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Editor's Note

Half a century ago, Christian theologians spoke extensively on classical culture and Christianity. Especially during the latter one-third of the century, the focus of popular theological conversations shifted to *Kulturkampf* or "Culture Wars." Well-meaning social critics saw Christian values plummeting in the American scene. Widespread changes were taking place affecting the American family, education, art, and politics, contributing to a destabilization of core Christian values in the public arena.

Ever since Christians began traveling to non-western countries as missionaries of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, perhaps the most important question they faced in their careers has been that of communicating the Gospel in languages to which they had to become students first. Literacy has been one of the primary contributions they made especially to oral communities that had not hitherto inscribed their languages. Interestingly enough, missionaries taught these communities how to write and read *their* mother tongue.

Missio Apostolica maintains that the missiological issues Christians face today are of a global nature. Whether in the East or in the West, people congregate as communities sharing a common faith, goals, and values. These pages share how people learn, grow, and prosper as missional communities, creating a culture founded in Jesus Christ and the Gospel He proclaimed. V. R.

Inside this Issue

In recent years, missiology has been gaining respect as an academic discipline through the works especially of missionaries like Roland Allen, David Hesselgrave, Paul Hiebert, Ralph Winter, David Bosch, and Lammin Sanneh. Their voices represent the lifetime service and experiments of thousands of missionaries and their families who were privileged to make Jesus Christ known among the nations as the one Savior of all people (cf. Gal 1:15). Empowered by the Gospel, they were proclaiming the one true faith and serving people and communities as God's agents for transforming communities in which they lived and served. Maturation as missionaries required of them and their families to learn the languages, cultures, and religions of the people they were serving. They intentionally immersed themselves into new situations and built bi-cultural bridges for proclaiming the faith in indigenous ways.

These pages present but a few of the reflections on the missiological challenges Lutherans face in today's church and world as they confess the Christian faith and adapt it in forms that speak directly to our generation. The authors relate the experiments in a variety of ways by addressing issues in translation, relating the historic traditions to changing worldviews, and reading Scripture and confessing its meaning to people who are either estranged from the Church's culture or those who are newly entering the faith from cultures hostile to a biblical worldview.

The essays presented here do not promise final answers to any questions they address. Instead, they are cognizant of the changes that have been taking place in the church and around it in terms of people's thinking and behaving and affirm that the Gospel makes lasting imprints in people's lives and reforms communities. They engage the readers and keep them inquisitive all the way, especially as they address such theologically substantive issues as contextualization, Scripture interpretation, sacrament, worship, liturgy, building missional communities, prayer, occult practices, and exorcism.

Although the majority of presentations directly address contemporary Gospel witness in North America, one is presented in two different languages, and more than one is set in a non-western context. Wherever the Lord has placed her, the Church exists in today's world as ever to admonish and to pronounce 'liberation from guilt and peace of conscience through confession and absolution in Christ."

Not homogeneity but diversity of expression is the canvas on which these reflections are presented. They are committed to being faithful scripture, history, and traditions while being fruitful and productive in the service of the Gospel. They do not diminish their Lutheran identity, but plunge boldly into the concerns that postmodernism, post-colonialism and post-institutionalism together have surfaced for reaching out to and serving people in Christ's name. As ever, people today crave for an intimate relationship with their Savior. The systems and structures of the church must befriend people in order to make that relationship possible, and not to become a hindrance.

Together, we explore, learn, grow in faith, and share the riches in Christ.

V. R.

Editorial

From Narthex to Nave

Victor Raj

Little more needs to be said of the itinerant nature of the people of God as narrated in Scripture. The blessing, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” was given already to the first parents (Gn 1:28). People multiplied and began to relocate in numerous places in God’s created order, especially after the flood: owning property, forming nations, and speaking distinctive languages (Gn 10:31).

By nature, human beings live as families, building communities and settling in different locations. Traveling away from home and living for an extended time in diverse communities and cultures bring about substantial changes in the thinking, patterns of behavior, and lifestyles of people.

