

Foreword

Many diverse influences on the development of the church in North America have in the past come from Upper Lusatia. As early as 1735 Nikolaus Ludwig Count of Zinzendorf, the founder of Herrnhut, sent missionaries from the Moravian Brethren to the “New World.” He traveled in person in 1741 to Pennsylvania in order to promote religious work among Native Americans and to build up the American branch of the Moravian Brethren, the present-day Moravian Church of North America. At the same time, the deacon of Grosshennersdorf, Heinrich Melchior Mühlberg von Gotthilf August Francke, the director of the Francke Foundations in Halle, was sent to Pennsylvania. After his arrival in Philadelphia in 1742 he worked as a Lutheran preacher in German-speaking communities and founded a church association on the east coast of America, which later merged into the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). Further impetus came a hundred years later from Ludwig Eduard Nollau, who was born in 1810 in Reichenbach/Upper Lusatia, and who worked from 1838 as pastor in St. Louis, Missouri. The German Evangelical Church Association of the West was founded in his parsonage in 1840, a group which belongs today to the United Church of Christ (UCC). Nollau’s contemporary, Jan Kilian, takes his place in this line of Upper Lusatian Fathers of the Church in the United States. He was the first pastor in Texas to join the German Evangelical

Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (Missouri Synod), which had been founded in 1847 in Chicago, Illinois, mainly by the Lutherans, who had emigrated from central Saxony under the leadership of Pastor Martin Stephan to Missouri. In 1866 he also led his congregation of Lutheran Sorbs (Wends) from Upper Lusatia, founded in Texas, into membership of the Missouri Synod. In this way, Jan Kilian became the founding father, and the congregation of Serbin the founding mother of this church in Texas, which as the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) with 2.4 million members today forms the second largest Lutheran Church in the United States, and is also involved in a wide range of activities abroad.

However, Jan Kilian's work was not only devoted to the preservation of denominational Lutheranism in the Protestant Church, but also to the protection of the Sorbian nation, to which he belonged. His exhortation addressed to the public at large, "Serbja, zachowajće swěru swojich wótcow rěč a wěru"¹ (Wendish people, keep the witness of our parents' hope and language) became his personal creed. In his efforts to maintain the unity of faith and nationality, he developed his fruitful work as a writer on contemporary affairs and a writer of hymns in the Sorbian language, alongside his official duties as a pastor. Jan Kilian is one of the outstanding Sorbian poets of the nineteenth century with his numerous religious songs and translations of hymns, which testify to his linguistic skills and use of expressive language. While his contemporary fellow pastor in Lohsa, Andreas Seiler (Handrij Zejler), provided the major impetus for the national renaissance movement with his activities as a journalist and his poetic works, which reflected his closeness to his people, Jan Kilian became the forerunner of the Lutheran revival among the Sorbs. He continued his work in the Sorbian colony in Texas, which was committed to preserving his language and faith. It is not only thanks to him that the community of Serbin acquired its name, but also the fact that it became the most significant Sorbian settlement overseas, in which the religious and national heritage of the Sorbian emigrants and its pastor is cultivated to this day, and from which stimulus for a return to traditional national values is transmitted to the descendants of Sorbian emigrants – also in other countries overseas.

The progressive loss of the Sorbian language in the Lutheran areas of Lusatia and the onset of secularization trends – both of these trends accelerated in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of the industrialization and modernization of society – led to the fact that the name of Jan Kilian was increasingly forgotten. His significance was also essentially reduced to his role as parish pastor in the memories of the descendants of the Sorbian emigrants – similarly a result of linguistic and cultural assimilation in the American melting pot. Only occasionally did Sorbian intellectuals, who were able to find an echo of Kilian's work in Sorbian Lutheran circles, turn their attention to him. In the 1920s composer Bernhard Schneider (Bjarnat Krawc) discovered Kilian, the "Sorbian hymn-writer,"² and

1 Chorus from Jan Kilian's hymn, "Zbudźenje za Serbow" (Wendish Anthem).

2 "serbski hymnista," in Bjarnat KRAWC, "Jan Kilian, serbski hymnista," in Škowrónčk ze serbskich honow 1 (1926) 6, pp. 21–22.

adapted the tunes of his hymns. High school teacher and cultural historian Otto Lehmann (Ota Wićaz) studied Kilian's life and work and called him "one of the most faithful and significant Sorbs ever."³ Matthäus Urban (Matej Urban), Kilian's successor as pastor in the Old Lutheran congregations of Weigersdorf and Klitten, even called him "a religious hero."⁴ During the socialist years the prevailing historiography downgraded his role to that of a utopian dreamer who did not reach his goal of "creating a social and national Kingdom of God."⁵ It was only in the wake of a new examination of the history of the Sorbian emigration overseas in recent times that there was a renewed focus on the figure of Kilian. George R. Nielsen provided a summary of his work in his book on emigration, "In Search of a Home" (1977, 2nd ed. 1989), and also Trudla Malinkowa in her publication "Ufer der Hoffnung" (1995, 2nd ed. 1999). The latter presented a selection of his poetry in 1999 in the series "Serbska poezija" (Sorbian Poetry), which also appeared in 2010 in an English translation in the United States. George R. Nielsen collected the fundamental research material in his project "Texas Wends: Letters and Documents" in the 1990s, and in 2003 produced the first biography, "Johann Kilian: Pastor".

