

**A Vision Frustrated:
Lutheran Missionaries to the Aborigines
of South Australia 1838-1853**

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ABSTRACT

In 1838 four missionaries from the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society in Dresden began work among the indigenous people of South Australia at the invitation of the chairman of the South Australia Company. This thesis explores the role theology played in shaping their aims, methods and experience, and in bringing their work to an end. It examines how their theology shaped a vision which differed from that dominant in the colony and lost them support from the government and other significant colonists. The missionaries aimed to evangelise the Aborigines, using vernacular languages, and envisioned the preservation of the Aborigines as a separate people with their own identity, rather than as dispersed and assimilated into European society. This was opposed by public policies of ‘civilisation’ and assimilation, and later, segregation of Aboriginal children. The thesis shows how theology influenced the policies of the Dresden Society, and the decisions the missionaries took when faced with the realities of colonial life, their relationships with other churches and their financial situation. To assess the relative influence of their theology on their experience, the thesis also considers other factors that hindered their work and brought it to an end, in particular the difficulties of evangelising a dispossessed, nomadic, indigenous population rapidly declining in numbers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of my advisor, Dr Carol Fort. I also wish to thank Lyall Kupke and Dr Lois Zweck at the Lutheran Archives, Adelaide, for their assistance with materials and translation, and those people who have lent me materials.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Colonial Secretary's Office
GRG	Government record group
PRG	Public record group
SLSA	State Library of South Australia
SRSA	State Records of South Australia

The Monument to the Kaurna on the site of the Piltawodli mission school.



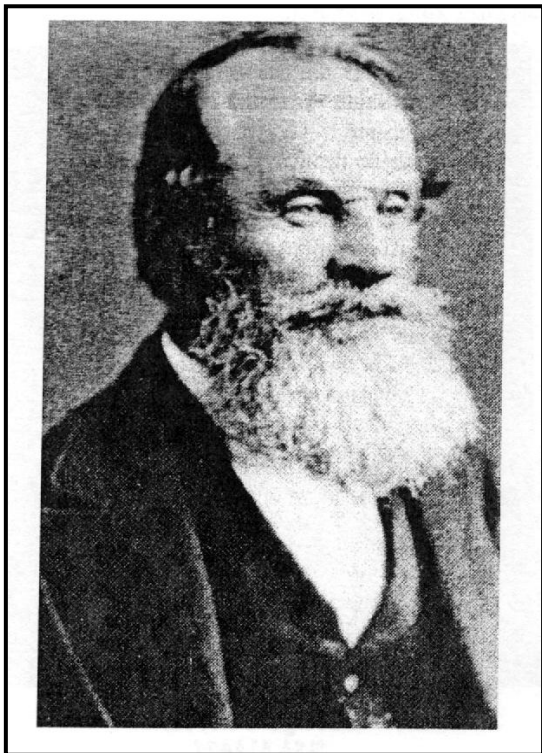
This monument stands on the north bank of the Torrens, North Adelaide, between Memorial Drive and the Morphett St. Bridge. The map on the above plaque shows the location of the mission school buildings, houses and huts at the Piltawodli Native Location.



Christian Gottlob Teichelmann and Clamor Wilhelm Schürmann as they appear on the Piltawodli monument. They are remembered as old men. However, Schürmann was twenty-three and Teichelmann thirty when they began work in South Australia. (Photographs by C Lockwood 2005)



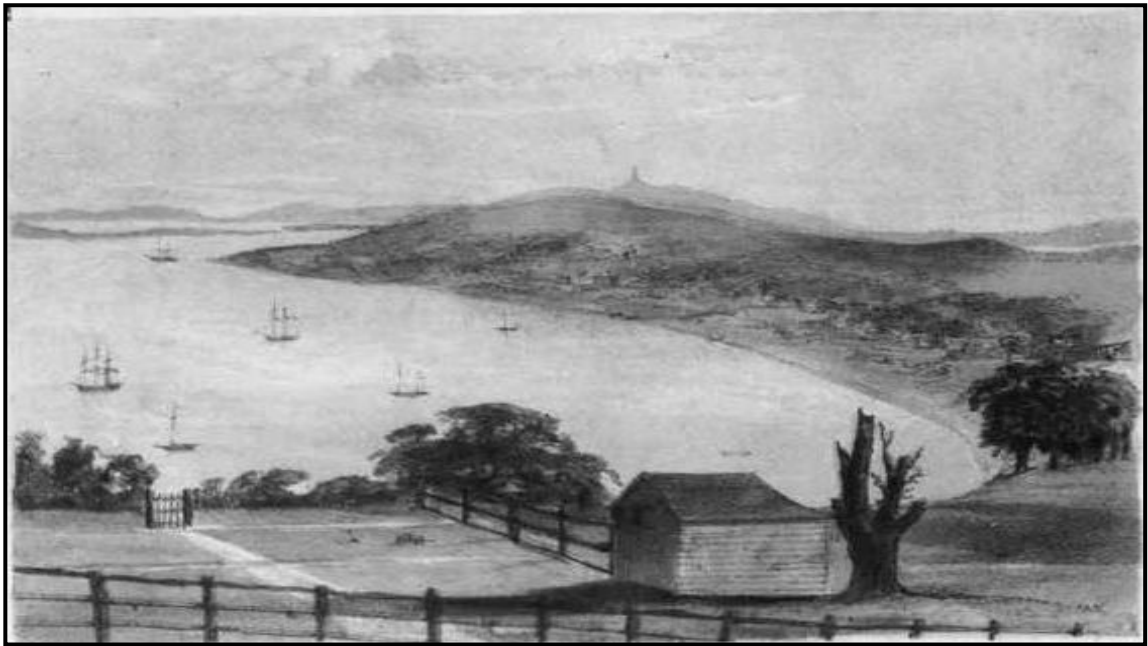
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Drawing by W A Cawthorne. Original in the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.



August Eduard Heinrich Meyer 1836
Photograph courtesy of the State Library of South Australia: SLSA B8236.



Samuel Gottlieb Klose
From *Happy was our Valley: The Douglas Family History*.



Port Lincoln View 1842

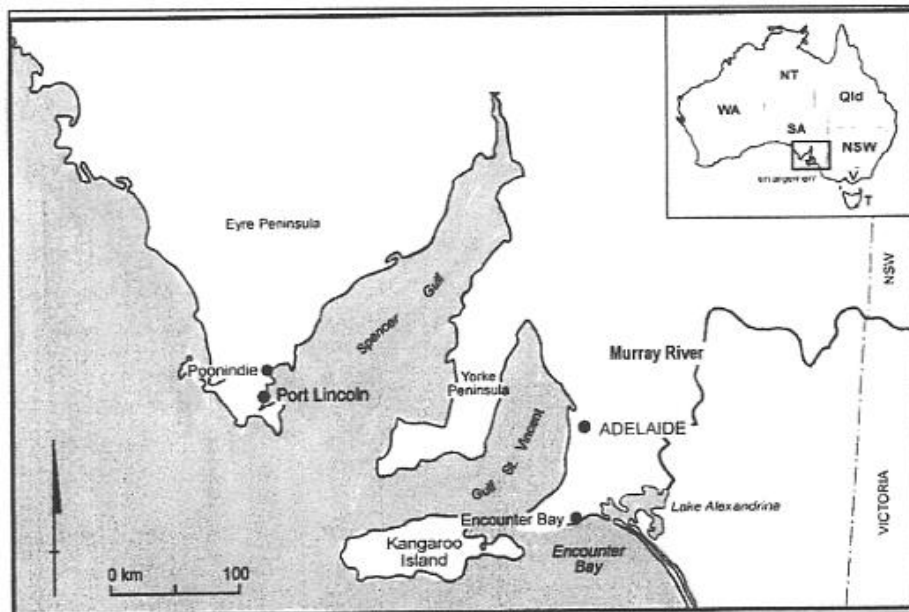
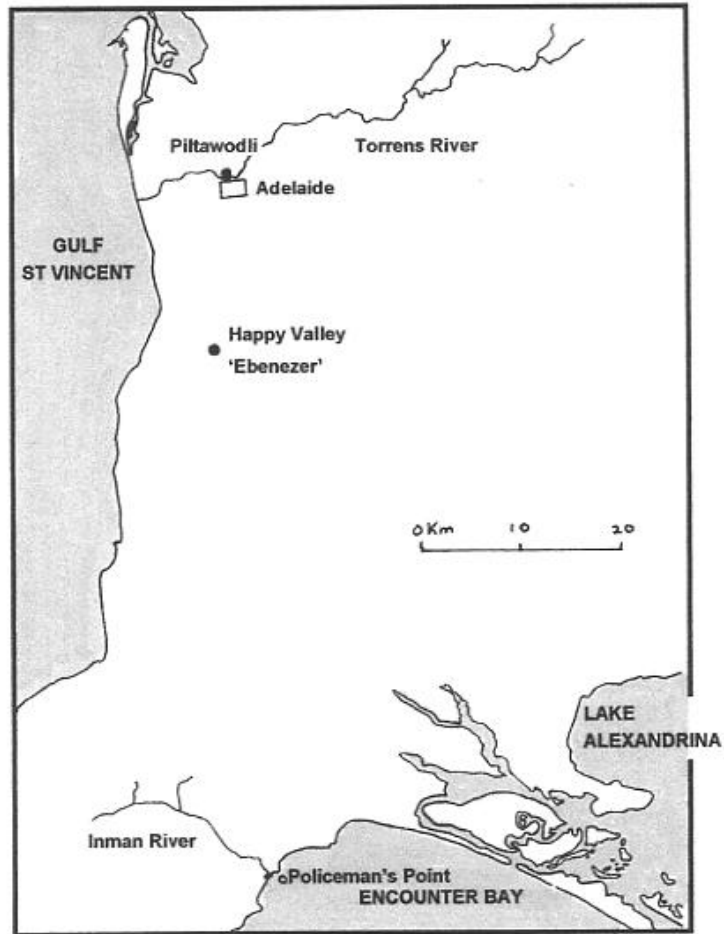
Work by George French Angas, courtesy of the State Library of South Australia: SLSA B7289/3



Encounter Bay 1846

Work by George French Angas, courtesy of the State Library of South Australia: SLSA B7289/3

Dresden Lutheran Mission Locations in South Australia



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On 12 October 1838, Christian Gottlob¹ Teichelmann (1807-1888) and Clamor Wilhelm Schürmann (1815-1893), from the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society in Dresden, arrived in South Australia. Originally hoping to go to India, they began Aboriginal mission work in South Australia at the request of George Fife Angas, Chairman of the South Australia Company. Angas promised five years' financial support. August Eduard Heinrich Meyer² (1813-1862) and Samuel Gottlieb Klose (1802-1889) followed in 1840. By 1853 the mission work of all the four had ceased. In 1848 the Mission Society headquarters moved from Dresden to Leipzig. *The Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Missions* states briefly: 'At first [the Leipzig Mission Society] sent missionaries to Australia but this project did not succeed.'³ These missionaries do not feature among pictures lining the Leipzig headquarters' walls today, or among the biographies on the Society's website. The South Australian mission was considered a failure, best forgotten.⁴

In seeking to understand this apparent failure, this thesis assumes these missionaries cannot be understood apart from their theology, and asks what role theology played in shaping their vision, methods and experience, and in bringing their work to an end.

This analysis of the Dresden men also raises questions of wider significance: Who should be responsible for community welfare and fund it? What is the relationship between church and state, especially when aims and values diverge? The thesis throws another light on the relationship between colonisers and missionaries, culture and theology and warns against a simple identification of Christianity with Western civilisation.

The Dresden Mission Society instructed its missionaries to gather information, keep diaries, and prepare detailed reports. Angas also asked for reports. Consequently these early Lutheran missionaries left significant records and the main source used by this thesis will be the missionaries' diaries and correspondence with their Society.

Recent years have seen renewed interest in these Lutheran missionaries for their unique linguistic and ethnographic records of the Kurna (Adelaide), Ramindjeri (Encounter Bay) and Parnkalla or Barngalla people (Port Lincoln). This arose from resources becoming more accessible to researchers. In 1960 the State Library of South Australia acquired two publications of Schürmann and Teichelmann on the language and customs

¹ Teichelmann's second name is often given as Gottlieb. Wm Bruce Kennedy, *Lutheran missionary to the Aborigines, Pastor Christian Gottlob Teichelmann 1807-1888, His Family, Life and Times*, Coolangatta, 1989, suggests his name was misspelt Gottlieb on an official document.

² Known as Heinrich Meyer.

³ Ernst Jaeschke, in Burton L Goddard (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Missions*, Camden, New Jersey, 1967, 267.

⁴ Dr Lois Zweck, Lutheran Archives researcher. Personal communication.

of the Kurna people, subsequently reprinting them.⁵ This led to a resurrection of the Kurna language of the Adelaide area and a renewal of Kurna cultural awareness.⁶ Meyer's work on the Ramindjeri language and culture⁷ is being used in Ngarinndjeri language and culture revival programs.⁸

Other resources becoming more accessible have been Clamor Schürmann's diaries and some letters in old-German script which his great-grandson Edwin A Schürmann discovered on microfilm in the State Library of South Australia's archives. A partial translation, available in the South Australian Museum, formed the basis for Edwin Schürmann's *I'd Rather Dig Potatoes, Clamor Schürmann and the Aborigines of South Australia 1838-1853*. Geoff Noller is currently retranslating the full diaries for the Lutheran Archives in Adelaide. This material is not all new as diary entries became the basis for letters to Dresden, some of which were printed in the *Dresdener Missions-Nachrichten*.

In 1984 the Lutheran Archives in Adelaide acquired from the Leipzig Mission Society a large collection of correspondence between the Dresden Society and its South Australian missionaries.⁹ Leipzig staff had transcribed the old-German handwriting into modern German. The Lutheran Archives in Adelaide now have Schürmann's and Teichelmann's diaries, and correspondence between Teichelmann, Schürmann, Meyer and Klose and their Mission Society. Some letters are missing. Translation work is unfinished and varies in quality. Different translations exist of some material as accuracy has been hampered by faded, indecipherable handwriting. Friends of the Lutheran Archives, a volunteer group, have published Klose's correspondence¹⁰ and will soon publish Meyer's. Schürmann's letters, Teichelmann's diary, and letters from Dresden have been translated by Lutheran Archives volunteers. The University of Adelaide's Department of Linguistics has been translating Meyer's, Klose's and Teichelmann's letters. Most of Teichelmann's letters remain untranslated but, because much of their contents come from his diary, this is not a major omission for the purposes of this paper. This translation work has led to published papers by scholars primarily interested in linguistics, including Mary-Anne Gale, Heidi Kneebone, and

⁵ C. G. Teichelmann, *Aborigines of South Australia: illustrative and explanatory notes of the manners, customs, habits, and superstitions of the natives of South Australia*, Adelaide, 1841; C. G. Teichelmann and C. W. Schürmann, *Outlines of a grammar, vocabulary, and phraseology, of the aboriginal language of South Australia, spoken by the natives in and for some distance around Adelaide*, Adelaide, 1840.

⁶ See Rob Amery, 'The First Lutheran Missionaries in South Australia, their contribution to Kurna language reclamation and the reconciliation movement,' *Journal of Friends of the Lutheran Archives* no. 10, October 2000; and 'Beyond Their Expectations: Teichelmann and Schürmann's Efforts to Preserve the Kurna Language Continue to Bear Fruit', in Walter F Veit (ed.), *The struggle for souls and science: constructing the fifth continent: German missionaries and scientists in Australia*, Alice Springs, 2004.

⁷ H A E Meyer, *Vocabulary of the Aborigines of the Southern and Eastern Portions of the Settled Districts of South Australia*, Adelaide, 1843.

⁸ Mary-Anne Gale, *The Linguistic Legacy of H A E Meyer: Missionary to the Ramindjeri people of Encounter Bay, 1840-1848*. Conference paper, University of Adelaide, October, 2005.

⁹ Originals are now in Franckesche Stiftungen zu Halle, Studienzentrum August Hermann Francke archives.

¹⁰ Joyce Graetz, (ed.) *Missionary to the Kurna, the Klose Letters*, Friends of the Lutheran Archives Occasional Paper no.2, North Adelaide, 2002.

Cynthia Rathjen.¹¹ Document locations and translators can be found in the bibliography and will not normally appear in this work's footnotes.

This thesis has benefited from the works of church historians A Brauer and F J H Blaess.¹² The Dresden Society's annual reports and works by Ernst Otto¹³ and Hermann Karsten¹⁴ have provided theological background. In *One Blood, 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope*, John Harris discusses the Dresden missionaries' work in the broader Aboriginal Christian mission context.¹⁵ In her PhD thesis, Anne Scrimgeour uses Schürmann's and Klose's letters and Teichelmann's diary to explore what she calls South Australia's early 'civilising mission' and its focus on Aboriginal schools.¹⁶ She sees the missionaries as part of the colonisation process and 'Christianization' as an integral part of the 'civilisation' of the natives necessary if Aboriginal lands were occupied. This present thesis asks to what extent the missionaries' aim was to 'civilise' the Aborigines.

