PART ONE

Missions

CHAPTER 1

Sacred Speakers or Sacred Groups

The Colonial Lutheran Mission in New Guinea

According to the secularization hypothesis developed by Max Weber (1957) and others, under conditions of modernity, religion was gradually supposed to become a private affair, moving further off the public stage and further into the minds of private individuals. Of course, predictions of the public death of religion have been proven wrong in recent years, as fundamentalisms of all stripes—or even just publically religious people—have emerged as major forces in contemporary life.

This much is almost a social-science truism at this point. But the terms of the secularization hypothesis still hold subtle sway in much current anthropological thinking about Christianity. In particular, the focus on the religious subject as the exclusive unit of Christian practice, belief, or salvation reinscribes the division of the world into a private, individual, religious domain and a public, group-based, political one. Groups—demographic, electoral, ethnic, but especially congregational—are either ignored in studies of Christianity or are seen as not Christian in any important sense.

One could argue that ignoring groups like churches and denominations reflects Protestant realities of the highly individualized practices of the people anthropologists of Christianity have studied. Certainly the almost exclusive orientation to the individualist sacred subject has been extremely productive for the anthropology of Christianity, producing with it models of transformation, personhood, materiality, temporality, value, agency, and more (Robbins 2004a; Keane 2007; Engelke 2007;

Luhrmann 2001; Schieffelin 2002; Harding 2000; Coleman 2006; etc.). In one sense, the anthropology of Christianity came into its own when it landed on the individualist subject as its primary unit of analysis. In order to get out of the culturalist trap—in which the barest shred of cultural continuity could seem to negate arguments about the authenticity of conversions—the Protestant subject became the positive sign of cultural transformation. However, a rigid focus on the subject has meant ignoring other extremely common and striking realities of Christian lives worldwide: Protestants schism; they create ever newer denominations; and they worry about church organization. And yet these kinds of events and desires have mostly been neglected in the anthropology of Christianity. Though Protestantism has no major tradition of world-renouncing ascetics, the focus on sacred subjectivities almost makes it seem as if Protestants are nothing but desert fathers, searching for and talking to God all on their own.

When scholars see subjects forming into groups, a process of object-dissolving (Robbins 2003) starts to happen: Christian groups look too much like kinship groups, ethnic groups, socioeconomic groups, or national groups to be Christian in a meaningful sense (that is, organized around practices and theologies of Christianity).[1] H. Richard Niebuhr (1929) argued that any church is necessarily a non-Christian reduction of Christian universality organized around socioeconomic class, race, or nationality. More recently within the anthropology of Christianity, Werbner's (2011) discussion of a church schism in Botswana is mostly focused on power struggles between family members. Jebens (2006) analyses Seventh-day Adventist and Catholic denominational conflicts in Papua New Guinea as the repetition of power politics between big men (traditional leaders).

One of the most productive yet also group-renouncing veins of the anthropology of the Christian subject has been the work on the speaking subject and on Christian language use more generally. Protestants so want to lose track of the social world that they can even erase the distance between themselves and their divinities, having coffee with Jesus or engaging in other intimate moments (see especially Luhrmann 2001, 2012). Protestant talk—even Protestant ritual talk like prayer—is supposed to be direct, unadorned, natural, authentic, off-the-cuff, and without influence from others (Keane 2007; Shoaps 2002). The sacred speaking subject of Christianity is self-contained and self-referring, a native speaker voicing authentic prayers to a native God. It is a linguistic imminence that is readily parodied as religious solipsism.[2]

I counterpose the sacred speaking subject with Protestant groups for a reason. Especially when viewed by church historians under Weberian influences (e.g., Troeltsch 1912; Niebuhr 1929), Protestantism was supposed to have replaced the authority and hierarchy of the church with the (individually read) Bible. That is, the opacity of institutionalism was supposed to be replaced by the transparency of Bible reading and biblically inspired individual speech. But the troubling fact of church organization never receded as much as modernist theologians like Niebuhr would have liked. The Bible—and the speaker-reader of it—wasn't able to do away with churches, denominations, and other forms of religious sociality. New churches are created by the thousands every year in the United States alone. Learning the alphabet soup of denominational acronyms is now a standard part of fieldwork for anyone with more than a passing interest in Christianity.

From the perspective of the subject, much Protestant theology is expressed as a refusal of distance (Engelke 2007): of God, of a sacred but alien language, or of a hierarchical order. My own interest is instead with the ways in which mediations—social and semiotic projects of creating distance—are central to Christian worship. Without them, it is impossible to understand the recurrences of schism—of critical distance—that punctuate Christian lives in so many communities, or of the later struggle to produce unity in the wake of Christian criticism. As I argue below, the church as a Christian group mediates a temporary but theologically and socially important distance from God.

