THE SPELL OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM:

The Berlin Mission’s Opposition to, and Compromise with,

the Völkisch Movement and National Socialism: Knak, Braun, Weichert.

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Introduction: Cultural Context

From the time of the first major internments of Berlin missionaries by the British in 1915, the Berlin Mission defined and redefined its place in the larger scheme of things which included the international Christian community, the mission field in the colonies of Britain, and Germany itself. Berlin missionaries did not see Germany as belonging to the *Herrschervölker* (dominating nations) like England, France, and Russia. Nor did the Berlin Mission see Germany as having an interest in conquest politics (cf. Dumont 1994). In their view, internment belied the universalistic ideals heralded during the 1910 mission conference in Edinburgh (Richter 1915:93, 95, 97; Knak 1940). Furthermore, far from seeing internationalism as succeeding, Berlin missionaries noted the simultaneous striving toward nationhood of *neue Völker* (new peoples) (ibid.). Of particular concern were the Afrikaaner whose nationalism, like that of Germany in the nineteen twenties and thirties, took on religious qualities (Knak n.d.a:227).

The Berlin mission saw itself as beleaguered on all fronts: by the English and French in the trenches of the First World War where their recruits fought, died, and were lost to the mission; and by the English and Afrikaaner in South Africa where the first mentioned enhanced their Imperialism and the last mentioned their religious nationalism. The worst battle of the mission was fought, however, in Germany itself where, after 1933, national socialism, the *völkische* Bewegung (völkish movement), and the various “new” Nordic and German religions together attacked Christianity as right for its downfall.

Germany of the thirties was awash with virulent movements. There was first the party specific movement of the national socialists. There was the broadly based *völkische Bewegung* (Mosse [1966] 1981). Within this, and very much in tune with Nazi ideology, which it refined,
were the “new” or “other” religious movements loosely referred to as “deutscher Glaube” (German Faith) (Meyer 1915), “deutschvölkischer Glaube” (Faith of the German folk) (Boge 1935), “Rasseglaube” (Race Faith) (Braun 1932), the “Deutsche Glaubensbewegung” (German Faith Movement) (Hauer 1933), various Wirklichkeitsreligionen (Reality Religions) (Mandel 1931), the “Deutschreligion” (Bergmann 1934), “Gotterkenntnis” (God-cognition) (Ludendorff 1935), various “Nordungenkreise” or Nordic religions (Boge 1935), to mention but a view (Bartsch 1937; Poewe 1999). Also included in Germany’s “other” or “own” religions must be the Deutsche Christen who rejected the Old Testament and Pauline Gospel as foreign, that is, as Jewish, and/or they argued for an Aryan Christ.

Innumerable “own” and “other” religions progressively defined and refined national socialist ideology (Rosenberg 1935; Hauer 1935; Bergmann 1933, 1941), rejected Christianity and Christian missions, and equated salvation with sterilization (Bergmann: ibid). Against these religions and their various Führers Berlin missionaries defended themselves, unfortunately, sometimes sparing Hitler. The mission director Siegfried Knak and mission inspector Walter Braun were aware that defending the mission against these nordic-, reality- and blood-religions meant taking a position against national socialism. They were not, however, prepared to oppose Hitler and the Third Reich outright.

Thus the opposition of the Berlin mission was selective and was aimed to ensure its survival and that of the Gospel. As well, the Berlin mission leadership’s position was not without ambivalence. It rejected some things, for example, the Gleichschaltung and the Arierparagraph. It was at times indifferent to anti-Semitism. It stressed opportunely what it thought were commonalities with national socialism, for example, their mutual dislike of internationalism,
Marxism, Imperialism, and Europeanization. It opposed strongly Rosenberg’s Darwinism and racism, but excused, at times, the muddleheaded utterings of Hitler.

This paper looks at the mixed response toward national socialism of three Berlin mission leaders: mission director Siegfried Knak (1875-1955), mission inspector Walter Braun (1892-1973), and mission inspector Ludwig Weichert (1887-1936). Particular attention is given to the anthropological theories, critiques, and concepts used and developed by Berlin missionaries who wanted to remain true to their Christian world view and their ideal of maintaining indigenous cultures, while avoiding to look like direct opponents of the Hitler state and Afrikaaner nationalism.

The Case of Siegfried Knak (1875-1955)

a. his life

Knak was born in the small town of Zedlitz, was educated and ordained in Stettin, and became a pastor in Ribbekardt, then Pomerania. His first wife died of pneumonia at a young age. Seven years later, in 1919, he married the daughter of another mission inspector, Martin Wilde, whose son Joachim Wilde, also a mission inspector, claimed Weichert’s book Mayibuye iAfrica! (1928) (after the Zulu slogan, Return again Africa!) for national socialism. In 1909 Knak was called to become a mission inspector. His work was interrupted by the first world war where he served voluntarily as preacher and was medaled for selfless service in finding and bringing to safety wounded soldiers. In 1921 he replaced Karl Axenfeld as director of the mission which position he held until 1949. He received his PhD in theology from the University Halle-Wittenberg, 1924, and made his first extended visitation to East and South Africa in 1929. His book, Zwischen Nil und Tafelbai (Between Nile and Table Bay), published 1931, sets the goal,
and makes explicit the anthropological theory by means of which Knak hoped to steer the Berlin
mission through the turbulent waters of the rabidly anti-Christian sentiments of the völkisch-
religious and national socialist movements in Germany. And not only there, he had also to worry
about the maintenance of Berlin activities in a South Africa that was becoming Afrikaanerized.

b. his works

In his unpublished history of the Berlin Mission from 1924 to 1949, Knak describes the
heated debates held in the new auditorium of Berlin University between representatives of the
mission or Christianity and fanatical defenders of nordic or generally Deutsche Volks-religions.
These debates were very serious and were discussed further during the annual mission
conference of Brandenburg organized by Julius Richter, a professor and church historian at the
Berlin university. Apparently supporters of the völkisch movement, especially academics, were
trying to turn Icelandic sagas into an alternative religious type which was given respectability by
linking it to German mysticism, Luther’s perspective on faith, and the religious perspective of
German classical writers like Goethe (p.28b). Concomitantly, Christianity was discredited by
fanatical national socialists like the Berlin Germanist Professor Gustav Neckel, the Germanist
Dr. Bernhard Kummer, and the leader of the Nordic Community, Professor Hermann Wirth,
among many others mentioned above. Together they depicted Christianity as a mistaken
development (Fehlentwicklung) or movement of secession (Abfallsbewegung) (Knak nd: 28b).
According to Knak (ibid), these pseudo-scientific constructions were so widespread that
Rosenberg saw it opportune to build his “Mythos” upon these ideas (1935). The use by Nordics
of their “religions” as political weapons, argued Knak, served to prepare Christian circles in
Berlin for the religious politics of the third Reich (p.28c) which, in its Rosenberg form, the
mission opposed.

Once war broke out, the main question became how its inevitably destructive consequences for the mission field could be minimized. Here Knak acknowledged international help. While many Berlin missionaries were interned in Andalusia near Kimberley and Bavianspoort near Pretoria, they were treated better than in the First World War so that seminars were run and young missionaries taught and ordained.

All the same, in the 1930's the Berlin mission did not support what Knak called the “negrophile” position of English missionaries (p.329), nor did the mission support Afrikaner segregation which, Knak argued, denied blacks all rights while yet requiring their labour (p. 329). Furthermore, in 1938 at the centenary celebration of the Vortrekker movement, Knak observed that Boer nationalism also took on religious form (p.227).

Aware of the religious-political dangers from German and Afrikaner nationalism, on one hand, and the cultural uprooting of Blacks by English “Negrophils,” on the other, Knak became insistent that the Berlin mission follow closely a very specific mission theory. This theory and the reasons for it Knak developed in the above mentioned book (1931) to which we turn now.