This thesis is also informed by newspaper articles, Colonial Secretaries' correspondence, Protector of Aborigines' reports, Angas papers and parliamentary papers which have also been examined by other writers. The records of the missionaries and their Society are the most valuable source because they provide unique insights not widely researched. This is especially so of jointly written missionary letters and conference reports and Dresden letters addressed to its missionaries jointly. Missionary records are often treated cautiously by scholars. They are seen as propagandist or as reporting what mission societies wanted to hear. However these Dresden missionaries' records are remarkably frank and honest. They often report things the Society would not have liked to hear and which did not reflect well on the writers. They express despair and failures as well as joys. As suggested by the choice of sources, this thesis attempts analysis from the missionaries' perspective.

The photographs of Teichelmann and Schürmann on the monument at Piltawodli (see Illustrations) are of mature, experienced men and these are the images most familiar to us. However, it is important to remember that Schürmann was twenty-three and Teichelmann thirty when they arrived in South Australia. Similarly, Protector

¹¹ Mary-Anne Gale, *The Linguistic Legacy of H A E Meyer*; Heidi Kneebone, 'Why Do You Work? Indigenous perceptions of Lutheran mission work in the Encounter Bay area, 1840-47,' *Journal of Friends of the Lutheran Archives*, no.10, October 2000; Cynthia Rathjen, 'A Difficult and Boring Task: Clamor Schürmann and the language achievements among the Parnkalla, Port Lincoln – 1840-1852,' *Journal of Friends of the Lutheran Archives*, no.8, October 1998.

¹² A Brauer, *Under the Southern Cross, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia*, Adelaide, 1956; 'A Further Page from the Life of the Fathers', *The Australian Lutheran Almanac*, Adelaide, 1930, 41-67; 'More Pages from the Life of the Fathers', *The Australian Lutheran Almanac*, Adelaide, 1937, 43-68. F J H Blaess, *The Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Australia and the Mission Work amongst the Australian Natives in connection with the Dresden (Leipzig) Lutheran Mission Society and the Hermannsburg Mission Institute 1838-1900*, BD Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St Louis, USA, 1940; 'Missions – Pioneers in Australia', serialized in *The Australian Lutheran*, Adelaide 1947-1948.

¹³ Ernst Otto, *Hundert Jahre Missionsarbeit*, 1979.

¹⁴ Hermann Karsten, *Die Geschichte der evangelisch-lutheran Mission in Leipzig*, Guenstow, 1893.

¹⁵ Sutherland, second edition, 1994.

¹⁶ Anne Scrimgeour, *Colonizers as Civilisers: Aboriginal Schools and the Mission to 'Civilise' in South Australia, 1839-1845*, PhD (draft copy), Charles Darwin University, 2007.

Moorhouse was twenty-six and Governor Grey twenty-nine when they began work in South Australia. All were young men feeling their way in a challenging and unfamiliar situation.

Structure of this thesis

To evaluate the work of the Dresden missionaries it is necessary to examine their theological background in Germany. This informed their mission aims, their methods and the decisions they made when faced with the realities of colonial life. The missionaries' theological perspectives resulted in a vision different from that dominant in the colony and influenced their relationships with government, colonists and other churches. In assessing the relative importance of their theology to their experience this thesis also evaluates other factors that hindered their work.

Chapter two will analyse the theology, background and vision of the missionaries. Chapter three will explore this vision in the South Australian context by looking at the three geographical areas of their work – the Adelaide area, Encounter Bay and Port Lincoln. Chapter four will examine the problems they faced. This will involve issues of support, relationships with Dresden and each other, the indigenous context, divergent colonial visions, and relationships with government and other churches. The concluding chapter argues that their theological background led them to a vision out of step with that dominant in the colony, but that the level of financial support was insufficient for them to pursue their vision independently. Thus it became impossible for them to overcome the practical difficulties of evangelising a nomadic, dispossessed people.

CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE AND MISSION VISION

This chapter will examine aspects of the missionaries' theology and background in Germany in order to throw light on their mission vision and approach. This background is also important in understanding decisions they made, their relationships with others in the colony, and the end of their work.

2.1 The Dresden background

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw a spiritual reawakening in Germany in reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment with its faith in autonomous human reason instead of divine revelation. The early stages of this revival were influenced by Pietism which downplays church doctrine and emphasises the inner response of the individual and its expression in Christian living: an emphasis characteristic of movements such as Methodism in England, and the Moravians in Germany. The revival found expression in new mission societies which tended to disregard doctrinal distinctions.¹⁷ The Dresden Mission Aid Society was formed in 1819 to support mission societies including the Basel Missionary Society which represented both the Lutheran and Reformed confessions. Dresden candidates trained at Basel became missionaries of the Basel or London Mission Societies.¹⁸

In 1817 Emperor Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia introduced into his overwhelmingly Lutheran realm a compulsory union of Lutheran and Reformed congregations, which was rigorously enforced from 1830. The persecution of Lutherans who objected to the new 'union' liturgy awakened Lutheran confessional consciousness.¹⁹ Objections centred on the Lutheran teaching of the Real Presence – the oral reception of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist as opposed to the symbolic understanding peculiar to Reformed theology. Some pastors forced to leave Prussia moved to Saxony, including Pastor Wermelskirch, who became the first director of the Dresden Mission Society. Similar objections strained relations between Dresden and Basel and these reached breaking point over the training of Saxon Lutheran students destined for Basel's Evangelical Lutheran Mission in India. The Dresden Society wanted them instructed in the Lutheran Confessions. Basel said 'Lutheran' should be understood historically, not doctrinally, and insisted that Lutheran students unwilling to attend joint communion services with Reformed students were unfit for missionary service. Dresden was forced to reconsider its Basel connection.²⁰

Meanwhile, Schürmann and Teichelmann were studying at the Berlin Mission Institute which had previously supplied missionaries to work with both Dutch and English

¹⁷ Adolph J Lohe, in J Bodensieck (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, Minneapolis, 1965, 1621.

¹⁸ Blaess, *The Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, 2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Otto, *Hundert Jahre*, 23-24.

mission societies while remaining Lutheran. However things changed when the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands (SPG) informed the Institute in 1836 that missionaries serving the SPG must be re-ordained as Anglican clergymen and accept the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, the definitive Anglican confession.²¹ The Bishop of Calcutta also took this position.²² Thus, when offered positions with the SPG in India, Schürmann and Teichelmann declined, unwilling to join a church they considered Reformed.²³ Told they could expect no other positions, they appealed to friends in Saxony. This led to the formation in 1836 of the independent Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society in Dresden,²⁴ unique at the time in making the Lutheran Confessions foundational for its witness.²⁵ The Society started its own seminary giving Schürmann and Teichelmann further training and training Meyer and Klose.

The seminary program was designed to give missionaries a thorough grounding in the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions. Greek and Hebrew were taught to help missionaries understand and accurately translate the Scriptures, and to provide linguistic skills which would help them learn indigenous languages more quickly. Those with lesser linguistic ability were trained as teachers rather than preachers. A comprehensive general education was also given. Many students had a trades background and all students were encouraged to develop useful practical skills, including medical knowledge, to care for themselves and those they worked among.²⁶

The Dresden Society asked the London Missionary Society for advice about beginning its own mission field. The LMS advised them to begin in an area comparatively close to Germany where mission work had already begun. Initially they should not tackle an isolated, distant field where the people had experienced no contact with Christianity. The LMS suggested the east coast of India because there the missionaries could work close to an English mission, and recommended that at least two missionaries be sent to the field.²⁷

In 1840 the Dresden Society commissioned its first missionary to India. Meanwhile George Fife Angas heard of the Dresden Society through Pastor August Kavel (who, assisted by Angas, later travelled to South Australia with his congregation, arriving in November 1838). Angas was a devout Baptist and very concerned about Aboriginal welfare. In 1837 he asked Dresden to send missionaries to South Australia, agreeing to support the Dresden Society with £100 pounds a year for five years, as long as he was

²¹ C W Schürmann, 'Obituary for Pastor C G Teichelmann,' *Der Lutherische Kirchenbote für Australien*, July 1887.

²² Kennedy, *Lutheran missionary to the Aborigines*, 1.

²³ Schürmann, autobiographical sketch 1836, cited in FJH Blaess, 'Missions – Pioneers in Australia,' *The Australian Lutheran*, Adelaide, April 9, 1947.

²⁴ *Eighteenth annual report of the Evangelical-Lutheran Mission Society at Dresden, covering the period from 17 August 1836 to 10 August 1937*, Dresden 1837, 9, Lutheran Archives, Adelaide.

²⁵ Bodensieck, *Encyclopedia*, 1641.

²⁶ *Eighteenth annual report*, 11-17.

²⁷ Otto, *Hundert*, 47-48.

satisfied with the missionaries' conduct.²⁸ Consequently, Schürmann and Teichelmann were sent to South Australia.

The Society gave reasons for this decision.²⁹ These included the fact that no missionaries were working among South Australian Aborigines, and South Australia's civil and religious freedom meant the missionaries could found free, independent Lutheran congregations. In addition, the Society believed Angas' support as chairman of the South Australia Company showed that he was 'concerned to make colonisation serve the extension of the kingdom of God' and he was 'not thinking of bringing the welfare of the poor heathen as a sacrifice to the colonists, as ... is said to be happening in British colonies.'³⁰

2.2 Lutheran theology and its implications for mission work

Lutheran theology teaches that people are incapable of attaining salvation through their own efforts.³¹ They are forgiven and reconciled to God entirely through faith in the atoning life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (justification by grace through faith).³² This has implications for mission work. Firstly, the Lutheran mission task is to offer the Gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation to all people because everyone needs forgiveness, irrespective of their conduct, culture or 'level of civilisation'. Secondly, the Lutheran emphasis on justification by grace through faith permits a greater openness to different cultural expressions of the Christian faith than is possible with theologies where the emphasis falls on sanctified living, with the temptation to define this in cultural terms. Through the Gospel, Lutheran theology teaches, the believer is brought into a relationship with God which expresses itself in gratitude to God and love for others. But he can add nothing to his salvation and is free in matters not prescribed in the New Testament.³³

Scrimgeour sees the Dresden missionaries as trying to 'civilise' the natives by Christianizing them. Peter Pfitzner questions this interpretation of Lutheran missionaries' work in Australia. He claims they were less affected by the 'educate and civilise' approach of the English. '[The] Lutheran emphasis on faith, not works, as the medium for salvation,' he wrote, 'provides space for variant cultural practices'.³⁴ An example of this can be seen in the 1850s' dispute among Leipzig missionaries in India about whether the Hindu caste system could continue among Christians. The Society believed allowances should be made because of the caste system's importance to the social fabric. Its Director distinguished between the caste system's religious elements and civil elements and outlined the Society's principle: 'Whatever is done in life and is

²⁸ *Eighteenth annual report*, 19-20.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 21-22.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 22.

³¹ 'Augsburg Confession', Article II, *The Book of Concord*.

³² AC, Article IV.

³³ Formula of Concord, Article X, *The Book of Concord*.

³⁴ Peter Pfitzner, *Agents of Colonialism? An inquiry into the role of Lutheran missions to Aborigines in Australia*, World Congress of Sociology paper, Durban, July 2006, 2.

incompatible with Christ must fall; what does not oppose the renewing power of the Gospel must endure.’ He warned against ‘imposing one’s own view as a rule on others in such matters.’³⁵ Regarding Lutheran missionaries in Australia, Pfitzner says:

The stereotype of missions as agents of colonialism does not acknowledge the extent to which missions were also agents of indigenous continuity through preservation of life, land, and language, accompanied by continuity in kinship protocols, ceremonies, stories and art, even if these changed significantly in the process.³⁶

Lutheran teaching emphasises the sole authority of the Bible as God’s Word, and conversion as the Holy Spirit creating faith through the Word.³⁷ For Lutheran missionaries this means it is essential to understand the culture, use the local language, translate the Scriptures and teach people to read them in their mother tongue, the language of the heart.

The Lutheran doctrine of the Two Kingdoms distinguishes between church and state.³⁸ According to this doctrine, God cares for his creation through civil authorities and institutions, and through individuals in their vocations and families (‘the kingdom of the left hand’), and through the proclamation of the Gospel, God brings people into his spiritual kingdom (‘the kingdom of the right hand’). Each ‘kingdom’ has its own role – justice, peace and good order are the responsibility of civil authorities; the proclamation of the Gospel is the responsibility of the church. Christians belong to both kingdoms and serve in both. They serve God and their neighbour primarily through their secular vocations. The Dresden missionaries saw their primary task as the proclamation of the Gospel with the government taking responsibility for Aboriginal welfare. They were willing to assist the government as long as they were free to follow their convictions in their spiritual work.

The missionaries’ convictions affected their relationships with other churches. Lutherans believe the pure teaching of the Gospel and right administration of the sacraments are essential for the unity of the church and reject the insistence on other criteria or prescribed forms of church governance.³⁹ This became an issue for the Dresden missionaries in South Australia because Anglicans insist on ‘apostolic succession’, ordination traced in a direct line from the apostles, and do not recognize Lutheran ordination except that of Swedish and Latvian Lutherans. This meant the Anglican Church hierarchy did not accept the Lutheran missionaries as priests, as equals, and insisted on re-ordaining them before they could work on an Anglican mission field. Joining the Anglican Church would also mean accepting the Thirty-nine Articles, which deny the Real Presence, a step the missionaries’ convictions prevented them taking. At the same time, the Lutheran teaching of baptismal regeneration and the

³⁵ Director J Hardland, for the Collegium of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Leipzig to Pastor H A E Meyer 21.2.1861, Lutheran Archives, Adelaide.

³⁶ *Agent of Colonialism?*

³⁷ Preface to the Formula of Concord, *The Book of Concord*.

³⁸ Augsburg Confession, Article XXXVIII.

³⁹ AC, VII.

Real Presence kept them aloof from common Dissenting ideas and made the Baptist Angas and other Dissenters wary of supporting Lutheran missionaries.⁴⁰

2.3 The mission vision

On commissioning its missionaries, the Dresden Society gave them instructions.⁴¹ They were to gather German settlers into congregations, which would provide a support base for Aboriginal work. They were to learn the indigenous language and make their chief aim the conversion of Aborigines through evangelism, printed material, preaching services, and schools, gathering converts into Lutheran congregations, and training them to assist in evangelism. The missionaries were to do scientific research and maintain peaceful relations with the heathen, with Angas and with other Christians. The mandate closed: 'Therefore go forth ... and bear witness to the heathen of the Gospel of the grace of God.'⁴² 'Civilising' the natives was not mentioned.

The missionaries were told to rely on God for sustenance because the Society had limited funds and could only support spiritual work. Schürmann later wrote to Angas, 'The Society in Dresden is by principle adverse (sic) to expending any money for temporal purposes.'⁴³

At a banquet given for Governor Hindmarsh prior to his departure for South Australia in 1835 Angas had outlined his vision:

Let us send out persons among them to learn their language...; to treat with them for the purchase of those lands which they claim as belonging to their tribes; to make them acquainted with the habits and views of the white people; to construct a written language for them; to publish the Gospels and New Testament in it; to teach them to read; to make them acquainted with the art of raising food from the ground; to instruct them in the mode of fishing from the sea ...; in the method of making utensils, raising huts, the use of clothing; and in time they may be induced by sufficient rewards and kind treatment to allow the settlers to take their youths and teach them to work as labourers.⁴⁴

Now Angas also gave the missionaries instructions.⁴⁵ They were to learn the language and customs of the aborigines of Adelaide, establish a school, and then move towards establishing a Moravian-style settlement in the interior, the junction of the Murray and Darling with its river access to Adelaide being the most suitable spot. Such a settlement would be essential to the success of the mission and here the Aborigines would be taught the arts of civilised living and growing food as well as Christianity. Angas

⁴⁰ Edwin Hodder, *George Fife Angas, Father and Founder of South Australia, London, 1891*, 177-178.

⁴¹ *Eighteenth annual report*, 22-23; Blaess, *The Australian Lutheran*, 7.5.1947, 139.

⁴² Otto, *Hundert*, 48.

⁴³ Schürmann to Angas January 1841, George Fife Angas: Summary Record, SLSA PRG 174/1/1682-1685.

⁴⁴ Hodder, *George Fife Angas*, 143.

⁴⁵ Angas to Schürmann and Teichelmann 28.5.1838, SLSA PRG 174/10; Schürmann diaries, 4.6.1838.

anticipated that families from Kavel's congregation would settle nearby and provide support, as would Aboriginal labour. He was confident the colonial administration would make land available and thought the colony's constitution, Governor Gawler's Christian commitment and the large number of professing Christians in the colony offered a better chance of success than elsewhere in Australia to date.

While the missionaries took good note of Angas' wishes, they saw themselves firstly as missionaries of the Dresden Mission Society.⁴⁶ The Society's instructions and the missionaries' letters and diaries reveal a vision with a clear priority – to bring the indigenous people 'the Gospel of the grace of God.'⁴⁷ They knew this would transform aspects of indigenous culture, but they did not define their goals in terms of civilisation, Europeanization, or assimilation. They envisioned land reserved for indigenous use where Aborigines would be preserved as a people, retain their language, communities and aspects of their culture, only gradually adapting to the invaders' culture or learning English as necessary. They would be instructed and literate in their own language, into which the Scriptures and confessional writings would be translated, opening them to God's grace and leading to the formation of Lutheran Aboriginal congregations.

