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CONVERTING SALVATION: Protestant Missionaries in Central Australia, 1930s-40s

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CHAPTER ONE: ‘Men without food’\textsuperscript{1}: Hermannsburg and FW Albrecht

The ‘station’ is a particular form of colonial and frontier idiom; in 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century Australia, cattle and sheep stations populated the pastoral and pioneering texts of Australian colonial history as they began to populate the landscape.\textsuperscript{2} Clearing the country of its indigenous inhabitants and setting up stations was a deliberate statement of colonial intent: we are here to stay. The station was therefore a signifier of solidity and substance, of stasis, of anti-nomadism.\textsuperscript{3} It was a powerful sign of possession and power, naturalizing and normalizing European notions of ownership by attempting to control and dominate an alien landscape through built structures and superior technologies. A station was more than just a named dot on a sheet of paper, it was an inscription that not only erased what had been there previously, but was also a

\textsuperscript{1} Emmanuel Levinas in \textit{Totality and Infinity} referred to the primary, primordial obligation to ‘feed the hungry’: ‘To leave men without food is a fault that no circumstance attenuates; the distinction between the voluntary and the involuntary does not apply here’ says Rabbi Yochanan. Before the hunger of men responsibility is measured only ‘objectively’... The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation...’: Emmanuel Levinas, \textit{Totality and Infinity}, p. 201. The inset photograph is from Barbara Henson, \textit{A Straight-out Man: F.W. Albrecht and Central Australian Aborigines} (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1992); opposite p. 78. It shows (from left) Pastor Albrecht, Dr Duguid, and Reverend David Munro on arrival home at Hermannsburg from the camel trek west in 1936 to the Haasts Bluff area with a view to ‘saving’ the people there, the Pintubi and the Ngallia, from ‘white encroachment’.

\textsuperscript{2} ‘Station’ is not of course a uniquely Australian idiom: mission sites were called stations, for example, in Africa and India, while in India, the secular versions were places where the English colonial officials and administrators resided.

\textsuperscript{3} Paul Carter has noted the incongruity of the European distaste for nomadism: ‘Is it not odd that ours, the most nomadic and migratory of cultures, should found its polity, its psychology, its ethics and even its poetics on the antithesis of movement; on the rhetoric of foundations, continuity, genealogy, stasis? Is it not decidedly odd that a culture intent on global colonization should persistently associate movement with the unstable, the unreliable, the wanton and the primitive?’ See Paul Carter, \textit{The Lie of the Land} (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. 2-3. Yet the aversion to nomadism is perhaps not so surprising, given that settled modes of productive and property relationships have been long seen by Europeans as inextricably linked to higher stages of civilisation.
sign of (and a signpost to) what was to come.\textsuperscript{4} A station as a scratch on a map, as inscription, overwrote the indigenous site that it now usurped. What Europeans saw as an empty and unutilised landscape – a \textit{terra nullius} – began to be populated with stations, filling in what was seen, by eyes and ears blind to the fecund and living landscape the Aborigine saw, as the Great Australian Loneliness.\textsuperscript{5} And mission stations, too, carrying these marks and signs of erasure as well, also came as harbingers of hospitality to the inhabitants of the landscape. It was, finally, this stage, this Landscape, against which and upon which our particular cross-cultural encounters were set; among the red sand hills, white gums and mission stations of Central Australia the varying ‘texts’ of the ‘long conversation’ between missionaries and indigenous people were discussed, negotiated, argued and agreed (or disagreed) upon, as well as inscribed and imposed.

Before Ernabella Mission Station, there was Hermannsburg Mission Station. As the crow flies, only about 300 miles of ancient, arid desert and mountain range separated the two mission sites.\textsuperscript{6} Yet they were separated by more than mere space. Sixty years of deep historical time had passed from the establishment of the Lutheran mission in 1877 to the founding of Ernabella. In addition, the two Christian denominations that had sponsored the ventures, while both Protestant, differed significantly in their theological and missiologial emphases.\textsuperscript{7}


\textsuperscript{5} Ernestine Hill, \textit{The Great Australian Loneliness} (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1968 (first published 1940)).

\textsuperscript{6} About half way on its journey from Hermannsburg, the crow if it looked to its right would see the majestic Uluru and the equally magnificent Kata Tjuta.

\textsuperscript{7} I use the singular for both Churches despite the fact that Lutheranism in Australia, at least until 1966 and Union, was racked by division and schism, as was its Presbyterian counterpart, whose Scottish ‘Disruptions’ had their ramifications in the Australian colonies: see Rowland S. Ward, \textit{The Bush Still Burns: The Presbyterian and Reformed Faith in Australia 1788-1988} (Brunswick: Globe Press, 1989). The early years of Hermannsburg were dogged by crises within the ‘two synods’ when the Mission came close to being abandoned: see M. Lohe, "A Mission is established", in \textit{Hermannsburg: a vision and a mission}, ed. E. Leske (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977): 6-40; also E. Leske, \textit{For Faith and Freedom: The Story of Lutherans and Lutheranism in Australia 1838-1996} (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 1996), esp. chapter 6. Indeed, the first Lutherans had emigrated to South Australia from 1838 due to schismatic and religious freedom issues in Prussia. Despite their divisions, however, Lutheran Churches remained more like each other than resembling any other Protestant denomination.
The Lutherans, German and often rural, had been 'outsiders' in Australia, self-perceived victims of Continental state religious persecution, excluded from the mainstream of social and religious life in Australia. The Lutheran Church was conservative, Confessional, and evangelical, emphasizing the Law, the Gospel, Grace, guilt and the consciousness of sin, and the Bible as the infallible and literal Word of God: on the mission site, these doctrines and dicta 'translated' into strict regimes of conversion, discipline and surveillance, and work. The Presbyterian Church, especially in the Victoria and South Australia of the 1930s and 1940s, was more an establishment and mainstream denomination. While not denying the Reformed 'truths' of justification by faith and the primacy of the Bible, as well as the post-Reformation evangelical imperative to take the Gospel along with these truths into all the world, Presbyterians had generally placed greater importance in the missionary venture on education and the sowing of the seeds of Christianity among native peoples by patient precept and preaching. Yet the Church had historically possessed two principal wings, Moderate and Evangelical, which persisted into the 20th century. In the 1940s this

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8 This generalisation is not intended to deny that individual Lutherans contributed significantly in both the 19th and 20th centuries to the national life: see ibid., (Leske), pp. 115-127.
9 Robert J. Scrimgeour, *Some Scots Were Here: A History of the Presbyterian Church in South Australia 1839-1977* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1986). Also see, as background, relating to a slightly earlier period to ours, D.L. Hilliard, "The City of Churches: Some Aspects of Religion in Adelaide about 1900", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* (1980): 3-30. One broad point of reference: in the 1933 census, 10.76% of Australians identified themselves as Presbyterian/Reformed, 0.92% as Lutheran: see Hilary M. Carey, *Believing in Australia: a cultural history of religions* (St Leonards, N.S.W: Allen and Unwin, 1996), Appendix, Tables of religious affiliation for censuses of population and housing, 1901-1991, p. 201. By an 'establishment' denomination, I do not of course mean 'established' as the State Church but that especially in South Australia, there were greater links between the Presbyterian Church of the 1930s and 40s and the upper echelons of political and commercial power than existed in relation to the Lutheran Church. Duguid, for example, enjoyed and expected easier access to influential politicians (such as various Ministers of the Interior, and high ranked officials, some of whom were Presbyterian) than Pastor Albrecht, who accepted this point gracefully.
10 These points about the two Protestant Churches are meant, again, as very broad generalisations, and should not be overdrawn, nor are they meant to apply invariably to individual missions of each Church. But even sweeping generalisations have their use in identifying underlying similarities and differences between entities or institutions such as churches and denominations.
11 See Ward, *The Bush Still Burns*, especially chapter 2; also, for the roots of the dichotomy in Scottish religious history, see Brian Stanley, ed., *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001). This is not to say that these were the only two 'wings' in the Church, or that other denominations did not have similar characteristics. In fact, most mainstream denominations had and have sectors, or 'wings', that could be characterised as 'evangelical' and 'moderate'/liberal', with the criteria being roughly the extent to which the evangél, the spreading of the good news of Christ, is confined to a more or less explicit and all-consuming mission of proclamation, usually allied to a essentially literal (evangelical) or liberal interpretation (moderate) of the Bible.
dichotomy even surfaced in the remote mission site of Ernabella. However, Presbyterian Ernabella initially followed the Scottish Moderate mission tradition of settled modernization, the progressive diffusion of Christianity over time as part of a gradual encounter with non-European societies.\textsuperscript{12} But like political parties of different persuasions, who tend to resemble each other in the performance of governance, mission stations of varying models, whether Lutheran or Presbyterian, often began to 'speak' to and about their indigenous visitants in similar sorts of ways, utilising the same discourses. Yet at the same time this curious phenomenon of affinity is noted, attention is drawn, inevitably, to unmistakable points of difference. Discourse can, like statistics and beautiful numbers, be rubbery and unstable.