In this chapter, I argue for the central place of religious groups in studies of Christianity, and I want to raise a number of questions. To use some of the terminology of groupness that Christian theology provides, what does it mean to Protestants to be the Body of Christ? How does one do it? What is the relationship between the Body of Christ and the sacred speaking subject? Why is the Body of Christ, as instantiated in any one Protestant church or congregation, so seemingly unstable and prone to schism? While I approached some of these issues in general terms in the introduction, here I want to examine these issues in terms of the specific problems that Lutheran missionaries encountered in colonial New Guinea. Although they initially hoped to create sacred speakers by translating the Bible into vernacular languages, the extraordinary linguistic diversity of the north coast of New Guinea made that impossible. Soon a model of sacred church organization became the primary focus instead.

Although I use material from the Zaka circuit that Guhu-Samane communities were a part of in this chapter, this is not a history of early Guhu-Samane engagements with Lutheranism. Burce (1983) provides a detailed, rigorous account of that history, and I do not want to duplicate her work here. Instead, I use this as an opportunity to examine Lutheran mission strategies specifically in terms of regional and interethnic Christian interactions.

THE BODY OF CHRIST: CHRISTIAN GROUPS AFTER CRITIQUE

In the era of Protestantism, separation from God seems to demand both a militant critique of others through separation and a similarly militant union with others through worship. Paying attention to this moment of unity is important for differentiating Christian groups from other liberal forms of individualist selfhood, since schism and Christian group formation as described by Niebuhr (1929) looks very much like liberals dissolving and reconstituting the social contract. For example, Puritan and nonconformist debates about church structure focused on a congregation's freedom to dissent from larger Episcopal structures or freedom to choose its own pastor. As voluntary associations, Protestant churches are hard to disentangle from a liberal tradition in which groups, while important, do not detract from what Dumont (1986) calls the paramount value of individualism.

However, I argue that Christian practices can exhibit a more complex notion of groupness, particularly through models of the Christian remnant—the group that is partial but looks toward a horizon of eventual unity. Unlike the Old Testament remnant that was shattered by others, the Christian remnant, as I use it here, is the product of critique made possible by the ethical demands of Christianity. Robbins (2004b) and Meyer (1999) both discuss the ways in which Christian critique constitutes a social whole—"the past" or "tradition" or "our culture"—from which to engage in critique and form this remnant. Some of the most interesting anthropological work to date on the formation of Christian groups focuses on the ways in which the relationship of "church" to "society" is a product of critique (Barker 1993, 1996; Robbins 2004a, 2012). American evangelicals likewise emphasize Christian critiques of social forces, even if this leads to the failures, for example, of charity groups to maintain momentum or even organizational existence (Elisha 2011).

A tradition of critique does not, of course, separate Christian groups from liberal ones. However, critique and the regimentation of separateness through the differentiation of Christian groups is not the end of the story. Christian groups only become the Body of Christ in their enactment of Christian unity, a partial enactment of the unity imagined in the remnant made whole—the "church triumphant" in heaven. While certain elements of the liberal tradition have similarly positive models of incorporation (early Marx's image of "species being" to be realized in communist communities might be equivalent), political liberalism largely sees groups as instrumentalist means to individualist ends.

In the colonial New Guinea context, Christian group formation was a central part of missiological work. As I discuss below, the goal of Lutheran mission organization was to foster and then partly overcome acts of critical separation. Separation might first be from one's immediate intra-village neighbors, but then separation had to be suspended at the level of interethnic group relations. Unity—and Christianity—existed in Lutheran New Guinea only when ethnic-group animosity was suspended. This critique-separation-unification movement was supposed to be fostered by a complex organizational pattern of districts, circuits, and congregations that forced New Guinean Lutherans to walk across mountains, rivers, or valleys in order to become Christian. As I will discuss more in the second half of this chapter, the image of the separating remnant makes possible this positive formulation of Christian critique and groupness.