If anything, it was even more important for Knak than for the mission theorists Warneck (1901) and Gutmann (1928) to affirm that the Volkskirche model absorbed the spirit of Christianity but not its European baggage. In the context of Versailles, the growing influence of national socialism at home, pressures from Afrikaaner nationalism in South Africa, and disenchantment with the English, the mission knew itself to be in a struggle for survival. It was popularly argued that European civilization was destroying African cultures, and missions were said to be the bosom buddies of europäische Zivilisation (European civilization) or the “hunting
dog of imperialism” (Knak 1931: vii). Since German national socialists, but not only they, believed that these were the very forces that defeated them, they quite literally hated Europeanization, imperialism, and internationalism. It was very important, therefore, that Knak highlight the Berlin mission’s approach as having opposed all along any marriage with these three trends.

Personally, too, Knak was under pressure from völkisch and national socialist circles. In 1932, Ludendorff’s anti-Christian occult movement, called the “Tannenbergbund,” falsely accused Knak of belonging to the free masons that Ludendorff characterized as an anti-German conspiratorial group (Lehmann 1974:144-5). While Knak was a patriot, he nevertheless became, more by accident than by design, a leading man in the resistance against the national socialist regime and its “German Christians.” In 1933, the Berlin mission joined Niemöller’s Confessional Church. After that Knak was considered an enemy of the state, suffered searches, interrogation, and was banned from talking (Lehmann 1974:146). Most traumatic for him was the realization that even Berlin missionaries in South Africa found it hard to understand that national socialist Germany was the mission’s worst enemy (Lehmann 1974:144-147).

Attempting to reduce harm to the mission, Knak started his book by pointing out that German Protestant missions had fought for decades to break the association between the mission and the spread of western culture to create a *verstädterte Welt*. Not only did the Berlin mission criticize the destruction that European civilization wrought in Africa and Asia, it went out of its way to keep the goals of western culture, imperialism, and mission distinct, despite inevitable overlap (Knak 1931: vii). In these efforts German missions, like Berlin and Leipzig, are different from most other Protestant missions in the world. To begin with, Berliners were thrown
out of China and the colonies, and when they returned, they did so on their own terms, not those of imperialism nor nationalism (p. viii). Their own terms were those of the Wittenberg Reformation that affirmed and respected *Volkstum* (p. viii). The Wittenberg Reformation, therefore, gave German Protestant missions their own distinctive character, one solidly opposed to Caesarism (*Cäsarentum*).

While Knak emphasized the mission’s Reformation roots, his portrait of South Africa too, was influenced by the Pietist educated but secularized Spengler (Knak 1929:26-29; 1931; Fischer 1989:30-31). What Afrikaaners, given their administrative ambitions, converted into the Eiselen-Hertzog program of segregation and later apartheid, Knak, given his Spenglerian view of history, portrayed as pseudomorphosis. African culture suffered spiritual damage because Africans’ relationship to space, land, culture and their mother-tongue were broken.

What was to be done? Adopting Spengler’s controlled relativism vis-a-vis multiple culture circles and high cultures (whose unique qualities are the result of the specific interplay of relatedness, 

9 environment, history, time, and community of fate), Knak proposed an alternative for Africans. This alternative would avoid Afrikaner repression, on one hand, and Anglo-Saxon assimilation, on the other (1931:96, 97). Drawing on the outstanding studies of African languages by Meinhof and Westermann (p.110, 277), and arguing for the return of land to Africans, Knak pictured Africans developing a dynamic culture and culture circle. The lingua franca spoken in this culture circle would not be English but Kiswahili or one of the following African languages: Zulu, Xhosa, Sesotho, or Setswana (p.277). Not only would the soul of African culture (*Volksseele*) be preserved and double morality (English at work, African in the village) prevented (p.82, 163), but an African language would be modernized (p.111). According
to Knak, Westermann argued that African languages, like others, were originally mixed
languages, perfectly capable of accommodating modern educational and technological terms
(p.277). Finally, opposing the Anglo-Saxon idea of inevitable progress, and drawing instead on
German experience, Knak cites the friend of Spengler, Moeller van den Bruck,\textsuperscript{11} who said that
“each Volk has its own socialism” (p.297).\textsuperscript{12} So why not Africans?

At any rate, argued Knak, Africans were moving in this direction. Major changes in
transportation, economy, and politics have not only made Africa more accessible, they have
made the fragmented African populations aware of belonging together, of having become a
community that has the same fate and purpose (\textit{Schicksals-und Willensgemeinschaft}\textsuperscript{13}) (1931:2).

Knak’s policy at home, however, was cautious. As we saw from his letter to Jacobi dated
September 28, 1933, he held on to “the purity of the Gospel,” affirmed rather than rejected the
state, but conceded that the “Arierparagraph widerspricht” (contradicts) the nature of the
Protestant Church. In an article entitled \textit{Erziehung und Volkstum} (nd), Knak anticipated (wrongly
as it turned out) that Germany expects a new colonial period in which the basic ideas of national
socialism would dominate. To enable German missions to survive, Knak suggested that
missionaries ask themselves how they see the relationship of indigenous peoples to \textit{Volkstum}.
Missionaries should analyse what the nature of African \textit{Volkstum} is and how Africans could
become equal to Europeans while yet holding on to their \textit{völkische Eigenart}\textsuperscript{14} (\textit{Acta betreffend: S. Knak, Abthl. II, Fach V, Nr. 6, Angefangen 1909 beendigt 1949}).

While Knak spoke the conservative language of the times, his attitude toward Africans
remained rooted in the Herderian tradition. This tradition valued empathy and respect for
particular cultures and peoples, while yet considering them to be part of universal human history.
The Herderian tradition was decisively abandoned by national socialists, especially Rosenberg, a major Nazi ideologist. Rosenberg’s word view consisted of Darwinism, Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s obsessions with blood and *Völkerchaos* (Rosenberg 1935:81-82), race wars, and a new religion rooted in Eckehart (ibid:239).

**The Case of Walter Braun (1892-1973)**

**a. his life**

Walter Braun was born in East Prussia where he served as pastor in Lappienen from 1917-1926. There he married, fathered a daughter, and served both German and Lithuanian congregations. From 1926 to 1947 he was a mission inspector for the Berlin Mission Society. During that time he made one East Africa visitation, 1936-37, for the express purpose of explaining to Berlin missionaries who were enthusiastic about national socialism, that national socialism was harmful to the mission. In 1947 he was called by Dibelius to take over the latter’s position as general superintendent of the Kurmark (the Electorate of the Mark Brandenburg), while Dibelius became bishop.

**b. his work**

In his criticism of the national socialist movement, mission inspector Braun (1932) took the following position. He addressed national socialists, including especially Hitler and Rosenberg, and told them that they and the mission had things in common. The *commonality* had to do with the Berlin Mission Society’s policy of missionization which was based on the ideas of *Volkstum* and *Volkskirche*. The aim of missionization was to create a *Volkskirche*, that is, to teach Christianity or preach the Gospel in such a way as to preserve and care for the existing customs and traditions (the *Volkstum*) of a people (Lehmann 1989:305; see especially
In their sense of *Volkskirche*, therefore, the mission shared the national socialists’ dislike of internationalism and the national socialists’ liking for the preservation of Völker and their specific cultures (Knak 1931). Internationalism or Europeanization turned people into copies and imitators of Westerners (Lehmann 1989:305). The *Volkskirche* concept, by contrast, aimed to maintain indigenous languages and culture (ibid: 481, 482).

From this common ground, Braun proceeded cautiously to highlight the mission’s and national socialism’s different understanding of Christianity, history, and *Volkstum*. Finally, he criticized the position national socialists took, especially Rosenberg, who published the program of the NSDAP, with respect to race, nationalism, and religion. The next few paragraphs are a summary of Braun’s thoughts on these matters.

