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To the Committee of the
Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society
in Dresden.

Encounter Bay, October 10, 1846

Dear brethren!

It has now been several months since I exchanged my previous position in Port Lincoln with the one here. After the joint consultation of all the brothers in January last year decided on this change, and it was immediately confirmed by a letter you received advising in advance, I returned to my former residence to sort out my things and arrived at Brother Meyer's place at the end of March. During the six months that have passed since then, one would think that I would have gained various experiences and made comparisons between these and the position to be taken up in Port Lincoln, which would enable me to judge the advantages or disadvantages of the step taken. However, I must admit that I am somewhat embarrassed in this regard, partly because the difficulties that the missionary has to overcome among the indigenous people of this country are so numerous and formidable that the more or less of them at this or that place is of less importance, and partly because I still have my doubts and hope that I have only just got to know the less favorable half of the year regarding the life and activities of the natives, and that the better part is still to come. I call the six months from April to September less favorable for the indigenous people, because during this period there is whaling here, whose workers exert a distressingly immoral and in every way pernicious influence on them.

Despite the uniformity of the way of life according to customs among the various tribes of South Australia, one notices a not insignificant difference in character. The Encounter Bay indigenous people are undoubtedly more advanced, both physically and mentally, than the tribes in Port Lincoln, but at the same time they are less lively, friendly, and manageable. Interacting with the latter is therefore much easier and more pleasant than with the local natives. Whether this is simply because they have interacted with Europeans for longer and have adopted many things that were originally foreign to them is not unlikely, as their behavior among themselves seems to be quite different from what they observe towards whites. I must admit that they seem to me, on the whole, far less amiable than my old acquaintances in Port Lincoln.

Since the lessons at school are taught in English, Brother Meyer and I agreed from the outset that I should teach the boys and he should mainly deal with the older ones, as he understands their language. When I arrived, there were eight boys here of varying ages, some might be ten, others fifteen years old, but unfortunately, they didn't last long. They had stolen several sticks of tobacco from a neighbor, for which we felt we had to punish them, and this, at least according to what they claimed, was the immediate cause of their running away. I immediately followed them on horseback, tracking their trail for several miles along the lake shore in the hope of catching up with them and persuading them to come back. However, they had noticed me from a distance and hidden themselves, as I surmised from the sudden disappearance of their trail, and they later admitted it themselves. They had made their way to the opposite bank of the Murray, where it was impossible to follow them.

After several weeks, they finally gradually returned, when the fishing was in full swing and there was plenty of whale meat available, namely in the month of May. But now the plague really hit them hard. Although they were persuaded to come back to school, before we knew it, and when we least expected it, they were all or partly gone and hiding among their relatives on the fishing boats. When Brother Meyer or I went to see them, we usually found that they had noticed us from a distance and had hidden somewhere behind the rocks of the steep sea coast. Only by promising the parents or relatives rewards of blankets or flour if they brought the children to us, was it possible to get them back for eight or fourteen days at a time. When the fishing stopped and at the same time the clothes purchased by the government (namely a woolen and a cotton shirt, as well as a linen trousers for each boy) attracted them, it seemed that they felt completely at home with us again. They were happy about their new clothes, planted a large bed for themselves with melon seeds and repeatedly promised not to run away again.

Just as the previously rainy weather had given way to fine weather, half of them disappeared one morning after breakfast, leaving behind their clothes, which the others followed a few days later. We hoped they would return after a few days, especially since they knew there was plenty of meat and flour for them. However, several weeks have passed without them showing up. I need not add how much such experiences sadden and discourage us; besides our own prayers, we greatly need the intercession of our brothers at home, so that the Lord may grant us patience and strengthen our hope and courage to persevere.

Although the English language is still an imperfect means of communication for the children, due to their limited knowledge of it, it cannot be denied that they possess sufficient ability and attention and could make progress in their learning if they could be taught consistently. However, they have not yet achieved much so far, as they often forget what they have learned in one week due to the constant coming and going. Moreover, the older, more advanced boys often skip classes, while new and completely ignorant ones join in, making it almost impossible to adhere to a regular

teaching plan.

Of the £100 originally intended for Port Lincoln (for which I enclose an invoice), we purchased a plow and four draft oxen, which Solomon and Bob were supposed to plow with. However, the latter did not arrive until the sowing season had long passed, and the former also took a considerable time to arrive; but we were pleased that he did not completely fail to show up. In addition to the four mentioned above, there were two young oxen that Mr. Moorhouse gifted to Solomon on the condition that he would stay with us. Since there were no European workers available and no natives skilled in plowing, I had to take it upon myself to operate the plow. Solomon seemed to enjoy the task quite a bit and he worked diligently with me for a whole month, although there were no shortage of difficulties that could sometimes make the work unpleasant for both of us. Namely, four of the oxen were still young and not very well trained, while the other two were very old and slow, and therefore did not get out of the way quickly enough for the younger ones. Moreover, these animals were very afraid of blacks, and as a result, no matter how hard Solomon tried, he was unable to keep the plow moving in a straight line. Naturally, this made the work very difficult for me, and since the plow was very heavy, I must say that operating it became quite tedious. The field we plowed was an hour's walk from here, which we had to cover on foot every morning and evening. Occasionally, the boys would even let the oxen run away when we had entrusted them with their care, so afterwards, we had to search not only for the cattle but also for the boys themselves.

