

The Birth of the Old Lutheran Church in Germany and Lusatia

This article is intended to provide an insight into the birth of the Old Lutheran Church in Germany and Lusatia. The first step (1) in this process is provided by a brief discussion of the historical premises governing the mental outlook behind the Prussian Union of Churches and the opposition to it in the 19th century. After that the Prussian Union (2) and the denominational opposition movement within the Lutheran Church (3) are described. In (4) the transition from the denominational Lutheran movement to the Old Lutheran Church is outlined, before in (5) the focus moves to developments in Lusatia. The article finishes with a short conclusion.

1. The Historical and Intellectual Premises behind the Prussian Union of Churches and Opposition to it in the 19th Century

At the beginning of the 19th century the Evangelical churches were determined in their theology and religious outlook by three major movements: the Enlightenment, Orthodoxy, and Pietism (NIPPERDEY 1998: 423). The Enlightenment had initiated a move towards the secularization of state and society, which professed a belief in rationality as the basic principle of our mental and organizational outlooks. This rational approach required a reorganization of supposedly out-of-date structures and institutions, which also affected the Church and religion. Alongside this restructuring it was considered important to create a “rational” religion based on human and cultural values, in which dogma no longer had any place and whose rationale was determined by practice. As a result, internal religious differences within Protestantism lost their significance.

The “rational” intellectual attitude of the Enlightenment was supplemented by an emotional one, which was provided by Pietism. This attempted to achieve a renewal of faith through spiritualization and individualization, in which personal belief and a person’s own religious feeling were considered to be more important than Church and creed. Here the emphasis was laid on the religious life of the individual instead of on theological dogma, although Pietism and the Enlightenment coincided in their emphasis on practice. The intellectual outlook of many pastors and congregations developed from these premises in the direction of a general Evangelical, rather than a more specifically Lutheran or Reformed type of faith (HAUSCHILD 2001: 757; NIPPERDEY 1998: 423–424).

While the Enlightenment and Pietism, with their separate concerns, developed in the course of the 19th century into rationalism and religious revival, the historical opponents of old Evangelical orthodoxy and Pietism in the theological faculties and in the clergy came together to oppose the growing dominance of a rationally orien-

tated theology and became a part of the religious revival movement. Out of this grew a revivalist faith movement in the 19th century, which was in the spirit of New Lutheranism, although not totally identical with it, and was able to combine the reformatory objectivity of the Bible and (Lutheran) creed with the subjectivity of modernism, which could no longer be ignored (NIPPERDEY 1998: 424–425). This new subjectivity consisted not only of the revivalist emphasis on the existential experience of belief, but also of the decisive combination of personal belief and Church creed. This type of denominational religious revival formed the basis of the opposition to the Prussian Union of Churches, which led to the creation of independent denominational Lutheran churches in the German territories of the 19th century.

2. The Prussian Union

Apart from the pressure from this new intellectual outlook, the union of the Evangelical Churches in the Kingdom of Prussia was clearly worth pursuing for state and political reasons. After the military defeat of Prussia by France in 1806, which brought about a collapse of the state, came the era of the Stein-Hardenberg reforms, which created the basis for a centralized state after 1815 (GOETERS 1992 [1]: 56). The intended “modernization” process also affected the churches, because church governance was also restructured as a result. A strict hierarchy was created, which was administered by the *Summepiscopate* of the king in close cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, then through the provincial consistories; it then descended to the church districts under the superintendents, the representatives of the supreme ecclesiastical authority of the sovereign. In this structure all attempts to implement a “democratic” church constitution governing the parochial church councils and synods in Prussia were rejected. Since all the Lutheran and Reformed congregations were now brought together under the same governing body as a result of these reforms, an administrative union had in practice existed since 1815 (HAUSCHILD 2001: 755). It was however in the interest of the Prussian state to go beyond a simple administrative union. It intended to bundle together the individual forces to consolidate the state; the results of “fruitless theological wrangling” were to be moved to a different plane, as the whole intellectual development of the time pointed in this direction. At the same time this process was in line with the need of the state for more integration and inner harmony (NIPPERDEY 1998: 432). Moreover, the Prussian elites believed it was important to establish a strong, uniform, and united Evangelical Church against the Roman Catholic Church. The feeling of breaking new ground after the wars of liberation and the rise of the revivalist movement in areas where it was not tied to a particular creed also helped to foster this process (NOWAK 2007: 28). The Prussian Union was therefore erected on a multi-layered foundation, as both the cold calculation of state interest and internal church and theological developments had prepared the ground for it (WAPPLER 1992: 114).