\textbf{equivalences}

Part of the reason for this state of affairs may be the malleable, ambiguous nature of some of the missiological concepts with which missionaries dealt. Vincente Rafael, in his 1988 book on Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines, notes similarities in the notions of conquest, conversion and translation.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{Conquest} and \textit{conversion}, aside from their primary meanings, may connote the surrender of a person's desires and possessions to another: 'Conversion, like conquest, can thus be a process of crossing over into the domain – territorial, emotional, religious, or cultural – of someone else and claiming it as one's own.'\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Translation}, too, can be something like an equivalent to conversion, 'in expressing in one language what had previously been expressed in another.'\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12} See ibid., (Stanley, ed.)


\textsuperscript{14} Rafael, \textit{Contracting Colonialism}, p. ix.

\textsuperscript{15} 'Translation' of course has its own profound ambiguities, ambivalences and contradictions, particularly in the colonial and Biblical contexts of missionary sites: for an argument (in the African context) that sees mission texts as 'dialogical', the product of sustained and contentious conversations between missionaries and 'native' interlocutors, see Derek Peterson, "Translating the Word: Dialogism and Debate in two Gikuyu
The significance of these equivalences for our discussion of the mission sites is that they 'highlight the dialectics of force and persuasion, of interest and desire', of possession and dispossession, of dominance and generosity that played out on these mission sites in similar, and different, ways. For example, the sense of the 'force' behind conquest can be a corrective to the more benign notion that conversion in the contact zone of a mission can be seen in terms of a conversation between the missionaries and the indigenes. While this thesis does point to the politics of hospitality, and the ethics of responsibility and obligation, underlying the peculiar relations between the missionaries of Central Australia and the original inhabitants, it does not suggest the absence of unequal relations of power and dominance on this missionary frontier, or that missionaries can escape altogether some complicity in the colonial 'conquest' of Australia. It does surmise a benignity that was absent in large measure in other colonial sites, insisting on the existence of strong affective ties of possession and dependency between the interlocutors of the 'conversation', as well as powerful and autonomous humanitarian impulses on the part of missionaries, even on conservative and orthodox mission sites such as Hermannsburg.

**power and possession**

I argue here the possibility that possessory imperatives and power relations on the mission site worked both ways, not necessarily equally, but still, significantly, in ways not sufficiently acknowledged by the historiography. A former superintendent of Hermannsburg, Gary Stoll, remarked perceptively in a 2003 television documentary on Hermannsburg that he suspected that the indigenous people were trying to do with the early missionaries what the missionaries were trying to do to them: assimilate them into the Right Way of Life. The Arrernte may have thought, particularly in the early days of contact, that they may persuade the missionaries. The ethnocentric assumption is that the Europeans do the persuading. A vignette from the same documentary: a

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brief snatch of old film showed Pastor Albrecht standing and talking with Moses, the blind Aboriginal evangelist of Hermannsburg and an iconic figure in Hermannsburg's 'mission narrative'. Moses dominates the scene completely. His physical presence - the black face framed with white hair and beard - his demeanour, his body language, his bearing, offer no trace of 'the colonial subject', no sense of obeisance. On the visual evidence alone, these are men conversing in a 'face-to-face encounter', at approximately the same level of power relations. Still it is only one small segment of film - and film and photographs can carry differing layers of meaning - yet it is another clue as to the complex relationships, which perhaps ought not to be defined too quickly, between white and black on a Mission Station.

conversion and salvation

There is another strategy I wish to utilise in adapting Rafael's approach of 'equivalences': that of broadening the reach, in particular, of the concepts of conversion and salvation. I refer in this study to the 'conversion project' as a kind of shorthand term for all that is suggested by the Christian reception of Christ's Great Commission, 'to go into all the world', preaching the Gospel and converting the pagan, the heathen, and the non-believer. The conversion project has been, historically, at the core of the missionary and evangelical enterprise. Without it, a mission, it may be argued, would not be a mission. Conversion, the change from sinfulness to righteousness, is intimately connected, of course, in this sense to the notion of salvation, the redemption of sinful man through the vicarious death of Christ.

A central argument of this work is that the experience of the Central Australian missionaries significantly transformed the meanings of salvation and conversion from the orthodox, spiritual sense to a more physical and secular import, that the original and primary missionary imperatives of conversion and 'saving souls'

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19 The principal Biblical reference is Matthew 28: 18-20, referred to as the Great Commission, or sometimes as the Evangelical Mandate.
became, as well, 'saving bodies and 'converting' Aborigines from 'primitive',
nomadic savages to 'useful citizens', and that this was due, at least in part, to a
developing sense of ultimate responsibility for the Other. One must here make
several careful qualifications. I do not suggest that the Central Australian
missionaries were the first missionaries to show concern for the Aboriginal 'body'
or a Levinasian sense of responsibility for the Other. During the 19th and early
20th centuries, it was missionaries who often held out the possibility of
Aboriginal physical survival when majority settler opinion was assuring itself of
their imminent extinction. I do suggest, however, that in the space and time
under consideration in this thesis, the relative weight given to 'saving souls' as
against 'saving bodies' shifted significantly in favour of the latter. I am also not
suggesting that the conversion project as recognised in traditional missiology did
not still carry weight in the Central Australian missions, or that it was
completely jettisoned for a purely secular interpretation, or, for that matter, that
an increasingly sophisticated anthropological and ethnographic scrutiny of
indigenous cultures was not having some influence on the conduct and
discourse of missionaries. However, what is apparent from the texts is that the
enunciation of the traditional project was limited more and more to the public
arena, in evangelical propaganda, in church and mission newsletters, and

20 I am not suggesting, either, that the broader use of conversion and salvation language was unique to the
Central Australian missionaries such as Love and Albrecht, or that it was an interpretation or a hermeneutics
of mission which they 'invented' in some way. The tension between a spiritual and a social sense of
'responsibility' has probably always been present in the proclamation of Christianity. Indeed it could be
characterised as the inherent tension between the Great Commission and the Great Commandment (to love
your neighbour), between righteousness and justice, between the Evangelical Mandate and the Social
Mandate found in Genesis 1: 28-30 and Genesis 9: 1-7. Even a publication such as the Evangelical
Dictionary of World Missions accepts that 'the prominence accorded to the Great Commission in the past two
hundred years is not apparent in previous church history': A. Scott Moreau, ed., Evangelical Dictionary of
World Missions (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), p. 412. And even recently the theoretical problem has
been discussed in missiological circles, for example at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism in 1974
and subsequent conferences, at one of which this formulation was advocated, which is prefigured by the
Love/Albrecht 'formulations' with which this study is concerned: 'Seldom if ever should we have to choose
between satisfying physical hunger and spiritual hunger, or between healing bodies and saving souls, since an
authentic love for our neighbour will lead us to serve him or her as a whole person': see ibid., p. 412. It is
evident, however, that in the colonial era, at least up until the 1940s, emphasis has been placed by most
missions on the spiritual dimension of salvation. This has been so in Australian Christian missions as well.
But we ought to be sure that we are not ignoring evidence of a concern with more secular aspects of
'salvation' simply because of a historiographical prejudice or bias in favour of a more narrow interpretation
of how missionaries practiced on mission sites.