LANGUAGE AS TOOL VS. LANGUAGE AS SACRED SUBJECTIVITY IN COLONIAL NEW GUINEA

As I discussed above, native-language authenticity is one of the most important aspects of developing a "semiotic ideology" (Keane 2007) of immediacy in Protestant practice. In order to speak to God in the way many Protestants hope to do, one must speak as naturally and "freely" as possible. Missiological practice takes this model of freedom and fluency into spiritual territory by making native-language authenticity an attribute of true communion. Language is thus "the shrine of a people's soul" (B. Schieffelin 2007) or the "heart language" through which Christians' innermost selves can be addressed (Handman 2007). The Summer Institute of Linguistics (now known as SIL International) is a linguistics and literacy NGO that has brought this model of Christian linguistic immanence to most corners of the world. By placing teams in

every extant language community in order to translate the New Testament (as well as other literature) into each person's heart language, SIL brings this model of sacred linguistic subjectivity to its methodological conclusion. Making the Gospel sound as natural as possible in the heart language in which a team works, SIL translators want to erase any sense of the translation's foreign origins. SIL teams want the New Testament to produce new Christian communities without the mediating influence of churches or organizations, and SIL as a whole has a policy against church planting.

As heirs to Luther's sanctification of vernacular languages, one might expect the Lutheran missionaries in New Guinea to give support to this sort of model of vernacular language sacredness and authenticity. And they do at certain moments, as when the 1948 Lutheran Mission New Guinea Conference Minutes includes a resolution from the executive committee affirming "the mission policy *that a tribe be evangelized in its own language*" (Conf Min 48, RES 48–71, emphasis in original). But Lutheran history in New Guinea does not always reflect this affirmation. Faced with the stunning linguistic diversity of the north coast of New Guinea (there were over two hundred languages spoken in Lutheran territory),[3] Lutheran missionaries began promulgating lingua francas with which to evangelize local people. In comparison with standard models of Protestant language, non-sacredness—as opposed to linguistic sacredness—was the calling card of the church languages that the Lutheran Mission employed.

By "linguistic sacredness," I refer to the ways that divine revelations come in specific linguistic forms (e.g., Hebrew or Arabic) or the ways that linguistic subjectivities of sincerity and authenticity can be used to make the Word "real" or affectively powerful to specific kinds of speakers (one could say, following SIL, that as a native "heart language" speaker of English, the Gospel in English speaks to me in specific, sacred ways). By any of these means, some kind of specificity is given to the language or to a speaker's subjective orientation to the language. Without this kind of specificity of linguistic form or subjective orientation, communication with God is assumed to be either impossible or extremely difficult. "Linguistic non-sacredness," as I am calling it, thus would have to be seen in the non-specificity, the lack of particularism, of a language.

When the first Lutheran missionary, Johannes Flierl, arrived on the Huon Peninsula as a representative of the Neuendettelsau Mission from Bavaria in 1886, he began working with local languages. But as the

mission grew and the missionaries learned more about the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the north coast, new Lutheran communities were slotted into one of two tracks: Austronesian or non-Austronesian. Speakers of Austronesian languages were missionized in the Austronesian church lingua franca Jabem (or Yabem); speakers of non-Austronesian languages were missionized in the non-Austronesian church lingua franca Kâte. The separate Rhennish Mission, also from Bavaria, worked largely out of Madang, starting in 1887, and its missionaries promulgated the local Gedaged (also called Bel or Graged) language as a church lingua franca. After World War II, during which the Lutheran groups lost a significant number of missionaries, American and some Australian Lutherans resuscitated the beleaguered organization. The Rhennish Mission was folded into the structure put in place by Flierl, and the language of mission memoranda and reports became English, even though many of the missionaries were more comfortable in German (for more on Lutheran Mission New Guinea history, see Frerichs 1959; Reitz 1975; and Wagner and Reiner 1986).

The Lutherans thus instituted three non-sacred and non-particular church languages that would be used in its three main districts: Gedaged language in the Madang district, Jabem in the Jabem (coastal Huon Peninsula) district, and Kâte in the Kâte (interior Morobe) district. These languages were learned by missionaries and then taught to other New Guineans in Lutheran schools and churches. Kâte (pronounced COH-tay), for example, went from having two thousand speakers at the end of the nineteenth century to having roughly one hundred thousand people claiming some level of competence by 1959 (Kuder brief, 4). As the missionaries themselves admitted, competency in Kâte varied enormously, from fluent first-language speakers to those with minimal passive knowledge. The goal was not to give speakers a relationship of sacred specificity to the church languages but to enable interethnic communication and constitution of a Christian community.

Each language-defined district shared in a generalized exchange of people and resources that was made possible by the use of a lingua franca. Underneath this uniformity of language, however, there was an extensive organizational structure that divided district members into many different kinds of groups. As I note below, missionaries constantly lamented people's lack of interest in sending their young men out as evangelists or contributing to distant projects within their district. That is, the mission both codified a series of differences (outline in the next

paragraph) and insisted that Christian practice meant overcoming those differences to produce a lingua franca–enabled district unity.