⁴⁶ Appendix A.

⁴⁷ Dresden's instructions.

CHAPTER 3: VISION MEETS REALITY

Chapter two outlined the Dresden missionaries' theological background and the mission vision that flowed from this. This chapter looks at their attempts to put their vision into practice, at modifications to their vision in the light of colonial realities, and at the final end of their work. It will examine the three geographical contexts of their work – the Adelaide, Encounter Bay and Port Lincoln areas.

Travelling to South Australia aboard ship with Governor Gawler, Schürmann's and Teichelmann's optimism was quickly tested. Schürmann records conversations with the governor's entourage. Gawler advocated bringing the Aborigines close to the larger towns and assimilating them with the English as servants. Schürmann disagreed, advocating separate indigenous communities and the retention of vernacular languages.⁴⁸ (See Appendix A)

Other disagreements centred on the legitimacy of England's colonising ambitions.⁴⁹ Discussions in which Schürmann called attention to injustices to indigenous people led to such disagreement that Gawler suggested Schürmann would *cause* bloodshed with his political opinions.⁵⁰ Schürmann wrote to the Dresden Committee, 'I must maintain my opinion that the English occupation of foreign countries without consideration for their occupants is humanly and morally unjust and that the English colonial system is founded on a basis of injustice.'⁵¹ The Committee warned the missionaries:

You have a different view from the Governor as to the legal claims of the English concerning the land and ground of South Australia ... about which he has expressed himself forcefully as a warning to you. ... It is highly dangerous, you will earn yourselves much antagonism and trouble in your mission work, indeed complete prohibition of it and probably even your way out of the Colony and away from the natives who could be inflamed to anger and revenge by your attitude.⁵²

Despite differences, Gawler and the missionaries developed a good relationship. Gawler agreed to support their use of the vernacular and called the missionaries 'sincere, intelligent, persevering Christian men.'⁵³ The missionaries described Gawler as 'a very kind and Christian man who truly has the well-being of the poor natives at heart.'⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Schürmann to the Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society in Dresden 10.12.1838; Schürmann's diary entry of 1.9.1838, Lutheran Archives, Adelaide.

⁴⁹ Schürmann diaries 23.6.1838.

⁵⁰ Schürmann to Dresden 10.12.1838; Schürmann diaries 18.10.1838.

⁵¹ Schürmann to Dresden 10.12.1838.

⁵² Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society in Dresden to Schürmann and Teichelmann, 1839.

⁵³ Gawler to Angas 10.7.1840, SLSA PRG 174/1/1558-1579.

⁵⁴ Meyer to the Committee of the Dresden Mission Society 11.12.1840.

3.1 Mission work in the Adelaide Area

The missionaries' optimism continued to be challenged in the colony. Almost penniless, they worked three months before Angas' £25 per quarter was released. Gawler arranged a loan and use of a hut at the Piltawodli Native Location on the Torrens. Thus from the very beginning the missionaries were dependent on government assistance, a factor which would continually deny them full independence.

Schürmann and Teichelmann began worship services for Adelaide Germans, hoping a Lutheran congregation would support evangelism among Aborigines. However most Germans employed by the South Australia Company were uninterested and Kavel insisted that members of his congregation attend his church at Klemzig. Consequently the missionaries' services and hopes for support from this direction quickly folded.

Immediately on arrival Teichelmann and Schürmann began learning the local language, customs and beliefs. They took every opportunity to mix with the Kurna, attending their ceremonies, and having them to stay in their homes. Schürmann accompanied them on long hunting expeditions and developed close relationships with a number of indigenous men. In 1840 Schürmann and Teichelmann published a Kurna grammar and vocabulary.⁵⁵ In 1841 Teichelmann published a booklet on Kurna customs.⁵⁶ In 1857 Teichelmann sent his updated *Dictionary of the Adelaide Dialect* to Governor Grey in South Africa. The manuscript is held in the Cape Town Archives. By then few Kurna speakers remained.

The school at Piltawodli

In December 1839 Schürmann began a school for Kurna children at Piltawodli although Matthew Moorhouse (Protector of Aborigines 1839-1856) believed it was futile trying to educate the Aborigines into being 'useful people'.⁵⁷ Teichelmann, who thought the school premature because the people were nomadic, continued working with Kurna adults.⁵⁸ Schürmann was delighted at his students' aptitude, as was Klose when he took over the school in 1840. Scrimgeour's thesis includes a detailed study of this school. The children were taught in Kurna (with Moorhouse, teaching some English). Although government rations were used as an incentive, progress varied as the students came and went depending on their whims and their parents' seasonal migrations and activities. This became their teachers' greatest frustration but lessened when the school became a boarding facility in 1843. Klose supported this initiative of Grey (Governor 1841-1845), intended to overcome absenteeism and protect girls from molestation by older Aboriginal men. At first the press and public praised the school but criticism arose. Newspapers reported that not enough was being done to 'civilise' the natives, teach them English and make them useful workers. (See chapter 4). While receiving

⁵⁵ C G Teichelmann and C W Schürmann, *Outlines of a grammar*, 1840.

⁵⁶ C. G Teichelmann, *Aborigines of South Australia*, 1841.

⁵⁷ Schürmann to Dresden 16.3.1840.

⁵⁸ Teichelmann diary 26-27.11.1839.

stipend support from Dresden and Angas, the missionaries depended on the government for accommodation, a school building, the children's rations, and from 1842-1845, a £100 subsidy divided between the four missionaries. In 1844 Grey started an English-medium government school in Walkerville for children from the Murray tribes and, at Grey's insistence, Klose began using English, except in religion lessons. In 1845 the two schools were amalgamated into a new Native Training Institute near Government House. Early in 1846 Klose's employment and government support for the Dresden missionaries were terminated. (See chapter 4)

Attempts at Aboriginal settlement

Dresden instructions to concentrate on spiritual matters were quickly tested. Confronted with a people and culture seriously impacted by colonization the missionaries felt the need to care also for the Aborigines' physical wellbeing.

Teichelmann reported that prevailing thought considered Aborigines 'a race of beings differing little from the higher animals.'⁵⁹ The missionaries disagreed and found qualities to admire. Teichelmann believed they had 'the same gifts and talents as Europeans.'⁶⁰ Schürmann wrote, 'One finds a vivacity, intelligence and cleverness among them,'⁶¹ and their 'busy, restless spirit betrays the image of God in them also.'⁶² He observed, 'I have admired and been delighted at the bearing and behaviour towards each other of the free and equal aborigines.'⁶³ Meyer noted the children's 'considerable intelligence'⁶⁴ and 'good memories'.⁶⁵ However the missionaries considered their level of morality low and their society blighted by such practices as polygamy, wife sharing, promiscuity, sexual abuse of boys and young girls, the 'slavish state'⁶⁶ of women, the marriage of prepubescent girls to older men, infanticide, constant quarrelling and fighting, sorcery and pay-back killings.

Such problems endemic to Aboriginal society were compounded by the effects of European settlement – dispossession, exploitation, introduced diseases⁶⁷ and European vices. Teichelmann thought the Europeans' moral state was possibly worse than that of the Aborigines⁶⁸ and the evil they introduced much greater than the blessings.⁶⁹ The missionaries wondered whether their work had any hope of success.⁷⁰ They thought the

⁵⁹ Teichelmann, *Aborigines* 5.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Schürmann diaries 14.10.1838.

⁶² Schürmann to Dresden 10.12.1838.

⁶³ Ibid 5.11.1839.

⁶⁴ Meyer to Dresden 17.3.1845.

⁶⁵ Ibid 18.4.1845.

⁶⁶ Teichelmann, *Aborigines*, 9.

⁶⁷ Appendix C.

⁶⁸ Teichelmann diary 24.11.1839.

⁶⁹ Teichelmann letter to Angus 21.12.1840, George Fife Angas: SUMMARY RECORD , SLSA PRG 174/1/1670-1677.

⁷⁰ Schürmann to Dresden 5.11.1839.

reservation of land for the Aborigines away from Europeans might provide some solution both for the missionaries and the Aborigines. However colonial authorities gave little support. Schürmann wrote in 1839:

Among [the Aborigines] themselves the missionary finds enough sins and difficulties which oppose his effectiveness: but when to these are added those of another race... one must fear for a blessed outcome of all teaching and labour. But then I am amazed that the natives have not sunk even further because of their constant association with a class of people like the English rabble, rough and ungodly beyond comprehension. Therefore the plan of bringing the natives into active contact with Europeans, indeed, where possible to allow them to be scattered among them... is highly destructive... But... if the natives wanted to settle in a separate place, [the governor] has no power to appropriate an area for them. This limitation appears to me to be so much more unjust in that the aborigines as members of a family are the owners of specific sections of land which the father of each family has inherited from his father.⁷¹

The missionaries had worked with the Aborigines, building huts and planting gardens at the Native Location, but by 1839 the Protector and Governor wanted to discourage them settling at Piltawodli.⁷² Agricultural efforts ended when the people prepared land but the government declined to supply the promised seed.⁷³ In due course the people were removed from the Location.

Schürmann informed Dresden that all wildlife had been driven away from the Adelaide area, leaving the local people without traditional food sources and government rations were inadequate to sustain them.⁷⁴ Dispossession, he feared, was reducing a once honest and open people to begging and thieving. He believed the Aborigines should be left with at least enough land for their sustenance. He hounded Moorhouse until Moorhouse asked the government for land.⁷⁵ The government finally reserved a few sections near Adelaide, Encounter Bay, Lake Alexandrina and the Murray.⁷⁶ However, government enthusiasm for settling indigenous people on their own land was short-lived and the new reserves were soon leased to whites.

The missionaries, however, continued to encourage dispossessed Aborigines to form agricultural communities away from the main European settlements as an alternative to begging, thieving or dispersal, and to facilitate evangelism. After an exploratory trip and hearing drovers' reports, Schürmann decided Angas' idea of a settlement at the Murray-Darling Junction was impractical. The Encounter Bay/Murray mouth area seemed more suitable so he happily accepted Gawler's invitation to move there, making plans during 1839 while waiting for a house to be built. He hoped to take with him Jannuruwe, a Kurna man who knew the Encounter Bay language, but the only way he could support

⁷¹ Schürmann to Dresden 19.6.1839.

⁷² Schürmann diaries 4.7.1839.

⁷³ Teichelmann diary April 1841.

⁷⁴ Schürmann to Dresden 8.8.1839.

⁷⁵ Schürmann to Dresden 16.3.1840.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Jannuruwe and induce Aborigines to stay put was through farming. But farming needed land, implements and draught animals. Schürmann wrote to the Dresden Committee and received this reply in 1840:

It appears questionable to us that missionaries alone should undertake the civilising of the natives since by so doing they become distanced from their actual calling... we are convinced that you cannot do more towards furthering it than you indirectly do by way of the rallying voice of the godly Word and by erecting schools and dispensing good advice.⁷⁷

The Committee suggested encouraging colonial artisans and tradesmen to settle around them, support the mission and help Aborigines acquire skills necessary for sedentary living. It pointed to the perceived readiness of the government to help with land and housing and admonished the missionaries to concentrate on their true calling:

You are not to establish a specifically civil community, but rather a religious one... Do not concern yourselves with the physical dependence or independence of the aborigines but concern yourselves with their spiritual liberation through the spiritual means of grace.⁷⁸

The Committee sought farmers and tradespeople in Germany to pay their own way to South Australia and help establish mission communities to free the missionaries from the many 'earthly' calls on their time, but the scheme never eventuated.⁷⁹ Schürmann's plans were changed when in 1840 Gawler asked him to go instead to Port Lincoln as Deputy Protector of Aborigines.

Left in Adelaide, Teichelmann told Angas that if the home government did not assume its responsibility to provide for the indigenous people it would be guilty of exterminating them by 'suffering them to dwindle away into nothing after having dispossessed them...and made them a more wandering people than before.'⁸⁰ This plea fell on deaf ears but when a Dresden Committee member provided £100 to buy land near Adelaide to make the mission more independent financially, Teichelmann bought land he called 'Ebenezer' at Happy Valley, nineteen km south of Adelaide, and moving there early 1844, he hoped to encourage the Kurna to farm with him. His letters to Dresden describe his frustrations. He fed and worked with some Kurna people, promising the harvest would be theirs. They cleared and fenced land and planted a crop, but Teichelmann was bitterly disappointed when none returned to harvest their crop. He blamed government rations and his neighbours' ability to pay much higher wages. Teichelmann was also frustrated by his lack of resources to help the needy and elderly who gathered around Ebenezer and his hopes to start a school never eventuated. The other missionaries thought Ebenezer an unsuitable location for an Aboriginal settlement. It was too closely populated by whites, too close to Adelaide and the Kurna did not

⁷⁷ Dresden to Schürmann and Teichelmann 27.7.1840.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ *Annual report of the Evangelical-Lutheran Mission Society at Dresden 1838-1839*, Lutheran Archives, Adelaide.

⁸⁰ Teichelmann to Angas 2.1.1843, SLSA PRG 174/5.

gather there in significant numbers.⁸¹ While at Ebenezer, Teichelmann also travelled to Adelaide to preach in the parklands – first to the Kurna and later, using a translator, to Murray people moving into Adelaide.

3.2 Meyer and Encounter Bay

Meyer was sent to South Australia specifically to work with Schürmann at Encounter Bay. But with Schürmann going to Port Lincoln, Meyer and his wife went to Encounter Bay alone. They were accommodated in a hut at Policeman's Point (now Victor Harbour), a poor location as the Ramindjeri, afraid of the police, had moved away. Meyer wore his shoes out walking back and forth to Aboriginal camps trying to learn the local language and share the Gospel. He decided to concentrate on learning the language and customs by starting a school and learning from the children. Initially teaching in the open air, he hoped to establish a school on good land reserved for Aborigines six miles away. Government approval arrived but no funding, Moorhouse being only interested in the Adelaide school.⁸² After repeated requests, Meyer was provided with rations and a room in a police building where he started a school in December 1841. He taught in both Ramindjeri and English, acceding to Grey's wishes and recognising that Aborigines were learning English from nearby whalers.

Meyer still wanted to reach adults and, with school attendance poor because of the parents' nomadic ways, he felt the only solution was to establish a settlement.⁸³ This would also reduce Aboriginal contact with 'the godless whalers'⁸⁴ as, more than anywhere else, the Encounter Bay women and children were exploited and ravaged by venereal disease. However, the soil at Encounter Bay was too poor and the Aborigines had no means to cultivate the better land reserved for them.⁸⁵ Meyer requested government assistance to establish a settlement on the reserved land but it was leased to white settlers.⁸⁶

His hopes dashed, Meyer concentrated on learning the local language and customs in order to proclaim the Gospel and perhaps help others through his language work.⁸⁷ This work resulted in two publications: *Vocabulary of the Aborigines of the Southern and Eastern Portions of the Settled Districts of South Australia*, 1843, and *Manners and Customs of the Aborigines of the Encounter Bay Tribes, South Australia*, 1846.

In January 1843 Grey told Meyer in person that he would not provide further assistance for the Aborigines. Meyer decided to lease 20 acres of government land where Aborigines camped for months at a time near the mouth of the Inman River at

⁸¹ Meyer, Klose and Schürmann to Dresden 5.7.1843.

⁸² Meyer to Dresden 10.3.1841.

⁸³ Ibid 2.2.1842.

⁸⁴ Ibid 10.3.1841.

⁸⁵ Ibid 11.12.1840.

⁸⁶ Ibid 2.3.1842.

⁸⁷ Ibid 12.2.1842.

Encounter Bay. He planned to live among the Ramindjeri, meet with them in the evenings, and employ those who wished to work.⁸⁸ Meyer believed Grey only wanted the Aborigines to be quiet and scatter as casual labourers. Meyer wrote:

The government has no other purpose in view than to keep the natives quiet, and in their eyes we are good people as long as we serve their purposes. But when we press for support or remind them of their duty regarding, for example, settling the natives somewhere or giving food for the children who wish to attend the school, we are unable to receive any other answer than: 'There are no means available for the purpose.' But perhaps the main reason lies deeper. The Governor has cherished a plan he hopes to realise, namely scattering the natives among the colonists in order that they might become of use to human society.⁸⁹

Meyer hoped that when Grey saw Aborigines engaged in agriculture, he would lend support and provide a supervisor. He borrowed money to build a house near his lease in 1844 and, using government rations for Encounter Bay, began clearing, fencing and cultivating with the Ramindjeri. Meyer reported that they worked enthusiastically and with pride in their work, but not even the government rations were continued.⁹⁰ Unfortunately the land was poor, white settlers having occupied the best. Meyer could not compete with the wages settlers paid and Moorhouse discouraged the project.⁹¹

Meyer was convinced a boarding school was necessary.⁹² When Meyer told Grey he wanted to ask Dresden for another posting, Grey promised sugar and clothes for the children and a subscription for a school building.⁹³ With subscriptions, a small donation from the Mission Aid Society in Adelaide, borrowings, and help from local settlers, Meyer completed a school house at the new location by September 1844. It doubled as a chapel for white settlers.