The practical creation of the Union and the emergence of the denominational Lutheran opposition began its course on 27 September 1817, when Friedrich Wilhelm III (1770–1840), King of Prussia from 1797, issued an order in council in which he called for the unification of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of his state on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Reformation (WAPPLER 1992: 94), so that “both should become one revived, Evangelical Christian Church in the spirit of its holy founder” (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 33). In this way it is true that the foundation of the Union in the Kingdom of Prussia can be traced to the initiative of the king (WAPPLER 1992: 95), but not the philosophy behind it, for this was already present in the intellectual outlook of the 19th century and was conditioned by it, as the emergence of unions in other German territories, such as the Grand Duchies of Baden (BRUNN 2006: 31–235) and Hessen (MÜLLER 1906: 256–280) makes clear. Moreover, the Union of Evangelical Churches in the Duchy of Nassau (HERRMANN 1985: 256–280) was brought to fruition even before the initiative of the Prussian king in August 1817.

As is clear from the order in council of 1817, the Union actually involved the unification of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches into a new Evangelical Church rather than a mere administrative union in which the different creeds could continue to exist, at least in name. Although such a union suited the ruling intellectual outlook in the 19th century and was practiced unofficially in individual congregations by organizing joint Holy Communion services, its introduction as part of ecclesiastical law represented initially a break with tradition, for both Evangelical traditions, both the Reformed as well as the Lutheran, held the view that joint Holy Communion was only possible where a church community already existed, based on doctrinal agreement (HAUSCHILD 2001: 757).

The quarrel in Prussia escalated, however, around the concrete question concerning the use in church services of the (united) liturgy, which was drafted by the king, and which Evangelical congregations were ordered to accept (KIUNKE 1985: 167–191). The so-called “liturgical quarrel” resulted from an argument within an argument, which nevertheless was representative of the overall quarrel. The liturgy was in essence the work of the king, put together from his experiences with the Russian Orthodox and the Anglican liturgies, as well as being based on his own personal preoccupation with Luther’s *Formula missae* and *Deutsche Messe*. The new liturgy confronted most congregations with completely unfamiliar innovations and made partly excessive demands, for example requiring the constant participation of a choir, even in village churches (HAUSCHILD 2001: 760). The liturgy was the brainchild and hobby-horse of the king (STAMM-KUHLMANN 1992: 477–486) and he did not shrink from the use of pressure or compulsion – or even from the use of military force – to force congregations to use it (NEUSER 1992: 155–158).

3. The Denominational Lutheran Opposition Movement

The Prussian government's plan to create a union was strongly opposed in the first instance by the circle around Breslau theology professor and Deacon of St. Elisabeth's, Johann Gottfried Scheibel (1783–1843). He already drew attention to himself in 1817 when he was the only theology professor to refuse to take part in the united Holy Communion service for the anniversary of the Reformation. Later, when the new liturgy was first recommended and then made obligatory, he totally rejected it.