21 Russell McGregor, Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the doomed race theory, 1880-1939
(Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1997).
sermons. Increasingly, over the extended time scale that missionaries such as Albrecht and Love were 'in the field', in their missionary activities, private communications and correspondences with their Boards, their notions of conversion and salvation were becoming secularised.

On the face of it, the orthodox conversion project on both Missions proceeded as usual: church services and Bible translation went on, and at least at Hermannsburg, the older mission, confirmation classes were held, converts were made and Native Evangelists travelled to the outstations; the home audiences and congregations for both missions were told by newsletter and photograph of the magnificent efforts of their missionaries to 'take Christ to the primitive Native'; funds were called for to build churches and provide Bibles; prayer was called for the souls of 'savages'. In such ways was the Gospel taken 'to the ends of the earth'.

Yet one is forcibly struck reading through the (private) correspondence, and the thinking of these missionaries as evidenced in papers, articles, and books, at the relative lack of emphasis placed on the orthodox conversion project and conversely the immense, intense, urgent emphasis placed on survival mechanisms relating to water, food, shelter, health as well as modernizing techniques such as education, employment and training projects designed to 'convert' the savage into a 'useful citizen', and increasingly, the collective (the 'tribe') into cohering and surviving entities. The concerns are rarely along the lines of the evangelical desire to 'convert' and 'save' individual souls. Rather the desperate questions asked are: 'can we save them from dying, from disease, can we feed them?' and 'can we save them' or 'convert' them in such a way that they

\[22\] Along with the desire to 'save' the Aboriginal body, which is one of the foci of this study, was an important, and related, desire on the part of the Central Australian missionaries to save the collective or the group (usually referred to as the 'tribe') with whom they were working. Again, I do not suggest they were the first, or only, missionaries to be concerned for the survival of particular indigenous collectivities. But it could be argued that there occurred around the 1930s a subtle shift in emphasis within the missionary discourse along with a concern with saving Aborigines as physical individuals to saving them as part of a larger entity (tribe) whose survival was seen as important and crucial. Evidence of this shift may be noted in the text of our missionaries' correspondences and conversations. I do not necessarily wish to underplay this shift by my suggestion of the primacy of the 'saving bodies' element in Central Australian missionary discourse.
(individuals and tribe) will fit eventually into a modern state, as citizens, as productive members? We are forced to take cognisance of the weight of this discourse, because of its preponderance in the literature, and attempt to give it some autonomous existence, rather than either being merely incidental to the (orthodox) conversion project, or simply a version of the ‘civilising mission’. It seems to me that while the conversion project was still stated and privileged on a rhetorical and public level it was de facto being abridged, minimised, and deferred by significant Central Australian missionaries. And this seems to have applied at times to the more traditional and evangelical Lutheran mission model at Hermannsburg as it did to the Moderate and progressive ‘new’ Presbyterian model at Ernabella.

**to leave the Word of God and serve tables**

Indeed, it was Albrecht who was most explicit on this matter. He had been under criticism from some Lutherans from the start of his superintendency of Hermannsburg in 1926 for not focusing sufficiently on the traditional conversion project, for not fashioning Hermannsburg as an exemplary Lutheran ‘mission’. It came to a head in the early 1940s when the Chairman of his own Board contested, in effect, Albrecht’s interpretation of his missionary call:

> Our station or stations have become to a great extent “feeding stations”...I know it is, to a great extent, unavoidable. But what the apostle said 1900 years ago applies today too: “It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables”.

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23 The distinction I am making here is not encompassed by the old and well-worn dichotomy between Christianizing and civilising on mission sites. ‘Civilising’ in this context and on traditional mission sites generally meant the re-forming of the indigenous body in the image of the West in terms of clothes, manners and modes of living (although this did not, of course, preclude, and may well have included, concerns for physical well-being): see Kathryn Rountree, “Re-making the Maori Female Body”, The Journal of Pacific History Vol. 35 (2000): 49-66; in an Australian context, see Jean Woolminton, “The Civilisation/Christianisation Debate and the Australian Aborigines”, Aboriginal History 10:2 (1986): 90-98; also generally see Comaroff and Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution, vols 1 and 2. While there are undoubtedly some connections between ‘civilising’ and ‘saving’, and both Missions in Central Australia attempted some ‘civilising’ of their ‘natives’, especially Hermannsburg which made strenuous attempts to re-form the Arrernte into a sort of German village peasantry (with boot-making and other leather-work), they are discrete notions.

The catalyst for Johan Riedel’s reproach was a letter from another missionary at Hermannsburg who had observed that he found it ‘difficult to remember I was a missionary here’. Albrecht’s response was a poignant defence of his position. It is worth quoting comprehensively as it situates the conservative Lutheran pastor in uncomfortable opposition to the missiological orthodoxies of his Church, and gives an insight into the life of a missionary to Aboriginal people in Central Australia. The attack concerns and upsets him: ‘I would have written before had I been quite clear as to what to say. But although even now I cannot say I am sure of what to say I feel it is my duty to reply.’ He begins with his response to the statement of his fellow missionary, Pastor Sam Gross:

I don’t know what to make of it. I have tried to take over as much of the work as I possibly could; on the other hand the work at Alice Springs has been largely in his hands, with all the opportunities connected with it. Here at the station if we are both here, we take the services in turn, but I have all the Sunday afternoons. Evening devotions are held by Br. Gross in English. Besides this Br. Gross has the Cash Store, the Cash Book, Child Endowment accounts, and helps with truck repairs if needed...My work is: the supervision of the vegetable garden, tannery and boot making including sales of these goods, Management of Haasts Bluff, the management here, confirmation lessons. I don’t wish to enlarge on these things, as this will not help us in this matter. I can assure you that when I came here I found even more difficult conditions and there was nobody to assist me and promise any relief.

The fleeting note of self-pity and defensiveness in reference to Albrecht’s early days at Hermannsburg in the late 1920s is significant as it may help to locate, for us, the rationale behind his powerful justification. It is also curious, and not a little amusing, that in his enumeration of the divisions of labour between himself and his missionary colleague Albrecht initially makes Gross’s case for him. But he goes on:

It is a fact that our stations are to a large extent ‘feeding stations’. I know what this implies and what it has meant to me. At the same time I cannot get away from one loud voice in my heart which says: give ye them to eat. This applies to all our undertakings, even to the last at Areysonga. I have seen too many perish because Christians in this country have listened

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25 Statement of Sam Gross: see ibid: Albrecht to Riedel, 18 Dec 1943. I noted in my Preface that ‘mission history was in my blood’: Pastor Gross’s daughter Marie married my uncle, David Trudinger, my father’s brother, who was a schoolteacher at Hermannsburg Mission and after whom I was named.
26 Ibid.
more to the Anthropologists who say: leave them alone, that is the best you can do for them.\textsuperscript{27}

The missionary cannot help a dig at the ‘Anthropologists’ but he firmly positions himself, buttressed by the scriptural citation, in a discourse of indigenous physical survival:

I know this cannot be said of our Church. On the other hand I feel the question must be asked whether we have done all we could “to give them to eat” so that they would not perish. I am afraid that is not the case. The disaster of 1929 and preceding years should never have overtaken us.\textsuperscript{28}