Districts were the largest organizational unit below the level of the mission as a whole. Districts were composed of circuits, which ideally had at least one European missionary resident. Circuits could be enormous, and the missionary might tour his circuit only two or three times a year. If a group lived far away from the circuit station, the missionary was a rare sight. Beneath the circuit level were congregations, which usually incorporated several villages. Major Sunday services would be held at the congregational seat and people would have to walk (in some cases, for several hours) in order to attend. "Native" evangelists from other circuits within the district would staff the church and school at the congregational seat. This meant that, in general, the only language the evangelist and his flock shared was the church lingua franca. Villages had elders, some of whom organized morning or evening prayer sessions and some of whom did more or less nothing.

As can be seen from this brief sketch, Lutherans were not shy about hierarchical organization and institutional bureaucracy. The Lutheran church in Papua New Guinea today retains much of this structure, a point of pride for Lutherans otherwise surrounded by the flat structures of independent Pentecostal churches. While the national creole, Tok Pisin, has largely taken over as the church language from Kâte, Jabem, or Gedaged, the use of a supra-local language to navigate this organizational order is still necessary.

The non-specificity and non-sacred character of the Lutheran church languages can be seen most clearly in a brief given to the New Guinea administration in 1959 by the Lutherans when colonial education policy was shifting toward English. The New Guinea administration had always depended upon the mainline missions (Lutherans and Catholics) to provide most of the education services and had given the missions a relatively free hand in devising curricula and methods. Lutheran Mission schools taught village children in whichever church language was used in that district, creating a younger population that was literate in the church language, able to recite Bible stories and other liturgical materials, and able to learn basic skills like numeracy. In the mid-1950s, the New Guinea administration decided that English must become the language of the colony (and the language of the eventually independent nation-state), and that education should be aimed at teaching more secular skills. The Lutheran Mission was rightly terrified that this policy

would decimate not only their school system but also their church organization as a whole.

In a brief to Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck, dated October 22, 1959, the president of the Lutheran Mission, Paul Kuder, laid out Lutheran objections to the coming English-only policy, trying to make the strongest possible case for the continued use of church languages in education. Much of the brief that addresses specifics of the language history of the mission is in fact taken from an internal mission memorandum "prepared by a senior missionary on [their] staff, a man born in New Guinea, with long experience in dealing with her people and having the confidence of New Guineans and Europeans alike" (Kuder brief, 2), likely Wilhelm Flierl.[4] This was the Lutherans' primary opportunity to defend the church languages' important role in New Guinea. And yet even in this document, Kuder and Flierl give, at best, lukewarm support of the church languages, focusing only on their practical use.

In fact, Kâte and the other church languages are defended mostly for their total lack of specificity within the New Guinea context. The church languages are, for all intents and purposes, perfectly equivalent to other New Guinea languages. Given that this argument appears in a brief about the "language problem" in New Guinea and details the long struggle the Lutheran Mission had with languages, the argument adopted in the brief ironically makes language as such into something of a nonissue.

> We should get rid of the idea that the tribes lose anything when we give them a different N[ew] G[uinean] language which is "ideologically" and in most cases even structurally perfectly equivalent to their own and in which they find the equivalent of every little shade of difference of meaning which is contained in their own vocabulary. What is the difference whether "eternal life" is juju-sangang (Kâte) or gogo-gäneng (Mape) or kepkep-sili (Kuat-Hube) or andeandekatik (Komba) or mama-karingang (Naba) or alaala-tatanga (Kipu) and so forth?—When one of these languages dies out (as fortunately some of them have), no one loses anything except the linguist-anthropologists.

The "Kipu" language mentioned here is now called Guhu-Samane. In contemporary Guhu-Samane, *alaala-tatanga* is still the phrase for "eternal life" (in current orthography that uses a *q* for the glottal stop, it is spelled *qaraqara tatanga*), although it literally means "strong life." While I have not been able to check on the other languages mentioned in this quote, other Lutheran communities, such as Yopno, similarly use "strong life" to calque "eternal life" (*egapegap tebai,* James Slotta, per-

sonal communication), and it is likely these other languages do too. That is, when Lutherans did engage with the vernacular languages, they tried to make them conform to a regional standard.[5]

Note, however, that this effort to construct a language for religious discourse along lines similar to work in Africa (Meyer 1999) is, in this case, mentioned in the context of an argument against making any language sacred. Each of these languages could die out, says the author, no harm no foul (except for those secular scientists of language and culture—the linguist-anthropologists). Indeed, a reduction in the multiplicity of languages in New Guinea could only help develop both a democratic state and an ecclesiastic structure. This point is emphasized again a few pages later, when the author argues that New Guineans can learn other New Guinea languages much more quickly than they can learn English, because "[a]ll New Guinea languages have practically identical thought categories, ideas and concepts" (Kuder brief, 8). The only specificity to the New Guinea languages is their uniform distance from English.