Braun, a conservative Christian, wanted to make quite certain that national socialists understood that his criticism was based on the tenets of a revealed religion. Because Christianity is revealed, one could not accommodate or reject its central tenets, nor the Old and New Testament on which these were based, in accordance with political whims. According to Braun these tenets were: first, salvation through Christ, who could therefore not be turned into an Aryan nor tossed out because he was a Jew; and second, creation of world and people by God, so that God created us in his image, so to speak, not we Him according to our whims (1932:13-14). In short, since Christianity is revealed, it is simply impossible to do away with the Old Testament, Paulinian doctrine, or Christ, as Rosenberg, among others, advocated doing.

National socialists were opposed to liberalism and internationalism. To that end they defined history in terms that left no doubt about their opposition. Thus Rosenberg wrote in his
program:

history is not eternal progress of humankind, be it toward greater humanity, toward the Christianization of all peoples, or toward some general conception of a culture of humankind; nor is it a raw class war; rather history is the confrontation of spiritual-racial powers with its environment and other races (quoted in Braun 1932:16).\(^{20}\)

With this view of history Braun could not agree. To Christians, he argued, history is God working in a fallen world to establish his kingdom. The Christian conception is therefore neither liberal nor radical conservative. It is centred on God and a person’s ability to discern what God is doing—a task that is usually failed, not because people fail to discern what is happening, but because people lack the power of decision.

Braun pointed out that the concept of \textit{Volkstum} in Hitler’s \textit{Mein Kampf} and in Rosenberg’s party program was not based on scientific knowledge (p.20, 21). Emerging from the streets it was confused and confusing. Nevertheless, argued Braun, some notions of what the party meant by it were recognizable. Thus to the party \textit{Volkstum} meant the rejection of Jews and a fanatical anti-Semitism. Furthermore, it was associated with race and with a peculiar religious meaning of blood and soul. To Rosenberg blood became the be all and end all of all creation, so that from it (that is blood) are born god, faith, religion, as well as social customs (ibid: 24).

With these fanatical and confused views of race, Jews, nationalism, and religion, Braun disagreed. He pointed out that the notions of race, nation, religion, and anti-Semitism already present in Lagarde, Gobineau, and Chamberlain, became a racist blood religion among national socialists. Braun warned, especially, against racial superiority and the disparagement of
“Semitic,” “Hamitic,” and “Negro” cultures. National renewal, he pointed out, was not brought about by the glorification of one’s own race nor by placing it above another.

At the time, Braun actually hoped that his criticism would correct the dangerous course that the movement had taken. In this hope he and the mission would be deeply disappointed.

**The Case of Ludwig Weichert (1887-1936): An Ordinary German**

### a. his life

Weichert was born April 13, 1887 in a small town called Wecher in the then Province of Hannover. His father was a supervisor of a railway station. Weichert’s education was modest. In 1908 he graduated as a public school teacher in Oldenburg. His teaching strengths were religion and biblical history. He excelled in two things, writing and speaking. While he wrote primarily for Christian audiences, his speeches were said to have inspired especially those found on the margins or outside of Christian circles. His first publications which celebrated pioneer missionaries and their educational efforts in the German Colonies appeared in 1913 and 1914.

Weichert was not the usual missionary. He did not, for example, receive the rigorous five to seven year seminary training that was usual for missionaries of the Berlin Mission Society. He entered the mission through the back door, as it were, having first been brought into the church by the German evangelist Samuel Keller. Like Keller, and on Keller’s advice, Weichert worked for the German version of the YMCA. Soon he became known for his energy and lively speeches that appealed to young audiences. In 1912 the Berlin Mission Society called him to serve as evangelist in their Volksmission (home mission).

Like many other Germans of that time, Weichert’s defining experience was the First World War. It is the source of his yearning for Gemeinschaft. He served as army chaplain in
army hospitals at the eastern and southeastern fronts, was hospitalized, then returned to serve in a mobile artillery unit at the western front. Here he experienced the full horrors of the war that shocked him to the core and turned him from a patriot, critical of the völkisch movement (Weichert 1924), into a national socialist, who worked briefly for the German Christians. How he worked through the experiences of that war is best seen in the three books he published in rapid succession: Nach Dreißig Jahren (In Thirty Years), 1915; Ums größere Vaterland (For the Greater Fatherland), 1916; and Wenn die Liebe fehlt (When Love is Missing), 1917. In 1918 he faced the first of several operations and nervous exhaustions that would interrupt his work continually until his early death in 1936.

Following the war, Weichert became a writer, evangelist, and mission inspector, the latter for the East African Department of the Berlin Mission. Post-world war stress and vigorous evangelisation brought on nervous exhaustion in 1920 and again in 1922. He suffered from sleeplessness, depression, irritation and, apparently, nicotine addiction so that he was sent for long cures to the Black Forest and Switzerland. It would appear that inner conflicts contributed to these break downs. These conflicts, small at first, increased in severity. Because it tells us something about the peculiarities of German church and mission life (cf. Lempp 1921), a small conflict is described first.

Weichert belonged to the Old Lutheran Free Church of Prussia (altlutherischen Freikirche in Preußen), but worked for the Berlin Mission which was part of the Lutheran Volkskirche (letter Weichert 28.2.1924, ACTA). Given their different practices, he could not belong to the one and hope to participate in the rituals, for example communion, of the other. Furthermore, a free church was a Bekenntniskirche (a confessional church) which, according to
the Berlin Mission’s theory of mission, could not missionize lest it engage in propaganda. A confessional church by its very nature could only “turn people into carbon copies of its members” (letter Knak, 23.3.1919, ACTA). By contrast, a *Volkskirche*, “a national church which in principle includes all the people” although they were free to withdraw (Lempp 1921:36), could missionize. This because it merely sowed the seeds of the Gospel into the heart of an individual who then, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit but without human manipulation, unfolded and developed freely according to the individual’s gifts, talents, and abilities. Such an individual was not bound to narrowly prescribed convictions of a confessing body. This conflict, meaningless in North America, became an issue for the whole mission society in 1933 when its leadership had to make the necessary but by no means easy decision to join Niemöller’s Confessional Church in their opposition to national socialism.

Weichert left the free church and from 1922 to 1929 dedicated himself entirely to work for the Berlin Mission Society. In South West Africa, Germans who knew of Weichert’s combined national socialist and conservative Christian leanings, requested that he visit them and South Africa to explain the various movements in Germany (Letter Committee 3.3.1926, ACTA). This request was granted. Indeed, the Berlin mission suggested that Weichert not only evangelise, but make it his first mission tour. Consequently, he travelled East and Southern Africa between 1926 and 1927. Upon his return he published his experiences as a book entitled *Mayibuye iAfrika! Kehre wieder, Afrika!* (1928) after the Zulu slogan, “Return again, Africa.” Because his books written in the nineteen twenties illuminate how a Christian and national socialist saw the world of his experience, they are discussed in a separate section.

On his second mission trip to Africa from 1928 to 1929, Weichert became seriously ill.
Not only did he undergo a kidney operation twice, a second time because the wound became infected, but he once again suffered nervous exhaustion. From then on he was seriously ill, facing operations or nervous exhaustion, every year. He was hospitalized in Tübingen and sent to cures in Switzerland. In Tübingen he was treated with Belladonna and morphine for days on end. For health reasons, therefore, Weichert was removed from the foreign mission and put back to work in the *Volksmission*. At any other time, this work would have been unremarkable; in Germany of the nineteen thirties, it turned into a calamity.

