
Native Lives Matter: Wilhelm Löhe (1808-72) and the Mission to Native People

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The Reformation continues.¹ Today I was invited to the Reformation festival² to talk about a relief plate at the Wilhelm-Löhe-Monument on the church square of St Michael's Church at Fürth. It had been inaugurated for the 400th anniversary of the Reformation at Fürth.³ The relief bears the signature: "Löhe's emissaries preach the Gospel to the Indians (sic!)." ⁴ *Native Lives Matter*, that was my first association.⁵ People in the United States stand up and protest against racism and discrimination, often connected to the "color" of their skin. This discrimination has severe consequences that can even lead to death. The Black Lives Matter movement, triggered by the violent police killings of African Americans, has been challenging the public globally since 2013.⁶ What about Native Americans of North America? Can they speak out? Are their voices heard?

Dear audience, this is why I invite you tonight to a change of perspective. Martin Luther triggered a reformation of the church because he questioned the power of the church over believers.

1. The festive lecture was published in German under the title "Red Lives Matter: Wilhelm Löhe (1808-1872) and the 'Indianermision'" on the website of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Parish of St. Michael in Fürth: https://www.stmichael-fuerth.de/system/files/dateien/walz_reformationsfest_redlivesmatter_loehe2020.pdf [12/14/2020]. For the present publication it was slightly revised.

2. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Raphael Sartorius, not only for his careful translation of the text into English, but also for his intercultural considerations in the translating process. I owe thanks to Dr. Brandon Sundh for his English proofreading.

3. Cf. [https://www.fuerthwiki.de/wiki/index.php/Kirchenplatz_4_\(Wilhelm-Löhe-Denkmal\)](https://www.fuerthwiki.de/wiki/index.php/Kirchenplatz_4_(Wilhelm-Löhe-Denkmal)) [12/14/2020].

4. The problems of the use of the "I-Word" in German, Spanish and English will be addressed in this article. Even in Native Americans scholarship, however, the "I-Word" is sometimes used, cf. Philip J. Deloria (ed.), *A Companion to American Indian History*, (Neal Salisbury, Blackwell Publishers, 2002); Philip J. Deloria, "Introduction," in Philip J. Deloria (ed.), *A Companion to American Indian History*, (Neal Salisbury, Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 1-5, 4f.

5. *Red Lives Matter* was my first association, but in the course of my exploration of the topic, I realized that Native American movements do not really use that term as positive affirmation in English, while *'Black' Lives Matter* is a self-designation among African Americans. Further, below I will critique racist color theories, which have been influential since the eighteenth century. Therefore, I changed the original title of my festive lecture in German for the present English publication.

6. Cf. Josiah Ulysses Young, "Do Black Lives Matter to 'God?'" in *Black Theology*, vol. 13, no. 3, November (2015), 210-218, 210.

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Nevertheless, in his writings he made ambivalent and pejorative statements about Jewish and Muslim believers. Today we take the liberty of reading such statements critically from our current perspective. We take the liberty of calling the ambivalence of the heroes of the Reformation by name.⁷

Tonight, in Fürth we are talking about the Lutheran pastor, Wilhelm Löhe, one of the ten most important citizens of the city of Fürth.⁸ A reformer of the church in the nineteenth century. A pioneer, a "mastermind" (German orig.: "Vordenker")⁹ of the mission movement in the nineteenth century.¹⁰ What should we do

7. Cf. e.g., Harry/Kraus Oelke, Wolfgang/Schneider-Ludorff, Gury/Töllner, Axel/Schubert, Anselm (ed.), Martin Luthers „Juden-schriften“. Die Rezeption im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016; Höbsch, Werner/Ritter, André (ed.), Reformation und Islam. Ein Diskurs, Leipzig, EVA, 2019; Adam S. Francisco, *Martin Luther and Islam. A Study in Sixteenth Century Polemics and Apologetics*, (Leiden, Boston, 2007).

8. http://www.1000-jahre-fuerth.de/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-295/390_read-3326/ [8/3/2021].

9. Weber, Christian, *Missionstheologie bei Wilhelm Löhe, Aufbruch zur Kirche der Zukunft, Die Lutherische Kirche, Geschichte und Gestalten, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996, 398.*

10. Cf. Frieder Ludwig, "Mission and Migration: Reflections On the Missionary Concept of Wilhelm Löhe," in: *Word & World* vol. 24, no. 2 (2004), 157-164; Rößler, Hans, Wilhelm Löhe und die Amerikaauswanderung in: *Frankenland – Zeitschrift für fränkische Landeskunde und Kulturpflege*, vol. 44, no. 10 Dezember (1992), http://frankenland.franconica.uni-wuerzburg.de/login/data/1992_57.pdf [10/28/2020]; Rößler, Hans/ Honold, Matthias, Wilhelm Löhe und die Amerika-Auswanderung: 1841-1872. Begleitveröffentlichung zur gleichnamigen Sonderausstellung im Löhe-Zeit-Museum Neuendettelsau vom 23. Juli bis zum 26. Oktober 2008, Neuendettelsau, Heimat- u. Geschichtsverein, 2008, <https://www.ev-kirche-rosstal.de/images/aktuelles/2017/Wilhelm-Loehe-und-die-Amerika-Auswande->

Invite you to look at the relief and “mission” not from the perspective of power, not to identify with Löhe and his emissaries, but to see it through the eyes of the “others,” the native people, guided by Galatians 3:28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

with the relief today? In times of *Black* and *Native Lives Matter*?