Far from the linguistic sacred, church languages in the Lutheran Mission perspective are simply instruments for effective communication. Kâte, Jabem, and Gedaged were the best instruments to use, given the years of work that Lutheran linguists had put into devising theological vocabularies, developing and printing language-learning materials, and teaching the language to parishioners across the Lutheran territory. As a practical matter, the turn to English-language education would require institutional reorganization, retraining of personnel, and reworking of curricula.

In 1960, the colonial administration in fact mandated English-language education. Since most of the Lutheran teachers and evangelists had no knowledge of English, and since the Lutherans had few education materials for English-language curricula, their funding was slashed and their institutional organization was thrown into disarray. The mission felt betrayed by the administration that had up until that point backed and often depended upon the mission, and even many years later, the transition was still a sore spot (see Johnson 1977, 445; Hage 1986, 409).

As I mentioned above, Lutherans counted one hundred thousand people as Christians and Kâte speakers in the Kâte circuit, even as they recognized that only about thirty-five thousand of them spoke Kâte with any fluency (Kuder brief, 4). As opposed to the model of the sacred Christian speaker, the Lutheran mission was populated with sixty-five thousand semi-speakers who could nevertheless be called Christians.

For Lutherans, the goal of an independent, autonomous, and thriving church was not going to be reached through talk, or at least not through talk alone. The independent church could be reached only by creating tight linkages across the different mission circuits, with native evangelists crisscrossing Lutheran territory in a wide-ranging movement aimed to get local people beyond ethnic boundaries and into the universalism of Christian faith. But if New Guineans were to partake in this free-ranging theological, economic, and geographical exchange, this sacred public could be formed only with non-sacred church languages.

I want to now turn to the ways in which the church as a hierarchical, regional, and multiethnic institution was seen as sacred and as an integral part of creating Christians and Christianity in New Guinea.

SACRED INSTITUTIONS OF UNITY

Church organization was a sacred project, one to which other forms of sacredness, like language and the speaking subject, had to be sacrificed. The Lutheran Mission decided to promulgate non-sacred church languages after World War I, when there was suddenly a great opportunity for mission expansion into the New Guinea highlands (Kuder brief, 3). Quoting again from the Kuder brief to the administration, the urgency of the post-WWI moment is clear:

> In such a dilemma, what should the mission have done? Stop the [post-WWI] expansion by force, at a certain stage, until every little tribe that had been won was neatly fitted out with every miniature institution necessary for its subsistence as a little Christian church of its own? There were missionaries who strongly favoured such a development. If they had had their way, the Lutheran Mission would probably look very nice today and make a good impression on visitors, but certainly have no part, to speak of, in the winning of New Guinea for Christ. Thank God that our mission had men of sufficient vision, initiative and energy to conceive of and carry out the one and only solution of the problem in such a super-multilingual country as the coastal parts of New Guinea, namely the development of church languages, comprising a multitude of tribes, church languages which can serve as transport systems for the lifeblood circulation of at least 50,000 or 100,000 member churches instead of 2 or 3000. (Kuder brief, 3)

The author presents the counterfactual history of Lutheranism as a parody of church organization. "Every little tribe" with "every miniature institution necessary" producing "a little Christian church of its own" is a nice dream of the ethno-linguistic sacred, but one that simply was impossible in the case of New Guinea.

SIL would disagree, of course. When SIL's Ernie Richert moved into the Zaka circuit, which included the Waria Valley, in 1957, the resident Lutheran missionary realized the challenge that SIL's "heart language" Christianity posed: if the SIL translator continued to turn the Kipu language (that is, Guhu-Samane) into a liturgical language, the local people would no longer need to be a part of the system of generalized exchange within the Kâte district that enabled congregational life (1958 Zaka Report). The Lutheran Mission was much more concerned to create not "miniature institution[s]" of Christian micro-nationalism but rather macro-institutions of church organization.

Practically, the mission required such an organization so that local evangelists could be sent out to missionize in areas beyond the reach of European missionaries, a practice that began in 1907 (Frerichs 1959, 260) and continues to this day. Theologically, this super-ethnic organization was the actual embrace of Christian universalism.