Meyer reported finding the Aboriginal children keen and responsive⁹⁴ and evidence of growing faith in some children and adults.⁹⁵ In the evenings he taught European children without charge and held Sunday services for the Europeans and some Aborigines. He also supervised the Aborigines' work, visited their huts, cared for the sick and dying, consoled prisoners and interpreted for Aborigines on trial in Adelaide. For a while he had an assistant teacher, Ernst Mackenzie, and supported him with borrowed money. Meyer suggested Government assistance was so meagre and begrudging⁹⁶ because the Encounter Bay Aborigines were peaceful:

⁸⁸ Ibid 13.3.1843.

⁸⁹ Ibid 9.11.1843.

⁹⁰ Ibid 5.7.1843 and 9.11.1843.

⁹¹ Ibid 10.6.1846, Moorhouse to COS 10.6.1846, *Letterbook of the Protector of Aborigines 1840-1853*, SRSA GRG 52/7/1, 170.

⁹² Ibid 9.11.1843.

⁹³ Ibid 30.1.1844.

⁹⁴ Ibid 30.9.1844 and 17.3.1845.

⁹⁵ Ibid 18.4.1845 and 7.10.1845.

⁹⁶ Ibid 17.3.1845.

The worst of this sad state of affairs is that because they are behaving peacefully here and are beginning to lend a hand to the colonists in their work the Government therefore withdraws almost all means of support which they would certainly receive if their behaviour towards the colonists were otherwise.⁹⁷

3.3 Schürmann and Port Lincoln

In 1840 Schürmann was enthusiastically planning how to use the land granted to the Encounter Bay Aborigines and start a school there. The Ramindjeri knew him⁹⁸ and he had been learning their language.⁹⁹ When Gawler requested he go to Port Lincoln as Deputy Protector of Aborigines instead, Schürmann accepted though with a heavy heart, out of gratitude for Gawler's support and in the hope it would bring recognition to the mission. More importantly, race relationships were bad around Port Lincoln, isolation made the post hard to fill, and Schürmann feared Aborigines would suffer unless someone concerned for their welfare filled the post.¹⁰⁰

Schürmann found the Port Lincoln people suspicious of whites due to the abduction of Aboriginal women by Europeans such as the Kangaroo Island crab-catchers.¹⁰¹ His efforts to learn the language and gain the trust of both Aborigines and settlers were hampered by clashes, thefts, and killings. He encouraged Parnkalla people to live with him, visited their camps and travelled extensively with them but became increasingly frustrated by the limited opportunities for ongoing contact. This made language learning slow. Later, in 1844, he published *A vocabulary of the Parnkalla language spoken by the natives inhabiting the western shores of Spencer's Gulf: to which is prefixed a collection of grammatical rules hitherto ascertained*. In 1846 he published *The Aboriginal tribes of Port Lincoln in South Australia: their mode of life, manners, customs, etc.* However by 1841 he was becoming increasingly convinced that he needed to be more involved with the Aborigines' physical circumstances. He questioned the Dresden emphasis on spiritual work:

You warn me wisely and correctly not to place too much emphasis on the outward affairs of the Aborigines, but who can observe their condition without being convinced of the extent to which they are dependent on external influences? Who then can refrain from imagining and considering how to shape their environment where possible so as to make their inner being approachable and subject to the Gospel of God? In the whole range of the recent missionary activity there is no people that can compare to the Aborigines of this land ... Therefore I am beginning to fear that the otherwise correct basis for missionary activity, which is limited to the spiritual domain only, can scarcely find any

⁹⁷ Ibid 25.7.1844.

⁹⁸ Ibid 14.8.1840.

⁹⁹ Schürmann letter to Pastor Wermelskirch of the Dresden Mission Institute 7.8.1840.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Schürmann to Dresden 27.12.1840.

application here or that from this alone the physical and spiritual salvation of the Aborigines could proceed.¹⁰²

Schürmann was convinced the only hope was to establish an Aboriginal station inland, on the Moravian model,¹⁰³ with the introduction of cattle as a step towards sedentary living.¹⁰⁴ He did not want the indigenous people begging and picking up European diseases and vices in town. Schürmann asked the government to reserve land for them, build him a small house on it and provide a labourer to teach farming and similar skills.¹⁰⁵ This would enable him to share the Gospel and accustom the Aborigines to work for a living. He contemplated settling among them even without government assistance but feared that they would take all his possessions through begging or by force. He could not afford to employ anyone to watch his possessions while he travelled around.¹⁰⁶

By 1842 Port Lincoln was in a state of siege as Aborigines attacked pastoral stations¹⁰⁷ and police and settlers retaliated indiscriminately.¹⁰⁸ While settlers felt he was not sufficiently representing their interests, Schürmann found his official position often in conflict with his role as missionary. He was expected to accompany police expeditions as interpreter, witnessing the shooting of innocent, unarmed Aborigines. He was pressured to inform on and testify against his people, while ministering to those condemned to death. In April 1842 he accompanied an expedition led by the Government resident, Mr Driver. Schürmann left the expedition in protest when an unarmed Aboriginal man Schürmann knew well was killed, despite a guide insisting he was not one of the killers they sought. Soon afterwards, his Deputy Protector position was abolished but Grey offered the Lutheran Mission in South Australia a £100 subsidy, mentioned above, on the condition a missionary remained in Port Lincoln. Schürmann stayed but was placed under Driver's supervision.

Thoroughly disillusioned, Schürmann begged the Dresden Society for reassignment to India or any place where people were sedentary.¹⁰⁹ His activities reduced almost exclusively to language learning, Schürmann advised the Society to give up Aboriginal mission work made hopeless by a lack of support and the Aborigines' nomadic habits.¹¹⁰ Grey withheld government support, said Schürmann, because he believed Aborigines were dying out and money spent on them was wasted.¹¹¹ The Dresden

¹⁰² Schürmann to Dresden 1.7.1841.

¹⁰³ Ibid 22.8.1842; Schürmann to Angas Jan 1841, SLSA PRG 174/1/ 1685.

¹⁰⁴ Schürmann to Angas 12.6.1839, in Edwin A Schürmann, *I'd Rather Dig Potatoes, Clamor Schürmann and the Aborigines of South Australia 1838-1853*, Adelaide, 1987, 49.

¹⁰⁵ Schürmann to Dresden 1.7.1841.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Foster, *Fatal collisions: the South Australian frontier and the violence of memory*, Kent Town, 2001, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 6; Grainger, Geoffrey, *Matthew Moorhouse and the South Australian Aborigines, 1839-1856*, Honours thesis, Flinders University, 1980, 41-42.

¹⁰⁹ Schürmann to Pastor Wermelskirch 22.8.1842.

¹¹⁰ Schürmann to Dresden 19.8.1844.

¹¹¹ Schürmann to Pastor Wermelskirch, 22.8.1842.

Committee refused Schürmann's request.¹¹² It was not convinced all was hopeless and urged Schürmann to greater dedication and faith.

Schürmann continued at Port Lincoln, his efforts continually thwarted by lack of funds. His limited contact with the Aborigines made even language learning slow and he doubted Aborigines would ever receive justice.¹¹³ To friends in Adelaide he wrote:

There is no shadow of protection for them, while they are debarred from... being heard in the Court of Justices. Several instances have occurred during my residence in this district, in which natives have been arraigned before the administrators of the law, although I was morally convinced of their innocence; in other cases, they have sought redress through me, for wanton attacks on their persons and lives, without being listened to.¹¹⁴

In 1843 Schürmann began farming on six acres he acquired two miles out of Port Lincoln. He employed Aborigines, using government rations as payment. He explained his actions to Dresden:

Even though the preoccupation with such external affairs is not the immediate and actual purpose of my mission it nevertheless gives me pleasure partly because it presents me with the best opportunity of advancing my knowledge of the language, partly also because the natives do not fail to appreciate the good outcome of such care.¹¹⁵

Results were mixed. The Aborigines worked with a will but lost heart when others demanded a share of their food. Other problems included the burning of fences and the loss of crop to fire, animals, and theft. Requests for land, tools and further rations met a negative response because Grey thought the plan impractical. He continued to prefer assimilation of indigenous people into white society as servants.¹¹⁶

In 1844 some Parnkalla told Schürmann they would like to gather and settle at Kunta, 30 miles from Port Lincoln, if he would live with them and help them farm.¹¹⁷ Schürmann again approached the government, repeatedly, with a proposal for a settlement at least 10 miles out of Port Lincoln. He believed this was more likely to succeed in the Port Lincoln area than other places because the area was thinly populated with whites and the Aborigines were more willing to work than elsewhere.¹¹⁸ Delay would be disastrous as the Port Lincoln tribes would decline in number like the almost extinct Adelaide tribe.¹¹⁹ Schürmann described his plan in a letter to Moorhouse. He

¹¹² Dresden to Schürmann 5.4.1843.

¹¹³ Schürmann to Dresden 3.7.1843 and 15.4.1844.

¹¹⁴ Schürmann, *I'd Rather Dig Potatoes*, 169.

¹¹⁵ Schürmann to Dresden 27.11.1843.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid* 27.11.1843.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid* 19.8.1844.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid* 15.4.1844; Schürmann to Moorhouse 7.9.1844, SRSA GRG 24/6/1844/488.

¹¹⁹ Schürmann to Moorhouse 7.9.1844.

advocated Aborigines be prevented from begging or doing odd jobs. Unless they had a regular work agreement with Europeans they must choose between maintaining their traditional lifestyle or supporting themselves on an agricultural settlement.¹²⁰ Government rations would only be given out at the settlement, as rewards for good conduct and industry. Schürmann thought such a station would be self-supporting within two or three years, and would reduce both government ration expenses and conflict with settlers. Such a plan, he said, had never yet been fairly tried in the colony.¹²¹

Even though a settler, Hermann Kook, promised £200 and his services, free, for the first year,¹²² and the Dresden Society offered £100 provided the government matched it,¹²³ Grey rejected the proposal. He judged Schürmann's estimated cost of £300 as unrealistic, believing that £1500 would be needed, and saying 'any lesser attempt would certainly fail and be more trouble than use.'¹²⁴ Schürmann continued to farm his few acres with local Aborigines until the repeated burning of his fences forced him to give up in 1845.

In 1844 Schürmann had also proposed an Aboriginal school in Port Lincoln. Grey said the requested £100 was too high and the Adelaide government school needed the money. Schürmann believed Grey was concentrating all his expenditure on the Adelaide schools as an experiment to show the world what could be done with the Aborigines.¹²⁵

The end of the mission

The four missionaries met in conference in January 1846. The government's rejection of the Society's offer of £100 for an Aboriginal settlement convinced them it was not serious about helping Aborigines settle, then or in the future. They were convinced that without the Aborigines' social conditions changing evangelism would not succeed.¹²⁶ The lack of Christian converts weighed heavily on them. Reluctant to take money which could more profitably support the Society's flourishing work in India, they decided to concentrate work in two locations, retain their association with Dresden but relinquish its monetary support.

As most of the Kaurna had left Adelaide and the mission school had been closed, Klose and Teichelmann began ministering to Germans and English in Adelaide and Schürmann joined Meyer near Encounter Bay. The two men bought land and farmed

¹²⁰ Schürmann to Moorhouse 17.5.1844, SRSA GRG 24/6/1844; Missionaries' Conference Report, 15.4.1844 (Appendix B).

¹²¹ Schürmann to Moorhouse 17.5.1844.

¹²² Schürmann to Dresden 19.8.1844; Schürmann and Kook to Moorhouse 17.5.1844, SRSA, GRG 24/6/1844/488.

¹²³ Schürmann to Moorhouse 7.9.1844, SRSA, GRG 24/6/1844/488.

¹²⁴ Schürmann to Dresden 2.2.1846.

¹²⁵ Ibid 11.12.1844.

¹²⁶ Meyer and Schürmann to Dresden 22.1.1846.

with the Aborigines, supporting themselves while sharing the Gospel.¹²⁷ Meyer supplemented his income working as a bullocky.

In April 1848 Meyer was called to serve the Bethany Lutheran congregation in the Barossa Valley. He accepted, citing the needs of Lutheran settlers and the poor prospects for the establishment of an Aboriginal Lutheran church.¹²⁸ Meyer had worked tirelessly. His letters suggest a warm relationship with many Aboriginal people. Brauer claims he won their confidence and love and records that they mourned his departure. After Meyer's death many Encounter Bay people annually visited his wife and daughter in Hahndorf for as long as they lived.¹²⁹

In 1848 the four missionaries decided to close the Lutheran Mission in South Australia, but to continue as individuals to assist the Aborigines.¹³⁰ Behind this decision lay financial problems, changes in government policy and the Anglican entry into Aboriginal mission work, dealt with further in Chapter 4. Already, in 1844, Meyer had questioned whether the mission should have ever been started. He suggested the Dresden Society had not done its homework. It had sent missionaries to the most difficult field on earth without recognising the financial commitments necessary to first settle the Aborigines. He suggested the field should have been left to the English churches. (See Appendix C) Otto said the Society should have listened to the London Mission Society's advice.¹³¹

Schürmann returns to Port Lincoln

In 1848 Governor Robe asked Schürmann to return to Port Lincoln as court interpreter. Schürmann hesitated, remembering earlier confrontations with the judicial system but a regular salary and the Aborigines' need persuaded him. Upon accepting, he found things worse than he expected. He was expected to accompany the Protector and police in their murder investigations and write reports. He was distressed as settlers took the law into their own hands and police punished guilty and innocent Aborigines alike.¹³²

In late 1849 Governor Young (1848-54) offered Schürmann a salary of £50 to start a school for Aboriginal children, because of his relationship with the people.¹³³ 'If not productive of ... permanent and general good,' said Young, it would 'at least have a tendency to generate and maintain kindly feelings between the Natives at Port Lincoln and the European settlers,'¹³⁴ and if it kept a few children away from their parents, it

¹²⁷ Meyer to Dresden 4.10.1846.

¹²⁸ Ibid 29.8.1848.

¹²⁹ Brauer, *Under the Southern Cross*, 169.

¹³⁰ Klose to Robe 15.2.1848, SRSA GRG 24/6/1848/207.

¹³¹ Otto, *Hundert*, 49.

¹³² Schürmann, *I'd rather dig potatoes*, 185-190.

¹³³ Moorhouse to Schürmann, 3.11.49, *Letterbook*, 247.

¹³⁴ Despatch no. 50, 21.3.1850, SRSA GRG 2/6/5.

would be worth its cost.¹³⁵ Schürmann started a school at Wallala, near North Shields, 12 km from Port Lincoln.¹³⁶ Government expenditure was minimal. In 1851 Moorhouse reported the students were still sitting on the ground with no forms or tables.¹³⁷ From the start, both adults and children seemed to favour the school and Schürmann had no trouble with attendance, the number of students only being limited by the government rations supplied.¹³⁸ Schürmann won the confidence and affection of his students and continued to share the Gospel also with the adults. The botanist, Charles Wilhelmi, visiting the school in 1851, reported ‘twenty-four native children attended his school, and had made considerable progress in reading, writing &c, which was rendered the more easy to them by the advantage that all information was by this most excellent man conveyed to them in their own language.’¹³⁹ Schürmann wrote to Meyer in 1851: ‘The black children in the school are giving us a joyful expectation and on the whole we are very happy.’¹⁴⁰

The venture was short lived. The Anglicans were entering mission work. With Moorhouse’s backing, Archdeacon Hale approached Governor Young with a proposal for a Christian settlement.¹⁴¹ Young was inclined to support initiatives from his own church¹⁴² and the government was soon to assist only Anglican mission work.¹⁴³ In 1850 the government leased Hale some 3000 acres of native reserve at Poonindie (an option Schürmann had suggested for his proposed settlement), five km from Schürmann’s school. Hale added a 12 square mile sheep run purchased with £1200 of his own money. (This was more a loan than a gift. When Hale left Poonindie in 1855 he asked the governing board to pay for a £1200 life insurance policy to benefit his heirs.) The government advanced Hale £600, £200 to be repaid with the rest a gift, and gave him £300 annually for a schoolmaster, matron and labourer. Older students from the Adelaide school were married at puberty and brought to Poonindie to segregate them from the corrupting influence of white society but also from their tribes so that they would not revert to traditional ways. Only married couples and single women from other schools were accepted. They worked the land for wages, and received Christian instruction but little schooling.¹⁴⁴ This marked the end of the Adelaide school when remaining students absconded and parents refused to send children there to avoid them being taken to Poonindie.¹⁴⁵ Initially Aboriginal adults from the Port Lincoln area were strictly excluded from Poonindie and their children accepted only in exceptional circumstances. Schürmann’s school was to instruct Port Lincoln children and could be

¹³⁵ Young to CSO 6.4.1852, in Schürmann, *I’d rather dig potatoes*, 195.

¹³⁶ Rathjen, ‘A Difficult and Boring Task,’ 91.

¹³⁷ *Letterbook* 20.1.51, 271.

¹³⁸ Phillipa Walsh, *The Problem of Native Policy in South Australia in the C19th with Particular Reference to the Church of England Poonindie Mission, 1859-1896*, BA Honours Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1966, 70.

¹³⁹ C. Wilhelmi, *Manners and Customs of the Australian Aborigines, in particular of the Port Lincoln District* Oct 29, 1860 cited in Rathjen, ‘A Difficult and Boring Task’, 92.

