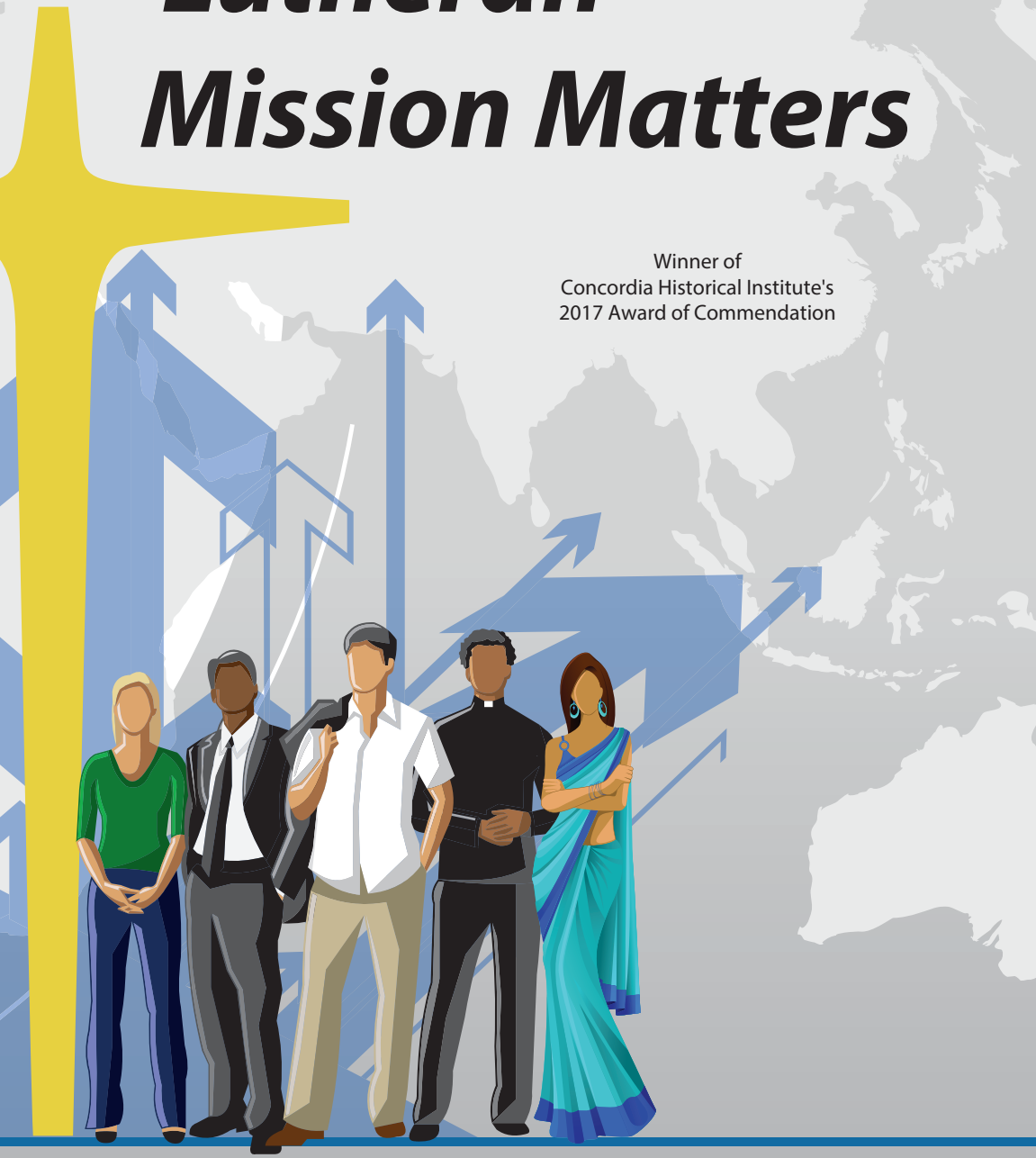
Lutheran Mission Matters

Winner of
Concordia Historical Institute's
2017 Award of Commendation



Volume XXV, No. 2 (Issue 51) November 2017

The Lutheran Society for Missiology's Journal *Lutheran Mission Matters* Receives Concordia Historical Institute's 2017 Award of Commendation

concordia historical institute

Department of Archives and History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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2017 Award of Commendation

in recognition of your significant contribution to literature and research in the field of Lutheran archives and history in North America

Lutheran Mission Matters

for *Lutheran Mission Matters*. 24:1 (January 2016).

For the notable blend of articles from key individuals tracing the progress and challenges of mission work by and through the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and its entities.

Rev. Dr. Daniel N. Harmelink, Executive Director

Rev. Dr. John C. Wohlrabe, Jr., President, Board of Governors

November 9, 2017

Trumpeting Christ's Redeeming Work in the Life of the Lutheran Church

Concordia Historical Institute is the official archive of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Its citation reads:

Every year the Awards Committee surveys contributions made to North American Lutheran History to identify the most outstanding projects. After an in-depth process, the committee is pleased to announce that your editorial work Lutheran Mission Matters (January 2016) has been selected to receive an Award of Commendation. . . .

On behalf of everyone at CHI, I offer my congratulations on your excellent publication. We look forward to publicly acknowledging you and your contributions to Lutheran history in North America.

Save the Date: January 30, 2018

Lutheran Society for Missiology (LSFM) Annual Banquet

You are invited!

Place: Koburg Hall of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Theme: "Recovering the Heart of Mission"

Banquet speaker: Rev. Dr. Robert Newton, president of the California, Nevada, Hawaii District of the LCMS

Cost: $30 for an individual, $50 for a couple;
for students, subsidized tickets are available at
$15 for an individual, $30 for a couple

E-mail lsfmissiology@gmail.com for more information.

LUTHERAN MISSION MATTERS

Journal of the Lutheran Society for Missiology

Volume XXV, No. 2 (Issue 51) November 2017

http://lsfm.global

LUTHERAN MISSION MATTERS
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***Lutheran Mission Matters* continues the publication of *Missio Apostolica,* the journal of the Lutheran Society for Missiology founded in 1993.**

Lutheran Mission Matters is published twice a year in the spring and fall by the Lutheran Society for Missiology, Inc. (LSFM), and special issues may be published occasionally. *Lutheran Mission Matters* serves as an international Lutheran forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion of issues related to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ globally. The views expressed by the individual writers, however, are not necessarily the views of the editors, Editorial Committee, or the Board of Directors of LSFM.

The journal is an open-access publication and is available online at http://lsfm.global. Members of the society who contribute more than $30 per year may choose to receive an identical paper copy of the journal.

The journal is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database (online journal index of the American Theological Library Association) and its related online full-text component, ATLAS (American Theological Library Association Serials). ATLAS may be accessed at no charge by alumni of many seminaries upon request to the library of their alma mater.

Since its inception the journal has been edited by an editorial committee led by these individuals:

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CONTENTS

LUTHERAN SOCIETY FOR MISSIOLOGY

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Inside This Issue: Reformation

As this issue reaches our readers and well-wishers, the five hundredth anniversary celebration of the Lutheran Reformation will have become history, along with the turn of the new millennium seventeen years ago. Consistent with the Reformer's conviction, "I believe that there is on earth through the whole wide world no more than one holy common Christian church," Lutherans, as they set out at the beginning of the sixth century of the Reformation, have no greater calling than to make known to the whole wide world the true treasure of the Church, that is, the sacred Gospel of the glory and grace of God. On this truth stands the Lutheran Society for Missiology and its premier journal, *Lutheran Mission Matters*.

It is a sanctified coincidence that on the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, *Lutheran Mission Matters* is publishing its fiftieth issue. Over twenty-five years we have published over 350 essays, 50 mission reflections, and numerous book reviews, representing Lutherans from all continents—respected indigenous scholars, theologians, church planters, pastors, and missionaries. They have one mission: to make Christ known to the world as Savior and Lord.

Christian theology intentionally is a cross-cultural discipline, an adventure that empowers each Christian believer to express the faith, trusting solely in the power of the Holy Spirit, who transforms the lives of people across nations, ethnicities, traditions, and cultures, to call them to faith in Jesus Christ. These expressions of faith truly draw all people from everywhere to the Savior as He is lifted before them as the testimony of God's love in word and in deed (Jn 12:32). God so graciously raises up throughout the world His witnesses for this purpose, baptized men and women who speak His life-giving word to others with gentleness and respect.

We introduce this issue with a homily that Professor Ben Haupt of Concordia Seminary preached on Luther's use of "All," showing that the Reformer was ever missional in his teaching and preaching. We are grateful to the internationally recognized Luther scholar, Professor Robert Kolb, for editing this special issue. Kolb's essay shows that being missional is second nature for Lutherans. Other contributors to this issue are mostly Kolb's colleagues or graduate students. At least five of the essayists in this issue are brand new to the journal, and all of them demonstrate how Luther's way of thinking permeates the majority world and across cultures for the sake of Christ alone. Join us in this great celebration.

The church always reforms. *Lutheran Mission Matters* always matters.

Victor Raj
Editor
Lutheran Mission Matters

Inbox

TO: Rev. Dr. Victor Raj
Editor, Lutheran Mission Matters

FROM: Rev. Heath R. Curtis
Coordinator for Stewardship, LCMS Office of National Mission

Dear Editor,

In the eight years of the Obama administration, the US went from being 78% Christian to 71%. The last time the LCMS saw a year to year gain in baptized membership, the Supreme Court was deciding *Bush v. Gore* and A. L. Barry sat behind the desk in Kirkwood. The ELCA, UMC, UCC, and Presbyterians are faring even worse. These facts and the questions they raise are what led the Stewardship Ministry of the LCMS' Office of National Mission to commission two scholars to study the demographic and cultural context of the Missouri Synod.

I want to thank Prof. William Schumacher for his essay offering his analysis of these demographic reports which were published in the Dec. 2016 issue of the *Journal of Lutheran Mission*; and I also thank you for publishing it. In this letter I hope to offer some clarifications that will further the efforts of your readers as they make plans for the future of their ministries in the challenging cultural landscape of today's America.

First, Prof. Schumacher raises questions and concerns about the methodologies of Dr. MacPherson (Bethany College) and Dr. Hawley (University of Alabama). Specifically, he mentioned the critique offered by Mrs. Rebeka Cook. We were gratified to see so much professional interest in this data, and MacPherson and Hawley offered very helpful replies to Mrs. Cook in the March 2017 issues of JLM which also go to the heart of Prof. Schumacher's comments; that issue of JLM can be viewed at https://blogs.lcms.org/2017/journal-of-lutheran-mission-march-2017.

Second, as a follow up to the question of the validity of the data, analysis, and conclusions of these researchers, folks should be aware that Dr. Hawley's latest peer-reviewed book, which began to percolate in his mind as he worked on our data, has just been published. The title says it all: Demography, Culture, and the Decline of America's Christian Denominations (Lexington Books). I'm sure your readers would benefit from a review of this volume in your pages: setting LCMS demographics in this wider context is both eye-opening and encouraging!

Third, Prof. Schumacher seems to be struggling under the misconception that our researchers, or leaders in the Synod, are saying that the LCMS can procreate its way into being a growing denomination again. Alas, the news of our researchers is so much more dire than that. Dr. Hawley reports that the LCMS already has a higher than average percentage of large families among the membership of the church who are in the child-bearing years. However, the number of folks aged 18–29 in 2014 was so small (11% of the Synod as opposed to 20% of America), that the Synod simply cannot emerge from demographic decline via natural growth in the short to medium term (1 to 2 decades). Not to mention that encouraging family formation (or evangelism for that matter) to "save the Synod" would be wrong headed and ineffective to boot. Rather, these numbers and analysis are in the reports to demonstrate just how "baked in" the LCMS decline in membership is: we are reaping the results of decisions made decades ago and there is no changing the past.

Speaking of evangelism, I am afraid I must report that the numbers are also stark in that regard. Since Dr. MacPherson notes that the LCMS already has an adult conversion rate that compares favorably with our peer denominations (indeed, we have a better "conversion rate" than the Southern Baptist Convention and for several years now we've had more adult conversions per year than infant baptisms!), we are not likely to see the kind of truly unprecedented growth in evangelism we would need to become a growing denomination in the short to medium term. Our conversion rate would actually have to far exceed that of the Mormon Church's efforts for this to be true - and the massive amounts of energy and resources they plow into evangelism is a byword among the nations.

Two other data points in Hawley's report deserve notice here as well: the MO Synod happens to be concentrated in parts of the country that are depopulating. In the growing parts of the country, the Missouri Synod is indeed growing, but at a rate below the growth of the overall population. In other words, even where MO Synod congregations are increasing in membership, they are not increasing at a rate that keeps up with the community around them.

Prof. Schumacher is certainly correct in noting that all of the above analysis in stated from a secular perspective, that is, looking at the Church as a merely human organization - we have not even factored in our belief that the Spirit works "when and where He pleases" for conversion through the means of grace. That caveat is always welcome in these discussions. At the same time, leaders in the Church since Paul have found it beneficial to make use of "First Article Gifts" and secular wisdom. The bottom line of the demographic research conducted by MacPherson and Hawley is this: unless the Lord chooses to perform a miracle, the LCMS, along with the ELCA, the Methodists, the UCC, the Presbyterians, etc., will almost certainly continue to decline in membership for two or three decades.

Fourth, Prof. Schumacher makes the self-evidently valid point that the LCMS is not coextensive with the Bride of Christ, His Church. The Lord will save His elect in spite of our failings, by His grace alone, and with or without the Missouri Synod: on that we certainly agree!

Yet I confess that I am unashamedly interested in the health and well being of the Missouri Synod: her congregations, schools, universities, seminaries, missionaries, and domestic and international infrastructure for ministry. It is precisely the *LCMS as a denomination* that sent Prof. Schumacher to do his mission work in Botswana and that continues to support missionaries around the world; it is the *LCMS as a denomination* that owns and oversees the universities and seminaries that train and certify our church workers. I want all of the ministries that make up the MO Synod to thrive precisely because we have been gifted with a wonderfully clear confession of the Gospel in all its articles! We desire "all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" and we desire to be a part of the Lord's work in this regard! I want the congregations I serve to thrive for the same reason I want Concordia Seminary, where Prof. Schumacher serves, to thrive: because the Lutheran Confession of the Faith is the God-pleasing, life-giving, and soul-saving message of Jesus Christ.

Of course, your readers are also interested in the health of their ministries within the LCMS, as are all leaders at the congregational, district, and Synod level. Different parts of ONM are responding to the demographic and cultural reality around us in different ways (see especially the work of Every One His Witness and Re:vitality from the Evangelism Ministry of the Office of National Mission). But as the Coordinator for Stewardship, my focus is first and foremost on the following.

Encouraging pastors and congregations and district leaders. We are living through a rough time for the Church at large in America. If your congregation, circuit, and district are shrinking despite your best efforts: you are not alone, you are not crazy, and you are not (necessarily) a "bad" pastor, congregation, district president, or district. All 35 districts are contracting in membership. It's something the whole Synod and all of American Christianity are facing for a host of complicated reasons. Our reports can help you understand what is going on, but you need to be ready to…

Learn about your context and make a plan. Where do you serve? An area in decline or experiencing growth? Your plans, expectations, and goals need to match that context. In the Stewardship office we help congregational and school leaders understand the world around them, encourage a faithful response, and make a plan for ministry that fits their specific context.

I have a special concern for Synodwide institutions. There will be areas of growth in particular cities, regions, and even districts as we move through the next two decades. But if our researchers' hypothesis holds true (as it is so far), the Synod as a whole will not experience growth. This needs to be factored into the plans of the large institutions that serve the whole Synod.

My 2017 calendar is already full up with presentations to institutions, circuits, boards of directors, pastors' conferences, etc. In these presentations I review the demographic data facing the Synod and all of American Christianity with a focus on understanding and planning for the future we are likely to face, under the Lord's gracious will. I am now scheduling speaking events for mid 2018. If your readers would like to have me come out and go through this data in person and talk about what is going on with the Synod to meet these challenges with confidence in the Lord and excitement in the Gospel: I can be reached at heath.curtis@lcms.org.

Sincerely,
Rev. Heath R. Curtis
Pastor – Trinity & Zion Lutheran Churches, Worden & Carpenter, IL
Coordinator for Stewardship – LCMS Office of National Mission

Response

Mission and Denominational Decline

After I offered a few comments (available here: http://www.lsfm.global/uploads/files/LMM_5-17_Schumacher.pdf) in response to the December 2016 Special Issue of the Journal of Lutheran Mission (*JLM*) (available here: https://blogs.lcms.org/2016/journal-of-lutheran-mission-december-2016), the conversation about demographic studies of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and their relation to mission and evangelism has continued. In particular, Rev. Heath Curtis, a pastor in southern Illinois and the LCMS Coordinator for Stewardship, has written a direct response to my comments (available here: https://blogs.lcms.org/2017/synod-demographic-studies-offer-insight-despite-critiques), and his response helpfully clarifies some points. Those who are interested in the topic and the discussion should also read the helpful contribution of Rebeka Cook and the additional material from the authors of the original reports in the Dec. 2016 *JLM* (all available here: https://blogs.lcms.org/2017/journal-of-lutheran-mission-march-2017).

I had not expected to write further on the subject, since I think my original comments and concerns were sufficiently clear. But I will offer just one or two

remarks to Rev. Curtis, since he singled me out in his blog post on the LCMS website.

In my earlier comments, I suggested that demographic data about the membership of the Synod at the denominational level is of only limited use in making informed decisions and plans about mission and evangelism. I wrote that I thought (and I still think) this is true for at least two reasons. First, denominational data tends to mask or blur the vital specifics of local congregations and their communities, and in America people choose to join (or not to join) congregations, not denominations. And second, even a complete picture of ourselves cannot be the key to connecting lost people with the Savior who gave Himself for them. In other words, for purposes of mission and evangelism, I argue that our focus must be local and our attention must be on those outside the faith rather than on ourselves.

By way of response, Rev. Curtis stresses two points that I think merit some further comment. For one thing, he takes some exception to my desire to focus on congregations rather than the denomination. He emphasizes his interest in and commitment to the LCMS as a denomination, because of its clear confession of the Gospel in all its articles. Happily, we are entirely agreed on this point! But Rev. Curtis goes on to assert that the LCMS *as a denomination* is essential for supporting missionaries and institutions such as seminaries, and at this point I think the question becomes more complex than his assertions suggest.

Today, it is too simplistic to claim that the Synod *as a denomination* supports missionaries, or funds theological education at the seminaries.

Career international missionaries are required to raise most or all of their financial needs through the Office of International Mission program of Network Supported Missionaries. This makes the support of missionaries depend on a direct connection between congregations and a particular missionary—the missionary's salary and financial support does not come out of the Synod's general operating budget (as it did when I served as a missionary in Botswana).

Something similar is true of our seminaries. A very small portion (roughly one percent) of the operating budget of Concordia Seminary comes in the form of direct subsidy from the LCMS, i.e., from the Synod "as a denomination"; that figure was about 44% in 1970. More than half of support for the seminary today comes from direct, generous gifts from congregations and individuals. For clarity, in other words, we should probably speak of both missionaries and the seminaries as being supported by faithful and willing *members* of the Synod, rather than by the Synod itself "as a denomination."

This should not be understood to suggest that the Synod as such is unimportant or irrelevant. What the "LCMS as a denomination" actually does, as Rev. Curtis mentions, is "own and oversee" the institutions, and control the selection and approval of missionaries. The Synod's direct denominational subsidy for seminaries is small, but the Synod in convention is firmly in control of governance of the institution through election of members of the governing Board

of Regents. The Synod is a mechanism by which each of us seeks to be held accountable by all of us for our doctrine and practice. Every pastor, every congregation, every institution, and every leader needs the advice, the counsel, and the encouragement of the others to be and remain faithful in our confession and witness.

But we should not imagine that the LCMS denominational structure is essential as a centralized funding mechanism for ministry—indeed, the past few decades have shown convincingly that the national denominational structure is much less effective for such a purpose than it used to be. (The reasons for this trend, and the implications for our work together, would be a very interesting discussion—especially in light of the fact that financial giving in congregations has actually *risen*, despite a general decline in membership and attendance, while giving to the Synod's denominational work has dropped.)

The second point to which I would like to offer a comment is when Rev. Curtis explains how he, in his capacity as Coordinator for Stewardship with the LCMS Office of National Mission, wants to apply and use the demographic data that has been assembled. He emphasizes that he wants to encourage pastors, congregations, and leaders of the LCMS by helping them understand that declining membership is not (necessarily) evidence of their failure. They should not feel bad about themselves when they are confronted by steady drops in membership and attendance, since "it's something the whole Synod and all of American Christianity are facing for a host of complicated reasons."

Okay, fine: pastor and congregations should not feel bad. (Unless, of course, you actually *are* a bad pastor, an unwelcoming congregation, or a lazy and unfaithful leader—then, by all means, feel bad about yourself to the point of genuine repentance and turn to Christ alone for forgiveness and new life.) But now that we have agreed that we do not need to feel bad about ourselves, can we please talk about something else more urgent and more interesting?

How do we feel about *other people* who do not know Christ, and who are trying to make their way in life without Him? *Mission* is not about us—not about our success or failure, not about how we feel about ourselves. Mission is about seeking and saving the lost, and that is what God is up to in the world. It is about the people who are not hearing the promises of God. It is not about our valid excuses or our insight into what is going on among us. Mission is not about the people who are in the pews and are thus included in our membership reports and demographic analysis: it is about the people who live around us but are *not* in our data because they are *not* hearing the gospel. Feeling bad about ourselves is beside the point; we do not need to look at data about ourselves to concoct scientific reasons why we are the way we are. God give us a heart that breaks for those who are missing out on the comfort, hope, and joy of life in Christ.

William W. Schumacher
Concordia Seminary

Sermon

Paul's Alls, Luther, and the Discovery of America[1]

Observation of the Reformation Chapel Service
Sermon by Ben Haupt

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO
Oct. 25, 2017

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Do you look at strangers when they walk past you? There are a lot of people in our world today, and sometimes it's just easier not to look people in the eye when they walk past you on the chapel plaza. It's even worse when I'm getting on a subway in New York City or London. When there's just a sea of people, it's sometimes easiest just to put my earbuds in, keep my head down, and shuffle along. Obviously I'm not going to get to know every person I walk past or stand next to in a subway or wait in line with at an airport. It's impossible to have personal relationships with seven billion people, and so I admit that sometimes I just shut them out.

As Christians, I wonder if we don't do the same thing when we begin to think about all the people out there who do not believe in Jesus. It's easier to keep our heads down, huddle in the sanctuary, and not think too much about the billions of people who don't trust in Christ's death and resurrection. It's easier not to think about the salvation of all those people I meet in the subway or at the airport than to actually look them in the eye and wonder whether they know Jesus. When the neighborhood begins to change around the church, it's easier just to drive into the

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Rev. Ben Haupt is Director of Library Services at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and a member of the Practical Department at the seminary. Before coming to the seminary, he served congregations in Florida and Georgia. He is a PhD student at the University of Birmingham, UK. His email address is hauptb@csl.edu.

sanctuary parking lot, past the changing neighborhood, and pretend that we're back in the 1950s when the neighborhood was as white as Andy Griffith and Beaver Cleaver.

Or maybe in a shrinking church body, we don't even like to think about those other believers in Jesus—you know the ones who worship so differently than we do—those Christians who wear skinny jeans and tight T-shirts and use instruments like guitars and drums or those other Christians who bow during the Gloria Patri, love to chant, and who wear nothing but the fanciest clerical collars, and who pride themselves in the vast variety of their vestments. It's easiest to put our fingers in our ears and keep our heads down and forget about all the different believers in Christ and the billions of unbelievers in Christ. The world's just too complex and so we close our eyes to all the people out there.

This morning, though, the Apostle Paul and—as we observe the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation today—Martin Luther, of course, hold up before our eyes something quite different. They hold up for us to see a little three-letter word. It's such a common word that it's easy to gloss over when listening to Scriptures, easy to miss it and its significance for understanding the profound depths of the Gospel and its implications. One scholar has even called this little three-letter word the war cry of Paul's epistle to the Romans. What's that little word? A-L-L. All. All. Today, Paul and Luther hold before our eyes the word *ALL*, even in surprising ways. You might even learn something you didn't know about Luther today. So, let's open our eyes for a few minutes to all the people.

The year is 56 or 57 AD. Paul is in Corinth. What a couple years it has been. For the last two, he has preached to all kinds of people in the coastal town of Ephesus. For a good while he was welcome in the Jewish synagogue and a good handful of Jews were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1–8), but eventually a number of Jews became upset by his message. Paul just went across town to hang out with a whole different crowd—Greek philosophers in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9–10). For two years, Paul had preached to any and every and ALL kinds of people who would give him a hearing. And then things got crazy. A local artisan who crafted silver statues of Artemis, the hero of Ephesus, realized why his profits had taken such a hit. Paul! That guy had been telling people to abandon the gods and worship only one. Like so many other Greeks and Romans of the time, this silversmith hated such Jewish ideas—one god . . . how ridiculous! So, he got a big crowd riled up and dragged some of Paul's friends into the local theater. Imagine that—a protest staged about some man-made statues! A lot has changed in our world since then, but a lot has remained the same. Paul was ready to rush in to defend his friends and gladly would have seen it as yet another opportunity to preach the good news of Jesus, but his fellow Christians would not let him. Thankfully, a local official calmed things down, and Paul and his missionary band escaped

unscathed (Acts 19:21–41). Just a few weeks later, he woke up in the bustling city of Corinth (Acts 20:1–3).

And so on this particular morning, Paul sits with his writing partner.[2] They look over the letter they've written thus far to the brothers and sisters in Rome. Yes, Paul's emphasis that the Gospel is for all people had come through quite clearly. He had gotten this across quite clearly in his address. "To ALL in Rome," that is, to ALL Jews and Gentiles who had been called to faith. Yes, "to ALL in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace" (Rom 1:7 ESV). And that little word *all* had come through so crystal clear in his summary statement. "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of ALL who believe: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Rom 1:16).

Paul must have known how hard it would be for the Jewish Christians and those Gentiles who had begun attending synagogue and had fully committed themselves to the Jewish lifestyle, how hard it would have been for them to hear those words . . . "the power of God for the salvation of ALL who believe." Paul knew full well what the Jews of Rome had been through in the last few years. Just fifteen years ago or so, the emperor at that time, Claudius, had prohibited Jews from gathering together. This had weakened the Jewish synagogues considerably. They were already in the minority among the vulgar Roman culture. And then a few years later, that rotten scoundrel had sent all the Jews in Rome packing. He had sent the immigrants back to where they'd come from. Just in the last year or so with the prospect of a new emperor and a whole new set of laws, Jews had begun moving back into town trying to reestablish themselves in the face of hostility of all kinds. How easy it would have been for the Christians in Rome to turn their eyes away from all their neighbors who didn't believe in Jesus. How easy to seethe in hatred when they thought of the Artemis-worshippers of Ephesus or the filthy centurions of Rome—evil people who did evil things.

The first section of the letter that Paul and his scribe had written yesterday cut through all that. It wasn't just on Gentile sinners with their worship of all kinds of false gods and their unnatural lifestyles that the wrath of God was being poured out on. It was also being poured out on the nationalistic hatred of Jews. No nation under heaven would escape condemnation. Instead with that little word *all* Paul was again making his point so forcefully. All people are sinners and stand under God's judgment and coming wrath. Paul repeats over and over and counters a number of arguments all with the point that all people, that all Jews and all Greeks and all Romans, indeed all people, yes, really all people . . . like *all*, every single last one of them, are sinners.

Today is a good day. With a glimmer in his eye, Paul is reminded of all the Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and Romans who had recently come to faith in Jesus. With those people in mind, with the vast diversity of all kinds of people across the lands

and seas he'd traversed, he dictates these words, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for ALL who believe. For there is no distinction: for ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:21–24 ESV). The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ is for ALL who believe.

Maybe Paul already had in mind that day some of the profound things he would later write in his letter. "He (that is, Abraham) is the father of all who believe" (Rom 4:11 NIV). And "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for all who believe" (Rom. 10:4 NIV). And "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom 10:12–13 NIV). Yes, that little word *all*, all who believe in Christ—Paul was holding up all kinds of people before the eyes of the Romans. Bad news on the one hand because it would convict them of their judgmentally averted eyes, and yet great news because they themselves were included in the Gospel's *all*. They, too, had been justified by Christ's gift, through the redemption in Christ.

With all these people in mind, Paul would a few days later toward the end of his letter write to the Romans, "I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another" (Rom 15:14 NIV). And he would end the main body of his letter a few lines later with the words, "The God of peace be with you all" (Rom 15:33 NIV). Yes, the Gospel is for all people, and that had profound implications for how they got on with all people.

Much had changed in the fifteen hundred years that passed after the Apostle Paul wrote those words in Romans, and yet much remained the same. It's 1522, and Luther is preaching on the "alls" in Paul's Epistles.[3] Paul doesn't just use this word in Romans that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift." Luther points that Paul goes on to use these "alls" in several places. Colossians 1:23 (ESV)—"The gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven." Titus 2:11 (ESV)—"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people." But how are we to understand these verses? In the medieval church, some were saying that Gospel had indeed gone out to all ends of the earth.[4] The command of Christ to make disciples of all nations? Check; we've done that already. The apostles took the Gospel to all nations. Don't you know about the stories of the apostles visiting every continent and land with this Gospel? Luther says, "Wait. No apostle was sent to Germany. It took eight hundred years for the gospel to arrive and convert us. And what about these recently discovered islands and this recently discovered land?"[5]

In 1522, Luther knew about the discovery of America.

Is that possible? Yes, Christopher Columbus had announced his discovery in 1497, and his little letter circulated even in Germany. A few years later, the letter of Amerigo Vespucci announcing his discovery had also made its rounds when Luther was a teen or young adult. And so Luther holds up the discovery of America and says, "What about all those heathens in those recently discovered islands and land? What about them?" Paul wasn't talking about a single event as if Christ's command to take the Gospel to all lands was already accomplished, and now we can just sit back and keep Christians in the church. No, he was talking about the very nature of the Gospel itself! "It is like a pebble dropped in a lake in which the ripples begin to go out and accomplish Christ's command to preach the gospel to all nations."[6]

These ripples are still moving across the pond. It's been five hundred years since Luther's 95 Theses. Much has changed, and yet much remains the same. This morning, Luther holds up before our eyes all people, and that includes you too! It may be bad news when you begin to think that the Gospel isn't just for you. It's not just you and Jesus. It's Jesus and all the people who believe in Him. If you're judging those people or averting your eyes from people you should be sharing the Gospel with, this is bad news for you. The wrath of God is being poured out on all people. "For you in passing judgment on another condemn yourself" Paul says (Rom 2:1 ESV). And yet, hear once again Romans 3:23–24, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This is good news for you. It's good news because your sins are forgiven, and Christ calls you to look on Him in faith. As a justified, baptized, forgiven child of God, He calls you to look at all the people of the world. Maybe every once in a while, take your earbuds out. Look at that person across the way and say hello. Strike up a conversation. Say a prayer asking that they would know the same Jesus that you know. See, the Gospel is for all people, even for you!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Endnotes

[1] An earlier form of this sermon was preached in chapel at Concordia Seminary for the Observation of the Reformation on October 25, 2017. It has been edited for publication.
[2] I am dependent on James Dunn for the background material, the date and circumstances of Paul's writing the letter to the Romans. Dunn, *Romans* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988).
[3] Martin Luther, WA 10/1:21; 10/3:139.
[4] Particularly Gabriel Biel. Cf. Reinhard Schwarz, "Martin Luther on the European Discovery of America," *Word & World* XIV (1994): 82–86.
[5] Cf. Karl Holl, "Luther und die Mission" in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1928–1932), 234–243.
[6] WA 10/3:140.

Articles

Luther's Teaching and Practice Regarding Believers' Confessing of the Faith and Witness of Christ

Robert Kolb

Abstract: The history of the Lutheran churches reveals a consistent interest in and commitment to mission from the sixteenth century on even if initially the churches in central Europe had little or no means for pursuing sending missionaries overseas. The theological commitment to mission, however, was taken for granted by prominent teachers of the Lutheran churches. Luther's theology, centered in the Word of God as the instrument of God's saving power, emphasized that witness to the gospel and the sharing of the message of forgiveness of sins in Christ was the calling or duty of every baptized believer. This takes place, he believed, in "Christian" societies but also outside those societies when it is possible for believers to give such witness there. His own practice reached out to lapsed church members as well as Jews, the only group outside the faith that existed in the German lands at his time. He was always sensitively translating the faith culturally as well as linguistically for his hearers and readers. The Augsburg Confession also was issued to confess the faith to others within the household of faith in line with the Wittenberg conviction that believers are always to give witness to Christ.

Fifty years ago, as I began my theological studies at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, a professor impressed upon me that a person cannot be truly committed to the Lutheran confessions without being fully committed to the mission of the church to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those outside the faith. That professor was Robert Preus. In the Norwegian Lutheranism in which he had grown up, in its specific forms

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on both sides of the Atlantic, mission and confessional commitment were not contradictory but complementary. Yet also in that culture, the division between faithfulness to the Book of Concord and faithfulness to the Lord's commission to teach the nations has somehow grown up in our time.

Nearly ten years ago, I was invited to give the Aus Memorial Lecture on just this topic. George Aus and his colleague Herman Preus had conducted a running feud throughout their careers: Aus, the pietistic and therefore synergistic missions and evangelism supporter, and Preus, the representative of the old Norwegian "Synod" that was close to Missouri and somehow supposed to be less enthusiastic about outreach to those outside the faith. I replied that I could hardly imagine giving the Aus Lecture; if they had offered a (Herman) Preus Lecture, I would, of course, have accepted. I received the immediate response, and I am sure that e-mail conveyed the appropriate grin and/or rolling of the eyes from the friend who had sent the invitation: That was precisely why they wanted me. The perceived tension between commitment to the Lutheran Confessions and at least some forms of bringing the Gospel to those outside the faith has introduced false accents to more than one branch of the Lutheran church.

The perceived tension between commitment to the Lutheran Confessions and at least some forms of bringing the Gospel to those outside the faith has introduced false accents to more than one branch of the Lutheran church.

But such false myths are hard to destroy. Where does this myth come from? Perhaps from the founder of the modern discipline of missiology, Gustav Warneck, who misread Luther and attributed to him the attitudes of the Liberal German theologians who claimed the name "Lutheran" but understood little of his way of thinking—although the examples of many leaders of the revival of Lutheran confessional theology in the nineteenth century, such as Wilhelm Löhe, Louis and Theodor Harms, and Friedrich Brunn should have made it obvious to Warneck that this was not the case.

Perhaps the myth simply arises more recently from those who are afraid of losing the treasure and thinking that burying it is the best way to do that. We live in a frightening time, and such an attitude is easy to develop. The Lord discourages that attitude. He knows more about the lordship of the Holy Spirit over His Church than we do.

A Bit of History

The separation of commitment to our Confessions and witness to those outside the faith does not reflect the historical record. It is true that some Lutherans have

always ignored the wider mission of the church to bring false believers to true faith in Jesus Christ. But from the sixteenth century on, the opposing examples are multiple. For example, the Swedes were trying to convert the Lapps in the north of the Nordic lands at the end of the sixteenth century, and Johann Campanius brought the Small Catechism into Lenape for the Delaware tribe in the mid-seventeenth century. By that time the Danes had made a few false starts at mission from their trading colonies on the west African coast, and Duke Jakob Ketteler of Courland, in present Latvia, had sent missionaries to the lands he acquired as repayment for a debt from Charles II of England on the west African coast and in Tobago. Three hundred ten years ago, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau began planting the first church that has remained in a Majority World country in southeast India at the Danish colony of Tranquebar.

Among the most famous statements of Lutheran Orthodoxy in regard to mission is the infamous Opinion of the Wittenberg faculty dated February 27, 1651, in which it allegedly limited the command of Jesus to make disciples of all nations to the apostolic times. Long heralded as a proof that seventeenth-century Lutherans were not interested in mission, this text bears closer scrutiny. For it was not answering a question regarding mission but rather regarding the legitimacy of the Lutheran church and the validity of its claim to be church at all. Roman Catholic critics, above all Robert Bellarmine, had argued that since the Lutherans did not engage in sending missionaries to distant shores, it was not truly the church instituted by Christ. An imperial counselor in Vienna, Erhard, Truchsess of Wetzhausen (1617–1664), in the midst of the process of his conversion from Lutheranism to the Roman obedience, had posed six questions to the Wittenberg faculty regarding what constitutes the true Christian Church. One of his "scruples" regarding the authenticity of the Lutheran church raised the question regarding the absence of preachers of the Augsburg Confession in the "Orient, the tropics, and the New World." Whether wisely or not, the Wittenberg faculty defended the legitimacy of the Lutheran confession by addressing only the question of the unmediated call to preach the Gospel in the wider world. The Wittenberg answer repeated the medieval conviction, represented also two generations earlier in Philip Nicolai's *De regno Christi* (1597), that the Gospel had indeed spread very early to all peoples and that they bore responsibility for keeping it alive in their own midst. Therefore, the Wittenberg faculty rejected participation in converting the distant heathen as a necessary mark of Christ's Church even though it did not rule out activities of Lutherans such as those mentioned above in this Opinion.[1]

Johann Gerhard's similar statement a quarter century earlier occurred in the same context, the contention of Roman Catholics that the only true church was the papal church because the succession of the apostles devolved on the bishop of Rome; proofs for this contention included papally commissioned missionaries in various parts of the world. Gerhard was arguing against the Flemish-born Hadrian à Savaria

(1532–1612) on this point as he developed his defense of the legitimacy of his church,[2] but this argument fit into the larger dispute with Bellarmine over the proper marks of the Church and whether the Lutherans qualified as true Church.[3] It is seldom noted that Gerhard also claimed that the calling of the heathen through the Gospel continued in his day,[4] that Lutherans were bringing Jews and Turks to faith in Christ,[5] and that Lutheran preachers of the Gospel had converted people in "Iceland; Greenland, Lappland, Livonia, and other places to the true God."[6] Gerhard cited Roman opponents' complaints that "the Lutheran sect" had dared to go "to the Greeks, to the Indians, and to the new world" against Bellarmine.[7]

Such attitudes reflected the teaching and activity of Luther's and Melanchthon's own disciples.[8] Some ignored the mission of the Church to spread the Gospel to the heathen, but others did not despite the fact that the most widespread machinery for non-European mission in the sixteenth century was an imperialist government seeking overseas colonies. Lutheran princes did not indulge in such ventures for the most part. In addition, like Luther and Melanchthon, most of their followers met almost no non-Christians in their entire lifetimes. When they did, many tried to bring Jews into their congregations, sometimes with success. Two of the members of the team that composed the Formula of Concord demonstrated their conviction that Christians are called to give public witness to their faith to those who do not share it. Jakob Andreae shared his view of lay witness to the faith and tried to cultivate it when he preached a series of thirty-three sermons in 1566 in Esslingen, a town in which Lutherans often encountered no unbaptized people but rather Roman Catholics, Zwinglians, Anabaptists, and Schwenkfelders. He grounded his series in the lament of the "common people" that they did not know how to converse with those of other churches when they met them on the roads and in the markets.[9] "Every Christian is bound to give an account of his faith, and whoever is not able to do so should not call himself a Christian, as we read, 'be ready at every time to give an answer to everyone who asks regarding the basis of your hope, and do so with gentleness and respect'" (1 Pt 3:15). Artisans dare not be silent when asked to explain their work, and believers dare not fail to speak of their faith when given the opportunity.[10]

Andreae distinguished two kinds of Christian witness, that of those who can read the Scripture and use their reading to fashion their witness and that of those who cannot read and must depend on their catechetical knowledge for their testimony.[11] "Just as the alchemists draw the best juice from a plant through the process of distilling, and call it the quintessential, that is, the very best power and juice, so it is with this juice that is drawn from the Holy Scripture. For if you would put the entire Holy Scripture under the wine press, or melt it into a nugget, you would not be able to press more out of it than these six chief parts."[12] Andreae proceeded to instruct the latter in witnessing to their faith with examples. To those Roman Catholics who "might want to persuade you that you should doubt whether or not you have a

gracious God through Christ because you sin every day and still have many transgressions to your credit. . . . You tell them no, and grab the first word of the Creed, 'I believe.' Believe means not doubting. I believe in the forgiveness of my sins. Therefore, I do not doubt. I sin daily because of my weakness, and therefore, I pray daily, 'forgive us our trespasses,' and I believe this forgiveness through our Lord Christ, who has paid for these sins and wants to reckon this to me."[13] In this manner Andreae hoped to foster the testimony of common people in their situation.

Nikolaus Selnecker used his comments on the book of Jonah to make one practical suggestion for German involvement in God's efforts to convert those outside the faith. On the basis of God's clear concern for the Gentiles, he urged his readers: "If people can take long, dangerous, extended trips today, from Germany to India or to the new world, to obtain merchandise, spices, and commodities, why should they be excused from taking along the Word of God, the most precious treasure, even if they have to preach the gospel more than a hundred miles away?" They should not speculate about why God has not given all people the message. Instead, they should do what God enables them to do to share Christ's message. Few of his contemporaries made such a journey, but Selnecker was nonetheless able to think such concrete, practical terms.[14]

Six Theses on Luther's Sense of the Mission of God

That this view reflects Luther's own attitudes and theology of the Word of God is clear from the little book assembled by Volker Stolle at Oberursel and translated by Klaus Detlev Schulz, *The Church Comes from All Nations. Luther Texts on Mission*.[15] Luther's own understanding of the mission on which Christ sent His Church at the end of each Gospel can be summarized in six theses.

1. *Luther understood the Word of God to be the foundation of reality and the instrument of the ultimate power of the Creator.*

Martin Luther grew up in a world that had inherited its basic perception of what it means to be Christian and to be human from pre-Christian Germanic traditional religion. When the tribal leaders had introduced their people to the Christian message, the church lacked sufficient personnel to adequately instruct the majority of the population, and it lacked the imagination to translate much of its message, formed in Mediterranean cultures, into the cultural setting north of the Alps. The terminology changed, but the foundational assessment of the relationship between God and the human being focused on the human performance of sacred or religious rituals that aimed at attracting divine favor. The carrying out of ritual mediated by the hierarchy—especially the local priest who said Mass, where a person's appearance and passive participation sufficed to please God—formed the connection between human creature and Creator.

Through his study of Scripture in his early years as professor, Luther came to a radically different conclusion. He found that God approaches sinners, not vice versa, and that He does so by speaking to them. His word of absolution re-creates them from rebels who doubt His Word and reject His lordship into His children, whose lives are framed and driven by trust in what He has done for them in the death and resurrection of Christ.[16]

Therefore, Luther abandoned Aristotle's understanding that reality consists of substances that can be described in terms of eternal rules that govern the universe and can be ascertained by the "rational being" [*animal rationale*] that Aristotle defined the human being to be. Instead, from early on in his career, Luther viewed reality as relational at its core.

For Luther, all creation, every creature, owes his, her, or its existence to God's speaking each one into existence. God speaks and things happen, as they did when He first spoke, piercing the darkness with His creative Word. "God speaks a mere Word, and immediately the birds are brought forth from the water. If the Word is spoken, all things are possible."[17] "By speaking God created all things and worked through his Word. All his works are words of God, created by the uncreated Word."[18] "All created things are produced and governed by God's Word. He spoke, and it happened."[19] Three years earlier than his lectures on Genesis 1, in 1532, he observed, "A person's word is a little sound that disappears into the air and quickly vanishes. God's Word is greater than heaven and earth, even death and hell, for it is the power of God and remains forever. If it is God's Word, a person should hold it fast and believe that God himself is talking with us."[20] In lecturing on Psalm 2, a few months later, he reaffirmed: "what the Hebrews always knew," that God's Word and things are all the same: דָּבָר [*davar*, the Hebrew word for both "word" and "thing"]. "When Scripture says that God is speaking it understands a word of reality [*verbum reale*] or action, not just a sound, as our words are. God does not have a mouth, a tongue, for he is Spirit. Therefore, the mouth and tongue of God refers to, 'he spoke, and it happened,' and when he speaks, mountains tremble, kingdoms dissipate, and the whole earth is moved. His is another kind of speaking than ours." When God talks, it "is a language different from ours. When the sun rises, when the sun sets, God is speaking. When plants grow, when human beings are born, God is speaking. Accordingly, the words of God are not empty air but things very great and wonderful, which we see with our eyes and feel with our hands."[21] Luther's relational view of reality combined with his conviction that God acts through his Word and that God's speaking makes things happen is the presumption behind His urgency when He is urging His readers and hearers to share the good

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news about Jesus with others since that good news is the Holy Spirit's tool for bestowing the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

2. *Luther believed that Baptism brings with it the call to every child of God to be agents who deliver God's life-giving Gospel in the forgiveness of sins to others.*

When Luther added the phrase "mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers," he was borrowing a phrase from the brothers of the Augustinian order, lay and ordained, who were pledged to bring consolation and support to each other. But it is clear that, as he did with other terminology of the monastic way of life, he universalized it; for he believed that God has placed the task of bringing His Word to others in the calling of all whom He baptized. In his postil for the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, Luther wrote that

God has placed the task of bringing His Word to others in the calling of all whom He baptized.

> all who are Christians and have been baptized have this power [to forgive one another's sins]. For with this they praise Christ, and the word is put into their mouth, so that they may and are able to say, if they wish, and as often as it is necessary: "Look! God offers you his grace, forgives you all your sins. Be comforted; your sins are forgiven. Only believe, and you will surely have forgiveness." This word of consolation shall not cease among Christians until the last day: "Your sins are forgiven, be of good cheer." Such language a Christian always uses and openly declares the forgiveness of sins. For this reason and in this manner a Christian has power to forgive sins.[22]

The reformer elaborated on this "mutual conversation and consolation" of believers in his Large Catechism. When "some particular issue weighs on us or attacks us, eating away at us until we can have no peace" or when we "find ourselves insufficiently strong in faith," then Luther advised laying our troubles before another believer "at any time and as often as we wish." From fellow Christians believers receive "advice, comfort, and strength." For "by divine ordinance Christ himself has placed absolution in the mouths of his Christian community and commanded us to absolve one another from sins. So if there is a heart that feels its sin and desires comfort, it has here a sure refuge where it finds and hears God's Word because through a human being God looses and absolves from sin."[23] Nearly a decade later, in preaching on John 14:13–14, Luther explained that Christians naturally want to help others receive deliverance and life in Christ just as they have. "A Christian cannot be still or idle but constantly strives and struggles mightily, as one who has no other object in life than to disseminate God's honor and glory among the people, that others may also receive such a spirit of grace."[24]

The reformer provided concrete details about his vision of Christians sharing the Gospel with each other individually or in small groups when he was preaching to the Wittenberg congregation on Matthew 18:15–20 a few months later:

> Here Jesus is saying that he does not only want [the condemnation of sin and proclamation of the forgiveness of sins] to take place in the church, but he also gives this right and freedom where two or three are gathered together, so that among them the comfort and the forgiveness of sins may be proclaimed and pronounced. He pours out [his forgiveness] even more richly and places the forgiveness of sins for them in every corner, so that they not only find the forgiveness of sins in the congregation but also at home in their houses, in the fields and gardens, wherever one of them comes to another in search of comfort and deliverance. It shall be at my disposal when I am troubled and sorry, in tribulation and vulnerable, when I need something, at whatever hour and time it may be. There is not always a sermon being given publicly in the church, so when my brother or neighbor comes to me, I am to lay my troubles before my neighbor and ask for comfort. . . . Again I should comfort others, and say, "[D]ear friend, dear brother, why don't you lay aside your burdens. It is certainly not God's will that you experience this suffering. God had his Son die for you so that you do not sorrow but rejoice."[25]

Standing in shadow of the cross, believers exercise their calling to bring the Gospel's comfort and consolation often without an explanation for the evil others encounter. They have something better. They bring the person of Christ and the restoration of life that flows from His empty tomb to those whose lives are ragged and torn.