Born into a Lutheran household, Scheibel moved first of all in the strongly denominational circles of the Lutheran Church in Silesia, which until 1740 was under Hapsburg rule and suffered from measures aimed at re-Catholicizing the province. In terms of intellectual attitudes the Enlightenment and Pietism played a lesser role compared with the rest of Prussia. During his theological studies in Halle from 1801 Scheibel was concerned with establishing the truth of the Bible and historical thought. After a crisis of faith he returned to biblical truth, according to his own account, which he later saw faithfully reproduced in the Lutheran creed. As Deacon in Breslau, Scheibel assembled around himself a kind of "personal congregation" that treasured his sermons and brought about a religious revival in the congregation and its community. At the same time he opposed the prevailing rationalist theology in the Theological Faculty and the clergy. In this connection Lutheran doctrine relating to Holy Communion became central to his theology (KIUNKE 1985: 8–85).

Holy Communion was for Scheibel not an individual celebration or a doctrine standing on its own, but had the "most significant meaning" for the totality of belief in Jesus Christ and Christian hope placed in him. Here we can see the deeper basis for Scheibel's conviction that an unbiblical doctrine relating to Holy Communion, which is how he regarded that of the non-Lutheran churches, provided by definition the basis for separating churches (KIUNKE 1987: 16). Expressed in different terms this means that a different doctrine requires a different church (KIUNKE 1985: 75), an idea which was totally in line with the tradition of both the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches. Only the changed outlook of the 19th century – as described above – put this tradition in question.

These denominational Lutheran convictions therefore represent the core of the opposition to the Prussian Union, which the king brought to fruition with the final introduction of the new liturgy and the obligation to use it through the order in council of 4 April 1830 and the decree of 30 April 1830 (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 35–37). For Scheibel the new order of service reflected a united theology, which for this very reason had no legal basis and was not to be allowed in the Lutheran Church. The liturgy prescribed by the king had for him the sole purpose of introducing church union on the back of the new service order (KLÄN 1987: 20). He wrote a petition to the king on 3 June 1830 stating that the conscience of the Lutheran congregation allowed it "never to use anything in its services which could lead to a union" (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 34). Scheibel emphasized that the church service

should be completely at one with the Word of God and the creed of the church holding it. This meant for the Lutheran Church that unequivocal witness to the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament was not to be concealed, replaced, or disguised. Moreover, Scheibel disputed the absolute *ius liturgicum* (liturgical right) of the king by making a distinction between the *ius circa sacra* (right around holy matters), which the king was allowed to dispense in his role as the supreme ecclesiastical authority, and the *ius sacra* (right in holy matters), which was the sole preserve of the church and the congregations (KIUNKE 1985: 167ff.; (KLÄN 1991: 153ff.)). Friedrich Wilhelm III considered this a personal affront.

In the meantime, opposition was growing in Breslau, in that an ever-larger group of denominational Lutherans who did not want to enter the Prussian Union was gathering around Scheibel, the lawyer Georg Philipp Eduard Huschke (1801–1886), and the nature philosopher Henrich Steffens (1773–1845). The Prussian government reacted firstly by suspending Scheibel from his post, then by exiling him in 1832. In this period the denominational Lutheran group in Breslau repeatedly submitted petitions (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 37–55) asking for the rights of the Lutheran Church in Prussia to be reinstated. However the king took the matter increasingly personally and turned the group from Breslau down brusquely.

In an order in council dated 28 February 1834 the king did not allow the “enemies of the Union [...] to set themselves up as a special religious society (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 55–56). Police measures against pastors and laymen from the denominational Lutheran Church followed this order in council and in the case of the Lower Silesian village of Hönigern (today Miodary in Poland) had a tragic outcome. The Evangelical Lutheran congregation of Hönigern, together with their pastor, Eduard Gustav Kellner (1801–1878), refused to introduce the new united liturgy and also resisted pressure from the Superintendent responsible to do so (FROBÖSS 1905: 36 ff.). As a result Pastor Kellner was suspended from office, but he did not acknowledge his suspension. The chief administrative officer of the district (Landrat) demanded to be given the keys to the church, but the church parishioners refused to hand them over. After vain attempts by the local authorities to take possession of the building, the Prussian government sent in the military on Christmas Eve 1834 – four hundred infantry soldiers, eighty cavalry, and two canons – to open up the village church, which was guarded and kept closed by around two hundred village inhabitants. The soldiers took possession of the church using rifle butts and brute force, and laid the united liturgy firmly on the altar (WANGEMANN 1859: 85 ff.). This unnecessary and excessive use of force shows how sensitive Friedrich Wilhelm III and his government had become in the meantime in their dealings with the denominational Lutheran opposition in Silesia, and it caused uproar and outrage in Prussia and abroad, especially since the general opinion was that such a demonstration of brute force in spiritual matters was no longer worthy of an enlightened society.