I mention all these little circumstances to show how difficult it is to get anything done when one is entirely dependent on the natives. One can never rely on them with certainty, hence nothing can be calculated in advance. Yet we managed to plow and sow seven English acres during the entire month of June. The soil is very good, and although sown late, I still expected at least a moderate harvest. However, the massive rainfall during the past winter, which fell in unprecedented quantities, flooded the entire field, as a result of which most of the seeds perished. I hardly believe I will be able to harvest the seed and the rent, which amounts to two bundles of hay from the field.

Brother Meyer mentioned that we have bought some land very close to us. This will enable us to engage in farming with and for the natives next year with greater success and less effort than this year, if the latter are inclined to do so. If more of the natives were as sensible and persistent as Solomon, much could be hoped for in this regard. I must give him credit that he has put in more effort these years than I expected, which is attributable solely to his interest in the matter, not to immediate reward. However, this is saying a lot from a native, as you know, the people are accustomed to only considering the needs of the moment and not worrying about tomorrow.

In one of your letters, you instructed that, as long as I was not proficient in the native language, I should take on pastoral and school duties, while Brother Meyer should focus more on the adults. As for the school, I have followed your instructions as far

as the local circumstances allowed; however, Brother Meyer continued to preach in English, as it comes easily to him, while it would take me time and effort.

Incidentally, it should be noted that since the return of the Independent preacher Newland, attendance at the English worship service has greatly decreased, as the settlers, mostly Independents or other dissenters themselves, are increasingly joining the preacher of this church community, especially since a small chapel was recently built by him here.

On the tenth Sunday after Trinity, or rather on the following Monday, the Lutheran synod of the congregations of the two pastors Fritzsche and Kavel began in Bethanien, forty English miles south of Adelaide, to which an invitation from the latter was enclosed. Pastor Kavel had undoubtedly deliberately omitted to send us missionaries a copy of the printed invitation, so Pastor Fritzsche sent us one along with an accompanying letter, in which he urgently urged us to attend the synod. With the exception of Brother Meyer, as we were both unable to attend, we all travelled to Bethanien and participated in the deliberations of the synod over five consecutive days. For a better understanding of Kavel's invitation as well as the proceedings at the synod, I would like to point out that for years, two factions have been sharply, one might even say hostilely, opposed to each other. The one faction, called Chiliasts, not only emphasizes the doctrine of the 1,000-year kingdom as a necessary sign of true and living Christianity in the congregation, but also interprets all the prophecies and figurative visions in the Revelation of John that refer to the 1,000-year kingdom literally; they therefore assert that Christ will visibly return and reign with his followers in Eden for 1,000 years, destroy his opponents, convert the people of Israel as such and in toto to himself, etc. This faction is led by Pastor Kavel. Now, the opponents, led by Pastor Fritzsche, again cite the aforementioned doctrinal confessions of our church, particularly Article 17 of the Augsburg Confession, so Pastor Kavel felt compelled to demonstrate alleged errors in them, as he did in the invitation, in order to weaken the authority of the confessions as a whole. --

The synod began with singing and prayer. The first morning was spent discussing the admissibility of certain individuals who were either under church discipline or were otherwise considered ineligible for the deliberations. The conclusion of these discussions was the question of whether we missionaries were also Lutheran and therefore admissible to a Lutheran synod. For a long time, we were sidestepped, until finally, Pastor Kavel, at my urging to put an end to the matter and let us know whether we could all stay or should leave, explained that some of the synod members undoubtedly regarded us as Lutheran, while others had reservations. A long and extensive, yet confusing discussion ensued, due to the lack of order and frequent simultaneous speaking by several people, making it impossible to maintain a regular course of the deliberations and even more impossible to provide a detailed report on them.

All sorts of exhibitions were put on by the Chiliast against the missionaries, and various rumors were spread to prove that neither we nor the Dresden society were Lutheran, which we could usually easily refute. In the end, however, Pastor Kavel and his congregation decided that they could not recognize us, because we are associated with the Lutheran Church of Germany, which is under the control of secular princes due to the unchristian consistorial constitution, and that they could not associate with anything or anyone who actually recognizes this constitution. It was countered that Pastor Kavel had nevertheless had a pamphlet printed during his emigration, in which he declared himself a Lutheran clergyman and demanded to be recognized as such by the still existing Lutheran Church of Germany, Scandinavia, and America. He replied that he had now gained more insight and publicly, solemnly, and emphatically disassociated himself from the Lutheran Church as it has developed over the past 300 years. Indeed, he claimed that on the basis of the confession documents, the Lutheran Church had come under the control of princes, and that recognition of the Symbolic Books was inseparable from recognition of princely authority in the church. It was of no avail to counter that the prevalence of princely power in the church was regrettable and was also lamented by all friends of the church at home; that we had a duty to thank God for the freedom we enjoyed here, but least of all had the right to cast stones at those who were fighting a fierce battle for the freedom of the church at home.