3. *Luther believed that Christians give witness to those outside the faith as well, even though most of his followers in sixteenth-century central, eastern, and northern Europe had little or no occasion to meet unbaptized individuals.*

In 1523, preaching to the people of the Wittenberg congregation on 1 Peter 2:9, Luther explained that every Christian, in the priestly office,

> proclaims to the other the mighty deed of God; how through him you have been redeemed from sin, hell, death, and from all misery, and have been called to eternal life. You should also instruct people how they should come to that light. Everything then should be directed in such a way that you recognize what God has done for you and you, thereafter, make it your highest priority to proclaim this publicly and call everyone to the light to which you are called. Where you see people that do not know this, you should instruct them and also teach them how you learned, that is, how a person through the good work and might of God is saved and comes from darkness into light.[26]

In the same year, 1523, Luther wrote that all Christians have the duty to "preach and teach the gospel to erring heathen or non-Christians" in the absence of a pastor.[27] He also taught his readers to pray for the conversion of those outside the faith.[28]

From early on, Luther also proclaimed to the Wittenberg congregation that God's Word proceeded from Christ and His apostles into the world, and its movement will continue to the end of time, like a stone thrown into the water, which moves out in concentric circles, as he preached on Ascension Day 1522, expressing sentiments similar to those in the Christmas sermon on Titus 2:11 and the Epiphany sermon on Isaiah 60:1–6 composed for his *Wartburg Postil* earlier that year.[29] On Ascension, he noted that the preaching of the Word "was begun by the apostles, and it constantly goes forward, is pushed on farther and farther by the preachers, driven hither and thither into the world, yet always being made known to those who have never heard it before although it may be stopped in the midst of course and condemned as heresy." But "it is still on its way."[30] Sermons from 1525 and 1533 echoed this sentiment,[31] as does his lecture of 1530 on Psalm 117:1, in which he proclaimed that the nations praise the Lord because the Word had spread, the heathen become subject to Christ, and "it is not finished yet."[32] Luther viewed the spread of the Gospel as necessary for the existence of the church. "If Christians were without such a commission, if they had no common bond in the way of seal or sign, the organization would neither be expanded nor preserved. Christ wishes to bind us together by a divine communion to further the spread of the gospel that others through our confession may be brought into the fold," he commented in 1522.[33]

Luther viewed the spread of the Gospel as necessary for the existence of the church.

4. *Luther put this conviction regarding Christian witness to Christ into practice to the extent possible in his "Christian" culture.*

Luther was prepared to put this theoretical base into practice in his own time. He hardly met more than twenty-five unbaptized adults in his entire life, all of them Jewish; and the only other group of people outside the Christian faith which he believed his hearers had any chance of encountering were Turks, whom they might meet if taken prisoner in the Turkish invasions. He regarded good catechetical training as preparation for such witnessing, should Christians endure the misfortune of capture.[34] Although his high hopes for mass conversions of Jews[35] disappeared, he continued to counsel patience and sensitivity in Christian witness to Jewish people, beginning with an affirmation of Jesus' nobility and worth as a human being and only gently proceeding to His being God.[36]

5. *As the consummate translator, Luther recognized the importance of faithfulness to the text of Scripture and sensitivity to the ever-changing context in which God has placed his human creatures as historical beings.*

Luther was, of course, the consummate translator. Recent work by Michael DeJonge of the University of South Florida and Christiane Tietz of the University of Zurich has focused on the nature of all practice of religion as an exercise in translation because the adherents of every religion, no matter how much they wish to preserve what they are handing down from the past, are handing their beliefs and practices down in the historical contexts of their times and places.[37] Lamin Sanneh has noted that translation comes naturally to those who trust in the God, who translated Himself into human flesh. They use a translation of the words of the Savior from Aramaic into Greek as their authoritative text, and they learn native languages upon entering into a new culture so that God's Word may be translated into the language and thought patterns of its new home.[38] James Nestingen put Sanneh's theory to use in analyzing Luther's Small Catechism as a very successful attempt to translate Latin Christianity's hand-me-downs into Germanic culture.[39]

This sensitivity to his own culture sprang from Luther's strong sense that God created His world within the framework of time and that the passing of time presupposes that He created human beings as historical creatures, whom He has located in various periods of the history that He shares with humankind in specific geographical places. That means that Luther was sensitive to context and to the supra-contextual nature of the message of God's Word that needs to be translated into specific times and places. "Therefore, as in the world every country and people have their own special laws, rights and customs, so, like in outward temporal appointments, there must also be a difference in the preaching. Every station and office must be responsible and taught in its appointed sphere."[40] God has a strategy, Luther believed. Despite these cultural differences, all believers are united by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ and by Baptism.

> It is, indeed, wisely ordained by Christ that in his kingdom, which shall expand into all the world and among all nations, he instituted not many ceremonies, as was the custom among the Jews, nor a diversity of forms among the various countries and nations, peoples and languages, but he ordained only the simplest and most ordinary sign [Baptism]. It is everywhere observed in the same way—just as the preaching of the gospel is alike in all places, making all, adults and children, rich and poor, great and humble, one and all, in the world equal before God. Hence, if a Christian from the uttermost parts of the world should come to us and observe our forms, he would have to say "they are the very same Word and sign that I have learned and received."[41]

6. *The Augsburg Confession represents Philip Melanchthon's presentation of the Wittenberg theologians' conviction that they had been given God's Word in order to share it with their own flock, with the household of faith, and with the world.*

The general framework of Luther's understanding of the Word of God, how it functions, and how it had spread across the nations through those whom God sends by virtue of His baptismal promise was shaping the thinking of his colleague, Philip Melanchthon, when he went to Augsburg in 1530 to advise the governments committed to reform in the Wittenberg manner as they answered Emperor Charles V's summons to explain their deviation from the Roman obedience. Melanchthon chose "*confessio*" as the word for the document that was to identify what the Wittenberg Reformation was about and to label the action which that document served to carry out in proclaiming the Gospel. By discarding his initial title for his presentation, "*apologia*," and turning from defense to confession, Melanchthon embraced the active understanding of God's working through His Word that Luther had propagated for more than a decade in Wittenberg. In so doing, he gave the word "confession" a new usage in Christendom and arrived at a new way of defining the church on the basis of its public confession. The Wittenberg understanding of this word, like several others, has been described by Peter Fraenkel as a "verbal noun," that is, a noun that describes an action.[42] One cannot have a confession without confessing it. In its historical, political, ecclesiastical context, Melanchthon focused above all on the ecumenical witness to existing Christendom that formed the vital heart of Wittenberg reform. But the implications of the Wittenberg understanding of God's Word commit the adherents of the Augsburg Confession to active evangelistic witness whenever they have opportunity to do so.[43]

One cannot have a confession without confessing it.

Conclusion

Luther presumed that the Holy Spirit is active in speaking a performative, re-creative word of promise that conveys the benefits of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ to those whom He moves to trust that promise. Luther also held that the Holy Spirit uses His human disciples as the instruments for bringing the Gospel to the people around us through the proper application and interaction of Law and Gospel. The model of confessing the faith to others that the princes and municipal representatives of Germany presented to the church in Augsburg in 1530 calls all of their followers to continuing confession of the faith: first, to their fellow believers within their own congregations, in edification; second, to those outside the faith, in

evangelization; and third, to the wider household of faith, in ecumenical sharing of insights and concerns.[44]

Endnotes

[1] *Consilia theologica Witebergensia* . . . (Frankfurt/Main, Wust, 1664), 196–197.
[2] Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter A. Hanson (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1961), 349, Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici: cum pro adstruenda veritate* . . . , ed. Eduard Preuss (Berlin: Schlawitz, 1863–1885), XI:288ff., IX:323.
[3] On seventeenth-century Lutheran ecclesiology, see Kenneth G. Appold, *Orthodoxie als Konsensbildung. Das theologische Disputationswesen an der Universität Wittenberg zwischen 1570 und 1710* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).
[4] *Loci Theologici*, XIV:191.
[5] *Loci Theologici*, XII:59.
[6] *Loci Theologici*, XII:60.
[7] *Loci Theologici*, XI, 287. Elert, 349.
[8] The following paragraphs are excerpted from Robert Kolb, "Late Reformation Lutherans on Mission and Confession," *Lutheran Quarterly* 20 (2006), 26–43.
[9] *Drey vnd dreissig Predigten Von den fu[e]rnemsten Spaltungen in der Christlichen Religion/ so sich zwischen den Ba[e]pstischen/ Lutherischen/ Zwinglischen/ Schwenckfeldern vnd Widerteufern halten* (Tübingen, 1580), originally published 1568, A1b–A2b. These sermons served Andreae as the model for his efforts in 1573 to reconcile feuding Lutherans, efforts that paved the way to the Formula of Concord.
[10] *Drey vnd dreissig Predigten*, 4:197.
[11] *Drey vnd dreissig Predigten*, 4:197–198.
[12] *Drey vnd dreissig Predigten*, 4:199–200. Andreae utilized the catechism extensively in his theological leadership, see Robert Kolb, "Jakob Andreae's Concern for the Laity," *Concordia Journal* 4 (1978), 58–67.
[13] *Drey vnd dreissig Predigten*, 4:201–202.
[14] Nicolaus Selnecker, *Daß ander teil Der Propheten* . . . (Leipzig, 1579), 116a, 113a–116a.
[15] Saint Louis: Concordia, 2003.
[16] Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 1–6, 35–97.
[17] *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–1993 [henceforth WA]), 42:37,4–6, *Luther's Works* (Saint Louis/Philadelphia: Concordia/Fortress, 1958–1986 [henceforth LW]), 1:49.
[18] Genesis lectures, 1535, WA42:35, 38–40, LW1:47.
[19] WA42:23,5–13, LW1:30; cf. his lecture on Psalm 2, 1532, WA40, 2:230, 20–32, LW12:32.
[20] WATischreden1:69–70, §148.
[21] "Lecture on Psalm 2," 1532, WA40, 2:230, 20–25, 231, 28; LW12:32–33.
[22] WA 10,1:412–414; "Luther's Church Postil, Sermon on Matthew 9:1–8," 1526, *Sermons of Martin Luther*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker 5 (1905; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983 [henceforth CP]), 209.
[23] Large Catechism, 1529, Confession 13–14, *Die Bekenntnisschrfiten der Evangelische-Lutherischen Kirche*, ed. Irene Dingel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014),1159, line 34–1160, line 4, *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 477–478.
[24] "Sermons on John 14," 1537, WA 45:540, 14–23, LW 24:87–88. Cf. "The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ—Against the Fanatics," 1526, WA 19:482–523, LW 36:359.

[25] "Sermons on Matthew 18-24," 1539–1540, WA 47:297, 36–298,14.
[26] WA12:318, 25–318, 6, as translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 20.
[27] WA 11:411, 31–413,6; LW 39:309–310.
[28] *A Simple Way to Pray*, 1535, WA 38:360, 29–361, 5; LW 43:195.
[29] WA 10,3:139,17-140,6, translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 24–25; on Titus 2:11, WA 10, 1:21, 3–23, 14, translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 98–99; on Isaiah 60, WA 10,1:541, 4–555, 15, translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 91–95.
[30] 3:202.
[31] WA 17,1:257–258, and 442, 31–443, 9; WA 37, 1:77–78, translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*; sermon on Matthew 24:8ff., WA 47:565, 11–566, 3, translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 82–83.
[32] WA 31, 1:228, 20–233, 8, translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 100–102.
[33] CP 3:234.
[34] "Admonition to Prayer Against the Turks," 1541, WA 51:621, 5ff., LW 43:239; "A Military Sermon against the Turks," 1529, WA 30, 2:185, 18–195, 6, translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 71–73.
[35] "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew," WA 11:314, 26–316, 2, 336, 22–36, LW 45:200–201, 229.
[36] In a sermon on Matthew 4, February 14, 1524, WA 15:447, 11–22, translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 60; sermon on Jeremiah 23:6–8, November 25, 1526, WA 20:569, 25–570, 12, translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 61; letter to Heinrich Genesius, pastor in Ichtershausen, July 9, 1530, on how to instruct a prospective Jewish convert, WA Br 5:452, 1–28, translated in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 63–64.
[37] Michael P. DeJonge and Christiane Tietz, eds. *Translating Religion. What Is Lost and Gained?* (New York/Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), see esp. the editors' introduction and conclusion, 1–12 and 169–173.
[38] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message. The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009).
[39] "Luther's Cultural Translation of the Catechism," *Lutheran Quarterly* 15 (2001), 440–452.
[40] CP 3:222.
[41] CP 3:235.
[42] Peter Fraenkel, "Revelation and Tradition. Notes on Some Aspects of Doctrinal Continuity in the Theology of Philip Melanchthon," *Studia Theologica* 13 (1959): 97–133.
[43] Robert Kolb, *Confessing the Faith, Reformers Define the Church, 1530–1580* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1991), 138–140.
[44] Charles P. Arand, Robert Kolb, and James A. Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions, History and Theology of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 9–11.

Six Theses on Luther's Sense of the Mission of God

1. Luther understood the Word of God to be the foundation of reality and the instrument of the ultimate power of the Creator.

2. Luther believed that Baptism brings with it the call to every child of God to be agents who deliver God's life-giving Gospel in the forgiveness of sins to others.

3. Luther believed that Christians give witness to those outside the faith as well, even though most of his followers in the sixteenth-century central, eastern and northern Europe had little or no occasion to meet unbaptized individuals.

4. Luther put this conviction regarding Christian witness to Christ into practice to the extent possible in his "Christian" culture.

5. As the consummate translator, Luther recognized the importance of faithfulness to the text of Scripture and sensitivity to the ever-changing context in which God has placed his human creatures as historical beings.

6. The Augsburg Confession represent Philip Melanchthon's presentation of the Wittenberg theologians' conviction that they had been given God's Word in order to share it with their flock, with the household of faith, and with the world.

Lutheran Society for Missiology (LSFM) Banquet
www.lsfm.global
Rev. Dr. Robert Kolb
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
January 25, 2017

Seis tesis acerca de cómo el Dr. Martín Lutero entendió la Misión de Dios

1. Lutero comprendió la Palabra de Dios como el fundamento de toda realidad y el instrumento de la expresión máxima del poder del Creador.

2. Lutero creía que el Bautismo trae consigo el llamado de Dios a cada uno de sus hijos/as para ser su instrumento que comunique a otros el Evangelio de vida a través del perdón de pecados.

3. Lutero creía que los cristianos dan testimonio de Cristo al prójimo incrédulo, al no-creyente, al falso creyente, o al apartado de la fe, aun cuando los habitantes de la Europa del siglo dieciséis tenían poca ocasión para conocer a personas no-bautizadas.

4. Lutero puso en práctica esta convicción en cuanto al testimonio cristiano por todos los medios en su cultura "cristiana."

5. Como consagrado traductor, Lutero reconoció la importancia de ser fiel al texto de las Escrituras y de ser sensible al contexto, que constantemente cambia, en que Dios coloca sus criaturas humanas como seres históricos.

6. Philip Melanchthon presenta, a través de la Confesión de Augsburgo, la convicción de los teólogos de Wittenberg, constatando que habían recibido la Palabra de Dios a fin de compartirla con los de su propio redil, con la familia de la fe y con el mundo.

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"The Giant That Couldn't Sleep": An Active Theology of Missions as Derived from the Lutheran Confessions

Glenn K. Fluegge

Abstract: Some have described the Lutheran Church as a "sleeping giant." The implication would seem to be that the Lutheran Church is gigantic when it comes to theology but relatively inactive when it comes to missions. One could make a good case against the caricature itself, but the purpose of this essay is to ask a more fundamental question: Can this giant even sleep? I argue that it cannot and set out to develop a two-dimensional theology of missions as derived from the Lutheran Confessions that is categorically active and very much alive. It focuses on the mission of the Triune God (vertical dimension) which flows naturally into the mission of the Church (horizontal dimension).

Introduction

The Lutheran Church has allegedly been described as a "sleeping giant."[1] The implication would seem to be that despite our great contribution to theology, we have a tendency to rarely, if ever, act on it. In a manner of speaking, we are supposedly asleep. The great "giant" of theology seems reluctant to wake up, rear its head, and venture out to plow the fields and plant the seed. The caricature ultimately suggests a question: What good is a sleeping giant?

Reactions vary. Some (myself included) would deny that the giant is "sleeping." Such a stigma seems less than historically accurate. Even a cursory overview of the history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod would reveal a church body that has been quite awake indeed, and not only in terms of its theology, but especially in terms of its missionary activity, both at home and abroad.[2]

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Others (myself included) disagree with the underlying assumption that one's theological prowess benefits no one and is otherwise wasted on the world. The rather emphatic words of G. K. Chesterton on the importance of theology and its distinctions come to mind:

> In all the mess of modern thoughtlessness, that still calls itself modern thought, there is perhaps nothing so stupendously stupid as the common saying, "Religion can never depend on minute disputes about doctrine." It is like saying that life can never depend on minute disputes about medicine.[3]

In this regard, he was of the same mind as Martin Luther. The Reformer was certainly not one to dismiss the importance of the Christian life, but he insisted above all on the importance of doctrine, for "life may be unclean, sinful, and inconsistent, but doctrine must be pure, holy, sound, unchanging . . . not a tittle or letter may be omitted, however much life may fail to meet the requirements of doctrine" (WA, 30 111, 343–344). Hence, Luther and the Reformers took their stance on issues of doctrine seriously and spent considerable time and effort in developing the rationale for their doctrinal stances and defending them against any opponents.

Even a cursory overview of the history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod would reveal a church body that has been quite awake indeed, and not only in terms of its theology, but especially in terms of its missionary activity, both at home and abroad.

I find less helpful a third reaction that some adopt, namely, that of boasting that one is better off being a gigantic giant lying asleep than a puny peon running around. In other words, having sound doctrine and the pure Gospel, even if rarely used in day-to-day life, is far more valuable than having a shallow and shaky theology that is practically and continually used to affect people's lives.

My purpose in this essay is not to explore the mission history of the LCMS. Nor is it to determine the value of being a theological giant. Nor is it to address the question of which is better, a sleeping giant or an active peon. These questions, especially the last one, tend to inadvertently admit and accept the fact that the giant is currently sleeping. But is that even possible?

Luther and the Reformers took their doctrinal stance because they believed wholeheartedly that it was firmly grounded on Holy Scripture. Just as important to them, however, were the pastoral implications of that doctrine. They were deeply concerned with the salvation and care of souls. In retrospect, it seems clear that this concern lies at the root of the entire Reformation movement. It is ultimately what gave rise to the fateful posting of the 95 Theses and serves as the underlying concern throughout the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, not to mention both of

Luther's catechisms. In other words, the Reformers did not boast in their doctrine simply because of its prowess, but they were ready to die for it because they believed that in the long run it was a very practical matter of spiritual life and death for the souls of many. It is in this way that Luther viewed theology as eminently practical.[4] Theology is not just speculation, nor is it merely about doing good works. For Luther, all of theology was about "the sinful and lost human being and the justifying and saving God" (LW 12:311).[5] Moreover, such a theology was not merely about examining the God-man relation from a distance, but it was also and ultimately a matter of God's creating and establishing a relation with us.[6] Any legitimate engagement in theology, then, necessarily creates faith and brings about salvation.

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If this theology of the Lutheran Reformers is what makes the Lutheran Church a "giant," then the question is no longer, "What good is a sleeping giant?" Rather, we should be asking, "Can this 'giant' even sleep? Can it even doze?" And the conclusive answer would have to be a resounding "no!" There is something so inherently practical and powerful about the theology of the Lutheran Church that, I would submit, it simply cannot remain inactive. With this in mind, it is safe to assume that if the "giant" is sleeping then it must be some other theology we are involved with.

The theology that the Lutheran Reformers were talking about can be found today most clearly and succinctly presented in the Lutheran Confessions and gathered together in *The Book of Concord.*[7] This essay takes a closer look at the inherent liveliness of the "giant" by narrowing our focus to one aspect of Lutheran theology, namely, the theology of missions. Although it may not directly address the topic of missions, I believe that Lutheran confessional theology has some deep insights that can serve as a foundational basis for a theology of missions today that is very active and quite alive.[8]

There are, of course, different approaches to missiology. There are those that focus on the practical side, delving into auxiliary disciplines such as anthropology, intercultural studies, and missional leadership. As a career missionary myself for many years in Africa, I do not wish to undermine in any way the value and, yes, necessity of such "left-hand kingdom" tools used in service to God's mission. Such discussions are crucially helpful when it comes to *how* the "giant" might carry out its activity. But I am concerned here with a much more fundamental question of *why* the

"giant" must be active in missions in the first place. Although I recognize the temptation to linger forever on the *why* and continually put off actual engagement in the *how*, it is likewise dangerous to overlook the *why* and jump immediately to the *how*. When all is said and done, the *why* ultimately helps us make responsible decisions about the *how*.

So, why missions in the first place? Is the work of mission simply an "addendum" to what God is really doing in the world? Is it really just a matter of mere obedience to yet another command that God added to the list we already had? Did God pass the baton, and now it's up to us to complete His mission? Are not Christian missions about liberation from oppression and caring for the needy? These and other questions like them reflect misunderstandings that greatly affect the *how* of missions and, in turn, call for a return to the *why* of missions. They can be addressed (and, if need be, adjusted) only as we explore the inherently missional[9] nature of confessional[10] Lutheran theology. In other words, I find it immensely helpful and most necessary to underscore what Lesslie Newbigin called the "logic of missions"[11] (but from a Lutheran point of view), that is, how our theology naturally and spontaneously[12] propels toward missional action and expression.

Our theology naturally and spontaneously propels toward missional action and expression.

My purpose in what follows is twofold: (1) offer a brief sketch of a theology of missions as derived from the Lutheran Confessions; and (2) offer an explanation as to why and how the Lutheran Church with its confessional theology of missions cannot sleep, but instead must be very much alive and active. To do this, I wish to direct our attention to the vertical dimension of missions as being the work of the Triune God (the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier)[13] and then, once this is established, to concentrate on the horizontal dimension of missions (the instrument of the Church).[14] Establishing the vertical aspect (God's mission or what theologians sometimes call the *Missio Dei*) before directing our attention to the horizontal aspect (the Church's mission) is vitally important, because the latter flows directly from and is motivated and "empowered" (SD IV, § 6)[15] by the former.

Vertical Dimension of Missions

I find it somewhat surprising how little attention God the Father receives in discussions about missions. Perhaps this is because the reconciling act of the Son and the sanctifying work of the Spirit appear to be more closely related to the subject of missions. It may also be due to the fact that Jesus directly engaged in activities that resemble what we consider "mission work" today. The Holy Spirit, for His part, was

sent out to continue "mission work." God the Father seems somewhat peripheral to the whole affair. But nothing could be further from the truth. God as Father provides the ultimate source (and example) for the actual Mission of God. This becomes especially clear when we direct our attention to His work as "Creator" (LC, Second Part, §§ 16, 19).

There are only twelve words in the English translation of the First Article of the Apostles' Creed, but each is deeply significant for Christian faith and life. The words "almighty Creator of heaven and earth" (LC, Second Part, § 9) not only identify God the Father as the Creator but necessarily define us as His creatures. What does this mean? It means that He universally preserves all things, including every aspect of our lives, from whom I marry to what I eat in the morning, and everything around us, from the birds in the air to the grain in the fields (LC, Second Part, §§ 13–16). However, the Father is concerned with more than just our day-to-day well-being and continued material existence. When we confess Him as "Creator," we confess that God the Father is concerned that we participate in a greater existence, one free from the power of the devil. According to Luther, essential to God's role as Creator and Preserver is that He "daily guards and defends us against every evil and misfortune" (LC, Second Part, § 17). On the basis of this confession and the Lord's example, we can most confidently pray, "but deliver us from evil" and be assured that it is our Father's will that we be rid of our "archenemy" (LC, Third Part, §§ 112–113).

This loving protection from the devil and his evil minions finds its fullest expression in the redemptive actions of Jesus Christ and its continuing effect in the sanctifying actions of the Holy Spirit.[16] Nevertheless, as our "Creator," it is God the Father who put into action the ultimate plan whereby through faith we are restored as the perfect creatures that He so graciously created. This incredible expression of loving kindness reminds us of His title as "Father" (Rom 8:15). But His love for His children surpasses that of even the most loving human parent. In fact, even the most ideal conceivable father-son experience on this earth would only be a faint shadow of that which truly exists between our "loving father" and we who are "truly His children" (SC, Lord's Prayer, § 2). In an unfathomable way, He yearns to see His children free from every evil and especially death (both physical and eternal).

Here we catch a glimpse of the missionary heart of God and find categorically that He "is for us" (Rom 8:31). Moreover, the missionary heart of God is not an accidental occurrence simply occasioned by the fall of humankind. It is not merely a matter of feeling sorry for us, a feeling of pity triggered by the mess we caused. If, as Luther was wise to point out, God's love, in sharp contrast to human love, "does not find, but creates that which is pleasing to it,"[17] the same could be said of His missionary heart. It is simply who He is. In fact, it is deeply significant for our own understanding of the inherent *a priori* missionary heart of God that His very purpose in creating us was to save us: "For in all three articles God himself has revealed and

opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart and his pure, unutterable love. *For this very purpose he created us, so that he might redeem us and make us holy*" (LC, Second Part, § 64; emphasis added). As the Father, God's primary goal in creating us was and remains the restoration of His creation—the new creation through Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17). God the Father becomes the source of God's mission that finds its culmination in Christ and continuity in the Holy Spirit.

God the Father becomes the source of God's mission that finds its culmination in Christ and continuity in the Holy Spirit.

While a theology of mission may begin with God as Creator, it cannot end there. In fact, the reader may have noticed that even our description above of the missionary dimension of the First Article could not help but "spill over" into the Second Article. This is an important point. God's mission does not find its ultimate fulfillment in His general love and care for His creation, nor is the Church's mission ultimately about carrying out the "cultural mandate" (Gn 1:28). Neither can we truly know the magnitude of His mission on behalf of His creation through natural revelation. As important as God's creative work is, Luther was quick to point out that "we could never come to recognize the Father's favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father's heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible judge" (LC, Second Part, § 65). It is interesting that throughout the Middle Ages the Apostles' Creed was commonly divided into twelve statements. Luther innovatively arranged it into three separate articles in order to emphasize how the Triune God is saving us in an interpersonal and relational way, such that all that God does in the creed is "for us."[18] The Second Article serves as both the foundational center and goal of this mission of the Triune God.[19]

Claiming Jesus Christ as the "foundational center" of God's mission means, first, that He is the foundation upon which the entire mission depends and, second, that He is the central point upon which the entire mission converges. Set the person and work of Jesus Christ aside, and the entire mission loses its focus and crumbles to the ground. What is left might be considered a mission, but it surely would not be God's mission as we find it in Scripture.

The Son serves as the foundational center for God's mission primarily because He was and remains the first and greatest missionary, God's ultimate Word of reconciliation to the world (Ap IV, § 80). God is a speaking God. He "loves to talk."[20] He created all things through a spoken Word and through that Word He is re-creating all things. That creative Word of God is not static. It is ever active and alive in a way that uses and yet surpasses human language. Unlike Christian missionaries who are sent out *with* the power of the Word, Christ *is* that very Word become flesh

(Jn 1:14). Lutheran theology with this Word as its foundational center cannot remain lethargic. It is active by its very nature.

We see this above all in the substitutionary life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which serves to reconcile us to the Father. Only because of what the Son has done on our behalf does "God the Father forgive our sins by grace, regard us as upright and righteous, and give us eternal salvation" (SD III, §§ 9–11). Jesus accomplished many feats and gave many sermons during His earthly life. This was His way of demonstrating in word and deed that God is among people carrying out His missionary work. Yet it is important to realize that these activities, by themselves, do not form the foundational center of God's mission, for they find their climax and culmination in the ultimate redeeming and reconciling missionary act of Jesus Christ—His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave on behalf of all people throughout all of history and throughout the whole world. Hence, the foundation and focal point of God's mission is Jesus' redemptive work. This is precisely what we confess in the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed when we say, "And [I believe] in Jesus Christ, *our Lord*" (LC, Second Part, § 26; emphasis added). To confess Christ as Lord, Luther explains, is to believe that He is our redeemer, that is, "he who has brought us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and keeps us there" (LC, Second Part, § 31). Later when writing his personal testimony (Smalcald Articles), Luther called this "the first and chief article" of which nothing "can be conceded or given up, even if heaven and earth or whatever is transitory passed away" (SA II, §§ 1–5).

Lutheran theology with this Word as its foundational center cannot remain lethargic. It is active by its very nature. . . . The baton of missions is not simply handed over to the Church upon Christ's ascension.

It is curious that in the Smalcald Articles Luther joins together under the "office and work of Jesus Christ" both Christ's redemptive work (redeeming the world by His death and resurrection) and what we might call His justifying work (saving a person through faith). Traditionally, theologians have labeled these, respectively, "objective" and "subjective" justification. The point I wish to underscore here is that, although the confessors do *distinguish* between the two for the sake of clarity (see, e.g., AC III & IV), they are careful to hold them together as *inseparable*. The implications for God's mission are profound. The baton of missions is not simply handed over to the Church upon Christ's ascension. Rather, the mission that Jesus *began* to carry out during His earthly life and through His death and resurrection (Acts 1:1), He now continues to carry out in the world today through the Church. Here we begin to overlap with the Third Article. Suffice it to say at this point that

God's incarnate Word continues His Mission as God's proclaimed Word of promise that creates saving faith. Promise personified becomes promise proclaimed. This is why Luther and the Reformers had an undying confidence in that Word. Luther once remarked that the preaching of the Word had a life of its own, like the ever expanding progression of waves from a stone tossed into water (WA 10:139, 17–140, 16).[21] They were convinced that, although it was information, i.e., Good News, it was not mere proposition.[22] It was "not idle or dead, but effective and living" such that through it "the devil is cast out and put to flight" (LC, First Part, §§ 101–102) and the forgiveness of sins is received (LC, Fifth Part, § 31). Its purpose, flowing from that of God the Father, is to defeat the devil's grip on us and to re-create us as new creations. This is partly why we confess the Son, along with the Father, as "Creator" (AC I, § 3; SD VII, §§ 44–45).

God's incarnate Word continues His Mission as God's proclaimed Word of promise that creates saving faith. Promise personified becomes promise proclaimed.

While remaining the indispensable foundational center of God's mission, the Son also serves as its goal in that "he shall come to judge the living and the dead" at His second coming (LC, Second Part, § 25). His return will be the final fulfillment of God's mission. The devil will be finally, completely, and utterly defeated, never to rise again. We will be completely and fully new creatures existing in pure harmony with God, untainted by vestiges of the old. This does not call for loafing at the present as we await His return, however, because as Christians we already can and do experience "proleptically"[23] (i.e., ahead of time) the benefits of His second coming. Though we still struggle with the day-to-day realities of our sinful selves, we are already reconciled and declared righteous before God for Christ's sake (AC IV, §§ 1–3). It becomes important especially on the horizontal level (see below) that we see the benefits of the goal of God's mission as available to us right now. With this, our theology of missions takes on a sense of joy (the victory is assured) as well as urgency (the victory is at hand).

I pointed out earlier that, apart from Christ, the Father would appear as "an angry and terrible judge." It is also true that "neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit" (LC, Second Part, § 65). The dynamic or active power which drives God's mission is found in the person and work of the Holy Spirit,[24] who is sent, i.e., "proceeds," from the Father and the Son as a continuation of their work of creation. He is an indispensable part of God's mission, for it is only through the "grace, help, and operation of the Holy Spirit" that we are brought to faith in God and trust in Him above all other things (AC XVIII, § 2). In discussing the issue of human free will, the confessors are adamant: Without the "power and action of the Holy Spirit" all the "planting and watering . . . would be

in vain," all the work done in missions would be for nothing (SD II, § 55). This is a terrible thought. Without the Holy Spirit, the benefits of the bitter sufferings and death of the Son to reconcile us to the Father would be closed to us, and true righteousness and holiness would be impossible. Without the power and dynamism of the Holy Spirit, the Good News "I forgive you because of Jesus' death and resurrection for you!" would become old news about a man who long ago claimed to die for the world.[25] Salvation would be reduced to a matter of memory. Thankfully, that is not the case. The proclamation of forgiveness in first-order discourse (for you) is a "proposition that packs power" in the here and now.[26] Through it the Holy Spirit has called and gathered "a holy little flock and community of pure saints under one head, Christ" (LC, Second Part, § 51). We confess this as "the holy Christian church, the communion of saints" (LC, Second Part, § 34), and it is unlike any other group or gathering of people throughout the world. It is a "unique community in the world" (LC, Second Part, § 42), gathered around the Word and Sacraments (SD II, §§ 48–52), those gifts that God has given to it and through which He has promised that the Holy Spirit will produce faith (AC V, § 3) and save souls. Luther then offers this summary: "Creation is now behind us, and redemption has also taken place, but the Holy Spirit continues his work without ceasing until the Last Day" (LC, Second Part, § 61). Such a theology of missions cannot fade away or become drowsy through the ages. It finds its dynamic and, therefore, active and vibrant continuation in the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Horizontal Dimension of Missions

We have established, thus far, a framework for a theology of missions focusing on its vertical dimension as the mission of the Triune God. That mission has the creative work of God the Father as its source, the redemptive and justifying work of God the Son as its foundational center and goal, and the sanctifying work of God the Holy Spirit as its dynamic, though all three equally participate in the work of each person.[27]

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What remains is to offer a few comments regarding what we might call the horizontal dimension of our theology of missions. It deals primarily with the Church's participation in God's mission. When that participation takes place in particular instances and places we call them "missions."[28] It is beyond the scope of this essay to delve into how this plays out in the life of the Church when it comes to such matters as strategy,

methods, resources, etc. As interesting and necessary as those are, I wish to focus our attention in particular on how and why a church with the theology of missions as described above cannot be asleep at the wheel, so to speak, when it comes to missions.

I mentioned earlier that the horizontal dimension (the Church's mission) derives and flows from the vertical dimension (God's mission). This has significant consequences for how we understand missions. It is does not mean that we are dealing with two different missions or that the Church's mission picks up where God's mission left off. Such a misunderstanding might underlie some of the lethargic drowsiness that tempts so many congregations. Rather, our mission is a participation in the continuing greater mission of the Triune God that, indeed, is still in full force.

The horizontal dimension (the Church's mission) derives and flows from the vertical dimension (God's mission).

Our missionary God is a God who very often works through human instruments. We may find this so normal about our God that we take it for granted. It is helpful to keep in mind that He did not have to do it this way. From a purely human perspective, it's quite a risky strategic move. He chose Abraham to be a blessing for the nations (Gn 12:1–3).[29] He selected Israel as His "treasured possession" to serve as priests for the nations of the world (Ex 19:5–6).[30] He kept a remnant for Himself through whom would come the promised Messiah to save the world (Is 49:6; Jer 29:7). As we have seen, He did not conduct mission business from afar but sent His own Son to become human to accomplish that mission (Lk 24:46–47). He sent out the apostles to proclaim the Good News to Judea, Samaria, and to the corners of the earth (Lk 24:48–49; Acts 1:8; Mt 28:16–20). When they huddled down in Jerusalem, He scattered them through persecution so that the Word was finally preached in Samaria and made use of Philip as the first to preach to the "ends of the earth" (Ethiopia) (Acts 8). He reminded Peter through a vision that God is and always has been about saving the whole world (Acts 10). He worked through James, the first "president" of the Christian Church at the first apostolic council at Jerusalem, to redirect missionary efforts to the nations (Acts 15). He transformed Saul the persecutor into Paul the apostle and into one of the greatest missionaries the Church has ever seen. And the list could go on. Throughout the Book of Acts, we see the Word as active and organic. It "spreads," "grows and multiplies," and "grows mightily and prevails" (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20). And yet that Word of Good News is never without human mouths and lives that proclaim it. Nor is it separated from the Christian Church which also "multiplies" and "increases in number" (Acts 9:31; 16:5).

My point in this rapid survey of God's mission over a span of two thousand years of biblical witness is that God's mission continues through the Church today. This is a crucially important point. As we have seen, that mission—with its source, foundational center, goal, and dynamic found in the Triune God—has an undeniable power and a certain momentum that continues to propel itself forward through the work of the Church today. If history has shown anything, it has demonstrated that God's mission cannot be hindered. The theology of missions as presented above reveals why this is so. The Church is carried along and propelled forward as it participates in God's mission to save the nations. For God in His infinite wisdom has chosen her as His "unique community in the world, which is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God, which the Holy Spirit reveals and proclaims, through which he illuminates and inflames hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it" (LC, Second Part, § 42).

It is a profoundly humbling thought that the Church serves as the "mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God." Luther did not mince words: God creates, calls, and gathers "the Christian church, *apart from which no one can come to the Lord Christ*" (LC, Second Part, § 45; emphasis added). Our missionary God does not carry out His mission apart from His Church. In a very real sense, the Church cannot remove itself from participation in God's mission or even take a break from it. It cannot sleep. To do so would call into question its very existence as Church. As they stood before the Diet of Augsburg, accused of being outside of the Church,[31] the Lutheran confessors boldly confessed the Church as "the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel" (AC VII, § 1). Although using different terminology, this redefinition of what constitutes the Church has significant missiological implications. The Church is no longer legitimized by its adherence to an external figure, i.e., the Pope, but is redefined by its faithfulness in preaching Christ crucified and raised for the forgiveness of sins and in administering the sacraments which convey that same Gospel. It is through these very means that God wishes to make use of the Church to "beget and bear" true believers and keep them in the faith. In other words, God's mission defines the Church. To be Church is to be about God's mission.

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The opposite is also true. If the Church fails to faithfully proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments, then it forfeits its "very existence and essence."[32] Lest we lose sight of the universality of God's mission and focus too narrowly and

exclusively on those already within the Church, it is helpful to remind ourselves that that proclamation and especially the sacrament of Baptism are meant also for those outside of the Church (Mt 28:19–20). While preaching on Luke 24:46–47, Luther emphasized the universality of the Church's mission:

> Christ intends and herewith commands that such preaching [about the forgiveness of sins] should not be made known in a corner or to a special few alone. . . . Instead, it should be preached in the whole wide world or, as he says, "among all nations" and again "to all creatures." He says this so that we know that he does not want to have anyone singled out or excluded. (WA 21:253.35–262.6)[33]

Although "perfectly free lord[s] of all [and] subject to none," thanks to God's mission on our behalf (vertical dimension), we remain "perfectly dutiful servant[s] to all, subject to all" as we gratefully participate in the Church's mission (LW 31:344).[34] The greatest service to neighbor is to supply him or her with the one thing needful—the Gospel. The person and work of the Holy Spirit serves as the direct connection, so to speak, between God's mission (vertical dimension) and the Church's mission (horizontal dimension). If the Church disallows the Holy Spirit His work of carrying out God's mission of saving souls through Word and sacrament, then, as Luther put it, "there [is] no Christian church" (LC, Second Part, § 45). It is important to understand that losing its status as Church is not punishment for sleeping or inactivity. Such an approach to missions tends to see it as mere obedience to a command. Rather, if participation in God's mission is *essential* to what it means to be Church, then losing the status of Church is simply a matter of laying aside the very thing that serves to define it.

Moreover, if the Lutheran Church is considered a giant because of its confession of faith, and if confessing one's faith is inherently what the Church's mission is about, then being a giant inherently means to be about the Church's mission.

The point is this: The liveliness of the giant is *essential* to its giganticness. When all is said and done, there really is no such thing as a *sleeping* giant. There is only an *active lively* giant or a *dead* giant. And a dead giant is no giant at all.

Endnotes

[1] The saying has been attributed to Billy Graham, though it may be more apocryphal than actual. Although Rev. Graham was apparently quite fond of the term, no one seems to have been able to identify when and where he said it in reference to the Lutheran Church (LCMS or other).

[2] See, e.g., Michael W. Newman, *Gospel DNA: Five Markers of a Flourishing Church* (San Antonio: Ursa Publishing, 2016); Theodore P. Bornhoeft, *Mission Beginnings* (Columbus: Brentwood Christian Press, 1988).

[3] G. K. Chesterton, *The Resurrection of Rome* in *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton*, vol. XXI (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 320.
[4] For Luther on "theology as practical," see WA TR 2:56, 22–23 (no. 1340), 464–465 (no. 2444); WA TR 1:72–73 (no. 153); WA TR 5:384, 16–17 (no. 5867); LW 54:22.
[5] Lectures on Psalm 51 from 1532. I follow the translation and am indebted to the helpful analysis of Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey G. Silcock and Mark C. Mattes (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 16–21.
[6] See Bayer's comments about "theology as relation." Bayer, *Theology*, 19–20.
[7] All references and quotations from the Lutheran Confessions are from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).
[8] I am not the only one who shares this sentiment. There are few other books in English that I have encountered that underscore the inherent evangelistic and missionary dimension of every aspect of Lutheran theology as well as Robert Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1995). It is also readily accessible to the layperson. Not so accessible, but definitely worth digging into, is Klaus Detlev Schulz, "The Missiological Significance of the Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Confessions" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 1994).
[9] This term is used in various ways and carries different connotations. In this essay, I use it broadly as synonymous with the adjective "missionary," whereby it basically means "having to do with missions and God's mission."
[10] As is the case with "missional," this term also carries a variety of connotations. In this essay, I use it broadly to describe theology as confessed by the original confessors in the Lutheran Confessions. Based on my understanding of the concept of "confession," I maintain that to be "confessional" is to be "missional" and to be "missional" is to be "confessional." For an excellent monograph on the historical development of "confessing" as a way of life in the early years of the Evangelical (Lutheran) movement and its implications for today, see Robert Kolb, *Confessing the Faith: Reformers Define the Church, 1530–1580* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1991).
[11] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 116–127:

> Perhaps my title, "The Logic of Missions," may seem an odd one, but I am concerned to explore the question of how the mission of the Church is rooted in the gospel itself. There has been a long tradition which sees the mission of the Church primarily as obedience to a command. . . . This way of putting the matter is certainly not without justification, and yet it seems to me that it misses the point. It tends to make mission a burden rather than a joy, to make it part of the law rather than a part of the gospel. . . . The mission of the Church in the pages of the New Testament is more like the fallout from a vast explosion, a radioactive fallout which is not lethal but life-giving. One searches in vain through the letters of St. Paul to find any suggestion that he anywhere lays it on the conscience of his readers that they ought to be active in missions. For himself it is inconceivable that he should keep silent. (116)

[12] See Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church, and the Causes that Hinder It* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1962).
[13] The goal here is not to isolate or separate the persons of the Trinity or their work, but to more fully and deeply explore the *Missio Dei* by focusing on different aspects of the collective economic work of the Trinity. In this respect I follow Luther's lead (see Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* [St. Louis: Concordia, 2009], 92). Apart from the Son's redemptive work, which required human flesh, each person of the Trinity is involved in every divine work. For a helpful discussion on Luther's use of the Creed

in his catechisms and "The Unity of the Trinitarian Persons and Works," see Charles P. Arand, "Luther on the Creed," *Lutheran Quarterly* 20 (2006): 10–21.
[14] Though I take it in a different direction, this approach has been partially adapted from Schulz, "Missiological Significance," 4–6.
[15] "True good works are not performed out of our own natural powers, but they are performed when a person is reconciled with God through faith and renewed through the Holy Spirit."
[16] Schulz, "Missiological Significance," 25.
[17] LW 31:57 (*Heidelberg Disputation*, thesis 28).
[18] Arand, "Luther on the Creed," 2.
[19] I have adapted these motifs from Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 117.
[20] Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel*, 9, 56–61.
[21] See Volker Stolle, *The Church Comes to All Nations: Luther Texts on Mission*, trans. Klaus Detlev Schulz (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003), 24–25.
[22] Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel*, 58.
[23] Proleptic denotes the "assigning of a person, event, etc., to a period earlier than the actual one; the representation of something in the future as if it already existed or had occurred; prochronism" (www.dictionary.com).
[24] See Schulz, "Missiological Significance," 52. For a fuller explanation of the dynamic of God's mission, albeit from a slightly different perspective, see pp. 52–64.
[25] See the insightful comments on this by Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 6.
[26] Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel*, 58.
[27] See fn. 13.
[28] See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 10.
[29] See Chris Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press Academic, 2006), 199–221.
[30] Wright, *Mission of God*, 224–225, 255–257.
[31] Shortly before their arrival in Augsburg, John Eck had published and circulated a document called *404 Theses*, which accused the evangelicals (derogatorily called "Lutherans) of numerous heresies in an apparent attempt to depict them as a sect that was no longer part of the Christian Church. In response, the evangelicals had Philipp Melanchthon add several articles clarifying and defending their theological views as soundly catholic, i.e., still in accordance with the whole. These twenty-one articles were placed before the seven articles that treated more practical issues.
[32] Schulz, "Missiological Significance," 59–60.
[33] See Stolle, *Church Comes to All Nations*, 32.
[34] *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520).

Where Are You?
The Question That Drives the Scriptures

Henry Rowold

Abstract: In Genesis 3, we read the tragic attempt by Adam and Eve to free themselves from the lordship and fellowship of God, followed by the judgment of God. God's first response, though, is a question, The Question: "Where are you," which reveals that God still seeks His wandering children. Indeed, The Question provides a fundamental thread for reading the subsequent record and history of the Old Testament—and on into the New Testament. This article notes key turning points in that history where The Question is pursued, and indeed The Question becomes a quest by God, to redeem His scattered children.

The Voice echoes through the Garden . . . and the universe: "Where are you?" In typical divine economy of words, The Question has a dual purpose. On the one hand, in response to Adam and Eve's choice to leave the presence of the Lord in preference to their own determination of good and evil, the Lord asks The Question, which carries a hard rebuke: "Where are you?" Why are you suddenly nowhere to be seen? Why, for the first time in the history of the world, do you feel it preferable to be by yourselves, cowering behind a tree, away from My presence? The Lord unravels the built-in words of divine curse not only on Adam and Eve, but on the workings of the whole of creation, which He once blessed by proclaiming it "good." With that, Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden.