> Of much greater avail was the fact that through the church languages a large number of tribes who had been enemies or even total strangers to one another, were joined together into one large community. It is true, God had effected the union through His Word and Sacraments and through His Holy Spirit. However, that union would remain an abstract one, as it were. It could not have been properly experienced and enjoyed, nor utilized for mutual edification and for common enterprise, without personal intercourse, which was only made possible through the common language. Only that language gave the former enemies the chance to worship together, to serve one another, and to work together. (Kuder brief, 4)

Missionaries constantly emphasized cross-circuit linkages in their reports and, it would seem, in their discussions with their flocks. Missionary Schuster's 1958 report for the Zaka circuit makes this point.

> A highlight at Zaka was also the visit of Bro. Scherle and W. Fugmann on the "Mula" [a recently acquired ship] with native delegations from Malalo and Sattelberg, to our circuit meeting at the beginning of June. . . . It was symbolic: [these were] Delegates from the two congregations from where Christian evangelists had been sent to Zaka years ago: What we wanted was more contact with the Malalo congregation and if possible exchange of pupils on the Primary school basis. Although we saw that many of our natives still do not think beyond their own circuit or district it was at least one step beyond that thinking to have such a meeting. And we hope this will continue. (1958 Zaka Report)

An important statistic for annual station reports was how many evangelists each circuit had sent out to work in other Lutheran circuits. Missionaries constantly searched for suitable candidates, sent them to the

appropriate Kâte- or Jabem-language evangelist schools at the coast, and hoped that they would be able to work well and for a long time in a cross-cultural situation. Many candidates, at least in the Zaka region with which I am most familiar, quickly came back, unable or uninterested in effecting the "mutual edification" that the Lutheran Missionaries so hoped for (see, e.g., 1958 Zaka Report). The laity was also supposed to contribute to this project in the form of donations to other circuits or in offering their young men up as evangelists.

When missionaries in Zaka felt that congregations were being too stingy with their money or their people, they saw this not only as a renunciation of Lutheran Mission institutions but also as evidence of a lack of true spiritual development. Note how, in the following quote from a Zaka-Garaina annual report, Missionary Dahinten is able to move from church structure to personal comportment in three quick sentences: "At some places I noticed a rather egoistic thinking as far as the stationing of church workers is concerned. There is also a lack of community amongst the people, especially in the Bubu valley. Some cases of polygamy are found and there are always illegitimate children" (1964 Zaka-Garaina Report). What keeps these three sentences from being non sequiturs is the sense that, for the Lutheran Mission, church organization itself was a sacred project, as important and as personal as the decision to be monogamous or to give birth to children in wedlock.

While the Lutherans viewed tithes of money and people as a sacred responsibility for any church hoping to one day become independent, the people of the Zaka circuit often saw such an emphasis on cross-circuit giving as a tax. Missionary Horndasch fought with his Zaka circuit members, who too often equated the sacred circuit with the secular colonial administration. Missionaries had to collect tithes when they traveled around their circuits, a process that looked to local people very much like the colonial administrators who collected taxes while on patrols. Especially for the inland groups in the Zaka circuit, who saw administrators or missionaries only a few times a year, the differences between the administrators based at Morobe Station and the missionaries based at Zaka could seem paltry. Brother Horndasch, a native German speaker, expresses his frustration at being taken for a colonial administrator in his somewhat stilted English: "But this year it was harder than ever before to get the money out of their hands for Elcong-[6] and Kâte-District-Treasury. They offer from one hand into the other and the money is still theirs. What kind of offering is this we think?—Because the missionary is the only one who collects the money for

Elcong and District Treasury they call him: 'tax-collector'. A nice name for a missionary, isn't it?" (1960 Zaka Report). This is an important moment within the archival record of local people's criticism of the Lutheran work. At the same time, we can also understand this complaint from within its Lutheran orientation to establishing a sacred unity. The problem is not a lack of individual belief or sacred speaking subjectivity but is instead a problem of refusing to overcome differences in the practice of church-constituting charity, as Augustine would call it.

Like the non-sacred vernacular languages of New Guinea, culture was largely considered an obstacle to evangelistic universality. Any particular emphasis on local culture in Lutheran Mission strategy was often oriented toward the destruction and negation of that culture. Christian Keysser—a Lutheran missionary whose influence was second only to that of the founder, Johannes Flierl—thought that culture and kinship bonds, as opposed to individualism, were especially strong in Melanesia. Therefore, conversions should be group affairs, and missionaries should initially not be too strict about dogma (Lawrence 1956, 75). After the group as a whole converted, the subtleties of Lutheran theology could follow. Keysser was, however, focused in particular on the cultural attributes that he felt were destructive and inhibiting, like sorcery.