Toward the end of 1932 Weichert was involved in two controversies. The first controversy was centered on Weichert’s involvement with the German Christians. Despite grave doubt and division, the Berlin Mission Society agreed to let Weichert serve, for an unspecified trial period, on the Party executive to advise German Christians on foreign mission.²⁷ This did not sit well with the Berlin Mission Society’s supporters who threatened to withdraw funding unless Weichert’s contact with the German Christians cease. Thereupon Knak, the Director, sent out a confidential circular letter to all supporting pastors. In it he explained that acquaintances from the NSDAP requested Weichert’s help in faith matters. Knak further explained that such help was entirely compatible with their notion of *Volksmission* whose task it was to plant the seeds of the Gospel. It was hoped that Weichert’s evangelism would turn around the estrangement of German Christians from the Judeo-Christian tradition. Finally, explained Knak, the Berlin Mission supported no political parties, neither the national socialists, nor the *deutschnationale*, nor the social democrats. Its sole interest was to encourage Germans to bend their ears to hearing the Gospel. This was Weichert’s task.²⁸

The second controversy blew up in December 1932. During the annual mission festival
held in Breslau, Silesia, Weichert was asked to talk at the university. Soon it was reported that
Weichert said:

that in his view a Jew occupying a ministerial position, a chair, or a university
post is unthinkable (*Zeitblick*, 23.12.1932, *Berliner Missionswerk, Archiv*).

*Zeitblick* went on to say “that, given the mood of the times, it was not surprising that
students applauded vigorously” (ibid), nor was it surprising that Rabbi Dr. Vogelstein and his
legal adviser Dr. Fraenkel complained to the church and received a public apology for the
“tactless and unjustified remarks” of Weichert (ibid). It was most unfortunate, commented the
writer, that a body whose vested interest it was to create peace among the religions, set out to
disturb it (ibid).

In the meantime, mission inspector Braun who had criticized the fanaticism of the
NSDAP earlier wrote to missionary Martin Jäckel (Braun letter 2.2.1933, ACTA: ibid). He
pointed out that, while Weichert’s position with the German Christians was strongly supported
by the Director, it was strongly opposed by him and others. Braun wrote this in the context of
affirming Jäckel’s decision not to take up a position on the executive of the *Deutscher Bund* (the
German Club) in Transvaal, South Africa. Apparently, Nazis were busy attempting to turn that
cultural institution into a political one. Unlike Tanzania, their success was not great in South
Africa (letter Braun to Jäckel, 22.2.1933, ACTA; contrast this view with Furlong 1991: 76ff). 29

In the meantime, Weichert suffered another breakdown. On the seventh of March 1933
the Committee reported that Weichert was still on sick leave in his parental home (ACTA). On
the thirteenth of June 1933 the Committee announced that Weichert had resigned from the
executive (*Reichsleitung*) and the German Christians and that his sick leave was extended
indefinitely (ACTA). Finally, on the eighth of May 1934 it was announced that Weichert withdrew from all church political work. Instead he did press and literary work for the mission.

During most of 1935 Weichert was ill again. Two circular letters, signed by Knak, were sent to various superintendents and missionaries in East Africa. It was explained that Weichert had undergone a six months cure in 1935. During that time, wrote Knak, Weichert “went through a hard but blessed school of God.” His imminent return to the East Africa work was a new beginning (Berlin 7.1.1936 and 9.1.1936, ACTA).

In the above letters, which were written in the sub-cultural lingo of conservative Christians, Knak explained that God’s work on Weichert’s soul brought about a major change in the man. We get a hint of what this change was from Weichert’s own correspondence. In a letter dated eighteenth of July 1936, Weichert, once again mission inspector, explained that he had totally withdrawn from the church political struggle. It had at any rate cost him years of sleeplessness. His own words help explain what brought about the above mentioned change:

In Heinrichsbad I met the Oxford Group about whom I had some reservations in the past. The meeting with their Swiss leader and their publications (for example those of Professors Brunner and Spörr and Pastor Oehler) led me to a more positive view. This was especially so, because I personally was singularly blessed. Their principles on matters of daily quiet time, obedience, guidance, surrender, confession, and sharing, and their standards regarding absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love were an extraordinarily strong inner help (Weichert to Rudlaff 18.7.1936, ACTA, ibid).

Weichert made several other significant points in that letter. For one thing, he wrote that
in this time of need, German congregations would reap considerable benefit from the Oxford Group. Secondly, he mentioned that he learned a great deal from numerous discussions in Switzerland about the new Germany and the Protestant church in the Third Reich. Finally, on a more personal note, he mentioned his children. His daughter was entering her third semester in medicine. As for his son Jürgen, Weichert wrote cheerily, “he grew mightily. He was still the old passionate Nazi and otherwise a rascal” (ibid). About his own political persuasion nothing was said except that party people and others still asked him about the condition of Germans abroad and about the state of the national socialist movement there.

On the twenty eighth of July 1936, exactly one month before his death, Weichert wrote an extensive report about the Oxford Group. In it he discussed various objections that might be raised against it and listed numerous benefits. He ended the report with these words:

He who would engage himself with the Oxford Group because he hopes to garner from it a sense of direction, would have to allow its history and experience to speak to him. Then he will be blessed, and afterwards he will be better prepared to serve our Volk and church in the present (Weichert 28.7.1936, ACTA, ibid).

The Oxford Group was particularly known for its ability to unite people irrespective of colour, class, and creed. Did the man Weichert who, unlike his mentor Samuel Keller, searched for the right group, finally find it? And had he transcended, just before his own death, the dead end to which national socialism would quite literally lead millions of people?

b. his thought and works

For the sake of brevity I discuss only three of Weichert’s books. None of his books are an affirmation of national socialism, although after his death, in the Foreword of the 1941 edition
of *Mayibuye iAfrica!*, Joachim Wilde claimed it for national socialism. All three books are, however, a combination of affinity with and criticism of national socialism. The source of his criticism is an evangelical Christianity and the Berlin Mission’s theory of mission.

If there is some accommodation of his writing to national socialism it has to do with their common roots in neo-romanticism (Fiedler 1993: 119). Weichert was a brief participant in national socialism through the German Christians, but in July of 1933 he left them and the Nazi Party deeply shocked and disappointed (Lehmann 1989: 351-2).

Weichert’s publications and thoughts followed the pattern of the day. They were based on: direct experience of the First World War, a heightened sense of patriotism, a sense of common fate, a sense of bitter defeat, and a sense of nationalism born of hopelessness. Versailles became the core symbol of international oppression. It crystallized a deep abhorrence of all tendencies that levelled distinct cultures, namely, internationalism, cosmopolitanism, civilization, rationalism, and Bolshevism.

Unlike other German missionaries, whose works were careful constructions of language, culture and religion (Cf. Wangemann 1868, 1869, 1881; Gutmann 1928; Meinhof 1911, 1912, 1913), Weichert’s attention, like that of his Director Knak, was focussed on criticism or defence. Neither they nor many others could escape the pressures and tensions of the times.

(I) *Volkstum und Christusglaube* (1924): affinity and criticism

Weichert’s publication, Volkstum and Christian Faith, is a Christian criticism of the völkisch movement before its absorption into national socialism. Weichert worried that the völkische exceeded the bounds of a healthy patriotism by attempting to be a movement that was simultaneously political, social, chauvinistic, and religious in nature (p. 3, 11, 12). By becoming
totalitarian, it distorted the meanings of Volk and Volkstum and encouraged a fanatical anti-Semitism and race hatred (p. 14).

Weichert made it his primary task, therefore, to defend the mission’s concept of Volk from its völkisch associations with social Darwinism, purity of race, and blood. According to Weichert, any Volk, including Germans, is racially mixed and speaks more than one language. What makes it unique is not its biology, but its history. One becomes a people through common fate, history, and experiences (p. 5, 8). As Spengler said “rather than being made by a Volk, great events call Völker into being” (p.7). True to the First World War experience, therefore, Weichert rejected völkisch politics (p. 9). The war called into being a sense of belonging to a Schicksalsgemeinschaft, a national “we” (p. 9).