The reference to 1929 refers to the extended drought that began as the young missionary began his term of office in Central Australia. The drought brought devastation to the animal herds of the Mission and death to a large number of the indigenous inhabitants of the Mission and the surrounding area. In later years, Albrecht constantly referred back to the trauma of those days: it seemed to alter forever the missionary ‘model’ he had brought with him from the Hermannsburg Missionary Institute in Germany, of Pietist missionaries preaching the Word of God and creating a self-sustaining community among heathen but healthy natives.\textsuperscript{29} The reality in the Australian Interior was much more terrible, and terrifying, to Albrecht. He never forgot it. So he went on, to Riedel, eloquent and impassioned even in his imperfect English:

Furthermore, \textit{we must not overlook the fact that God has led us into a work where we have to care for the body if we wish to have souls to be cared for.} For instance, if we had not stepped in at Haasts Bluff in time, today there would be no Natives left to care for; white people with stock would have seen to that. And now there are nearly 400 there. I know much more could and should be done religiously, which you may take as proof that it is a feeding station only. However, you will admit we have to have the people first before missionary work proper can be done.\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid. (Albrecht’s underlining).
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection": Albrecht to Riedel, 18 Dec 1943 (my italics).
\end{footnotes}

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The theologically conservative Lutheran Albrecht is conceding that the
‘missionary work proper’ as he called it was not what was being done at
Hermannsburg. He concedes that it ought to have been, by the book, by the
Book. But he is caught in the icy grip of an inexorable logic: you cannot have
souls to save unless the bodies containing those souls survive. The body must be
saved and possessed before the soul can be possessed. Albrecht’s model was
that of the traditional Lutheran mission. But it was being turned upside down by
events, by facts, by deaths:

can we afford to sit back and let matters take their course, saying we feel
not called to do this work? I would repeat again: if others would and
could do it, I should be only too happy to leave these things alone. As it
is, however, I have no choice lest I should go away from this place later on
with the feeling that I have dodged my responsibility because it meant work
so different to what I thought missionary work should be.31

panoptical time

The strength of Albrecht’s defence silenced his Chairman, at least momentarily.
Before looking briefly at the history of his superintendency from 1926 to attempt
to understand the discourse of ultimate responsibility whose ‘language’ the
conservative evangelical missionary now (partly) spoke, it is worth musing for a
moment on how missionaries such as Albrecht and Love might have been able to
reconcile their positions with the orthodox missionary discourse of conversion
and salvation. Mission stations, it seems, were places that possessed an
unusual, almost gnostic sense of time. Missionaries (certainly Love and
Albrecht) were often imbued with a notion of the large, global sweep of time,
along the lines of what Ann McClintock has called ‘panoptical time.’32 In
contrast, for example, pastoralists possessed a much narrower framework of
time; their time was seasonal, the next crop of sheep or cattle, the next shearing,
calving, lambing, the next rain. This is not to say that missionaries who ran
sheep and cattle did not have some of the same concerns as pastoralists but
their religious time frame was much wider than a secular, seasonal one. They
saw themselves as under the aegis of God who worked not only in mysterious

31 Ibid., (my italics).
32 See Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest (London:
ways but also in mysteriously lengthy ways. Both Love and Albrecht were explicit in their preparedness to wait years, a lifetime, even longer, for their missions 'to bear fruit'. Their harvest-time would be of God's choosing, not theirs; they were patient and prepared to wait. In both their theologies, in Lutheranism and particularly in Love's Presbyterianism, there was a strong religious undercurrent of predestination, broadly defined: everything is worked out, all will be revealed in God's great Plan and God's good Time.33

The Ernabella missionary as well took an elevated view of 'time' in relation to the conversion project. In 1944, in commenting on the time away from the mission for Aboriginal boys under initiation, he remarked that:

their years of adolescence are under the charge of their tribal elders rather than of the missionaries. I think we must acquiesce, for some years to come, at least, and never seek to break the authority of their elders: but in due time to win the elders, too, to the way of Christ. I think I could work up enthusiasm and have a large number of men and women baptised soon. And what would be the good of that?34

In due time: this elongated conception of time allowed the two missionaries the space to negotiate new and broader meanings for the Christian ideas of conversion and salvation. It also gave them some personal margin of error from the orthodox measurements of progress on the mission site: conversions, numbers of indigenes attending the Sunday services, the extension, across the landscape, of churches, schools, and houses, the increasing indigenous enmeshment with Western ways of work and time discipline, and other routines of mission life, dress, food, language. These 'traces' of civilization and

33 In a sermon in Adelaide, Albrecht articulated the 'length' of his vision: 'We are asking ourselves whether our Natives ever will manage and establish themselves...we can only continue if we refuse to retaliate or treat these people according to what they deserve in the eyes of this world. 'Love to the end' would mean here that we would not expect this generation neither the next of these stone age men and women to come round and establish themselves...One year in the development of a race may mean many hundreds of years. Think how many hundreds yea thousands taken by our fathers to reach this stage; they were never nomads and were used to making a living from the soil...They are the Lord's, too. It is now a matter for us to continue in our love. And we cannot do otherwise, as love is the only thing that will remain, even beyond the grave': Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection": sermon (undated), entitled 'Love Unto the End'.
christianisation were never given the importance by Love or Albrecht that they were on other missions, which is not to say they did not forward evidences of them for the consumption of their Boards and their home constituencies, the metropolitan churches in South Australia and elsewhere, the synods and the assemblies. But the two missionaries were themselves convinced that the 'fruits of their labours' lay well into the future, that the 'long conversation' would continue to take place for generations to come, and in fact would only continue to take place if the present generation was given a future into which to survive.

we do not come to kill

From the perspective of the early 1940s, when, as we shall see, Albrecht returned to Hermannsburg from a war-time 'exile' in Adelaide (enforced by anti-German sentiment) and met JRB Love at the new Mission at Ernabella on the way, the encounter between the missionaries and the Arrernte has already been in progress at Hermannsburg for 65 years. To glimpse the 'making' of Albrecht as the missionary he was in the 1940s, and the particular missionary discourses in which he participated, to provide us with a context for the closer examination of the Ernabella missionaries, we need to look briefly, through Albrecht, at the history of the mission he took over in 1926.

The thousand-mile, two-year journey of the first Lutheran missionaries from Bethany in South Australia to the site that was established as Hermannsburg in 1877 has been represented as iconic in Lutheran literature.\(^{35}\) Certainly Albrecht himself saw it in this light: '...in this journey into the heart of a Continent we feel the heartbeat of our Church. It was, and always will remain, one of the most heroic missionary journeys in Australia.'\(^{36}\) Albrecht always retained a self-conscious sense that he was following in the steps of prophets and pioneers,

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\(^{35}\) See for example Loehe, "A Mission is established", (ed. Leske); also see Diane J. Austin-Broos, "Narratives of the Encounter at Ntaria", \textit{Oceania} 65 (1994): 131-150 for an interpretation that compares indigenous and Lutheran narratives of the encounter at Ntaria (Hermannsburg) and sees the Lutheran account as voiding the Aboriginal Landscape of society and history, that is, of not including the Arrernte as historical actors. See my related argument in chapter 7 below regarding the limitations of what I call 'establishment' discourse foreclosing indigenous history and involvement.