Currently, in Germany and the United States, sculptures by colonial masters are being soiled with paint, streets are being renamed, and the “Humboldt Forum” in the reconstructed royal palace in the city center of Berlin has been questioned by the campaign “No Humboldt 21!” since 2013, because it will host ethnological collections from Africa, Asia, and the Americas.¹¹ Looted colonial art has to be returned to the countries of origin, postcolonial movements claim. Should the relief of Löhe’s missionaries in Fürth also be removed because images and language are powerful?

In view of these questions, I would like to invite you to a reformatory change of perspective, which at the same time carries out a change of power: Let us celebrate the Reformation festival today from the perspective of the first people. *Reformatio* means change, renewal, conversion. I invite you to look at the relief and “mission” not from the perspective of power, not to identify with Löhe and his emissaries, but to see it through the eyes of the “others,” the native people, guided by Galatians 3:28:¹² There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.¹³

The last part of the phrase is very close to Luther’s translation [rung_HeftNr.5_klein.pdf](#) [10/28/2020].

11. <https://www.africavenir.org/projects-germany/decolonial-objections-against-the-humboldt-forum.html> [3/8/2021].

12. This verse can be understood as a “Charter of Diversity,” cf. Walz, Heike, Galater 3,26-28 und die Taufe, Ökumenische Visionen zur Verwandlung des Zusammenlebens angesichts der Intersektion von Ethnie, sozialer Klasse und Geschlecht, in: Ruddat, Günter (ed.), Taufe – Zeichen des Lebens. Theologische Profile und interdisziplinäre Perspektiven, Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Verlag, 2013, 145-164. In my most recent reading of Galatians 3:28 I go beyond this understanding as I understand the border-crossing impulse of Galatians 3:28 is also valid in relation to the faithful of other religions.

13. The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, ESV Text Edition 2016, <https://www.bibleserver.com/ESV/Galatians3%3A28>, [12/15/2020].



“denn ihr seid allesamt einer in Christus Jesus.”¹⁴ – “for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Let us celebrate the Feast of the Reformation from this point of view: There is neither missionaries nor people of other faiths, there is neither European nor Native, there is neither male nor female. We are all human beings.

I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand as former professor of theology in Buenos Aires, at that time in the service of the Evangelical Basel Mission Society (mission 21). I cannot do otherwise, because I came to know intercultural and theologically sensitive work at eye level with indigenous people, namely the ethnic group of the *Qom*.¹⁵ My experiences and research on the “Rights of Indigenous Peoples” have shaped me.¹⁶ Therefore, I would like to understand mission as receiving or *reverse mission*.¹⁷

14. The Bible according to Martin Luther’s translation, Die Bibel nach Martin Luthers Übersetzung, Lutherbibel, Revidiert 2017, Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2016. In this version of the translation, Luther’s translation, “nor man nor woman” has been used although the Greek New Testament writes “nor male nor female.”

15. The ethnic group *Toba* (the name in *Guarani* means “forehead”) is one of the largest indigenous people of the *Gran Chaco* in Argentina who call themselves *Qom* cf. Almada, Samuel/Walz, Heike, Bibellesen verändert, Die Begegnung mit Christen war für die Bewohner des Chaco über Jahrhunderte eine Leidensgeschichte, in: Die Bibel aktuell: Der Chaco, no. 3 (2008), 6-7.

16. Cf. Walz, Heike, Menschenrechte zwischen Religion und Gesellschaft in Argentinien, Postkoloniale Perspektiven für Religionswissenschaft und Interkulturelle Theologie (Habilitation, Berlin 2016, forthcoming 2021).

17. Cf. Matthew, Ojo, “Reverse Mission,” in Jonathan J. Bonk, (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Mission and Missionaries*, (London, Routledge),

Therefore, my considerations reflect a trifold dialogue between my experiences and research work on Germany, the United States, and Argentina.¹⁸ My question is: *What can we learn from the indigenous people?*

On the relief Löhe's missionary is depicted – in the context of the growing nationalist and antisemitic political climate and parties in the 1920s in Germany – as the tallest person. With his index finger raised, he stands in front of the natives. Mission and education, in colonial jargon “civilization,” went hand in hand.

However, I am asking myself: Could Löhe's hand gesture and his closed eyes also express a gesture of blessing? Löhe, as European and Christian; as a missionary and a man, is perceived as superior. He dominates the relief, but he is not in the center of the picture. An indigenous man in European clothing is seated in the center. Perhaps an interpreter, an intercultural mediator, who translates the message?

In postcolonial hermeneutics, indigenous agency is the key to understanding, possibly even visible here on the relief. Therefore, in my postcolonial hermeneutics of mission as receiving, I would like to ask: *What can we learn from Native Americans for the future? What is their message for interreligious and intercultural encounters, and for the ecological commitment?*

In the following, I will propose three reformatory readings of mission¹⁹ and comments on the relief. At the end, I will suggest a proposal for the future of the relief.

The first voice belongs to the indigenous people, and we need to fall in tune with them.

Voices of the Natives

“The crow
I saw him when he flew down
To the earth
He renewed our life
He has taken pity on us.”²⁰

380–382; see also the postcolonial feminist understanding of mission in Heidemanns, Katja, Schritte zu einer feministischen Missiologie, in: Walz, Heike/Lienemann-Perrin, Christine/Strahm, Doris (ed.), „Als hätten sie uns neu erfunden“, Beobachtungen zu Fremdheit und Geschlecht, Luzern, Edition Exodus, 2003, 81-97.