Weichert also rejected völkisch politics because it created an “extraordinarily strong and growing” anti-Semitism (p.14). This anti-Semitism was different in quality from the “modern anti-Semitism” started by the court chaplain Adolf Stoecker in 1879 (p. 15). Stoecker neither hated Jews nor did he want to reverse Jewish emancipation, but he did want Reform Jews to keep their noses out of Christianity or at least exercise greater “modesty,” “tolerance,” and “equality” (p. 15). And with this Weichert obviously agreed as we know from his anti-Semitic remark in Breslau. He had no quarrel, he wrote, with Orthodox or Rabbinic Jews, nor with mystical or Chassidic ones, nor with Zionism (p.14). Using 1910 figures, Weichert points out that Jews constituted one percent of the German population, yet they held fifteen percent of the professorial positions, twenty five percent of the legal positions, and from 1918 to 1919 eighty three percent of the ministerial posts in government (p. 19, 20). In his view, this was not only immodest but unseemly. But why, were Jews to be excluded from these positions when his
conception of Volk, for example, was inclusive (p.19)? And why single out Reform Jews? The answer is time.

Race, blood, soma, these things of nature were not the significant characteristics of Volk. Time, fate, environment (*Landschaft*, later *Raum*), and history, things of the psyche were (p. 5, 8; also Knak 1931: 97). Now Weichert knew Jewish culture to be one of the world’s great cultures (p.31), but it was shaped a long time ago and in a very specific environment (p. 11). While the Jewish nation of the first century was also not a pure race, given its intermarriages with other peoples (p. 11), its soul is not the German soul (p.19). What right then had these people to Lord it over Germans (p. 18, 19, 20). Let them have their economic power, even economic supremacy, writes Weichert with passion (p. 20), but under no circumstances must Jews be allowed to convert this power into political leadership of our state or intellectual leadership of our culture (p. 20).

While Weichert voiced a restrictive anti-Semitism, he opposed the fanatical anti-Semitism of the nineteen twenties. Today’s anti-Semitism, wrote Weichert in 1924, “has greatly moved beyond Stoecker” (p. 16). As well, it was totally indiscriminate, against Jews and half-Jews, against the Jewish “race” and all things Jewish in the Christian Religion. It was wrong to turn back the clock of Jewish emancipation, he argued (p. 16). He abhorred the politics of the völkische that deliberately excluded Jews (p. 16). Slogans like “Germany for Germans” were “malicious” as was the “flood” of anti-Semitic journals, brochures, and books (p.16). “Hate of Jews,” and “pogroms” must be rejected, as must the “anti-Semitic reformation of Christianity” which called for the removal of the Old Testament and Paul and for “a pure, Aryan Christianity free of rabbinical theological constructions” (p.22).
Summarizing his argument, Weichert wrote that it was wrong and dangerous to raise youths to be völkisch, chauvinistic, and internationalistic (p. 35-36). Likewise it was an Irrweg, a wrong direction, to raise youths to “hate Jews” and to reject the “healing power” of the Old Testament. It was wrong to feed them a “fuzzy mystical German religion” or a “sterile germanicized Christianity” (p. 36). What he wanted taught instead was a healthy patriotism and a sense of the reality of a transnational kingdom of God (p.36).

Weichert’s conservative Christianity allowed him to see through the “patriotic mysticism” of a Fichte for whom the human being and Volksgeist were one with God. He also saw through Lagarde’s “religious nationalism” which advocated a national religion in place of an overcome Christianity so that fatherland and Volk were religion, and a German God emerged from the soul of the German Volk (p.31, 32, 33). As a Christian he saw clearly anything that threatened the Judeo-Christian tradition, rejecting any notion that disturbed the Judeo-aspect of it. But as a nationalist he rejected only the “extraordinarily strong” anti-Semitism of the present. His thought left no room for an anti-Christian to put his foot in the door of the Judeo-Christian tradition. But he did not see, at least not until 1933, that his own thought left room for anti-Semites to put a foot in the door of Jewish safety.

(II) Samuel Keller (1925): Weichert’s Christianity

Weichert’s book (1925) about Samuel Keller (1856-1924) picks up common themes. It tells something about the human qualities that Weichert admired, about the First World War and its effect on people and, importantly, about Keller’s mistake, one that Weichert was keen to avoid. The book shows the consistency of Keller’s conceptual world. Thus he discusses Keller’s prophetic religiosity, like that of Jews in the previous volume and that of
Africans in the next, in terms of the *Landschaft* (landscape or natural environment) and history that shaped it, and the liberalisation of it in terms of the cosmopolitanism that levelled it. Some of the qualities that Weichert admired in Keller he also admired in Africans: humour, mimicry, imagination, freedom, agility of mind and body, and love of people (p. 25, 47; 1928: 148). In his view, they were shaped in somewhat similar natural environments.

Keller, like Weichert, was a Baltic German. His first job took him to the vast and empty grasslands of Russia. It is here that he abandoned his *Sturm und Drang* years and had his career-forming spiritual experience. Keller’s romantic faith (p. 45), his deep sense of freedom, his fiery spirit, and the prophetic-romantic images that peppered his speeches were shaped in the Russian steppe, in the vast plains of the northern Crimea and later in the valleys and rolling hills of the southern Crimea (p.44, 45, 48). Until he came to Germany, Keller served several ethnic groups in numerous towns and villages and on wealthy farms. The scale and customs of the latter reminded Weichert of similar descriptions in the Old Testament (p. 42).

Given the times, it is not surprising that the book includes extensive excerpts from the war journals of Hans Keller (1881-1918), Samuel Keller’s son, who studied theology in Tübingen, Halle, Heidelberg, and Berlin. Particularly pertinent are Hans Keller’s journal entries about the battle of Artois Ferme on the seventeenth of June 1918. What shocked him was not only the maiming, deaths, confusion, and fear around him. He was horrified by “the meanness of the enemy” who saw clearly from their “planes and balloons” the “huge red cross” that German soldiers had built of “red brick in white sand on the field in front of the main field dressing station,” but fired directly into the station. While white flags with red crosses clearly demarcated the dressing station and flew on the rooftops of the *Ferme*, a red cross of a flag on the roof was
hit directly as if it were a bull’s eye (p.106). Likewise disturbing is his description of the
destruction of German cemeteries by French or British soldiers. “And these brothers,” wrote
Hans in his war diary, “accuse us of barbarism” (p. 109).

The theme of the first world war is picked up again toward the end of the book.
Not only the death of Keller’s son in 1918, but the collapse of Germany, affected Keller’s health
adversely (p. 202, 203-210). Nevertheless, Keller continued to travel and evangelise. And like
Weichert later, Keller was concerned about the ethical and religious failings and needs of
Germans (p. 204, 206, 208-210). Weichert was well informed about Keller’s concerns, because
from 1919 on they often worked together. Wrote Weichert, Keller observed that an increasing
number of people suffered nervous illness, inner disturbance, and religious need since the
collapse of Germany (p. 210). The Keller book is another record of the fact that the collapse of
the country paralleled the collapse of its people (p. 210).

Perhaps most telling is Weichert’s criticism of Keller’s loner status. Weichert felt that
Keller’s refusal to work with the Gemeinschaftsbewegung (the community movement) was a
mistake (p. 223). The Gemeinschaftsbewegung was a neo-pietistic renewal movement within the
mainline church for the purpose of reaching those people who had become alienated from the
church and unresponsive to pastoral care. The idea was to gather these people into a new
community (Gemeinschaft) of believers. The movement, with roots in the Lutheran Reformation,
Pietism, and the Anglo-American awakening of the early eighteen hundreds, emphasized
conversion, rebirth, scripture, prayer, witness, the brotherhood of believers, greater involvement
of the laity, and non-denominationalism. When the movement split over Pentecostal practices
that entered Germany from Norway in 1907, the church rejected it. Keller already criticized
excesses of the movement before the Pentecostal phase. By contrast, Weichert felt that Keller should have known that some excesses were inevitable. After all, they were inevitable because *Landeskirchen* routinely rejected life giving movements. Its pastors, who “preferred to serve stones instead of bread in their sermons,” saw movements as working against their interest (p. 227). Like these pastors, wrote Weichert, Keller became the evangelist of the educated classes and the rich (p.226). In an effort to build bridges of faith for modern intellectuals, Keller became theologically liberal (p. 228). He became untrue to the *Landschaft* and history that shaped him.