The harsh period of persecution with fines, seizure of possessions, and arrests could not however prevent the spread of the denominational Lutheran opposition. In 1835 independent denominational Lutheran congregations started to be created in

Pomerania, and by 1838 the denominational Lutheran movement had made its way into every Prussian province (SCHÖNE: 1969: 115).

4. From the Denominational Lutheran Movement to the Old Lutheran Church

The beginning of a change in the relations of the Prussian state with the denominational Lutherans came in 1840 with the accession to the throne of Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795–1861). The new monarch, who when crown prince had already been upset by the actions of his father and his ministers, ordered the release of imprisoned pastors in August of the same year and allowed them to take up office in their parishes. From a legal point of view the new king was granting toleration to the denominational Lutherans. The new situation allowed the Lutherans to set about the task of building up their church organizations, whereupon the definitive creation of a Free Church of the Lutheran Creed started to take shape (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 68–81). In this process the structures started to be dominated by consistories and synods. Negotiations with the state led to a detailed presentation of the denominational Lutheran concerns in the so-called “Promemoria” (Memorandum) of 15 August 1841 (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 82–87). Such negotiations were meant to provide the basis for possible state recognition. That is how it is put, among other things, in the “Promemoria”:

“In accordance with this, the Evangelical Lutheran parishes present: 1. The seven articles of faith of the Lutheran Church, with all their theses and antitheses, as the sole and exclusive creed, and therefore as the basis of its total ecclesiastical existence, in particular: 1. The three ecumenical symbols, 2. The Augsburg Confession, 3. Its Apologia, 4. The Smalcald Articles, 5. The Small and 6. The Large Catechism, and 7. The Concordia Formula. The fact that the Lutherans also adhere to their articles of faith in their antithetical sense and regard them in their original sense as the basis and guideline for the continued internal and external existence of their Church, expresses a particular position in relation to the Evangelical regional church, in that the latter has more or less given up everywhere the antithetical validity of the Lutheran symbols and refuses to grant to those parishes in which the united rites have not been introduced the exclusive validity of the Lutheran symbols in relation to Church governance” (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 83).

The Prussian state finally granted the denominational Lutherans recognition, albeit extremely limited, by means of a “General Concession” in 1845 (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 88–89). Because of this, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Prussia – for this was how the Old Lutherans described themselves – felt forced to pursue unlimited recognition of the position of their church from the state authorities. But it was not until 1908 that they achieved corporate rights as a church and for their parishes (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 99–102). The Old Lutheran Church finally obtained the

status of a legally incorporated public body on 19 June 1930, nearly one hundred years after its birth (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 102; DA SILVA 2010: 30–31).

5. Developments in Lusatia

After the First Paris Peace Treaty of 1814 had determined that the French-German border follow the line of 1792, the more detailed frontier arrangements were laid down finally in the Treaty of the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Together with other areas in the west and north of its territory, Prussia received in this treaty the northern and western half of the Kingdom of Saxony along with Torgau, Wittenberg, and parts of Lusatia (GOETERS 1992 [2]: 78–79). Despite belonging to the Kingdom of Prussia since the beginning of the confrontations about the Union and faith, these arguments did not – as far as is known – become widespread in Lusatia until the 1840s, when the situation of the denominational Lutheran opposition had been alleviated by toleration on the part of the king, and the creation of independent church structures had as a result already begun. But also here the confrontation between the regional church and the denominational Lutheran Church began concerning the question of the relationship between the Lutheran creed and the liturgical agenda or parish services.