18. I must admit here that it was only in the course of my further studies for this English version that I began to look into the historical and theological literature of Native Americans, cf. the portraits of Native American theologians and scholars in: [https://globaltheology.com/2018/08/23/12-native-american-voices-to-learn-from/\[3/15/2021\]](https://globaltheology.com/2018/08/23/12-native-american-voices-to-learn-from/[3/15/2021]).

19. Cf. Eight bible-oriented models of mission at Lienemann-Perrin, Christine, Rechenschaft über Mission, Biblische und zeitgenössische Perspektiven auf die Ausbreitung des christlichen Glaubens, in: Schmid, Hans-Jörg/Basol-Gürdal, Ayse/Middelbeck-Varwick, Anja/Ucar, Bülent (ed.), Zeugnis, Einladung, Bekehrung, Mission in Christentum und Islam, Regensburg, Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2011, 64-81. My proposals are not depicted in this volume.

20. Arens, Werner/Braun, Hans-Martin, Der Gesang des Schwarzen Bären, Lieder und Gedichte der Indianer (sic!), München, Beck, 1992, 50.

What can we learn from Native Americans for the future? What is their message for interreligious and intercultural encounters, and for the ecological commitment?

You heard the “Song of the Ghost Dance” by the *Apsáalooke*, in English “Crows.” Crows are an ancestor animal for many natives of North America, to whom divine power is attributed. Let us think of the *Apsáalooke*, and of the *Oglala Lakota*, the *Chippewal Ojibwa* and the *Hunkpapa*, who all met the emissaries of Löhe.²¹ They lived with their spiritual power sources for thousands of years before the European settlers and missionaries²² arrived. From them we receive an ecological mission for the future.

1. Ecological mission: Every part of the Earth is sacred to my people

Let's put ourselves in the nineteenth century for a moment: The *Apsáalooke* live as nomads beside the Great Lakes. They live from fishing, hunting buffalo, and gathering wild fruit. With canoes they move upon the lakes. Flowers are their sisters, animals their brothers. All things — plants, animals and people — have the same value. The land is sacred to them. It is inalienable. It belongs to everyone. The earth is filled with the souls of the ancestors. They receive visions and dreams that are signposts for the future. The *Apsáalooke* believe in a supreme power that is effective in all things and beings. Shamans mediate between the world of spirits and the world of humans. They celebrate rituals with dances. They see themselves as part of nature and live in cosmic connectedness with the universe.²³

Many of you may have heard about the speech of Chief

21. See Rößler, Hans, Neuendettelsauer Missionare bei den Chippewas in Michigan und den Crows in Montana/USA (1845-1860), (Vier Modelle missionarischer Aktivität), in: Zeitschrift für Bayerische Kirchengeschichte, vol. 77 (2008), 227-234.

22. In the German original of the lecture, the words “Siedler:innen” and “Missionar:innen,” which represent the gender inclusive versions of the word, are used. This is historically accurate, because mission societies sent out female missionaries and the missionary's wives were often part of the mission (as well as on the relief one can see a woman, probably the missionary's wife), cf. Jahnel, Claudia (ed.), Mi stori. Frauen erzählen ihre Geschichte, Neuendettelsau, Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 2012; Heike Walz, “Swiss-German Protestant Women in Mission: The Basel Mission (19th-21st Century),” in Christine Lienemann-Perrin/Afric Songco Joye/Atola Longkumer (eds.), *Putting Names with Faces: Women's Impact on Mission*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 335-357.

23. Cf. Arens, Werner/Braun, Hans-Martin, Die Indianer Nordamerikas, München, C.H. Beck, 2004, 58-84; Arens/Braun, 14-18; Richard W. Pointer, *Encounter of the Spirit: Native Americans and European Colonial Religion*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007).

Si'ahl,²⁴ called Seattle, from the year 1855:²⁵

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man. [...] You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin.²⁶

Vine Deloria Jr. (1933-2005), a native theologian, law and political scientist, and activist, in his ground-breaking book *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* states:

The vast majority of Indian tribal religions, therefore, have a secret center at a particular place, be it a river, a mountain, a plateau, valley, or other natural feature. This center enables the people to look out along the four dimensions and locate their lands, to relate all historical events within the confines of this particular land, and to except responsibility for it. Regardless of what subsequently happens to the people, the sacred lands remain as permanent fixtures in their cultural or religious understanding.²⁷

Indigenous people lived an ecological spirituality long before the international ecology movement put ecology on the agenda in the twentieth century – long before today's climate commitment of Fridays for Future. We receive this challenge from the natives: Love for the earth, the planet, and how we can turn around to face the current climate change.

On the relief, all the Native Americans are depicted on the right side of the picture, three men and one woman with a child, with devices in their hands. Are they tomahawks? Or are they hoes and scythes? Surely the missionaries had agricultural tools

24. "Seattle" is the incorrect pronunciation of his name "Si'ahl" see <https://www.historylink.org/File/5071>, [28/10/2020].

25. The speech was first published in 1887 in the version of Isaac L. Stevens, the first governor in Washington, who stated to have been present when Chief Si'ahl spoke orally. On the turmoil of the transmission history, cf. Albert Furtwangler, *Answering Chief Seattle*, (Washington: Washington Press, 1997). The original wording is not available, the oral tradition compared to the European written tradition is part of the intercultural conflict, and some even question the historicity of the speech. Nevertheless, I have chosen the speech because of its poetic character, and because it is probably the the most well-known narrative in Germany.

26. "We are part of this earth and the earth is part of us," narrated after the speech of Chief Seattle, according to Ted Perry to the President of the United States in the year 1855 in Richard Armstrong, Joseph J. Fahey, *A Peace Reader: Essential Readings on War, Justice, Non-violence and World Order*, (Paulist Press International, 2. Edition, U.S., 1992), 153-154.

27. Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red. A Native View of Religion*, 30th Anniversary Edition, (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 66.

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in their luggage.²⁸ "What we should bring to the Gentiles in their wilderness."²⁹ Löhe thought about this in his 1848 lecture "The Gentile Mission in North America" (*Die Heiden-Mission in Nord-Amerika*). Mission was conceived in the nineteenth century as a sedentary way of life with the model of a "mission station" or "mission farm,"³⁰ with land ownership and agriculture.

This is part of the reason why there was a conflict between this European view and the Native Americans, who lived as nomads. This economic, intercultural, and interreligious clash of civilizations has not been resolved to this day. I often receive news from Argentina about clashes between indigenous people and landowners or transnational corporations. Today the harmony is disturbed, the natives live torn between their traditions and the cell phone.

Let us listen again to Chief Si'ahl on behalf of the natives:

"When the last red man has vanished from this earth, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, these shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people."³¹

2. Theological mission of the cross: To call "the thing what it actually is"

The second mission we receive draws attention to the cross that was so important to Martin Luther. "The theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing as what it actually is. That is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering."³² The cross is a means of language to call the suffering of the natives and the unjust violence against them by name. The cross is a symbol of protest, a memorial. Bartholomé de las Casas (1484-1565), Dominican and missionary, described already in the sixteenth century the cruel violence perpetrated on the indigenous people in Latin America by the Spanish colonization. Las Casas said, "I left Jesus Christ in the Indies, not once but a thousand times beaten, afflicted,

28. Cf. Rößler, Hans, Moritz Bräuninger (1836-1860), Pionier und Opfer der Indianermission, CA & ZW III/IV 72 (2010), 72-81, see 79.

29. Löhe, Wilhelm, *Die Heiden-Mission in Nord-Amerika*, Nürnberg, Raw, 1846, 1. Translation from the German original by the interpreter.

30. Cf. Rößler, Neuendettelsauer Missionare bei den Chippewas, 232 and 234.

31. Chief Si'ahl, "We are part of the earth" (cf. reference 18).

32. Harold J. Grimm, Helmut T. Lehmann, (eds.), *Luther's Works, Career of the Reformer I*, Volume 31, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 53.

insulted and crucified by those Spaniards who destroy and ravage the Indians.”³³

Las Casas alludes to Matt 25:34ff: Jesus Christ is to be recognized in the suffering faces of the natives. God is present in Christ himself in the natives. For them Christ is risen.³⁴ In early 2020, Craig Nesson wrote a moving, even autobiographical, plea in this sense: “Calling a thing what it is.”³⁵ Many of you know Craig Nesson, an American who is a Lutheran professor at Wartburg Seminary, and a fruit of Löhe’s mission among European settlers. I was impressed by Nesson’s clear statement: This was a genocide against the Native American people. That is why he introduces his students to Native American history from the perspective of genocide theories and liberation theology.³⁶ Nesson has dedicated a new book to Löhe³⁷ – after all, Löhe is the founding father of the Lutheran churches in the United States – but he also teaches the Native American history of the United States.

Not all historians speak of genocide.³⁸ Some believe it was a deliberate destruction of cultural traditions, i.e., ethnocide. A legal recognition still does not exist. I resonate with Craig Nesson – as I have dealt with similar controversies in relation to Argentina³⁹ – and would like to name it a genocide, as the criteria of the UN are fulfilled.⁴⁰ It is one of the “great human catastrophes”⁴¹ of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Death by sale and loss of their land, their livelihood, even more, loss of their spiritual

33. Bartolomé de las Casas, *History of the Indies*. Translated and Edited by André Collard, (New York, Evanston, and London, Harper & Row Publishers, Harper Torchbooks, 1971), 264f.

34. Cf. Walz, Heike, *Vom langen Atem der Auferstehung. Befreiungstheologische, feministische und transgender Ansichten des Kreuzes*, in: von Lüpke, Johannes/Brouwer, Christian (Hg.), *Ein Kreuz – viele Ansichten*, Reinbach bei Bonn, CMZ-Verlag, 2015, 193-222, see 202-206.

35. Craig L. Nesson, “Calling a Thing What It Is: Confronting the American Genocide of Indigenous People,” in *Currents in Theology and Mission* vol. 47, no. 1, January (2020), 23-28. Nesson also relates to Luther’s “Heidelberger Disputation.”

36. I am particularly grateful to Craig Nesson, who not only shared his syllabus of all his courses and the respective literature with me, but who is also in a vivid exchange with me between Franconia, Latin America and the U.S.

37. Craig L. Nesson, *Wilhelm Loehe and North America. Historical Perspective and Living Legacy*, (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020).

38. Three conflicting interpretations of history exist in U.S. historiography: The first assigns a subordinate importance to the history of Native Americans for the history of the U.S. in the nineteenth century; the second evaluates it as extreme genocide; the third does not assume systematic extermination, but ethnocide, i.e., the deliberate destruction of indigenous cultures, cf. Aram Mattioli, *Verlorene Welten. A History of the Indians of North America 1700-1910*, (Stuttgart, Klett Cotta, 2019), 22f. Mattioli follows the third approach.

39. Cf. Walz, Heike, *Menschenrechte zwischen Religion und Gesellschaft in Argentinien*, 364-369.

40. Cf. Art. II, “UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of December 9”, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/19994549/201406110000/0.311.11.pdf> [10/28/2020]; cf. Nesson, “Calling a Thing What It Is,” 24f.