When Keller was in his prime he rejected the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung*. Weichert was determined not to make a similar mistake. Consequently, he joined the movement typical of his time. But where the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung* was harmless and indeed survived to join the confessional church that opposed national socialism, the *Glaubensbewegung* of the *Deutsche Christen* was lethal.

(III) *Mayibuye iAfrica!* (1928): Weichert’s anthropology

Many Berlin missionaries wrote outstanding works that combined anthropological, historical, or theological genres (Cf. Wangemann 1881; Merensky 1899). Unlike the French missionary Leenhardt (Clifford 1982), however, Weichert was not a top scholar. He was, however, one of the mission’s most vivid and evocative writers and speakers. His most anthropological work is *Mayibuye iAfrica! Kehre wieder, Afrika!* (Return again, Africa!). It is an anthropological account about the harmfulness of colonialism and the consequent guilt of the white man.

His Foreword sets the tone for a dramatic description of Europe and Africa seen from the thought world of a defeated (Spenglerian) Germany. I shall quote from the Foreword at length,
so that the reader may get a sense, not only of its content and evocative style, but also of the
recurrent concepts and common themes that show his affinity for national socialism.

Upon my return from Africa I was asked frequently: “Where in Africa did you
like it best?” And each time I had to answer: “There, where the African life was
not yet Europeanized!” (1928: iii).

The answer captures Weichert’s main concern, one shared with völkisch thinkers, that
Europeanization would “overgrow” African cultures at a time when Africans did not have the
freedom nor resources to work out a new African synthesis between the valuable old and the
good new customs (Westermann in Weichert 1928: vii). Weichert feared cultural levelling and
proletarianization. And what he feared for Africa, it should be noted, is also what he feared for
Germany under Versailles.

Throughout the book Weichert contrasts the Europeanized Africa with an intact African
culture in its natural setting (Landschaft). He starts this contrast in the Foreword, not only to give
a feeling for Africa, but to follow through with the thesis that Africans were shaped by their
landscape and history. Thus he describes the thorn brush, elephant grass, tangled lianas, burned
steppe and deserts of the not-yet-Europeanized Africa. The reader is in the saddle. And while he
suffers the scorching sun, groans under the tropical rain, or sings into the fresh morning air, he
rides along, as any African would, filled with the optimism of a natural and ordered freedom (p.
iii):

And then you reach African villages--away from the profane world of a
“civilizing” Europeanism--where people still live their old life, an African life,
given over to their culture, their customs, and their religions. Once ancient
caravan paths formed a net across the African earth, now highways are built that
survive tropical rain storms and compare favourably with the modern roads of the
Alps. Noisily, the motor hauls European loads past bush and field, through
rainforest and across deserts. The machine has begun its hard and heartless
regimen in innermost Africa. And the cold spirit of the modern metropolis, the
sober and calculating spirit of a “civilized” Occident turns this dark continent, this
mysterious land of powerful magic, into a European province, a satellite of the
industrial city. Those who knew the old Africa are sick with longing. “Return
again, Africa!” is the cry that burns in their souls. This longing torments the
hearts of blacks, who understand with the clarity of their Europeanized
intelligence, what has been lost, and what the new Europeanized Africa can not
win back for them. When I first heard the Zulu of Natal sing their freedom song,
“Mayibuye iAfrica!” it gripped my soul and shook my understanding! In this song
the soul of the enlightened black man calls for the land and life of his fathers. Its
undercurrent is a boundless bitterness toward the white man who destroyed the
old Africa (p. iii-iv).

The book consists of two parts. The major and longer first part describes and analyses
“the colonization and Europeanisation of Africa.” The second shorter part discusses
missionization. Not only is Weichert’s lively engagement with a dynamic Africa and his reading
public refreshing, fascinating too is the authenticity and consistency of his concerns. Thus he
starts his chapter on colonization with a description of nineteenth century Europe. What worries
him about African cultures is also what worries him about European cultures. As a disastrously
rapid technological development and assimilation toward Americanism threaten to “overgrow” Occidental cultures, so this fatal technological development and assimilation toward Europeanism threaten to “overgrow” African cultures. It is not technology itself that Weichert dislikes. What he dislikes is its embodiment within “civilization” and its disembodiment from “culture.”

Weichert’s world is rooted and interconnected as are all cultures; his perspective is global in the sense of transnational; his orientation includes the unseen. By contrast, civilization is international, always in the process of being re-rooted; its perspective is centered on the human capacity to exploit; its orientation excludes the unseen, being focussed solely on the material world (1928: 6-8). It is not Margaret Mead’s “global village” that he associates with “civilization,” but Spengler’s “global city.” A global city mentality values cosmopolitanism instead of “Heimat,” a calculating rationalism and materialism instead of respect for living traditions; a scientific and petrified irreligion instead of a religion of the heart; Gesellschaft instead of state; natural rights instead of acquired rights. Mass not Volk belongs to the global city (p.9).

Given his negative evaluation of “civilization,” it comes as no surprise that African cultures are positively valued. He reviews African high cultures, pre-European art, mining, technology and culture contacts (p. 12-15). Drawing on the works of Westermann, Bleek, Endemann, Richter, Meinhof, Spieth, von Luschan, and others, he describes the uniqueness and richness of African languages, religions, and cultures generally (p. 20-23). He explodes the myth that Africans are “primitive,” “wild,” “people of nature,” “childlike,” “without history, religion, or narratives” (p. 25-28, 56). African cultures can be sophisticated; minimally, they
have a distinctive genius (p. 27, 29). Weichert describes the richness, and gives examples of African music, poetry, stories and folk tales, including East African Schachtelmärchen (box-folktales, involved tales) where one tale is contained within another (p.41-42; also Meinhof 1911, 1912, 1913).39 Like other Berlin missionaries, Weichert too takes seriously the study of African dreams, prophets, and seers. His definition of African religion points to the importance for Africans of revelation, an intuitive Gnosis, depth of feeling and perception, and an awareness of a higher being and another world (p.56-57). Given his global orientation, he finds similarities between African religious thought and that of Augustine, Calvin, and various philosophers, including Greek Stoics (p.57).

Most eloquent are Weichert’s descriptions of the yards, locations, and compounds in South Africa’s and South West Africa’s (Namibia’s) mining towns (p. 137 ff). Weichert was highly critical of the “colour bar” and, especially, “industrial segregation” which to his mind made the race conflict unbearably sharp (p. 105). And so he asks himself, will African opposition exceed the song, Mayebuye iAfrica? Will the black man drive the white man out of Africa? His answer is no (p. 275). The Zulu call for freedom, he wrote, will not receive the answer longed for. In this realization rests a never-ending tragedy (p. 276). Nevertheless:

The white man must remain. But out of his immense guilt must come the recognition that he owes the Black a new Africa (1928:276).

Conclusion

In one way or another most German scholars and missionaries were entangled in national socialism. The involvement may have consisted of accommodation, affinity, affirmation or selective opposition (Fischer 1990). Even after the Berlin Mission Society joined Niemöller’s
Confessional Church, some affinity with national socialism remained, if only through concepts like *Volk*, *Volksseele*, or *Volkstum*.

Knak, Braun, and Weichert opposed much of national socialism. They opposed racial superiority, the destruction of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and fanatical anti-Semitism. That they did so with conviction, had to do with their adherence to the central tenets of the Christian metaculture (Burridge 1991).