The confrontation began when the people of Weigersdorf in the parish of Groß Radisch took their pastor, who tended towards support for the Union, to task after they had received news of the concerns of the denominational Lutherans in Silesia (MALINKOWA 1999: 103). The local leader of this Lutheran movement was Weigersdorfer schoolteacher Andreas Dutschmann (1808–1892). After he had been convinced by the arguments put forward by members of his congregation, the pastor started to use the old Lutheran liturgical agenda again, but reverted shortly afterwards to the united agenda ordered by the state, probably as a result of pressure from his superiors (BIEHLER 1927: 9–11). As the local pastor was not able to uphold the indissoluble bond between faith and church service, which had been established by Scheibel and demanded by the denominational Lutherans in Prussia, and refused to use the Lutheran instead of the united agenda created by the king, a number Weigersdorf parishioners went to Pastor Jan Kilian (1811–1884) in nearby Saxon Kotitz in order to celebrate the Lutheran service.

This decision did not come about by chance, as Kilian had already made clear his adherence to the denominational Lutheran creed from 1830 during his student days in Leipzig by frequenting circles which aimed to support the Lutheran doctrine against rationalism (NIELSEN 2003: 7). Even before his assumption of office in Kotitz he had given up for the time being his long-held wish to become a missionary abroad, as the rationalist theology professed in Basel was not compatible with his denominational Lutheran convictions (NIELSEN 2003: 9). By now Kilian was already enjoying a certain amount of security as the local pastor in Kotitz, and he began to put into action his belief that Sorbian culture and the Lutheran faith belonged together by translating and publishing a number of religious articles. Later,

during his time in Weigersdorf, he did the same for the articles of faith of the Lutheran Church. This later work was not however completed until 1854, the year of his emigration (HAUPTMANN 1994: 99–117; NIELSEN 2003: 14).

Kilian had already expressed clearly in 1845 his denominational Lutheran beliefs and his opposition to rationalism and to the lack of commitment in this period to particular creeds in his article “Die nothwendige Vorsicht lutherischer Christen bei jetziger Glaubensverwirrung. Ein ernstes Wort an das evangelische Volk” (The Need for Lutheran Christians to Be Cautious in This Time of Religious Confusion). Kilian wrote in the introduction to his extended sermon on the Day of the Reformation in 1845: “It has also to be emphasized that we Lutheran priests and teachers have sworn an oath on the articles of faith of our church and for as long as we wish to be teachers in the Lutheran Church, we have to preach and teach God’s Word from the scriptures according to the interpretation and creed of our church” (KILIAN 1846: V). Kilian attacked strongly the rampant rationalism of his time and the “new spreaders of the Enlightenment,” as he called them (KILIAN 1846: 72), who sought to displace the Holy Scriptures as God’s Word and wanted to lead people astray by relativizing and annulling the articles of faith of the Lutheran Church. In this connection he supported the step undertaken by Lutherans in Prussia “to leave the State Church to avoid such apostasy” (KILIAN 1846: VI, 41 ff.).

For Kilian rationalism was responsible for the religious confusion of his time as it robbed Christians of their “spiritual treasures” by telling them that the “inner movements and awakenings [...] were nothing more than dreams and madness” (KILIAN 1846: 34). Kilian also accuses them of deceit: “Through false teaching we come to doubt God’s works and words and are cheated of our belief” (KILIAN 1846: 41). For him “the enemies of the Bible are so numerous that the small group of Lutherans might become fearful if they did not have an Almighty God” (KILIAN 1846: 43). His conclusion is terse: “The rapid progress of our present race represents a rapid step backwards” (KILIAN 1846: 72). Of course Kilian then starts to talk of the Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament at the altar (KILIAN 1846: 49 ff.). It was this very doctrine that played a key role in the arguments about the Evangelical Union in Prussia; in their faith in the creed of the Lutheran Church the denominational Lutherans had as their main aim defense of the Real Presence doctrine.