There seems, however, an "on the other hand" to God's primal question, "Where are you?" As foreboding as the rebuke and the curses are, the door to the future has not slammed shut. Given the promise in Genesis 3:15, The Question bears promise that the future is not an unabated life under the curse. Indeed, The Question implies a sense of invitation that Adam and Eve return to a relationship of love and trust with God. Though the virus of evil has entered and polluted life for them and for the

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world, God does not write them off. "If you don't/won't come to Me," God in effect says, "I'll come to you,"[1] and so begins the story of Scripture. From this programmatic Question comes the call of Abraham and patriarchs (and matriarchs), prophets, priests, and eventually, "in the fullness of time, God send forth His Son" (Gal 4:4).

As the mark God placed on Cain (Gn 4:15) bears both God's judgment and God's promise of protection, so The Question speaks a word of firm judgment but implies also a word of a promise to Adam and Eve and to their children, including to this day. Furthermore, The Question gives the key for understanding the intent and the significance of the entire flow of Scripture. What may otherwise seem a splotchy hodgepodge of disconnected events and people, some noble and some despicable, take relevance as part of the record of and witness to God's relentless outreach "to seek and to save the lost" (Lk 19:10).

The Question gives the key for understanding the intent and the significance of the entire flow of Scripture.

". . . in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gn 12:3)

In rather quick strokes, what follows in the first eleven chapters of Genesis records not only the scattering and multiplying of the human race, but the startling spread of evil, with the consequent darkening of the curse. A close look at those evil-curse events, though, shows touches of divine mercy: the promise to Adam and Eve, a mark to protect Cain, the preservation of the human and animal world through the ark. As the story of the Tower of Babel ends, a rather sudden switch of gears takes us into peoples migrating from modern Iraq to Syria.

God's first step toward pressing The Question was to call one of those migrants, and with that call history turned. For one thing, up to this time, in a book often considered the Book of Israel, there had been no Israel. Furthermore, God reaches out and calls from those migrants one whom Scripture suggests had precious little to commend him.[2] The Lord calls him to leave home and everything that made him who he was, including whatever dreams of what he may have yearned to be and to place himself fully into the Lord's hands (Gn 12:1). In Genesis 12:2–3, God states His purpose and Abram's place in that purpose: (1) God promises to bless Abram, thus providing provisional escape from the self-propelling evil-curse cycle. (2) A verb becomes a noun, and Abram, whom God blessed, now becomes a "blessing," a new identity for Abram,[3] and a new presence in the post-Genesis 3 world. (3) In the final phrase of verse 3, God's intent becomes clear, "in you all peoples on earth shall be blessed." The wanderer in all his wanderings brings blessing to the vastly spreading, scattering people. Abram may be just a who-would-have-thought choice,

but in God's commitment to His Question, Abram is called and equipped to radiate God's blessing to a broken world, to "all peoples on earth," reflected in Genesis 1–11—and echoed in the praises sung before the throne of the Lamb in Revelation 7:9.

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This mission from God—that through Abram "all peoples on earth will be blessed"—is given, however, not to Abram alone but to "you and your offspring,"[4] namely all the generations of Abraham, which eventually overspilled the bloodline of Abraham. Israel responded to The Question and reflected on this calling in psalmody (Gn 22:27–28, 47:9; 72:1), in prophetic words (Is 19:24; Jer 4:1–2), and even in apocryphal meditation (Sirach 44:21). This entire movement of Israel's history was implemented as part of God's pursuit of The Question, and Scripture start-to-finish resonates that calling.

". . . you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6)

Genesis ends on a high note, with family reunited and well-provisioned in Egypt. With another quick sweep through convoluted history, however, Exodus begins with the opposite: Israel oppressed, enslaved, and under threat of extermination. To the Lord they cried, and "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Ex 2:24). It is worth noting that what God's memory called to the fore was not just His remembrance of the patriarchs, but of His covenant with them, of The Question and of Israel's place in a frightful world.

The story of the struggles of Moses, the confrontations with the Pharaoh, the various plagues visited on Egypt, the final escape from Egypt, and the perilous journey to and across the Red Sea is well known and is celebrated in Passover observance among Jewish people, including messianic Jews, to the present day. There was even a widely enjoyed animated film of a decade or two ago, *The Prince of Egypt*. While in typical Hollywood fashion, the movie ended with the victorious emergence from the Red Sea, the biblical presentation uses that "victory" as simply the starting point of Israel's mission and identity.[5] There is a strategic pause in the story, when God has Israel linger at the foot of Mount Sinai. There God will explain to Israel exactly what just happened, namely what was at stake in the deliverance they just experienced. In Exodus 20:1–17, God reveals His ten "words," which bring

God and people, grace and obedience together in words to be carried in Israel's heart wherever they go.

Before the giving of commands and laws, however, God sits Israel down and, in 19:4–6, connects both the deliverance and the commands with The Question. Exodus 19:4 recites in marvelous imagery God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt "to myself." In 19:5 God speaks of Israel as His "treasured possession among all peoples" who keeps His covenant. Then an unexpected phrase appears, where the focus switches away from Israel to the context within which God delivered and prized His people, namely "for (because) all the earth is mine." Given this global focus and the words of the purpose of God's deliverance of Israel, it is uncertain if these words are read best with the words in verse 5 or with the following verse: "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

With the whole earth in mind and for the sake of the whole earth, Israel is to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." It is striking that the phrase "kingdom of priests" appears nowhere else in Scripture.[6] Furthermore, Israel's priests were a designated tribe of Israel, whose role it was to be priests to Israel, namely to guide Israel in its worship and sacrifice and to instruct Israel in its faith and life. Here, however, seemingly all of Israel is called to be a kingdom of priests, and to do that "for (because) all the earth is mine." Put simply, Israel, the people of God, is to be among and to the nations what Levi is to Israel, the people of God. What we have here, then, is a variation on Genesis 12:1–3 defining Israel's place in God pursuit of The Question. Israel's role among the nations was to be kingdom of priests through whom all people on earth would be blessed. That's what was at stake in God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

Note the second half of God's call to Israel be a "holy nation." Israel is to be so closely aligned with the heart of God that the peoples can hear and respond to The Question through the witness of the people living among them. With this dual calling, namely kingdom of priests and holy nation, Israel is taken up into God's mission so that all aspects of its (our) life, wherever God leads them (us), their (our) mission is to be agents of God's mission.

Israel is to be so closely aligned with the heart of God that the peoples can hear and respond to The Question through the witness of the people living among them.

". . . in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel" (1 Kgs 8:43)

One of the controverted events in the Old Testament was Israel's clamoring for a king, so that "we also may be like all the nations" (1 Sm 8:20). In today's secular

worldview, these desires for sovereignty, security, and dignity certainly sound like reasonable aspirations, no matter how they are viewed: politically, diplomatically, economically, or militarily. However, there were/are serious dangers, beginning with preferring to be "like all the nations" instead of being a "holy nation" among "all the nations." Besides, kings tend to love warfare and grandiose projects, and the people pay heavily for both; kings tend to assimilate power and operate in terms of conquest and domination, often without moral, godly concern; kings set the rules however and whenever it suits them. God tried to warn Israel. Not only did every prediction prove true, but the very nature and identity of Israel changed dramatically when a people of God became a nation, a political entity. The children of God became one among many citizens of a nation, some of whom had widely varying faiths and moralities.

As spotty as Solomon's life was, one high point was in addition to constructing the building: his articulating the purpose of the temple in divine terms rather than in terms of architecture or kingship. First Kings 8 is surely the high point of Solomon's place in the historical record. He recognizes that the value of the temple is not that God needs a place of residence. The temple is rather a place that God graces with His name and presence, a place toward which people can focus their prayers in faith that God will hear, a place toward which people can confess their sins in faith that God will forgive. In a string of scenarios in which people can look through the temple to God (1 Kgs 8:31–40, 44–51) comes a very striking, if brief, scenario (vv. 41–43). He suggests that there will be foreigners who are "not of your people Israel," living in a distant land but who will come and pray toward this house, "for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm."[7] Solomon prays that God "hear . . . and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you" (v. 43). But the purpose behind this prayer on behalf of the foreigner is "that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel" (vv. 43, 60). That last phrase indicates a leveling in the temple that almost seems beyond belief, that there be no difference in the prayer and in God's response to the prayer between Israelite and foreigner.

Even the temple, in Solomon's inspired prayer, has its place in God's pursuit of The Question and in people's (including the foreigners') response to The Question. At least part of the answer to "Where are you?" lies "in worship, in the temple." So, by extension, places of worship and nurture to this day take on sacral and missional import as driven by The Question.

". . . in its welfare (*shalom*) you will find your welfare (*shalom*)" (Jer 29:7)

To the Jews, whose celebration of the Passover included recollection of slavery in Egypt and decades of wilderness wandering, exile in Babylon must have seemed a *déjà vu* experience, only more so, torn away from the Holy Land, from the holy

temple, from a divinely promised present and future. Hope and trust are difficult when life is reduced to oppression, when God's people are carted away and the sacred things of the temple stripped away. As Israel viewed Egypt, so Judah viewed Babylon, with resentment and revulsion. Preserved among the psalms are mournful echoes of those days:

> By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy! (Ps 137:1–6)[8]

We can see in chapters 50–51 that Jeremiah did not soften his judgment against Babylon. However, his pastoral outreach in chapter 29 is startling, as they continue The Question (v. 4). For one thing, God told Judah to prepare for a stay of three generations. Those whom the Lord drove into exile would themselves likely not see the Holy Land again. What were they to do during that long stretch of seventy years? For one thing, Jeremiah said to build houses to live in and to plant gardens to feed them and, for another, to have children who would have children, seventy years of intergenerational family life (vv. 5–6)! Most important, however, the exiles were to "**seek** the welfare (*shalom*[9]) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and **pray** to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare (*shalom*) you will find your welfare (*shalom*)" (v. 7). Their life was not to bemoan their fate in Babylon and certainly not to burn up with hatred. Judah's *shalom* rests in its seeking and praying for *shalom* for Babylon, being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in Babylon and so that Babylon is given the *shalom* Judah seeks.

God leads Judah into exile so that Judah can return to the Lord, and so that Babylon through Judah can also return to the Lord. This unlikely kingdom of priests is the people through whom foreign, even resented, nations can be blessed.

Where are you, Judah? Away from the Holy Land? Yes. Away from the temple? Yes. But not away from the Lord. God leads Judah into exile so that Judah can return to the Lord, and so that Babylon through Judah can also return to the Lord. This unlikely kingdom of priests is the people through whom foreign, even resented, nations can be blessed.

As Christians from all places wander in all directions, whether by design or driven, these words of Jeremiah have timely relevance for the people of God. Whether people on the run or people who provide hospitality for those on the run,

the Lord provides context in which unexpected grace can be given and received, and all people on earth can be blessed through the people of God.

"In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall . . . (say), 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you'" (Zec 8:23).

Jeremiah minced no words that Judah's exile in Babylon was God's punishment, bitter and bleak. Jeremiah's surprise for Judah was that what was harsh had an undergirding and an overlay of grace, both for Judah and for Babylon. Judah would likely not have prayed for Babylon without the exile, nor would Babylon have known *shalom* without Judah.

As prophets began to look into a more distant future, a couple of these themes dominate. For one thing, Judah/Israel, like Jerusalem and Zion—all God's vessels of grace—became beacons of God's grace as He gathers both the scattered remnant of Israel and also the scattered descendants of Babel, the islands, the peoples from afar, who "are not of my people Israel." Whether in the form of a faithful remnant or a people whom God graces with a new heart and a new spirit, God continues to use His chosen people to serve the nations. Just as in both exodus and exile, what is at stake is not Judah by itself, but Judah for the sake of the nations. We know the soaring visions of Isaiah and Micah. We see the baffling conversion of Nineveh through Jonah, but Jonah's resistance to conversion through Nineveh.[10]

The passage from Zechariah (vv. 20–23), not as well-known perhaps, provides a similar insight into God's pursuing The Question. Anticipating the vision of Revelation 7:9, Zechariah describes the coming of people of every tongue among the nations, approaching the people of God because they have heard that "God is with you" (Immanuel). Somehow, as with the foreigners in Solomon's temple prayer, some of God's people had been anonymously but faithfully sharing the call of God; and among "all nations" people are drawn to Him to ask The Question, and indeed receive the answer: Where are you? With us—with God. Immanuel.

Notice also the special touch in a couple of verses before Zechariah 8:23, where the nations are getting themselves ready: "Let us go at once to . . . seek the Lord Almighty. I myself am going." It sounds just like the words of the shepherds that one starry night (Lk 2:15), as they mustered up impetus to seek the Newborn, the solution to The Question.

Where Are You? Question and Answer

Like the prayer for Babylon above (or Abraham or Israel at Sinai or the temple), only with much fuller completion, the prophets look ahead to what The Question is

looking to fulfill. This is the mission into which God calls and invites his Old Testament saints, a quest long and tortured but never neglected or abandoned.

This is the mission into which God invests His Son—He who both is and speaks the Word and who grants the gift which is the name and the mission God gave Him, Immanuel—the solution to The Question.

This is the mission that continues with those whom Word and Spirit call and empower to live both The Question and the solution. The church of all ages and specifically the church of our age continues to press The Question to our world. We articulate and interpret the evil, the pains, the sufferings, the pollutions and corruptions that infest a world that has removed itself from God. Like the prophets, we proclaim the word of God's judgment. As God Himself, however, we also reflect the heart behind The Question, namely that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tm 2:4). Therefore, we proclaim Him whom God sent into the world to seek and to save, Christ crucified and risen. As a holy nation, we offer ourselves, in word and deed, as witness to God's forgiving love and grace.[11] As people of God, we offer not only The Question but the answer. Where are you? I am in Christ. Come and join me—us. Immanuel.

As people of God,
we offer not only
The Question but
the answer.
Where are you?
I am in Christ.
Come and join me—us.
Immanuel.

Endnotes

[1] This sense of yearning in the heart of God, in addition to the words of judgment, is reflected in Hosea 11:8–9, in the Lord's weeping over Jerusalem (Lk 19:41), and in the admonition not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph 4:30).

[2] According to Joshua 24:2, Abram and family "served other gods." A biblical precedent is set here, namely that there is little to commend any of those the Lord called to serve Him, e.g. Jacob, Rachel, Hosea, Jeremiah, Mary Magdalene, the twelve, Paul.

[3] On this precedent of the call of the Lord providing new identity to those He calls, the motley group of fishermen, tax collectors, and other no-frills men of the Gospels were called not only to follow Him, but to assume a new identity, "fishers of men," and eventually apostles.

[4] Cf. Gn 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14. Just for the record, unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Scripture are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

[5] Though clarity of focus and restrictions of length prevent side trips, there is one intriguing tidbit worth noting in the account of the exodus. Ex 12:37 refers to the Israelites who escaped as a body of some "six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children." The next verse then adds that "a mixed multitude also went up with them," which indicates that it was not just direct descendants of Abraham who experience the deliverance of the exodus and who likely proceeded to Mount Sinai and on through the wilderness. As they enter the Promised

Land, there is a covenant ceremony (Joshua 24) that provides opportunity for that "mixed multitude" to respond, as the Lord desires, to The Question.

[6] First Peter 2:9 quotes Exodus 19:6, but seems to use the Septuagint translation, which has "royal priesthood" rather than "priestly kingdom."

[7] This "foreigner" is not the "sojourner" who has cast his/her lot with Israel and is included in the worship life of Israel, but one who stands outside the faith and life of Israel. One wonders how and from whom this foreigner will "hear of Your great Name." There's some otherwise unreported sharing of Israel's faith, perhaps on the pattern of Naaman's servant (2 Kings 5).

[8] The remaining three verses of the psalm move to a vengeful curse of Babylon. Verses 1–4 were put to song some forty years ago by the group Boney M. The upbeat calypso tone cannot supplant the haunting sadness of the verses, however, nor the addition of a softer prayer from Psalm 19:14.

[9] *Shalom* is one of the most beautiful words of the Hebrew language and of the Old Testament. It may be best remembered from the way all the various words of blessing in the benediction of Numbers 6:24–26 are summed up by the final "*shalom*." *Shalom* means peace, wholeness, harmony in every aspect of one's life, from health to family to freedom from worry (about sufficient food, about oppression, about danger) to proper and trustful life with and under God. Part of The Question is the gift of *shalom,* which includes but also invites further growth in the life only God can give.

[10] It is interesting to read the Book of Jonah through the lens of The Question, both God's questions to Jonah, God's dealing with Nineveh, and Jonah's response to God. At the end of the book, that Question rings and haunts without clear reply from Jonah and thus continues open-ended to the present day.

[11] Note the marvelous variety of imagery, each with its own flavor and emphasis, that Scripture uses to describe the mission of Church and Christians: "salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13), "light of the world" (Mt 5:14), "fishers of men" (Mk 1:17), "my witnesses" (Acts 1:8), "aroma of Christ" (2 Cor 2:15).

Christian Ministry Across Cultures: "Not by Birth But by Rebirth"

Victor Raj

Abstract: This essay proposes that "missiology is theology done right," a theme I am working further on in the form of a book. Christian mission is founded on Scriptural warrant that all human beings may know that Jesus Christ is God's Son and those who believe in Him will have eternal life. To make this truth known to the whole wide world, God has set part a people, a holy priesthood, and a prized possession for His mission. All institutional churches and church establishments are the products of the missionary activities of the past. In the modern era, Christian theologians have acknowledged that missiology is the mother of theology. Revisiting the Christian Church's history and theology enables Christians of our time to return to their roots, to the Lord Christ who sends them out into the world on His mission. Mission is nothing other than God's heart reaching out to those who are lost in sin and death, offering them forgiveness, life, and salvation in His name. God's mission has no boundaries.

Whether it is "From Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand" (LW 322) or "Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim, Till all the world adore His sacred name" (LSB 837), the historic Christian church's hymnody naturally is steeped with global missional themes. The unbiased eye simply cannot find in any traditional Christian hymnal a composition that does not include a stanza or two that clearly evidences or implies missional overtones.

Missional intentions are not lacking in the church's historic lectionary readings either. They constantly bring to the forefront God's desire and the commissioning of God's people to bring all people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Stimulated and encouraged by the traditional liturgical worship experience, the active participant in the church's conventional worship will not be able to leave the sanctuary unmotivated to share the faith with friends and neighbors outside church walls.

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The Introits, Propers, and Collects of the church generally are exhortations for the congregants whenever they gather for worship to go out into the world and witness the mighty acts God has done in Christ for all God's people. As the church sings with joy and thanksgiving the post-communion canticle, "Thank the Lord and sing His praise, *tell everyone* what He has done," or prays that "the word may not be bound, but have free course," the worshipers are agreeing with the rest of God's people that the church has a mission to spread the word to the ends of the earth. Just like Christian worship and liturgy, mission is rooted in Scripture and sustained in the historic traditions of the church.

Holy Scripture is testimony that God has set apart a special people to tell the world His mighty acts. In His wisdom, God chose a people to be His light to the nations, proclaiming to the whole inhabited earth the blessings He first promised Abraham (e.g., Gn 12:1–3; Is 42:6).[1] These promises were fulfilled uniquely in the life and ministry of God's incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, climaxing in His death and resurrection. The church is God's instrument to let the world know that in Jesus Christ everyone has a place in God's kingdom.

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The prophetic word was Jesus Christ's ministry platform, ushering in through His life and service God's rule and reign on the earth. Jesus brought healing and wholeness for all people, demonstrating in word and deed that in Him God's heavenly rule and reign has become real for those who trust Him as Savior and Lord (Lk 4:18). Entrance to God's kingdom, however, is only through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, whose innocent suffering and death paid for the sins of all people. At His ascension, Jesus bestowed on His disciples the privilege of proclaiming to everyone the unmatched message of salvation that God calls all people everywhere to repentance and forgives their sins in Christ's name (Mt 28:18–20; Mk 16:15–16; Luke 24:44–49; John 20:19–23). This only underscores the Lutheran core doctrine, "Where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation." God forgives freely everyone who believes in His Son, Jesus Christ, and His righteousness.

Galilee: Jesus' Ministry Headquarters

It may very well be that Jesus chose on purpose the district of Galilee as a major hub of His public ministry to demonstrate that He came to save sinners of all ethnicities, cultures, and language backgrounds. Historians concur with what Matthew's Gospel[2] references in 4:15, that first-century Galileans were of a mixed race, of Jews and Gentiles. The Israelites conquered Galilee under Joshua's

leadership, and later the Assyrians invaded this region. In the post-exilic times, Galilee was repopulated with Gentiles and cultivated an ethnically diverse and religiously pluralistic culture. Galilee, nevertheless, was not an ideal place where a traditional Jewish person wanted to reside. By choosing Galilee as a center of His activities, Jesus showed that God's church is His people, from wherever they call their home on earth.

Jesus' ministry headquarters was Capernaum in Galilee, and His first disciples were Galileans. Galilee was home for Peter and Andrew. Jesus invited Philip, a Galilean, to follow Him, which Philip did. Philip introduced Jesus to Nathaniel, a certified teacher of Judaism, for whom Cana in Galilee was home. Conservative Jews did not favor their Samaritan neighbors any more than Galileans. Some Jewish fundamentalists denounced Jesus by saying that He was a Samaritan and demon- possessed for the way He spoke and performed miraculous signs (Jn 8:48; cf. 8:20; 7:20). Jesus countered His Jewish opponents by saying that in fact *they* were the devil's progeny, even though they claimed their pedigree to Abraham.

God favors neither the Jerusalem insiders nor Roman citizens simply because in the world's eyes they might be enjoying privileged status. God in His own right shatters all man-made cultural and racial fortifications and gathers into His kingdom men and women from everywhere who turn to Him in repentance and faith, trusting solely in the merits of His Son Jesus Christ.

For Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans, God opens the door to His kingdom only through repentance and faith. "The call to repent is a call to conversion, to move from sin and unbelief to repentant faith and salvation."[3] From a distinguished scholar of the Jewish religion and member of the Jewish council, such as Nicodemus (Jn 3:5), to an outcast woman from the obscure Samaritan village of Sychar,[4] the Gospel is God's invitation for everyone in the world to believe in God's one-of-a-kind Son (Jn 3:16). God favors neither the Jerusalem insiders nor Roman citizens simply because in the world's eyes they might be enjoying privileged status. God in His own right shatters all man-made cultural and racial fortifications and gathers into His kingdom men and women from everywhere who turn to Him in repentance and faith, trusting solely in the merits of His Son Jesus Christ. Human destiny is sin; salvation is God's gift.

Ministry Across Cultures

The missionary *outburst* of the Gospel's reaching out to both Jews and Gentles was instinctive in Jesus' ministry. That the Gospel by design targets both Jews and Gentiles is made clear by James Voelz as he interprets the two feeding miracles in the Gospel of Mark.[5] In Mark 6:30–44, twelve baskets full of bread were left over from Jesus' feeding five thousand men and thousands of women and children. Voelz translates the Greek word for baskets in this narrative as "Jewish baskets," pointing to the inward focus of Jesus public ministry. In Mark 8:1–9, however, Jesus likewise feeds the four thousand, after which enough broken pieces were left to fill "seven creels/Roman baskets." Voelz argues that Jesus performed this miracle in Gentile lands to show that the consummation [of God's rule and reign] will be inclusive, so that "the feast of Yahweh for 'all peoples' (Is 25:6) will comprise both Jews and Gentiles alike."[6] Voelz says, "There is no greater indication of the Creator's/Redeemer's generosity—also to the Gentiles!"[7]

The prophets foresaw a Jew-Gentile conflict arising at the coming of Christ, which had far-reaching consequences. Isaiah, for example, forecast a "framework that portrays Judaism and Christianity in conflict, along with God's decision to take the kingdom from his ancient people and give it to those who produce fruit."[8] At His coming, God's incarnate Christ was rejected by His own people (Jn 1:11). The world, into which God sends His people bearing Christ's name, faces rejection likewise. Tensions, controversies, discord, and racial and cultural conflicts continue to exist even within the church, ironically in the name of Christ and for His Gospel's sake.

Just as God created all people equal, Adam's sin made all human beings equally sinful before God and neighbors, and the God who is righteous demands all people everywhere to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to be saved (Acts 2:38–39). The Jews are as much in need of repentance as non-Jews.[9] Himself a Jew by race and upbringing and a Roman citizen by birth and cultural heritage, Paul undercut the holier-than-thou Jewish pride as he argued that in the new creation "the Israel of God" is the new identity God gives freely to those who trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. In Christ there is no Jew no Greek, no slave no freeman, no male no female (Gal 3:28). Repentance and faith in Christ creates a new people for God.

Apostolic ministry since Jesus brought the Christian faith beyond the Jewish and Judaic boundaries as far as Rome, the center of the secular world of the time. Himself a born Roman citizen, the apostle Paul was God's choice to proclaim the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. Like Jesus, Paul began his missionary preaching in the synagogue, if there was one in the cities and villages he visited. First-century Synagogue membership consisted of devout Greeks who converted to Judaism and Jews whose mother tongue was Greek.[10] Acts shows how Paul reached out to both Jews and Gentiles, proclaiming Christ from house to house and in public (Acts

20:20). Acts concludes with the narrative of Paul preaching and teaching the kingdom of God while Rome kept him under house arrest (28:30). Already from the formative years, the people of God have been an inclusive community, a cross-cultural mix of races, languages, manners, and customs.

As an institution, the church has never been free from conflict since its inception. The Judeo-Christian leaders of the Early Church saw that God was accepting non-Jews into the family of faith as the Spirit was calling, gathering, and enlightening a people with the Gospel of Christ. They found no reason to put on the Gentiles' neck a yoke that the Jews themselves knew was unbearable. They realized that the Jew/Gentile distinction had no value before God, as both will be saved only by believing in Jesus Christ (Acts 15:1–11). Other narratives in Acts show that the Jewish adversaries were accusing Christians of plotting to sabotage Caesar's empire in the name of Jesus, a rival king.[11]

Paul articulated the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of *everyone who believes*, to the Jew first and to the Gentile (Rom 1:16). God bestows on all believers a new identity bathed in the baptismal waters, disregarding their racial and cultural heritage. Frictions, mistrust, and hostilities do not cease even within the church if not anchored solidly in Christ, its cornerstone, head, and defense. In Christ, the transforming power of the Gospel shatters the dividing walls of human creation by "a process of cultural cross-trading" in which a Jew continues to be a Jew but ceases to be a Jew, and a Gentile continues to be Gentile but ceases to be a Gentile simultaneously, purely because of Christ.[12] The church lives in the very midst of cultures that are shaped by very different visions of life. The Christian church must forfeit "the protection of cultural isolation that ancient Israel experienced. . . . Our new situation means that *missionary encounter will be for us the everyday experience of life.*"[13]

Whether they be Jew or Gentile, God recreates a people for Himself not by birth but by rebirth. Entrance into God's kingdom is not by inheritance, but by repentance—not an inalienable right, but a gift by adoption. God *adopts* children for Him from all peoples and cultures and languages. The popular adage, "God has no grandchildren," is appropriate here. God's children are a holy people not merely born, but "twice born"; not simply begotten, but begotten of water and the Spirit. They are a peculiar people, glorying exclusively in the cross God put in place for their sake.

Whether they be Jew or Gentile, God recreates a people for Himself not by birth but by rebirth. Entrance into God's kingdom is not by inheritance, but by repentance—not an inalienable right, but a gift by adoption.

In Jewish theology, "God's 'holiness' is his 'otherness,' that which would keep God at a distance, were it not His desire to make us a holy people by His grace and through the sacrifice that forgives sins and empowers holy lives," according to Andrew Bartelt.[14] God imputes His holiness upon humans purely on His Son's merits and sets apart for His holy purposes a holy priesthood, a people from all nations solidified by His grace and forgiveness (1 Pt 2:5). The signs and symbols with which God first designated His "covenant people" now apply directly to all who belong to Him in Christ.

Bartelt further notes that "the whole earth is to be full of [the] glory of God, which we now know, fully, in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6)." The prophetic words in Isaiah speak of "the centrality of Zion as the 'magnet' for all nations" (2:2–4), signifying that the "'earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea' when the 'resting place' of the root of Jesse will be 'glorious.'"[15] In the new age, God has in Christ set apart a holy people for His holy purposes to attract all people to His mountain, the mountain on which His Son was lifted up for all people to behold and be saved (Jn 12:32).

New Directions, New Expressions

Christianity has its roots in Palestine, where God's Son walked the face of the earth with His first disciples, "living, moving and having their being." The Church first began as a peoples' movement situated in Israel in Asia that later Christians in Europe identified as "the holy land" in the [Middle] East. In God's grand design, however, the disciples of Jesus would span the globe with the Gospel as His missionaries. The Acts of the Apostles show that Jesus called Paul, who was not one of the first Twelve, to be an apostle especially in the Gentile world. Paul and his companions were the first missionaries to bring Christ and the Gospel to Europe, beginning with Philippi. The Light that first shined so brightly in Asia became the beacon that enlightened Europe through Christian missionary work, giving birth to the European culture. Over two millennia, the rest of the world presumed that Christianity is a Western religion and all Westerners are Christians.

Mission Is a Joint Endeavor

Nevertheless, "mission" became popular among Christians of the modern world, especially since the nineteenth century. It began in universities and college campuses where Christian young men and women gathered in small groups for Bible study and prayer. They caught the vision to organize mission societies, volunteer missionary organizations to travel the world with the Gospel of Christ. Thousands of men and women risked their lives for Christ's sake, leaving behind their comfort zone and reaching out across the seas over the globe. Volunteer missionaries became examples

for institutional churches to see the big picture and set up committees, commissions, and boards for missions under their denominational banner. The boards simply were coordinating the services the volunteers had already set in motion. The Church needs its membership to learn from them as they engage God's mission.

Conversely, in these postmodern times the twenty-first-century church establishments are becoming post-missionary institutions, distancing themselves from missionaries, mission organizations, and missional thinkers. While a plethora of volunteer missionary organizations are mushrooming everywhere, church establishments are requiring that missionaries and mission enterprises must be self-funded and self-sustaining, although they must be serving under the banner of institutional churches.

At the same time, universities and seminaries of our generation are upholding mission as a principal component of theological education in the twenty-first century. "Missional" and "glocal" are but examples of the vocabulary theological educators have introduced in this discipline.[16] Darrell Guder surmises that "missional" is a kind of scaffolding that holds up our ecclesiology, theology, interpretation of Scripture, and theological education. He has proposed that "the apostolic mission was to form gathered and sent communities who would continue the witness to God's salvation in Christ that had brought them into existence in the first place."[17] Guder maintains that the first apostolic community empowered the disciples to go out and become community-founding missionaries."[18]

Stephen Neill was born of missionary parents in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1900. Neill received training in linguistics and became a theological educator and missionary in India, following the footsteps of his parents and siblings. In 1927, the Church Mission Society in Tinnevelly in Tamil Nadu ordained him deacon, and a year later his home church ordained him priest. Neill became a career missionary in India, taught in theological schools, got involved in inter-church conversations at the global level and served as Bishop of the Church of South India.

In his 1957 Duff Lectures, Bishop Neill made the famous statement, "If everything is mission nothing is mission," pointing directly at the tension between missionaries and the institutional churches.[19] The bishop was speaking from his heart as a cross-cultural missionary and coordinator of various Christian denominations wrestling with the challenge of giving a united witness of Christ in a world bereft of unity and singleness of purpose. At the same time, church establishments and missionary organizations will benefit from biblical scholar and mission coordinator Christopher Wright's observation that "It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission—God's mission."[20]

Missional Theology

Missionaries and missional theologians have been from early on scholars in biblical and systematic theology. Gustav Warneck (1834–1910) held the first university chair of missiology in Halle and was instrumental in the formation of the International Missionary Council. For Warneck, individuals converting to Christ should not be separated from the community to which they belong in the first place. Instead, Gospel proclamation should be aimed at the conversion and baptism of whole communities rather than of individuals.[21] Martin Kahler has argued that "mission is the mother of theology." Theology for Koehler "is an accompanying manifestation of the Christian mission" and not a "luxury of the world-dominating church."[22]

Georg Vicedom was a pioneer missionary in the highlands of central New Guinea.[23] Vicedom was raised in a farmer's family in northern Bavaria and trained in ethnography and anthropology at Hamburg and in theology at Neuendettelsau. Vicedom insisted that the church must get to know peoples and cultures thoroughly before it can engage the world with the Gospel of God.

Arguably, Vicedom simulated the Ziegenbalg model of cross-cultural mission, who preceded him by two centuries. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg (1682–1719), also from Halle, was the first Protestant missionary who went to India in 1706. While studying at the seminary in Germany, Ziegenbalg had a vision to reach the people of India with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He would not settle as a home grown, "most wanted" preacher in his hometown, including the congregation that baptized him. The auspicious words of his seminary professor, Abbot Franke, resonated within him, "When one leads one soul of such nations [as India] righteous to God, that is equivalent to winning a hundred souls in Europe since these daily have sufficient means and opportunities."[24] Ziegenbalg had a rough road ahead of him already aboard the ship, including from the captain and the crew, who were on business and hardly had any inclination for converting the heathen to the one true God.

Ziegenbalg began his India mission in Tharangambadi (Tranquebar), roughly one hundred kilometers east of Chennai (formerly Madras). In Tranquebar, the young Lutheran preacher was appalled by the scarcity of Bibles, hymnals, and devotional books for the European colonists and their families in India. His first assignment therefore was to set up a theological library that held volumes in English, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish. Ziegenbalg studied linguistics for India under eminent scholars who were not Christian. His mastery of Tamil in such a short time amazed everyone, to the extent that the Tamil lexica he pioneered is referenced as authoritative even today by native Tamil scholars.

Ziegenbalg served the Gospel in the context of religious pluralism and fought against the dehumanizing and oppressive forces of the Indian caste system and socio-economic disparities. He engaged in intellectual dialogue with Brahmin scholars of

the Hindu religion and posited before them the new identity God bestows upon all people on the grounds of the work God accomplished exclusively in Jesus Christ. Ziegenbalg obtained an ordinance from the (Portuguese) governor that "all new-born children of slaves [were] to be brought for Lutheran baptism, and the heads of families [were] to make their servants available for two hours daily so that the missionaries could instruct them in the fundamentals of Christianity."[25]

Ziegenbalg insisted that Indian men must be trained in Bible and theology so that they can speak the Gospel directly to Indians in their mother tongue, which is much better than hearing it from foreign missionaries from an entirely different world. For a fact, "The idioms of speech and conduct by which the evangelist grasps and expresses the gospel are themselves shaped by the evangelist's culture."[26] As a Ziegenbalg biographer wrote, "Against bitter opposition and stupidity, Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg paved the way for foreign missions. He gave his life for the work. It is one of God's mysteries that He performs His great deeds through suffering witnesses."[27]

Since Ziegenbalg, Lutherans have not lacked in conversations on missions and missional theology. That theology and ecclesiology work together with congregations and Christian believers as Christ's witnesses is evidenced in Robert Kolb's life, scholarship, and mission. Translator and editor of the Book of Concord,[28] Kolb continues his research, writing, and teaching on all continents at all levels. Kolb finds time to lead Bible studies for congregations, witness workshops, and speaks gently with anyone who crosses his path at home and abroad—simply because the love of Christ compels him.

Kolb reiterates that "theology is the original cross-disciplinary field of study, the original inter-disciplinary exercise in the field of human learning. For the theological task demands listening to voices from every field of human endeavor to bring God's Word to all the corners of His world."[29]

Making the transforming power of Jesus Christ known to all people is the modest, unpretentious goal of Christian mission. Kolb writes, "Always at the heart of God's transforming message is His revelation of Himself in the glory of suffering, in the splendor of the cross, in the triumph of death. Glory, splendor and triumph lie concealed in the likes of suffering, cross and death."[30] Christ is the center of our lives, and so His cross is at the center of the church's mission in His name.

> Just as God created humankind without compulsion or condition, as a free act of love, so he has re-created humankind without compulsion or condition, as a free act of love. This act of creating anew may be described as salvation or reconciliation or liberation. It is best described as "justification," even though for unbelievers in our culture this usually means something quite different than the biblical understanding of the word.[31]

Gospel proclaimers must therefore take into serious account the listening capacity of their intended audience. Christian mission knows no geographical or cultural boundaries—East, West, North, or South.

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Kolb reiterates that justification implies righteousness and justice; biblically it defines the right relationship between God and his human creatures. It tells how God restores fallen sinners to that right relationship with himself, rescuing them from sin and death, "restoring them to life itself. . . . Righteousness in God's sight is life itself."[32]

> Genuine biblical teaching, doctrine, is not correct if it is merely flawless in content. It must also be presented, aimed precisely at the situation of the contemporary hearer. It must be as effectively spoken by us today as it was effectively delivered to the prophets and apostles two millennia and more ago. The practice of theology, the conveying of the Christian teaching, is not beyond the reach of the "average" Christian. It is neither the sole province of professionals nor an optional activity for any Christian witness.[33]

For Kolb, theology is for proclamation that empowers each Christian to believe, teach, and confess Christ as Savior and Lord. Missiology is theology done right!

Christ Reigns and Rules Across Cultures

Four decades ago, veteran missionary, missiologist and Bishop of the Church of South India, Lesslie Newbigin wrote, "At the heart of mission there must always be the call (of the Christian) to be committed to Jesus Christ in his community."[34] Newbigin detected that especially in the Western tradition, Bible reading has been primarily an interaction between the reader and the text. In theological education as discipline, when studying the Bible as literature, much emphasis is given to gaining a clear and comprehensive understanding of the sociohistorical and political context of the author of each book and the specific situation of the intended audience. Anyone who tries to explore a text without carefully studying also the original context in which the text was written will gain only a partial knowledge of the author's intentions as he was composing the text. In reading therefore, the reader must be given the opportunity to "read the mind of the original author," as well as the mind of the audience the author may have had in his mind as he was composing the text, to be able to comprehend the full meaning of the author's intention. This third aspect, that is, the context of the text, has been a missing piece in Western theological education. Readers of texts also read *for* an audience, if the goal is to communicate

what they read (and understand!) to others who are new to the author and the composition.

Newbigin noticed that in the "mission field" those who communicate the biblical message in a new context must respect and honor the culture, religion, and socio-political and economic background of their particular audience. Newbigin called this a "three-cornered relationship" among the "receptor's culture," the Bible and the culture of the missionary.[35] In this case, the receptor is the native in the "mission field" and the missionary is the foreigner from a different land. Christians engaging the "world," however, acknowledge that the reader's culture has as much a place as the text and the culture of the missionary in this exercise. The text's meaning does not become clear to the reader (and listener) unless their culture also is taken into serious account as Scripture is read and interpreted. Missional reading of Scripture necessitates a respectful recognition of the listeners whose idioms of speech, conduct, and culture are shaped differently than the traditional Western readers of the Bible.

In the missionary context, in the East or in the West, therefore "A three-cornered relationship is set between the traditional culture, the 'Christianity' of the missionary, and the Bible. The stage is set for a complex and unpredictable evolution both in the culture of the receptor community and in that of the missionary."[36] However, whether in the West or the East, students of Scripture must not fail to involve a third element in the exercise, that is, the language and culture of the interpreter. The text's meaning does not become clear to the reader (and listener) except when *their* language, idioms, figures of speech and cultural expressions are given respectful recognition and put to their proper use in interpretive process.

In the twenty-first century, Christian presence is recognized more in the majority world than in the traditional homelands of Europe and America. In the new millennium, Lutherans in Africa outnumber all Lutherans in North America put together. It may be true that Christian influence is declining in the Western culture because the institutional churches do not regard mission as a principal component of their service to the church and world.

> It is possible that the Western voice in the global church will become increasingly muted—and even insignificant—in the decades to come. . . . This could be a cause for rejoicing—if it indicates the growth and strength of the world church. However, if this happens because the church in the Western settings ceases to have any relevance or voice in world Christianity, it will be a cause for sorrow for all Christians.[37]

The prophetic word of our time could be that God is taking away His kingdom and offering it to those who bear more fruit.[38]

Mission and ministry paradigms have shifted.[39] Missional thinkers lay before us a new challenge, that of *becoming the Gospel*, in such a way that we embody in our daily living our Lord Christ's words and actions as the first-century Christians did more realistically. Christians of the twenty-first century do face the challenge of becoming facsimiles of the first-century apostolic model, especially as our contexts, cultures, and patterns of behavior are distinctively different from the first Christians. Yet, we "participate in the very life and mission of God, through proclamation, praxis and even persecution."[40]

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In mission and in ministry, risks are involved and tensions, especially for Lutherans, remain unending.[41] Giving due diligence to the mission God has entrusted His people enables us to live through tensions, empowering the church to take risks for the Gospel's sake, and to sing with proper confidence, "Let every race and every language tell, Of Him who saves our lives from death and hell" (LSB 837:5). This is much cause for joy for each follower of Jesus.

Endnotes

[1] That God is on a mission for all people is in fact the theme of the entire Scripture. The Old Testament model is that the people of God are a light to the nations. See the detailed analysis of this theme in the Old Testament by Henry Rowold, "Where Are You?" in this issue: 243–251.
[2] See Jeffrey G. Gibbs, *Concordia Commentary: Matthew 1:1–11:1* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006). Gibbs observes that the population of northern Galilee had large Gentile population with whom Jewish population intermingled, resulting in religious syncretism. Gibbs further states that "the promised light will shine in the darkness" probably refers to both Jews and Gentiles, but "the explicit mention of the Gentiles/nations surely invites a connection with Matthew 28:18–20," 204–5.
[3] Ibid., 214–15.
[4] Samaritans were taboo for the Jews, as they were a mixed blood of Jews and Gentiles since the time of the exile. When traveling from Galilee to Judea and back, Jews intentionally avoided Samaria by choosing the alternate route on the east side of the Jordan River.
[5] James W. Voelz, *Concordia Commentary, Mark 1:1–8:26* (St. Louis: CPH, 2013).
[6] Ibid., 430.
[7] Ibid., 500.
[8] R. Reed Lessing, "Preaching from Isaiah 56–66," *Concordia Journal* 39, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 52.
[9] Darrell Bock and Mitch Glaser (ed.), *To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History* (Kregel, 2008). See also the earlier volume by David Filbeck, *Yes, God*

of the Gentiles, Too: *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament*, A/Bgc Monograph Series (Billy Graham Center,1994).
[10] This pattern is obvious in the Book of Acts. In Thessalonica, for example, Paul (and Silas) on Sabbath days went into the synagogue, as it was the custom, and reasoned with them from the Scriptures (Acts 17). Some Jews were persuaded by the apostolic witness about Jesus Christ, and so were many devout Greeks and many of the leading women in the city.
[11] Acts 17 alone is a textbook example of the apostolic experience, of acceptance and rejection. In Thessalonica, Paul and Silas' witness in the synagogue made some Jews jealous. They dragged Jason and other followers of Jesus to the court because they began to believe in Jesus Christ, "another king" (vv. 5–9). Then in Berea, as Paul and Silas preached, many Jews and many prominent women and men believed, just as it was happening in Thessalonica (vv.10–12).
[12] Roji George, *Paul's Identity in Galatians: A Post-Colonial Appraisal* (New Delhi: Christian World Prints, 2016), 198.
[13] Michael W. Goheen (ed.) *Reading the Bible Missionally* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 24.
[14] Andrew H. Bartelt, "Isaiah 6: From Translation to Proclamation," *Concordia Journal* 39, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 17.
[15] Ibid., 18.
[16] For example, see Darrell L. Guder (ed.), *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).
[17] Darrell L. Guder, "The Implications of a Missional Hermeneutic for Theological Education" in *Reading the Bible Missionally*, ed. Michael Goheen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 288.
[18] Guder, *Missional Church*, 289.
[19] Stephen Neill, *Creative Tension: The Duff Lectures* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1958).
[20] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2010), 24. The LCMS's own Mission Blueprint for the Nineties document addresses these tensions and shows that the whole world is God's Mission.
[21] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995),141.
[22] Darrell L. Guder, *Reading the Bible Missionally*, 295.
[23] To his credit, Vicedom published over four hundred essays primarily on anthropology. Among his dozen books, Lutherans are most familiar with *The Mission of God,* English translation (CPH, 1955). Vicedom familiarized the church with the concept of *missio Dei*, emphasizing the theocentric character of Christian mission. See also Hans-Werner Genischen, "Vicedom, Georg Friedrich," in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1998), 7.
[24] Erich Beyreuther, *Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg: A Biography of the First Protestant Missionary to India* (Madras: CLS, 1955), 11.
[25] Ibid., 18.
[26] Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 146.
[27] Beyreuther, *Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg*, 80.
[28] Robert Kolb (ed.) *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2000), 200. Google Robert Kolb to browse the hundreds of essays he has published over the years and the dozens of books his pen has produced. Kolb rivals Vicedom in that if Vicedom's research publications had a major focus in anthropology, Kolb's volumes speak substantively on *confessing* the Christian's faith in every age.
[29] Robert Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 8.
[30] Ibid., 66.

[31] Robert Kolb, *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 157.
[32] Ibid., 157.
[33] Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today*, 18.
[34] Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 120.
[35] This is a very important issue that deserves serious attention. Missionaries and Bible translators have been working on these challenges for several decades now. My essay shares some seminal thoughts that in the future I will call "Missiology is Theology Done Right." As I have been thinking about such project, I came across a volume titled, *Global Mission: Reflections and Case Studies in Contextualization for the Whole Church* (William Carey, 2011), a collection of articles by expats as well as those natives to the mission field. Some essays are translations to English from another original language. Demonstrating the translator's challenge, one author uses five book-size pages to explain the word "faith" in another language.
[36] Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 147.
[37] A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2012), 320–21.
[38] Christian witness is for the whole world. The twenty-five-year history of *Missio Apostolica* (now *Lutheran Mission Matters*) is testimony to this fact. This is the one-of-a-kind journal of the Lutheran Society for Missiology that addresses the challenge of presenting Christ to people of all walks of life across nations and cultures as a living testament of Christ's ongoing mission on earth.
[39] For an appraisal of the paradigm shifts in mission, see David Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Mission Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kreger Academic and Professional, 2005).
[40] Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation and Mission* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 297.
[41] For an off-the-cuff yet in-depth and unbiased coverage of the tension that the Missouri Synod faces in mission and ministry, see Andrew H. Bartelt, "Office of the Ministry: Keeping Our Balance," *Concordia Journal* 39, no. 1 (Winter 2013), 10–12.

IBM and the LCMS:
Walking the Reformation Pathway

Michael W. Newman

Abstract: International Business Machines Corporation, IBM, Big Blue—by the early 1990s the technology giant and marketplace dominator was tanking. Reeling from a proliferation of PC brands, a tech start-up revolution, and internal cultural paralysis, the once-powerful mainframe computer innovator found itself on its heels. Experts predicted imminent collapse.