What compromised them, as said, were shared affinities. As Fischer (1990:10) points out, the central principles of the völkisch world view had both positive and negative implications. What national socialists stood for, namely, hierarchical order, racial hierarchy, racial superiority, the Führer principle, German religion, and German Christianity, was opposed by the mission executive and most missionaries relatively early and definitely by 1933. The negative implications of this world view, (all the antis-, like anti-internationalism, anti-liberalism, anti-cosmopolitanism, anti-pacifism, anti-democratisation, anti-Semitism) compromised many missionaries, in our case, especially Weichert. Weichert opposed the radical and racist anti-Semitism that made its breakthrough with the defeat in World War One; but he accepted a restrictive anti-Semitism. We know that the Oxford Group worked in him a change of heart. To work a complete change in mission theory, and for that matter in anthropological theory, would have meant abandoning *Volk*-centred thinking, rejecting the state, and accepting constitutional reform protective of individual human rights. Germany and the world paid a high price, especially in human lives, before this happened.
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1. **Völkisch** refers to a populist movement in Germany that paved the way for national socialism. Wildly nationalistic, its adherents cultivated a mishmash of secular colonial, spiritual racist, and occult religious ideas going back to the mid-nineteenth century. The movement was at its height after the defeat and Versailles in the nineteen twenties and early thirties. Its Volk-based nationalism, however, was rooted in the occultation and mystification of nineteenth century thought as seen in the works of especially Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891), Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927), and Count Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) (cf Mosse (1966) 1981; Braun 1932). Harmful for the mission was the völkisch thesis that each race had its own religion based on its own primal revelation, that was impossible to replace. It was therefore impossible to convert another people, making mission unnecessary.


3. **Volk** is a concept that assumed different meanings at different times and for different political groups. For Karl Marx Volk referred to the oppressed, on one hand, and ethnicity, on the other. Wilhelm Riehl (1823-1897), who influenced Gutmann, saw in Volk the persevering element of society, those who maintained core traditions, especially peasants. For missionaries Braun, Gutmann, and Knak, Volk was an existential and environmental concept. It referred to ethnically and racially diverse peoples who moved to the same general environment and there developed a common and enduring culture, language, sense of space and fate. For national socialists, Volk became a biological entity and referred to those of one race.

4. **Volkskirche**: According to Berlin mission policy, an independent, self-reliant church that was rooted in the existing customs and culture of a people so that, rather than destroying these, their natural and inherent Christian tendencies are made explicit. In general theology, a Volkskirche is a Landeskirche so that all Protestants of a region belong to it, unless they formally withdraw. The Afrikaans word *volkskerk* means people’s church.

5. **Zivilisation**: Romantics distinguished civilization (associated with French imperialism and domination) from culture. This distinction was given a new impetus by Oswald Spengler who saw civilization as the last and hardened phase (the winter) of a culture’s life cycle. Culture was conceptualized as an organism with four phases of growth: childhood (spring), youth (summer), adult (fall), and old age (winter). The last phase of a culture is civilization. --Also associated
with re-rooting, human exploitation, materialism. Further associated with Spengler’s “global city,” not Mead’s “global village.” A global city mentality values cosmopolitanism, calculating rationalism and materialism, and scientific and petrified irreligion.

6. **Verstädterte Welt** is a Spenglerian concept adopted by missionaries Gutmann and Knak to refer to the urbanized, civilized, Euro-American world that they regarded as a world of bureaucracy, cement, materialism, and technology-driven science. National socialists associated civilization with international oppression and levelling symbolized by the Treaty of Versailles.

7. The very conservative Hermannsburg mission, which recruited missionaries from German farmers who had settled in South Africa, is excluded. Its missionaries were, with some exceptions, relatively unsophisticated, very assimilated, and simply did not have the education, including university, enjoyed by Berlin and Leipzig missionaries.

8. **Volkstum** is a term coined during the Romantic period by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) to express the physical and psychic power of the German Volk at a time when “Germany” was under French foreign rule. (One can see why Afrikaaners took to this term). The concept was used to encourage German political and cultural unity. To that end, Jahn published a book in 1810 entitled, *Deutsches Volksthum*. The inherent nature of a Volk or culture. Berlin missionaries following Gutmann defined Volkstum as the eternal bonds or elementary social structures of a specific people or culture. To the NSDAP, however, Volkstum meant the rejection of Jews and a fanatical anti-Semitism. It became associated with a mystical notions of blood-race.

9. I use the term “relatedness” rather than race because both Spengler and Knak were against racism, especially the biological and blood based racism of national socialists. “Race” to these two, as well as Warneck and Gutmann, was a short-hand term for peoples, from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, who grew together over time to share a common language, landscape, sense of fate and, hence, a common identifiable spirit (Knak 1931:97; Fischer 1989:75). While they used the term “race,” it had this cultural meaning.

10. **Volksseele** emerged with the Romantic conception of history as the search for origins (*Ursprung*) and wholes (*Ganzheit*) which was usually referred to as the soul of a Volk (*Volksseele*), the essential spirit of community recognizably maintained through time from its origin to the present. French psychoanalysts saw German preoccupation with Volksseele as the emancipation of the unconscious by uniting it with mother while suppressing the world of the
11. Moeller van den Bruck was one of several who shared the **Ideas of 1914**. These held the hope of establishing a national organic community, without class divisions, based on tradition, honour, love of country, and consciousness of the German past. Its supporters were determined to avoid the crass materialism of Anglo-American bourgeois liberalism. Pledged to these ideals were Ernst Troeltsch, Thomas Mann, Friedrich Meinecke, Walther Rathenau, Max Scheler, Werner Sombart, Friedrich Naumann. In agreement with them were Moeller van den Bruck and Oswald Spengler.

12. Moeller van den Bruck (1876-1925), author of *The Third Reich* published 1923, belonged to a circle of 1914-1919 conservatives who tried to shape Germany’s future. He was influenced by de Lagarde and in turn inspired Spengler, Rathenau, Erich Ludendorff, Hans von Seeckt (Fischer 1989:60).

13. **Schicksalsgemeinschaft** is a community of shared fate (rather than destiny). The term was coined by General Ludendorff to describe the sense of community that developed among soldiers in the trenches of the First World War.

14. Instead of *Eigenart*, national socialist usually talked about *Artgleichheit*. This term became popular after 1919 among those belonging to the völkische movement and later, national socialism. It enforces the idea that citizens of a state have to be similar in kind by belonging to the same race, culture, and mind set. Associated with this concept as used by Nazis was the idea that some thoughts are valid while other thoughts are invalid and to be eliminated.

15. While Braun’s belief in a commonality between mission thought and the thought of Hitler seems worse than absurd now, it should be remembered that as late as 1933 and 1934, Hitler was reported to have made the following statements: “Because we are attached in deep love and loyalty to our own *Volkstum*, we respect the national rights of other *Völker*...and desire from the depth of our hearts to live in peace and friendship with them...The concept Germanicizing (*Begriff des Germanisierens*) is unknown to us. The mentality of the past century, which held that one could make Germans out of Poles and the French, is foreign to us to the same degree that we passionately oppose its opposite ” (Adolf Hitler, 17 May, 1933). Or again, “The national socialist concept of race...does not lead to a contempt (*Geringschätzung*) or undervaluation (*Minderbewertung*) of other *Völker*,...rather it leads of necessity to a natural respect for the life and being of other *Völker*...” (Adolf Hitler, 30 January, 1934) (Quoted in Ibel 1934: 46, 47).
During the same period Hitler seemed “to halt the arbitrary terror of the SA in the streets and to restore a measure of legality to the country” (Dawidowicz 1976:82).

16. Braun, and others writing at this time, usually stated their agreements with national socialism before voicing their disagreements. This practice became even more common, and their writing more veiled, as censorship increased. Consequently, their conservative leanings are often interpreted as support for Hitler’s party and regime. It is important, therefore, to heed carefully the points of disagreement.

17. This policy was a modified version of the accommodation theory of P. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), a Jesuit missionary to China in the sixteenth century (Bettray 1955; Poewe 1994). Ricci taught that missionaries must accommodate themselves, and respect, the customs and traditions of the people among whom they worked. His thoughts were modified and carried forward by Karl Friedrich Gützlaff (1803-1851) until Gustav Warneck (1834-1910), the founder of the science of missiology, made the creation of Volkskirche the goal of mission (Lehmann 1989:480).