41. Mattioli, “Verborgene Welten,” 15. Translation from the German original by the interpreter.

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power. Death by alcohol which they tolerated worse than Europeans, in exchange for their land and furs on payday. Death by viruses brought in from Europe, such as smallpox. Today in the global world, in the face of Covid-19, we have an idea of what that means. Death by wars and destruction campaigns of the settlers. Ethnocide through re-education on reservations and in boarding schools. Loss of political autonomy, cultural self-determination, and lack of rights.⁴² The reservations exist to this day, where people are living below the poverty level.

Having this history in mind, a learning process considering language is necessary. Löhe wrote about the Indians (*sic!*)⁴³ in the language of his time. Certainly, this term is still used in some literature, but it is a no-go today. It is a colonial, foreign designation. Since 1492, indigenous people in Latin America have been called *indios (sic!)*, a term that is still used today as a pejorative, racist insult in Spanish. It was a collective term, which at that time was created by Columbus through the misconception that he had arrived in India. All indigenous people were called *indios (sic!)* as a whole.⁴⁴ This was not a discovery, but a *cover-up*⁴⁵ of the many languages, ways of life, cultural traditions, religions and spiritual worlds of these ethnic groups. As a comparison – which is not historically accurate, as the consequences for the Franconians are a lot less dire than for the colonized people designated with the “I-Word” – it may be mentioned that not all Franconians⁴⁶ want to be called Bavarians either. Löhe mentioned in his speech that “every small tribe speaks a different language.”⁴⁷

42. Cf. Mattioli, “Verborgene Welten,” particularly pages 15-22; cf. also Arens/Braun, *Der Gesang des Schwarzen Bären*, 21f.

43. E.g. Löhe, Wilhelm, *Die Heiden-Mission in Nord-Amerika*, 4.

44. A linguist present at the lecture raised the question why in German *indios (sic!)* was not translated as “Indian” (*Inder*), but as *Indianer (sic!)* (in English there is only one word). Her interpretation was that the translation at least expressed an awareness that the natives were not people from India in Asia. However, the German term derives from the Latin word *indianus*, which in turn is synonymous with the population of India (cf. <https://www.wortbedeutung.info/Indianer/> [3/9/2021]). It remains problematic that the I-Word is an external designation that homogenizes completely the diversity of the ethnic groups, whether they are thought to be people from India or not.

45. Translated from the Spanish word “encubrimiento,” cf. Dussel, Enrique, “1492. El encubrimiento del Otro. Hacia el origen del „mito de la Modernidad””. *Conferencias de Frankfurt*, Octubre 99, La Paz, Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, 1994.

46. Franconia has belonged to Bavaria since the early nineteenth century, but the population conveys a relatively strong regional consciousness, which includes its own dialect, history, mentality, habits, food, and landscape.

47. Löhe, *Die Heiden-Mission in Nord-Amerika*, 1. Quotation

Natives have a right to be called what they call themselves. In the context of the “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”⁴⁸ of 2006, the following language rules apply: in English *native people, first nations, indigenous, tribal or aboriginal*⁴⁹ *people*, in Spanish *pueblos originarios* (natives) and *indígenas* (indigenous) and in German *Ureinwohner:innen* (natives) or *Indigene Völker* (indigenous people). ‘I-Wordmission’ is therefore a term that should no longer be used. This is not just *political correctness*, but language creates reality, as the philosophy of language teaches.⁵⁰ Speaking about Native Americans with this foreign designation perpetuates the ideology of European superiority, while the almost extinction of the *first nations* continues to this day. “Save the Man but kill the I-Word”⁵¹ is the ideological strategy, as the historian Manuel Menrath writes. Some survivors are officially recognized ethnic groups in the United States, for example the *Apsáalooke Nation*.⁵² Indigenous people around the world, however, are in danger of disappearing forever from the face of the earth. In this way, Native Americans today are opening our eyes anew to the reformatory message of the cross: the theologian of the cross calls things as they really are. Natives suffered a genocide in North America, caused by my German ancestors, and they have the right to name themselves.

3. Postcolonial anti-racist mission: *Native Lives Matter*

Let us come to the third mission, the postcolonial anti-racist mission. Instead of *Red Lives Matter* we have to talk about *Native Lives Matter*. The survival of the indigenous people is what matters.

In the language of his time, Löhe called Native Americans “the red I-Word of North America,”⁵³ a reference to a loan translation of *red skins* (*sic!*), which is also a racist curse word, both in English as in German (*Rothhaut, sic!*). *Native Americans* are reported to be even more often victims of police violence than African Americans.⁵⁴ The slogan *Red Lives Matter* is hardly ever used,⁵⁵ even though some Natives, such as the *Cherokee*, have described themselves as red in positive self-affirmation.⁵⁶ *Native Lives Matter* – that is the

motto today: Our lives are precious, they count! Unfortunately, right-wing extremist movements are holding against it. In Germany, the *National Democratic Party (NPD)* offers T-shirts with the inscription “White Lives Matter”.⁵⁷ This example shows, how slogans can be reversed and abused.⁵⁸

This color theory, the division of people into white, red, yellow or black, is the brainchild of the racial theories that emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Racial theories are the downside of the European Enlightenment. They reflect the entanglement of Modernity and Coloniality, as Latin American decolonial thinkers such as Aníbal Quijano and Walter M. Mignolo say.⁵⁹

The orientation toward skin colors can be traced back to, among other things, the natural scientist Carl von Linné (1707-1778), who classified people hierarchically according to supposedly natural and culturally influenced colors.⁶⁰ Such hierarchically ordered theories of color, climate, and race were very common in the eighteenth century. Even in the writings of philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a pioneer of the idea of universal human rights, these theories can be found, e.g., in his lectures on “Physical Geography” (1802):⁶¹

“In the torrid zones, humans mature more quickly in all aspects than in the temperate zones, but they fail to reach the same [degree of] perfection. Humanity has its highest degree of perfection in the white race. The yellow Indians have a somewhat lesser talent. The N-Word [*sic!*]⁶² are much lower, and lowest of all is part of the American races.”⁶³

American Historical Review, June (1997), 625-644, https://peopleofonefire.com/how_indians_got_to_be_red.pdf [10/28/2020].