That's when Louis V. Gerster, Jr. was invited to take the helm as CEO of IBM. Gerster had no tech industry credentials but was a proven growth and change agent as CEO of American Express and RJR Nabisco. Answering the call to lead a dying business behemoth did not qualify as an item on his career bucket list, but this was IBM. It was more than just another resident occupying the crowded and transient neighborhood of worldwide industry. IBM was an American institution. This was more than just a job; it was a mission. So Gerster decided to accept the position.

Nine years later, IBM had moved from market defensiveness to technological leadership, from internal fragmentation to customer prioritization, and from hemorrhaging funds to empowering profitability. What happened?

You might say that IBM walked a reformation pathway. Louis Gerster guided the company to a rediscovery and effective implementation of its core purpose—even within the rapidly changing context of the late twentieth-century tech industry. IBM would reclaim its position as the leader in the creation, development, and manufacture of the computer industry's most advanced information technologies.

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Is it possible for the church to learn from IBM's recovery? Specifically, can The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), a rapidly declining, internally distracted, and financially strapped major U. S. denomination experience such a reformation as it walks in the shadow of the Reformation of five hundred years ago?

Can The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), a rapidly declining, internally distracted, and financially strapped major U. S. denomination experience such a reformation as it walks in the shadow of the Reformation?

The similarity between the two acronym-labeled entities is astounding. Both were conservative organizations that enjoyed heydays in the mid-1900s. Both fostered internal culture that was viewed to be immune from external forces of change. Both comprised highly educated, high-quality, and highly committed leaders and constituents. Both developed worldwide influence, and both sustained growing market shares until each was confronted with external forces and internal attitudes that precipitated unprecedented freefalls.

But one organization recovered its confident spirit and strong influence. IBM was brought back from the brink.

The following analysis takes lessons and insights from Louis Gerstner's book, *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance? Leading a Great Enterprise through Dramatic Change*[1], and asks if the LCMS might be able to follow a similar path to recovery. This paper is a missiological study, not an examination of fiscal or strategic practices. This look at the LCMS is theological, not an attempt to see the church function more like a business. It is a Gospel invitation bidding us to pay close attention to the parable of IBM—having ears that hear, eyes that see, and hearts that understand—as Jesus calls us to be faithful stewards of the treasure He has entrusted to our care.

What mission motivation might redirect our church as we lean in attentively to the story of IBM?

Owning Up

Louis Gerster said, "The *sine qua non,* the essential characteristic, of any successful corporate transformation is public acknowledgment of the existence of a crisis. If employees do not believe a crisis exists, they will not make the sacrifices that are necessary to change" (77).

Gerster alludes to the terms "necessary change" and "corporate transformation" when he describes the radically altered heart needed at IBM. God's Word uses the

term "repentance" to describe the humility, remorse, and change wrought by God in the heart of someone who has been missing the mark.

Martin Luther began his Ninety-Five Theses with a call to repentance. Every reformation begins that way. Repentance is not merely a thought, a well-written theological paper, or a church program that will help raise funds and increase seminary enrollment. Repentance is being cut to the heart and asking the question, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

Repentance is not merely a thought, a well-written theological paper, or a church program that will help raise funds and increase seminary enrollment. Repentance is being cut to the heart and asking the question, "What shall we do?" . . . There is no time to explain, blame, excuse, or delay. We need to own up to the problem: We've drifted off course.

Gerster went on: "We had to stop looking for people to blame, stop tweaking the internal structure and systems. I wanted no excuses. I wanted no long-term projects that people could wait for that would somehow produce a magic turnaround. I wanted—IBM needed—an enormous sense of urgency" (71).

This is reformation language. Luther recognized that the Gospel was at stake—more than that, the eternities of people who would or would not hear the Gospel hung in the balance. The same is true today. There is no time to explain, blame, excuse, or delay. We need to own up to the problem: We've drifted off course.

Gerster explained how IBM drifted:

> When there's little competitive threat, when high profit margins and a commanding market position are assumed, then the economic and market forces that other companies have to live or die by simply don't apply. In that environment, what would you expect to happen? The company and its people lose touch with external realities, because what's happening in the marketplace is essentially irrelevant to the success of the company (117).

During the mid-1900 flurry of growth and expansion, the LCMS began to lose touch with external realities. Looming before the powerful church body of the 1950s were critical issues: racial equality, service to the poor, changing social mores, and equipping a new generation for leadership. But the distraction of internal dissonance and conflict began to sidetrack the LCMS from its mission. An internal fight for the Gospel began, but in the fighting, the Gospel and its connection to a new generation was being lost. After a decade of fear, infighting, and division, the LCMS entered a season of steady decline. At first, LCMS insiders attributed the decline to efforts toward doctrinal purity. After four decades of losses, a sharp decrease in baptisms,

adult confirmations, number of churches, and membership was blamed on the declining birthrate and the new generation's distaste for church.

But one question hasn't been addressed: How is the internal preoccupation of the church leading our beloved denomination to irrelevance? Just as the sixteenth-century Roman Church became an internal swirl of political and administrative self-absorption, the LCMS of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has fallen into the organizational trap of ignoring a large segment of its "customers": people outside the church who need the Gospel most.

A wake-up call is sounding very loudly. The LCMS has entered an unprecedented season of decline, losing half a million members in the last fifteen years. Is the situation hopeless? Should we consign ourselves to insignificance, circle the wagons, and do our best to stay alive long enough to maximize our pension plans? Louis Gerster clarified how transformation takes place in an organization when he said, "So there must be a crisis, and it is the job of the CEO to define and communicate that crisis, its magnitude, its severity, and its impact. Just as important, the CEO must also be able to communicate how to end the crisis—the new strategy, the new company model, the new culture" (77).

Our leader, the Lord of the Church, speaks boldly and clearly to us in His Word. In the midst of our crisis, the new strategy and culture of the church is a call back to the old, old story of Jesus and His love. It is a call to "look to the rock from which [we] were hewn, and to the quarry from which [we] were dug" (Is 51:1). The crisis will end with a return to the Gospel—the same Gospel championed by Dr. Martin Luther five hundred years ago.

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Outward Focus

What does that look like?

Today's reformation means remembering that the Gospel is not an internal, humanly developed, organizational system. The message of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ is not a doctrinal concept generated by one of our strategic planning groups. The Gospel is "*extra nos*," outside of us, a gift from God who sent His Son, the Word who became flesh and made His dwelling among us. The answer is not within our systems or fallen souls. It is in Christ alone. An external focus is essential for the health and viability of our church. While not thinking at all about God's gracious reach into our broken world, Gerster highlighted the critical need we have at this time in history. He said, "In the past, IBM was both the employer and the

scorekeeper in the game. I needed my new colleagues to accept the fact that external forces—the stock market, competition, the changing demands of customers—had to drive our agenda, not the wishes and whims of our team" (96–97). Our whims and wishes need to be set aside to make room for God's external forces, His revealed Word and means of grace, to drive our agenda.

Lou Gerster resolved that IBM was no longer going to take a posture of protection and inward thinking. He noted, "We were going to take our fate into our own hands. We were going to play offense" (127). He went on: "My point is that all of the assets that the company needed to succeed were in place. But in every case . . . all of these capabilities were part of a business model that had fallen wildly out of step with marketplace realities" (176). "What was needed was straightforward but devilishly difficult and risky to pull off. We had to take our businesses, products, and people out of a self-contained, self-sustaining world and make them thrive in the real world" (178). "The challenge was making that workforce live, compete, and win in the real world. It was like taking a lion raised for all of its life in captivity and suddenly teaching it to survive in the jungle" (178). God's assets are in place. His ranks of baptized believers have been given the authority and commission to go and make disciples. Will the LCMS receive these gifts and steward them well?

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In 1950, the LCMS gathered in Milwaukee for its triennial convention. Seeking, perhaps, the same outward shift Lou Gerster brought to IBM, delegates passed a stirring resolution: "Resolved, 1. That the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod call upon its total membership for an even greater love and devotion to the Lord and Savior of mankind, and a consequent burning zeal for the lost souls of men. 2. That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with all of its members pledge before the Cross of Christ to cultivate an ever deeper and more prayerful sense of stewardship toward the ever-widening soul-saving program of the church."[2]

The lion consigned to captivity was being set loose into the jungle, into the real world, into the cultural actuality of a growing number of lost souls. Only by focusing on the external realities of God's gifts and the world's need could the church accomplish its mission.

Gerster summed up his diagnosis of the crippled computer giant:

> This hermetically sealed quality—an institutional viewpoint that anything important started inside the company—was, I believe, the root cause of many of our problems. To appreciate how widespread the dysfunction was,

> I need to describe briefly some of its manifestations. They included a general disinterest in customer needs, accompanied by a preoccupation with internal politics (189).

God calls us outward—outward to see His means of grace and outward to see where those means need to be applied. Inward preoccupation paralyzes mission and diminishes attentiveness to opposing forces. Gerstner noticed that "interdivisional rivalries at times seemed more important, more heated, than the battle with external competitors" (194). Our maneuvering for positions of control, and our battles with fellow servants within the church blind us to the assault of Satan's destructive schemes. The Evil One is the ultimate external competitor. Looking inward as a church abdicates our calling to "stand against the schemes of the devil" (Eph 6:11).

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Rebooting Culture

How can an organization see clearly enough to understand the real battle? The culture needs to be rebooted. Gerstner commented about IBM, "What lay ahead—devising a strategy for a fundamentally new world and reinventing an encrusted culture from the DNA out—that was a challenge of a vastly different order" (105). He said, "Successful institutions almost always develop strong cultures that reinforce those elements that make the institution great. They reflect the environment from which they emerged. When that environment shifts, it is very hard for the culture to change. In fact, it becomes an enormous impediment to the institution's ability to adapt" (182). "The more successful an enterprise becomes, the more it wants to codify what makes it great—and that can be a good thing. It creates institutional learning, effective transfer of knowledge, and a clear sense of 'how we do things.' Inevitably, though, as the world changes, the rules, guidelines, and customs lose their connection to what the enterprise is all about" (184).

The strong culture and customs of the LCMS brought it roaring into the mid-twentieth century with a "traditionally aggressive"[3] approach to a changing society. The uncompromising and life-giving truth of God's Word was brought boldly to a world in need. But when cultural issues became difficult to address, the LCMS wavered in its resolve to step wholeheartedly into the messy fray with the Gospel. Then fear took hold. Internal theological disagreements and organizational disjunctures wounded and divided the LCMS. Never wanting such disruption to happen again, the LCMS began to veer into self-protection. Reaching outward diminished and suspicion of anything new increased.

Gerstner summarized what happened to the culture of IBM: "Years later I heard it described as a culture in which no one would say yes, but everyone could say no" (193). Negativity and fear along with a critical and protective spirit began to prevail. An errant view of what it meant to be biblical and confessional began to spread virally through a post-1970s church. Today, generations of church members and ministry leaders don't even remember the traditionally aggressive culture that propelled the Gospel mission of the LCMS forward. They don't understand, what Rev. F. W. Herzberger, writing in *Ebenezer*, the 75th anniversary book of the synod in 1922 said so well: "True Biblical orthodoxy is *always* full of spiritual life, full of missionary zeal, full of unfeigned helpful, compassionate love, for it is the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of His believing children."[4]

Cultivating Servanthood

Gerster began to effect change through a statement of principles. The principles emphasized an outward focus for the sake of others. IBM employees were to be shaped by an internal compulsion to be servants who look outward. They were encouraged to function together as a team for the sake of a bigger and very urgent purpose. The connection these principles have to the church is clear, as is the list Gerster brought to his employees:

- The marketplace is the driving force behind everything we do.
- Our primary measures of success are customer satisfaction and shareholder value.
- We operate as an entrepreneurial organization with a minimum of bureaucracy and a never-ending focus on productivity. The best entrepreneurial companies accept innovation, take prudent risks, and pursue growth, by both expanding old businesses and finding new ones.
- We never lose sight of our strategic vision.
- We think and act with a sense of urgency.
- Outstanding, dedicated people make it all happen, particularly when they work together as a team.
- We are sensitive to the needs of all employees and to the communities in which we operate.
- We want the communities in which we do business to become better because of our presence (201–202).

If you can see through the business vernacular on that list, you comprehend a picture of people who begin to value people again. You observe a collective surge of individuals—a community—bound together by a common and worthy mission, doing their all to lift up one another and to bless the world. You see the components

of God's mission through a church that is no longer afraid or preoccupied with self, no longer uncertain or distracted by personal agendas. You see the church as a city set on a hill, leading many to glorify the Lord of the church who gives the uncommon gift of eternal hope and life.

Gerstner sounded a "reformation" call when he said, "Maybe we can practice continual, restless self-renewal as a permanent feature of our corporate culture" (214). Much of the reformation pathway we are called to continue involves not only thought, but action. It is a reformation of deeds, not merely words. It is a reformation of "doing" theology, not simply knowing theology. We may confess many doctrines, but do we have an operational plan in place to put God's Word into practice, to put the treasure He has given us to work (see Matthew 25)?

Gerster summed up the need for an active reformation when he said, "So, execution is really the critical part of a successful strategy. Getting it done, getting it done right, getting it done better than the next person is far more important than dreaming up new visions of the future" (230). We are called not only to confess the Word, but to conform to the Word—by God's grace through His gifts (Rom 8:29).

Getting it done has nothing to do with politics or control. Gerstner pointed out wisely, "It is not a question of centralization v. decentralization. Great institutions balance common shared activities with highly localized, unique activities" (245).

Onward

The answer for the church today is the same as it was for Martin Luther and the church five hundred years ago. Luther returned to the Gospel because he was granted the gift of repentance. He loved much because he had been forgiven much. Christ's love compelled him to go and tell. "Here I stand," Luther said, "I can do no other." Luther was not merely a hearer of the Word, deceiving himself. He was a doer of the Word (Jas 1:22). He was "all-in" theologically. His faith was accompanied by bold action. As a justified child of God, he walked in the newness of life (Rom 6:4). Being "all-in" theologically means not separating truth from action, knowledge from mission. God, who is the Truth, reveals and sends the Truth. He also sends His redeemed people with the Truth to others.

Mission is not a program loosely attached to the central theological precepts in the Scriptures. Mission IS theology.

We need to grasp that point today. Mission is not a program loosely attached to the central theological precepts in the Scriptures. Mission IS theology: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,

which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:8–10). The sending God sends His gifts and sends us to share the gifts He gave.

Our own confessions have been teaching this for centuries. The Preface to the Book of Concord states that the Augsburg Confession, which bore witness to "the pure, unalloyed, and unadulterated light of his holy Gospel and of the Word that alone brings salvation"[5] was "presented in the presence of all the estates of the empire, and published and proclaimed in all of Christendom throughout the wide world."[6] The foundation of the Confessions is a complete theology—one that not only hears the Word, but sees it puts it into action through Word, Sacrament, and the Body of Christ, His Church.

Luther's Large Catechism articulates eloquently and powerfully:

> This we ask [Thy Kingdom come], both in order that we who have accepted it may remain faithful and grow daily in it and in order that it may gain recognition and followers among other people and advance with power throughout the world. So we pray that, led by the Holy Spirit, many may come into the kingdom of grace and become partakers of salvation. . . . Therefore, we must strengthen ourselves against unbelief and let the kingdom of God be the first thing for which we pray.[7]

The Formula of Concord quotes Luther when it declares: "Faith is a divine work in us that transforms us and begets us anew from God, kills the Old Adam, makes us entirely different people in heart, spirit, mind, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good."[8]

What is the pathway forward for the LCMS? From where have we come and to where are we being led? Let us live our identity as reformation people, being led to repentance, receiving the grace of God, and walking in that grace, loving much because we have been forgiven much (Lk 7:47). Let us be compelled by Christ's love instead of being driven by fear, ego, stubbornness and infighting. Let us ask for God's grace to form us into doers of the Word, not hearers only who deceive themselves.

Let us live our identity as reformation people.

Louis Gerstner saw the "elephant" called IBM dance once again. The corporation became nimble and responsive, engaged with the global community. If God restores the reformation heart of the LCMS, allowing it to regain its Scripture-centered vitality, perhaps we, too, will see the LCMS dance again.

Endnotes

[1] Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), Kindle Edition.
[2] *Proceedings of the Forty-First Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 426.
[3] "The New Lutheran," *Time*, (April 7, 1958), 60.
[4] W. H. T. Dau, ed., *Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod During Three Quarters of a Century* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 446–447.
[5] Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 3.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 427.
[8] Ibid., 552–553.

Quincentennial Celebration: The Paradigm Shift from Martin Luther Then to Ours Now—Part Two

Enoch Wan

Editor's Note: Dr. Wan served as the keynote speaker at the 2017 Multiethnic Symposium at Concordia Seminary, Jan. 24–25, 2017. He has graciously consented to the publication of his presentation, which is here presented in two parts. The first installment (in the May 2017 issue of *LMM*) focused on his analysis of the contextual paradigm shifts of both the Reformation era and our contemporary age. This second installment deals with his "personal proposal to the leadership of Lutheran church bodies in North America in the twenty-first century," based on the three global trends identified in this first segment: the shifting landscape of Christendom, the phenomenon of diaspora, the rise of socio-cultural relativism. It is the third trend that is the major focus of his proposal.

Abstract: Based on significant global trends that affect the mission of the kingdom of God, the Lutheran Church is encouraged, first, to be engaged in a shift from traditional missiology to a multilinear, multidirectional missiology and multiethnic ecclesiology. Further, in light of diaspora communities literally "at our doorstep," a "diaspora missiology" understands not only missions "to" the diaspora, but also "through," "by and beyond," and especially "with" such communities as full partners in mission. Finally, Dr. Wan articulates a "relative realism" paradigm that counteracts the cultural relativism and mistrust of institutions that dominate the mission context and that restores an authentic Christianity based on our relationship with God and then with one another as human creatures. This leads to practical implications for Gospel-driven mission within the realities of a changing social-cultural and technological context.

In reviewing the paradigm shift that formed the social context of the Reformation now five hundred years ago, I highlighted three global trends in our contemporary social climate. (*Ed. note*: See previous article and its summaries in

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Figures 1A and 1B and 2.) These should prompt us toward a paradigm shift in missiological approaches, and I will offer a modest proposal for specific action points consistent with Lutheran theology and its insights and contributions.

Global Trend 1—The Shifting Landscape of Christendom and the Rise of the Global South

Action: A Paradigm Shift to Multiethnic Ecclesiology and Missiology

The first global trend already identified and briefly discussed is the shifting landscape of Christendom and the rise of the global south. Practical implications of the demise of the West in a post-Christian mode and the surge of mission forces in the global south in Christian missions should be considered by the leadership of the Lutheran churches here and now. First is the need to address and replace the Euro-centric and paternalistic paradigm of traditional missiology with a multilinear and multidirectional paradigm.[1] Further, we must embrace a multiethnic ecclesiology that should reflect the reality of the population all around us and promote multiethnic leadership and adjust to Kingdom-orientation by being actively involved in contextualization. By contextualization I mean "the efforts of formulating, presenting and practicing the Christian faith in such a way that is relevant to the cultural context of the target group in terms of conceptualization, expression and application; yet maintaining theological coherence, biblical integrity and theoretical consistency."[2] Following from this is the need to engage in multilevel strategic partnership with churches in the global South.[3]

Further, we must embrace a multiethnic ecclesiology that should reflect the reality of the population all around us.

While multiethnic issues and ecclesiology need to be a major focus of any denomination, especially those who are highly Anglo-dominant, let me move on to the second and, most specifically, the third global trends, as these tend to be less developed and thus worthy of more detailed discussion and more challenging responses: (2) the phenomenon of diaspora and diaspora missions and (3) the failure of traditional institutions and the rise of socio-cultural relativism.

Global Trend 2—The Phenomenon of Diaspora and Diaspora Missions

Action: A Paradigm Shift from "Traditional Missiology" to "Diaspora Missiology"

I have previously defined "diaspora missions" as "Christians' participation in God's redemptive mission to evangelize their kinsmen on the move, and through

them to reach out to natives in their homelands and beyond." I have also highlighted four types of diaspora missions:

- Missions *to* the diaspora—reaching the diaspora groups in forms of evangelism or pre-evangelistic social services, then discipling them to become worshiping communities and congregations.
- Missions *through* the diaspora—diaspora Christians reaching out to their kinsmen through networks of friendship and kinship in host countries, their homelands, and abroad.
- Missions *by* and *beyond* the diaspora—motivating and mobilizing diaspora Christians for cross-cultural missions to other ethnic groups in their host countries, homelands, and abroad.
- Missions *with* the diaspora—mobilizing non-diasporic Christians individually and institutionally to partner with diasporic groups and congregations.[4]

"Diaspora missiology" is "a missiological framework for understanding and participating in God's redemptive mission among diaspora groups"[5] and is an emerging new paradigm,[6] different from "traditional missiology." The following charts (Figures 3 & 4) highlight key contrasts.

Figure 3–"Traditional missiology" vis-à-vis "Diaspora missiology"—4 elements[7]

#	ASPECTS	TRADITIONAL MISSIOLOGY ←→	DISPORA MISSIOLOGY
1	FOCUS	Polarized/dichotomized • "Great commission" ←→"great commandment" • Saving soul ←→ social Gospel • Church planting ←→ Christian charity • Paternalism ←→ indigenization	Holistic Christianity with strong integration of evangelism with Christian charity • Contextualization
2	CONCEPTUAL IZATION	• Territorial: here ←→ there • "Local" ←→ "global" • Lineal: "sending" ←→ "receiving" • "Assimilation" ←→ "amalgamation" • "Specialization"	• "De-territorialization"[8] • "Glocal" • "Mutuality" & "reciprocity" • "Hybridity" • "Interdisciplinary"
3	PERSPECTIVE	• Geographically divided: foreign mission ←→local, urban←→rural • Geo-political boundary: state/nation←→ state/nation • Disciplinary compartmentalization: e.g. theology of missions/strategy of missions	• Non-spatial, • "Borderless," no boundary to worry, transnational & global • New approach: integrated & interdisciplinary

#	ASPECTS	TRADITIONAL MISSIOLOGY ←→	DISPORA MISSIOLOGY
4	PARADIGM	• OT: missions = gentile-proselyte / "coming" • NT: missions = the Great Commission / "going" • Modern missions: E-1, E-2, E-3 or M-1, M-2. M-3, etc.	• New reality in the 21st Century—viewing & following God's way of providentially moving people spatially & spiritually. • Moving targets & move with the targets

Figure 4–Comparing Traditional Missiology & Diaspora Missiology in Ministry[9]

#	ASPECTS	TRADITIONAL MISSIOLOGY ←→	DISPORA MISSIOLOGY
1	MINISTRY PATTERN	OT: calling of Gentiles to the God of Zion (drawing in, "centripetal") NT: sending out disciples by Jesus in the four Gospels & by the H.S. in Acts (going out, "centrifugal") Modern missions: • Sending missionary & money • Self-sufficient of mission entity	New way of doing Christian missions: "mission at our doorstep" • "Ministry without border" • "Networking & partnership" for the Kingdom • "Borderless church,"[10] "liquid church"[11] • "Church on the oceans"[12]
2	MINISTRY STYLE	• Cultural-linguistic barrier: E-1, E-2, etc. Thus various types M-1, M-2, etc. • "People group" identity • Evangelistic scale: reached→←unreached • "Competitive spirit" "self-sufficient"	• No barrier to worry • Mobile and fluid, • Hyphenated identity & ethnicity • No unreached people • "Partnership,"[13] "networking" & synergy

Let me highlight only a few key features from the details of these figures. First, the paradigm shift in diaspora missiology in terms of "perspective" (see Figure 3, no. 3) includes non-spatial deployment of missionaries, borderless/transnational and global movements of people, and an integrated and interdisciplinary "perspective." Thus the "orientation" of diaspora missiology is characterized by "the Gospel from everywhere

Thus the "orientation" of diaspora missiology is characterized by "the Gospel from everywhere to everyone."

to everyone," viewing and following God's way of providentially moving people spatially and spiritually, "moving mission fields" of diaspora everywhere, and mobile/flexible missions and strategic kingdom partnership. All these items can be considered by Lutheran leadership as action points. For example, due to the phenomenon of diaspora movement internationally to G7 countries and internally to urban centers, leadership of the Lutheran churches in the United States is encouraged to practice the four types of diaspora missions: missions *to* the diaspora, missions *through* the diaspora, missions *by* and *beyond* the diaspora, and missions *with* the diaspora.[14]

> The diaspora phenomenon offers many advantages in the practice of missions to the diaspora. Diaspora missions: (1) is economically sustainable; (2) is geographically accessible in reaching the target groups; (3) has fewer political and legal restrictions; (4) involves partnership among people and organizations committed to the Great Commission; (5) is not carried out by just a few "experts" or "international workers"; (6) is a way to encourage self-supported diaspora Christians to be "kingdom workers," especially those working in limited access contexts; (7) is putting the "priesthood of believers" into mission practice—a heritage from the Reformation.[15]

Second, I will expand specifically some of the practical applications of the "with" approach in diaspora missions.[16]

Figure 5–The Concept and Practice of "*With*" Approach in Diaspora Missions[17]

CONCEPTUAL	PRACTICAL	
	Relational Pattern	Practical Way
Bridging & Bonding	Networking: • Bridging by regional proximity or linguistic/racial affinity • Bonding: kinship/friendship/mutual interest	• Hospitality • Reciprocity • Connectivity & complexity • Solidarity • Unity
	Partnership: • National & transnational individual • Local congregations or institutional entities of multiple variety	

The best way to explain the **"*with*"** approach is by way of illustrations. It can be an ex-missionary returning home (due to retirement, health or family reason) from Japan but continue to work with diaspora Japanese or Chinese. He/she has the language facility to evangelize (or partner with) Japanese

> diaspora and the cultural sensitivity to work with Chinese diaspora. A missionary return[s] to the U. S. from South America but continue[s] to work with all kinds of Hispanic Americans. . . .
>
> Networking and partnership in the "with" approach of diaspora mission may vary in form, size, shape and flavor because our Lord is creative and impressively surprising in His miraculous ways of building His Kingdom. We stand in awe when observing how He orchestrated things to His glory and our astonishment.
>
> The key concepts of the "with" approach are **"bridging and bonding"** and the practice may take the relational pattern of networking or partnership. "Bridging" may be based on regional proximity (e.g., same continent such as south Asian or South America), linguistic affinity (e.g., Portuguese from Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique and Angola), racial [cultural] affinity (e.g., Hispanic from South America and Spain). Bonding may be based on kinship, friendship or mutual interest. Partnership may occur among national, expatriate and transnational at congregational or institutional entities of multiple variety (e.g., charity or faith-base).[18]

Another practical suggestion for the leadership of Lutheran churches in the U. S. is the employment of a "missions at our doorstep" approach. In light of the trend of the emerging phenomenon of diaspora, new immigrants from the so-called "unreached people-groups" are now at our door own doorstep. This means that we can now seize the golden opportunity to practice "the Great Commandment" of loving this new neighbors pre-evangelistically first, then fulfilling "the Great Commission" to make disciples out of them. The presence among us has created an opportunity for us to engage in cross-cultural missions without crossing the ocean. Some key features of this new strategy are noted below (Figure 6):

Figure 6–"Mission at Our Doorstep"[19]

NO	YES
No visa required	Yes, door opened
No closed door	Yes, people accessible
No international travel required	Yes, missions at our doorstep
No political/legal restrictions	Yes, ample opportunities
No dichotomized approach	Yes, holistic ministries
No sense of self-sufficiency or unhealthy competition	Yes, powerful partnership

Practical applications of "diaspora missiology" will need to be discussed and implemented within a Lutheran framework, but the opportunity for "missions at our door step" is a key factor. May God open our eyes to see the unprecedented opportunity, stretch out our hands to reach these new people groups, open our hearts/homes/sanctuaries to embrace/host them, and share with them our lives and hearts enlivened by the Gospel! Helpful references with practical guides are: *The World at Your Door: Reaching International Students in Your Home, Church, and School,*[20] *Missions Have Come Home to America: The Church's Cross-Cultural Ministry to Ethnic,*[21] *Missions within Reach*,[22] *Reaching the World Next Door,*[23] *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission,*[24] etc.

Global Trend 3—The Failure of Traditional Institutions and the Rise of Socio-cultural Relativism

Action: Paradigm shift to a "relational realism paradigm"

A. Definition and Description

Due to the failure of traditional institutions (marriage, family, institutional church, etc.) and the rise of socio-cultural relativism (postmodernism, relaxed regulation on marijuana, extramarital sex, same-sex/gender marriage, etc.), a paradigm shift is proposed that embraces a "relational realism paradigm." By this I mean "a conceptual framework for understanding reality based on the interactive connections between personal beings/Beings."[25] The philosophical element of the relational paradigm is based on "relational realism"[26] and the methodological element is based on "relational theologizing."[27] In a "relational paradigm," there is the emphasis on "being" over "doing," "essence" above but not without "existence," "relationship" above "function," "vertical relationship with God" above "horizontal relationship with others within the created order." The insistence of a God-centered relationship and Christian epistemology grounded in the Word is an excellent response to the trend characterized by the "failure of traditional institutions and the rise of socio-cultural relativism."[28]

Theologically, the relational paradigm is grounded on the fact that man was created in the image of God and his existence (ontologically) is solely dependent on God at all times (Gn 1:26–27; Rom 11:36; Heb 1:3). His ability to know (epistemologically) and his undertaking in missions (*missio Dei*) are all dependent on God, who is the great "I AM" (Ex 3), as I have sought to summarize in the following three statements[29]:

- "'I AM' therefore i am" ontologically[30]
- "'I AM' therefore 'i know'" epistemologically
- "'I AM' (*missio Dei*) therefore 'i am'" missiologically[31]

These three statements are in contrast to the rationalist's maxim of Descartes—"I think therefore I am."[32] The motto, "I think therefore I am" provided an impetus for the rationalist orientation ("I think") and existential element ("I am") with its individualistic and humanistic tendency based on the capital "I" in the entire undertaking.

The relational paradigm is based on "relational realism," which is different from the "critical realism" of Paul Hiebert.[33] Both assert realism, but in different ways. As shown in the table below, critical realism is too closely aligned with science epistemologically and empirically. The "umpire's response" in critical realism is too man-centered, too dependent on human perception and human objectivity, i.e., "I call it the way I see it." In contrast to critical realism, "relational realism" is God-centered both ontologically, epistemologically, and existentially.

Figure 7–Hiebert's "Critical Realism" vis-a-vis Wan's "Relational Realism"[34]

REALISM X 2	NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SYSTEMS OF KNOWLEDGE	THE UMPIRE'S RESPONSE
Critical Realism (Hiebert)	"The external world is real. Our knowledge of it is partial but can be true. Science is a map or model. It is made up of successive paradigms that bring us to closer approximations of reality and absolute truth."	"Each field in science presents a different blue-print of reality. These are complementary to one another. Integration is achieved, not by reducing them all to one model, but by seeing their interrelationship. Each gives us partial insights into reality."	"I call it the way I see it, but there is a real pitch and an objective standard against which I must judge it. I can be shown to be right or wrong."
Relational Realism (Wan)	The external world is real, but that reality is based primarily on the vertical relationship—on God and His created order (Acts 14:14–17, 17:24–31)— and secondarily on horizontal relationships within the created order, i.e., spirit world, human world, and natural order.	God is the Truth: His Word (incarnate with personhood, inscripturated, and revealed in written form) is truth; His work (creation, redemption, transformation, etc.) is truthful. Therefore, truth and reality are multidimensional, multilevel and multicontextual.	Man without God and His revelation (incarnate and inscripturated Word) and illumination (H.S.) can be blinded to truth and reality. Therefore, he is not the umpire to make the final call of being: real or illusion, truth or untruth, right or wrong, good or bad.

Relational Realism (Wan) continued	God is the absolute Truth. Science is a road map and may provide a human-based paradigm that cannot exclusively claim to be the only way to closer approximations of reality and absolute truth. A scientist with a modernist orientation has neither a monopoly on truth nor can dogmatically/conclusively/exhaustively make pronouncements on reality.	All human efforts and disciplines (science, theology, philosophy, etc.) without a vertical relationship to God (the Absolute Reality) at best are defective ways to approximate truth and reality (for being unidimensional = horizontal; single-level= human playing field; unicontextual = shutting out the spirit world of God & angels (Satan & fallen angels included). Truth and reality are best to be comprehended and experienced in relational networks of God and the created 3 orders, i.e., angels, humanity, and nature.	No human judgment is final, nor can it be dogmatic/conclusive without the vertical relationship to God—the absolute Truth and the most Real.

B. Factors for the proposed contextual paradigm shift of embracing a "relational realism paradigm"

In Western society today, a lack of "relational reality" can be observed in the following socio-cultural phenomena: (a) a high mobility in general and a high density of population in urban centers; (b) the prevalence of failed marriages and broken/dysfunctional families; (c) the prevalence of virtual relationships over actual personal interaction, e.g., the popularity of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter; (d) the Christian church's obsession with programmatic and managerial aspects of ministry for quantitative growth instead of "body life" of genuine Christianity and "personal touch"; (e) the increasing popularity of the "gospel of health and wealth" without relational intensity.

In the face of postmodernist epistemology and socio-cultural pluralism in the twenty-first-century United States context, the relational paradigm is the most appropriate contextual response to the challenges for several reasons:

(1) The rediscovery of "relationship" in Christian faith and practice is desperately needed in order to revitalize Christian faith and practice to form a counter-cultural force.

(2) It is an excellent Christian response to the cry for relationships from people of the twenty-first century who are starving for genuine face-to-face relationships.

(3) It is a practical way to rediscover "relationship," which is the essence of Christian faith and practice.

(4) It has been proven to be effective in ministering to diaspora communities and individuals in need of Christian charity.

(5) It is a paradigm that enables the synthesizing of diaspora missiology and diaspora missions.

(6) It is transculturally relevant to societies in the majority world, which are highly relational.

(7) It nurtures a Kingdom orientation and strategically fulfills the Great Commission (a vertical relationship with God), and a working relationship with fellow "kingdom workers" (horizontally with one another).

(8) It enables the practice of "strategic stewardship" and "relational accountability."

(9) It is in line with the various approaches in diaspora missions, e.g., *to, through, by/beyond* and *with*, which are "relational" in nature.

(10) In light of the shift of Christendom's center from the West to the majority world, strategic partnership and synergy require the practice of the relational paradigm rather than the popular managerial tendency and entrepreneurship of the West.

The relational paradigm is a timely Christian response to the general cry for relationship in the twenty-first century (see 1–4 above). Factors contributing to the relational deprivation in the twenty-first century include: failed marriages, broken families, and a growing sense of alienation resulting from urbanization and globalization. Communication technology and social media have enabled people to be connected in real time virtually, but not with face-to-face human interaction. The growing acceptance of digital relationships via the vast and various social media in virtual reality is an indication of the relational deprivation of contemporary society in our time. In this socio-cultural context, the relational paradigm is offered as a timely approach to rediscover the fundamental relational nature of the Christian faith and practice when reaching out to individuals and communities in diaspora.

In light of the shift of Christendom's center from the West to the majority world, strategic partnership and synergy require the practice of the relational paradigm rather than the popular managerial tendency and entrepreneurship of the West.

Furthermore, the relational paradigm provides a way to rediscover relationship in Christianity—the essence of Christian faith and practice that can foster a counter-cultural force against postmodernist epistemology and socio-cultural relativism. If Christianity is likened to "chicken soup" and "relationship" is the genuine chicken (with flesh and bones), then the contemporary Christian church and individual believers have often settled for canned chicken soup that only has the flavor of the chicken but lacks the substance and nutrition of a real chicken.[35]

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A personal touch and relational intimacy are part of the uniqueness of Christianity. Individually, every human being is known by God before birth and every Christian is intimately called by God before the foundation of the world. He/she is God's beloved, chosen in Christ by the Father (Eph 1:4), destined to be a joint heir with Christ the Son (Rom 8:17), known to the Good Shepherd by name (Jn 10:3), transformed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:3; Rom 12:1–4), and indwelled by the Spirit as His temple, both individually and collectively (1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19).

Collectively, the Church is the bride and body of Christ (Eph 5:22–33), who purchased it by His precious blood (Acts 20:28), interceded for it as the High Priest before His crucifixion (John 17), and now reigns at the right hand of the Father (Rom 8:34). However, over the course of time, as the church bodies have focused on quantitative growth, relied on programs and management skills, and became steeped in the secularization process, the relational distinctiveness of Christianity was gradually lost; yet it is an excellent alternative to revitalize Christian faith and to withstand the onslaught of socio-cultural relativism.

C. Effective ministry and mission in light of a relational realism paradigm

The figure below presents a synthesis of the relational paradigm (left side) and diaspora missiology and diaspora missions (right side). If the relational paradigm is likened to the skeleton (as in biology) or syntax (as in linguistics), then diaspora missiology and diaspora missions is the flesh/face (as in biology) or word/sound (as in linguistics).[36]

Figure 8–Relational Paradigm: Synthesizing Diaspora Missiology & Diaspora Missions

RELATONAL PARADIGM		DIASPORA MISSIOLOGY & DIASPORA MISSIONS
5 ELEMENTS	**5 RELATIONAL ASPECTS**	
PARTICIPANTS • Triune God & Christians carry out the Great Commission • Resistant: Satan, fallen angels	**RELATIONAL NETWORK** • Triune God is the originator of relationship; the center and foundation of all networks • Two camps: God, obedient angels & Christians ← → Satan	• Not programmatic, not entrepreneurial, not outcome-based • Strong emphasis on relational dimensions between person Being (the triune God) and beings (of humanity and angelic reality) • Recognizing the dimension of spiritual warfare
PATTERN (→sending) • Father → the Son & together → H. S. • Father → the Son → Christians (Jn 17:18), Christians obeying • H. S. sending (Acts 10:19; 13:2) Christians empowered	**RELATIONAL DIMENSIONS/ CONTEXT** • Vertical dimension to God • Horizontal dimensions within the Church & beyond • Multi-context: divine, angelic, human; changing human contexts due to globalization, diaspora movement, etc.	• Vertical dimensions, e.g. "relational accountability" • "Glocal" missions in the globalized context • Non-spatial, "borderless," no boundary to worry, transnational • Different approach: integrated ministry & interdisciplinary study of missiology • Learning of new demographic reality of the 21st century & strategize accordingly with good stewardship
PRACTICE • Christians participating in God's mission, carrying out the "Great Commission"	**RELATIONAL REALITY** • God: reconciling the world to Himself in Christ through Christians • Satan & fallen angels at enmity with God and His followers	• New reality in the 21st century • Viewing & following God's way of providentially moving people spatially & spiritually. • Moving targets & move with the targets (diaspora)
POWER • God's love transforms Christians & compels them carrying out His mission	**RELATIONAL DYNAMICS** • Doing missions out of love for God & compassion for the lost • empowered by the Holy Spirit	• Micro: love, compassion, Christian hospitality • Macro: partnership & networking • Holistic Christianity with strong integration of evangelism with Christian compassion & charity

PROCESS • God: plan of salvation provided & the Church carrying out God's mission	**RELATIONAL INTERACTION** • God's calling, Christ's commissioning, H.S. empowering • Christians obedient to God; Satan resisting God's mission	• "Great commission" + "great commandment" • Diaspora mission: ministering ***to***, ***through***, ***by/beyond***, and ***with*** the diaspora • Relational accountability • Strategic stewardship and partnership

In light of this synthesis of the insights of both diaspora missiology and a relational realism, let me conclude by offering some specific practical implications that can impact our approach to mission and outreach, whether at the denominational, local, or even personal level.

1. Kingdom orientation

A person with kingdom orientation is someone who embraces the perspective, sentiment, and motivation of the kingdom at heart and in action. Kingdom orientation enables practitioners of Christian missions to overcome denominationalism, parochialism, and territorialism. It will remove relational barriers in communication and reduce the tendency of being managerial and paternalistic, which tend to be impersonal. The relational paradigm will aid the cultivation of relationship among all parties. It will nurture partnership between the dwindling church in the West and the thriving church in the global south.

With kingdom orientation, diaspora Christians and congregations can be motivated and mobilized to become kingdom workers and kingdom partners.[37] With the exception of refugees, most diaspora people are gainfully employed. As kingdom workers, their kingdom orientation will help to multiply mission forces without draining the scarce resources of mission agencies, while at the same time fulfilling the Great Commission. This is an effective and economical way of engaging the "priesthood of believers" in the twenty-first century.

2. Partnerships that mimic the Trinity

"The relational reality of the Triune God figures prominently in both the Old and New Testaments scriptures."[38] The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to one another in perfect unity, though distinct from one another with diverse roles and operating interdependently. This theological understanding of the Trinity has implications for the practice of strategic partnership in Christian mission, including diaspora missions. The figure below offers seven principles derived from the model of the Trinity for the practice of ministerial partnership.

Figure 9–Partnership in Light of the Trinity[39]

PRINCIPLES	PRACTICE OF MINISTERIAL PARTNERSHIP
1. relationship	know, confer, plan with one another
2. unity	spiritual unity leading to unity of goal
3. diversity	difference in gifts and distinct roles
4. interdependence	not self-sufficient
5. love	self-sacrificial love within the Trinity and beyond
6. peace	harmony; freedom from anxiety and inner turmoil
7. joy	Christians are to be joyfully serving God and others

3. Strategic stewardship

According to Jenkins,[40] places where Christianity is thriving and mutating are also places where population is shifting. He projects that this demographic trend will continue throughout the next century. Given this global demographic trend, the church must strategically minister to receptive people in developing nations where population and church are growing at a higher rate than the post-Christian West. This strategy also applies to ministries to diaspora groups, who are usually more receptive to the Gospel while on the move from the security of their homeland.

Christian stewardship has two dimensions: endowment by God **vertically** and entrustment by others **horizontally**. Strategic stewardship (Lk 12:32–48) and relational accountability (Lk 15:1–16:13) also have vertical and horizontal aspects. Resources, spiritual gifts, and ministry opportunities all originate from God; thus, those who are custodians of various measures of grace from the Father (Jas 1:16–18), the Son (Eph 4:7–11), and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:1–11) are to be good stewards. Therefore, Christian individuals and institutions are accountable to the Triune God for their stewardship of endowments and entrustments vertically and strategically.

Likewise, resources and ministry opportunities oftentimes come from other Christian individuals and institutions by means of contribution, donation, and entrustment. There is to be strategic stewardship on the part of recipients who are accountable horizontally to the contributors and donors.

4. Biblical basis of relational accountability[41]

Relational accountability is the understanding and practice of accountability within the relational paradigm. It consists of two dimensions: vertical and horizontal. The relational paradigm is contextually more relevant within the context of "Missions in the Majority World"[42] than in modernist, postmodernist, or rationalist paradigms. The reason is that in the socio-cultural context of the majority world, social structure is primarily the interweaving of myriads of networks at multiple levels.

Traditionally, mission agencies in the West were accountable to donors but not necessarily to those among whom they were establishing missions. When Western mission organizations became hard pressed by dwindling resources in finance and personnel, accountability was no longer based solely on finance from the West. A new pattern of relational accountability between partnering entities in the West and the majority world is to replace the pattern of Western paternalism and dominance. When the relational paradigm is being practiced in diaspora missions, mutual "relational accountability" is to replace the traditionally "unilateral accountability" by entities of the majority world to those of the West.

For example, historically, Western-based mission agencies had always funded mission operations in the majority world. They, as the dominant force, often ignored issues and concerns raised by the local people. The only relational accountability for these missionaries from the West was to their own sending agencies in the West. The relational paradigm and relational accountability proposed in this paper is to counter such "one-way" relationships. The same principle applies to Christian ministry in general.

5. Strategic partnership and "reverse missions"[43]

"Partnership" is a "unique opportunity" to work with the Triune God and the Body of Christ to accomplish the *missio Dei* under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit.[44] "Strategic partnership" is partnership characterized by wise use of God-endowed resources and God-given opportunity to His glory and for kingdom extension.

"Partnership" is a "unique opportunity" to work with the Triune God and the Body of Christ to accomplish the missio Dei under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit.

Strategic partnership is a fitting replacement for Western paternalism and Euro-centric style missions. Members of thriving diaspora churches in host countries must be challenged to practice "reverse missions." It is the carrying out of mission work in the post-Christian West by diaspora Christians or Christians of the global south. It is also the sending of diaspora groups back to their homelands and to other countries for mission work. Success of these mission endeavors depends on the collaboration and partnership among parties concerned, i.e., mission entities from the West, maturing congregations in the global south, and diaspora churches. The synergy from such partnership will enhance Christian stewardship and advance kingdom ministry.

A good case of "reverse missions" is the trend of church planting by Africans in Europe that began in the latter part of the last century with momentum:

> The 1990s witnessed the rise of New Pentecostal Churches (NPC) with African origins. For example, one of the largest Churches in Western Europe is Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) founded in 1992 by Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo (Nigerian); also one of the largest Churches in Eastern Europe was founded in 1994 by an African, Sunday Adelaja pastor of Embassy of God in Kiev, Ukraine. African Churches in Europe are making many contributions and are bringing renewal to a continent that is fast losing its Christian roots and values. The contributions of African Churches can be seen in the following areas: Church growth, social cohesion among ethnic minorities, community development, women's ministries and discourses, immigration services, *diaspora* studies, revival, missions and a host of others.[45]

It is, therefore, critically important for church bodies in Europe and North America to practice strategic partnership with the vibrant diaspora churches in the context of post-Christian West and for the fulfillment of the Great Commission globally.

Summary

The Reformation era was a time of significant paradigm shifts in cultural landscape, with a parallel in the changing landscape of Christianity in the twenty-first century. Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther exercised his theological leadership in light of such socio-cultural changes. This paper (in two parts) has been written to inspire Christian leaders today, especially those who are direct heirs of Luther and the Reformation, to do likewise.

Three global trends have been identified in Part One: the shifting landscape of Christendom, the phenomenon of diaspora, the rise of socio-cultural relativism. In Part Two, a personal proposal to the leadership of Lutheran church bodies in North America has been presented in response to the these three trends: a paradigm shift to multiethnic ecclesiology and missiology, a paradigm shift from "traditional missiology" to "diaspora missiology," and a paradigm shift to a "relational realism paradigm." I have offered some practical implications as a starting point for further discussion within a Lutheran framework of mission, building on the model of the Reformation to embrace Gospel-centered and Gospel-driven mission within the realities of a changing social-cultural and technological context.

Endnotes

[1] Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003).