18. Knak (1931: vii) is especially concerned with the destructive aspects for indigenous peoples of European civilization. According to Knak (p. viii), the affirmation of Volkstum is rooted in the conception of the Wittenberg reformation of the Gospel. This conception is the opposite of cultural imperialism which he associated with the word, Europeanization and with what Spengler called the verstädterten Welt. Knak, it will be remembered, was the Director of the Berlin Mission Society. He wrote this book upon his return from his mission tour. Like Weichert, as we shall see, he was against Europeanization and internationalism.

19. God is defined by national socialists and völkische as follows: God is not wholly in the blood, not wholly in the earth, not wholly in the Volk, but these are his mouthpieces through which he speaks to us. Braun criticized these and more lethal notions of God as disrespectful of the Judeo-Christian tradition, indeed, as attempts to do away with this tradition altogether.

20. The idea of “racial struggle” like everything else was taken from someone else and used to express a political predilection, in this instance from Gobineau ([1915] 1967) and the school of “anthroposociology” (Stocking 1968:60).

21. All information on Weichert comes from various letters and documents contained in the
22. In German Christlicher Verein Junger Männer.

23. Gemeinschaft, also Gemeinsamkeit, are common terms in sociology. In the nineteen twenties General Erich Ludendorff, among others, pushed the meaning of these concepts to refer to a sense of community forged in blood on the battle field. The terms were used by national socialists in opposition to class struggle and political party feuds.


25. In Germany, free churches were thought to be sects (Lempp 1921:32). The Old Lutherans resisted incorporation into the Union of Lutheran and Reformed Churches in 1817 and, consequently, were persecuted by Friedrich Wilhelm III. In 1845, under Friedrich Wilhelm IV., the persecution stopped and the Old Lutherans were given freedom of religion.

26. The Berlin Mission theory is based on the work of the German theologian Martin Kähler (1835-1912) who links distinctions between Volkskirche and Freikirche to issues of conscience and history. The conception of conscience in the philosophy of Volkskirche steers free of philosophical Idealism. Idealists argued that all humans are born with a categorical sense of good and bad. By contrast, Kähler and evangelicals argued that from the biblical perspective there is no direct link between conscience and God’s will, no inborn godly knowledge of good and evil. Rather, conscience shares in the dubious character and corruption of human existence, which is why, in the absence of God’s grace, it can torment, entice, and mislead people. In view of the crimes committed in the name of national socialism, and in view of Weichert’s misjudgements, as we shall see, the evangelical position is by far the closer to human truth and the human condition. Knak thought that Weichert’s view that, the estrangement of Germans from Christianity would lead to heathenism, was naive. Wrote Knak, “...the man does not know what heathen is. Should Germany actually reject Christianity, it would not be heathen, it would be worse than heathen; it would commit spiritual and intellectual suicide” (Letter by Knak, 23.3.1919, ACTA, ibid). One could say that is more or less what happened between 1933 and 1945.
27. He was a member of the *Reichsleitung der Deutschen Christen*.


29. While Furlong’s (1991) description of the influence of German national socialism and South Africa’s Radical Right on the National Party is fascinating and on the whole sound, he is not above drawing on questionable correspondence, dated November 25, 1939, at a time when everything German was suspect, to insinuate missionary involvement in Nazi activities. Thus Furlong (1991:133) mentions “detailed reports from black Christians” claiming that their pastors were “inciting converts to hatred of the English”, and so forth, without analysing these reports, nor the motivation of blacks who wrote them, and without telling his readers whether these pastors were black especially since many German missionaries were interned as early as September 23, 1939, and expatriated by means of an Italian ship to Germany (Lehmann 1989: 358, 529-33). As Lehmann points out, Berlin missionaries lived in constant fear that a malevolent neighbour might accuse them of engaging in propaganda for the German cause (1989:530). And while Furlong saw Nazi missionaries almost everywhere, there was in fact only one Berlin missionary in Transvaal who was a member of the national socialist party (ibid). The situation may have been different with Hermannsburger missionaries who were recruited primarily from local Afrikaanerized German settler farmers. The situation in South West Africa and, then, Tanganyika was different from South Africa.

30. Rudlaff was a missionary in Tanzania. While he followed the mission theories of Bruno Gutmann and Siegfried Knak, he rejected national socialism. He was a student of Barth whose teaching left no room for nationalism of any sort (Fiedler 1993:138-9).

31. In a letter dated 17 November 1945, Tübingen, Weichert’s wife Käthe wrote Knak that she survived the bombing of their house 17. 4. 1945. On the 19. 4. 1945 the French moved in and plundered the bombed house. Then fire was set to it and it burned down completely the night of May sixth-seventh. August 28, 1945 her son, Jürgen, returned from American imprisonment in Italy. He promptly married (ACTA). On the 29.5. 1949 the Berlin Mission announced that the Institute for medical mission, Tübingen, will send their first German physician, Dr. med. Ursula Weichert, Weichert’s daughter, to Africa with a Scottish Mission. Jürgen Weichert became a writer and co-worker of a German newspaper (Announcement 29.5.1949, ACTA). From Knak’s letter (31. 5. 1949, ACTA) to Ursula we learn that she was about to leave for Nigeria to take over a hospital there. In that letter, Knak asked about the prize-winning novel, Shaka, written by a Black that Weichert had translated into German.
32. By contrast, see Mosse ((1964) 1981:132). Mosse agrees that Stoecker’s “brand of anti-Semitism” did not advocate “a war between the races.” But, writes Mosse, “those who stressed the inherently dynamic nature of the Volk considered such a course inevitable” (p.132). As shown in another footnote, however, Mosse admits that the latter view only broke through after the first world war.

33. **Raum**: Space. Raum, like concepts of prime or pristine (ursprünglich), and eternal or everlasting (ewig, Ewigkeitsvorstellungen), have their roots in early Romanticism (cf Brednich 1988:66, 36-42). Völkische and national socialists twisted their meaning into expansionism, the thousand year Reich, immutable race.

34. Goldhagen (1996) deliberately runs the fanatical anti-Semitism of the nineteen twenties and thirties together with earlier, less fanatical forms of it in the nineteenth century and with the restrictive anti-Semitism based on quotas. That he does so is demanded by his theory about “the Germans.”

35. Goldhagen (1996: 23) does not distinguish between brands of anti-Semitism. To him “the elimination of Jewish influence” and “the elimination of Jews themselves” are one and the same. One must remember that calls for the “elimination” of Jewish influence were voiced with equal force in America, Britain, and Germany. In France anti-Semitism was even stronger. To Weichert restriction and killing were not the same. The thought of “elimination” as in pogroms and fanaticism, generally, horrified him. Until 1933, he voiced restriction of influence in the specific spheres of politics and culture. Thereafter, he repented. It is a horrible history and one can understand Goldhagen’s totalizing position. Nevertheless, his position is born of passion and careless generalization, not of careful study of randomly selected primary sources covering all spheres of German life, as his generalization would require. Nor does he study the change of language, meaning, and the process of sanctioning physical violence as the völkisch and national socialists gained power.

36. **Geist** is term difficult to translate into English because it means simultaneously spirit, intellect, even soul, although the last word is usually translated as Seele.

37. **Culture** is seen as rooted, interconnected including with the unseen; respects living traditions; associated with religion of the heart; can be global in the sense of transnational.
38. Names mentioned are those of German missionaries or ex-missionaries who produced ethnographic and linguistic works as well as collections of African narratives and religions. Weichert also drew on English researchers, for example Sir Harry Johnston (p. 23).

39. Weichert(1928:41) recommends especially Meinhof’s 1911 publication. Indeed, Meinhof’s treatment of African literature and poetry is superb. See also Meinhof’s discussion of research method and goal which was far ahead of his time (1912: 12-23). Meinhof emphasized not only knowing the indigenous language and poetry of a people but also their motives. The most important source of religious research is the human being. And here casual communication is often more important than formal questioning because the latter tends to place answers into the mouths of those questioned (p. 19).

40. The exception were some missionaries in the former German colonies, now Namibia and Tanzania (Fiedler 1993; Lehmann 1989).