For some areas, the greatest legacy of Keysser's non-individualist approach to Christian conversion was a general animosity toward cultural practices, usually focused on men's houses, that missionaries felt kept groups from experiencing conversions. The Lutheran missionaries referred to all men's house systems as *Balumskulten* (*Balum* cults). According to Missionary Lehner ([1911] 1935), *Balum* was the name of the men's house cult among the Bukaua people on the Huon Peninsula. Apparently *Balum* became a quasi-technical term among Lutheran missionaries for any men's house system, with special emphasis on the initiation ordeals to which elders subjected young boys. Note, then, the ways in which Lutheran analysis created the interchangeability of New Guinea languages and culture.

In the instances where men's houses were destroyed or had their sacra shown to noninitiates, local cultural practices were understood as competing against Christian influence (Tomasetti 1998; a similar example of showing men's house objects to noninitiates is in Kulick 1992, 164–65). Burce describes a Zaka missionary, Rev. Mailander, as "being engaged in an all out spiritual battle for people's souls against a powerful entity that he sometimes referred to as 'Herr Balum'" (Burce 1983,

195). As both Waria people and their missionaries suggest, the spread of the mission came with the destruction of local men's houses.

In Keysser's ideal, only a few aspects of local culture needed to be changed—like men's houses and the sorcery or feasts that they sponsored—while in other respects he felt that people could remain within their cultural milieu. This seemingly practical approach was still very transformative. First, the anchors of local villages—men's houses—were destroyed or were made substantially less powerful. Second, Keysser's technique of missionizing the society as a whole meant that even people who had not shown any particular interest in the mission were still encompassed by it, especially in the congregational structure that was supposed to organize local people, at least with respect to the mission. Although there was an initial flurry of interest in 1922, a few years after Rev. Mailander's entrance into the Waria Valley (see Burce 1983, 195), local people soon cooled to the mission and confirmations were few and far between. There was, however, little possibility of a total renunciation of the mission. Not only were many of the men's houses destroyed and sacra buried or burned, but daily life was starting to orient more and more to the mission stations. The Lutheran Mission was rapidly building practical institutions—health services, education, commerce—even if the sacred institution of the church was slower in its formation.

THE REMNANT: GROUPNESS IN A RELIGION FOR SOME AND YET ALL

Alfred Koschade, a Lutheran missionary to New Guinea, developed theological arguments for church organization as part of a Lutheran response to anticolonial Christians urging missionaries to leave their fields. Koschade works to define a church and especially an independent church in his book on the New Guinea Lutheran situation, *New Branches on the Vine* (1967). It is helpful to examine it here insofar as it focuses on the nature of Lutheran unity as an integral component of a Christianity that exceeds individualist subjectivities. In particular, Koschade argues for the importance of the church as an actual, this-worldly entity, emphasizing two points in particular. First, the visible, actual church instantiates Christian unity, but second, the visible, actual church can do this only if it is preceded by a moment of separation, what Koschade speaks of as cultural critique.

Throughout the book, Koschade pays particular attention to the moment in 1956 when the Lutheran Mission New Guinea officially

became the Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Guinea. He writes that even if individual New Guineans had been in the process of becoming members of the Body of Christ since Johannes Flierl's first conversions at Simbang village in 1899, it was not until 1956 that New Guineans became a church as such. Echoing Augustine's distinction between the "visible church" of actual congregations and the "invisible church" composed of only the elect, Koschade argues that the invisible church ("the congregation of saints and true believers" [Koschade 1967, 13]), while important, is not sufficient. New Guineans—and all Christians—must also join together to constitute an actual existing community and to create an actual existing unity across difference. Koschade sees the constitution of the church body at Simbang in 1956 as a miraculous transformation (especially given his use of the primitivist trope of cannibalism so common to discussions of colonial New Guinea): "Within fifty years they had learned to look upon each other, not as potential *hors d'oeuvres,* but as brothers in the blood of Christ. Such things cannot be wrought by the power of men. It is the work of God!" (Koshade 1967, 14).

In the archival materials I consulted, a constant lament is the insufficient interest in constituting the church in exactly these ways. Potential congregational leaders are dismissed or derided for not wanting to walk for days across rivers, mountains, and valleys in order to instantiate the colonial circuit at regional meetings (see Zaka Reports for 1958, 1961, 1962, 1964). Insofar as the circuit was defined by fiat—by the church language used within it—this circuit contained within it multitudes of ethnic differences that needed to be negotiated.

But Koschade's argument covers more territory than just a call to constituting churches. He is interested in the ways in which the third-world churches (to use the language of the time) would contribute to global Christianity. "Constituted churches" are necessary to enrich the world's understanding of the Christian revelation, as each such constituted church has a perspective on the Gospel unique to its cultural and social milieu that must then be witnessed in evangelism.