¹⁴⁰ Schürmann to Meyer, 23.8.1851. Lutheran Archives.

¹⁴¹ *Letterbook*, 26.6.1850, 264-5.

¹⁴² Harris, *One Blood*, 338.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 332.

¹⁴⁴ Walsh, *The Problem of Native*, 64-77.

¹⁴⁵ Grainger, *Matthew Moorhouse*. 99; Moorhouse to Kavel 5.4.51, *Letterbook*, 275.

visited by 'wild' Aborigines.¹⁴⁶ An approach by Archdeacon Hale for Schürmann to join him made Schürmann concerned for his school's future. On a trip to Adelaide he wrote to Meyer in 1851:

You are aware that Archdeacon Hale has invited me...to enter into an agreement with the English Church. Shortly before my departure he outlined this invitation with great urgency and with numerous weighty arguments, chiefly derived from my non-ecclesiastical position and 'comparative uselessness' in Port Lincoln. I have of course answered negatively, because I was inclined by my conscientious convictions to do so... How humiliating... [to] seek, urge and burden us with a lasting fellowship in an unfamiliar church and thereby lead us to repel, forsake and scorn our own church...It appears to me that Archdeacon Hale wants to reduce the influence of my school in Port Lincoln. If I read this correctly, it could be that if I don't join him, he will find some cause to shift my school from my section to Poonindie... One thing I will not change. I will follow ...my 'unfamiliar' confession.¹⁴⁷

In 1852 Lutherans planning to move to Western Victoria asked Schürmann to accompany them as their pastor but Schürmann felt he could not desert his students.¹⁴⁸ 'I [have] finally found my settled place and made it comfortable,' he told Meyer, 'I would be quite wretchedly crucified by the change.'¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the Adelaide school's closure in 1852 cut off Hale's main source of students. Poonindie's death rate was very high and as a result students absconded. Rathjen suggests these factors forced Hale to look to Schürmann's school for replacements.¹⁵⁰ In 1852 Young decided to close Schürmann's school and transfer its students to Poonindie. He offered Hale £1000 a year to accept Schürmann's students and whatever young Aborigines the governor sent him. Schürmann bowed to the inevitable and moved to Victoria in 1853 where he served for many years, a faithful and much loved pastor. In 1861, when the Lutheran congregations in South Australia decided to start Aboriginal mission work at Lake Killapaninna, they approached Schürmann about returning to mission work. He refused, citing his age and conviction that a successful mission would require more than the Lutheran congregations in Australia were willing or able to contribute.¹⁵¹

3.4 The missionaries' legacy

As indicated in chapter one, the Dresden missionaries have been seen as unsuccessful. Their work did not lead to the establishment of an indigenous Lutheran church. However they left a significant linguistic and anthropological legacy which has been appreciated in recent times by the descendants of the people they served. Other linguists

¹⁴⁶ Walsh, *The Problem of Native Policy*, 74.

¹⁴⁷ Schürmann to Meyer 23.8.1851. Lutheran Archives. Translation Geoff Noller.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid 17.1.1852

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Rathjen, 'A difficult and boring task', 93.

¹⁵¹ Schürmann's letter to Cordes in India 14.8.1861

and missionaries built on their work, adopting their orthography and methods.¹⁵² The Dresden men pricked the colonial conscience but it is difficult to judge how much they influenced government policy. They certainly led the way in establishing schools and influenced the government to reserve land for Aborigines, even if it was leased to settlers. When calling for such reservations before the 1841 House of Commons Select Committee on South Australia, Angas quoted the missionaries to support the claim that Aborigines inherited clearly defined territories.¹⁵³ As court interpreters, the missionaries probably helped influence authorities to finally allow Aboriginal evidence in court. Although they baptised no-one it is obvious from their writings that some Aborigines showed at least the beginnings of Christian faith. The Dresden missionaries' work provided the foundation for Anglican mission work. At Point McLeay the Congregationalist missionary George Taplin built on Meyer's linguistic work and acknowledged he was harvesting the seed sown by Meyer.¹⁵⁴ The people accepted Taplin because they appreciated the love and concern shown by Meyer and his wife.¹⁵⁵ Lutheran mission efforts later in the century learnt from the Dresden work. They emphasized the use of vernacular languages, moved as far from European settlement as possible, and accepted responsibility for the physical as well as spiritual well-being of the Aborigines. They were more realistic about the financial commitment needed.

For the individual lives touched by the Dresden missionaries their efforts were not in vain – the prisoners comforted, the sick and dying cared for, the people befriended, fed and taught to read and write – and the many acts of kindness and love the missionaries showed a despised and marginalized people. Brauer notes that race relations in Port Lincoln deteriorated once Schürmann left.¹⁵⁶ Harris describes their efforts as 'impressive, courageous, selfless, loving and generous. They were powerless to stem the tide of exploitation and oppression. But at least they tried.'¹⁵⁷

The Legislative Council Select Committee on the Aborigines of 1860 did not call any of the Dresden missionaries to give evidence. Questions were asked about their work but no-one claimed to know much, even Moorhouse. Scrimgeour notes that Grey failed to mention the Lutheran missionaries' involvement in Aboriginal education in dispatches to London.¹⁵⁸ Their work unrecognised, they were soon officially forgotten.

¹⁵² Rob Amery, 'Beyond Their Expectations: Teichelmann and Schürmann's Efforts to Preserve the Kurna Language Continue to Bear Fruit', 11.

¹⁵³ Second Report of the Select Committee on South Australia, 1841, *British Parliamentary Papers*, Minutes of evidence 2408, 2422.

¹⁵⁴ Taplin to Teichelmann 12.3.1867, cited in Brauer, *Under the Southern Cross*, 168.

¹⁵⁵ Harris, *One Blood*, 354.

¹⁵⁶ Brauer, *Under the Southern Cross*, 178.

¹⁵⁷ Harris, *One Blood*, 354.

¹⁵⁸ Scrimgeour, *Colonizers*, 198.

CHAPTER 4: THE MISSIONARIES' DIFFICULTIES

Chapter three outlined the experience of the Dresden Lutheran missionaries as they attempted to put their vision into practice. Chapter four will examine factors which frustrated their work and the role theology played in these difficulties. They will be dealt with under the categories of financial support; relationships with Dresden and between the missionaries; the indigenous culture; divergent colonial visions and relationships with government and other churches. The purpose of the chapter is to explore the relative importance of theology and other factors in making it impossible for them to continue. Appendix B outlines the missionaries' difficulties as they saw them in 1844.

4.1 Financial difficulties

Inadequate financial support crippled the missionaries' efforts and robbed them of independence. Money problems were exacerbated when Angas' promised support ceased after two years¹⁵⁹ because he was overextended financially.¹⁶⁰ The Dresden Society, in its infancy and under pressure because of its confessional stance, could only supply its missionaries with a very basic, and initially, erratic stipend. After 1842, the Dresden Society, after taking into account other sources of support, tried to make their pay up to £100 a year each (equal to the wages of a bullocky, barely enough for a single man¹⁶¹). Money did not always arrive as promised. Until other arrangements were made in 1843, Dresden channelled its contributions through Angas' agent with the result they were often tardy or missing,¹⁶² and on at least one occasion mistaken for Angas' contribution.¹⁶³ Misunderstandings strained relations. In 1843 Teichelmann wrote to Angas, 'I lament exceedingly our having come out to the colony... without a permanent arrangement, circumstances which have caused me unspeakable anxiety and much unpleasantness.'¹⁶⁴

The missionaries' hopes to found a German congregation in Adelaide which would give them support came to nothing. The congregations of the two Lutheran pastors in the colony, Fritzsche (who arrived in 1841) and Kavel, were desperately poor even before leaving Germany. They faced resettlement costs, repayment of passage money to Angas, who was pressuring them for repayment, and, as non-British citizens, premium land prices. Tensions arose between Kavel and the missionaries over Kavel's 'Apostolic Constitution' and practice of strict church discipline.¹⁶⁵ Kavel's and Fritzsche's people

¹⁵⁹ *The Southern Australian*, 7.6.42, 2D; Teichelmann to Angas 16.9.1841, SLSA PRG 174/1/1670-1677.

¹⁶⁰ Hodder, *George Fife Angas*, 148.

¹⁶¹ Letter from Rev Stowe to Rev Wells 10.1.1839, Lutheran Archives.

¹⁶² Dresden to W Smillie 18.3.1843, Lutheran Archives, Adelaide; Dresden to Teichelmann 27.7.1841; Teichelmann to Angas SLSA PRG 174/5/2.1.1843.

¹⁶³ Schürmann to Dresden 16.3.1840; Teichelmann diary 15.1.1840.

¹⁶⁴ Teichelmann to Angas 2.1.1843, SLSA PRG 174/5/21-25.

¹⁶⁵ Brauer, *Under the Southern Cross*, 100.

gave foodstuffs and, occasionally, small monetary donations and voluntary labour, but could do no more.¹⁶⁶

The missionaries were forced to supplement their incomes by growing their own food. Even when in government employ, Schürmann supplemented his meagre pay with farming. The missionaries resented time spent on domestic chores and hard manual work because this limited time for their vocation, but they could not afford help.¹⁶⁷ Schürmann frequently returned from trips to find everything stolen because he could not afford someone to watch his possessions. Attempts to train Aborigines to farm foundered when they could not match neighbours' wages. They even had trouble feeding and clothing themselves as they tried to support their Aboriginal work out of their meagre resources. After months without meat, Meyer's family gratefully ate birds the family cat brought home. At the same time, Dresden and Angas urged greater frugality while colonists and Aborigines looked down on them because they did manual labour.¹⁶⁸

Poverty made marriage difficult. The Dresden Society considered it irresponsible to marry if unable to support a wife and family. The missionaries thought their single state hampered their work and the Aborigines were suspicious of their intentions.¹⁶⁹ Meyer arrived as a married man, and all eventually married. Schürmann married a German Lutheran (1847), Klose an Anglican (1844) and Teichelmann a Calvinist Scot (1843). Their wives were a great asset but Dresden had a point – Teichelmann struggled to support his 12 surviving children.

The loss of Angas' support and irregular remittances from Dresden¹⁷⁰ encouraged leading Adelaide citizens to form the South Australian Aboriginal Missionary Society in aid of the German Mission to the Aborigines in 1842. This assistance was short-lived. The Society placed conditions on their money and Schürmann decided to accept no money from them unless driven by need.¹⁷¹ The new Society's secretary, W. Smillie, wrote to Dresden about the missionaries' needs. Dresden's reply showed that theological reasons as well as lack of funds influenced their level of support: the missionaries, like St Paul, should partially support themselves and live near the same level as those they worked among. The Committee wrote:

What you consider as the necessary ... annual stipend ... we must truly agree is necessary if the missionary is put in a position like that of the preachers of Europe; but that this is necessary under all conditions of this office we are not convinced. We rather hold to the view that it is much less than improper for a missionary to occupy himself with a garden or other work, and say, as once the apostle Paul said, that he should arrange his own means of subsistence, at least in part ... Such occupation... enhances the missionary in the eyes of the natives

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 150.

¹⁶⁷ Appendix B; Teichelmann diary 27.8.1845.

¹⁶⁸ Dresden to Teichelmann 17.5.1842.

¹⁶⁹ Schürmann to Dresden 21.6.1839.

¹⁷⁰ 'Mission to the Aborigines', *Register* 4.6.1842, 1G.

¹⁷¹ Schürmann to Dresden 22.8.1842.

(as the Apostle Paul also experienced) and if he moves amongst them it brings the natives closer to him. Therefore also it remains our wish that as far as possible our missionaries live amongst the natives and lead them in all kinds of activity like fathers and educators by their example and hence live in utmost simplicity and where possible become active in garden and agricultural work. Only then we believe are they really fulfilling their vocation.¹⁷²

In 1843, in order to make the mission more self-supporting, Dresden funded the purchase of land ('Ebenezer'), which Heinrich Lührs came to South Australia at his own expense to work. However he found his efforts would only supply his own needs with no profit for the mission.¹⁷³ When Teichelmann tried to turn Ebenezer into an Aboriginal agricultural settlement he incurred unbearable expense. The other missionaries believed it was impossible to feed and clothe the Aborigines from Ebenezer's proceeds and that Teichelmann had misunderstood Dresden's intentions.¹⁷⁴

Without government support, as meagre and unreliable as it was, the missionaries could not continue to work. When it came to an end, so did the work of the Lutheran Mission in South Australia.

4.2 Relationships between the missionaries and with Dresden

The evidence of the available correspondence between Dresden and its missionaries mostly shows a respectful, even affectionate relationship. The missionaries were accountable to the Society and looked to them for guidance. However a reply to a letter could take a year and distance made it hard for the Committee to understand the local situation, so its advice was sometimes inappropriate. Misunderstanding arose and sharp words were exchanged. Out of touch, the committee assumed there was greater support for the missionaries from within South Australia than was forthcoming.¹⁷⁵

Funding problems were a constant cause of tension in earlier letters. Another contentious issue was the Society's reluctance to give the missionaries permission to marry. The men eventually took matters into their own hands. The Society also complained about inadequate reporting. But the missionaries saw few results to report and felt isolated and unsupported.

Major disagreement arose over the extent to which it was the missionaries' responsibility to provide for the Aborigines' physical wellbeing. The Society considered this a government responsibility while the missionaries became increasingly convinced that, with the government failing to act, they needed to fill the void both for the sake of the Aborigines and for their spiritual work to succeed.¹⁷⁶ Schürmann believed the

¹⁷² Dresden to W Smillie 18.3.1843.

¹⁷³ Meyer, Teichelmann, Klose and Lührs to Dresden 26.1.1844.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Dresden to Teichelmann and Schürmann 27.7.1840.

¹⁷⁶ Schürmann to Dresden 15.4.1844.

missionaries and their Society had failed the Aborigines¹⁷⁷ and it was unrealistic to expect the missionaries to overcome mission obstacles with spiritual weapons alone.¹⁷⁸

The distance between the four mission locations made communication and co-operation difficult, despite periodic conferences. Meyer and Schürmann craved a colleague. Meyer regretted the failure to carry out the plan to have two men working together.¹⁷⁹ This dispersal was, however, because of governors' requests and not, as Scrimgeour suggests, because of personality clashes.¹⁸⁰ Meyer, Schürmann and Klose were gentle, courteous men and Meyer and Schürmann personal friends. There were tensions with Teichelmann who sometimes alienated people with his forthrightness and uncompromising (though often insightful) opinions. Initially Schürmann experienced difficulties working with him and Meyer called him 'an old disapproving and hard taskmaster.'¹⁸¹ Nevertheless Schürmann and Meyer endeavoured to co-operate with Teichelmann and later Schürmann was to help Teichelmann personally. Klose worked amicably with him, and elsewhere Teichelmann has been described as 'greatly respected for his conscientious devotion to duty and his quiet unostentatious character.'¹⁸² Disagreement certainly arose over Teichelmann's purchase of Ebenezer without consulting the other missionaries and his opposition to Meyer's teaching Aboriginal children in English. Such disagreements were minor factors in the mission's demise, but if the work had been less dispersed, the missionaries would have felt more supported and might have seen more positive results.

4.3 The indigenous context

As discussed in chapter three and documented in Appendix B, the missionaries' major obstacle was the people's nomadic life-style, because both language learning and evangelism required ongoing contact.¹⁸³ The small size of nomadic groups and the multiplicity of languages compounded the problem. Both Teichelmann and Schürmann considered roaming with Aboriginal groups but lacked the resources to do so.¹⁸⁴ If evangelism was to succeed the only way forward was to encourage the Aborigines to settle. Schürmann wrote to Dresden from Port Lincoln:

[A]s long as you do not go with the natives and live with them, but wait until they come to you, you will not accomplish much...[T]o live amongst the natives is what I have wanted, what I have tried to achieve...But how this is to be accomplished other than by allotting the natives a piece of land as their enduring and inalienable property and to assist them in its cultivation, I do not know.... Of course I visit them but that does not mean living with them ... This, in the

¹⁷⁷ Ibid 19.8.1844.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid; Schürmann to Moorhouse 7.9.1844, SRSA GRG 24/6/1844/488.

¹⁷⁹ Meyer to Dresden 25.7.1844.

¹⁸⁰ Scrimgeour, *Colonizers*, 43.

¹⁸¹ Meyer to Dresden 1839. Date unclear.

¹⁸² Lodewyckx, A 'Christian Gottlieb Teichelmann', a biographical sketch 1935 in *Teichelmann and Schürmann, Newspaper Cuttings etc.* SLSA.

¹⁸³ Schürmann to Dresden 28.5.1845.