[2] Enoch Wan, "Jesus Christ for the Chinese: A Contextual Reflection," *Global Missiology* (Oct. 2003), www.globalmissiology.net. Sample works on "contextualization" and Sino-

theology by Enoch Wan are listed below:

- "Liberating Paradigm Shift: Theologizing from the East" (unpublished paper presented at the EMS SE Regional Meeting, March 7–8, 1997).
- *Banishing the Old and Building the New: An Exploration of Sino-theology* (in Chinese) (Ontario, Canada: Christian Communication Inc. of Canada, 1997).
- *Sino-theology: A Survey Study* (in Chinese) (Ontario, Canada: Christian Communication Inc. of Canada, 1999).
- "Christianity in the Eye of Traditional Chinese," *Chinese Around the World* (July 1999): 20–24.
- "Critiquing the Method of Traditional Western Theology and Calling for Sino-theology," *Chinese Around the World* (November 1999): 12–17.
- "Practical Contextualization: A Case Study of Evangelizing Contemporary Chinese," *Chinese Around the World* (March 2000): 18–24.
- "Theological Contribution of Sino-theology to the Global Christian Community," *Chinese Around the World.* (July 2000): 17–21.

[3] Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock, eds., *Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series Book 17 (William Carey Library, 2009).

[4] Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*, rev. ed. (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2014), 7–8.

[5] See "The Seoul Declaration on Diaspora Missiology," accessed March 25, 2010, http://www.lausanne.org/documents/seoul-declaration-on-diaspora-missiology.html.

[6] There is the IDS-USA Series (Institute of Diaspora Studies) edited by Enoch Wan as listed below:

- Enoch Wan, ed., *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*, rev. ed. (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2014).
- Yaw Attah Edu-Bekoe and Enoch Wan, *Scattered Africans Keep Coming* (Spring 2013).
- Enoch Wan and Thanh Trung Le, *Mobilizing Vietnamese Diaspora for the Kingdom* (Spring 2014).
- Enoch Wan and Ted Rubesh, *Wandering Jews and Scattered Sri Lankans: Understanding Sri Lankan Diaspora in the GCC Region Through the Lens of OT Jewish Diaspora* (Spring 2014).
- Enoch Wan and Elton S. L. Law, *The 2011 Triple Disaster in Japan and the Diaspora: Lessons Learned and Ways Forward* (Summer 2014).
- Enoch Wan and Anthony Francis Casey, *Church Planting Among Immigrants in US Urban Centers: The Where, Why, and How of Diaspora Missiology in Action* (Summer 2014). A more recent publication is Michael Pocock and Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Reflections on Reaching the Scattered Peoples of the World*, EMS, vol. 23 (2015).

[7] Enoch Wan, "Diaspora Missiology," originally published in *Occasional Bulletin*, EMS (Spring 2007): 8; posted in "Featured Article" of www.globalmissiology.org in July 2007.

[8] "Deterritorialization" is the "loss of social and cultural boundaries" due to the large scale diaspora.

[9] Enoch Wan, "Diaspora Missiology," originally published in *Occasional Bulletin*, EMS (Spring 2007): 9.

[10] David Lundy, *Borderless Church* (Authentic, 2005).

[11] Peter Ward, *Liquid Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002).

[12] A church was founded by the chief cook, brother Bong, on board of the container vessel Al Mutannabi in Nov. 2002 (see Martin Otto, *Church on the Oceans* [UK: Piquant, 2007], 65). From personal communication of March 29, 2007, a staff worker reported that "Last week I met the second cook on another ship and I was very happy to see that the second cook already started planting a church. . ."
[13] "Partnership" is defined as "entities that are separate and autonomous but complementary, sharing with equality and mutuality." More discussion on "partnership" in another section later.
[14] See extensive discussion and explanation in Chapter 8, Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology* (2014): 123–134.
[15] Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology* (2014), 183.
[16] The "with" approach is a relatively new development, discussed in the second edition (2014) of my *Diaspora Missiology*.
[17] Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology* (2014), 132.
[18] Ibid., 132–133. Bold emphasis was in original.
[19] Enoch Wan, "Diaspora Missiology." *Occasional Bulletin*, EMS, 20 no. 2 (Spring 2007a): 3–7.
[20] Tom Phillips and Bob Norsworthy, *The World at Your Door: Reaching International Students in Your Home, Church, and School* (Minnesota: Bethany House, 1997).
[21] Jerry L. Appleby, *Missions Have Come Home to America: The Church's Cross-Cultural Ministry to Ethnic* (Missouri: Beacon Hill, 1986).
[22] Enoch Wan, *Missions Within Reach: Intercultural Ministries in Canada* (Hong Kong: Alliance Press, 1995).
[23] Thom Hopler and Marcia Hopler, *Reaching the World Next Door* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995).
[24] J. D. Payne, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012).
[25] Enoch Wan and Mark Hedinger, *Relational Missionary Training: Theology, Theory and Practice* (CA: Urban Loft Publishers, 2017).
[26] Enoch Wan, "The Paradigm of 'Relational Realism,'" *Occasional Bulletin*, EMS, vol. 19, no. 2 (Spring 2006):1–4.
[27] Enoch Wan, "Relational Theology and Relational Missiology," *Occasional Bulletin*, EMS, vol. 21, no 1 (Winter 2007): 1–7.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 2–5.
[30] The "I AM" is God's self-identification and "i am" (lowercase) is an intentional designation for man in contra-distinction to "I AM."
[31] Our Triune God is characterized by love, communion, commission (sending), and glory. Also see Kevin Daugherty, "*Missio Dei*: The Trinity and Christian Missions," Evangelical Review of Theology 31 (April 2007). John A. McIntosh, *All Things New: The Trinitarian Nature of the Human Calling in Maximus the Confessor and Jurgen Moltmann* (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014).
[32] Wan, "Relational Theology and Relational Missiology," 2.
[33] Paul Hiebert, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 37–38.
[34] Wan, "The Paradigm of 'Relational Realism,'" 4.
[35] Chicken soup is valued in most majority world cultural traditions. The use of the "chicken soup" analogy was included in video presentations by Enoch Wan in presentations at Tokyo 2010 and Cape Town 2010:

- Tokyo 2010 – Plenary Session Video, video clip available at http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/6897559 and paper (pp. 92–100) available at http://www.tokyo2010.org/resources/Handbook.pdf.
- Cape Town 2010 – "Multiplex" Session Video, video clip available at http://www.enochwan.com/english/confvideos/index.html and paper available at http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/conversations/detail/10540.

[36] For an explanation of this figure, refer to Enoch Wan, "Global People and Diaspora Missiology," in *Handbook of Global Mission: Consultation, Celebration, May 11–14, 2010*: 92–106. Video clip available at http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/6897559.

[37] See two publications for elaboration: Enoch Wan, "Korean Diaspora: From Hermit Kingdom to Kingdom Ministry," Korean Diaspora Forum, May 18–21, 2010 (Seoul, Korea); Sadiri Emmanuel Santiago B. Tira, "Filipino Kingdom Workers: An Ethnographic Study in Diaspora Missiology." EMS Dissertation Series (Western Seminary, 2008).

[38] Enoch Wan, "Partnerships Should Mimic the Trinity," *Faith Today* (July/August 2010): 27.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2002).

[41] The content of this section is adapted from "Global People and Diaspora Missiology" Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Consultation, Plenary Session, Tokyo, Japan, (May 11–14, 2010) p. 92–106.

[42] See Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock, eds., *Missions in the Majority World* (William Carey Library, 2009).

[43] Enoch Wan, "Diaspora Missiology and Missions in the Context of the 21st Century," *Torch Trinity Journal*, vol. 13, no.1 (May 30, 2010): 46–60. Also in *Global Missiology*, October, 2010; available at www.GlobalMissiology.com.

[44] For detailed discussion on "partnership," see the three articles below:

- Enoch Wan and Kevin P. Penman, "The 'Why,' 'How' and 'Who' of Partnership in Christian Missions," *Global Missiology* (April 1, 2010), available at www.GlobalMissiology.com;
- Enoch Wan and Johnny Yee-chong Wan, "Partnership—A Relational Study of the Trinity and the Epistle to the Philippines," *Global Missiology* (April 1, 2010a), available at www.GlobalMissiology.org;
- Enoch Wan and Geoff Baggett, "A Theology of Partnership: Implications for Christian Mission & Case Study of a Local Congregation," *Global Missiology* (April 2010), available at www.GlobalMissiology.org.

[45] "Reverse Missions: African Churches in Europe," (accessed Dec. 20, 2013), http://israelolofinjana.wordpress.com/2012/01/25/reverse-missions-african-churches-in-europe/.

Lutheran Presence at the First Protestant Christianity in South Travancore

Damodharan Christudas

Abstract: Protestant Christianity in Travancore has a unique history different from other missions in India. The Eastern (Syrian) Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Christians first came to India as immigrant communities and multiplied primarily through biological reproduction. Protestant Christianity however was a missional movement, proclaiming Jesus Christ as Savior among indigenous peoples. The Protestant mission movement in India began especially with the entrance of Bartholomew Ziegenbalg in Tranquebar in 1706, a Halle Lutheran Missionary. The existing histories about the origin of the Protestant Christianity in Kerala hardly mention this fact. Before the arrival of the London Mission Society in 1812, Protestant Christians were working already in Travancore as an extension of the Tranquebar mission. Historians of Travancore Protestant Christianity so far have only acknowledged the origin of Protestant Christianity in Kerala with the Rev. Vedamanickam of Mylady. That story however is very selective. This study is an attempt at re-reading the Travancore Christian mission history for the purpose of showing a clear connection of Lutheranism with the first Protestant missionary efforts in Travancore.

This year the world is celebrating the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. During this historic year, 1.6 million Indian Christians belonging to twelve different denominations within the Lutheran tradition will be joining this celebration. To God alone is due the praise and honor for the growth and expansion of the Lutheran Christians in India. It is important that the voices of Indian Lutherans be heard as part of the five hundredth anniversary celebration. They, too, have been called by the Lord to be His witnesses at this critical moment in world history. What

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through God's grace transpired five centuries ago through the faith and life of one servant of the Word, named Martin Luther, historians have called the "protestant revolution." That "revolution" continues today to profoundly influence the lives of Christians and no Christians alike. Indian Lutherans have many reasons to celebrate the Reformation as we experience the power of the Word living and active in the lives of ordinary people.

New perspectives in historiography are emerging, enabling investigators to find proper, relevant, and sufficient sources for the reconstruction of an inclusive history of any existing tradition or movement. Each minority Christian movement has a story which needs to be told, especially as these stories have hitherto been ignored or overlooked by historians. These stories are important because they represent the experiences of exploited minorities, oppressed peoples, and outcasts. The Christian minorities in India have been and still are vulnerable because of the socio-economic and cultural context in which they live. Historians must do justice to the concerns and perspectives of these suppressed minorities.

A rereading of the life stories of Indian Christians is vital at this point in the history of Christian missions in India. Roger C. Hedlund observes the importance of the inclusion of "little traditions" in the study of mission history.[1] Too often church historians concentrate mainly on the so-called "great tradition," that is, the history of the institutional church, its administration, seminaries, charitable institutions, and official doctrines, while neglecting the efforts of the common people who by living the Gospel in their everyday activities and sharing their faith with family, neighbors, and acquaintances are carrying out the Great Commission, not only in their own vicinities, but often in other parts of the country. Our understanding of contemporary Christianity will be incomplete if we ignore the folk theology of the masses and the mission work carried out by the unsung lay evangelists of what anthropologists designate as the "little tradition," the religion of the common people. The perceptions and assumptions found in most of the available histories are deficient and incomplete in this respect. In India, as in the Early Church, the faith was spread mainly through social and family networks and not by professional missionaries prepared by the institutional church. A historiography taking into account the perspective of those neglected in the past is needed to give church history a holistic

Students of history need to read anew the available histories to discover the hidden transcripts that relate how the Holy Spirit has been active in the lives of the poor, the oppressed, and the disinherited. The common people have been and are not only the objects but also the subjects of mission.

approach. Students of history need to read anew the available histories to discover the hidden transcripts that relate how the Holy Spirit has been active in the lives of the poor, the oppressed, and the disinherited. The common people have been and are not only the objects but also the subjects of mission. In this light we need to have a look into the history of first Protestant mission in South Travancore,[2] a part of present state of Kerala in India.

Christian Mission is a movement that cuts across all kinds of geographical boundaries. Jesus Christ sends His disciples into the world as an extension of His incarnation. Therefore mission work is not an auxiliary activity but the very life-blood of the Church. It is generally believed that in obedience to Christ's mission, St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, came from Palestine to Kerala, South India, in AD 52 to preach the Good News. From the first century AD onwards there has been a Christian presence in India. The present St. Thomas Christians in India, also known as the Syrian Christians, were the direct descendants of the Apostle Thomas' early converts.[3] Certainly there was a well-established Church in Malabar by the third century.[4] We have no evidence that any member of the early church in Kerala ever attempted to record the history of this church body during the first thousand years of its existence.

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The so-called St. Thomas Christians limited their outreach to other Syriac speaking peoples but did not reach out to others or translate the Scriptures into the many languages spoken in South India. Though a Christian community existed in South India long before a church was established in many sections of Europe, the rest of India had to wait many centuries before hearing the Good News in a language they could understand. It is clear that only after the coming of the Portuguese, and particularly after the arrival of St. Francis Xavier in 1542, that Roman Catholic Christianity progressed in the South. In the ensuing years, geographical discoveries and the evangelical zeal that was a by-product of the Reformation and Counter Reformation contributed much to the establishment of many missionary organizations dedicated to the evangelization of the non-Christian races of the world, including the many peoples inhabiting the Indian subcontinent. Accordingly, the first Protestant missionaries to be sent to the Indian subcontinent were German Lutherans who arrived in the small Danish colony of Tranquebar[5] in South India in 1706.

Protestant Christianity in South Travancore

The Lutheran missionaries who helped establish Protestant Christianity in Tranquebar were German pietists who had studied at the University of Halle under the influence of August Hermann Francke, one of the great leaders of Lutheran Pietism. The German missionaries were sent to India by the Danish royal family, that is, by laypeople and not by a church body. Upon arriving in Tranquebar, the missionaries began translating the Scriptures, founding congregations, establishing schools, and undertaking charitable work. From Tranquebar, Christianity spread to other parts of India, including Travancore. Soon other missionary societies in England, Holland, Scotland, and Germany began sending workers to South India. For many years Protestant missionary work in Southern India was a cooperative enterprise that saw Anglicans, Reformed, Lutherans, and Methodists serving together in the same society. However, the first evangelists who carried the Gospel to Travancore were not foreign missionaries from one of the mission societies in Germany, Holland, Denmark, or Great Britain, but indigenous Indian Christians who identified themselves as Lutherans. One of these Indian evangelists was a young man named Maharasan.

Conversion of Maharasan

Maharasan came from an obscure village called Mylady near Nagercoil. He heard the Gospel while he was on a pilgrimage to a place called Chithambaram. It was on this pilgrimage that a Lutheran missionary named Kohlhoff, from Tanjore in Tamil Nadu, shared the Gospel with him. Maharasan converted to Christianity and was baptized by the Lutheran missionaries. He then took his new name, Vedamanickam (1763–1827),[6] and returned to his village and began proclaiming the Word of God that he learned during his long stay in Tanjore. This happened in 1804. Certain catechists from Tanjore and Thirunelveli came and worked for some time in South Travancore. But Vedamanickam felt that presence of a European missionary in this place would further boost the cause of mission. So he returned to Tanjore with a request for a missionary. It so happened that a Lutheran missionary named Ringaltaube, associated with the London Mission Society, was residing and waiting for providential guidance to direct him to a new sphere of labor. He accepted Maharasan's invitation as a divine call to work in Travancore. So he promised to visit South Travancore. In Mylady, it was Vedamanickam's habit to gather those who would listen to the Gospel and read to them the Scriptures. He taught them the Catechism called *Gnana Upathesa Kuripadam* (which means small notes on wise doctrine). They were about thirty persons.[7] Vedamanickam also gave Christian names to his wife and relatives who accepted Christianity. A catechist from Palayamcotta visited him occasionally to help him. But Ringaltaube's ministry in South Travancore opened a new era in the mission history of South Travancore.

The Christian churches that were established in South Travencore came into being as an extension of the Tranquebar Mission,[8] although South Travancore was considered as part of the Thirunelveli Mission. Certain officers of the East India Company, like Colonel Trotter, and certain Danish merchants, like Samuel Sawyer, took much interest in spreading the Gospel in South Travancore.[9] According to John A. Jacob and also Anglican Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814–1891), Dutch factories were established in Cape Comorin and other places in South India. Mention is made in these reports of possible Protestant evangelistic work in South Travancore.[10] Kohlhoff (1773–1819), the successor to Schwartz, states that "he sent an Indian evangelist by the name Yesuadian, to Travancore."[11] Certain merchants and other travelers who used to go to the Thirunelveli district for tapping Palmyra juice became Christian converts and were baptized and returned to South Travancore.

The congregation at Kudangulam was established on November 11, 1802.[12] Early Protestant Christians at South Travancore had a close connection with the members of this Church. James Hough, the first Government Chaplain in Thirunelveli, in his report of 1815 states that "out of the 3100 Christians in the churches, 270 live in a village in Travancore."[13] T. K. Velupillai, who wrote about the Protestant Christianity in Travancore, reports that "even before 1806, stray attempts had been made by missionaries of Tanjore and Tinnevelley missions to gain converts."[14]

Moreover, citing a leaf from Ringaltaube's church register of the congregation at Pichaikudiyiruppu, Robinson says, "most of the people were baptized at Karungulam by Sathyanesan, a native priest. The register indicated these converts died during the famine of 1803."[15] Describing Ringaltaube's mission in Travancore, J. Duthie writes, "he expected to find a good number of Christians there."[16] When Hacker explained about the conversion of Vedamanickam[17] (whose name in Malayalam means "Pearl of Holy Scripture"), he says, "There were some who had embraced the truth before him."[18] This supports the argument that there were Christian Protestant converts in South Travancore before the London Mission began to work there. These converts were not from *Sambavar* community, but most probably from *Shanars*.[19]

Ringaltaube's Mission at South Travancore

The London Missionary Society (LMS) founded in 1796 was at first a nondenominational organization; later it became more Congregational in regard to its doctrinal orientation. However, the LMS continued to recruit and send out missionaries belonging to different church bodies, including many Lutherans. The LMS understood itself to be an international enterprise whose mission was to spread the knowledge of Christ among the *"heathen"*[20] and other unenlightened nations.[21] William Tobias Ringaltaube (1770–1816) was destined to be the first European Protestant missionary to Travancore. He came to Travancore by travelling in a

Danish vessel, "Kind Packet." He was a German Lutheran and a graduate of the University of Halle. I. H. Hacker describes him as "A Prussian by birth and a Lutheran by religion."[22] As Ringaltaube was drawn towards the South, he began to learn Tamil.[23]

Ringaltaube arrived in South Travancore on April 25, 1806. In two days, he reached Palayamcotta, which became his headquarters for the next three years. He came back again in March 1809 and settled at Mylady in South Travancore and remained there until 1816. Ringaltaube is credited with the founding of seven congregations in South Travancore, including the church in Mylady, although, as we have noted, it was the Indian Lutheran evangelist Vedamanickam who brought the Gospel to Mylady and invited Ringaltaube to help him. Ringaltaube won many converts for the Protestant cause.[24] He received financial help from some of his friends in Travancore and elsewhere, particularly from British Army officers and civilian officers of the East India Company. After twelve years of labor in South India, Ringaltaube handed over his charge to the indigenous leader, Vedamanickam of Mylady, and returned to his homeland due to ill health. The meritorious services of missionaries like Ringaltaube helped attract members of the depressed classes. This in turn resulted in a Christian mass movement in South Travancore.

Relationship Between Tranquebar, London, and Other Mission Societies

The work of Tranquebar Lutheran missionaries was strengthened by the financial support from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) which was started in London in 1698. SPCK was formed by a group of Anglicans in England in 1698. Its aim was "to promote Christian Knowledge at home." Thus, its focus was mainly in the field of education and publishing.[25]

From 1709, the SPCK contributed to the funding of the Lutheran Mission; and, after 1734, the main responsibility for the mission outside Tranquebar rested on this society. From Tranquebar mission activities spread far and wide. From Tranquebar, native Christians went out and started new stations in Cudallore, Madras, Tanjore, Trichnopally, Palayamcotta, Tinnevelley, and Travancore and even in Calcutta. Even the celebrated Baptist missionaries that formed the Serampore Trio were inspired, when they came to Calcutta almost a century later.[26]

It should be noted that a century of growing rationalism in Europe caused a lack of missionary zeal and contributed to the discontinuation of the Danish Mission and a gradual decline of Danish involvement in the SPCK. With Europe's involvement in the Napoleonic wars, the SPCK fell into decline. In 1826, the SPCK handed over its responsibilities to the Society for Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). The SPG was the second Anglican Mission Society to be formed. The first meeting of the society was held in 1701. Rev. Dr. Thomas Bray was responsible for starting both the SPCK and the SPG. The main purpose of starting SPG was to support the Anglican Church in

the American colonies and the West Indies. The SPG decided to begin its work in India and also in Ceylon from 1818 onwards. Upon taking over the work of the SPCK, some Anglican members of the SPG would begin to question their continued support of Lutheran missionaries in the society who had not been ordained by an Anglican bishop.[27] At this time there were Anglican bishops in India; and though the Anglican societies accepted the Lutheran orders of existing missionaries and Indian clergy, they required that in the future all ordinations should be in accordance with Anglican practice. Hence all the fruits of the blessed labours of the old Lutheran missionaries in the eighteenth century fell into the helping hands of Anglican missionaries and their supporting societies.[28.]

In 1813 the first CMS (Church Missionary Society) missionaries arrived in South India, and in Tinnevelley the members of the CMS mission soon became more numerous than those of the earlier missions. The first CMS missionaries included a substantial number of German Lutherans. Seeing Lutheranism in India beginning to falter with the demise of the Danish Halle Mission, the Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission society began to send out missionaries to strengthen the cause of Lutheranism in India. The Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission (LELM) was founded on August 17, 1836. The Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission continued the work of the Tranquebar Mission when the Danish East India Company sold its property to the British East India Company in 1845.[29]

From Tranquebar to Travancore

The first Protestant Christians in South Travancore were directly related to the Tranquebar Lutheran Mission.

As we have noted earlier, there were Protestant Christians in South Travancore before the arrival of the LMS missionaries. The first Protestant Christians in South Travancore were directly related to the Tranquebar Lutheran Mission. They were converted and baptized by the Lutheran missionaries. The early evangelists in South Travancore also had the Lutheran roots. In 1790, C. F. Schwartz ordained Sathyanathan in Tranquebar and sent him as a pastor to Palayamcotta. Vedamanickam was trained and baptized by John Caspar Kohlhoff, the successor of Schwartz.[30] The first London Mission Society missionary, Ringaltaube, was also an ex-Danish Halle Lutheran. Before the arrival of Ringaltaube in South Travancore, the form of worship adopted by these early Protestant Christians was Lutheran. The form of church worship and church government was also Lutheran, as was also the case in Tharangampadi and Tanjavur. Several Lutheran rites and traditions continued to be observed in these congregations. Women were taught to cover their heads when they assembled for

worship and were seated separately. Ringaltaube was aided in the preparation of his sermons and discourses by the tracts and books published by the Lutheran missionaries in Tranquebar.[31] Further, C. M. Augur—in his description of the agreement made by Ringaltaube, the new Travancore missionary, and J. C. Kohlhoff, then head of the Society for Propagation of Christian Knowledge—notes that: "The reason why Mr. Kohlhoff entered into such an agreement with Mr. Ringaltaube was that Mr. Ringaltaube was equally in agreement with the use of Lutheran orders, and so he had the assurance that . . . during his temporary direction of the society, the churches would maintain the Lutheran principles he shared with them."[32]

While describing the mission work of the first Protestant missionary of South Travancore, R. N. Yesudasan wrote that that Ringaltaube, who was a German Lutheran, taught new converts with Lutheran catechisms. Tamil prayer books and the Catechism (*Gnanopadesha Kuripadam*) of the Lutheran Church of Tanjore were widely used by the majority of the Christians and their brethren in the mission.[33]

It should be noted that even though Ringaltaube was the pioneer Protestant missionary, with a groundbreaking ministry of twelve years in Travancore, the credit of being the "Father of South Travancore protestant mission" was given to Rev. Charles Mead (1792–1873). With Mead, the mission saw a gradual transformation from its Lutheran roots to Methodism. Augur writes: "one of the most important events of the earlier years of Charles Mead's period of administration of the mission was the gradual transformation of the Lutheran Church practices of the early church into Methodist forms of worship."[34] G. Devakadaksham further supports this statement, when he writes, "in the early period of the mission, the Lutheran form of worship was practiced."[35] Gradually, Rev. C. Mead introduced the Methodist form of worship. The church at Mylady was constituted after the model of the Tanjore and Tranquebar churches, which mostly followed German Lutheranism. Early Mylady Christians and their brethren in mission used the Tamil prayer books and catechisms of the Lutheran church of Tanjore. When Ringaltaube ordained Vedamanickam, he put on him his own surplice and called him a "native priest."[36]

In South Travancore, Protestantism experienced great success due to the work of Vedamanickam and the LMS missionary, Ringaltaube. However, there were already Protestant Christians in South Travancore before they came. Before the conversion of Vedamanickam of Mylady, there were Protestant Christians in South Travancore with clear connections to the Tranquebar mission. It is probable that among the early converts to Protestant Christianity many were from the Shannar/Nadar community. The historians of S. Travancore Protestant Christianity so far have acknowledged the origin of Protestant Christianity in Kerala only with Vedamanickam of Mylady and Ringaltaube. Even so, it must be pointed out that the first Protestant Christian, the first Protestant missionary, the first Protestant church and the first Protestant native pastor in Kerala were Lutheran. The first Protestant Christian in South Travancore,

Maharasan Vedamanickam, was baptized by a Lutheran missionary and was also ordained as the first Protestant pastor in South Travancore in the Lutheran order. The first Protestant missionary to South Travancore was a German Lutheran, William Tobias Ringaltaube (1770–1816), who came with the help of the London Missionary Society. Until the arrival of the Methodist LMS missionary, Charles Mead in South Travancore, the first Protestant community in Kerala remained Lutheran in character.

Conclusion

Protestant Christianity in Kerala has an exceptional history, unlike that of other church bodies in India. Though a Christian church existed in Kerala long before Christian churches were established in many parts of Europe, the rest of India had to wait for many centuries to hear the Good News. It is clear that it was only after the coming of the Portuguese that Roman Catholic Christianity was introduced in South Travancore. With the arrival of St. Francis Xavier in 1542, the Roman Catholic mission enjoyed great success. Protestant work in India is the result of the missionary activities of several different Protestant mission societies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. German Lutherans were sent to South India as the first Protestant missionaries early in the eighteenth century. During this time, Denmark played an important role in the establishment of the Protestant Church in India. The Danish royal family was responsible for the sending of the German Lutheran missionaries to the small Danish colony in Tranquebar. They were the first Protestant missionaries to work in India (1706). The existing histories about the origin of the Protestant Christianity in Kerala, however, need to be read anew to appreciate the extent to which indigenous Lutheran believers were involved in the spreading of Protestantism in Southern India. Our understanding of contemporary Christianity will be incomplete if we ignore their contribution.

There are various studies about Christianity and the establishment of Christian church bodies in Kerala. These histories have been written by both Christian and non-Christian historians. But most of these investigations ignore the part played by native Lutheran Christians in the evangelization of Kerala. The picture painted of the coming of Protestantism in most books and articles is deficient and incomplete because it passes over the contributions of low caste Lutheran Indian believers in extending Christianity in Kerala. Against this background, the present study seeks to set the record straight. This is in

The picture painted of the coming of Protestantism in most books and articles is deficient and incomplete because it passes over the contributions of low caste Lutheran Indian believers in extending Christianity in Kerala.

the author's opinion an extremely important issue, as it regards not only a concern for scholarly truth, but also as counterweight to some of the cultural, racial, and denominational imperialism implicit in many books and articles written in the past. A historiography sensitive to the perspective of those who have been neglected in the past accounts will give to history a more holistic approach.

The history of the Protestant Christianity in the then South Travancore was different from that of other mission traditions in India. People from outside of this country brought the Syrian and Roman Catholic Christian faiths into Travancore. But it was indigenous Lutheran people who were the first to bring the Gospel to South Travancore. Lutheran mission was primarily a movement among the aboriginal people in South India. Among the many Christian denominations in India today, the Lutherans are still standing with strong convictions and distinctive doctrines and practices. In this five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, the Indian heirs of Luther's Reformation strongly believe that they should keep their identity as Lutherans, as they have a definite and distinctive message to share with the world.

Endnotes

[1] In a civilization there are great traditions of the reflective few, and there are little traditions of the largely unreflective many. One is the tradition of the philosopher, the other that of the little people. One is literary and the other oral. In Indian Christianity, great tradition represents the mainline churches and little tradition represents small churches and other indigenous movements. For more details see, Roger Hedlund, *Quest for Identity: Indians Churches of Indigenous Origin, the Little Tradition in Indian Christianity* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000).
[2] Travancore is the Anglicanized form of *Thiruvithamcode* or *Sreevalum code*. Travancore occupied a prominent place among the then Indian states. It was one of the Southern princely states of South India.
[3] A. Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in India* (Manchester: University Press, 1925), 18.
[4] G. T. Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore* (Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1902), 4.
[5] The name Tranquebar was a European term. According to Tamil, it was spelled *Tharangampadi,* which means village waves, wave dancer, or even wave singer. It was a seacoast village of the Madras presidency.
[6] C. B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Madras: CLS, 1992), 156.
[7] C. M. Augur, *Church History of Travancore* (Madras: SPS Press, 1903), 447.
[8] The Danish Halle missionaries, Bartholomaeus Zeigenbalg (b. 1682) and Henry Plutschau (b. 1676), arrived at Tranquebar on July 9, 1706.
[9] *The Travancore Times* 81/5 (June 25, 1952), 2.
[10] John A. Jacob, *A History of the London Missionary Society in South Travancore 1806–1959* (Nagercoil: np, 1956), 17.
[11] J. W. Gladstone, *Protestant Christianity and Peoples Movements in Kerala 1850–1936* (Trivandrum: KUTS Publications, 1984), 58. Gladstone says that due to the protest from the high caste people Yesuadiyan was not able to build any church. That shows the possibility of conversion to Protestant Christianity from the low caste people.
[12] *The Travancore Times*, 2.

[13] Ibid.
[14] T. K. Velupillai, *Travancore State Manuel* (Trivandrum: Government of Travancore, 1940), 770.
[15] William Robinson, *Ringaltaube the Rishi* (Sheffield: Independent Press, 1902), 99.
[16] J. Duthie, "A Century of Protestant Missionary Work in South Travancore," *Harvest Field* 17 (1906): 412–414. This was a paper read at the Kodaikanal Missionary Conference in May 1906.
[17] Vedamanickam was the first convert from Hinduism in Travancore.
[18] I. H. Hacker, *A Hundred Years in Travancore: 1806–1906* (London: H. R. Allenson Limited, 1908), 17.
[19] *Shannars* were the community of toddy tappers from palmyra trees and land laborers who had migrated to Southern Travancore. They are prominent in South Indian Districts. Now they are called as the Nadars.
[20] This term is frequently seen in Indian history books written by foreigners. They mean it as "a person who does not belong to a widely held religion as seen by those who do" (Catherine Soanes, *Compact Oxford Dictionary* [Oxford: OUP, 2004], 415). But now this term has a negative impact among Indian society. In this paper, when unavoidable, the present researcher would give the word within quotation marks.
[21] G. P. Fisher, *The History of Christian Church* (London: Hider & Slaughter, n.d.), 985.
[22] Hacker, *A Hundred Years in Travancore*, 20.
[23] Samuel Mateer, *The Land of Charity* (London: John Snow & Co., 1871), 158–159.
[24] John A. Jacob, *A History of the LMS in South Travancore 1806–1857* (Nagercoil: Diocesan Press, 1990), 45.
[25] Beth Walpole, *Venture of Faith: A Brief Historical Background of the Church of South India* (Madras: CLS, 1993), 34.
[26] Joseph G. Muthuraj, *We Began at Tranquebar*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), 104–121.
[27] Walpole, *Venture of Faith*, 47–51.
[28] H. M. Zorn, "The Background and First Twenty-five Years of the Missouri Evangelical Lutheran India Mission (1894–1919)" (unpublished STM thesis, St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1969), 23.
[29] Daniel Jeyaraj, "Lutheran Churches in Eighteenth-Century India," *Lutheran Quarterly* 17 (2003): 90.
[30] The Kohlhoff's connection with South India, including the places of Nagercoil and Trivandrum of South Travancore, is clearly shown in the map appeared in Elizabeth A. Kohlhoff (compiler), *Pastoral Symphony—The Family and Descendants of J. B. Kohlhoff* (Richmond: University of Western University, 1989), 76.
[31] Joy Gnanadasan, *A Forgotten History* (Madras: Gurukul Publication, 1994), 59–60.
[32] Augur, *Church History*, 487.
[33] R. N. Yesudhasan, *A People's Revolt in Travancore, A Backward Class Movement for Social Freedom* (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1975), 56–57.
[34] Augur, *Church History,*701.
[35] G. Devakadaksham, "The Kannyakumari Diocese," in J. W. Gladstone (ed.) *United to Unite, History of the Church of South India 1947–1997* (Chennai: CSI Synod, 1997), 204.
[36] Augur, *Church History*, 701.

De Roma . . . a Wittenberg . . . a USA

Miguel Darío Sanabria

Abstracto: El Reverendo Miguel Sanabria, oriundo de Colombia, describe su camino en la fe desde sus días como seminarista Católico Romano, luego su ordenación como sacerdote hasta llegar a ser pastor luterano. Hoy sirve en la Bahía de Tampa, Florida, en un ministerio misionero entre la población Hispana. Sus experiencias nos muestran cómo Cristo, tan claramente destacado en la Reforma Luterana, transforma la mente y el corazón de un siervo de Dios.

Solo por bondad del Señor, los siete años que dura la formación "superior" para ser validado como sacerdote romano, no los cursé en la ciudad donde está el Seminario regional al oriente de mi país, Colombia, sino que fui enviado con los Jesuitas a la Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá. Fue allí donde comencé a ver las enormes fisuras de la formación que estaba recibiendo en "doctrina", radicalmente opuesta a la enseñanza bíblica; recuerdo que en la biblioteca del Seminario Menor encontraba a Salgari, Wast, Verne . . . pero no la Biblia; solo algunos libros de texto sobre la Biblia, pero no la Biblia. Ya en la Universidad tuve la fortuna de ser designado lector en el comedor al mediodía y por la noche; uno de;

El Después de mis estudios de Licenciatura en Filosofía y Teología, cursados en la Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá, Colombia, de donde soy oriundo, volví al estado laical mediante Rescripto de Roma. El Señor me ayudó a prepararme para la Docencia Universitaria-Postgrados mediante estudios de Maestría y Especialización, estando vinculado a la Planta Central del Ministerio de Educación, donde conocí a quien es mi esposa, Flor Marina, con quien tenemos tres hijos: Miguel Andrés, Yolima y Diana, y cinco nietos. Con mi esposa y mis tres hijos, cursamos estudios en el CHS del Seminario Concordia de Saint Louis, MO, para servir mejor al Señor; allí tuve también la bendición de una Maestría en Artes. Radicado en USA desde hace 18 años, el Señor me llamó hace diez para su servicio como pastor LCMS, adscrito al Distrito FL-GA. En Tampa, hemos sembrado cuatro misiones que atendemos junto con los Vicarios John Cobos, Miguel Andrés y las diaconisas. *migueldarios@hotmail.com*

los libros rigurosamente señalado y en las páginas exactas, fue uno del extenso Ludovico Pastor, "La historia de los Papas" preparaba la lectura mediante un permiso especial para acceder a esta obra restringida; leyendo a escondidas de lo señalado, llegué a los Papas del tiempo de Lutero: Inocencio VIII y Alejandro VI, su sucesor. La otra lectura que me marcó fue el pequeño texto de Lutero que también leí a hurtadillas: "Sobre el papado romano," en el que vi con claridad que "la Iglesia verdadera, solo puede ser gobernada por Cristo."

Vi con claridad que "la Iglesia verdadera, solo puede ser gobernada por Cristo."

Las recomendaciones que hace siguen siendo válidas 500 años después: "No al poder terrenal; sí al espíritu de servir; no al culto a los santos; reducir el lujo del Papa y de la Curia; abolir el celibato; impedir la usura; no al poder terrenal de la Iglesia; eliminar las indulgencias; abolir el cobro por los servicios sagrados."

Después de los estudios superiores de filosofía y teología romanas, fui ordenado sacerdote. Serví en cuatro parroquias como ayudante; oficiaba la misa todos los días, escuchaba las confesiones, recitaba el rosario, hacía devoción a muchos santos, leía el "Breviario" en latín. Pero nada de eso satisfacía mi alma cansada. Me invadía un desasosiego más profundo que cuando era un muchacho. Pero Cristo me cuidó, porque me familiarizó con la versión católica de la Biblia, en la que encontré versículos asombrosos que contradecían lo que estaba haciendo; este Libro decía una cosa y mi Iglesia otra. ¿Quién tenía la razón? ¿La Iglesia Romana o Dios? De pronto Dios me brinda la oportunidad de no seguir en parroquias sino de trabajar como capellán en un colegio técnico, tipo "High School" adaptado a mi país. Desde entonces mi único contacto con la "curia" y los sacerdotes era el Obispo, quien se volvió mi consejero; después llegó a ser Cardenal en mi país. En un viaje que hizo a Roma me trajo el Rescripto del Papa para liberarme del sacerdocio y volver a mi estado laical.

Fue en este Instituto donde el Señor comenzó su trabajo de llevarme a la sana doctrina, lejos de esos años de lucha contra líderes romanos, cuando con Biblia en mano yo insistía en que un cura no puede suplantar la obra del Señor en la cruz; que la salvación es solo por gracia en Cristo y que solo hay una fuente de autoridad: la Palabra de Dios. Ahora cuando el Señor nos da la oportunidad de manifestarle nuestra gratitud por su bondad, ayudando a extender su reinado de amor en este rincón de la Florida: la Bahía de Tampa. Es aquí, cuando con mi esposa y con mi familia, damos testimonio de que "los caminos del Señor son inescrutables", porque lo que al principio en la vida parece sombrío, con el paso del tiempo se entienden los propósitos de lo alto. "¡Oh profundidad de las riquezas . . . de Dios! ¡Cuán inescrutables . . . son sus caminos!" (Romanos 11:33–36).

Ahora el Señor ha ido tejiendo nuestro ministerio sobre esas columnas: Fe, Gracia, la Palabra y Cristo. Esta es la primera parte de nuestra plataforma doctrinal levantada sobre estas cuatro columnas con énfasis en la "Roca" que es Cristo, para "lanzar" el desafío puesto por Él, de extender el Reino de Dios dentro de las comunidades hispanas que vienen a los Estados Unidos persiguiendo un mejoramiento en todo, no solo en el aspecto económico; sobre esto no hay discusión.

Ahora el Señor ha ido tejiendo nuestro ministerio sobre esas columnas: Fe, Gracia, la Palabra y Cristo.

La otra parte de la plataforma se torna difícil por múltiples razones. Una de ellas es el panorama religioso general que estamos viviendo en Estados Unidos en su conjunto de razas y etnias, y que está cambiando de manera acelerada dentro del paradigma de la "post-modernidad": los Estados Unidos se volvió un campo misionero que debo analizar y comprender en primera instancia, y luego valorar en la dimensión de la ayuda para llevar el mensaje de Cristo como dice Mateo 28:19, "a todas las naciones."

Es cierto que debemos trabajar con ahínco por sembrar la semilla en África, Asia y Oceanía; pero las "misiones" las tenemos ahora junto a nosotros en nuestro diario caminar, a la vuelta de la esquina; junto a nosotros hay más "individuos laicos" y menos "personas religiosas," proceso que no se refleja tanto entre los latinos como sí en los anglos, porque entre los hispanos encontramos una tendencia cada vez mayor hacia grupos de fe. El número de estadounidenses que no profesan una religión en concreto ha crecido hasta 56 millones de personas en los últimos años, convirtiéndose en el segundo grupo más grande en número por detrás de los evangélicos, de acuerdo con el sondeo presentado por "Pew Research Center," el año pasado.

Desde hace un par de años escucho predicar que los Estados Unidos se ha convertido en uno de los campos misioneros más grandes del mundo, lo que nos hace misioneros en nuestro barrio, en nuestro conjunto residencial, como quedó estampado en la revista del Dwelling 1:14 del Rev. Finke: "Por los últimos 30 años en los Estados Unidos se ha estado produciendo un huracán religioso y cultural dejando el paisaje irreconocible para los cristianos que cumplieron su mayoría de edad en los años 70."

Los ministerios Hispanos de nuestro Sínodo de Missouri en el oeste, centro y aquí en el este de los Estados Unidos tienen las mismas características culturales y religiosas; porque los fieles con quienes trabajamos en torno a Cristo, en general parecen bien intencionados en el acto de fe, débil casi siempre, sí, porque vienen aferrados a ejes no Cristo-céntricos. En un porcentaje altísimo, en nuestro caso particular de la Bahía de Tampa, su ancestro católico-romano los marca no solo

porque nunca accedieron a la Biblia, sino por el mismo temor que les causa acceder a este "libro misterioso", tenerlo en su poder, leerlo y degustar sus realidades y misterios; hasta nos miran con recelo cuando se la ofrecemos a ningún costo, como que somos simplemente "cristianos protestantes" iguales a los evangélicos que conocieron en su país, cuando los motivaban hacia la prosperidad y la sanación a cambio de los "diezmos"; a veces nos ven parecidos, con Biblia en mano, a las parejas que llegan timbrando por sus casas.

¿Qué hacer para "levantar y enriquecer con fieles de verdad" nuestra iglesia, de conformidad con el propósito del Padre (Efesios 3:10)? Tendríamos que tener claro que la iglesia es la promesa del Hijo (Mateo 16:18); que la iglesia se selló con la llegada del Espíritu Santo (Hechos 2:42–47). Pero, también que la iglesia en Antioquía, aunque fue plantada por creyentes ordinarios, solo se hizo fuerte por la obra de los primeros pastores pioneros: los apóstoles (Hechos 11:19–26). Cuando con alegría y esfuerzo se planta una nueva misión, seguimos los senderos de Pablo (Hechos 13; 14:23; 19; 20:17).

Hoy, Dios Padre bendice a los "pastores-misioneros" que se animan a plantar iglesias nuevas, pero estos pastores deben tener el apoyo de las respectivas autoridades designadas para "gobernar los destinos territoriales, nacionales y ecuménicos de nuestra Iglesia Luterana"; por lo menos que esos "pastores-misioneros" puedan estar tranquilos porque les proveen con qué sostener dignamente a su familia, que siempre es su apoyo de primera mano para su trabajo pastoral. La obra de Dios, y para Dios, queda a medias cuando un pastor combina el trabajo ministerial con la búsqueda del sustento para sí y los suyos con trabajos seculares; no realiza bien ninguno de los dos oficios; lo estamos viendo a diario; y no es lo mandado por el Señor; Pablo es claro cuando le habla a los Corintios: "Así también ordenó el Señor a los que anuncian el evangelio, que vivan del evangelio" (1 Corintios 9:13–14).

Se escuchan en algunos círculos de nuestra jerarquía luterana, Sínodo de Missouri, comentarios hechos con la mejor intención sobre el futuro de los Ministerios Hispanos en los Estados Unidos, dándoles una vida más bien corta; como que si la presencia Hispana en este país estuviera condenada a desaparecer más pronto que temprano; para lo cual se argumenta que los niños nacidos aquí de padres Hispanos, solo hablan inglés y no aceptan otra forma de comunicación; y que como los niños y jóvenes Hispanos se "americanizan" pronto, entonces el conglomerado hispano con toda su cultura, va a desaparecer. Lo cual no es cierto, porque es evidente que no obstante las restricciones, la migración Hispana hacia los Estados Unidos continúa.

Se argumenta que . . .
el conglomerado hispano
con toda su cultura,
va a desaparecer.

Pero aparte de la semblanza doméstica anterior que se repite igual en otros lugares de los Estados Unidos, el estudio más reciente del "Pew Research Center" reveló que si en los Estados Unidos, en 1965, el 84% de la población era blanca no Hispana, para este año 2017, ese porcentaje ha caído al 62%, mientras que los Hispanos han pasado de ser, del 4% de hace 50 años, a un 18% actualmente en el año 2017, y se espera que pasen a ser una cuarta parte (un 24% o más) para el año 2045.

Frente a esta proyección alentadora de la presencia creciente de la hispanidad en los Estados Unidos, la única verdadera esperanza pastoral para la Iglesia Luterana Hispana en los Estados Unidos se encuentra en que haya el apoyo institucional de los Distritos y especialmente del Sínodo para nuestras Misiones, para que los Pastores hispanos puedan seguir haciendo su trabajo ministerial. A partir del aval que la inmensa mayoría de estos servidores ha recibido del Seminario Concordia de San Luis, Missouri, formados en el Centro de Estudios Hispanos (CHS), donde cursan por largos años, mínimo cuatro, la formación pastoral y teológica, además del requerimiento simultaneo de la vivencia práctica para un desempeño ministerial eficaz y eficiente.

Cristo evangeliza y forma a sus primeros discípulos antes de enviarlos a "hacer discípulos." La formación es evangelizadora a fin de preparar a los agentes de la evangelización. No hay evangelización sin los agentes formados para que esto ocurra. Pero la evangelización debe ser formativa también con el fin de "hacer discípulos", aprendices de Jesús, como lo hizo Pablo quien también enfrentó una comunidad que no iba a la Iglesia; por eso formó a los líderes para que pudieran ir a las comunidades para anunciar el Evangelio. Los Estados Unidos es el nuevo reto misionero.

Cristo evangeliza y forma a sus primeros discípulos antes de enviarlos a "hacer discípulos."

Ahora, que la problemática migratoria Hispana es compleja, es cierto; y más que las condiciones de vida de ciertos grupos presentan características muy difíciles de manejar, como es el caso de una localidad donde tenemos plantada una misión. El 90% de la población es mexicana y como casi todos provienen de la misma región, Oaxaca, el "mixteco" es el dialecto doméstico con el que se comunican entre sí los mayores. El poco español es usado solo para las "compras y negocios." Los hijos solo hablan, leen y escriben en inglés. La consecuencia lógica es que las familias están incomunicadas; por ende, el trabajo pastoral se vuelve más complejo y requiere de más cuidado y dedicación; pero siempre de la mano del Señor, porque es cierto que la Iglesia como un árbol de vida tiene raíces invisibles y profundas, ocultas, que van bajo tierra siempre buscando esa vida que viene sólo de las aguas vivas de Cristo por medio de su Palabra.

Cristo es la vid; nosotros somos los retoños que, con su ayuda, dan buenos frutos de fe y amor. El tronco crece y se vuelve fuerte con el fin de apoyar el destino del árbol de llevar fruto. Una iglesia responsable se dedicará a hacer discípulos de sus convertidos nuevos. Luego se dedicará a hacer líderes de esos discípulos, quienes toman responsabilidad para adelantar la obra de Dios. ¿Por qué es tan importante el discipulado? Simplemente porque Jesús dijo que debemos hacerlo (Mateo 28:19–20).