\(^{36}\) Albrecht, "Albrecht Material", Lutheran Archives: 'Into the Heart of a Continent'. See also \textit{Lutheran Herald}, 11 Nov 1950.
men in the mould of Old Testament heroes such as Abraham and Moses.\footnote{Note the naming of the older Aboriginal men at Hermannsburg as (for example) Moses, Jakob, Abel privileging the same Old Testament tradition.} While the early fortunes of the Mission varied (it was actually abandoned from 1891-1894), and was not established on a secure footing until the superintendentship of the remarkable Carl Strehlow (1894-1922), it was significant that, as Mervyn Hartwig noted in his seminal doctoral dissertation, the German missionaries were the first Europeans to go to Central Australia to make a permanent home there.\footnote{M.C. Hartwig, "The progress of White settlement in the Alice Springs District and its effects upon the Aboriginal inhabitants, 1860-1894", (Ph.D thesis, University of Adelaide, 1965), p. 472. Hartwig’s thesis on the progress of white settlement in the Alice Springs district and its effect upon the Aboriginal inhabitants during the years from 1860 to 1894, written forty years ago, remains one of the most significant scholarly treatments of the early history of Hermannsburg. Further to the discussion in the Introduction above: much of the historiography on Hermannsburg has come from within the Lutheran community such as Leske, ed., *Hermannsburg: a vision and a mission*, to which FW Albrecht contributed a chapter, and Paul Albrecht’s recent book: Albrecht, *From Mission to Church*. In his preface, Paul Albrecht concedes that he cannot bring ‘the required objectivity to the task’ and that Hermannsburg ‘still awaits the complete history’ (viii). One of the strengths of the book is, in fact, its subjectivity: note the fascinating account of Albrecht’s own intellectual and theological struggle to reorient the missiology of the most revered mission site in Australia (including a reassessment of the missiology of his father). FW Albrecht himself received a sympathetic and perceptive biographical treatment from Barbara Henson in her 1994 study: see Henson, *A Straight-out Man: F.W. Albrecht and Central Australian Aborigines*. Brilliant but necessarily episodic and tangential treatments of Albrecht and Hermannsburg occur in Carter, *The lie of the land; Barry Hill, Broken Song; T.G.H. Strehlow and Aboriginal Possession* (Sydney: Knopf, 2002); and Tim Rowse, *White flour, white power*. Rowse’s *tour de force* is a delineation of assimilation through a study of the colonial technique of rationing in which the Lutheran missionaries’ invention of what Rowse calls ‘mercantile evangelism’ receives a novel and imaginative treatment. A compendium of essays on Albert Namatjira and the art movement that followed him at Hermannsburg contains some excellent writing on the Mission: see Jane Hardy, J.V.S. Megaw, and M. Ruth Megaw, eds., *The Heritage of Namatjira*.} It should be noted that the ‘home’ was the attempted creation of a self-sufficient Lutheran mission community patterned on a German peasant village.\footnote{According to Norman Etherington, writing of South African missionary ideologies, Louis (Ludwig) Harms, the founder of the Hermannsburg Missionary Institute in Hanover (which initially sponsored the Australian mission), harboured chiliastic expectations of a Dark Age for the Church in Europe, consequently sending missionaries ‘freed from every undesirable trait of modernism’ out into the world to missions aimed at drawing indigenes into ‘the communal economy of enclosed mission settlements’. The original models for Harms’ missions were, apparently, medieval missions to the Saxons: see Etherington, “South African Missionary Ideologies 1880-1920: Retrospect and Prospect”, in *Missionary Ideologies in the imperialist Era: 1880-1920*, Torben Christensen and William R. Hutchinson, eds. (Denmark: 1982): 191-199, p. 194.} But despite this imposition of European colonial forms, while the mission and the pastoral frontier arrived in the area at about the same time, the local indigenous peoples, initially cautious, were eventually able to distinguish the missionaries from colonial perpetrators of violence: in Levinasian terms, they could see in the ‘face’ of the missionaries the words: we
do not come to kill. So the Arrernte displayed their hospitality by accepting the invitation of the Lutherans to be guests in what was in fact their own home. It is to Albrecht’s credit that he came to grasp this reality of the missionary – Arrernte encounter at Hermannsburg: the Aboriginal attachment to their land. The white man had irreversibly taken the nation and the land, and now it was the missionary’s task to ‘convert’ and ‘translate’ his Aborigines into suitably useful citizens, economic and social, in the white capitalist economy and society. Much of the urgency in the missionary ventures of both Love and Albrecht was in the attempt to ‘save’ indigenous bodies, lives, peoples, tribes: by feeding them, curing their ills and incorporating them into white economies and polities. The urgency was compounded by the knowledge that the ruthlessness and severity of the European encounter with the Australian Aborigines meant that their death and possible extinction would follow any long term failure of this ‘conversion project.’

**contract and reciprocity**

Of course, the indigenes’ reaction to the early missionaries was more than mere Levinasian hospitality. As Hartwig’s gloss on Elkin’s notion of ‘intelligent parasitism’ put it, the Arrernte’s strategy of ‘intelligent exploitation’ extracted the necessaries of a hard life in Central Australia - haven, food and water – from the

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41 Therefore his insistence in early (1930s) letters to Charles Duguid and to the authorities referring to the retention of Aborigines in their own country as the necessary condition of their survival: see, for example, Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection": Albrecht to Duguid (copy), 25 Aug 1939, and Albrecht to Minister for Interior (copy), 14 Aug 1935.
42 Love and Albrecht differed somewhat on the rate at which this ‘incorporation’ should and would proceed: Albrecht, partly because of Hermannsburg’s closer proximity to white economic centres such as Alice Springs, from the late 1940s and 1950s, while he certainly wished for a more gradual transition away from the ‘contaminating’ white centres, saw it as not only inevitable, but occurring rapidly; he produced a stream of papers on related subjects such as ‘The Question of Economic Rehabilitation of Aborigines’ (1953), ‘Not an Unqualified Blessing: Aboriginal Citizenship’ (1954), ‘Apprenticeship for Aborigines’ (1955), ‘Employment of Aborigines at Cattle Stations’ (n.d.), ‘Aspects of Mission Work among Aborigines living at cattle stations’ (1956), ‘Citizenship for Aborigines’ (1959), ‘Stages of Transition’ (1961), albeit generally urging caution and dousing white liberal expectations regarding the ease of the transition: see Albrecht, “Albrecht Material”, Lutheran Archives. Love saw the process as inevitable, but wished, as did Duguid, to delay it as long as possible, and was perhaps more sanguine that it could be so delayed; in the meantime, helping indigenous people, with white supervision, gain the tools they needed to cope with the transition: see especially chapters 10-11 below.
43 See McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, for a brilliant delineation of the ramifications of the ‘doomed race’ theory which was often the context or subtext of missionary discourses of ‘saving the Aborigines’.
Lutherans. But the missionaries, in terms of Hartwig’s suggestion that the relationship between Aboriginal people and Europeans in this phase of the encounter was symbiotic rather than parasitic, also intelligently exploited the indigenous people. They now had what they desired: a ‘congregation’. But in return, they had to feed it. The newly appointed Albrecht, whose appointment as superintendent of Hermannsburg in 1926 ended a four-year interregnum following the death of Strehlow, explained this ‘contract’ in 1927. Writing of the ‘remarkable economic circumstances under which the natives have to subsist here in the inland’, he wrote:

Their main food source is meat and some plants. To survive they have to be constantly on the move... Now if a man is forced to move around constantly, he cannot simultaneously be instructed in the Word of God. If the missionaries desired to instruct the men, they had to become responsible for their sustenance.\(^{45}\)

Albrecht here draws a tight logical link between the need to restrict nomadism and the conversion project, between feeding and preaching. However, in this passage, he was writing very early in his superintendentship and principally about the pioneer missionaries. Later, as he saw more and more desperate ‘dispossessed men without food’, the links between food and the conversion project became somewhat more tenuous; men without food needed food to survive, to live, not just to remain sedentary for sufficiently long to hear the Gospel. In any case, there were always varying understandings of the reciprocities on both sides: Arrernte migrated to the mission, and stayed there, because they could get food more easily than if they had to hunt and gather their food, and because the mission represented a refuge from an increasingly hostile and rapacious white settler caste.\(^{46}\) In return for this, the indigenous people would live under mission discipline, listen to the mission preaching, and

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44 Hartwig, "The progress of White settlement", p. xxi. See AP Elkin, "Reaction and Interaction: A Food Gathering People and European Settlement in Australia", American Anthropologist 53 (Apr-Jun., 1951): 164-186. Hartwig reads the reactions of Aborigines to white incursion into Central Australia as moving along a spectrum from ‘fear and avoidance’ through ‘tentative approaches’ to ‘intelligent resistance’ and ‘intelligent exploitation’. He avoids adopting Elkin’s concept of intelligent parasitism on the grounds that ‘the relationship established between Aborigines and Europeans during this phase of Aboriginal reaction was symbiotic rather than parasitic.’