¹⁸⁴ Teichelmann diary 7.4.1844; Schürmann to Dresden 27.11.1843.

present conditions would only be possible if one completely became a wild person, wore a kangaroo skin instead of clothing and nourished himself with their meagre diet... It is a hard task laid upon us.¹⁸⁵

Already in 1839 Schürmann believed the missionaries' work would be minimal and short-lived because of the denial of land to Aborigines.¹⁸⁶ When attempts at Aboriginal settlement failed, chances for an indigenous Lutheran church disappeared. Schürmann wrote:

Where so few are scattered among so many the hope of forming separate and lasting congregations ...is extremely small. Purely as a work of compassion, to lead a few souls from death to life is the only possibility this mission can ever contemplate, and never ...the establishment of the Lutheran church in its own particular identity.¹⁸⁷

Without ongoing contact, finding linguistic and cultural equivalents for Christian concepts was hard. Schürmann struggled to express concepts such as grace, salvation, repentance, and damnation in Parnkalla¹⁸⁸ and lamented that it was much easier to communicate the Law than the Gospel, easier to translate the Ten Commandments than the Lord's Prayer.¹⁸⁹ He wrote:

Most of all it is hard to find ... a fully appropriate word for ...forgiveness... perhaps for the reason that I have never seen a native seeking forgiveness for an offence he committed. They are in no way inclined to yield in the case of any emerging wrongs, but resolve them either by abuse or with blows.¹⁹⁰

The missionaries translated hymns, bible stories and sections of the catechism but not whole biblical books. There were too many calls on their time and they were still struggling to translate religious concepts when their work came to an end.

The missionaries reported Aboriginal apathy, resistance, and ridicule when they preached,¹⁹¹ particularly when they criticized Aboriginal behaviour (or spoke of death,¹⁹² a taboo subject). This is a common initial reaction in a new mission situation and does not necessarily mean the missionaries' approach was the reason for their lack of converts. The missionaries' preaching, as recorded in their letters and diaries, does at times seem to emphasise the Aborigines' moral failings rather than the predominant Lutheran emphasis on God's love for them. This could suggest the influence of Pietism. However two points need to be made. Firstly, the missionaries wanted to warn against

¹⁸⁵ Schürmann to Dresden 27.11.1843.

¹⁸⁶ Schürmann to Dresden 8.2.1839.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid 3.7.1843.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid 19.8.1844.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid 11.12.1844.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Meyer to Dresden 1.8.1844: Teichelmann, *Aborigines*, 12-13.

¹⁹² Meyer to Dresden 21.8.1841.

behaviour they believed was bringing suffering and destruction of the Aborigines as a people. This was not simply an effort to inculcate European culture as is sometimes assumed. The missionaries condemned even polygamy only after consultation and after being convinced its practice was causing suffering.¹⁹³ Secondly, Lutheran theology teaches that people must first understand their need for forgiveness before they will seek salvation in Christ. This underpinned the missionaries' stated approach to evangelism¹⁹⁴ and can be seen for example in Klose's approach on visiting a prisoner: 'At every opportunity I make him aware of his sinful life, where it has brought him and where it will bring him after death if he does not take refuge in Jehovah, and I acquaint him with the Gospel.'¹⁹⁵ Their ultimate objective was always to share a loving Saviour. Klose wrote: 'When I heard that within a few days the children would leave the Location to go to the new school, I spent considerable time on the first three verses of [Romans chapter 8] in order to make Christianity really clear and sweet to them.'¹⁹⁶ These verses teach that there is 'no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' because Christ has achieved what sinful human nature cannot and has set the believer free from the consequences of sin and death. Klose repeatedly expressed confidence that the seed he had sown would eventually bear fruit.¹⁹⁷

The missionaries did not meet only rejection. They also reported attentive listening and evidence of faith among children and adults but hesitated to claim conversions without sufficient evidence of changed lives.¹⁹⁸ Possibly they were expecting too much. Certainly they were aware that Aborigines sometimes said what was expected of them¹⁹⁹ and that individual converts would likely falter when faced with tribal pressures. For these reasons the missionaries hoped to form congregations of adults and children. They recognised that community support is important to Christians, especially from tribal societies. It is noteworthy that later, in Papua New Guinea, German Lutheran missionaries would withhold baptism until a whole community agreed that anyone desiring baptism could be baptised.

Attempts at evangelism were also undercut by the scoffing,²⁰⁰ bad example,²⁰¹ and horrendous treatment of Aborigines by some Europeans.²⁰² This treatment discredited all Europeans in the indigenous people's eyes and contributed to demographic change which impacted the missionary task. The Kaurna had largely left Adelaide by 1845-6, due partly to the influx of Murray people and partly to the rapid decline of the whole Aboriginal population.²⁰³ The missionaries recognised the Aborigines' preoccupation

¹⁹³ Schürmann to Dresden 16.3.1840.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Graetz, *Klose Letters*, 42.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid 43.

¹⁹⁷ *Klose Letters*, 36, 45.

¹⁹⁸ Teichelmann diary 9.7.1845.

¹⁹⁹ Meyer to Dresden 25.7.1844; Appendix B.

²⁰⁰ Schürmann to Dresden 5.11.1839; Teichelmann, *Aborigine*, 12.

²⁰¹ Schürmann to Angas 3.4.1840, in Schürmann, *I'd rather dig potatoes*, 97.

²⁰² Meyer to Dresden 1.8.1844; Schürmann to Dresden 14.8.1840.

²⁰³ 'Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council, upon 'The Aborigines,' together with minutes of evidence and appendix,' no 165, *Proceedings of the Parliament of South Australia*, volume III, Adelaide 1860.

with physical survival. Schürmann wrote '[If] concerns with livelihood are a temptation even to the experienced Christian, why should not hunger quench all restraints of conscience in the person of nature.'²⁰⁴ He later wrote: 'The happy, healthy and numerous tribes around Adelaide and the neighbourhood have been so decimated by excesses, sexual offences, disease, exposure and malnutrition that there would now be scarcely one to tell the tale.'²⁰⁵

4.4 Colonial visions and colonial authorities

The objectives of South Australia's founders were commercial. Some colonists had no sympathy for the Aborigines. Others were concerned for Aboriginal welfare but disagreed on how to provide for it while pursuing settler interests. Both settlers and colonial authorities expected the Dresden missionaries would serve their interests. When this didn't happen they withdrew support. Early officials such as Governor Gawler (1838-40) and Protector Wyatt (1838-39) supported the missionaries' efforts but relationships with later colonial authorities were problematic.

The South Australia Act of 1834 made no provision for the indigenous people. Angas and other humanitarians with influence in the British Colonial Office sought to rectify this.²⁰⁶ Under pressure, the Colonising Commissioners' First Annual Report set out their vision in 1836.²⁰⁷ Aborigines, they assumed, would benefit from contact with 'industrious and virtuous' settlers who would respect Aboriginal land rights where found to exist – settlers would only buy land which had been sold voluntarily by Aborigines receiving permanent 'subsistence' in return. The Commissioners would promote civilisation and Christianity and supply Aborigines with 'asylums' – weatherproof sheds – and food and clothing in exchange for labour. This plan, the Commissioners advocated, would be carried out 'in such a way as to be beneficial rather than burdensome to settlers' and would 'accelerate the prosperity of the Colony, by training the Aborigines to habits of useful industry, and by bringing a supply of native labour to aid the efforts of the settlers.'²⁰⁸ Under the plan, one fifth of the land would be reserved for Aborigines. That very same year the Commissioners declared all colonial land open to sale. Too late, an 1838 Amendment to the South Australia Act recognised Aboriginal rights to land.

In the early years of colonization, the Commissioners' plan set the pattern for Aboriginal relations. Successive governors aimed to 'civilise' and assimilate the Aborigines into colonial society as labourers through contact with Europeans and the work of the missionaries, though Teichelmann warned, 'No Native will enter the service of a European, at least not for a long period, for all are accustomed to live

²⁰⁴ Schürmann to Dresden 28.5.1845.

²⁰⁵ Schürmann, 'Obituary'.

²⁰⁶ Robert Foster, *An imaginary dominion: the representation and treatment of Aborigines in South Australia, 1834-1911*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1993, 1-30.

²⁰⁷ *House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1836*, no. 426, 8-9.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 9.

independently and to be their own masters.’²⁰⁹ An attempt to encourage the Aborigines in agriculture and settled living at the Native Location was soon abandoned and the Aborigines dispersed. Moorhouse reported to the Select Committee of 1860 that the plan was impractical and the lands were auctioned because the Aborigines would not ‘settle into distinct families,’ presumably European-style nuclear families.²¹⁰ The missionaries felt the plan was not given a real chance. Gawler and Grey, encouraged by the missionaries, the Protectors and Angas, reserved other land for Aboriginal use but were attacked by colonists who saw no evidence of permanent Aboriginal dwellings or agriculture and claimed Aboriginal claims to land ownership were ‘cuckoo notions’ instilled by the missionaries and Protector.²¹¹ Settler interests were given priority. There were no further government attempts to assist the Aborigines to settle. Reserved land was largely leased or sold to Europeans and the money used for the operation of the Aborigines Department. After the Waste Lands Act of 1841 allowed some proceeds from land sales to go to Aboriginal welfare, little land was reserved. Policy focused instead on providing rations to the needy and educating children in English.

Disillusionment with ‘civilising’ efforts led to the discussion of the options of coercion, segregation and institutionalization.²¹² Edward John Eyre makes this shift clear in ‘The Manners and Customs of the Aborigines,’ in 1845.²¹³ He recommended that the Aborigines’ traditional lifestyle should be broken down, the country divided into districts, each with an Aboriginal reserve and a manager, and the distribution of rations used to gain influence and authority over them. He recommended integrating adults into the community by concentrating them in defined areas and encouraging them to adopt European ways and work as pastoral workers. Civilizing efforts should concentrate on educating children insulated from the influence of Aboriginal adults. He advised that vernacular languages should not be used lest they perpetuate Aboriginal culture. On leaving school, Eyre suggested, children should serve an apprenticeship, marry and settle in a village under the influence of a missionary. Eyre’s recommendations broadly reflected developments in Grey’s and Moorhouse’s thinking, although Moorhouse favoured segregation of the Aborigines from settlers as well.²¹⁴ Many of these recommendations became government policy.²¹⁵

Governor Robe supported apprenticeships, ‘educating native children with Europeans in habits of industry’²¹⁶ and a general system of ration depots. According to Foster the depots became a system of social control through giving or withdrawing rations.²¹⁷ The Aborigines became increasingly dependent as Eyre predicted:

²⁰⁹ *Aborigines*, 6.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *South Australian Register* 1.8.1840, 5.

²¹² Foster, *An imaginary domain*, 131-132. Evidence given to the 1860 Select Committee confirms this.

²¹³ *Journal of Expeditions* pp 482-484, cited in Foster, 133-134.

²¹⁴ Grainger, *Matthew Moorhouse* 34.

²¹⁵ Foster, *An imaginary domain*, 120, 134; Rev Dean Farrell’s evidence, ‘Report of the Select Committee,’ 1860, 72; Geoffrey Grainger, *Matthew Moorhouse*, 86.

²¹⁶ Robe to Grey, 31.7.1848, GRG 2/6/4/ no.32.

²¹⁷ Foster, *An imaginary domain*, 139.

I believe that the supplying them with food would gradually bring about the abandonment of their wandering habits, in proportion to the frequency of the issue, that the longer they were thus dependent upon us for their resources, the more binding our authority would be.²¹⁸

Moorhouse wrote in 1850: 'It is very disheartening and somewhat humiliating to see all our attempts at improving the Natives assume the aspect of failure.'²¹⁹ A consensus was developing that segregation was necessary if young Aborigines were to be civilised or Christianised.²²⁰ To prevent educated Aboriginal children reverting to traditional ways a policy of segregation was attempted under Governor Young.²²¹ Discussion between Archdeacon Hale and Moorhouse led in 1850 to the establishment of the mission for young Aboriginal couples at Poonindie along the lines proposed by Eyre. Isolation from both Europeans and Aboriginal relatives was essential to the plan. The government's policy was increasingly one of control rather than education. Moorhouse told the 1860 Select Committee that educating the Aborigines in civilisation was utterly hopeless.²²² According to Schürmann, Moorhouse already believed this in 1839.²²³

Scrimgeour sees the colonial administrators and missionaries sharing the same goal of Christianising and civilising a colonized people.²²⁴ The distinction she sees is that the government's primary object was colonization, facilitated and justified by 'civilising/Christianizing' the Aborigines while the Lutheran missionaries' aim was to Europeanize Aborigines through Christianity.²²⁵ She claims that the missionaries were not opposed to colonization or British rule²²⁶ but 'served colonial agendas and sought to use colonial power to serve their own.'²²⁷ It is clear however from the discussions with Gawler analysed in chapter three that the Lutheran missionaries opposed colonization and the seizure of Aboriginal land. Scrimgeour uses Teichelmann's warning to some Aborigines that 'if they did not settle like the Europeans they would be driven out' as proof that Teichelmann supported the use of colonial authority to civilise/Christianize the Aborigines by force.²²⁸ This warning is open to other interpretations, including a realistic assessment of likely consequences. Teichelmann's writings show he believed Christianity cannot be forced, but requires a change of heart, a prerequisite for any change in life style.²²⁹

²¹⁸ Eyre, *Journal* 483 quoted by Foster, *An imaginary domain*, 140.

²¹⁹ Letterbook 26.6.1850, 264-5.

²²⁰ Evidence given to the 1860 Select Committee; *Southern Australian* 26.11.1842, 3.

²²¹ Grainger, *Matthew Moorhouse*, 104.

²²² *Ibid*, 96-97.

²²³ Schürmann diaries 16.11.1839.

²²⁴ Scrimgeour, *Colonizers*, 167.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 125.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 179.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 211.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 175-177.

²²⁹ Teichelmann diaries 18.12.1845, TA88; *Aborigines*, 11.

The Dresden missionaries' aims were informed by their theology and the sense of justice and compassion which flowed from their religious faith. Their emphasis on salvation as a free gift of God, received through faith, meant their aim was to bring the Aborigines to faith, not to promote a particular life style or level of civilisation or holiness of living. Ideally, as Christian people Aborigines would work out the implications of the faith for their own culture. At Piltawodli the missionaries did attempt to answer community criticisms and pressures to do more to 'civilise' the local peoples. And they did seek to 'civilise' the Aborigines to the extent of encouraging them to settle so the missionaries could learn their language and teach them, and because they saw no other alternative if the people were to have a future. The missionaries found an exploited, starving, dispossessed people, reduced to begging, thieving and prostituting their women. Their numbers were plummeting as introduced diseases, settler violence and disruption to their way of life added to deaths through infanticide, sorcery and fighting. They realised they could not merely concentrate on their spiritual aim but needed to care for the Aborigines' physical welfare as well. John Harris claims that the missionaries 'did not always separate the Gospel from what they saw as the benefits of a settled, productive, agricultural European way of life.'²³⁰ The missionaries' writings indicate that they were clear about the distinction. A settled life was seen as a means to an end, not part of the Gospel.

The missionaries' approach differed from that of the government in a number of significant ways. Firstly, the missionaries opposed the dispersal and assimilation of Aborigines as servants. They believed God had created them as a separate people.²³¹ The missionaries insisted there was a system of indigenous land ownership. They consistently advocated the reservation of land for Aborigines, and assistance to settle so they could preserve their communities, identity, language and aspects of their culture and the impact of dispossession and European culture could be cushioned. Here the missionaries hoped to establish Aboriginal Lutheran congregations. The Christian message, they believed, would free Aborigines from their superstitions and animistic fears and gradually change destructive aspects of Aboriginal culture. The missionaries proposed training opportunities attached to adult settlements, with schools teaching in vernacular languages and introducing English as it became necessary or desirable. Schürmann was so concerned about the impact of colonization on Aboriginal society that he concluded that some coercion might be necessary, with Aborigines given the choice of either maintaining their traditional lifestyle, pursuing a settled life based on agriculture or cattle raising on their own land, or entering regular employment with settlers.²³² Soul destroying begging, free rations, prostitution, stealing, and handouts in return for odd jobs, he believed, should not be options.

The government had no interest in preserving Aboriginal society or assisting Aborigines to settle. The missionaries were left to flounder on their own small plots, attempting to teach farming skills to Aborigines, while trying to fulfil their vocations. After discussions with Grey in 1843, Schürmann wrote:

²³⁰ John Harris, *One Blood*, 333.

²³¹ Schürmann diaries 1.9.1838.

²³² Schürmann to Moorhouse 17.5.1844, [SRSA GRG 24/6/1844](#); Missionaries' Conference Report 15.4.1844.

He is totally against any effort to establish corporate bodies of aborigines alone, segregated from Europeans. On the contrary he holds the firm intention of raising the children in the English way, in order to train them to be useful servants for the Europeans.²³³

Another area of tension was in the missionaries' relations with the judicial system. As indicated in chapter two, the missionaries' theology encouraged them to use local languages. Rathjen, Gale and Amery testify that Meyer, Teichelmann and Schürmann were gifted and competent linguists.²³⁴ Grey encouraged the missionaries to publish their linguistic work but Scrimgeour suggests his motive was to gain a reputation with the Colonial Office as a man who understood indigenous people, rather than respect for vernacular languages. The government, however, used the missionaries as interpreters for the police, the Protector and the courts with the result that their other work suffered.²³⁵ As Deputy-Protector, Schürmann resented the expectation that he would use his relationship with the people and knowledge of their language to spy on and apprehend them. As interpreters, the missionaries attempted to achieve justice for Aborigines, and help prisoners.²³⁶ They were highly critical of the application of 'British justice.'²³⁷ Schürmann argued for the admission of the evidence of indigenous people in court and maintained that they had their own codes of behaviour and should not be judged by white law.²³⁸ Moorhouse supported Schürmann, but Grey opposed special laws for Aborigines.²³⁹

Language became an issue in education. Initially the government was happy to use the missionaries to educate Aboriginal children. They were competent, committed and cheap. They did not consider themselves above teaching children as Lutheran theology says even small children need God's forgiveness and are capable of faith. They were committed to using the children's mother tongue, especially in religion classes, and students made much faster progress as a result. English was only used as needed or required.