57. Cf. <https://npd-materialdienst.de/de/Bekleidung/whitelives-matter.html> [10/28/2020]. The *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* is a right-extreme wing party (founded in 1964), which uses clear messages and symbols of Hitler’s NSDAP.

58. The motto *All Lives Matter* has also been instrumentalized by right-extreme wing movements, cf., <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/23/opinions/all-lives-matter-misses-the-big-picture-baker/index.html> [10/28/2020]. A protest of a former NPD-activist has been announced as marching for *All Lives Matter*, cf. <https://bnn.de/karlsruhe/demos-in-karlsruhe-verlaufen-weitgehend-friedlich-mehrere-vorlaeufige-festnahmen> [10/28/2020]. I thank Raphael Sartorius for these comments.

59. Cf. e.g., Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” in *Cultural Studies* 21:2 (2007), 168-178; Walter M. Mignolo, “Delinking”: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-coloniality,” in *Cultural Studies* 21:2 (2007), 449-514.

60. Cf. Hund, Wulf D., *Wie die Deutschen weiß wurden. Kleine (Heimat)Geschichte des Rassismus*. Stuttgart, J.B. Metzler Verlag, 2017, 84f; cf. Shoemaker, “How Indians got to Be Red,” 626ff.

61. The research on Kant is still discussing how Kant’s statements are to be evaluated, cf. e.g., Katrin Flikschuh, Lea Ypi, (eds.), *Kant and Colonialism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

62. Unfortunately the N-Word is part of the citations.

63. Immanuel Kant, “Physical Geography” translated by Olaf Reinhardt, in *Immanuel Kant: Natural Science*, Eric Watkins (ed.), (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 576.

from the German original translated by the interpreter.

48. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/Declaration%28German%29.pdf> [10/28/2020].

49. Ann Marie Bahr, *Indigenous Religions*, (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publisher, 2004), 3.

50. Cf. the theory of speech act unfolded by John Austin and Judith Butler; cf. also <https://www.uni-hamburg.de/gleichstellung/download/antirassistische-sprache.pdf> [10/28/2020].

51. Menrath, Manuel, *Mission Sitting Bull. Die Geschichte der katholischen Sioux*, Schönigh Verlag, Paderborn, 2016.

52. Cf. <https://tribalnations.mt.gov/crow> [10/28/2020].

53. “*Die roten Indianer (sic!)*”, Löhe, *Die Heiden-Mission in Nord-Amerika*, 4. Translation from German by the interpreter.

54. Cf. CNN: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/10/us/native-lives-matter/index.html> [10/28/2020]; Lakota People’s Law Project: *Native Lives Matter*, 2015, <https://s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/romeroac-stage/uploads/Native-Lives-Matter-PDF.pdf> [10/28/2020].

55. Michael Leroy Oberg, Professor of history of Native Americans, runs a blog with the category *Red Lives Matter* as a relevant section: <https://michaelleroyoberg.com/category/red-lives-matter/> [10/28/2020].

56. Cf. Nancy Schoemaker, “How Indians got to Be Red,” in

Later Kant withdrew the hierarchical division of people and declared all people to be citizens of the earth.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, this example shows how much European intellectual history is impregnated by such theories of color, climate, and race. In addition, the attribution of colors has changed throughout history, according to the racism researcher Wulf D. Hund in his book “*Wie die Deutschen weiß wurden* – How the Germans became white.”⁶⁵ The idea of skin colors is a racist construction. Spoken with Gal 3:28: Here is neither white nor black, neither yellow nor red.

Dear festive community, to speak out the ‘I-Word’ is a no-go. European emigrants were involved in genocide and racist language is denounced: Will one of the most important citizens of the city of Fürth, Wilhelm Löhe, be thrown off his pedestal after all?

Löhe’s life work was dedicated to mission. His central thought was: “Mission is nothing but the One Church of God in its movement.”⁶⁶ Mission sets church in motion. Mission is an essential characteristic of the church, not a special task of experts. For Löhe, mission was a renewal movement of the church, similar to the Reformation. Löhe was influenced by Pietism. He was a mastermind – *Vordenker*⁶⁷ for a worldwide church, which has a great charisma still today, and we benefit from it in Neuendettelsau and at the Augustana-Hochschule.

Nevertheless, I would like to invite you to read the ambivalences of his mission postcolonially. For twenty years⁶⁸ I have been influenced by postcolonial mission historians from the global South, who research in local mission archives, whether in Basel (Switzerland), Wuppertal or Neuendettelsau (both in Germany). *Postcolonial mission* reading means reading (*rereading*) and writing (*rewriting*) the past and present against the grain. At the best, former missionized people rewrite it themselves. Women write it, because almost all missionary literature is written from a male perspective. The relief under consideration illustrates this: Behind the missionary’s back a woman is hiding, perhaps the missionary’s wife. She humbly lowers her gaze. In a feminist postcolonial perspective there is no male or female. Postcolonial rereading involves deconstructing colonial ideological justification doctrines

64. Cf. Pauline Kleingeld, “On Dealing with Kant’s Sexism and Racism,” in *SGIR Review*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2019), 3-22, <https://philpapers.org/rec/KLEODW> [10/28/2020].