46 See Rowse, White flour, white power, pp. 42-46, also citing suggestions by Annette Hamilton on Western
sometimes work for the mission. In later years, Albrecht would often write about his frustration when 'his Aborigines' would regard 'work' as a personal favour to him, leaving it when they felt the obligation had been discharged rather than operating within European conventions of 'finishing the job'.\(^{47}\) Differing understandings led to misunderstandings, frustration, and occasional hostility. But one is forced to acknowledge, from the start, a certain fragile hospitality and civility, even where it was 'contractual' and reciprocal, between German Australians and indigenous Australians at Hermannsburg.

**traces of religion**

The series of articles in which Albrecht delineated the Hermannsburg 'contract' between missionaries and Arrernte were written to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the mission in 1877.\(^{48}\) Albrecht's document gives a compelling insight into the attitudes and discourse of a man at the outset of a forty-year missionary career in Central Australia, almost straight from 'the Mission House' in Hermannsburg, Germany.\(^{49}\) For us, it is a marker to measure the development of his thinking on Aborigines, to see how the militant, zealous young missionary of 1926 differed from the experienced, mature veteran of seventeen years later with his 'feeding stations' and his perception of how the model of 'missionary work' had changed. The narrative is a mixture of brief autobiography, reminiscences of 'joyful' arrival and reception at Hermannsburg, admonition to the metropolitan congregation for their financial neglect of its Mission, and a historical sketch of the establishment of the Mission and its early years, including an extended treatment of 'Missionary Strehlow', who 'has stamped the venture here with his personality and finally proved his loyalty by

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\(^{47}\) See, for example, in his paper 'Stages of Transition' (p. 3) in Albrecht, "Albrecht Materials", Lutheran Archives; also see Albrecht's 1983 interview with Phillip Adams, ABC, p. 17, transcript in ibid.

\(^{48}\) See Albrecht, *From Mission to Church*, Appendix 3, FW Albrecht, 'Fifty Years'. The articles were originally published in the *Kirchen-Blatt* of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia, beginning with the edition of 19 April 1926 and concluding with the edition of 8 April 1929. They have now been collated, translated (by Pastor HD Oberscheidt) and published as an Appendix in Paul Albrecht's 2002 book.

\(^{49}\) See ibid., 'Fifty Years', p. 301. Albrecht spent six months in Canada en route to Australia and studied English and catechetics at Wartburg Seminary in Winnipeg.
his death in the desert.\textsuperscript{50} He then describes and defends his own early administration. In a section entitled ‘The congregation’, he comes, he writes, to ‘the real work of the mission’: to establish a Christian congregation. And into what sort of ground is the ‘seed of God’s word’ sown? he asks.

Albrecht assesses the natives’ characteristics for his 1920s’ readers: they are ‘not at all disfigured’ and only the chocolate coloured skin ‘distinguishes them from white people’; they are great walkers, clever trackers, quick consumers and ‘true masters at going hungry’.\textsuperscript{51} The new missionary pronounces confidently on Aboriginal social life: they acknowledge no authority, they have no social structure, aside from their ‘totemic and marriage-class relationships’, the place of women is ‘thoroughly undignified’, excluded from the ‘secret, religious’ ceremonies, the property of her husband and his ‘entire marriage-class’.\textsuperscript{52} According to Albrecht, only ‘traces of religion’ were to be found in Aboriginal life; these ‘traces’ were based on fear or fertility: ‘[the Arrernte] appear to have lost all the more sublime needs of the soul.’\textsuperscript{53} Albrecht remembered the first missionaries to the mission who had originally despaired of people ‘too depraved and steeped in their sin’ and had even wondered at one point whether ‘it is really God’s will that these depraved heathens should have the gospel proclaimed to them’\textsuperscript{54} This ‘doubt’ had been ‘premature’, the Word of God was in fact ‘nibbling at their hearts’. The nibbling led to conversions and then a congregation, whose ‘care and expansion’ had now became Albrecht’s duty.

\textbf{the evil of laziness}

The most remarkable feature of the Arrernte, Albrecht had decided, beginning a life-long Lutheran disquisition into work and the Aborigine, was their ‘laziness’:

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 303. TGH Strehlow’s complex and beautifully written \textit{Journey to Horseshoe Bend} tells the narrative of his father’s death en route to Adelaide for medical treatment in 1922: see TGH Strehlow, \textit{Journey to Horseshoe Bend} (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969).

\textsuperscript{51} Albrecht, \textit{From Mission to Church}: ‘Fifty Years’, p. 351.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., pp. 353-353.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p.353. Most initial colonial encounters with Aboriginal people, even by missionaries, perhaps \textit{especially} by missionaries, seemed to result in similar verdicts to Albrecht's. On closer, and longer, inspection and involvement, this judgement invariably changed, as did that of the Hermannsburg missionary: see Carey, \textit{Believing in Australia}, pp. 27ff.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 360, quoting Missionary Kempe in the \textit{Hermannsburg Missionblatt} of Jan 1888.
Just as hunger forced them to hunt and gather food, so now someone else has to constrain them to work. Even now that they are Christians and have seen the evil of laziness, they still cannot produce the will power to overcome it and force themselves to work.\textsuperscript{55}

From the start, Albrecht, the quintessential Lutheran, assigns a moral quality to the Protestant virtue of ‘work’, reinforced with scriptural authority. The Biblical verse he continued to quote throughout his missionary career in his papers and sermons considerably more than any other was St. Paul’s ‘As a man works, so shall he eat’, buttressed at times with the Old Testament God’s admonition to Adam to dig in the garden and ‘in the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread’.\textsuperscript{56} Albrecht insists on the critical importance of ‘work’ at Hermannsburg not only because of the Lutheran exegesis of these verses as holding universal and sacred authority, but because of the necessity to provide, through a livestock industry, food for the mission\textsuperscript{57}. Lack of rain had put paid to an early experiment in agriculture; by the 1880s the Hermannsburg missionaries had decided to concentrate on horses and cattle (primarily for sale) and sheep (for food). The mission was remote and the cost of transport so high that they had little choice. Things had not changed much by 1926, with the mission and its inhabitants now Albrecht’s responsibility. There were also mouths, even unconvertible and irredeemable mouths, to feed:

We have to cater for quite a number of old, crippled and sick people. Quite a few of them are heathens. Their endless stubbornness and unreceptiveness gives us little hope that they will ever become Christians, even though they hear God’s word every Sunday. \textit{They are nothing but a burden for the mission. But who would want to be responsible for turning them away when no one else would look after them}?\textsuperscript{58}

It appears that the young Albrecht was already beginning to develop a sense of ultimate responsibility for the other – we might say a Levinasian obligation – that was relatively unconnected to any conversionary desire or expectancy, and which the terrible events of the next few years were to reinforce.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 352.
\textsuperscript{56} 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Genesis 3:19 (Revised Standard Version).
\textsuperscript{57} For the moment, at this moment (late 1920s), Albrecht was not considering the significance of ‘work’ in preparing the ‘natives’ for citizenship. This notion was to come later.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p. 319 (my italics).
the water of life

In these years, the Land and its ancient inescapable cycles were imposing themselves on the ideological vision of the Lutheran missionary. A long and terrible drought had set in by 1927 and it was not to lift until 1930. Cattle and sheep began dying. Hermannsburg’s cattle stock fell from 10,000 to 300. Worse, the Arrernte were succumbing. Over this period, many died. The small children were most affected. In 1927, on 8th June, a service was held at Hermannsburg to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the mission station. Moses, the blind Arrernte evangelist, preached on the subject of water. He remembered that the first missionaries had chosen the Ntaria site for its good supply of water. According to Albrecht, ‘Moses now demonstrated that, as God gave the missionaries the water for earthly life, God gave the water of life to the heathens through the missionaries.’