Assimilation however implied that English would supplant Aboriginal languages. For a short time Moorhouse and Gawler supported their use but under Grey the policy became one of teaching in English only. When Schürmann was offered a teaching position at the Walkerville school in 1844 he declined, fearing he would be 'completely dependent on the whims of the government.'²⁴⁰ Moorhouse admitted that learning English occupied

²³³ Schürmann to Dresden 27.11.1843.

²³⁴ Rob Amery, 'Beyond Their Expectations: Teichelmann and Schürmann's Efforts to Preserve the Kurna Language Continue to Bear Fruit'; Mary-Anne Gale, *The Linguistic Legacy of H A E Meyer*; Cynthia Rathjen, 'A Difficult and Boring Task: Clamor Schürmann and the language achievements among the Parnkalla, Port Lincoln – 1840-1852.'

²³⁵ Meyer 8.4.1845.

²³⁶ *Klose Letters*, 42.

²³⁷ Teichelmann to Angas 2.1.1843, SLSA PRG 174/5, 21-25.

²³⁸ Schürmann, *I'd rather dig potatoes*, 139.

²³⁹ Grainger, *Matthew Moorhouse*, 56; CSO file SRSAGRG 24/6/1843/170.

²⁴⁰ Schürmann to the Committee 11.12.1844.

most of the children's time at Walkerville²⁴¹ and Teichelmann and Klose observed that religious instruction there was by rote without comprehension.²⁴²

As colonial frustration with the slow progress of 'civilising' the Aborigines grew, criticism was focused on the missionaries' school with its emphasis on the basics of religion, arithmetic and reading and writing in the vernacular, with some instruction in English, general knowledge and practical skills. The newspapers debated the usefulness of the school. The *Southern Australian* spoke positively of the missionaries' 'great, laborious and self-denying zeal' and the 'high value of the missionaries labours,'²⁴³ as did members of the South Australian Missionary Aid Society. However there was also criticism. The general opinion was that instruction should be in English. Moorhouse believed that if children became Christian 'it followed necessarily that they would adopt civilised habits' and would need to speak English to deal with Europeans on equal terms.²⁴⁴

Others too saw assimilation into European civilisation as a necessary implication of the Christian message, though definitions of civilization differed. They criticised the missionaries' lack of results. The *South Australian Register* expected greater changes in the outward appearance and manners of the children. It considered the missionaries' school 'worthless,' saw no 'chance of the civilisation of the young children under the arrangements in use.'²⁴⁵ The *Register* and *Adelaide Examiner* complained the missionaries were doing nothing to make the Aborigines useful workers. The *Examiner* lamented, 'All the efforts for civilising the native, have been with the object of his becoming a portion of our labouring, civilised population...all such attempts have ended in failure.'²⁴⁶ It concluded:

The fault has been in the system and not in the aborigines...We understand that the Society in South Australia are determined to continue the efforts to civilise our natives under the direction of the German missionaries. If so, we can easily foretell the result. The system on which these men have hitherto proceeded, their foolish reports and the evident prejudice that exists in their minds with regard to the Aborigines and their superficial knowledge of the English language renders the further employment of them, except in a subordinate capacity, folly of the most unaccountable description.²⁴⁷

The editor made an exception of Meyer who 'has formed around him a half civilised community of natives.'²⁴⁸ By contrast he pointed to the positive results where

²⁴¹ Moorhouse to CSO 8.7.1844, SRSA GRG 24/6/1844/712.

²⁴² Teichelmann diary 25.8.1845.

²⁴³ *Southern Australian* 3.6.1842, 2D.

²⁴⁴ Moorhouse to CSO 8.7.1844, SRSA GRG 24/6/1844/712.

²⁴⁵ *Register* 30.10.1841, 2.

²⁴⁶ *Examiner* 3.12.1842, 2C.

²⁴⁷ Editorial, *Adelaide Examiner* 17.2.1842, 2C

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Europeans employed Aborigines: ‘they will become... a useful and industrious class without owing any debt of gratitude to the German missionaries.’²⁴⁹

He suggested a different theological approach:

We should like to see the Wesleyan body take up the cause and see if the powers of Methodism ALONE – that has achieved so many triumphs for the Gospel, among people who have been inaccessible to the efforts of every other system of religion – could not do good service to their master’s cause amongst our benighted Aboriginal brethren.²⁵⁰

The German missionaries had been ‘a millstone around [the Protector’s] neck’ and their efforts a ‘disgrace,’ a ‘lamentable waste of public money.’²⁵¹

Grey’s focus shifted to government schools²⁵² using only English, with a determined emphasis on civilizing the children in European terms and providing more practical training. In 1845 he closed the Piltawodli and Walkerville schools, transferring students to a new Native Training Institute off North Terrace. Teichelmann’s insistence that the Piltawodli school was a mission school²⁵³ was brushed aside. Klose was convinced that the Walkerville school had been modelled on his school and the progress of his students had led to the establishment of the Native Training Institute.²⁵⁴ He hoped to continue at the new school but his employment was terminated when he insisted he be free to teach religion according to the dictates of his conscience. Scrimgeour suggests the mission schools were sacrificed to Grey’s ambition to build an Aboriginal Training Institute that would enhance his reputation as a colonial administrator.²⁵⁵ The Native training Institute brought children in from other areas, deliberately separating them from their families. The Poonindie school took this policy a step further.

The Dresden missionaries disagreed with focusing solely on the children and forcibly segregating them from their families, although they accepted that boarding schools and rounding up truants helped children’s school attendance. They advocated segregating children from the destructive European influences but not from their families. They wanted schools as an integral part of Aboriginal communities,²⁵⁶ continued to share the Gospel with all age groups²⁵⁷ and hoped their students would share the Gospel with

²⁴⁹ Adelaide Examiner 25.1.1843.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Adelaide Examiner 28.1.1843, 1A.

²⁵² Meyer to Dresden 17.3.1845.

²⁵³ Teichelmann to Moorhouse 29.1.1845, SRSA GRG 24/6/1845/115.

²⁵⁴ Klose Letters, 45.

²⁵⁵ Scrimgeour, *Colonizers*, ch 6.

²⁵⁶ Appendix B.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

their tribes.²⁵⁸ In this respect their settlement plans differed markedly from that at Poonindie.

The views of other church groups were more in line with those of the government and broader community. This was partly because of the different emphasis of Reformed theology. While Lutherans emphasized justification by grace, the Reformed emphasized holy living and they were more inclined to define the Christian life in terms of European civilisation. Angas saw the Christian mission in terms of moral, civilised living. He wrote to Teichelmann and Schürmann:

You have the moral image of the Christian and you go to show its influence to the heathen; you are in the enjoyment of the comforts of civilised life and you go to allow others to share it with you. You go as Pioneers, as messengers of mercy, to stay the moral pestilence of benighted people... endeavouring under God, to raise the tribe of the insular continent from barbarism to the highest pitch of refinement, from being subjects of Satan's Kingdom to become the servants of the most high God.²⁵⁹

Other Christians had similar views. The Methodists who conducted Sunday School at the Walkerville school emphasized a disciplined, civilised lifestyle with instruction in English a principle aim.²⁶⁰ Others also saw the necessity for English, such as Angas' agent, and newspaper editor, Anthony Forster, who believed using vernacular languages would inhibit progress towards civilisation.²⁶¹ Colonial Chaplain Rev Dean Farrell, who took over supervision of the Native Training Institute in Adelaide, was involved in the South Australian Aboriginal Missionary Society, formed in 1842 to aid the Dresden missionaries and involving ministers from all denominations. Farrell endorsed the Society's policies, as seen in his evidence given to the Select Committee of 1860. The Society was against perpetuating native languages²⁶² and favoured giving 'a more comprehensive' education²⁶³ than the missionaries provided, teaching English and useful skills, and taking the children as young as possible from their parents.²⁶⁴ The isolation of young Aborigines from the evil influence of their parents was repeatedly advocated in evidence to the Select Committee and was the principle on which the Anglican Mission Station at Poonindie was founded.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁸ *Klose Letters*, 20.

²⁵⁹ Angas to Schürmann and Teichelmann 28.5.1838, SLSA PRG 174/10.

²⁶⁰ Department for Administrative and Information Services, 'A Little Flour and a Few Blankets', *An Administrative History of Aboriginal affairs in South Australia, 1834-2000*, State Records SA, 2002, 14.

²⁶¹ Register 9.9.1843, 3.

²⁶² *South Australian Register* 9.9.1843, 4B.

²⁶³ Report of the Select Committee, 1860, 72.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*; *South Australian Register* 26.11.1842, 2E.

²⁶⁵ Report of the Select Committee, 1860, 5.

4.5 Relationships with other colonial churches

The confessional Lutheran revival of which the Dresden missionaries were a part had a parallel in Anglicanism's Oxford Movement which stressed doctrine and Anglican traditions.²⁶⁶ The early decades of South Australian settlement were marked by conflict between Dissenters and some Anglicans who hoped to achieve the social and religious prominence they held in England.²⁶⁷ Governors Robe and Young were sympathetic to Anglican aspirations which were strengthened by the establishment of the Adelaide diocese and the arrival in 1847 of Bishop Short.

The Dresden missionaries willingly worked with other churches as long as their right to retain their Lutheran convictions was respected. However, from the beginning they were put under pressure and their status as clergymen was questioned. On board ship Schürmann and Teichelmann were asked to conduct services, but only according to the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. They could not conduct a shipboard marriage. Dissenters on board aggressively challenged their theology.²⁶⁸ Klose however reported good relations with Calvinists on board ship.

Relations in the colony were mixed. Many English clergy looked down on the missionaries because of their poverty, manual labour and lack of university training. Others were helpful. The Congregationalist Minister, Thomas Stow, to whom Angus sent a letter of introduction, was welcoming. Wesleyan women assisted at the Piltawodli school and Christians from various denominations gave some financial support until they decided to channel support to their own missions. As indicated above, their non-Lutheran theology placed a greater emphasis on Christian living which led to a greater emphasis on Europeanising the local people and dissatisfaction with the Dresden men's approach. They also taught a symbolic understanding of the sacraments. Dissenters and some Anglicans were offended by Lutheran teachings of baptismal regeneration and the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper.

Growing Anglican influence in the colony finally thwarted the Dresden missionaries' hopes. With the Piltawodli school's closure, Klose wondered whether he could teach in the new school with a clear conscience when it was placed under the supervision of the Anglican Colonial Chaplain, Farrell. On advice from Dresden, Klose agreed to teach there on the condition that 'the religious part of the instruction and education of the children be entirely entrusted to my hands.'²⁶⁹ Robe did not agree.²⁷⁰ With the formation of the Adelaide Anglican diocese, Bishop Short demanded the right of supervision over

²⁶⁶ David Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order, A history of the Anglican Church in South Australia*, Netley, S A, 1986, 37

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 39.

²⁶⁸ Schürmann diaries 28.5.1838.

²⁶⁹ Klose to CSO 14.8.45, SRSa GRG 24/6/1846/96.

²⁷⁰ SRSa GRG 24/6/1846 96.

the Dresden missionaries.²⁷¹ On deciding to accept a call to Bethany, Meyer wrote to Dresden in 1848:

Due to the removal of Governor Grey, the government has changed significantly... Adelaide has been appointed as the seat of the bishop. This great shepherd appears indeed to have an interest in the black sheep of his diocese, for he encouraged us to continue the mission at his cost, with the stipulation however that if some should be converted to Christianity, they are then to be led to the English Church. ... This is indeed no fertile ground for our Lutheran Church.²⁷²

With this the missionaries asked the Dresden Society to release them, and the Lutheran Mission in South Australia was closed. Only Schürmann continued to work with Aborigines, first as court interpreter in Port Lincoln and then starting a school. This too was closed when the option of supporting an Anglican venture more in line with government policy presented itself (analysed in chapter three), a venture run by Hale, a man 'of British nationality and a minister of a church familiar to the governing powers.'²⁷³ Hale invited Schürmann to work with him on the condition he become an Anglican, an offer Schürmann declined because of his Lutheran convictions.²⁷⁴

As foreigners the Dresden men felt disadvantaged when dealing with authorities. Schürmann wrote:

It is not actually the obligation of the Lutheran church but that of the equally Christian people of England to undertake the preaching of the Gospel in their colonies... We are able to make many suggestions, but many of our suggestions would carry more weight if we were not in the unfortunate position of being foreigners.²⁷⁵

The orphaned farm lad Schürmann, the former carpenter Teichelmann, and their colleagues could not, with their accented, imperfect English, foreign nationality and 'unfamiliar creed,' command the same hearing as the likes of the wealthy, aristocratic Archdeacon Hale who had 'considerable influence with the governor in all matters relating to the Aborigines.'²⁷⁶

²⁷¹ Otto, *Hundert*, 50.

²⁷² Meyer to Dresden, 29.8.1848.

²⁷³ Rathjen, 'A Difficult and Boring Task,' 93.

²⁷⁴ Schürmann to Meyer 23.8.1851.

²⁷⁵ Schürmann to Dresden 3.7.1843

²⁷⁶ Schürmann to Meyer 17.1.1852

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The Dresden Lutheran missionaries' role in South Australian history cannot be understood apart from their theological background. This thesis asks what role that theology played in shaping their vision, methods and experience, and in bringing their work to an end.

The missionaries' theology shaped their vision and methods. Lutheran theology sees salvation as a gift of God, not a reward for good conduct. The missionaries saw their goal as bringing the message of God's love and forgiveness to the indigenous inhabitants of Australia and establishing Aboriginal Lutheran congregations rather than changing their lifestyle to conform to European ideas of civilisation. In line with Lutheran teaching on the two Kingdoms and the Christian vocation, the Dresden Society urged its missionaries to concentrate on proclaiming the Gospel and leave the major responsibility for the natives' physical wellbeing to the government.

Lutheran teaching emphasises the authority of the Bible as God's Word, and conversion as the Holy Spirit creating faith through the Word. Consequently, the missionaries taught literacy, studied the culture and used the people's language to reach their hearts. Any behavioural or cultural changes would result from a change of heart. Consistent with this theological understanding, the missionaries envisioned Aboriginal Lutheran congregations in communities that retained their separate language, identity and culture as far as this did not conflict with the Christian faith. Their vision required the reservation of land for the continuation of Aboriginal communities.

The Lutheran approach did not find approval with most settlers who wanted access to Aboriginal land or favoured assimilation of the Aborigines as workers for the colonists. Nor did it satisfy settlers who thought they should be civilising/Europeanising the Aborigines as well as bringing them to Christ. The missionaries became increasingly out of step with the opinions of government and colonists.

The greatest stumbling block to the missionaries' vision was the fact that the Aborigines were a nomadic and dispossessed people with many languages. This made evangelism extremely difficult. Because of inadequate government provision, the Dresden missionaries felt the need to care for the Aborigines' physical as well as spiritual welfare. They advocated assistance to Aborigines to form settled communities on their own land, in order to provide them with a sustainable future and make evangelism possible. Without support from government or other sources, they failed in this aim.

The Dresden Mission Society owed its beginnings to a revival of confessional Lutheran theology in protest against the established church. But the Society's lack of official recognition affected its ability to fund its missionaries. Its funding structure was based on the scripturally-based assumption that its missionaries would focus on Gospel proclamation, live and identify with the Aborigines, and partially support themselves in the manner of St Paul. In the Australian context, this idealistic principle robbed the

missionaries of any chance of independence from the colonial government and any realistic hope of pursuing their vision with success.

Working as German Lutherans in an English colony the missionaries' influence was limited. When Anglicans became interested in Aboriginal mission work the government switched its support to them. Unwilling to give up their convictions and work as Anglicans, the Dresden missionaries' work came to an end.

Lutheran theology shaped the Dresden missionaries' vision, methods and convictions, which differed from those of other influential colonists. Given the missionaries' limited resources and the lack of support within South Australia, they found it impossible to evangelise a fragmented, dispossessed, roaming, pauperized population rapidly declining in numbers.