Me encanta la traducción libre y actual de Juan 1:14, "La Palabra se hizo carne y se movió al vecindario."

From Rome . . . to Wittenberg . . . to USA

Miguel Darío Sanabria

Abstract: Rev. Miguel Sanabria, originally from Colombia, describes his spiritual journey, first as a Roman Catholic seminarian, then as an ordained priest, and finally as a Lutheran pastor. Today he serves as a pastor-missionary in the Tampa Bay area, serving within growing Hispanic communities. His experiences illustrate how Christ, so clearly demonstrated in the Lutheran Reformation, transforms the mind and heart of God's servant.

Only because of the Lord's goodness, the seven years of the seminary formation to become a Roman priest, I did not take them in the city at the Regional Seminary in the eastern part of Colombia, but rather, I was sent with the Jesuits to study at the Javeriana University in Bogotá. It was there that I began to see the enormous disconnects in the formation I was receiving in "doctrine," which were often radically opposed to biblical teachings. I remember that in the library of the Lesser Seminary, I read Salgari, Wast, and Verne, but not the Bible. There were only some textbooks on the Bible, but not the Bible itself.

Rev. Miguel Darío Sanabria is originally from Colombia. After my studies in Philosophy and Theology at the Javeriana University in Bogota, Colombia, I was ordained a Catholic priest. Later I renounced the priesthood and received a special Rescript from Rome. I thank the Lord for his faithfulness, first because I completed a Masters with additional specializations in eduaction, then for the opportunity to teach at a university linked to the Education Department of Colombia, and then to meet my wife, Flor Marina, with whom we have three children: Yolima, Diana and Miguel Andrés, and now, five grandchildren. My wife, our three adult children, and I have studied at the Center for Hispanic Studies of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO and where we have been better prepared to serve the Lord. I also have the blessing of a Master of Arts from Concordia Seminary. Having lived in the USA for 18 years, the Lord called me these last ten years to serve as an LCMS pastor in the FL-GA District. Serving in Tampa, together we have planted four Hispanic-Latino missions, the women as deaconesses, Miguel Andrés as a vicar, along with my son-in-law Vicar John Cobos.
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Translated from the Spanish "De Roma . . . a Wittenberg . . . a USA" by Marcos Kempff.

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While at the University, I received a special assignment: to serve as a designated reader in the dining room at noon and at night. One of the books to be read was marked with only exact pages to be read. The book contained the writings of Ludovico Pastor, "The History of the Popes," which I was able to read only because a special permission was granted for this restricted piece. But I secretly read some of the forbidden pages, about the popes of Luther's time: Innocent VIII and Alexander VI, his successor. Another reading that made an impact on me was Luther's little text, "On the Roman papacy," that I also read secretly and in which I clearly saw that "the true Church can only be ruled by Christ." The recommendations it makes are still valid five hundred years later: "No to earthly powers; yes to the spirit of service; no to the worship of saints; yes to reduce the luxury of the Pope and the Curia; yes to abolish celibacy; yes to prevent usury; no to the earthly power of the Church; yes to eliminate indulgences; yes to abolish the charge for sacred services."

I clearly saw that "the true Church can only be ruled by Christ."

After my advanced studies in Roman Catholic philosophy and theology, I was ordained a priest. I served in four parishes as an assistant, celebrated Mass every day, listened to confessions, recited the rosary, did devotion to many saints, and read the "Breviary" in Latin. But none of that satisfied my weary soul. I was filled with a deeper uneasiness than when I was a boy. But Christ took care of me, because He made me familiar with the Catholic version of the Bible, in which I found amazing verses that contradicted what I was doing. This Book said one thing, and my Church another. Who was right? The Roman Church or God? Suddenly God gave me the opportunity not to continue serving in parishes, but to work as a chaplain in a technical college, a kind of special "high school" in my country. At that point, my only contact with the Curia and the priests was the Bishop, who became my counselor. He was later to became a Cardinal. On one of his trips to Rome, he brought me a Rescript of the Pope to free me from the priesthood and once again become a layperson.

It was at this school that the Lord began His work to bring me to sound doctrine, far from those years of struggle against Roman's leaders. With the Bible in hand, I insisted that a priest cannot supplant the work of the Lord on the cross, that salvation is only by grace in Christ, and that there is only one source of authority: the Word of God.

Now, years later, the Lord gives us the opportunity to express our gratitude for His goodness, helping to extend His reign of love in this corner of Florida: Tampa Bay. It is here, with my wife and with my family, we bear witness that "the ways of the Lord are inscrutable," because what at first seems gloomy in life, over time

shows us His ways: "O the depth of the riches . . . of God! How unsearchable are his ways!" (Rom 11:33–36).

Now the Lord has woven His Words into our ministry on these columns: Faith, Grace, the Word and Christ. This is the first part of our doctrinal platform raised on these four columns, with an emphasis on the "Rock" that is Christ, to "launch" the challenge posed by Him, to extend His Kingdom within Hispanic communities that come to the United States pursuing an improvement in everything, not only in the economic aspect. About this there is no discussion.

The Lord has woven His Words into our ministry on these columns: Faith, Grace, the Word and Christ.

To implement the other part of the platform becomes difficult for multiple reasons. One of them is the general religious panorama that we are living in the United States. With many cultures and ethnicities, there is rapid change within the paradigm of "post-modernity." Now the United States has become a mission field that I must analyze and understand in order to value the dimension of taking the message of Christ, as Matthew 28:19 says, "to all nations."

It is true that we must work hard to sow Gospel seeds in Africa, Asia, and Oceania. But there are "missions" present in our daily walk, just around the corner. Among us are more "indifferent individuals" and fewer "religious people," a phenomenon that is reflected not as much among Latinos as it is among the Anglos, because among Hispanics we find a growing tendency toward joining faith groups. The number of Americans who do not profess a particular religion has grown to 56 million people in recent years, making it the second-largest number behind Evangelicals, according to the Pew Research Center survey last year.

For a couple of years, I have heard preaching stating that the United States has become one of the world's largest mission fields, which makes us missionaries in our neighborhood, in our residential complex, as, for example, printed in the *Dwelling 1:14* magazine by Rev. Greg Finke: "For the past 30 years in the United States there has been a religious and cultural hurricane leaving the landscape unrecognizable for Christians who came of age in the 1970s."

The Hispanic ministries of our Missouri Synod, across the whole country, have similar cultural and religious characteristics, because the faithful in Christ with whom we work generally seem well-intentioned in their acts of faith, though almost always are weak, because they still are clinging to non-Christian habits. A very high percentage, in our particular case of the Tampa Bay area, due to their Roman Catholic ancestors, never open a Bible, because of the same fears of having access to this "mysterious book," to own it, read it, and taste its "realities and mysteries." They even see us with suspicion when we offer them free Bibles. We just become suspect

"Protestant Christians," just like the "Evangelicals" they knew in their country of origin, when they were motivated toward prosperity and healing in exchange for "tithing." Sometimes, when, with our Bible in hand, we are seen as just more of those that go door-to-door ringing door bells.

What can we do to raise up and strengthen true believers in our church, in accordance with the Father's purpose (Eph 3:10)? We should be clear that the church is the promise of the Son (Mt 16:18), that the church was sealed with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:42–47). But, as the church in Antioch, though planted by ordinary believers, became strong by the work of the first pioneer pastors—the apostles (Acts 11:19–26), so also, when a new mission is planted with joy and effort, we follow Paul's paths (Acts 13; 14:23; 19; 20:17).

Today, God our Father blesses the pastor-missionaries who are encouraged to plant new churches. But these pastors need the support of the respective designated authorities who govern our Lutheran Church, so that at least these pastor-missionaries can provide for their families with dignity and also give their main attention to their pastoral work. The work of God, and for God, is halved when a pastor combines ministerial work and other sustenance for himself through secular work, making it difficult to perform both vocations well. We are seeing it daily. It is not commanded by the Lord. Rather Paul is clear when he speaks to the Corinthians: "Thus says the Lord to them that preach the gospel, that they may live by the gospel" (1 Cor 9:13–14).

Comments, with the best of intentions, are heard in some circles of Lutheran leadership about the future of Hispanic ministries in the United States, giving them a rather short life, as if the Hispanic presence in this country is doomed to disappear sooner or later. It is argued that the children born here of Hispanic parents speak only English and do not accept another form of communication; they argue that as Hispanic children and young people become "Americanized," then the Hispanic conglomerate, with all its culture, will disappear. This is not true, because it is clear that despite the restrictions, Hispanic migration to the United States continues. But apart from the previous household profile that is repeated throughout the United States, the Pew Research Center's most recent study found that in the United States, in 1965, 84% of the population was white non-Hispanic, and that by 2017, the percentage has dropped to 62%, while Hispanics have gone from 4%, 50 years ago, to 18% of the population in 2017. Hispanics are expected to become about a fourth part of the population (24% or more) by the year 2045.

It is argued . . . the Hispanic conglomerate, with all its culture, will disappear.

Faced with this encouraging projection of the growing presence of Hispanics in the United States, the only true pastoral hope for the Hispanic Lutheran church in the

United States lies in the institutional support of the Districts and especially the Synod for our missions, so that Hispanic pastors can continue doing their ministerial work. The vast majority of these servants have studied at the Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS) of Concordia Seminary of St. Louis, Missouri, where they attend for at least four years, receiving pastoral and theological formation along with simultaneous requirements of practical experiences for effective and efficient ministerial performance.

Christ evangelizes and forms His first disciples before sending them to "make disciples." Formation is evangelizing in order to prepare others for evangelization. There is no evangelization without those being trained to make it happen. But evangelization must also be formative in order to go and "make disciples," as Jesus' apprentices. Just as Paul did so when faced with a community that did not believe, so he formed leaders so they could go to the communities to proclaim the Gospel. The United States is the new missionary challenge.

Christ evangelizes and forms His first disciples before sending them to "make disciples."

Now, there is no doubt that the Hispanic immigrant problem is complex, it is true. Certain groups of immigrants have very difficult living conditions to handle, such as the case of a people group where we have planted a mission near Tampa. About 90% of the population is Mexican, and almost all of them come from the same region, Oaxaca. The "Mixteco" spoken is a domestic dialect with which the adults communicate with each other. The little Spanish they use is only for "shopping and business." Children speak, read, and write only in English. The logical consequence of this complex situation is that the families are not communicating well; therefore, pastoral work is very challenging and requires much dedication, care, and patience. We know that our work always comes from the Lord's hands, because it is true that His church is a tree of life with invisible and deep roots, often hidden deep underground but always seeking that life that comes only from the living waters that Christ provides through His Word.

Christ is the vine, we are the branches. With His help, we produce good fruits of faith and love. The trunk of the vine grows and becomes strong in order to support the vine to bear fruit. A responsible church will be dedicated to making disciples in Christ, of its new converts. Then they will become leaders of other disciples, who will then take responsibility to advance the work of God. Why is discipleship so important? Simply because Jesus said we must do it (Mt 28:19–20).

I love the free and current translation of John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood."

Mutual Hierarchy as a Framework for Ecclesiology

Jeffrey A. Dukeman

Abstract: This article first briefly argues for the preferability of a mutual hierarchy framework over both the hierarchical framework of Hans Urs von Balthasar and the egalitarian framework of Miroslav Volf for the doctrine of the Trinity. Building on this Trinitarian foundation, it then advocates mutual hierarchy in ecclesiology, particularly in three ecclesiological areas: the relation between a pastor and a congregation, trans-congregational relations, and relations between the church and the mission field. The paper concludes with some questions for discussion in these three ecclesiological areas in the context of the LCMS today.

Hierarchy necessarily entails more than one person or thing. When dealing with human beings, it means that in a given context one person has a higher status or a certain authority over another. A key question when dealing with hierarchy is the nature of the hierarchy. Does it foster genuine community, or does it foster oppression? Two concepts can help to shed light on this question: uniqueness and dignity. Some damaged relationships involve a higher agent who conspicuously diminishes the dignity of the lesser, for example, if a chauvinistic husband abuses his wife. Other damaged relationships are subtler, involving an appearance of equality but actually a hidden oppression. For example, Karl Marx could advocate a classless society, an egalitarian construct; but in practice it involves tyranny because of forced conformity. Although these two concepts of uniqueness and dignity help expose two different types of oppression, they are closely related. A master who demands absolute obedience from a servant actually is projecting his or her image; similarly, seeking absolute equality tends to forcibly disallow uniqueness.

A better way to assess and achieve genuine community comes through what may be termed a mutual hierarchy framework. This framework acknowledges that

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genuine community entails each member of a community exercising hierarchy over another in connection with that member's unique characteristics, gifts, and vocations. A mutual hierarchy framework thus has the potential to better account for the dignity of each member. If a person recognizes that every other member of a community has a unique contribution to make, then that person is better equipped to use his own gifts to complement what others lack and also allow himself to be complemented.

It is true that such a framework has limitations. Saying that a relationship is characterized by mutual hierarchy does not yet delineate what specific characteristics and gifts each member has; two observers might look at a relationship and each describe it in terms of mutual hierarchy and yet not describe it in the same way. Furthermore, what one person sees as mutual hierarchy could be viewed by another as not so. For example, Hitler, Himmler, and Goebbels probably saw helpful abilities in each other, and yet they worked together for evil. But in this case, most observers would agree that Hitler largely projected his own desires onto everyone else so that the situation should not be described in terms of mutual hierarchy. In spite of limitations owing to differing perspectives, the promise of a mutual hierarchy framework remains.

In what follows, the potential fruitfulness of a mutual hierarchy ecclesiological framework relative to both a hierarchical framework and an egalitarian framework will be explored. First, a mutual hierarchy framework will be better illustrated through briefly examining the doctrine of the Trinity, setting the stage for what follows. Next it will be applied to three particular areas of ecclesiology: the relationship between a pastor and a congregation, trans-congregational relations, and relations between the church and the mission field. By trans-congregational relations in the second area I mean relations between Christians, not including relations within a congregation.[1] Finally, I will summarize the conclusions of the paper and suggest some potential applications in the three chosen ecclesial areas for my own denomination, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).

Illustration from the Doctrine of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity can help illustrate the three basic frameworks.[2] Hans Urs von Balthasar, a prominent Roman Catholic social Trinitarian theologian from last century, had a doctrine of the Trinity characterized by largely unidirectional hierarchy.[3] For example, for Balthasar the Son throughout his life was radically passive, always choosing the path of maximal suffering as he obediently followed the will and commission of the Father. This passivity of the Son reached its climax in the descent into hell on Holy Saturday, where the dead Son in the agony of hell radically surrendered himself to the Father in order to suffer the greatest possible punishment for the redemption of mankind.[4] Here so much initiative lies with the

Father relative to the passive Son that the Son seems undignified, compelled to do the Father's mission.

In his egalitarian Trinitarian framework, Miroslav Volf, a Free Church social Trinitarian theologian, acknowledges that in the biblical narrative there is a certain paradoxical hierarchy involved in the sending of the Son and the Spirit into the world; but he overwhelmingly emphasizes the fully egalitarian relations between the divine persons.[5] This culminates at the cross where Volf, while acknowledging a certain paradoxical hierarchical abandonment of the Son by the Father, stresses the egalitarian relations between the divine persons as they give themselves to each other and the world at the cross.[6] Here the uniqueness of each divine person relative to the others is not adequately accounted for, as the hierarchy necessary for distinguishing them is minimized and stigmatized. Although both Volf and Balthasar are helpful as social Trinitarians, for both genuine Trinitarian community is diminished to the extent that largely only one divine working is evident in the world, with each divine person largely doing the same thing in Volf, and the Father more conspicuously diminishing the dignity of the Son by foisting his will and work on him in Balthasar.

The genuine community of the divine persons in their work in salvation history can be better discerned through the lens of a mutual hierarchy framework. A mutual hierarchy framework shows that, contra the Trinitarian trajectory of Volf, each divine person always exercises a unique vocation that involves hierarchy over the others. And yet, contra the Trinitarian trajectory of Balthasar, each divine person always uses the power associated with his vocation to serve the other divine persons and the world. For example, in salvation history the Father always remains in heaven as a stronghold sending his messengers to the world, the Son is unique in taking on human flesh and dying and rising for mankind, and the Holy Spirit is unique in sanctifying human beings in the church. And yet the divine persons are interdependent as they each use the power of their vocations to serve and complement one another in community for the sake of the world.[7]

A mutual hierarchy framework shows that . . . each divine person always exercises a unique vocation.

Some Basic Contours of Balthasar's Hierarchical Ecclesiology and Volf's Egalitarian Ecclesiology

In the Trinitarian example given above, Balthasar stressed the radical obedience of the passive Christ in his life to his commissioning Father in heaven. Ultimately, this doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation for Balthasar's entire theology, where all things may be divided into pairs, with one element of the pair hierarchical over the other. For example, consider the following ecclesiological statement by Balthasar:

> If Church can be defined as *communio*, her "constitutive elements" must be "totally immanent in each other" in such a way that they "cannot be separated from one another. This is evident, for instance, in the reciprocal structural relationship between sacrament and Word, between the general priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood, between the faithful and the Church, between duty and law, between the whole Church and the local or national Church, between the pope and the college of bishops, between the bishop and the presbyterium." It is this reciprocal immanence of elements, themselves structurally distinct and unconfused, that makes Christ's Church a reflection of the Trinity; thus, too, it renders the operation of the Holy Spirit in her a valid and salvific interpretation of the unity and distinction between the Father and his incarnate Son, in which God shows his nature as love, and love is manifested as the "law of grace."[8]

Here Balthasar, after the pattern of the Father and the incarnate Son, divides various ecclesial members into pairs in such a way that love is defined in terms of the "law of grace" where the lesser in each pair owes strict obedience to the greater.[9] Combining these pairs leads to a pyramidal shape to the church for Balthasar: bishops owe the pope obedience, priests owe bishops obedience, and laity owe priests obedience.[10]

Balthasar's hierarchical ecclesiological framework is problematic in the three ecclesial areas chosen for this paper. First, at the congregational level, it locates all authority with the priest, problematizing the contribution of laity. Second, it makes the magisterium hierarchical (in a unidirectional way) over individual congregations, problematizing congregational contribution.[11] And third, it ultimately places Spirit-led mission work at the bottom of the pyramid, making believers hierarchical over unbelievers in a unilateral way and calling into question the latter's value and the value of mission work.[12] Balthasar's ecclesiology encourages a choice of pastor over laity, trans-congregational church over congregation, and maintenance over mission.

Moving now to Volf, in the Trinitarian example given above, Volf stresses the fully egalitarian relations of the divine persons while he minimizes and stigmatizes the thought of hierarchy among them. The case is similar in Volf's ecclesiology, as he stresses egalitarian relations among Christians while minimizing and stigmatizing the thought of ecclesial hierarchy. To take just one example from Volf:

> The symmetrical reciprocity of the relations of the trinitarian persons finds its correspondence in the image of the church in which *all* members serve one another with their specific gifts of the Spirit in imitation of the Lord and through the power of the Father. Like the divine persons, they all stand in a relation of mutual giving and receiving.[13]

Here Volf emphasizes fully egalitarian relations of Christians with one another. By saying "all" members serve one another, Volf implicitly critiques hierarchical

systems where only clergy serve laity in the church. His discussion comes in the climactic "Trinity and Church" chapter of *After Our Likeness*. In this chapter Volf structures his discussion of the Trinity and the church using the same or similar categories: (fully egalitarian) relations, (mainly egalitarian) perichoresis as a sort of mediating category, and a third category of hierarchical sending (in the case of the Trinity) or hierarchical structures (in the case of the church). For both the Trinity and the church, Volf stresses the first category of egalitarian relations and views the third, i.e., hierarchical category, as less-desirable, paradoxical, and an exception.[14]

Volf's egalitarian ecclesiology is problematic in the three ecclesial areas chosen for this paper. First, in the area of life within a congregation, Volf's egalitarian framework leads to a minimizing of the pastoral office through seeing the church as constituted through the egalitarian charismatic gifts of all Christians. For example, in the chapter, "Structures and the Church," in *After Our Likeness*, Volf sees the pastoral office as a subset of the charismata of all Christians and discusses hierarchy only in connection with the pastoral office, not in connection with the gifts of the laity.[15]

Second, Volf's framework provides the rationale for his overwhelming emphasis on an individual congregation over the trans-congregational church. Christians within a congregation are much more capable of egalitarian, face-to-face, relations with one another than Christians or congregations in the trans-congregational church.[16]

And third, Volf's emphasis on the egalitarian relations of Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit tends to foster a choice of maintenance over mission. For example, Volf's book, *Exclusion and Embrace,* is based on an egalitarian understanding of the Trinity and deals with how the church as the image of the Trinity should respond to injustice in the world.[17] The problem here is that if Christians who possess the Holy Spirit have egalitarian relations with non-Christians, why would Christians need to offer non-Christians the Holy Spirit, since non-Christians are already largely considered the same as Christians, people for whom Christ died?

Furthermore, recalling that for Volf, Christians in the trans-congregational church are less capable of egalitarian relations than Christians within a congregation, the case for non-Christians is even worse, as they are further removed from a congregation. In Volf's ecclesiology, Christians have egalitarian relations with non-Christians but should not necessarily be optimistic about the success of these relations in practice.[18] Volf's ecclesiology that prioritizes face-to-face egalitarian relations between Christians within a congregation encourages a choice of laity over pastor, congregation over trans-congregational church, and maintenance over mission.

In both Balthasar and Volf, ecclesial community is not adequately accounted for. In Balthasar's hierarchical framework the distinctness of different ecclesial entities is somewhat accounted for but dignity, less so. In Volf's egalitarian framework, dignity is somewhat accounted for but uniqueness, less so. In both cases, unnecessary ecclesial choices are fostered. Balthasar's ecclesiology encourages a choice of pastor over laity and of trans-congregational church over congregation, while for Volf's ecclesiology it's the opposite: a choice of laity over pastor and of congregation over trans-congregational church. Ironically, the end result logically for both theological frameworks is a choice of maintenance over mission, with the mission field being neglected due to insufficient dignity in Balthasar and due to insufficient distinctness in Volf.

Balthasar's ecclesiology encourages a choice of pastor over laity . . . , while for Volf's ecclesiology it's the opposite: a choice of laity over pastor. . . . The mission field [is] being neglected due to insufficient dignity in Balthasar and due to insufficient distinctness in Volf.

A Better Way: Some Basic Contours of a Mutual Hierarchy Ecclesiology

Genuine ecclesial community can be better discerned and fostered by utilizing a mutual hierarchy framework. Mutual hierarchy means not having to decide against something just because it is more egalitarian or more hierarchical. Here each ecclesial member has hierarchies over the others in connection with his or her own unique gifts, offices, and responsibilities. Recognizing this can help foster each member in using these hierarchies to serve the others and complement them in the work of God's kingdom. Because of these advantages, this framework can foster the flexibility necessary for the complexities of God's kingdom and a sinful world. Each ecclesial member has unique powers, with varying levels of overlap and complementarity with the powers of others. Recognizing this can help foster flexible teams best adapted for unique problems and work. Such teams can work dynamically, shifting resources as necessary amidst changing circumstances. A mutual hierarchy framework involves far more than strict lordship/obedience relationships that just involve "bossing around" and rather involves such relational categories as friendship, inclusive lordship/discipleship, instruction, encouragement, consolation, forgiveness, and especially love.

The fruitfulness of such a mutual hierarchy ecclesiological framework may now be explored in the three ecclesial areas surveyed above in Balthasar and Volf. First, a mutual hierarchy framework yields a different conception of the relation between a pastor and a congregation. Unlike the frameworks of Balthasar and Volf, a mutual hierarchy framework does not tend towards a choice between a pastor and laity. The two do not have to be mutually exclusive but rather should complement one another. A pastor can be clearly distinguished from laypeople in terms of their respective vocations. And yet, amidst this distinguishing, there is some overlap between the two, and a pastor can use his distinct vocation to serve laypeople and vice versa.

A mutual hierarchy framework . . . involves such relational categories as friendship, inclusive lordship/discipleship, instruction, encouragement, consolation, forgiveness, and especially love.

This framework also allows for better flexibility in a congregation. For example, certain tasks, perhaps like a building project, may require more lay expertise while other tasks, perhaps like a mission program, may require more pastoral expertise. Further flexibility is possible in that laity can train their pastor in areas where they have better expertise, and vice versa, with the end result that both pastor and laity can have a new perspective to contribute to the congregation after the training process. For example, a newly ordained pastor arriving at his first call will likely learn much about the workings of a congregation from the laity, even as he will also likely contribute skills flowing from studying recent scholarship and mentoring.

A mutual hierarchy framework also yields a different conception of trans-congregational relations. Unlike the frameworks of Balthasar and Volf, a mutual hierarchy framework does not tend towards a choice between an individual congregation and the larger church. A unique individual congregation is typically required for Christians to be baptized in and gather together as the people of God to receive God's gifts. And yet each congregation and its members form and have also been formed by other Christians and congregations.

For example, some Christians have vocations that are more clearly oriented towards the trans-congregational church than others and have unique gifts for this work. A seminary professor might have a special gift of teaching, and a missionary might have a special gift for spreading the Gospel. A mutual hierarchy framework acknowledges the importance of these different gifts and encourages the church to consider both how these gifts are unique and how they might help Christians work together most effectively.

Similarly, just as each Christian working in the trans-congregational church is unique, each congregation is unique, having distinct characteristics and gifts.[19] There is also fluidity and overlap between congregations as congregations send pastoral candidates away from themselves to seminary, Christians move and change congregations, Christians become missionaries, and pastors change congregations. In other words, congregations are dynamic entities. Mutual hierarchy helps discern and foster this condition as trans-congregational members remain distinct from one another, each having gifts; and yet these members change and serve the others in the church, for example, a congregation being formed by Christians outside itself and forming them in return. In this way, ecclesial members functioning in a trans-congregational way can genuinely complement one another.

A mutual hierarchy framework also yields a different conception of the relation between the church in general and the mission field. Unlike the frameworks of Balthasar and Volf, a mutual hierarchy framework does not tend towards a choice between maintenance and mission. First, it clearly distinguishes Christians from non-Christians. Christians are children of God who strive to do His works in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. Non-Christians do not possess the Holy Spirit but still are capable of doing all sorts of things that can help the world in terms of peace, lawfulness, and service. More importantly, they are dearly loved by God, who made them in His image and desires their fellowship and salvation. Amidst these important distinctions between Christians and non-Christians, each can use their vocations to help the other. Christians can love non-Christians, serve them through their deeds, and share the Gospel with them, while non-Christians can love Christians, serve them through their deeds, and engage in conversations with them. Appreciating the mutual hierarchy fellowship Christians share with non-Christians can help both the church and the world. If non-Christians see that Christians treat them with respect and care and work for them, non-Christians may be more likely to befriend Christians, work with them, share their thoughts and worldviews with them, and even be open to hear about Jesus. Similarly, if Christians see that non-Christians have dignity in God's sight and that they, too, can work for good purposes in the world, Christians can be in a better position to value them, work with them, and further develop relationships with them that could slowly flower into opportunities to share the Gospel with them.[20]

A mutual hierarchy framework does not tend towards a choice between maintenance and mission.

Conclusions and Potential Applications

This paper has argued that a mutual hierarchy framework is preferable to both a hierarchical framework and an egalitarian framework in the realm of ecclesiology. An analysis of the hierarchical framework of Hans Urs von Balthasar has shown that for him all relationships are hierarchical in one direction so that the church has a pyramidal structure with the pope (and ultimately God) at the top. This perspective tends to reduce the sort of vocation one exercises to commanding those lower down the pyramid or obeying those higher up. An analysis of the egalitarian framework of Miroslav Volf has shown that for him hierarchy becomes a typically negative exception so that it is difficult to account for the differences among human beings. For Volf, the sort of vocation one should exercise is diminished, since the ideal becomes all doing nearly the same thing; similarly, for Balthasar vocation is largely reduced to the vocation of the one(s) highest up the ecclesial pyramid. In both cases, unnecessary ecclesial choices are fostered, toward more hierarchical elements in Balthasar, toward less hierarchical elements in Volf, and toward maintenance over mission in both. In both cases, genuine community is not adequately accounted for.

But a mutual hierarchy ecclesiological framework accounts for the uniqueness of church structures and members, a concern of Balthasar, as well as for the dignity of ecclesial members, a concern of Volf. Here uniqueness is better accounted for, since each ecclesial member should exercise distinct hierarchies over the others. And dignity is better accounted for, since recognizing that all possess hierarchies also fosters recognizing that hierarchy, power, and vocation should be used to help and serve others rather than to try to exercise power over them or usurp their powers. Recognizing this mutual hierarchy fosters such things as the following: recognizing the complexities of situations, enabling flexibility to meet this complexity, fostering checks and balances against abuses of power, encouraging people and congregations to work to identify their own unique gifts, assessing how diverse gifts can complement each other, and better recognizing how the church lives in the image of the Trinity. The paper has briefly demonstrated these things through looking at three ecclesial areas: relations between a pastor and a

Recognizing this mutual hierarchy fosters such things as the following: recognizing the complexities of situations, enabling flexibility to meet this complexity, fostering checks and balances against abuses of power, encouraging people and congregations to work to identify their own unique gifts, assessing how diverse gifts can complement each other, and better recognizing how the church lives in the image of the Trinity.

congregation, trans-congregational relations, and relations between the church and the mission field.

To conclude, I would like to draw on my experiences as an LCMS layman and pastor to ask questions for further consideration for each of the three ecclesial areas identified in the paper. In doing so, I do not intend to answer these questions but rather prompt the reader to consider how a mutual hierarchy framework might help assess and respond to current events. With respect to the relationship between a pastor and congregation, I have heard many colleagues critique certain hierarchical LCMS understandings of the office of the ministry as too "Catholic," while others have critiqued certain egalitarian or functional views of the pastoral office as too "Evangelical." Could a mutual hierarchy framework help clarify both, in that there is a distinct pastoral office and that a pastor needs and is dependent in all things on a congregation so that together they are at heart a team?

With respect to a trans-congregational perspective, in recent years I have heard many of my colleagues emphasize the authority of the president of Synod, while many others have emphasized the authority of district presidents, often in both cases depending upon who is in power. But in both cases, has there been too much influence from a hierarchical framework? In recent times have there not been needed calls for reform, ranging from more Waltherian "repristination" efforts to a website bearing the name "Congregations Matter"? Could a mutual hierarchy framework help better to see the unique gifts and centrality of hard-working congregations, while also working towards a measured place for trans-congregational leaders like the president of Synod and district presidents?

And finally, with respect to the relation between the church and the mission field, I hear much about "confessional" types and "missional" types, labels so accepted that they are even freely used in official discussions at LCMS conventions. Could a mutual hierarchy framework help better to demonstrate that there is a great need for both a stable, distinct, and confessional denomination as well as a dignified mission field and mission work? Can mutual hierarchy help us see both that there is a need for rigorous theological reflection and that we must be relating to and working together with the mission field to be living as church in the most beneficial way for the church and the world?[21]

Endnotes

[1] For a helpful attempt at a definition and description of the trans-congregational church by another Lutheran theologian, see Jeffrey Kloha, "The Trans-Congregational Church in the New Testament," *Concordia Journal* 34 (2008): 172–190. Kloha sees three main definitions of church (*ecclesia*) in the New Testament: a congregation, a clustering of congregations, and the one holy Christian church (*una sancta*). While I agree that these usages of church are central in the New Testament, there also is typically a certain looseness in its way of speaking.

For example, when Paul writes to a particular church (or group of churches), he does not typically explicitly specify whether he is just addressing believers or also the unbelievers in their midst (the "mixed" church). See also Matthew 13, which deals extensively with the mission of the kingdom, i.e. the church, and encourages patience amidst unbelief. From a slightly different perspective, when the New Testament speaks of the trans-congregational church in a region, e.g., in Acts 9:31, it does not only have to refer in a formal manner to the congregations in that region living and working together as congregations but also can include diverse groupings of Christians working together more informally across congregational boundaries. This is even more so the case for the one Church on earth (*una sancta*). Small groups of Christians who are part of the one holy Christian church but are from different congregations and even different denominations can certainly say together "We are Christ's church," although one should not for this reason neglect the importance of such things as congregational structure, doctrinal confession, and corporate sacramental worship. Less structured groupings of Christians are especially important in the context of the mission of the church in today's world as Christians from different denominations work extensively together as representatives of Christ's Church. Already this flexibility in the term "church" hints at the diversity a mutual hierarchy framework can account for and foster.

[2] The Trinitarian analysis that follows is largely based on Chapter 3 of my dissertation "Problems in a Movement: Towards a Mutual Hierarchy Social Model of the Trinity" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2010). This chapter focuses on the vocations of the divine persons in salvation history (the "economic Trinity"). See also Chapter 4 of the dissertation for a similar analysis of the divine persons' eternal existence (the "immanent Trinity").

[3] Social Trinitarians posit community as the ultimate ontological category for Trinitarian discourse.

[4] See Alyssa Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

[5] Volf in "The Trinity is Our Social Program," *Modern Theology* 14 (1998): 407, summarizes his egalitarian Trinitarian framework: "I have suggested elsewhere [in *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*] that hierarchy is not necessary to guard either the divine unity or the distinctions between divine persons, and here I want to add that in a community of perfect love between persons who share all divine attributes a notion of hierarchy is unintelligible."

[6] See, for example, Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 128–129.

[7] Robert Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of the Atonement* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004) examines the New Testament and finds that it tends to classify the work of the divine persons in terms of the Old Testament categories of king, priest, and prophet, and three associated theories of the atonement: *Christus Victor*, vicarious sacrifice, and empowering exemplar, respectively. Critically building on this work of Sherman, one can discern in the Gospel of Matthew a first third that emphasizes Christ's occupying the office of king on behalf of the Father; a middle third where Jesus, in connection with the office of prophet and on behalf of the Holy Spirit, sends the disciples out on a limited mission trip (see 10:5) and trains them; and a final third where Jesus exercises His own most proper vocation as a priest during holy week. Discerning this structuring of the Gospel of Matthew can help prevent overly privileging one part of this Gospel over another or one divine person over another.

[8] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, vol. 3, tr. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 357–358.

[9] See Aidan Nichols, *Say It Is Pentecost: A Guide through Balthasar's Logic* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 1–22, which shows that Balthasar's

hierarchical ecclesiological framework is cast in terms of an object-subject philosophical framework. In a given pairing, an object is always radically hierarchical over a subject.
[10] For a discussion of the church's lacking a sufficient critical principle vis-à-vis the Magisterium in Balthasar's ecclesiology, see Steffen Lösel, "Conciliar, not Conciliatory: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Ecclesiological Synthesis of Vatican II," *Modern Theology* 24 (2008): 23–49.
[11] Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 113–123, critiques the Eastern Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas in a way that would largely apply to Balthasar as well. Volf questions why for Zizioulas an individual congregation and even an individual Christian can be connected to the apostolic church, and hence Christ, only through a priest's ordination by a bishop (apostolic succession).
[12] Dennis Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 100, in a brief survey of Balthasar's ecclesiology assesses, "Balthasar may not be the best theological voice available when it comes to the relation of the Church to various cultures, to science, to other religions, or to the plight of the poor."
[13] Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 219 (italics original).
[14] See the section "Relational Personhood" in Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 204–208, for an example of Volf's discussion of fully egalitarian Trinitarian and ecclesial relations; the section "Perichoretic Personhood" in ibid., 208–213, for his discussion of largely egalitarian perichoresis; and the section "The Structure of Trinitarian and Ecclesial Relations" in ibid., 214–220, for an example of Volf's minimizing the significance of hierarchical Trinitarian sending and hierarchical ecclesial structures.
[15] Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 221–257.
[16] See, for example, Volf's discussion in "The Catholicity of the Local Church" in *After Our Likeness*, 270–278.
[17] Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 7, says that *Exclusion and Embrace* is grounded in the same egalitarian view of the Trinity as *After Our Likeness*. *Exclusion and Embrace*, 290–295, summarizes Volf's proposal to deal with violence in the world. For Volf, Christians should be nonviolent, absorbing violence through self-giving love, standing with arms wide open in the hope that the other will reciprocate, accept what he already has been declared in Christ, and then be embraced. Lacking here are much of the *positive* actions of Christ and the church, a concern that Volf himself mentions in these pages. For example, Christ in Matthew 8–9 does a series of very powerful miracles that display a positive, offensive mission strategy that contrasts with Volf's largely passive strategy.
[18] On the other hand, Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program," 417, can allow a certain hierarchy in connection with mission: "I have argued that the social vision based on the doctrine of the Trinity should rest primarily on the downward movement in which God, in a sense, comes out of the circularity of divine love in order to take godless humanity into the divine embrace." There is thus a tension in Volf's missional thought here as in other parts of his theology in connection with a hierarchy-equality polarity that sees hierarchy and equality as opposites. Volf's missiological discussion is related to the problem of the relation between God and creation in general in Volf's theology. Was God's creation of the world a fully egalitarian act, or did it involve unfortunate hierarchy? Was the act of creation egalitarian, which calls into question God's distinctness from creation, was it chiefly hierarchical and hence against God's true nature, or did it involve both of these things in uneasy tension?
[19] Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008) is a great resource to help a congregation assess its own identity and vision.
[20] A mutual hierarchy ecclesiological framework is compatible with the core Lutheran "two kinds of righteousness" framework. The problems the two kinds of righteousness guards

against can easily be defined in terms of hierarchy and equality. If only vertical or passive righteousness were allowed (a danger of a law-gospel framework if law is only understood in its "second" use as a mirror to reveal sin and vocation/mission is neglected), God would only be defined in hierarchical terms, not caring about human fellowship and vocation. On the other hand, if only horizontal or active human righteousness were allowed (a danger of "social gospel" thinking), the hierarchy of God over creation would disappear, resulting in an egalitarian understanding of the God-world relationship. But a two kinds of righteousness framework does not have to choose between vertical righteousness alone or horizontal righteousness alone, but rather views these two as both distinct and complementary. See Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness; Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, (1999): 449–466.

[21] See also Leopoldo Sánchez, "Toward an Ecclesiology of Catholic Unity and Mission in the Borderlands: Reflections from a Lutheran Latino Theologian," *Concordia Journal* 35 (2009): 17–34, as Sánchez similarly argues that a Christian should not have to choose between confession (or, in the broader term of the article, unity) and mission, but rather see that each mutually informs the other.

Encountering Mission

Rejuvenating the Lutheran Identity in India: Indian Christians Meeting Luther Five Hundred Years after the Reformation

Sony Lawrence

Abstract: The IELC Lutherans in India have had a rich past with respect to preaching, teaching, publishing, running schools and hospitals during the MELIM missionary era. However as missionaries left India, there was a lack of conscious effort to uphold these distinctive Lutheran attributes. Consequently, the younger generation, which constitutes about half of today's IELC membership, is unaware of its rich past in terms of history, practice, and theology. Being born Lutheran, they are now struggling to define their Lutheran identity. It is in this context that the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation is upon us. The IELC Trivandrum Circle is planning to use this opportunity to rejuvenate the Lutheran identity among its members, young and old.

Introduction

Christianity in India is believed to have begun with the visit of the Apostle Thomas in 52 AD to the state of Kerala in western India. Over the centuries, Christianity flourished as pockets of small but vibrant communities (Syrian Christians, for example) in various parts of South India. However, the spread of Christianity gained momentum with the arrival of the Portuguese, led by Vasco da Gama in 1498 and the Roman Catholic missionary Francis Xavier in 1542.

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The Lutheran presence in India began with the arrival of the Danish Halle missionaries, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Plustschau, in 1706 at Tranquebar, a Danish colony in the eastern coast of India. In 1895 the then Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States entered into the Indian mission field by sending Theodore Naether and Theodore Mohn to Krishnagiri in the southeastern part of India under the banner of Missouri Evangelical Lutheran India Mission (MELIM), the forerunner of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC).

In the early years, MELIM missionaries concentrated their work on the Tamil speaking people of South India initially by establishing schools taught by Indian teachers. This led to the formation of Lutheran "stations" in Krishnagiri, Ambur, Bargur, and Vaniyambadi. The first baptism took place after five years of mission work in 1900 at Ambur.[1] In the following years, many more missionaries joined the Indian mission field, and by the year 1911 there were eleven MELIM missionaries and about 350 MELIM members. In 1912 the mission expanded to the Malayalam speaking area of the present day Trivandrum, South Kerala. By the year 1957, 283 congregations with 29,185 members and 105 national pastors,[2] the Concordia Seminary at Nagercoil (1924), a printing press at Vaniyambadi (1926), a hospital at Ambur (1923), and many schools, including high schools, were in existence.[3]

By the 1950s discussions had begun on the formation of an independent Lutheran church. This move was an earnest attempt by the missionaries to aid the native church in assuming leadership and responsibility. It may also have been due to the rise of nationalism after the Indian independence in 1947. On January 8, 1958, the IELC officially came into being as an independent Lutheran church with three district synods—Ambur, Nagercoil, and Trivandrum—and a constitution of its own.[4]

The growth of IELC has been marginal over the years, now numbering an estimated 500 congregations, 250 clergy, and about 100,000 members over the three district synods. It is only a speck among the 3.5 million strong Lutherans spread among the 13 other Lutheran denominations, which were formed from the various mission initiatives similar to MELIM. According to the 2011 Census of India, there are 27.8 million Christians, of which 6.13 million are in the Malayalam speaking area (state of Kerala) and 4.42 million are in the Tamil speaking area (state of Tamil Nadu), the two languages groups where the MELIM missionaries were active. Regional statistics show that relatively new church bodies have a larger membership statistic than the IELC. Other church bodies, despite having lesser membership than the overall Lutheran population in India, have a greater say in the Indian economic, social, and political spheres. Clergy apart, members of other denomination have no acquaintance with or are unaware of a church that calls itself Lutheran, which is true in most parts of the world. Though the Indian Lutheran heritage spans over a period of over 300 years, Indian Lutherans face an identity crisis. Defining who they are, describing their heritage and what they believe have become a challenge to most who

call themselves Lutheran. This identity crisis runs much deeper among the younger generation of the IELC.

Theological and Pastoral Formation within the IELC

The outcome of the various measures ensured for theological education and pastoral care within the IELC has varied from time to time. Right from the beginning of the MELIM, missionaries were focused on starting schools to educate the local people. These schools focused not only on secular education but also on compulsory religious education, as it was the main purpose of starting such schools. In 1952, MELIM had 99 schools with 273 Indian teachers. Most of these schools were attached to local churches, so much so that about half of the students of these schools were baptized members of MELIM congregations.[5] For MELIM, schools were a stepping stone to bring the Gospel to the local people to the extent that they even refused government funding when they were pressured to exempt students from attending the compulsory religious education.

The missionaries made special efforts to train the people who were entrusted to teach the Bible to the school children. In fact, one of the criteria for appointment as a teacher to these schools was his or her ability to teach the Bible. Special in-house training programs were conducted for these teachers so that they were able to be better teachers. Moreover, catechists were also assigned the task of religious teaching, and by 1952, there were 141 catechists also teaching in schools.[6]

This methodical evangelistic practice continued for about twenty-five years, even after the formation of the IELC. However, since then, religious education in IELC schools has virtually stopped. The primary reason is that most of the missionaries had left the country by then, and those schoolteachers who were directly trained by the missionaries had retired from service. Moreover, fear of reprisal from social groups and compliance with government norms have also attributed to this problem. However, there are schools where non-mandatory Bible classes still do take place but not to the same extent or with the same enthusiasm as previously.

The outcome of religious teachings at schools was twofold. First, the teachers and catechists had extensive, rigorous, continuous, and firsthand theological training from the missionaries themselves. This created a class of faithful and steadfast laymen who confessed and practiced the Lutheran theology. They were so trained that some were deputized to preach and conduct Sunday worship at various preaching stations and churches, and some even eventually entered into the Office of the Holy Ministry. These laymen were pivotal in the theological and numerical growth of the IELC. They were a helping hand to the pastors in planting new preaching stations, special Sunday schools and congregations. Since they were teachers, they commanded respect in the secular community and people lent an ear to what they had to say. They also acted as safeguards in preventing false teachings

from entering into the church. To this day, heresy and false teachings have had minimal impact on IELC due to the faithful witness of these men. They identified themselves as confessional Lutherans and were standard bearers of the Lutheran identity.

Secondly, Christian children who studied in these schools were catechized in Lutheran theology. They had a firm knowledge of the Bible and the catechism and were pillars of their respective congregations. They were also witnesses to the true Gospel in their places of work. They were not ashamed, but in fact were proud in identifying themselves as Lutheran Christians. In fact, some of them were the backbone of the once strong youth movement in the IELC. The non-Christians who attended these schools benefited in attaining a disciplined education, and some have boasted that they still can recite the Small Catechism from memory.

As was alluded to earlier, such religious teaching in IELC schools (any Christian school, for that matter) has come to a standstill. Though there are diverse arguments for the cause, it virtually closed the doors for laymen to be trained in Lutheran theology and practice (both as teachers and as students), especially as part of their work or academic schedule. It has also affected the catechetical ability of the IELC. Today, the IELC is lacking laymen and women who are trained in the basics of Lutheran theology and practice, which has affected her ability to properly teach the Word of God, especially to Sunday School students, the youth, and the women's groups.

Because of the faithful work of the pastors and of these lay leaders, the theology, worship and practices in IELC congregations have, over the years, remained the same. Today's younger generation is keen on following these traditions, mostly because that is what they are used to doing. Most are unaware of why they do the things they do and why they say the things they say. Some of these internet-savvy second- and third-generation Lutherans have begun to question certain beliefs and practices out of genuine concern. Most often their queries and concerns are not satisfactorily answered. They are not properly equipped to defend their Lutheran identity. It is the responsibility of the church to ensure their sense of belongingness in the church through proper catechesis. This issue must be addressed appropriately and quickly, keeping in mind the shift in Indian demographics as about half of the 1.3 billion Indian population is below the age of thirty.

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The process of pastoral formation in the IELC is worth discussing here. The MELIM missionaries were keen to provide proper Lutheran theological training to the local people, since they were often used as helping hands in the mission field. Keeping this is mind and the need to train future pastors, Concordia Theological Seminary was opened at Nagercoil in the year 1924, just about thirty years after the first MELIM missionary arrived in India. For decades, the MELIM missionaries themselves were its faculty members. They were particular in upholding the Lutheran identity in the theological education and pastoral formation in the IELC. The seminary became the catechetical hub of confessional Lutheran theology and a place for theological discourse among the missionaries on the theological challenges that they faced.