65. Cf. Hund, *Wie die Deutschen weiß wurden*, particularly 85ff.

66. Löhe, Wilhelm, *Drei Bücher von der Kirche. Den Freunden der lutherischen Kirche zur Überlegung und Besprechung dargeboten von Wilhelm Löhe, lutherischem Pfarrer, Stuttgart, Verlag von Samuel Gottlieb Liesching, 1845*, 15. German original translated by the interpreter.

67. Cf. a short version Weber, Christian, *Rückblick und Ausblick: Wilhelm Löhe als Vor-Denker*, in: Triebel, Johannes (Hg.), *Miteinander weltweit unterwegs. Das Missionswerk der Evang.-Luth. Kirche Bayern, Erlangen, Verlag der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Mission, 1997*, 9-12.

68. Cf. among others, my article: Walz, Heike, „Reading Women into History“. *Frauen im Dialog über Mission, Postkolonialismus, Gender und Evangelisation*, in: *Zeitschrift für Mission* 3 (2002), 288-305.

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which follow a colonial idea of mission – “*sendungsideologische Rechtfertigungsdoktrinen*.”⁶⁹ The prefix “post” simply means: people are not objects to mission.⁷⁰ The indigenous people acted and negotiated. They adapted and resisted. They carried much with humor, and with pain and grief. They learned many new things and unlearned their traditions. They selectively adopted what they found good and rejected what they did not consider good. They were neither “noble savages” nor “uncivilized without manners.”

To read postcolonially is to place oneself at the service of life: Native Lives Matter to God. The lives of indigenous people matter – to God. Surely one could say: For Löhe, “red lives” counted, because he not only wanted to “help”⁷¹ the German settler families in North America – that is, to save their souls. He also saw his mission as compensation for the guilt of the enslavement of African people and for the “awful cruelty”⁷² that Protestant “brothers” had inflicted on the indigenous people. Löhe’s intention reflects the central idea of the missionary movement in the nineteenth century: mission in the service of saving souls and founding a church.⁷³

A concrete example was the Franconian mission project with the *Chippewa/Ojibwa* and *Apsáalooke*. Pastor August Friedrich Crämer worked in Frankenmuth (1845-1850). His intentions reflect the classical missionary aspirations of the nineteenth century: mission through education and church foundations. The historian Hans Rößler calls it the “pedagogical model of church mission.”⁷⁴ Through biblical reading, literacy, and living together with fifteen children in the parsonage, the mission was to “credibly exemplify

69. Cf. Osterhammel, Jürgen/ Jansen, Jan C., *Kolonialismus. Geschichte, Formen, Folgen*, München, C. H. Beck, 2009⁶, 20.

70. Löhe called humans “justified objects of our endeavors to mission,” orig. „*würdigen Gegenstand für unsere Missionsbestrebungen*“, Löhe, *Die Heiden-Mission in Nord-Amerika*, 4. Translation from the German original by the interpreter.

71. Löhe, *Die Heiden-Mission in Nord-Amerika*, 1. Translation from the German original by the interpreter.

72. Ibid. Translation from the German original by the interpreter.

73. Löhe’s mission theology actually exceeds this understanding, cf. Weber, *Missionstheologie bei Wilhelm Löhe*.

74. Rößler, *Neuendettelsauer Missionare bei den Chippewas*, 229. Translation from the German original by the interpreter.

the ideals of Christianity.⁷⁵ Thirty-four children were baptized, but in 1847 they all contracted smallpox and died. The mission was suspended. The *Chippewa/Ojibwa* had moved on westward, having lost their livelihood by selling their land.

Postcolonial mission would be to advocate for life and survival of native people because they are children of God. Latin American Liberation Theology would express this with the formula “to take the indigenous people from the cross” (*Bajar de la Cruz a los Pobres*)⁷⁶ so that they may rise again. Mission in the service of survival, especially for those of other faiths.

Mission was “God’s mission” for Löhe, a hundred years before this idea (the so-called *missio Dei* in missiology) became anchored in the worldwide missionary movement: Mission is not human-made, is not available (*verfügbar* in German), but a movement, that emanates from God and flows to the people.

Chief Siʔal is said to have noticed:

“One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover – our God is the same God. You may think that you own him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the god of man, and his compassion is equal for the red man and the white.”⁷⁷

Indigenous people in Latin America say: God was with them even before the European missionaries came. God’s mission can not be appropriated, it is not available and human-made. Postcolonial mission then can also mean: The faith will not be touched. I learned such an attitude in Argentina, where the churches support the *Guaraní* in the province of *Misiones* in their struggle for survival as an indigenous group, but without trying to convert them to Christianity. God can meet us in people of other faiths.⁷⁸ The preservation of the life of people of other faiths is the first priority. Mission or conversion happens where God’s spirit flows. Spoken in the spirit of Reformation: grace is in God’s hands. It is not for me to appropriate it, to use it for purposes.

It may be that people are seized by the Christian faith through God’s Spirit when they receive the Christian message as liberating and saving. This was the case among some communities *Qom* I met in the *Gran Chaco* in Northern Argentina. After 450 years of resistance to Christian mission, they fell into a serious existential crisis in the 1940s, caused by the attempts of genocide by

75. Ibid., 228. Translation from the German original by the interpreter.

76. Cf. Vigil, José María/ASETT-EATWOT, *Bajar de la Cruz a los Pobres*. *Cristología de la Liberación*, Servicios Koinonía, Publicación Digital, 2007, <http://www.servicioskoinonia.org/LibrosDigitales/> [10/28/2020].