APPENDIX A: Schürmann's diary entry for 1 September, 1838.²⁷⁷

On 1st September the governor asked me whether we were being sent out by the society in Germany or by Angas. - Naturally it was the former, was my answer. - Are you sure there has not been some significant contribution from Angas? - Indeed. However even if this was not the case, we would still have gone out to South Australia. - So, he said, he had been under the impression that Angas had sent us out. However I soon detected that he had something else in mind besides knowing who had sent us out because he continued: The plan that demanded separating the Aborigines was not only erroneous but also required the approval of the government. Did I know we would be under the authority of the Protector of Aborigines? - My response was I knew such a Protector existed, but I knew nothing of his control over our activities. However I hoped that this control would be of such a kind that it would be easy to bear. - [He said] one could not accept such a political separation of the people. - My plan has nothing to do with politics and was advised by Angas with whom I was on good terms... [Asked] whether I wanted to retain the language of the people and whether this had been my instruction from the Society, I replied that the latter was understood by the Society since they themselves said in my instructions that as soon as I was proficient in the language I should translate the catechism and the Bible into that language. It therefore lay upon me to maintain the language of the people and to keep them separate as a people in so far as I wished to form congregations among them, which was hardly possible if they were scattered in larger towns so that one could hardly find one [Aborigine] among 500 people. And why was this separation that was to take place a problem seeing that by nature they were already separated from Europeans by colour and in other ways as well? Asked whether I would block the people from learning the English language, I replied that I could [not] and would [not] since I considered it to be an advantage if they understood English. - Would they be encouraged to learn English? - Individuals could well do so but not the people as a whole. I would introduce their language into church and school if it proved capable of development for such purposes. Naturally I would encourage the people to learn their own language well. [He said] I could depend on it that my plan was wrong. Wasn't I in reality saying that the occupation of Australia was an injustice? I did not think that I had said such a thing but yet I wanted to say to him as a friend that my opinion was that the English had no [such] right.

²⁷⁷ Translation by Geoff Noller and Lois Zweck.

APPENDIX B: Letter to the Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society of Dresden, from its missionaries, Adelaide, 15 April, 1844.

To the Committee of the Evangelical Missionary Society of Dresden

Dear Brethren in the Lord!

We all met in Adelaide on the 9th of March of this year for purpose of complying with your request that we should gather to discuss the state of the mission in South Australia and to convey our views to you. After our deliberations had been opened with the reading of Psalm 10 and fervid prayer for the guidance of to Lord in this important matter, the following question was raised immediately: What purpose did the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society have in mind when they sent their missionaries to Australia? Our unanimous answer to this simple question was: To preach the Gospel to the Aborigines of this country and to gather the converted into Lutheran congregations.

We could not but be aware that the attainment of this goal is attended by obstructions at all times and among all peoples, as for example: the innate disinclination towards all things divine; a carnal attitude which resists any pressure to renounce (human) desires and their fulfilment; and the power exerted by unbelief and superstition, which becomes stronger and stronger as the true faith threatens to take hold of the (human) heart. We could not fail to notice that missionaries everywhere have had to contend with these and similar difficulties but were of the opinion that the extraordinary state of the indigenous people of South Australia presented the messenger of Christ with special difficulties which it was our duty to appraise. Among these the following are worthy of mention:

Firstly, the small size of the Aboriginal population in comparison with the vast size of the country. The population density has been calculated as being no more than ONE person per British (or statute) square mile. Some idea of how greatly scattered they are may be gained from the fact that they do, nevertheless, roam through every part of the country to gain sustenance from it.

Secondly, the fragmentation of their language into many completely divergent dialects. At Encounter Bay, which is only 14-15 German miles (approx. 60 statute miles) from Adelaide, the dialect is different from the one spoken in Adelaide that a philologist is the only person able to identify true relationships between them. In Port Lincoln the divergence is not so great but the difference is still significant enough to make communication between the two tribes impossible. The printed dictionaries which some of you already have, and which others are about to receive, are the best source of information on this subject.

Thirdly, the nomadic life style of the Aborigines, which they have practised over a long period and which has engendered a deeply-rooted aversion to living in fixed homes. It may well seem unnecessary to mention this point again because it has been the subject of complaint so often and in so many different places. (Incidentally, not on our part alone, and on the part of missionaries of several English societies who attempted the difficult task of establishing missions in New South Wales, but also on the part of the late missionary, Williams, who encountered this life style on the largest island of the new Hebrides, if I am not mistaken, and who, in his 'Mission Initiatives' ('Missions-unternehmungen'), had no hesitation in passing it off as the reason for postponing the

attempt to convert the native islanders, at least for the present.) This phenomenon is certainly very important because the nomadic life style of the Aborigines is destined to frustrate the efforts of missionaries more surely than any other circumstance, and it is on this account that we see it as our duty to redirect your attention to it. Without seeing them for yourselves, it may be difficult for you to have a clear conception of the roving habits of South Australian Aborigines because comparisons between them and primitive tribes of other lands, such as those of America and South Africa, seem to be so obvious. We are convinced, however, that every attempt to draw parallels with other nations will lead to an over-estimation of our indigenous people. We do not know of a single race on the face of the earth which does not have some kind of an arrangement or engage in an occupation which imposes a certain type of regularity upon their movements. North Americans grow maize crops in summer and dry meat to enable them to spend a comfortable winter in their wigwams; the Kaffirs stay close to their herds of cattle, and even if they are often forced to move from place to place because of a shortage of pasture or water, the members of a tribe do, nevertheless, stay close to each other. In addition, the North Americans as well as the South Africans have kings or chieftains who maintain at least some notion of order, however weak, and of social cohesion within their tribes. By contrast, our Aborigines are not held in check by any notions of deference nor by considerations of any other kind. For we are sure that whatever was said with regard to Aboriginal chieftains was based on a misconception; every locality is valued only for the subsistence it provides. If, as sometimes happens, they gather in larger numbers to catch fish along the coast, or if they gather to hunt wild animals during the hot summer months, strife, disputes and the shedding of blood are also sure to follow before long, and these invariably result in the dispersal of the group. And added to all those facts there is:

Fourthly, the distressingly rapid decline in their numbers since they have had contact with Europeans, and the worsening of their condition overall. European contact has not only given rise to detestable illnesses among the Aborigines, resulting in the deaths of many and the physical and mental depredation of others, but such contact has also had a blunting effect on their positive characteristics, for they initially possessed an inherent capacity for spontaneous and well meaning actions which have given way to a greater measure of shamelessness and impudence. In addition, an increase in the number of European settlements has resulted, for the Aborigines, in new sources of gaining a livelihood either by begging or by performing menial tasks and this has also served to hasten their dispersal. Groups of ten or twenty may be seen everywhere where small European towns or villages have sprung up. But this latter development is more characteristic of the Adelaide tribe than of the tribes living in the Encounter Bay and Port Lincoln areas.

The difficulties the missionary encounters as a result of the circumstances mentioned above are quite obvious and self-evident. We will, therefore, mention only two. The first is the way in which the language study has been made more difficult. Much can probably be learned by attracting the presence of one or two Aborigines and conversing with them, but to become really familiar with all the ideas and views which combine to make up the Aboriginal ethos (and such knowledge is surely desirable and, indeed, necessary), it would, of course, be essential to observe them in greater numbers and to live among them. But when the missionary feels that he is capable of making himself understood he can, nevertheless, speak with only a few Aborigines at any one time.

We also discussed how the bad circumstances mentioned above and the consequences resulting from them might be overcome. And we were generally of the opinion that this might be achieved if colonies for the Aborigines were established either by the Government or by the Mission Society. But that the Government would not become involved in an undertaking of this kind was obvious from the reply the Brethren Meyer and Schürmann received when they applied for a subsidy to assist them in their attempt to accustom the Aborigines to arable farming on their mission stations, for the answer stated explicitly that the Governor was not convinced that the line of approach suggested by the missionaries had any practical value. On the contrary, the Governor preferred to keep the Aborigines as close as possible to the city and to other townships, so that sheep farms, located in various parts of the countryside, would not be robbed or endangered.

In assessing the Committee's advice that we should live among the Aborigines, we took the view that this would not be possible, partly because the Aborigines are often dispersed into a number of smaller groups of two or three families each and partly because they would be likely to pester the missionary for his provisions and would then consume the lot, or if turned away, would become dissatisfied with him. On the other hand, any attempt on the part of the missionary to exist on the coarse diet of the Aborigines would soon be likely to have an injurious effect on his health. It also seemed to us to be appropriate for the missionary to raise the outward standards of these primitive people to his own level, but the way of life described above is certainly more likely to drag him down to the uncivilised life style of the indigenous people.

And the kind of expectations one may have for the youth may best be deduced from the experiences of the Adelaide school. Since May of last year, there has been a daily attendance of 19 children and their level of progress has been reasonably satisfactory. Those who have left school have, however, returned to their old way of life but they do display a more responsive sense of shame as a result of the instruction they have had. The opening of a school at Encounter Bay is being planned; provisions for the erection of a school have already been made and subscriptions towards boarding and lodging the pupils have been collected. In Port Lincoln also, the Governor has promised to lend a helping hand as soon as he can get hold of the necessary means. It is regrettable, however, that these institutions (i.e. schools) cannot be linked directly with adult Aboriginal settlements.

In Encounter Bay and in Adelaide we think it desirable for the English language to be introduced into the curriculum beside the indigenous language, since the children have already acquired a good grasp of the official language through contact with the white population. On the other hand, this course of action would be impossible at Port Lincoln where, till now, the tendency has been for the Europeans to learn the Aboriginal language rather than the reverse.

Our hopes and views differ with regard to Aboriginal adults. The Brethren Meyer and Klose are of the opinion that there is, humanly speaking, very little hope of their conversion, and for the following reasons:

- 1) their life style, which has already been described;
- 2) the unwillingness of the Government to provide them with separate settlements;

3) the resultant difficulties in mastering the language thoroughly enough to give the Aborigines a complete grasp of the concepts connected with the doctrine of salvation;

4) the rapid dying out of the Aborigines since making contact with whites, lending to the fear that they may have vanished by the time the missionary is able to appear among them in his capacity as a missionary.

Brother Teichelmann's hopes and expectations rest on the missionary's ability to preach the word [of God] in the Aboriginal language more and more clearly and intelligibly so that souls will eventually be won for the Lord. Experience has shown that the extent to which God's word has been proclaimed to them clearly and intelligibly has determined the degree to which they have been touched by it, but whether this will lead to (their eternal) life or death is beyond the control of the missionary. Moreover, as the missionary's preaching about God's plan for their salvation becomes more and more comprehensible and comprehensive, the two reactions mentioned above will also become more and more evident.

Brother Schürmann believes that one may also be justified in entertaining hopes for the aged, provided the following conditions are fulfilled, namely:

1) that each tribe be given exclusive ownership of an area of land with a diameter of two or three English miles;

2) that a school be erected on this land and that the adults be taught agriculture;

3) that the habit of roaming about among the European population be prohibited and outlawed, and that the Aboriginal people be forced to make a living by catching fish or hunting in accordance with tradition, or (alternatively) that they settle down on the land allocated to them. By these means only will we be afforded an opportunity to master their language so that we will be able to acquaint them with [God's] plan for their salvation and make a comprehensive and wholesome impact on their spiritual and social life, at least to some degree. Since it is unlikely that the Government will implement such a measure, and it is impossible, I believe, for the [Mission] Society to do so, Brother Schürmann's view is, in effect, almost the same as that of the Brethren Meyer and Klose.

As far as the mission at Moreton Bay and its activities are concerned we must admit that we are unable to place as high a value on the reports appearing in 'Die Biene'²⁷⁸ as you appear to do. Each of us could certainly cite numerous examples of Aboriginal statements of the type reported in 'Die Biene', but one has to be careful not to overrate their significance, for the Aborigines often make beautiful statements and promises (to ingratiate themselves and to achieve their own ends) without ever intending, or at least, never seriously considering their fulfilment.

We should not overlook the fact that the Gossner missionaries are able to concentrate their collective efforts at one locality, while we work individually. Nevertheless, we fail to see that their work is any more comprehensive or more highly-blessed than our own. It may well be true that the missionaries compiled their reports without intentional

²⁷⁸ The mission magazine of the Gossner Mission.

ostentation, but all of us were left with the impression that they have deceived themselves in their assessment of true Aboriginal character and the success of their own endeavours.

We were greatly surprised that the Society is advising the four of us to live on the Ebenezer site, for then both Encounter Bay and Port Lincoln would have to be abandoned and the Adelaide school would surely be closed down because the Government would either withdraw its support or appoint some other teacher. In addition, it seems unfair to give up the larger tribes like the ones at Port Lincoln and Encounter Bay, and to sacrifice three years of effort spent in learning their languages. Our living together would have no influence on the movements of the Aborigines, i.e. they would not follow us unless, of course, we supplied them with provisions. Ebenezer seems to us to be the least appropriate place, partly because the site is too small, partly because the surroundings are heavily populated and an influx of many Aborigines would inevitably lead to collisions with the Europeans.

With reference to the savings which could be achieved by cultivating your (i.e. the Mission Society's) land ourselves, we are certainly forced to admit that the work of our hands would provide us with a livelihood just as successfully as it does in the case of other colonists but it would of course leave us with no time to pursue our vocation. On the other hand, Brother Teichelmann's calculations have shown conclusively that the employment of skilled labourers would inevitably lead to losses on account of low grain prices and relatively high wages.

Since the land cannot continue to be cultivated as intensively as it has been without incurring ongoing expenditure, the question arises as to what the Society will do with its property. In our humble opinion the wisest thing to do would be to farm the land out to tenants, or to sell it. Selling it may well be the better option, for in these difficult financial times it will be hard to find a tenant with the ability to pay. We have now come to the unanimous decision to leave things as they are for the time being, and Brother Teichelmann will continue to live at Ebenezer until we receive precise instructions as to the Committee's future plans.

We remain your humble fellow servants in Christ,

Chr. G. Teichelmann

C. W. Schürmann

H.A .E. Meyer

S. G. Klose

Adelaide, 15 April, 1844

APPENDIX C: Letter to the Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society in Dresden from H A E Meyer, Encounter Bay, 25 July 1844. (Excerpt)

...Your esteemed letter concludes with the question: ‘How do things stand with the teaching and work of our missionaries, who are to pave the way for a Lutheran Church Mission and towards whom so many hopeful and inquiring eyes are directed?’ With regret, we have already had to admit that your desire to form Lutheran congregations from those converted from paganism to Christ can not be realised under the present circumstances and also, unfortunately, probably not in the future; but your Mission here can only be regarded as a work of compassion to lead the natives from darkness into light and to God away from Satan’s might, and then to seek employment among the Europeans, if the Lord grants His blessing to that purpose. As a suitable opportunity offers itself here to make some observations on the Australian Mission, I take the liberty to write down a few thoughts which have already occupied me frequently and still do, namely whether you, respected friends, as the committee of the Lutheran Mission, have also done the right thing in directing your mission activity to Australia. It can certainly not be subjected to any doubt that a Society can err, even with the best of intentions, in sending its messengers to a place where their efforts will perhaps not be crowned with success until a later time, and on the other hand, pass by nations where victories could be won with the Gospel in a shorter time. Acts 16:6,7 perhaps furnishes proof of this. Yet I do not question whether it was according to God’s gracious will that you sent us hither, for were this the case, no more questions could be asked and we would have to hold our tongues and quietly await the hour of His deliverance, but whether you, revered friends, have done the right thing when the Mission is regarded from a political point of view – the answer to this would certainly have to be in the negative. A society should firstly seek to acquire some knowledge of the people to whom they propose to direct their activity, so that they can judge whether the success of the preaching of the Gospel is conditional upon spending large sums of money or not, as here for example where one, plainly speaking, can not anticipate a lasting fruit of one’s work if the people are not first raised from their animal-like state to a more moral one – but for that it is essential to provide a settlement for them. Then the Society should look and inquire where the tribes are the most numerous, and who has the responsibility of caring for their spiritual welfare. Here, for example, this duty clearly lies first of all with the English, for they have taken possession of their property, and in all probability would also have sent out missionaries who would then, by dint of their recommendations and as English subjects, be able to do much more to assert the rights of the natives. Finally, is it well advised for one, so to speak, when testing one’s strength for the first time, to pass over peoples crying out for help, or those parts of the earth where in the normal course of events one can promise oneself great success, and on the other hand choose the most difficult field on God’s earth? The answer to this could be very simple, namely that it is no business of mine to ask such questions as long as I am receiving my support. And indeed this answer would be sufficient for me, were my heart not laden with other matters – but I know that you will rather reprimand and correct me in love, should these thoughts and concerns be groundless, so that they may be swept away, for they were never a source of consolation and encouragement to me. On the other hand, however, if you perceive that these and like questions have been completely overlooked when sending us out, do not make us suffer alone for the fact that the inquiring and hopeful eyes of so many people are directed here; but confess openly that you have chosen a field of whose difficulties you had no idea, and that perhaps not until the bones of all of us have decayed will the scattered seed grow and bear fruit, with the observation – if

God in His mercy should preserve the original inhabitants of Australia for long enough to give them time for repentance.

... Now it is heartbreaking to look at the poor heathen – never have the consequences of sin been so evident as in this year. The huts of the natives are close to the fishing stations where every year from April to October about 100 people of the lowest class are employed and who make use of most of the poor blacks of the female sex for sinful and shameful purposes, thus causing sickness and death among the tribes. Young people with whom I was able to engage in strenuous work in the previous year now look like old men and are not able to leave their camp; women who were once sprightly and cheerful now creep around emaciated, like skeletons, from one hut to another, indeed even children are afflicted through proximity with these loathsome diseases. All this they suffer with a passivity which cannot be put into words. If they are questioned about it, each sex has its own excuse, the women say: ‘We were forced to do it by our men so that they might obtain tobacco and flour from the Europeans.’ The men reply: ‘We can do nothing about it, the women love those men too much.’

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