But metaphor was collapsing under the weight of reality. The water of earthly life was drying up. As early as 1927, Albrecht was looking in desperation towards the Kaporilja Springs, a permanent spring producing about 3000 gallons of water a day and situated about four and a half miles above Hermannsburg, to provide succour to the mission station. But the cost of laying pipes was too great. Albrecht’s brief entries in the Hermannsburg Chronicle demonstrate the horror of the drought. He notes that between the Junes of 1926 and 1927, only 2 inches of rain fell at Hermannsburg, 300 cattle, 40 sheep and a number of horses were lost. By the end of 1927, the drought had still not broken. January 1928 brought one inch of rain:

…but that left little impression on the country. Through the persevering drought the ground is so dried out, that even at a depth of ten feet one can find almost no moisture. The cattle and horses that are still alive find some miserable nourishment from bushes and rotted spinifex.

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59 Albrecht, From Mission to Church: ‘Fifty Years’, p. 305.
The drought went on and on: 'One can still see only miserable skeletons walking about... Often severe dust storms rage.' In 1929, the Superintendent reported that about 50 Arrernte were sick, 'without our knowing what is the matter with them, people affected by swollen limbs, which are very painful, and by a type of mouth-decay which makes eating very painful. The teeth eventually fall out'. At one point, most of the people were 'bed-ridden'. 10 died in one month. At the beginning of August, an expedition from the University of Adelaide, which included J.B. Cleland and Norman Tindale, diagnosed the problem as scurvy. 200 cases of oranges and lemon eventually came from the South after an appeal and 'the dreadful disease had been contained'.

The stark facts of the deaths of Arrernte children haunt FW Albrecht's *Report to the Chief Protector on the Mortality of Infants at Hermannsburg*, covering the years from 1926-1930. At the end of the document, after attempting to allocate causes of death, such as scurvy, colds, bronchitis, whooping cough, and 'general weakness', Albrecht appends 'a list of several of the native families at the Finke River Mission, showing the size of the families'. Most had been severely diminished. Albrecht estimated that 49 children under school age had died in the period under review; he attributed most of the deaths to the drought conditions. In another report in 1930, Albrecht indicated that the year from July 1929-June 1930 had been 'the worst year on record since the establishment of the mission 53 years ago': most of the stock had died, and the Mission camels, which were necessary for water carting, were so poor, that at one point it was thought Hermannsburg may need to be abandoned. From July 1929 to July 1930, Albrecht reported, 41 people died at the station, including 15 infants, and only 5 were born.

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61 Ibid., see entries for 1928, p. 61.
62 Ibid., see entries for 1928, p. 65.
63 Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection": *Report to the Chief Protector on the Mortality of Infants at Hermannsburg*.
64 Ibid.
the hills were silent

The traumatic events that inaugurated Albrecht's superintendency produced a radical shift in his conception of missionary enterprise. It forced him to broaden his notions of conversion and salvation. It forced him, an orthodox, small-town German Lutheran from Poland, to grapple suddenly with the Australian Landscape's delivery of death and devastation on an awful scale. Even his experience as a Red Cross nurse in the Great War had not prepared him for this.65 Listen to Albrecht remembering in a sermon over thirty years later, as he tried to make sense of it all through a theology (and a hospitality?) of suffering:

We had to bury more and more, not knowing what had caused their death. Then Scurvy set in openly, even if at that stage we did not know what it was. Most of our Native children died, and when we had our first two, it seemed but a matter of time and we would have to take them to the same place...How we longed for some advice from someone who knew what it was all about. There were no nurses, no doctors within 400 miles. The hills were silent and the bush did not talk. If we had known all this, known it was going to happen, we would have felt inadequate; we would never have faced it...[yet] our Native people would have never come so close to us, we would never have grown together so much if it would not have been for those years of suffering.66

let the water flow

FW Albrecht, in the early 1930s, embarked on an ambitious scheme to bring the water of the Kaporilja Springs to the Mission station. In his appeal for funds in 1932, 'Spring Water for the natives at Hermannsburg', he described the ordeal of the drought in apocalyptic terms: 'it was like walking into the valley of the shadow of death when one after the other had to be carried away.'67 The water from Kaporilja would provide fresh vegetables to be grown in the Hermannsburg gardens to prevent scurvy and sickness, provide good drinking water, and allow the stock to survive and increase. It was to save the people and to prevent another year like 1929 that Albrecht made his appeal to 'please help to make the

65 See Henson, A Straight-out Man, pp. 3-4.
67 Ibid., 'Spring Water for the natives at Hermannsburg: An appeal of the Finke River Mission, 1932'.
water flow': it was, he pleaded, a matter of life and death for 'our people'. It was also a matter of turning the metaphor of the water of life back into reality.

Yet it may not have been quite so straightforward, even for the 'straight-out' missionary. While there were no chiefs in traditional Aboriginal Australia, there were 'rainmakers' who wielded considerable influence and who often provided a point of resistance to missionary intervention. There is some evidence this sort of resistance occurred on a limited scale at Hermannsburg. How significant, then, was 'water' as a missionary tool? To the Lutherans, the Kaporilha 'miracle' was like Moses striking the rock and producing water. It represented, and was represented as, more than just a matter of providing an alternate and much needed source of water. It demonstrated to the missionaries, and they hoped to the Arrernte, that God had not deserted them out here in the wilderness; that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of Martin Luther, was still with them: it had an apocalyptic, theological force: it was not just about water, or rather, it was about water as a signifier of life, of regeneration, of renewal, of the Lutheran God. Water had a habit of becoming metaphorical.

**the children of Israel**

In fact, the Lutherans were much more likely to see their mission venture at Hermannsburg in metaphorical and biblical terms than the more prosaic Presbyterians who eventually established Ernabella. The Mission out in the

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68 Ibid.
69 With the assistance of 'friends of the Aborigines' such as Violet Teague, the artist, and her half-sister, Una, TGH Strehlow, JB Cleland and others, as well as the Lutheran community and the public through a subscription campaign, the money was raised, and with mission Aborigines doing most of the work, the pipes were laid, and the 'water flowed' in 1935.
70 'Rainmakers' and 'witchdoctors' were also fertile ground for Western representations that sometimes bordered on the fantastic, not only in Australian locales but overseas; see, for example, the well-known *Jungle Doctor* series of books by Dr. Paul White, set in Tanganyika.
71 The recanting rainmaker mentioned by Albrecht in Leske, ed., *Hermannsburg: a vision and a mission*, pp. 85-86 implied some previous 'resistance' to the missionaries' narratives of how the rain came. During his early years at Hermannsburg, Carl Strehlow had banned increase and rain-making ceremonies but they had gone on out of view despite the undoubted waning of traditional Arrernte ceremonial life after the arrival of the missionaries: see Philip Jones, "Namatjira: Traveller between two worlds", in Hardy, Megaw and Megaw, eds., *The Heritage of Namatjira*: 97-136. After 1904, Strehlow softened his stand against Arrernte religion and began to record aspects of it in his massive ethnographical depiction of Arrernte culture: Carl Strehlow, *The Aranda and Loritja Tribes of Central Australia*, Hans D. Oberscheidt trans., 7 vols. (M.F. Leonhardi, 1907-1920).
desert, with its striking white washed church in the centre of the Kraal, has always been represented in the Lutheran literature as an iconic, covenanted institution of almost biblical proportions. Albrecht re-articulated this notion in a sermon to the Hermannsburg congregation in 1976, eight years before his death. He conceded that the history of Hermannsburg was ‘full of contradictions and human failures, sins and weaknesses’, apparently of mere human provenance. He then asks: how and why was this place chosen? And he is in no doubt that ‘God had had a hand in it’:

But why should He have chosen you here, people of this area? We know our God never acts haphazardly or without a certain plan in view. Why had he chosen Israel before other people? We have no answer to any such questions...However, of one thing we may be quite sure: He has accepted you as His own.73

This imagining of the Arrernte as akin to the Israelites in Egypt and Canaan, as a chosen people, was a representation, a foundational myth, that justified the missionary venture and made sense of it to the Lutherans and to Albrecht. In 1930, Albrecht, coming to terms with the effects of the drought, but still a militant and zealous Lutheran missionary, made a startling intervention in the culture and religion of the traditional Arrernte and utilised components of the Israelite foundational narratives to justify it. After a stabbing in the native camp, Albrecht gave Arrernte elders an ultimatum: he would not have another communion service unless the people put God’s law ahead of Aboriginal tribal law. In Henson’s account of the matter, the elders decide that a local ‘sacred cave’, Manangananga, where indigenous sacred objects, tjuringas, were kept, would be ‘opened to everybody’. Albrecht agrees. Henson’s Aboriginal commentators remembered how frightened everyone was when ‘the stones’ were taken out of the cave and put in front of everyone:

72 See especially Lohe, "A Mission is established".
74 How the Arrernte ‘received’ this concept is not germane to our study, although it is a most interesting question: see Diane J. Austin-Broos, "The Meaning of Pepe: God's Law and the Western Arrernte", The Journal of Religious History 27 (October 2003): 311-328.
75 Henson, A Straight-out Man, p. 53. Interestingly, contemporary Western Arrernte people speak of living by ‘two laws’, Arrernte law and God’s law. For an absorbing discussion of this phenomenon, using the concepts of ontology and ethnicity to explore it, see: Diane J. Austin-Broos, "Two Laws", Ontologies,
First time we see that stone. Old man [Albrecht] start those opening words, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, then everybody relax, we start to sing hymn. Then he preached about Moses and Aaron and the golden calf. Tjurungas were like the golden calf. Old man preach, and everybody look up, yes, that's really true. We bin think about God make this free. Yes, stones very frightening for Aboriginal people, that's why Pastor Albrecht go there, 'Come here, everybody, come near, sit down here'. People touched them, children, everybody.76

Like the narrative of Forster's Marabar caves in A Passage to India, 'something happened' at the Ntaria cave but what was it?77 We are given a few 'facts' but little to connect them or make sense of them. We would want to know of the extent of Albrecht's influence in the 'decision' of the elders, although we assume, ethnocentrically, that his influence was large. Given that there is some evidence that the cave later re-assumed its former 'place' in Western Arrernte cosmology, what exactly was the 'decision'? The Lutherans took the incident as conclusive evidence that the Arrernte had 'come across' and accepted the primacy of 'God's law'. From an indigenous perspective, it may have been merely a first step in the integration of Lutheran Christianity into 'Arrernte law'.78 Manangananga confirmed the early Albrecht as a militant and zealous missionary who regarded the indigenous people as 'pagans' with only a 'trace' of religion. Much later, he was to characterise them as among the most 'spiritual' and religious people on earth.79 There was a journey of some distance in these words, as in his words to a young Baptist minister in the 1950s:


76 Henson, A Straight-out Man, p. 54, citing Arrernte men Edwin Pareroultja and Pastor Traugott Malbanka. It is one weakness in Barbara Henson’s sympathetic portrayal of Albrecht that she spends one page only on this important ‘incident’ where Aboriginal tjurungas are for the first time openly mocked and desecrated by the missionaries (with the apparent consent of the elders, although it is very possible that they were under some duress from the missionaries to do so).

77 E. M. Forster, A Passage to India (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965 (first published 1924)).

78 There are other possible shades of interpretation of the Manangananga incident. Philip Jones, for example, has argued powerfully that it not only represented a sharp end of the continuing Lutheran campaign to denigrate and destroy Arrernte religious life, but involved a conscious decision of the Christian Arrernte, particularly the native evangelists, to collaborate actively with the whites against their own religion: Jones, "Namatjira: Traveller between two worlds": 97-136, pp. 122-123. Also see: Austin-Broos, "Two Laws".

In the first couple of years I was at Hermannsburg and became proficient in the Aranda language, I was sure that I knew all about the Aborigines. But after working there for twenty-seven years...I'm thoroughly convinced I don't know anything at all about them.  

As we follow the discourse and praxis of JRB Love and Charles Duguid, and the imagining and establishment of the second major mission to Aborigines in Central Australia, we will not lose sight of FW Albrecht of the first mission, a man who grew into his role as a missionary and then transformed it, and who, like his beloved and bewildering Arrernte, learnt to adapt to the Land and to its occupants. We will catch 'glimpses' of him working at Hermannsburg contemporaneously with Love at Ernabella, and catch 'snatches' of the discourses about Aborigines that Love and he, among others, participate in while 'converting' and 'saving' their Aborigines. We will see him in partnership with Duguid, going west on truck and camel in 1935, 1936 and 1939, attempting to ensure the survival of the Pintubi and the Ngalia people around Haasts Bluff. We will also note his rationalization of the work and discourse of John Flynn, the celebrated Inland missionary who, unlike Love, Duguid and Albrecht, had dedicated himself to the cause of the white people of the Interior.

**the whites began to treat us like Aborigines**

The last thing to do in this contextual chapter is to bring FW Albrecht to the point of a gestural 'moment' in 1942 when he met Love, the superintendent at Ernabella, for the first time at the Presbyterian mission site and the two agreed and disagreed in arguments about Aborigines. We will regenerate that 'moment' in chapter eight and examine it more closely. Albrecht had been in enforced exile from Hermannsburg since December 1940 because of the war and questions about his German background. Partly through the support of Duguid, as well as the assistance of the Aborigines' Friends' Association (AFA), he was able to return in 1942. His 'exile' can only have reinforced his sense of being an 'outsider' in Australian society. This role was largely cast for him by the circumstances of his birth, his religion and by his calling. But he had also

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81 This experience was not new to Hermannsburg. Anti-German prejudice in World War I had resulted in Hermannsburg losing its Government subsidy from 1917-1923: see Rowse, *White flour, white power*, p. 84.
willingly taken it on. Later in life, he explained his *modus operandi* when visiting outlying camps of Aborigines:

When we started visiting, we could soon see that we could not come as ordinary visitors to call on the station people; if we did that, then the Natives would keep well away from us. It was necessary for the Natives to see that we cared for them in the first place. So after calling at 'Government House', we would go to the camp, call on them, then settle down a little distance away, with or without tent. We would have our meals like other travellers, or doggers, boil the billy and eat in the open. The result soon became obvious: the people recognised we were there for their benefit, came to us with their many questions, complaints, and worries. We could soon feel and see that our service meant much to them. There was another side: the white people began to treat us like Aborigines, as outsiders.82

The politics and poetics of hospitality (the poetics are heard in the simple acts of boiling a billy and bedding down beside the black camp), as well as the dialectics of possession, on the mission site are not then simply negotiated between the missionary and the indigene. The nature of these mentalities and processes was also shaped by the dominating and exclusionary powers of the white settler discourse and praxis. As we shall see, FW Albrecht and JRB Love were very different kinds of missionaries to the Aborigines. Neither conformed completely to type, either the evangelical Lutheran, or the progressive Moderate Presbyterian. Both were more complex than the stereotype of 'missionary' has allowed. But in their ability to negotiate a broader and more flexible interpretation, from within their own denominational and missionary discourses, of the Christian concepts of conversion and salvation, and in their determination to stand beside 'their' Aborigines, the 'dispossessed men without food', they were not dissimilar: they were 'with the black people'.

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