It all proved futile. They demanded a public withdrawal from the state church association from those with whom they could enter into ecclesiastical communion. With such stubborn, unthinkable, church-history-satisfying, selective views, an agreement was as little possible, nor desirable, as it could be. And what had been foreseeable, according to the content of the announcement, happened, it came to an open and, I fear, permanent break. Unfortunately, this happened in a way that cannot be condoned, but I mention it to give an idea of the spirit in which the democratic synod in South Australia, which Pastor Kavel introduced soon after his immigration and on which he placed such great emphasis, was held. Pastor Kavel had stated that if the Queen of England wanted to appoint a bishop for us Lutherans tomorrow, we would have to accept this due to the symbolic books.

To this, Pastor Fritsche said: "On the contrary, I must testify. If you, Pastor Kavel, are convinced that our confession documents play such a weak role, why do you give the government a hint about this, as in the announcement, instead of putting them in the proper light? In this way, you are actually betraying the church."

Several: Yes, Pastor Kavel, you are the traitor of the church. Pastor Kavel made a gesture to leave, and at the same time, almost all the Chiliasts shouted: Come on, Pastor, let's go. You're nice Lutherans, you want to hide in the dark; these must be nice confessions that not everyone in the world should know about, etc.

Pastor Kavel now explained in a few words that he could no longer attend the synod and left with his followers, without wanting to explain the erroneous interpretation of

the statement made by Pastor Fritsche. An attempt to restore the synod the next morning failed. Pastor Kavel accused his opponent of blasphemy and declared that he would only want to hold joint discussions with them if they repented and stopped distorting God's word. We missionaries, of course, remained passive in these and previous similar incidents.

Afterwards, Pastor Fritsche continued the synod with his congregation and asked us to stay as well. There were mutual explanations between us and the congregation, during which we admitted some mistakes on our part and they acknowledged their previous misunderstandings. A cordial ecclesiastical agreement was reached. It was decided that some points of the congregation's rules that were offensive to us and several congregation members should be amended, and everyone recognized the necessity of moving away from the previous more or less sectarian stance to a general ecclesiastical viewpoint and maintaining a connection with the faithful part of the Lutheran Church in all countries. However, a deeply rooted narrow-mindedness also manifested itself. For example, there was a serious discussion about whether Lutherans and Chiliasts should be allowed to marry from now on, and even whether existing marriage vows should be honored. The latter question was conditionally affirmed, but the former was decisively denied.

Considering that there is already a prohibition in place, under which no member of the community is allowed to marry someone who does not belong to the community, in the event of losing church communion, and that the community, or rather the two communities, have merged to half of the previous number of souls, due to the departure of the other half, such a restrictive statute must be recognized as unenforceable and even dangerous for the prosperity of the community.

Unfortunately, the sending of this letter has been greatly delayed due to circumstances beyond my control. I can only add that the harvest from the field I and Solomon cultivated turned out to be better than we expected. However, this benefit does not benefit either the mission or the natives, because none of the latter were able to harvest the wheat when it was ripe.

The cause was partly the field's distance from the bay, and partly, and mainly, the fact that most of the wheat in the neighborhood had already been harvested, with the blacks earning blankets and the like; and since on the harvested fields the women brought in enough food by gleaning, they felt no inclination to exchange their comfortable idleness for the hard work of harvesting their own grain. I offered them blankets, flour, and money in addition, if they would only come with me for a few days to harvest the overripe grain before it fell to the ground. It was in vain, and I had no choice but to hand over the wheat to the man from whom we had leased it, in exchange for the cancellation of the lease and twelve sacks of wheat, so that we could get back the seed wheat and still have two full sacks left over for all the effort and work. Solomon was absent, otherwise he might have been persuaded to harvest the grain, even if we had had to leave it entirely to him.

I can assure you that this experience hurt me a lot, especially since I always believed that it would be possible to instill an interest in their own physical well-being in the natives, if one started in the right way. They are and will remain, without exception, people of the moment and chance, and will remain so until God's power miraculously changes them or human force compels them. If the wheat field had been close at hand, or if the grain had ripened earlier before they had satisfied their modest needs through earnings, they would undoubtedly have harvested it; but it's impossible to always cater to their convenience. --

Finally, I would like to add that, God willing, I will be married to Minna Maschmedt from Osnabrück by Brother Meyer next week. This will fulfill my long-cherished wish to enter into marriage with a thoroughly converted Christian, a fellow Lutheran believer, and a compatriot, for which I sincerely thank the Lord.

Further commending you to his fraternal and loving memory, I remain in respectful and grateful love.

Your

C. W. Schürmann