77. “We are part of this earth and the earth is part of us,” in Armstrong/ Fahey, cf. footnote 18.

78. Some documents of Ecumenical Movement of the World Council of Churches as well as some documents of the World Mission Conferences have affirmed this idea, e.g., the World Mission Conference in San Antonio, 1989, says that “we have affirmed about God being present in and at work in people of others faiths,” in Frederick R. Wilson (ed.), “The San Antonio Report. Your Will Be Done: Mission in Christ’s Way,” (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1989), 33.

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European colonialism and the foundation of the Nation State in the nineteenth century. They had lost the power of their spiritual roots. In the midst of this crisis some *Qom* communities drew new spiritual strength from the mission of Mennonites and Pentecostal churches. In the 1990s they turned to liberation theology. Since then, they have stood up for their rights to land through the translation of the Bible – completely reformatory. They have said yes to this liberating, life-giving form of Christianity. It was their own decision, in the midst of their emergency.⁷⁹

The Löhe-mission to the Native Americans, however, was committed to “settler colonialism.”⁸⁰ The missionary project of the Löhe missionaries Johann Jakob Schmidt (1834-1914) and Moritz Bräuninger (1836-1860) is one example. Both spent six weeks in 1858 with the *Apsáalooke*, learning their language and sharing the religious ritual of smoking the pipe in the evening. When the *Apsáalooke* bid farewell, they asked them to return, but the missionaries said goodbye and built a mission station. Their missionary commitment ended in a catastrophe.⁸¹ The Löhe-mission of the *American natives* as a whole was a failed project.⁸²

The Lutheran Church in the United States started here and reformed its understanding of mission in 1999. The motto is “accompaniment”:

“We understand *accompaniment* as walking together in solidarity that practices interdependence and mutuality. The basis for this *accompaniment* [...] is found in the God-human relationship, in which God accompanies us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.”⁸³

79. Cf. Walz, Heike, *Europa, Christentum und Moderne im Lichte postkolonialer Theorien. Am Beispiel indigener Qom / Toba Kirchen in Argentinien und dem Islam in Bosnien*, in: Michael Meyer-Blank (ed.), *Christentum in Europa. XVI. Europäischer Kongress für Theologie Wien 2017. Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie Band 52*, Leipzig, Ev. Verlagsanstalt, 2019, 787-809.

80. Mattioli, *Verborgene Welten*, 21. Translation from the German original by the interpreter.

81. Bräuninger died by the hands of the *Oglala*. The *Oglala* and *Hunkpaka* probably considered the missionaries as “intruders,” Rößler, Moritz Bräuninger, 82; cf. the *Oglala Tribe*, which belong to the Sioux, <https://accessgenealogy.com/south-dakota/ogla-sioux-tribe.htm> [10/28/2020].

82. Cf. several reasons for the failure in Craig Nesson, *Wilhelm Loebe and North America*, 33.

83. Craig L. Nesson, *Wilhelm Loebe and North America: Historical Perspective and Living Legacy*, (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications

Even more important in this statement, it seems to me, is the interdependence and reciprocity: Here is neither US-Lutheran with a German “migration background” (*Migrationshintergrund*⁸⁴) nor Native American.

Conclusionary emarks: A Native-Lives-Matter-Relief?

I conclude: Mission in the service of life and survival, that is the leitmotif that we could receive as “reverse mission” from natives: ecological preservation of the life on our earth, struggle against the genocides of this time and postcolonial, anti-racist, mutual togetherness with people of different faiths.

What do these re-readings of mission on today’s Reformation Day mean for your relief in Fürth?⁸⁵ One suggestion would be to emphasize the ambivalence of this heritage and to seize the opportunity to shape it as a place of learning and reformation: To invite theologians or activists of the *Apsáalooke* or *Chippewal Ojibwa*, women, men, and diverse people, to create an art presentation – in the sense of a mutual dialogue on Natives Lives Matter:

What keeps you alive? Where do you get spiritual strength from?

What does ecological living mean to you? How can religions together save the planet?

You could also create a work of art together with native people and people of diverse religions living in the neighborhood and carry on the ecological mission of the indigenous people to work together to save the planet.⁸⁶ A new art project sheds new light on the current relief. The last word has a poem of the *Sioux*, because there is neither *Sioux* nor Lutheran, we are all children of God.⁸⁷

“[...]”

I pass the pipe to you first.

Circling I pass to you who dwell with the Father.

Circling pass to beginning day.

Circling pass to the beautiful one.

Circling I complete four quarters and the time.

I pass the pipe to the Father with the Sky.

I smoke with the Great Spirit.

Let us have a blue day.”⁸⁸

2020), 34.

84. In this wordplay I use the term *Migrationshintergrund* that is used officially, but equally strongly criticized in Germany.

85. The parish has discussed installing a commentary plaque that names the problematic sides of the relief and invites people to think about the monument under the motto “Think about it!” playing with the words “Denkmal” (*monument*) and “denk mal” (*think about it*) in German.

86. Cf. the working group “Religions and Biologic Diversity” of the “Abrahamic Forum” (Abrahamisches Forum e.V.), which I am part of.

87. The paradox remains that one names differences but deconstructs them at the same time.

88. Arens/Braun, *Der Gesang des Schwarzen Bären*, 71.