It was therefore obvious that a pastor such as Kilian, who was wedded to the denominational Lutheran cause, would give his full support to the concerns of the denominational Lutheran Prussians. He not only offered services to the denominational Lutherans, but he also actively supported their cause (MALINKOWA 1999: 103). He translated for them the church decree of the Old Lutherans into Sorbian, which had been accepted by the synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Prussia in 1841, after having been worked on since 1835 (SCHÖNE 1969: 115 ff.) and by doing so gave strong impetus to the difficult and momentous decision to set up independent denominational parishes. Kilian continued to support these awakened believers by establishing contact with the leadership of the Old Lutherans in Prussia and asking them for spiritual support. In response, Pastor Heinrich Adolf Geßner

(1803–1878) from Freystadt in Lower Silesia (today Koźuchów in Poland), who had already spent five years in prison on account of his role in the denominational Lutheran opposition, declared his readiness to support the new parishes. As a result, in May 1843 a free Lutheran congregation was founded in Weigersdorf with fourteen people from the village and neighboring Dauban. The following day a congregation of denominational Lutherans was established in Klitten. Pastor Geßner then came every three months to celebrate the Lutheran service in Weigersdorf and Klitten (MALINKOWA 1999: 103).

The bond between the denominational Lutherans in Weigersdorf/Klitten and Jan Kilian was very close; they tried from the start to have him installed as their pastor. Kilian also expressed his readiness to move from Saxony to Prussia in 1843 in order to serve in Weigersdorf/Klitten. As a result, Geßner nominated Kilian in May 1844 as his deputy. That was possible at that time because the Old Lutherans saw themselves as the rightful Lutheran Church in Prussia and part of the Church community of other German Lutheran Churches such as those of Hanover, Bavaria, and Saxony. This did not change until after the Second World War and the foundation of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). The immediate transfer of Kilian to Prussia was however prevented by a notice of objection from priests in the surrounding parishes. They feared that the presence of Kilian would bring even more unrest into the area. Unfortunately they chose to follow the legal path in this matter instead of engaging seriously with the theological concerns of Kilian and the denominational Lutherans. Following this objection the Prussian authorities turned down Kilian's application to become a Prussian subject, while the Saxon government forbade him to work in the neighboring state and threatened to dismiss him from office (MALINKOWA 1999: 103). Such hostile measures against the independent denominational Lutherans were of course no longer in keeping with the times as they now enjoyed – as already stated – toleration by the state since 1840.

The measures taken against the denominational Lutherans could not however prevent the growth of the independent parishes. In 1846 about one hundred people from the surrounding villages joined the Weigersdorf congregation. In December of the same year the Weigersdorf church was consecrated, followed by the Klitten church in October 1847 (BIEHLER 1927: 13; MALINKOWA 1999: 104). This happened after a period of further reduction in tension between the Prussian state and the independent denominational Lutherans, which resulted in the so-called “General Concession” of 23 July 1845 (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 88–89). In this Friedrich Wilhelm IV allowed “the Lutherans who had separated themselves from the community of the State Evangelical Church [...] to come together as special church congregations and to form an association of these congregations under an executive board which is not subject to the Church governance of the State Evangelical Church.” He stated “he was applying the basic principles in Our Monarchy of freedom of conscience and religious practice,” but was also doing this in the interest of public order. It was also decreed that “the baptisms, confirmations, marriage banns, and ceremonies undertaken by these priests [...] should be totally valid [...] and that those religious ceremonies already carried out by them and their predeces-