The seminary was the cynosure of Lutheran theology when the MELIM missionaries were at its helm. However, as they left the country, the seminary has not been able to maintain the same degree of excellence in the field of theological education. In fact, the quality of education has suffered over the years, mainly due to lack of well-trained faculty and partly due to the issues within the IELC administration. The seminary has not been able to be the driving force in Lutheran theology and practice, which it once was. Pastor refresher courses, which were once regularly conducted by the seminary, have not been conducted in recent years. Moreover, due to the current academic restructuring mandated by the affiliating university, the seminary curriculum is currently ecumenical in nature. Study of Lutheran theology is limited to only a few courses. In using this new curriculum, present-day IELC seminary students are being trained along with students of various other denominations. This has affected the distinctive Lutheran identity of the seminary and its pedagogy. It is yet to be seen how these changes will affect the theology and practice of the local congregation and, eventually, the IELC as a whole.

Lutheran Theological Literature

In order for any ideology or theology to be transmitted from one generation to another, written documents are a necessity, and in the appropriate regional languages. MELIM was a champion in publishing literature that was distinctively Lutheran in order to help in its preaching and teaching. They made special efforts to publish theological literature in Urdu, Tamil, and Malayalam. Dr. D. Christudas gives a brief summary of the MELIM publications:

> MELIM from its very beginning in 1895, prepared tracts and printed them for distribution in connection with evangelistic work. In 1914 and 1925 two sermon books, written by F. Mohn and N. Samuel, were published. Besides, Lutheran small catechism and one hundred Bible lessons were published in 1917. In October 1921, a Tamil monthly *Sathia Satchi* (True Witness) was started. Malayalam monthly *Christiani* started publishing from 1925. An

> order of service and hymnal was issued in 1940. Hymnal, Catechism. Augsburg Confession, Matthew's Commentary, Bible Stories, Bible History, Agenda, Small Agenda, Enchiridion and Passion History were the oldest Malayalam publications. Another notable publication was the *Christava Siddhantha Deepika* (The Light of Christian Thought), a theological quarterly; published by the Concordia Seminary [Nagercoil] faculty from 1948 onwards. Separate book depots were also opened in each district to distribute these publications.[7]

The importance given to publishing Christian literature by MELIM can be seen from the fact that a printing press was established by missionary Dr. A. A. Brux in the year 1926, barely thirty-one years after the beginning of MELIM. Most of Lutheran literature was printed from this press. Up until the late 1970s, roughly toward the end of the missionary era, the IELC was fairly rich in Lutheran literature, which was used for teaching its pastors and laity. The Vacation Bible School textbooks published by MELIM were used not only in the Lutheran Church but also as templates by other denominations to develop their own VBS literature.

The current state of Lutheran publication in IELC can be deduced from the fact that the press established by MELIM is no more in existence and that all the district book depots have been closed down. Printing and publishing of Lutheran literature is unfortunately not taken up by the IELC today. Though, over the years, the hymnal and Small Catechism were published, no scholarly literature or study materials have been produced. However, few devout laymen have taken initiatives to publish relevant books on basic Lutheran doctrine on their own, and few circles in the IELC have done the same. This is only a drop in the ocean when compared to the ocean of literature needed for theological sustenance in the IELC. All the books mentioned by Dr. D. Christudas above, except the catechism and hymnal, are out of print. There is no Lutheran literature in print that helps the pastors and laymen to understand the Lutheran theology and practice. This literature gap is replaced by literature published by other denominations, which is often reflected in preaching and teaching. Transmission of Lutheran theology in institutions of pastoral formation relies on, even today, oral transmission, that is, by word of mouth. Even 310 years after the first Lutheran presence in India and 125 years after the beginning of MELIM, the Book of Concord is not fully translated into either Malayalam or Tamil language, although the Augsburg Confession and the Smalcald Articles were published by MELIM in 1956. However, some efforts have recently been made to translate and publish the entire Book of Concord. Lutheran classics like Dr. C. F. W. Walther's *Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, *Pastoral Theology,* etc., are unknown among the pastors and laymen. The library of a Lutheran pastor in India has fewer books and less Lutheran literature than those of a first-semester seminary student in the United States.

The lack of Lutheran literature in the IELC today has seriously affected its ability to explain to itself and its members its teaching and practices. The members of the church lack proper reading materials to enrich themselves in Lutheran history and theology. They are left at the mercy of Google to find answers to their questions and doubts and for clarifications. They are not able to find answers as to what defines them as Lutherans. Questions related to the Lutheran theological identity remain unanswered.

The Five Hundredth Anniversary of the Reformation

With Lutherans in India, especially in the IELC, who are grappling with their identity, the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation has come as a blessing. Though most of the members have only a minimal knowledge of Luther, the Reformation, or the theological issues behind it, the Reformation and Luther does evoke some sense of nostalgia in them. This can be attributed to the fact that the typical pastor and his congregation are proud of being Lutheran. Even though most of them are not cognizant of their Lutheran identity, they do not hesitate to identify themselves as Lutheran publicly and are not apologetic about it. The members are conscious of the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation and believe that it is a great opportunity to show off their Lutheran identity in their neighborhoods and among friends, Christians and non-Christians alike. The Lutheran Church in India sees the anniversary celebrations as an opportunity to instill in its membership the crux of their identity. The members see it as an opportunity to enunciate the Lutheran identity to the outside Christian and non-Christian community.

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The Trivandrum Circle of the IELC consists of twenty-four Malayalam speaking congregations in and around the city of Trivandrum in Kerala, South India. Its membership is a snapshot of the general populace in Kerala, including government servants, businessmen, teachers, retirees, private company employees, laborers, and farmers. The membership includes also a fairly good mix of the young and the old, with faithful pastors serving them.

Preparations to celebrate the Reformation anniversary began at the Trivandrum Circle in the latter half of 2016, with its General Body appointing a committee to come up with a vision document to properly celebrate this historic event. The

committee submitted a set of recommendations that were accepted by the General Body. The committee set the agenda for the yearlong celebrations, stating that the celebrations should (a) be Christ centered, (b) educate the members on the Lutheran theology, practice, and heritage, (b) be a witness to the general public for both Christians and non-Christians.[8] These guidelines were aimed at addressing, as much as possible, the question of Lutheran identity: Let the five hundredth Reformation anniversary celebrations rejuvenate the Indian Lutheran Church from within to without.

First and foremost, the celebrations are to be Christ centered, as the Reformation is not about Luther but about Christ and His Gospel of saving poor miserable sinners through God's mercy. Second, the renewal from within is to be achieved through reassuring the members of their baptismal grace. Their faith is to be strengthened with continuous teaching on the Word of God through Bible classes that especially cover topics that Lutherans identify themselves with the most but often struggle to comprehend. Celebrations should focus on satisfactorily answering the questions relating to the Lutheran identity—its practices and beliefs through catechesis and publishing the necessary literature. The rich heritage of the Reformation and the history of the Lutheran Church and the work of the MELIM missionaries are to be brought out in through these celebrations so that a sense of belongingness and pride is generated among the members. Finally, the celebrations are to be a witness and testimony to what God has done to and through the Lutheran community, especially to the outside community. Other Christian denominations and people groups that are not familiar with the Lutheran community are to be made aware of the existence of such a vibrant Lutheran community through these celebrations. In summary, the aim of the five hundredth anniversary celebrations of the Reformation is to have Christocentric festivities beginning from within the church and leading to without.

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To meet the above objectives, the IELC Trivandrum Circle chalked out a yearlong plan to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, commencing from October 30, 2016 and ending on October 31, 2017. The following is a summary of the various festivities:

Inaugural meeting: The inauguration of the yearlong celebrations began on October 30, 2016, with a ten-mile-long motor vehicle rally from Kazhakootam to Calvary Lutheran Church, Peroorkada, the venue of the inaugural ceremony. The

rally was flagged off by Pramod Kumar, the Assistant Commissioner of police and a faithful Lutheran of the Trivandrum Circle. Members donned custom-made T-shirts and caps inscribed with a logo that was specially designed to commemorate the anniversary. A specially designed flag was hoisted at Calvary Lutheran Church by K. M. Justus, the oldest active Lutheran in the Circle, to denote the beginning of the celebrations. This flag will be kept flying until it is lowered at the closing ceremony of the yearlong celebrations on October 29, 2017. A logo to commemorate the anniversary was also released. The inaugural celebrations were jointly organized by the Trivandrum Circle and the Lutheran Laymen Fellowship, a registered organization for the Laymen within the Circle, which has been organizing Reformation Day programs since its inception in 2001.

Reformation Flame: A public event named "Reformation Flame" was held in the open air auditorium, Gandhi Park, at the heart of Trivandrum City, just a stone's throw away the famed temple where treasures worth billions of dollars were found recently. This program held on February 18, 2017, was a first of its kind in the history of the Circle, where a public confession of faith was made, with an address by Prof. D. V. Bernard, former principal of Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil. It was also a public declaration of the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation with a display of music from church band troupes and a candlelit mass choir, comprising about 450 members from the Circle, singing Reformation hymns.

Literature published: As part of the celebrations, a variety of Lutheran literature was published as a small step to fill the gap in the availability of Lutheran literature. A special edition of Luther's Small Catechism and a book titled *Christiya Aradhana* (Christian Worship), originally written by Dr. M. L. Kretzmann, were published. The *Christiya Aradhana* was chosen for reprint, as there was no literature available on the explanation of the Lutheran worship. Another book titled *Cheriya Katechismusinte Paaddavivaranam* (A study guide to the Small Catechism), originally written by George Mezger, is in the process of being published. This 350-page question-answer model study guide, whose existence was not known to most pastors and laymen when published, will be the only available study guide on Lutheran theology in the Malayalam language.

In an effort to teach the Sunday School children the history of Reformation and its theology, in addition to the regular course work, three additional chapters related to Reformation were added to each class on Reformation history and on Lutheran doctrine. In the middle of September, students took a test on these topics. The 2017 Vacation Bible School lessons were modified to include Luther's history and Reformation theology.

Each year a study book is published for Bible classes for the women's group and the youth group. This year a study book on *Lutheran Theology and the Leaders of the Reformation* was published with articles on the causes of the Reformation, the 95 Theses, Luther's rose, the *Sola*s, the theology of the cross, the priesthood of all believers, and the two kingdoms, along with short biographies of Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, John Huss, and John Calvin.

In addition to the above, a multicolor wall hanging calendar with important events that shaped the Reformation marked in it was made available. Custom-made notebooks with the picture of Luther nailing the 95 Theses and a short history and timeline of the Reformation were also made available to school and college-going students.

Walk for Reformation: To create awareness among the general public on the Reformation and its five hundredth anniversary, members of the Trivandrum Circle assembled at the Museum Park compound in Trivandrum City on April 8, 2017, and walked around the park for an hour. The members, wearing badges and the custom-made T-shirts with the Reformation logo, joined hundreds of people on their regular evening walk as an expression of their Lutheran identity.

Oikumenae 2017: A seminar, Oikumenae 2017, was held on May 7, 2017, at Gospel Lutheran Church, Thundathil, with heads of the Malankara Syrian Church, Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos; the Orthodox Church, Dr. Gabriel Mar Gregorios Metropolitan; and Mar Thoma Church, the Rt. Rev. Joseph Barnabas Episcopa, as speakers. Each of the dignitaries spoke of the Reformation from his church's perspective. Bishops pointed out that that the Church at the time was in need of a Reformation and that Martin Luther was the reason for the Counter Reformation! One bishop said that it was God who chose Luther to reform the Church and that the current Pope even said that the Church could err. They all agreed that, although there are doctrinal differences, all Christians can stand together to the common good of the humanity.

The purpose of the Oikumenae 2017 was to enable the Lutheran clergy and laity to listen to the different perspectives on the Reformation and also to let the other denominations know of the strength of Lutheran community and its celebrations of the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. At the close of the event, the Circle president and the bishops jointly planted a mangrove on the church premises to mark the event.

Thanksgiving for the service of MELIM missionaries: On the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, the Circle felt it appropriate to offer thanks and praise to the Triune God for the service of the MELIM missionaries and the native Indian pastors and laymen who helped them in the mission field. A thanksgiving service was arranged, along with the dedication of the newly constructed church building of the Trinity Lutheran Church, Plavuvila, on August 6, 2017. Prof. T. Joy, former principal of Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil, delivered the sermon, highlighting the sacrifices made by missionaries and also exhorting the church to engage in active mission work.

Mission Centre at Oolikuzhi: One of the visions of the committee was to start a new mission station in the anniversary year. The Oolikuzhi Mission was established by the Beracha Lutheran Church, Vattappara, and was functioning in a private home. Upon request from the church, the Circle took it upon itself to purchase a property and build a permanent structure as a monument to the five hundredth Reformation anniversary. Through the support of its members, the Circle was able to purchase land and build a structure worth about $15,000, the dedication of which was scheduled for October 22, 2017.

Exhibition on the Reformation and MELIM/IELC: The Lutheran Laymen Fellowship of the Trivandrum Circle organized a two-day exhibition on the history of Reformation and also that of MELIM and IELC as part of the closing ceremony of the yearlong celebrations. The exhibition that was held October 28–29, 2017 highlighted the major events that shaped the Reformation and the life of Martin Luther. The rich heritage of MELIM—featuring details of MELIM missionaries, a timeline of events beginning with Theodore Naether's arrival, and the formation and history of IELC—was part of the display.

Closing ceremony: The closing ceremony of the yearlong celebrations took place on Sunday, October 29, 2017 at Calvary Lutheran Church, Peroorkada. On October 22, 2017, a vehicle rally processed from the Trivandrum city centre to the Calvary Lutheran Church as a proclamation of the conclusion of the yearlong celebrations. Prof. P. J. Kurien, the Vice-Chairman of the upper house of the Indian Parliament inaugurated the closing ceremony. The keynote address was delivered by a former state police chief and theologian Dr. Alexander Jacob. Former Chief Minister of Kerala Oomen Chandy, the members of the state legislative and of the parliament were among those who attended. The Trivandrum Circle members took this event as time of celebrating the five hundredth anniversary of the reclamation of the pure Gospel.

Photo credit: Tony Lawrence

This is the closing ceremony of the yearlong celebrations of the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation organized by the Trivandrum Circle of the IELC.

People on the Dias (Left to Right): Prof. P. J. Kurien, Vice Chairman, Rajya Sabha (Upper house of Indian Parliament), who inaugurated the closing ceremony; Mr. Sony Lawrence, Convener, Reformation 500th Anniversary Celebrations Committee; Mr. C. I. Baiju, Secretary/Treasurer, IELC Trivandrum Circle; Rev. A. J. Joseph, Chairman, Reformation 500th Anniversary Celebrations Committee; Rev. Surgi George, President, IELC Trivandrum Circle; Mr. K. Muraleedaran, Member of Kerala Legislative Assembly; and Dr. Alexander Jacob, Former Kerala Police Chief and Theologian, who delivered the keynote address.

Photo credit: Tony Lawrence

This is the audience at the closing ceremony.

Endnotes

[1] D. Christudas, *Tranqeubar to Travancore* (ISPK, 2008), 42.
[2] Joseph Rittmann, "Reading the History of MELIM in Context 120 Years Later," *Lutheran Mission Matters,* XXV, no.1 (Issue 50) (May 2017): 140–142.
[3] Luther W. Meinzen, *A Church in Mission Identity and Purpose in India* (IELC Press, 1981), 241–244.
[4] Christudas, *Tranqeubar to Travancore,* 71.
[5] Ibid., 67, 69.
[6] Ibid., 67.
[7] Ibid., 66–67.
[8] Minutes of the General Body of the IELC Trivandrum Circle held on September 18, 2016.

God's (and the Church's) Mission: Is It a Matter of Pleasing Consumers?

Gerson L. Linden

Abstract: God's mission to save the world through Jesus Christ involves the Church as the instrument for the proclamation of the Gospel. For the accomplishment of the task, people have to be targeted in a meaningful way. Such has been the preoccupation of the Lutheran Church, also in Brazil. However, a new religious movement begun in the second half of the twentieth century, known as "Neopentecostalism," tends to work as a market offering religious products to the people, treated as consumers. This article assesses the strategies of a Brazilian denomination, the "International Church of God's Grace" as representative of such an approach.

Introduction

That God loves people is one of the simplest and most direct truths revealed in His written Word and in the life and work of the Lord Jesus. His mission targets people who need life in the midst of a reality of death resulting from the original flight from the Creator's communion. Holy Scripture is the letter of love from a Father who wants to gather children for His eternal home. The reality of God's love for people is manifested in the existence of His Church, men and women who live the eschatological communion with the Father promoted by the Holy Spirit. God's mission is His dynamic action coming through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit to touch the world, to create His Church, in order to bring them in the Spirit through the Son back to the Father. That is God's mission, where the Son and the Holy Spirit work, in the words of Irenaeus, as the two hands of the Father in action in the world to save those who are lost.[1]

God's mission towards the world includes His Church as the instrument. Therefore, people, real-life people, are what really matters to the Church. That is

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sometimes described as the "mission of the Church," which is actually God's mission through His Son in the Spirit, acting in the life of His people. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (hereafter designed by its Portuguese acronym, IELB), as many other Lutheran and non-Lutheran denominations, has developed through its history a vision that intends to be molded by God's mission to save people. Since the second half of the twentieth century, IELB has promoted a general theme that intentionally conducts its national and local programs: "Christ for All" (*Cristo para Todos*). Every four years the IELB has been developing plans with that general theme, promoting actions in Christian education, worship, evangelism, and service to the needy. For some time the target of each planning was numerical growth, which was even expressed in the form of numbers planned to be reached in the years ahead. Now, already for some years, the four-year planning aims to guide congregations and national institutions towards seeding the Word, trusting the work of the Holy Spirit to produce fruit, including numerical growth, when and how it pleases Him.

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Given the situation briefly described above, every national board, and local leadership as well, has always tried to find better ways to achieve the purpose of proclaiming the saving Gospel to the largest possible number of people. This mission stance tends to make people in the church open to discover creative ways to bring "Christ for all." In the Brazilian reality, numerous examples can be observed, and perhaps imitated, from what other Christian groups are doing. In this article, I intend to describe what could be considered a strategy (or a mindset) that can be identified in some denominations that tries to target the largest number of people with a message.

As happens so many times in the history of the Church, good intentions sometimes open the door to situations that offer a danger to the integrity of the proclamation of the Gospel. In this case that I intend to present, what can be seen as a good intention runs the risk of considering people as consumers that have to be pleased with a "religious good." This study is based on (and reproduces parts of) a dissertation recently presented,[2] which focused on a Christian denomination in Brazil (The International Church of God's Grace, hereafter, ICGG) that is part of a larger movement known as "Neopentecostalism."[3] It is important to observe that I will not describe some possible contributions that the strategies employed by the ICGG could offer to the Lutheran Church. The intention of this article is to depict characteristics of that religious movement, which could be tempting for Lutherans. Therefore, the article aims to alert against possible deviations that may result from such an approach compared to a Scripture-guided view of mission and church life.

Some studies on Neopentecostalism call attention to the problem of the church's being attracted to seeing herself as a business that has to please consumers.[4] From the study on the ICGG, some characteristics may be identified, which intend to provide growth for the church but that run the risk of considering people as consumers of religious commodities. Some of those characteristics will be now described.

Mission Strategies as Characteristics of Brazilian Neopentecostalism

1. A strong leadership centered on an individual, to the point that the whole denomination would be identified with him

Neopentecostal denominations in Brazil have their identity deeply rooted in the life and deeds of their leaders. The place of the founder and leader is central to the particular church he leads. If one examines written and visual material produced by the church body, he or she will probably agree that it is only possible to understand the ICGG by recognizing the centrality of its leader. Such characteristic may be also observed in Neopentecostalism in general.[5]

The key role of the leader in Neopentecostal churches has been noted by several scholars. Karla Patriota, who studied the Neopentecostal movement from the standpoint of sociology, developed a thesis[6] using the concept of the society of the spectacle. Using that typology, she shows how the religious leader assumes a role compared to a star in a TV show. The founders of each Neopentecostal church body (who, in the case of the three largest Neopentecostal churches in Brazil are still the leaders today) are always exposed through all possible means, so that they may be seen as an identifying mark of the church. Patriota points out how the high exposure of R. R. Soares not only gives identity to that denomination, but also preserves the unity of the ICGG. All other pastors work to promote the leader. The "star" concept helps to explain other two aspects of the way the leader is seen in Neopentecostalism: "as an unquestionable and incontestable leader and as a show-man."[7]

The "star" concept helps to explain . . . the way the leader is seen in Neopentecostalism.

2. A deficient eschatology that locates Christian hope here and now

Classical Pentecostalism began as an evangelistic and eschatological movement. It is possible to note that such original emphasis receives less emphasis in Neopentecostalism. Its teaching and preaching is much more interested in addressing current problems that people face in their daily lives (especially in terms of health and finances).

Ricardo Bitun, a sociologist and author of several studies in Pentecostalism and Neopentecostalism, proposes that the irruption and rapid growth of Neopentecostalism in Brazil should be understood in connection with the transition from a traditional society to the modern society, with emphasis on the competitiveness of the marketplace.[8] Neopentecostal churches developed a theology that could assess and respond to challenges that people face in their daily lives in terms of health, employment, family harmony, poverty, etc. Two theological positions, Prosperity Theology and the concept of spiritual warfare, were (and are) key for the worldview that Neopentecostalism assumes. Bitun affirms that for Neopentecostalism, at least in practical terms, there was an anticipation of the Christian *parousia*. He argues that the traditional future focus in the eschatology of classical Pentecostalism (and Protestantism as a whole) gave way to the expectation of prosperity and victory against evil forces and its consequences here and now.[9]

3. Teaching concentrated on divine blessings focused on people's needs here and now

The ICGG daily TV program, "*Show da Fé*" (Show of Faith), has a section—"*Novela da Vida Real"* (A Real-Life Soap Opera)—that introduces people who experienced a radical change in their life when they became active participants of the church and its projects. It focuses on a person or a family who was facing some difficulty related to employment, finances, health, drugs, or even relationships inside the family. The story always has a good ending, presenting a new reality after the person has taken seriously the message of the church, which implies also becoming an active donor for the projects of the ICGG.

The interpretation of what happens to the person or family in the "*Novela da Vida Real"* is a practical example of how Prosperity Theology works. Edir Macedo, founder and leader of the largest Neopentecostal Brazilian Church (IURD) and R. R. Soares' brother-in-law, is one of the most explicit preachers of prosperity in Brazil. He uses the language of debt that God has to those who faithfully tithe. In his book, *Vida em Abundância* (Abundant Life), he challenges the believers to tithe and then to charge God to fulfill His promises: "To tithe is to become a candidate to receive unmeasured blessings. . . . When we pay the tithe to God, He becomes obligated (because He promised this) to fulfill His word, rebuking the devouring spirits."[10] Macedo attributes to those spirits every disgrace in human life, including diseases, accidents, vices, social degradation, and any suffering that afflicts the person in his daily life.[11] R. R. Soares' preaching on prosperity may be considered a milder way of dealing with blessings, if compared to Macedo, even though he can also be a legitimate representative of Prosperity Theology.

In his television program, "*Show da Fé"* broadcast on January 28, 2014, Soares was encouraging people not to be satisfied with the current situation in which they

were living, but they should seek God's blessings. He then spoke against an attitude of someone who says, "I'm poor and was born this way, and I have no success in life." Soares argued that since God shows no partiality; every believer may claim (not "ask for," but "claim") blessings. In that same program, Soares presented the reason why a believer does not enjoy the promised blessings. Any doubt in faith, say Soares, prevents a person from being blessed. He was explaining Colossians 1:9–10, specifically the phrase, "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will." If a person hears God's Word and feels God's action in his life, he should not stop, but go forward, seeking more and more of God's blessings. There are some people, concluded Soares, who stop there and do not enjoy what they have as their right.

4. Offering of varied programs (the "show") to attract people—"consumers" of spiritual goods in the religious market

Karla Patriota, already quoted above, based her study of the ICGG using the concept of the "spectacle society," developed by French writer Guy Debord.[12] Her fundamental thesis is that "this new kind of organization of Neopentecostal religious activity turns the theological discourse into carefully packaged merchandise which is offered through TV spectacles."[13] She maintains that such a discourse packed in the form of a spectacle loses its effect in daily life when the spectacular element is lacking. Such disenchantment needs to be compensated by new enchantment, i.e., the continuity of the spectacle, which happens in the form of new religious products. Patriota observes that religious discourse appeals to the senses, especially vision, generating in the religious context desires for entertainment and anxiety in the religious consumer:

A discourse packed in the form of a spectacle loses its effect in daily life when the spectacular element is lacking. Such disenchantment needs to be compensated by new enchantment, i.e., the continuity of the spectacle, which happens in the form of new religious products.

> It appears to us that the concept of religious "mission" is being left aside in order to achieve better results in terms of numbers. . . . [T]here is a cult of the person, since the religious leaders that occupy time of *mass media* have their discourses legitimized by media, though their contents suffer a significant marketing suitability. The concept of the society of spectacle . . . promoted and sustained the transformation of several churches, classified as Christian churches, into huge communication companies.[14]

Patriota argues that new religious movements represent a flight from traditional religiosity and a new definition of what it is to be a member of a church body.

Neopentecostalism learned very well how to deal with secularization in the religious environment. There was a time when the religious institutions were the cement that united cultural and social aspects of a people in a communitarian life. Autonomy is a value that no longer allows the religious institutions to have a monopoly on the thoughts and actions of society. Patriota claims that Neopentecostal denominations successfully participate in this process of religion in our society. The individual makes choices. He is a "religious consumer" who wants to choose freely what the best religious "product" is for him. Religion is a matter of private life, and the "consumer" wants to have his desires met also in this field of his life.[15] As an inevitable consequence, she says, there is "the revival of a spectacular religiosity in every field of human activities."[16] The ICGG knows very well how to use this to its favor. The way Soares presents his message and the way the ICGG packages its content are well fitted to elements of entertainment and mass communication, as can be seen in the principal "product," the "Show of Faith" TV program, broadcasted in popular TV channels in prime time.[17]

Final Remarks

The church of God lives as the result of God's mission and also as the instrument in this mission to the world. The Holy Spirit, who had a key role in the manifestation of God's kingdom through the coming, ministry and messianic work of Jesus, continues to be in action in the world through the Means of Grace. In Absolution, Baptism, the Lord's Supper and in the proclamation of the Word that brings Christ, the kingdom is coming by the Holy Spirit.

One could point some useful aspects of Neopentecostal strategies in reaching people with the message of Christ. However, Lutheran theology based on the New Testament teaching is critical against any anthropocentric approach to mission, which unfortunately underlies much of the Neopentecostal approach.

The strategies used by Neopentecostal leaders dealing with people as consumers should be seen by Lutherans as a threat to the Gospel message. Calling the attention so much to the leader himself and to the possibilities people have when they act with boldness determining blessings from God put the focus on the person and not in God's proper way to deal with sinners. In this way, such approach becomes a legalistic way of proposing the message and blurs the people's vision of the real Gospel.

A triumphalist view of faith constitutes much of what prosperity theology proposes. In Neopentecostal preaching, real faith means success understood as improvement in life. Christ's sacrifice, death and resurrection, become the guarantee not only of reconciliation with God, but of victory against problems in finances, in family life, and in health issues. For Martin Luther, however, being in Christ involves experiencing inner conflict, which is the Spirit's work to show how the

individual is naturally turned away from God. As Regin Prenter observes, by his frequent use of Romans 8:26 ("The Spirit assists us in our weakness"), Luther confirms that God is really present in the person's life, in the midst of groaning of the anxious soul that feels seized by death and hell.[18] This use by Luther is particularly significant for the purposes of this article, since it is also a frequently quoted text in the ICGG preaching, but with a different reading, with the plural "weaknesses." These are taken as references to evils that disturb daily life even in Christian people, and which are the result of demonic forces. In such an application of the text, the role of the Holy Spirit is to assist the believer to be freed from those weaknesses that come from outside of them and to hinder his right to receive blessings.[19]

For Luther the Holy Spirit is the true God present in our affliction and anguish. Such realism is also a good contribution to assess the way Neopentecostalism deals with conflicts that are present in the life of the believer.

All those critical assessments about Neopentecostal strategies should not mean a lack of boldness in Lutherans as they engage in God's mission. The Lord's love and sacrifice for the world, along with His sending of the Holy Spirit to convince people of sin, justice, and judgment (John 16), testifies to the urgency and importance of the proclamation of the Gospel. People matter! However, in God's mission, people should not be treated as consumers in a religious marketplace. They, as everyone of us, are sinners with the most extreme and urgent need of the gifts already achieved through the sacrificial work of Christ, i.e., forgiveness and eternal communion with the Father. God's most "spectacular" action in the world, acting through His Church, is the dynamic work of the Spirit, by the clear and direct announcement of Christ through the Means of Grace.

In God's mission, people should not be treated as consumers in a religious marketplace. They, as everyone of us, are sinners with the most extreme and urgent need of the gifts already achieved through the sacrificial work of Christ, i.e., forgiveness and eternal communion with the Father.

Endnotes

[1] Kilian McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God—The Holy Spirit as the Universal Touch and Goal* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), 3.

[2] Gerson L. Linden, "Eschatological Pneumatology as a Theological Framework for Evaluating the Pneumatology of the International Church of God's Grace in Brazil" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2017). Special thanks to the Rev. Dr. Robert Kolb, supervisor of the project, and to the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

[3] In contrast to classical Pentecostalism, this movement has no emphasis on speaking in tongues as a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and has not kept the characteristic distance that the original movement had toward society in general. It needs to be noted that in the United States the term "Neopentecostalism" generally refers to the Charismatic movement that occurred in the main Protestant denominations. In this article I'm using the term for what in the United States is similar to the "Prosperity Theology" groups or, more popularly, "Health and wealth theology." The ICGG was founded by Missionary Romildo Ribeiro Soares (known nationally as R. R. Soares) in 1980. Soares continues to be the leader of the ICGG.
[4] A classical study in Portuguese, originally a doctoral dissertation, is the book by a Presbyterian theologian, Leonildo S. Campos, with a suggestive title, *Temple, Theater, and Market*, a study about the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, the largest Brazilian Neopentecostal Church. (*Templo, Teatro e Mercado: Organização e Marketing de um Empreendimento Neopentecostal*, 2nd ed. [Petrópolis: São Paulo, São Bernardo do Campo: Vozes, Simpósio, UMESP, 1999]).
[5] It is common that those denominations are popularly identified by the name of their leaders. For instance, it causes no misunderstanding if one refers to "The Church of Edir Macedo," referring to the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (hereafter named by the Portuguese acronym, IURD), founded and led by the self-named "Bishop" Edir Macedo. That is also true in the case of the ICGG and in the World Church of God's Power (popularly known as the Church "of Waldemiro Santiago," the church founder and leader and self-named "Apostle Waldemiro").
[6] Karla Patriota, "O Show da Fé: A Religião na Sociedade do espetáculo. Um Estudo sobre a Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus e o entretenimento religioso brasileiro na esfera midiática" (PhD diss., Federal University of Pernambuco, 2008). Patriota is Anglican and graduated in Communications and in Theology. She had a Master's degree in Communications and doctorate in Sociology of Religion, with a post-doctorate in Cambridge. She is a full-time professor in the "Universidade Federal de Pernambuco" (National University of Pernambuco).
[7] Patriota, "Show da Fé," 292–93.
[8] Ricardo Bitun, "Transformações no campo religioso pentecostal brasileiro: a antecipação da parúsia crista," *Ciências da Religião: História e Sociedade* 6, no. 2 (2008), 203–28.
[9] Bitun, "Transformações no campo religioso," 216–17.
[10] Ricardo Mariano, "Os Neopentecostais e a Teologia da Prosperidade," *Novos Estudos* 44, no. 44 (1996), 35.
[11] Rodolfo Gaede Neto, "Teologia da Prosperidade e Diaconia," *Ensaios e Monografias* 17 (1998): 5–20.
[12] Guy Debord (1931–1994) wrote his book, *The Society of the Spectacle*, in 1967. That book was republished several times since then.
[13] Patriota, "Show da Fé," 6.
[14] Ibid., 23.
[15] Ibid., 75–82.
[16] Ibid., 83.
[17] Ibid., 146.
[18] Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, trans. John M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1953),197.
[19] This use of that text by the ICGG preachers was witnessed by a former student of this writer. He who was a member of the ICGG for many years.

Missouri's Mission with Hispanics in the United States—a Half-Century Critique: The Good, Bad, and Possible

Douglas Groll

Abstract: Invited to share reflections on Hispanic ministry in the Missouri Synod over a fifty year ministry the author is in intent on showing that a great deal of progress has been made in Hispanic ministry as God has blessed dedicated individuals and families in raising up ministry to and with Hispanics in congregational leadership formation and literary productivity. At the same time, the Synod and its administrative units on district levels are judged sorely deficient in recognizing their own internal blindness to systemic cultural premises which have insisted on Anglo economic and administrative superiority and their consequent marginalization of ethnic and specifically Hispanic ecclesial needs. The article suggests that Hispanic and other ethnic minorities within the Synod present a possible "teaching moment" for the Church to recapture its identity as a "people in exile" under God's eternal blessing instead of an institution in decline that must hold on to its power and control at all costs.

Rev. Dr. Douglas Groll was born and raised in Northwest Ohio, where as early as 1949 he began a life of interaction with Hispanics. Upon graduating from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1966, he served as missionary in rural congregations in Monagas State, Venezuela, ultimately moving to Caracas to administer Concordia School and the Venezuelan mission. The Grolls returned to the United States in 1978 to Trinity Lutheran Church in Cleveland, where he served the historic Anglo congregation as well as an emerging Pto. Rican Lutheran community. In 1987 he was called to organize the Hispanic Institute of Theology and implement the Synod's first theological education program by extension which established learning centers in over 20 cities in the U.S. and Canada. Although initially dependent on the television studios of Concordia University, River Forest, as technology changed it was possible to reorganize the Institute on the home campus of Concordia Seminary in 2006 as the Center For Hispanic Studies. Pastor Groll has contributed to theological journals and has authored La Adoración Bíblica*, a textbook for Hispanic liturgists. douglasgroll@sbcglobal.net*

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Inviting a missionary, pastor, professor, and administrator to reflect on a particular area of ministry over fifty years is indeed a dangerous thing. I have been retired for eleven years, and with each year that I am away from active ministry I sometimes think that either I have nothing to offer or no one cares. The reader will then understand why, when invited to give my own reflections on Missouri's Hispanic ministries, I readily assented. Finally, I thought, they want to know, and finally I am going to "tell it like it is"! After a couple of weeks of reflection, recalling my years in Venezuela (1966–1978) and the varied accumulated memories of nine years of ministry with Puerto Rican sisters and brothers in Cleveland (1978–87) and later as director of the Hispanic Institute of Theology (now the Center For Hispanic Studies) from 1987–2006, which took me to dozens of cities all over the United States, I sensed that the memories were too broad and too diverse. It was not just "Tell it like it is!" because "it" is really "they, them, and those things" in the plural. I needed some simple organizing principles to deal with contradictions. As I recalled events and reviewed dozens of documents, I was surprised and sobered by the good and bad running side by side over the decades. Heroic individual ministry as exemplified by Pastors Cobian and Andrés Meléndez in Texas ninety years ago or Pastor Martinelli in California in the 1930s has run parallel with administrative bungling. Significant administrative progress can be demonstrated alongside blatant backsliding.

Consequently, for the sake of keeping things simple, I have chosen to address three general areas: The Good, The Bad, and The Possible.

The Good

The first point that I want to make is that we do not need a new "Theology of Mission." This fact was brought home to me as I listened to and watched Dr. Robert Kolb's insightful banquet address to those gathered together in the Lutheran Society for Missiology (LSFM)'s annual meeting in the halls of Concordia Seminary in January 2017. In less than fifty minutes, he was able to remind attendees that a missionary understanding of the Gospel and the Lutheran Confessions was really there all along in the Lutheran "soul," manifested by words and actions of Lutheran princes, missionaries, and adventurers alike. This reality has been there for centuries and should not surprise us this year as we celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. What surprised me, however, as I listened to his presentation of a Confessional Lutheran view of mission, was a nagging question: "Where have I heard this before?" I recalled a meeting of the International Lutheran Theological Conference on the same campus sometime in 1970 or 1971, when I represented the Conference of Lutheran Churches of Venezuela. Lutheran leaders from all over the world were gathered and tasked to ask and answer almost the same question: "Can we be confessional and missional? Does our Lutheran DNA (we didn't use that term then) help or hinder our ministries?" Yet, as I look back, I concluded that what I had lived over almost fifty years was a sound theology of missions with the "bookends" of the Lutheran Confessions, already debated but affirmed back then and still

consistently proclaimed at least in our theological discourse of this century, as so eloquently stated by Dr. Kolb.

A second "Good" that accompanies what we believe, teach, and confess and need not be debated, at least in terms of Hispanic presence in the United States or where Lutheran ministry might take place, is simply put: *We know very well what we should be doing and what is needed to do that work.* On an economic-sociological-political scale, we simply have better data on all facets of Hispanic presence in the United States than ever before. The Pew Hispanic Center continues to study the Hispanic realities of our country from almost every point of view, occasionally even posting reliable studies of religious and spiritual preferences. These are updated almost weekly. At the same time, we know a great deal about the Lutheran Hispanic presence. In 2006, the Synod mandated a Blue Ribbon Task Force to study Lutheran Hispanic history, presence, challenges, and needs for a report to the Synod in convention. The findings of the Blue Ribbon Task Force are still available in the Convention Workbook of 2007 and are still waiting to be implemented. Simply put: Another study is not needed.

A third "Good" to celebrate is that there have been and continue to be new Hispanic ministries opening in many districts each decade, largely carried out by Hispanics. This was already highlighted in the Blue Ribbon study, although not statistically documented since then. Leadership of Hispanic ministry in the LCMS is now completely or almost completely in the hands of Hispanic men and women. This fact must be celebrated because it was not always that way. When I returned to the United States in 1978, meetings were dominated by Anglo pastors, many of us as returned missionaries from different parts of Central and South America. Attending the Hispanic National Convention in Tampa in 2015 was a joyful celebration of a Lutheran Hispanic proclamation of the Gospel in study, culture, and song.

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To see Hispanic pastors and deaconesses leading national assemblies brings about another "Good." Since the early 1970s, there has been a consistent, high quality program to form theologically well trained pastors, deaconesses and lay workers. Even prior to the creation of the Institute For Hispanic Studies under Dr. Herbert Simms on the campus of the then Concordia College in River Forest in the early 1970s, there were attempts in Monterey, Mexico , and Concordia College in Austin, Texas, to prepare men for ministry. Since 1987, the Hispanic Institute of Theology (now the Center for Hispanic Studies) has prepared dozens of men and women for ministry.

We can be thankful that a uniquely Hispanic approach to theological questions often previously voiced only through Roman Catholic and general Protestant voices

has been and are being voiced through and by Lutheran Hispanics and Anglo workers in Hispanic contexts so that the church at large at least has the opportunity for growth and instruction if it wants to listen and be taught. Generally, written studies do not single out friends or acquaintances for accolades or criticism. I would be remiss, however, in reflecting on our Lutheran Hispanic ministries if I did not mention the contributions of Hispanic Lutheran giants of our own Synod who have especially contributed to Hispanic theological thought and ministry. I think first of those now deceased: Andrés Meléndez stands out as pastor, radio preacher, missionary, and scholar, who translated countless hymns, prayers, tracts, and treatises, culminating in his editorship of the Book of Concord in Spanish. Bruno Martinelli and David Stirdivant must be remembered as first among many faithful workers in California. Bernard and Fred Pankow, though natives of the Dakotas, established work in New York City and California. Pastor Llerena did yeoman's work in New York City. Work in Florida is marked by the names of Robert Gonzalez, Eugene Gruel, Herman Gleinke, and Loraine Florindez. Fred Boden, Carlos Puig, and Leo Vigil are only a few of many faithful Texas missionaries now with their Lord. Pastors Gerhard Kempff and William Rumsch worked tirelessly in the Pacific Northwest. Angel Perez helped stabilize ministry in Cleveland and the Midwest. There is a continuing new, vibrant Hispanic ministry with new names: Leo Sanchez, Aurelio Magariño, Hector and Beatriz Hoppe, Ligia and Adolfo Borges, Melissa Solomon, Julio Loza, Benito and Jesse Perez, and Roberto and Irma Rojas are only a few who come to memory at this moment. There are many more.

Another "Good" is that we must recognize the blessings of ample theological, educational, and worship materials. When we arrived in Venezuela in October 1966, we had Bibles printed by the United Bible Society, ready access to the new Lutheran hymnal, *Culto Cristiano*, published jointly by the LCMS, the American Lutheran Church, and the Lutheran Church of America, and the Small Catechism, published by CPH in Spanish. An illustrated book of children's Bible stories was a common resource for Sunday School. Today, thanks to the multicultural department of Concordia Publishing House and the Lutheran Laymen's League, there are ample biblical materials for spreading the Good News in Spanish (and sometimes a bilingual format) at almost any level.

The Bad

The reader might have noticed in the course of listing the "GOOD" side of this presentation that there is an almost "knockoff" phrase: "*If the Synod wants to . . .*" That statement is not a mistake, simply because, while I list outstanding individual contributors to the Lutheran Hispanic missionary movement, the reality is that the Missouri Synod—with the administrative responsibility and capacity to study, plan, administer, and support mission enterprises—has a most uneven history as it continues to fail as an institutional entity with any knowledge of or serious desire to prioritize ministry to Hispanics. This is often but not always reflected in its District extensions. In spite of the overwhelming demographic reality of the Hispanic presence and growing importance in all levels of our society, our administrative units

have often dealt with this challenge as one on an equal par with important, but by comparison, much smaller identifiable ethnic or ministry need groups. The lack of Hispanic ministry as a priority is manifest by a blatant lack of Hispanic staffing on all levels of Synod or district levels. The result of the lack of Hispanic presence on administrative levels has resulted in failure to understand its own systemic weaknesses, failure to demythologize itself in the midst of the broader American culture, failure to attempt to learn the history of Hispanic presence, failure to listen to Hispanic theological voices, and, perhaps, most importantly, failure to do anything about any of the above, especially since Hispanic Lutherans have been addressing all of these concerns for years.

Failure to Understand Systemic Weakness

Prior to addressing a specific failure to act over against Hispanic ministry, my observation over the years is that in general Missouri's mission efforts have floundered because of a constant turnover of administrations with conflicting theologies or methodologies of mission. Our Synod has never really figured out its identity. Are we pastors to the flock, educators with schools, doctors and nurses or evangelists? These functions of ministry have been played off against each other through programs. The *Ablaze* program, heralded with great pomp and expense only a decade ago, suddenly stopped with the next administration. Today the catch word is *mercy.* What will it be tomorrow? Hispanic pastors and deaconesses are left asking if their labors will be evaluated, affirmed, or terminated by new criteria as new administrations struggle to define their ministries. Hispanic pastors and workers, as well as their families, have been harmed and often embittered because of our capriciousness.

In general Missouri's mission efforts have floundered because of a constant turnover of administrations with conflicting theologies or methodologies of mission.

Failure to Demythologize our Cultural Comfort

Dr. Robert Newton's presentation to his own district on the LSFM's website about the delegation of the church's role in society to the margins of recognition of control and power, coupled with the theological necessity of the Church at any time to see itself in "exile," prompts me to invite the reader to explore the ever expanding bibliography of Hispanic–American theology treating that theme. The Anglo American church does not understand its use of power, that is, understand how readily it has accepted subtle and often unconscious myths of itself as intellectually and ethnically superior to the Hispanic objects of its well-intentioned mission efforts, and probably, most importantly, the presumption of its innocence, permanence of superiority and power over the Hispanic Christian movement. These presumptions militate against any recognition of God's people as a pilgrim people.

Our Synod has not accepted its own level of accepting American myths of cultural structures. Good Lutherans decry the cultural aberrations of our society so centered on immorality, rampant individualism, and secularism. Yet, while we deplore individual aberrations of servanthood, as an institution we seemingly have accepted corporate models of administration far from the "margins" of an exiled people. A recent *Reporter* heralded the naming of a new CEO. The phenomenon of the CEO is certainly good for industry. Is it good for the Church? A few years ago on the basis of the required posting by the *Reporter*, with only a hand calculator I could see that the first million dollars of offerings of Missouri's members each year go to six executives' salaries and benefits. The point here is not that good men and women do not work hard and are worthy of their hire. The point is rather that we do not seriously question the myth that this is the way the Church must function in our society. How can a church mission executive on full salary with health and retirement benefits encourage Hispanic worker priests? We are slaves to our myths.

Failure to Learn about the Hispanic Presence in the United States

These lines are being written during a September full of the tragedy of Charlottesville and the ongoing tensions between North Korea and the United States, all at the same time that we wait for daily updates on the Russian meddling investigation. The Charlottesville event highlights the deep cultural divide of racism and the scars of slavery of the African Americans that still haunt our national consciousness. The Korean crisis underscores our historic economic and political tensions with Asia, while Russia reminds us of ties to Europe. While we acknowledge a certain obsession with these three weighty challenges, the reality is that the daily life of most Americans, including members of LCMS congregations, is much more dependent upon our interaction with men, women, and children from the North-South axis, specifically with Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Central Americans. Mexicans and Central Americans harvest our food, clean our hotels, mow our lawns, clean our office buildings, and increasingly govern our cities, while we see them as nameless and faceless. Lee and Grant at the Appomattox Court House represent one clash of culture. The Versailles Treaty represents another end to a war. We will probably get a rather blank stare, however, when we ask about the circumstances that brought about and the results of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1847—a treaty equally important and probably as relevant to life today in these United States. Offers of educational workshops by the Hispanic Institute and the Center for Hispanic Studies over a decade showed little response on the part of Synod's leaders.

All of the above in this case is simply to underscore the dearth of knowledge of Hispanic culture and history, as well as the systemic lack of interest in knowing whom we say we want to evangelize. There are two additional factors that currently play into any equation of our Synod's successes or obstacles to successful ministry with Hispanics: (1) There seems to be an anti-immigrant tone within large sections of the American public and within the church to the degree that we mirror the general population. As I write these lines, the United States is embroiled in another debate

about Deferred Act for Childhood Arrival (DACA). Since these young people are in Missouri's congregations, our response to this debate will be a test of our resolve to be in ministry to Hispanics. (2) We have to be honest that our Synod's leadership has publicly identified the Synod with the tone of the new administration in Washington in our official publications and through public events featuring members of this administration, e.g., Dr. Ben Carson addressed the November 1916 LCEF Convocation. At least officially The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod does not project that it can be trusted as a welcoming community for Hispanics.

Failure to Act

Once again I chant the refrain "*If the Synod wants to listen . . .*" The work of the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Hispanic Missions mandated by the Synod in convention in 2006 presented nine recommendations to the next convention. Of the nine, I must single out the first, third, and ninth for consideration:

1: A Counselor for Strategic Development of Hispanic Ministries

3: Hear the Hispanic voices in forming the church's future

9: Ongoing study to build a strategic plan

With the exception of the CTCR document, *Immigrants among Us,* none of these recommendations have ever been implemented. We actually know less about Hispanic ministry in the United States than we did ten years ago. Hispanics consistently put at the top of their "wish list" the position of the Counselor for Strategic Development of Hispanic Ministries. Yet the Anglo ecclesial administration could somehow justify budgetary considerations as a reason for not filling the position. There is less coordination and communication among Hispanic workers than there was ten years ago. There is no systematic plan for defining or identifying Hispanic ministries or monitoring success or failure. There is no one person or office charged with coordination of planning for looking outward or strengthening the interior Hispanic community. Hispanics can only conclude that ministry to, by, and with them is not a priority.

