultural transfers, which accompanied the Reformation in the sixteenth century and must be carried out again and again. For research on the history of Christianity, this approach entails focusing on common issues and concerns as well as highlighting and conveying diversity, which should re-

⁸³ See Bediako, “Conclusion,” 249. On translations in Christianity, also with reference to the history of the Reformation, see the fundamental study by Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001 [1989]).

place the mutual unidimensional perception of “Africa” or “the” Reformation. This goes against a monolithic depiction of Luther as well as a fixation on a particular state of affairs. The prerequisite for such a dialogue – an accurate historical contextualization of the Reformation as well as the cultures and religions of Africa – has already been accomplished in many regions. The mutual exchange of findings is still largely pending. Nonetheless, it would provide a valuable impetus to Luther research and to the study of the history of global Lutheranism – not only in Africa, but also in the West.