sors should also be recognized as valid, with retrospective effect.” It was now also possible to build churches, since the independent parishes received “the rights of a corporate body” which granted them the right to acquire and possess land and buildings. The fact that the independent denominational Lutherans were also governed by the regulations of Paragraph 261, Section 11, Part II of the General State Law of the Prussian States was also important: “Nobody should be required to pay taxes or charges, which arise from a link with a parish, by any other religious party than the one to which they adhere; that is if they live in the parish or own land in it” (http://www.smixx.de/ra/Links_FR/PrALR/pralr.html; accessed 15 September 2011). As a result they were released from the payment of taxes to the State Church, such as the tithe; up until then they were forced to bear a double financial burden (KLÄN/DA SILVA 2010: 88–89).

Despite the more relaxed policy, Kilian did not receive official permission until 1847 to look after the Weigersdorf/Klitten congregation from Kotitz. In May 1848 he was granted Prussian state citizenship, so that he was able to leave his Kotitz parish and transfer to Dauban (MALINKOWA 1999: 105). Here Kilian had to organize and build up his parish himself, a situation different from that in Kotitz. His congregation consisted not only of denominational Lutherans from Weigersdorf and Klitten, but also those from other areas in Lusatia that had gathered in the towns of Spremberg, Muskau, and Cottbus. His journeys between the congregations and preaching places lasted, as a rule, three weeks, and he preached in German and Sorbian. A man from Dauban who served both as coachman and organist supported him on these journeys. The parish grew from fourteen parishioners at the beginning to about 1,200 members in 1852 (NIELSEN 2003: 26).

The lessening of political and military persecution did not however reduce the social pressure on the independent denominational Lutheran. As outsiders in their own homeland they had for a long time been toying with the idea of emigrating. In March 1854 an emigration association was founded, which engaged Kilian as its priest (HAUPTMANN 1994: 107 f.). In Breslau the Upper Church Council, the highest Church body of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Prussia, took note of this development in Lusatia, which had happened earlier in Silesia and Pomerania (Clemens 1976), with sorrow and regret. “Since he was the only Sorbian pastor of the Lutheran Church in Prussia, who can serve the Weigersdorf/Klitten congregation in their mother tongue, he was indispensable, and several attempts were made to keep him” (MALINKOWA 1999: 119 f.). Within the congregation the teacher and organist Dutschmann also opposed the idea of emigration (BIEHLER 1927: 13). These attempts were however unsuccessful, and emigration followed in 1854. There then began a difficult period for the Old Lutheran parishes in Lusatia – which was however gradually overcome (BIEHLER 1927: 13–15) – with the result that the Old Lutheran Church was able to establish itself here as a church independent from the Prussian United Church. Even in the difficult times, which Kilian and Dutschmann did not experience, during the World Wars and the GDR dictatorship, the Old Lutheran parishes in Lusatia were able to uphold denominational Lutheranism.

After the political changes, they joined the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1991 (DA SILVA /SÜSS 2011).

6. Conclusion

The history of the Old Lutheran Church in Lusatia followed the same course as in Prussia; its history was similar to that of other independent Evangelical Lutheran Churches in the 19th century. The members of the congregation were members of the religious revival, teachers and priests, who, as a result of their adherence to the Lutheran faith, could not contemplate living in the united church. They wanted to be Lutheran and remain so; when this was not allowed them, they decided in favor of independence. Even emigration was not particular to Lusatia, as other Lutherans emigrated from elsewhere because of their beliefs. One particular feature of the history of the Old Lutheran Church in Lusatia was however the participation of the Sorbian population in the Lutheran movement. What was remarkable was the fact that Kilian saw the link between Sorbian culture and Lutheran theology and promoted it. In this sense emigration was something special because it had both a faith and an ethnic context, especially since the Sorbs who emigrated to Texas wanted to found a Sorbian and Lutheran colony there. The special elements in this relationship require however further investigation.

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