> This believing community exists in its own peculiar environment as it is influenced by the various sociological factors within that environment. In response to the Gospel and for the sake of its witness to the Gospel, it establishes itself as a constituted body. The proclamation of the Word to the society in which the church exists makes it necessary that this be done. The phenomenon of the younger churches, then, has been brought about under the guidance of God for the sake of the church, that is, for the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. It is not merely a

> matter of organization or of autonomy or of historical development. It is a matter of theology—of the comprehension of the Word and its proclamation. For this is essentially what theology is all about. It is the church from its particular position in history and in the light of prevailing social and cultural conditions examining the Word of God which brought the church into being, for the sake of proclaiming that Word to the world. (Koschade 1967, 20–21)

This is certainly a clichéd paean to multiculturalism, given the never-specified content of the "prevailing social and cultural conditions" providing each group's unique perspective. But it is, nevertheless, an important argument for churches as the necessary institutional formations through which Christian understanding and, importantly, evangelization take root. Like Puritan arguments that Christians without covenant are so many dissected organs of the Body of Christ, Koschade enunciates Lutheran Mission sentiment that emphasizes the theological importance of what Augustine called the visible church.

Koschade later cites and agrees with the pseudo-multiculturalist missiological theories of Donald McGavran, a conservative American evangelical who had a major influence on mid-century missionary work through his books (e.g., *Bridges of God,* 1955; *Understanding Church Growth,* 1970) and his position as founder of the School of World Missions at the Fuller Theological Seminary in California.[7] McGavran (1970) actually argued against mainline missiology of the sort the Lutherans practiced. He felt that people should be converted from within their "homogeneous units" ("HUs"), what SIL would call "people groups" and what anthropologists used to call "cultures." SIL, in fact, is populated with many graduates of (or simply devotees of) McGavran's School of World Missions. McGavran's missiology closely resembles SIL's model of the ethno-linguistic sacred, in which people are converted through their heart language and constituted within a sacred speaking subjectivity. It is a model that rejects the importance of difference, or in McGavran's terms, of "crossing boundaries." How then does Koschade—a Lutheran missionary devoted to precisely this practice of crossing as a theological necessity—square his McGavran-like multiculturalism with his Lutheran insistence on confrontations with others?

Koschade is able both to emphasize "prevailing cultural and social conditions" as producing unique perspectives on the Gospel and to justify, theologically, the necessity of mediating church institutions by working with a concept of the remnant. As in Romans 11:5 and echoing Isaiah, the remnant "chosen by grace" is the shattered remains of

a once-whole group. The remnant is also the group in the process of trying to reconstitute itself, what might also be called the "church militant" fighting to achieve salvation.

> [The Gospel] can never be manipulated in such a way that the [indigenous] church, which is the product of the Gospel, is made into an institution recognized and accepted by all members of the society, or with which they all identify themselves. It is the character of the Gospel that it is "a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23–24). . . . There must, therefore, always be a tension between the church and society, for the people of God are a remnant people, a pilgrim people who are but strangers and sojourners in the world. (Koschade 1967, 39)

As opposed to the ideals of SIL or McGavran—or to the models of immediacy that attempt to remove society altogether from Christian practice—the remnant emphasizes the ways in which both the church and the church's only partial overlap with society is important.

Discursively, the remnant insists on the central role of criticism—criticism of one's traditions, culture, language, or church. To return to Koschade one last time, the remnant that looks to Jesus is the group that is organized around critique. "[Christ] is both in and of the world, a product of a particular human society with all of its cultural institutions, speaking a particular language, practicing particular customs, sharing the history of a particular people; and at the same time he stands over against the world, society and culture, rejecting it and being rejected by it" (Koschade 1967, 40).

Criticism is often the engine of schism and sectarianism, producing more and more Christian groups among independent churches. But it was also important to the Lutheran missionaries, who, of course, were not trying to create schisms (at least not within the Lutheran mission). Rather, missionaries like Koschade saw the divisions within the world—many of which were established through Lutheran missionary organization—as helpful tools with which Lutherans or potential Lutherans could develop theological insights. Young evangelists sent to other circuits could recognize differences with their home circuits and use these to council their new charges. Guests at circuit meetings could help village elders understand how things were done in other parts of New Guinea. And as much as the gentlemen's agreements kept inter-mission hostilities to a minimum, Lutheran missionaries were still happy to see fights with their Roman Catholic counterparts at frontier zones become opportunities for (what they thought of as) critical work.