The two-hundredth anniversary of Jan Kilian's birth in 2011 offered the occasion for historical research to introduce this outstanding personality from the Sorbian clergy to a wider public for the first time, and at the same time to engage more intensively with his life and work. The Texas Wendish Heritage Society in Serbin and Concordia University in Austin, Texas, organized commemorative events. In Lusatia a number of institutions, church congregations, and associations came together to put on a wide-ranging program of commemoration (see pp. 20–22). The Sorbian National Ensemble invited audiences to concerts of Kilian's songs. The Sorbian Lutheran Association produced a CD with a selection of hymns and erected a memorial in Kotitz, Kilian's former place of work, which is in the form of a sailing boat and has inscriptions in the three languages that Kilian used in his work: Sorbian, German, and English. The Sorbian scientific society Maćica Serbska and the Sorbian Museum assembled a mobile exhibition in three languages about Jan Kilian, which was exhibited many times in and outside Lusatia, also after the end of the jubilee year. The Lutheran congregation of Weigersdorf invited people to a special service of commemoration in three languages in the church in which Kilian once preached. The Sorbian Artists' Federation dedicated the festival of Sorbian poetry in 2011 to the poet Jan Kilian. Finally, the climax of the anniversary celebrations was the conference organized by the Sorbian Institute, "Jan Kilian: Pastor, Poet, Emigrant," which took place on 23 and 24 September 2011 with strong participation from the public in Bautzen. Patron of the conference was Stanislaw Tillich, prime minister of the Free State of Saxony.

3 "jednoho z najswěrnějšich a najwuznamnějšich Serbow, kiž su hdy žiwi byli," in Ota WićAZ, "Jan Kilian," in *Předženak* 1927, pp. 36–41, here p. 36.

4 "nabožny rjek," in Matej URBAN, "K čestnemu wopomnjeću Jana Kiliana," in *Předženak* 1927, p. 35.

5 "swój utopiski cil, twarić socialny a narodny 'raj boži', njedocpě," in *Nowy biografiski słownik k stawiznam a kulturje Serbow*, Bautzen, 1984, p. 250.

The present volume contains the written versions of the papers given at this conference. One contribution was not included, two have been added to the volume. The contributions are essentially arranged chronologically, following the biography of Kilian. At the beginning, a general overview in the form of a family tree with biographies by Trudla Malinkowa presents basic information on family members. Arnd Matthes provides insights into the many branches of the Kilian family's network of relationships in Lusatia and their way of life in Jan Kilian's youth. In his study of Kilian theologian Jens Bulisch puts him into the context of the intellectual history of his time. Ludger Udolph examines Kilian as a poet and translator of hymns, using selected examples. Jan Mahling provides insights into Kilian's involvement in Saxon state politics by examining the birth, development, and effects of the Kotitz Petition of 1845. Gilberto da Silva examines the foundation of the Old Lutheran Church in Germany and Lusatia. Trudla Malinkowa provides a link to this with her contribution on Jan Kilian's work as a Lutheran pastor in Prussia. Joachim Bahlcke then provides a survey of emigration from Saxony and Upper Lusatia in Kilian's time. George R. Nielsen describes Kilian's relations with his fellow pastors in Texas, and William W. Schumacher examines his relationship with the President of the Missouri-Synod, Ferdinand Walther. Roland Marti analyzes the two addresses that Kilian wrote on the occasion of the topping-out ceremonies of the church buildings in Serbin in 1859 and 1868 and describes his role as an "occasional poet" in Serbin. Finally, providing at the same time a bridge to the present day, David Zersen examines the tangible and the intangible legacy of Kilian and its cultivation in the United States today. The contributions are preceded a preface from Saxon Prime Minister Stanislaw Tillich, who puts the conference and its outcomes into the context of Saxon-American relationships. The contributions are being published simultaneously in German and English, in order to make reception by readers easier in both Europe and America.

My thanks are due to all who contributed to the success of the conference and to the other events on the occasion of the two-hundredth anniversary of Kilian's birth, and to those who have contributed to the development of this book. It is to be hoped that the volume will stimulate further work on both sides of the Atlantic on this outstanding Sorbian poet, pastor, and emigrant.

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