The Possible: A Bright History, A Bright Future

We can rejoice that there is a bright history for a Lutheran proclamation of the Gospel through Hispanic ministry for many reasons. First of all, we must always go back to our central affirmation that Jesus the Savior is Lord of the Church. Ultimately, nothing can and will prevail against it. Secondly, He continues to prepare and send men and women into the world to proclaim Good News with or without a denominational support system.

When one looks backward at Hispanic ministry carried on by Hispanic men and women over these ninety years, one can conclude that ministry has taken place by men and women with sanctified dedication, in many cases in spite of the Missouri Synod. One might go so far as to say that—since in so many cases their ministries have been carried out on the margins with little, no, or erratic denominational

support—they have learned how to minister from the viewpoint of vulnerability. They have identified with the powerless on the margins because in many cases the church has put them there. Their wives or husbands often work full time to support the family while they labor in ministry. They work as carpenters, contractors, maintenance supervisors for 40 and 50 hours a week and then prepare their sermons and minister to their flocks. They know of exploitation, as they have labored on brainstorming tours to raise money for Hispanic missions or posed for pictures in official publications, knowing the Synod's or district's intent to use them to raise money, but then have been denied a voice in saying how it was used.

There is another reality often difficult for the dominant culture to understand or appreciate, namely, that it might be that Hispanic and other ethnic cultural groupings within the United States could help the Synod do more than survive. After long years of being on the margins, these groups can help the church at large learn how to "downsize," that is, how to be vulnerable instead of powerful and controlling. We look around our aging demographic and we wonder where all the people are and how we can sustain ministries. The reality probably is that we can't, nor should try to sustain the congregational understanding of church as power, influence, and control agent. Theological themes such as pulpit and altar fellowship, liturgical wars, steps toward church discipline—themes important to the "in group" that that have seemingly dominated and divided our Synod for the last fifty—are not on Hispanic "needs" mission radar. Hispanic Lutherans from Missouri's tradition know that in many cases they must rely on other Hispanic Christians. In many cases, they relate more to Roman Catholic, Evangelical, and even other Lutheran Hispanics over questions of education for their children, economic exploitation, health care, and immigration. The aging Anglo Missouri must "let go" and let Hispanics and other cultural groups help show it how to leave its perception of being able to "do it alone" and join Christians of other stripes in ministry as Lutherans.

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Hispanic Ministry in the Missouri Synod might be the "canary in the cage" to determine the life and death of the Synod. The Synod might make it if it can once again be vulnerable "in exile" and learn from Hispanics and other marginalized cultures how to live without power and serve as a people in exile—or continue to insist on control and power as it descends into the cave of death.

Johannine View of Persecution and Tribulation

Wang Lian

Editor's Note: *Lutheran Mission Matters* publishes twice a year on specific themes that have missional significance. Editors also allow other contributions on mission-related topics. Wang Lian's article actually is a Bible study on the Johannine view of persecution. This study is timely especially as today's Christians face opposition from the world as they live as Christ's witnesses in contexts that showcase competing ideologies and worldviews, often facing persecution and opposition. Wang Lian presents a case for Christians to hold their ground as the followers of Jesus did in the first century.

Abstract: In this article, I address persecution and tribulation from a Johannine perspective. The fourth Gospel emphasizes the importance of being prepared for suffering through its use of διώκω (*diokō*) and θλῖφις (*thlipsis*). John gives more attention to Jesus' passion than the Synoptics. The mention of persecution and tribulation is an important one in the Johannine epistles, as well as in Revelation. This article mentions five areas of Johannine theology observed from John's writings: persecution based on hate, persecution associated with the world, persecution and the Holy Spirit, persecution foretold by Jesus, and Jesus Christ's example in persecution and suffering.

Christians around the world have been persecuted for their faith since the Early Church. Therefore, it is not surprising that persecution of Christian believers is occurring today. One such believer is Alimujiang Yimiti, a Uyghur pastor in northwest China, arrested in 2008 for "unlawfully providing state secrets to overseas organizations." His family and lawyer were not allowed to attend his trial and were not told of his sentence until four months after the trial. He is a converted Muslim, which may have been the reason that the government gave him a fifteen-year prison term after he was convicted.[1]

Little has been written concerning the perspective of John on persecution and tribulation. However, John has a view of persecution and tribulation expressed in the fourth Gospel as well as his epistles and the Book of Revelation. This writer takes

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the traditional position that the "beloved disciple," the brother of James and son of Zebedee, was the author of the fourth Gospel, the Johannine epistles, and the Book of Revelation.[2] John quotes Jesus Christ in John 15:20 as promising that His followers would be persecuted (διώκω, *diokō*) and that they would have tribulation (θλῖψις, *thlipsis*) in John 16:33. John does not use the verb πάσχω (*paschō*) in his writings (used as the primary word for Jesus Christ's sufferings in the Synoptic Gospels, as well as elsewhere throughout the New Testament for suffering), but that does not mean he does not have in mind the associated idea of endurance which πάσχω implies when he refers to suffering for the faith.

The subject of persecution is significant in the fourth Gospel, despite the verb διώκω only being used twice (5:16; 15:20).[3] Whereas the fourth Gospel does not appear to have as striking an emphasis on Jesus' teaching about persecution as do the Synoptic Gospels, this may be attributed to the relative lack of emphasis on eschatology in John's Gospel (versus Matthew and Mark, for example, in the Olivet Discourse). Yet, the eschatology of the fourth Gospel reaches its climax in the Upper Room Discourse of John 13–16, and this is where Jesus' teachings on persecution are also primarily found. Furthermore, the Synoptics (while each having a slightly different focus) emphasize the earthly nature of Jesus Christ (the suffering servant, lending a sense in which His followers would also suffer for His sake) versus the clear emphasis on the deity of Jesus Christ in the fourth Gospel, for example, the use of the key phrase "I am" equating to ἐγω εἰμι (*ego eimi*), the Greek equivalent of יהוה [transliterated YHWH] of Exodus 3:14 (see also Jn 20:31). However, the *theologia crucis* is also an important theme for John.[4]

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Persecution of believers in Jesus Christ is also stressed in the Johannine epistles, notably in 1 John. The absence of the name of Jesus Christ in 3 John (mentioned obliquely only as "the name" in verse 7 and as "the truth" elsewhere in this epistle) could suggest that the author was aware of the persecution that could come to those who would receive and read this letter, as well as to those who might carry and deliver it. The Book of Revelation references more intense persecution and tribulation in the letters to the churches (chapters 2 and 3), and this tribulation reaches its climax in the Apocalypse. An interconnection exists between the intense hatred by the world, the persecution of believers, and the tribulation they will experience according to John's writings. This article will explore some of the themes in the Johannine corpus related to persecution and tribulation in order to show that John had a theology of persecution and tribulation in his texts.

Persecution Based on Hate

The Johannine Jesus emphasizes that persecution of His followers will be based on hate. The Greek verb μισέω (*miseō*) appears nine times in John's Gospel (five alone in John 15), five more times in 1 John, and three in Revelation. The frequent use of μισέω in the fourth Gospel to describe Jesus and His followers compares to seven uses of this verb in Luke and five in Matthew, with a relative view of a lack of preferential treatment and giving the idea of dishonor by comparison (or loving less, versus abhorring or despising) being seen in one use in Matthew and two in Luke, and a scattering of uses of this verb elsewhere in the New Testament (including only once in Mark, 13:13). John pictures the followers of Jesus as being hated based on their identification with Him. It is worth noting that both verbs in John 15:24 ("seen and hated") are in the perfective aspect, suggesting a permanent attitude.[5] Jesus is hated with the same hatred the world has for His Father (Jn 15:23–24). Köstenberger argues that the theme of hate advances the theme of close identification between Jesus, the Father, and His followers.[6]

This hatred is the categorical opposite of the love that Christ shows and which His followers are to show for one another (Jn 13:34–35; cf. Jn 17:23–24), the theme that opens the Upper Room Discourse and characterizes what John had become, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Clearly the hatred that these disciples would experience would be the opposite of the love that they had experienced with Jesus Christ. This love that had transformed them from requesting the form of retribution (fire from heaven) that John had felt was just (Lk 9:54) to seeking to be loving and merciful. Köstenberger also connects this hatred by the world with the disciples' election (Jn 15:19).[7]

Jesus uses this strong verb (μισέω) to express the idea that these disciples would not simply experience passive disinterest or disregard by the Jewish and Roman authorities, but active persecution. In Revelation, none of the uses of μισέω deals directly with the world's hatred of believers, although the persecution and killing of believers reaches a climax in this book. The persecution by the world of Christ's followers reaches its climax in Revelation 6:10 and 12:11 with a graphic picture of the martyrs falling before the throne of God and pleading for the judgment of God upon those who have killed the saints. This kind of hatred and the persecution based on it would be most intense among those who claimed to be the most devout, as well as those who have the most invested in the current world system.[8]

Surprisingly, in 1 John 3:13–15, John says that it is church insiders who will hate the disciples. By the time this epistle was written, those who had sought to persecute Christians were either men who had moved clandestinely into the assembly of believers or else were heretics who had left the church. Perhaps these were the false teachers to whom John refers in 2 John 7 and those who were making unjust

accusations from within the church in 3 John 10. However, John still makes it clear that the source of the persecution is the "world."

Persecution Associated with the World

John repeatedly states that the persecution will come from the world (Jn 15:18–19, 17:14). Johannine cosmology is dualistic in nature, encompassing light and darkness (Jn 1:9–11).[9] The world (κόσμος, *kosmos*) encompasses all the world forces that oppose Christ (both in terms of moral values and the antichrists who will arise), as well as the devil's influence.[10] Thus, the world hates Christ because He exposed its evil (Jn 7:7; 15:22).[11] The values that characterize the world are the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life (1 Jn 2:15–16). John says this same world system loves its own and hates those who are not its own (Jn 15:18–19). This hatred is a Messianic fulfillment of Psalm 69:4 in John 15:25, being without a defensible cause. Jesus also makes it clear that the disciples will be hated by the world because they will not be of the world, even as Jesus was not of the world (Jn 17:14; see also Jn 15:20). This hatred from the world was present at the time of the writing of 1 John (1 Jn 3:13). However, Jesus does not pray for the disciples to be physically separated from the world, only from its values (Jn 17:15).[12]

Jesus does not pray for the disciples to be physically separated from the world, only from its values.

This same world system persecutes the believers in Revelation. The letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2–3 mention several occurrences of persecution. The churches of Smyrna, Pergamum, and Philadelphia are all described as encountering persecution. Persecution becomes full blown in the death of the saints described in Revelation 6:9–11, 7:14, and 12:11. Meanwhile, the forces of the world are described by John as amassing themselves to fight against Jesus Christ and His armies (Rev 19:11–19; 20:7–9). One purpose of Revelation is to prepare believers for this persecution (contra Oropeza, who believes that the purpose of the book is to combat assimilation and apostasy).[13] One particular aspect of the world system worth noting is John's mention of antichrists. These are part of the false religious systems incorporated into the world's value system that seeks to replace true Christianity with a false religious system. Antichrists had already started to appear by the time of the writing of the Johannine epistles or were those who had apostatized from the true church (1 Jn 2:18–22; 2 Jn 7). They find their culmination in the arrival of the great antichrist in the beast of Revelation.

A key theme of the Book of Revelation is that of worship. The worship of the true God crescendos from chapter 1 through chapter 5, is contrasted with worship directed to the beast in chapters 6 through 18, and culminates in worship of the true

God in Revelation 19 through 22. In an attempt to hijack sincere worship of the true and living God, a false religious system of worship coalesces under the antichrist "beast" of Revelation 13, resulting in the persecution and martyrdom of true believers in Christ (Rev 13:7–8; 18:24). However, it is also clear from the Johannine eschatological perspective that multiple antichrists will surface. Thus, according to John, part of Satan's strategy—using the world's values that include acceptance of false religious systems—is to infiltrate the church with those who are not true teachers of Christianity and then initiate persecution from within.[14] The persecution John envisions will begin in the synagogue among Jewish unbelievers and expand from there to non-Jewish unbelievers, resulting in the killing of true believers in Jesus Christ as a form of service to God (Jn 16:1–4). Thus, the persecution that John describes in Revelation is both present and ongoing, as well as in the future as part of the tribulation.[15]

The worldly power that arises as a result of this false form of worship contrasts with the true power that comes from the Holy Spirit, who is God's provision for Jesus' disciples who would soon undergo persecution.

Persecution and the Holy Spirit

Jesus stresses in the Upper Room Discourse that the disciples should not focus on the persecution to come because of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit.[16] The Johannine pneumatology of John 16 is the most advanced of the Gospels and is the main source of New Testament instruction regarding the third member of the Godhead alongside Romans 8.[17] The juxtaposition of the promise of the Holy Spirit in John 15:26 to the description of the world's hatred in John 15:22–25 makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is to have an important role in preparing the disciples for persecution and tribulation. Burge observes that this pneumatology is couched in the warnings about persecution and tribulation present in John 15:18 and following.[18] Lindars also observes that the Holy Spirit's assistance to the disciples is couched in the context of persecution in John 15.[19]

The function of the Paraclete (παράκλητος, *parakletos*), according to John 16, is to convict the world (vv. 8–11), guide the disciples into truth (verse 13), teach them what to say in the day of persecution (v. 13; cf. 15:26–27), and glorify Jesus Christ (v. 14).[20] The purpose of these activities is to give comfort to Jesus Christ's disciples, who are also expected to experience grief (v. 22) and tribulation (v. 33). This takes place within the Johannine inaugurated eschatology concerning the παρόυσια (*parousia*) in John 14:1–6 and 16:16–22, culminating in His visible return in Revelation 19:11ff.[21] Michaels also notes that another function of the Paraclete is to give testimony of Jesus Christ by the means of the disciples to the hostile world.[22] The conviction of sin that the Holy Spirit provides (Jn 16:8–11) is the same

conviction of sin that Jesus Christ provided, and for which the world hates Him (Jn 15:22).

The Holy Spirit enables believers in Jesus Christ to overcome (νικάω, *nikaō*) the world. Burge is correct in saying that persecution stimulated an interest in the Holy Spirit, who would sustain and strengthen them in the midst of the persecution.[23] This verb νικάω is prominently used in Johannine literature, accounting for twenty-four out of twenty-eight usages in the New Testament, the majority of which occur in 1 John and Revelation. The source of this overcoming is seen to be Jesus Christ's overcoming the world (Jn 16:33). In 1 John, John mentions both that these believers have overcome the evil one and the world and that this activity should be ongoing (2:13–14; 4:4; 5:4–5). In Revelation, there are multiple exhortations to the churches to overcome the tests they face (Ephesus, 2:7; Smyrna, 2:11; Pergamum, 2:17; Thyatira, 2:26; Sardis, 3:5; Philadelphia, 3:12; and Laodicea, 3:21). The saints are said to overcome through the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and their willingness to die for the sake of Jesus Christ (12:11). The indwelling Holy Spirit produces the perseverance of the saints (13:10, 14:12; see also Romans 5:3).[24] Köstenberger and Swain relate these passages to spiritual warfare in mission, overcoming darkness by the proclamation of the spiritual light found in Christ.[25]

The tribulation foretold by Jesus in John 16:33 becomes the focus of the Holy Spirit's activity, the place where Johannine pneumatology of the Paraclete has its most prominent work. It is the situation in which the Holy Spirit enables true believers to overcome the world and the evil one in the ultimate, definitive victory of Jesus Christ's triumphal return. It is the promised work of the Paraclete that enables Christians to persevere in the tribulation that Jesus Christ Himself foretold, realizing that this perseverance does not depend on the strength of the believer but on God's work through the believer's suffering.[26] Estrada notes that the Holy Spirit is taking the place of Jesus in consoling the disciples and that the Spirit is to provide the disciples with a testimony about Jesus when they encounter difficulty.[27]

It is the promised work of the Paraclete that enables Christians to persevere in the tribulation that Jesus Christ Himself foretold, realizing that this perseverance does not depend on the strength of the believer but on God's work through the believer's suffering.

Persecution Foretold by Jesus

The other prominent aspect of John's theology of persecution is that it was foretold by Jesus Himself. Jesus warned His disciples in the Upper Room Discourse

that they would suffer persecution for His sake (Jn 16:2, 33). What Jesus makes clear by these predictions, then, is that persecution is ordained by God Himself, a point He reiterates at His trial with Pilate (Jn 19:11). These prophecies play a prominent part in Johannine eschatology. Köstenberger states that one purpose of Jesus' parting instructions was to keep the disciples from being surprised by opposition, and this purpose is consistent with John's warning in 1 John 3:13.[28] Keener notes that the inaugurated eschatology in the fourth Gospel reflects the immediacy of tribulation in John's eschatology and is consistent with the same imminent return of Christ in Revelation.[29] While the initial persecution by the Jews focused on being thrown out of the synagogue, a much more violent form of persecution is envisioned by John, as portended for the disciples of Jesus in the Jews' treatment of Jesus (Jn 5:16–18).[30] Jesus' prayer in John 17 is for the protection of these believers in the face of the world's hatred (Jn 17:14–15).

Jesus also warns the churches in the letters in Revelation 2–3 to expect persecution, and He acknowledges that at the time of the writing of this book the persecution had already begun (1:9; 2:9–10). Nevertheless, chapters 4 through 18 describe a great tribulation that will come upon the whole earth and the resultant persecution that will be unleashed against true believers in Jesus Christ. Despite the many symbols and pictures in this drama, it is clear that those who are believers will be martyred for their faith (7:14; 12:11; 20:4).

Whereas John does not clearly state God's purposes for allowing persecution, it is likely part of the pruning process mentioned in John 15:2, since Christ's discussion of the vine and the branches segues to His teaching on persecution.[31] One of the purposes of persecution, then, in Johannine thought is likely to prepare the saints to be more dependent on the vine (and so bear much fruit). Michaels says, "Jesus' disciples will suffer persecution simply because they belong to him and represent him."[32] Thus, while persecution is ordained by God based on Christ's predictions of it, it is also ordained by God to make His children more dependent upon Him.

In John 17, Jesus prayed that His disciples would not be taken out of the world (and the persecution that they would face) (17:14–15), but that they would be unified as a result of the persecution they would face (17:11, 21). This also helps explain the descriptions and prayers of the martyrs in Revelation 6:10, 7:14–16, 15:3–4, and 19:1–2. It is reasonable to assume, then, that Jesus' teachings about prayer (Jn 16:23–24) are instructions to His disciples about their response in persecution.[33]

In John 17, Jesus prayed that His disciples would not be taken out of the world (and the persecution that they would face) . . . , but that they would be unified as a result of the persecution they would face.

Again, John connects the disciples' response to persecution with anticipation of the παρόυσια of Jesus Christ. The anguish they will experience in suffering will be replaced by the joy of seeing Christ again at His return (Jn 16:21). The knowledge that God sees and will set things right at His judgment gives His disciples hope to persevere in tribulation (Rev 6:10).

The purpose of Jesus warning His disciples about the persecution, then, was that they would put their trust in Him and become dependent on Him, both before and during the coming tribulation, and also so that they would joyfully anticipate His return. Knowing that tribulation was part of God's plan for their lives would enable them to persevere in their faith. John proceeds to illustrate this principle in the death of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ's Example in Persecution and Suffering

Aside from Jesus Christ's statement that He was hated by the Jewish leaders (and so His followers also would be), the suffering of Christ is illustrated by John in the passion narrative of John 18–19. In His arrest, trials, and crucifixion, Jesus modeled for His disciples how He expected them to respond to persecution.[34] In doing so, He showed them they should be willing to remain silent in the face of false accusations and to focus on the truth.

Jesus, in His appearances before Pilate, refused to answer any of the false charges that had been trumped up against Him. Instead, He held His silence (19:9) and was willing to undergo scourging, as well as submit to a crown of thorns and beatings, despite Pilate's threefold affirmation that he found no guilt in Jesus (18:38; 19:4; 19:6). There is no mention in any of the Gospels that Jesus resisted these punishments or spoke out against those who inflicted them. The expectation was that His disciples should also willingly undergo suffering for the sake of the Gospel when confronted with false charges.

In addition, Jesus' only defense recorded by John was to affirm that His kingdom was not of this world, but that He came to bear witness to the truth. His willingness to confront Pilate on this subject brought the cynical response from Pilate, who represented the world's power system: "What is truth?" (Jn 18:38). Pilate did not wait for an answer, but Jesus had already confirmed that He was the way, the *truth*, and the life (Jn 14:6). John's perspective, then, of the world, is that it has no concern for truth, but only for the relative personal prosperity and comfort that the world affords. The confrontation between Jesus (whose kingdom far exceeded that of Rome) and Pilate (the most powerful

John's perspective, then, of the world, is that it has no concern for truth, but only for the relative personal prosperity and comfort that the world affords.

man in Jerusalem at the time) showed that those with earthly power would be willing to compromise their morals for their own benefit and persecute those who stood for truth. John's theology of persecution focuses on how the world turns a blind eye to truth—even to the point of persecution—in order to obtain or retain its own system.[35] In the Johannine epistles, willingness to place God's truth above the world's teaching and to suffer for righteousness' sake are keys to overcoming the world (1 Jn 4:2–6; 5:4–6). John is also willing to confront those in the church who are accusing true believers unjustly (3 Jn 10), but this is based on a willingness to put truth first in spite of any consequences.

John portrays Pilate as notably presenting Jesus to those in the Praetorium with his well-known proclamation, "Behold the Man!" (19:5). In so doing, he unwittingly acknowledged who Jesus was, even while seeking to play upon the sympathy of the crowds. In the end, Pilate opts to have Jesus crucified, and Jesus willingly submits to crucifixion based on His recognition of different spheres of authority (19:10–11). Even in His resurrected state, Jesus retained the marks of His earthly suffering (Jn 20:27).

Yet, the Johannine theology of Jesus' suffering does not end at the cross: Jesus appears triumphantly to His disciples after His resurrection (John 21). He reappears to John in His resurrected glory (Rev 1:12–18). Thus, John recognizes that suffering and persecution for the believer will be transient and will cease entirely at the return of Jesus Christ when He establishes His earthly kingdom in the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:4–5). Jesus becomes the example, according to John, of someone who has gone through immense persecution and suffering and has come out gloriously victorious. This is something Christ's disciples can anticipate as well.

Lessons Learned and Application

The Johannine theology of persecution and tribulation, then, encompasses five major, interwoven themes. It emphasizes that the source of suffering for true believers is the hatred by the world's system. Such affliction is overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit, resulting in both pruning and perseverance. Affliction and suffering are ordained of God and therefore should be considered normal in the Christian life. Jesus Christ Himself showed us the example by enduring suffering and overcoming it through standing for truth and anticipating a future day when God will make all things right.

And how about us? We can anticipate persecution and tribulation as we reach out in ministry to the lost. The *missio Dei* requires our submission, and submission to God is frequently met with antagonism or hostility from unbelievers in the world. John's teachings concerning persecution serve as a corrective to the modern-day popularity of a "prosperity Gospel," which teaches that one should not have to go through suffering (contrary to the theology of the cross). Conforming to God's

mission means we should be willing to emerge from our comfort zone in order to serve others. Are we willing to share Christ's love even with our persecutors, counting on the comfort and strength promised by the Holy Spirit? Let us follow Christ's example in responding to those who persecute us.

Christians should view persecution and tribulation as an opportunity to remain faithful in their witness to God. Such was the case with the twenty-one Coptic Christians who were martyred in Tripoli, Libya, in February 2015. They were given the chance to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ, but when each man refused to do so, they were beheaded.[36] Their martyrdom again shows the hatred of the world toward Christians and the power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen believers in the midst of persecution.

John's eschatological portrayal of Christ's triumphal return creates the motivation to endure persecution, a matter not otherwise developed in the Synoptic Gospels. His view of the kingdoms of heaven and earth (echoing Matthew) sets the stage for the earthly conflict between the world and Christ's disciples. Recognizing the normalcy of persecution and suffering, as well as the anticipated return of Christ, should give the true believer the perseverance empowered by the Holy Spirit to endure the persecution that comes his way. Echoing the exiled apostle John in Revelation 22:20, we can say, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

Endnotes

[1] Bob Fu, "Alimujiang Yimiti," accessed August 3, 2017, http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/04/alimujiang-yimiti.html.
[2] Köstenberger points to the recent revival in belief in traditional authorship of John's Gospel and its historical reliability, as well as noting the support for this. Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 51–99.
[3] Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible Societies, 1993). All word counts were performed using Logos Bible Software, version 7.8.
[4] Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 525–538. Thompson points out that Christian tribulation cannot be understood without understanding John's emphasis on imitating the crucified King (Leonard Thompson, "A Sociological Analysis of Tribulation in the Apocalypse of John," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 147–174). Lindars also points out that the subject of persecution is woven into the rejection of Jesus throughout the fourth Gospel (Barnabas Lindars, "The Persecution of Christians in John 15:18–16:4a," *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 48–51).
[5] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 681–682.
[6] Andreas Köstenberger, *John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 463–467.
[7] Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 242. Köstenberger points out that the term μαθητής was to be understood not as simply applying to the Twelve but to their followers as well. He unites this with the Johannine mission theme to explain why Jesus loved His disciples, and they were to be united in love (522–523).

[8] The interplay between the world and the disciples is part of Köstenberger's cosmic trial motif, in which the question of truth is put on trial before Caiaphas (Jew) and Pilate (Gentile), with both rejecting/dismissing Jesus' claims and representing the world's rejection of Jesus (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 244, 436–456).
[9] Köstenberger comments on the use of dualism in John's Gospel (including that of light and darkness) and notes that "John's is not an absolute dualism in which immovable boundaries are set between those who are in the light and those who live in darkness." (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 280). See also Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 109–129, where Bauckham sees "the world" as part of John's cosmological dualism, a "dualism of opposition."
[10] Robert W. Yarborough, *1–3 John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 199–201.
[11] Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1021.
[12] Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1060–1061.
[13] B. J. Oropeza, *Churches Under Siege of Persecution and Assimilation: The General Epistles and Revelation* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012), 175–233.
[14] This view is consistent with Oropeza's contention that John viewed apostasy as the primary threat in his writing. However, apostasy alone does not explain John's purposes for writing, based on 1 John 2:15–16.
[15] Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 129–130.
[16] The Paraclete was sent to replace Jesus as the encourager of His disciples and to provide a strengthening presence in the absence of the physical presence of Jesus (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 396–397).
[17] This pneumatology also has a prominent role in 1 John as well. It is intertwined with John's Trinitarian mission theology, according to Köstenberger (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 395–402, 539–546).
[18] Gary M. Burge, "Persecution, Revelation, and Charismatic Crisis in the Johannine Community," *Evangelical Theological Society Papers, ETS-1023*, 1982.
[19] Lindars, "The Persecution of Christians in John 15:18–16:4a," 62–66.
[20] Köstenberger also mentions that the Holy Spirit will call to the disciples' remembrance what Jesus taught (14:26) and will testify regarding Jesus (15:26) (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 397).
[21] This is part of Jesus' claim to pre-existence and His promise to return (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 297–298).
[22] J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John: New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 825.
[23] Burge, "Persecution, Revelation, and Charismatic Crisis in the Johannine Community."
[24] Hamilton proposes that an additional purpose of God's enabling the saints to overcome is to show His salvation through judgment to the glory of God, which Hamilton proposes is the unifying theme of the Bible. See James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 56–59.
[25] Andreas Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 158–159.
[26] Again Köstenberger's description of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete to replace Jesus is worth noting.
[27] Rodolfo G. Estrada III, "The Spirit as an Inner Witness in John 15.26," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22 (2013): 77–94.

[28] Köstenberger, *John*, 468–469.
[29] Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1016.
[30] Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1020.
[31] Köstenberger points out the symbolism of Jesus as the true vine (the representative of Israel in such passages as Ps 80:8–16; Is 5:1–7; 27:2–6; Jer 2:21; Ez 15; 19:10–14; and Hos 10:1), and of His disciples as the branches (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 502–504).
[32] Michaels, *The Gospel of John,* 821.
[33] This is true despite their (initial) misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 141–145).
[34] Larsson advances the argument that Jesus is glorified because of dying on the cross (versus being glorified in spite of the cross). See Tord Larsson, "Glory or Persecution: The God of the Gospel of John in the History of Interpretation," in Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser, eds., *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 82–88. This idea is advanced again by Bauckham in a pivotal statement: "What John has done is not to dissolve the passion in glory, but to redefine God's glory by seeing the suffering and the humiliation of the cross as the high point of its revelation" (Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 199).
[35] The rejection of truth is an important aspect of Köstenberger's cosmic trial motif in John's Gospel and is also prominent in the Johannine epistles (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 441–456).
[36] Stoyan Zaimov, "21 Coptic Christians Beheaded by ISIS Honored for Refusing to Deny Christ," accessed August 3, 2017, http://www.christianpost.com/news/21-coptic-christians-beheaded-by-isis-honored-refusing-deny-christ-175128/.

Reviews

THE KINGDOM OF SPEECH. By Tom Wolfe. New York, Boston, London: Little, Brown, and Co., 2016. 175 pages. Hardcover. $26.

Tom Wolfe—he of *The Electric, Kool-Aid, Acid Test; The Bonfire of the Vanities;* and *A Man in Full*—an author in love with words, has taken a step into the hazardous field of language origins. This brief tome provides an interesting mix of entertainment and scholarship. The scope of Wolfe's survey of language origin speculations runs the gamut from nineteenth-century evolutionary theories to Noam Chomsky's faculty/organ of language with one goal in view: to convince that language did not evolve from animal methods of communications, as sophisticated as some of these may be. Rather, language (speech) is an "artifact," an invention, if you will—a unique ability and a tool of human beings.

Along the way, Wolfe provides plenty of detail related to egos, jealousies, and machinations to protect scholarly turf. He has read widely in primary sources, some now readily available online: Darwin's works, letters, and diaries, as well as works of T. H. Huxley, Alfred Wallace, Max Müller, B. F. Skinner, and Noam Chomsky. While Wolfe's focus remains on speech and language, the reader learns much about the embedded assumptions and wild guesses involved in evolutionary thinking. Specifically, he debunks cosmogony, the "theory of everything," the idea that every component, every propensity of every living creature had to evolve from an earlier form. Speech, he assures the reader, has no roots in and did not evolve from even the most sophisticated forms of animal communication. It is utterly unique to man. It enables the ego, "the creation of an internal self" (165); the power of accurate memory, including the ability to preserve memory internally, in print, in diagrams, etc. (164); and "the power to conquer the whole planet for our species" (165).

That Wolfe accepts evolution in general is clear from his conclusion regarding language: "Speech ended not only the evolution of man, by making it no longer necessary for survival, but also the evolution of animals" (164). The animal kingdom "exists only at our sufferance" (164). "In short, speech, and only speech, has enabled us, we human beasts, to conquer every square inch of land in the world, subjugate every creature big enough to lay eyes on, and eat up half the population of the sea" (165).

Clearly, Wolfe is no creationist and, presumably, not a Christian. As he puts it, "Only speech gives man the power to dream up religions and gods to animate them" (165). He recognizes the appeal of the words of Jesus and of Marx (another religious figure). But there are other personages whose words exercise great control over millions, such as Mohammad, whose "words have enthralled and ruled the daily

lives of 35 percent of the people on earth since the eighth century" (167). Furthermore, "Soon speech will be recognized as the Fourth Kingdom on Earth," along with the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms: "*regnum loquax*, the kingdom of speech, inhabited solely by *Homo loquax*" (168).

By now, the reader might be wondering, as does the reviewer, what Wolfe might think of the *Logos,* of the Word that has existed since before time, the Word that *spoke* into existence the universe and the life that populates it. Has he simply come so close but then "missed the mark"? Is he aware of the God who refers to Himself as the Word? Surely, someone as widely read as Tom Wolfe has encountered the Word who was in the beginning, who was with God, and who was God. "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (Jn 1:3, NASB).

So near and yet so far? Just a near miss? Or has Wolfe read of the God who spoke the world into being and rejected Him? Has he read Genesis 2:19–20, in which Adam, created in the image of God, is given the charge and, obviously, the ability to name—with words, with speech—all the living creatures? Is not this the unique God-given human ability ("kingdom") of speech of which Wolfe writes?

Here is how close Wolfe comes. Reflecting at night on pictures of chimpanzees and gorillas in a textbook on evolution and, at the same time, on the scene outside of the window of his Manhattan abode, multi-story modern buildings and all their related conveniences, he concludes the book with these words: "It occurred to me that the two bedtime scenes, Apeland's on the one hand and Manhattan's on the other, were a perfect graph of what speech hath wrought. *Speech!* To say that animals evolved into man is like saying that Carrara marble evolved into Michelangelo's *David*. Speech is what man pays homage to in every moment he can imagine" (169). Fallible human speech? Not the Word? The *Logos*? So near, and yet so far.

David O. Berger

THE MISSION BIBLE COMMENTARY: The Gospel According to Luke & The Acts of the Apostles. By Rev. Dr. Paul C. Bruns. Mission Nation Publishing, Inc., Book Series, 2016. 604 pages. $29.99

One of the frustrations frequently encountered by missionaries, Bible translators, and mission educators is finding commentaries and other Bible study and catechetical materials that reflect the divine passion for carrying out the universal mission of God's people. This passion led to the writing of the New Testament and the Christological interpretation of the books of the Old Testament. The authors used by the Spirit in the writing of the Bible were themselves missionaries, and the

documents they helped produce were and still are missionary documents. Historians of the early Christianity have documented how the biblical documents contributed in no small measure to the rapid expansion of Christianity in the Roman Empire and beyond. These documents embody a Christ-centered and culturally sensitive theology of mission with many relevant real-life examples of how that theology can be put into practice. To the dismay of many mission educators, the great majority of biblical commentaries available to pastors, evangelists, and deaconesses in the so-called majority world have been produced to address the priorities of the academy and not those of the Church's ongoing commitment to the Great Commission.

In order to remedy the lack of mission-orientated commentaries written for majority-world Gospel communicators, a team of biblically conservative Lutheran mission educators with experience in Central and West Africa has founded the Mission Nation Publishing Inc. Their aim is to make available, both in hard copy and electronically, Bible commentaries written from a Great Commission Gospel perspective. The project involves the production of a commentary on each book of the Bible. The first two commentaries of this ambitious project are now available. Written by veteran Lutheran missionary Paul C. Bruns, they cover the Gospel of St. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. For many years, Dr. Bruns has been involved in the preparation of evangelists, pastors, catechists, and Gospel teachers in Africa. His volumes abound in examples that highlight the meeting of the Gospel with those who still sit in darkness.

Knowing that for many of the users of his commentaries English is a second language, the author states in his introduction: "I have also made a very serious attempt at consistently controlling the level of language that I used, so that everyone will be able to understand. I used short sentences. I always made all of the participants in a sentence (subject, object and indirect object) as clear as possible. And I also avoided using the passive voice as much as possible."

Dr. Bruns is convinced by his study of the Scripture that there is a missionary principle imbedded in almost all of the events, citations, and teaching in the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Throughout the commentaries, these principles are broken down into two categories: (1) Mission Messages and (2) Mission Imperatives. For example, Bruns finds a missionary message and also a missionary imperative in Luke 6:22 "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you." The missionary message the Bruns finds in this text is that "the Lord Jesus will surely bless a Christian in the midst of suffering for his sake, and he will also bless him with eternal life, if he remains faithful to him" (268). The missionary imperative that Bruns finds in the same text is that "Christians should rejoice in the midst of suffering for Jesus' sake because unbelievers may see their joy, which may create opportunities to witness to Jesus" (268).

Using his message/imperative methodology, Bruns spells out the missionary message and the missionary imperative contained in every text, both in Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. The authors of the Mission Bible Commentary are convinced that every verse in the entire Bible points in some way to Jesus and His mission to seek and save the lost. Evangelists and Bible teachers are called to point out to their hearers the missional dimension of every biblical text. What the Holy Spirit seeks is that, through the prayer and the study of the Scriptures, a missionary heart is created in the disciple, a heart that burns with fervent love for the lost, even as God's missionary heart burned in love for us when He sent His Son into the world to be our Savior. The *Mission Bible Commentary* (MBC) promotes not only a high Christology, but also a high doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. In noting the missionary messages found in Luke and Acts, Bruns points out repeatedly that the Holy Spirit creates and preserves faith only by using the message of God's grace in His holy Word.

Again and again in his commentaries Bruns points out that missionaries are called not only to proclaim the Gospel but also God's Law. One of the mission imperatives stressed over and over in the commentary is that "Christians should, in love, warn lost people who do not repent, for God will justly condemn to eternal punishment all people who do not trust in Jesus as their Savior, but he will punish them by different degrees, according to how well they knew his will" (279). Many church workers in North America and Europe are loath to warn their listeners of eternal punishment, but not so with Bruns and his co-workers. The situation of many new believers, not only in the majority world, but also in our churches in the USA, is such that warnings against the dangers of cheap grace are always in order. In the long run, cheap grace can be extremely expensive.

All in all, the *Mission Bible Commentary* could be described as not only a very Lutheran presentation of the Gospel, but also a very Missourian reading of the Scriptures. In the opinion of this reviewer, the author takes for granted that his readers will understand his comments on the proper distinction of Law and Gospel and many other Lutheran hallmarks. Non-Lutheran readers might have difficulty navigating some of the terrain covered by the MBC. In spite of this, non-Lutheran missiologists could benefit greatly by adding the MBC to their resources. On the other hand, many people in the academy would probably write off the MBC as being too supersessionist, too proselytizing, too insensitive to LGBTQ concerns, and too hesitant to embrace the concerns of the theology of liberation.

Some readers of the *Mission Bible Commentary* might conclude that its author is seeking to distance himself from some elements in the missiology of Donald McGavran and Peter Wagner. One of the oft-repeated mission imperatives emphasized in the Bruns commentary is the following: "Christians should go and seek the lost one person at a time by focusing on each person's unique needs" (288).

This imperative would seem to be a reaction against a missiology that fosters people movements and the group conversion of entire tribes and clans. It might also appear to be at variance with the conversion of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost and the five thousand converted in Acts 3. In other words, MBC's insistence on individual conversions would seem to endorse what some would call a missiology of extraction. In this respect, we should remember the first modern Protestant missionaries to advocate the conversion of an entire tribe or a people were not Donald McGavran, Peter Wagner, or Pentecostals, but rather German Lutherans like Bruno Gutmann in Tanzania and Christian Keyser in New Guinea.

Another imperative of the MBC that appears to be a reaction to the Church Growth movement states: "Christians should faithfully do their job of preaching and leave the results to the Holy Spirit" (520). Church Growth theory stresses that the task of evangelism or mission does not end with the proclamation of the Gospel. The aim of mission is the incorporation of new disciples into the fellowship and ministry of a living congregation of believers. There are other places, however, in which we can observe a more positive incorporation of Church Growth concepts into the overall work of the MBC. For example, in discussing Jesus' missionary mandate in Acts 1:8, the author stresses that we are called to be active in sharing the Gospel message on three levels of mission work: (1) among those of our own culture (Jerusalem and Judea), (2) Samaria, and (3) to the ends of the earth. These are the same three levels labeled by Ralph Winter and Peter Wagner as E1, E2, and E3 evangelism.

In the opinion of this reviewer, there are many texts in Luke and Acts that remain to be mined in order to extract missionary messages and imperatives that have been passed over or only partially mined. One example of a text that can yield further missionary messages and imperatives is the one that relates the baptism and temptation of Jesus. In the account of the baptism of Jesus recorded in Luke 3:21–22, the voice from heaven proclaims: "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased." This is most certainly an allusion to Isaiah 42:1, the first of the four servant songs in the book of Isaiah. We know that the last of the four servant songs (Isaiah 53) describes the servant of God who was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. In His baptism, Jesus is ordained as God's suffering servant; He willingly accepts the mission that will lead Him to the cross. It is because Jesus accepts this mission, even though it will cost Him His life, that the Father proclaims Him to be "the servant whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights." It is to help Jesus in carrying out His mission that the Father puts His Spirit upon Jesus. In our baptism, we receive not only the forgiveness of sins but also the Spirit of Jesus to help us in carrying out our mission. Our baptism is also an ordination for mission.

If we understand the baptism of Jesus as an ordination for mission, we can better understand the account of the temptation of Jesus in Luke 4:1–14. The devil does not want Jesus to take up His cross and carry out His mission. All of the temptations recorded in Luke 4 are satanic attempts to entice Jesus to establish His kingdom without the cross. In essence, all of the temptations are anti-mission. The temptations we experience as disciples of Jesus must also be seen as satanic attempts to divert us from carrying out our mission as fishers of men. To deny our mission is to renounce our baptism.

The Bruns commentary, like all books on the biblical theology of missions, can be improved and expanded. However, having said this, we must thank the Lord for this work of love and dedication in the cause of God's mission to all peoples. The riches presented in the 604 pages of this commentary are more than sufficient to make its study and use of great benefit to God's missionary people on the six continents.

Theological educators interested in commentaries on Luke and Acts written from a missionary perspective might also wish to consult the following works:

Hermann Hendrickx, *The Third Gospel for the Third World* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996).

C. Peter Wagner, *The Book of Acts: A Commentary* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2008).

Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, eds., *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context*, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

Rudy Blank

Lutheran Mission Matters Call for Papers: May 2018 "Confessing in Mission"

For the May 2018 issue of *Lutheran Mission Matters*, the theme will be "Confessing in Mission." You are invited to write for this issue.

Clearly "Confessing in Mission" is not far from two words popular in these days, "confessional" and "missional." From your experience and your study related to these words, what would you offer to readers of *Lutheran Mission Matters*?

The preposition "in" was an intentional choice of the Editorial Committee, asking writers to wrestle with the relationship of the other two terms. How do we keep them together?

1) We don't. God does.
2) Is not mission the purpose of confessing?
3) Does not mission always confess something?

What might be the place of confessing in mission? What of the baptismal history of the Apostles' Creed or the courageous presentation of the Augsburg Confession as matters of mission? Could we learn Luther's Small Catechism as preparation for mission conversations?

How can mission be confession when a new people group has no "Christian" language? Is "evangelism" mission and "making disciples" confessing? What kind of liturgy-as-confessing is appropriate in mission? What do pastoral care and Christian Education look like when we understand them to be included in both confessing and mission?

Or, have these two terms become so partisan, so adversarial, or so overused and abused that we should trade them in for "newer models"? "*Proclamation* . . . has been used out of a sense of the debasement of the word 'gospel,' which is attached to any program its proponents feel is important."[1]

The May 2018 issue of *LMM* can explore what old scholars and new writers have to say about these terms and their correlation. The word "in" asks that submissions deal with both terms, but the "method of correlation" is the author's choice. What links do you see, hear, or feel as you encounter these terms, as these terms encounter you?

LMM articles are generally about 3,000 words in length although longer and shorter articles will be considered. *LMM* includes space for academic research and personal encounter in mission. For good reasons the desired deadline of February 1, 2018 is negotiable.

Attention to the theme in any particular issue does not prevent, space permitting, attention to other matters. Please let us know of your interest in this publishing effort. Send your comments and questions to the editor of the journal, Dr. Victor Raj (rajv@csl.edu).

Endnote

[1] C. S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1986).

A Note to Contributors

We welcome your participation in contributing to *Lutheran Mission Matters*. Please observe the following guidelines for submission of manuscripts.

Lutheran Mission Matters publishes studies of missiological issues under discussion in Christian circles across the world. Exegetical, biblical, theological, historical, and practical dimensions of the apostolic mission of the church are explored in these pages. (See the mission statement below.) While issues often focus on a theme, the editorial committee encourages and appreciates submissions of articles on any missiological topic.

Contributors can familiarize themselves with previous issues of *Missio Apostolica* and *Lutheran Mission Matters* at the Lutheran Society for Missiology's website (http://lsfm.global). Click on the Publications link to view PDFs of previous issues.

Book reviews: LSFM also welcomes book reviews. Submit reviews of no more than 500 words. E-mail Dr. Joel Okamoto (okamotoj@csl.edu) if interested in writing a review.

Mission Statement

Lutheran Mission Matters serves as an international Lutheran forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion of issues related to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ globally.

Formatting and Style

Please consult and use *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition for endnotes. See basic examples below and/or consult the "Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide" (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

[1] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 243–255.

[2] Hans Küng, *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today*, trans. Edwin Quinn (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 184–186.

[3] Robert J. Priest, Terry Dischinger, et al., "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," *Missiology, An International Review* 34 (2006): 431–450.

References to Luther's works must identify the original document and the year of its publication. Please use the following model.

[4] Martin Luther, Ninety-five Theses (1517) in *Luther's Works*, ed. Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 31:17–34.

Quotations of or allusions to specific texts in the Lutheran Confessional writings must be documented. The use of modern translations of the *Book of Concord* is encouraged. Please use the following model.

[5] Augsburg Confession V (Concerning the Office of Preaching) in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran* Church, ed. R. Kolb, T. J. Wengert, C. P. Arand (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 40.

Direct quotations exceeding four manuscript lines should be set off from the text in an indented paragraph, without quotation marks. Omissions in a quotation should be noted by ellipsis, with an additional period to end a sentence, as appropriate.

Spelling should follow the latest edition of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. Words in languages other than English should be italicized.

Preparation and Submission

Length: Concise, clear articles are preferred. Manuscripts should not be more than 3,000–4,000 words although longer pieces may be arranged by the editor.

Content: *Lutheran Mission Matters* is committed to addressing the academic community as well as pastors and people throughout the church and involving them in the theology and practice of mission. Use of terms or phrases in languages other than the language of the article itself is discouraged. The use of complex and long sentences is discouraged. Attention should be paid to paragraphing so that the article is easy to follow and appears inviting on the page.

Use of call-outs: *Lutheran Mission Matters* frequently uses call-outs to break up blocks of text on a page and to emphasize important points being made in the article. The author is invited to use Word's Text Highlight Color to suggest words or phrase that may be included in a call-out. The final decision will be made by the editor.

Format: Please submit articles in single spaced Times New Roman 10-point font with 0.25" paragraph indents.

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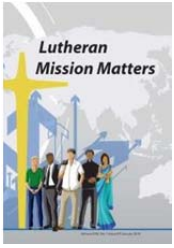

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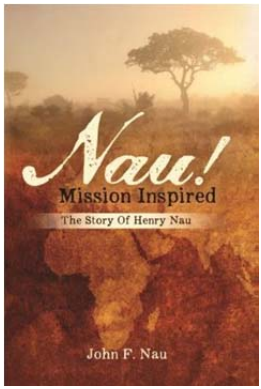

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