Beginning with Abraham, Israel’s patriarchal history has been more a travelogue. As a people, they were moving from place to place in varied communities. Their story as a nation had been rather unsettling. Israel’s history was shaped in the land God promised them—every place in Canaan that the soles of their feet had trod (Josh 1:3)—but only to a certain extent. Their formation as God’s chosen people also took place in countries that they did not own and cultures in which they were initially foreigners, sojourners, and aliens. Wherever God had scattered them, there was always a strong pull, nevertheless, for them to come home to the land that God first gave them to own as their property. There God let them build a temple that signified His presence with them. From there, God sent them to other nations and peoples for whom they would become a blessing in His name. Israel rose to a nation of prominence under the capable leadership of King David, the man after God’s own heart.

Although it was in the heart of David to build a house for the Lord, it was his son, King Solomon, who would be the first to build for the Lord a temple in Israel. Solomon’s temple by design consisted of the inner sanctuary, the nave, and multiple courtyards. For Israel, the temple was the place of a direct divine–human encounter. In the temple, the people of God would know His presence and God would hear their prayers and forgive their sins. Solomon knew that foreigners ἀλλογενὴς (alien), too, would come to this temple and call on God’s name as they recognize the redeeming acts of His mighty hand and outstretched arm (1 Kgs 8:27–30, 41–43). The architectural design of the second temple built in the sixth century BC included an outer courtyard for the Gentiles. The temple that stood in New Testament times was Herod the Great’s contribution to the Jewish religion of the time. As a political leader, Herod’s own interest in trade and commerce must have allowed the court of the Gentiles to develop into a major commercial center attracting both businesses and customers.

Herod himself was born into the dynasty of Idumean nobles who converted to Judaism, keeping strong allegiance with Jews while procuring the trust of Roman officials.[1] Much of what Herod did in Israel, including in the city of Jerusalem, had little to do with his allegiance to the religion of the Jews or its promotion. In other words, Herod's initiatives for the sake of the nation of Israel, including the guarding their religious interests, were politically motivated rather than to demonstrate a common faith with the Jews. Determined to validate his political clout and allegiance to the government he worked for, Herod renamed many of Israel's towns, and even the citadel of the temple, after his family members or close companions. In Jerusalem, he introduced pagan games for which he built a hippodrome and a large amphitheater in the plain. "Here chariot races and contests of various kinds took place, including condemned men fighting wild animals."[2] Such activities were atypical of Jewish culture and contradicted the tradition of the elders. Herod secularized the Jewish religion in its own homeland and infiltrated the Holy City and the temple with pagan culture.

Israel was privileged to have numerous symbols that embodied God's unique presence with them. In its ancient history, Mount Zion perhaps epitomized these signs (Is 2:1–5). On Zion, Israel would gather as one nation in praise and worship of the one true God. Zion became such an important word in Israel's vocabulary that it included the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the nation as a whole (Is 60:14; Jer 31:12; Zec 9:13). The people of God felt safe and secure around Zion. From Zion would go out invitations to all nations, summoning everyone to gather in one place for worship of the Lord and to learn His counsel.

In chapter 56, the prophet Isaiah was given a much larger vision of Gentile inclusion into God's household. God will gather yet others to Him besides those already gathered. God will bring to His holy mountain foreigners. Gentiles will love the Lord's name and come to His holy presence. Just like His chosen people Israel, foreigners will hold fast to His covenant and worship Him in prayers, praises, and thanksgiving. The Lord's house will become the house for prayer for all peoples, where social, racial, and communal inequalities hold no lasting value. Foreigners and outcasts will be given greater honor than those who by birth are sons and daughters (Is 56:6–8). Isaiah's vision breaks all boundaries and human traditions and allows all human beings access to the Divine Presence.

The Court of the Gentiles was also the marketplace where vendors sold sacrificial animals, food, and souvenirs and exchanged currency. The marketplace is actually where life happens for most people today throughout the world. Business and commerce, perhaps unbeknownst to us, dictate our daily living, leaving little room for religion to play its decisive role in decision making. If in the traditionally Christian West the Christian religion is already sidelined, inclusive and pluralistic spiritualities are growing rapidly and gaining prominence, especially in well-to-do households and communities. A surplus of competing ideologies and countless new religions surface abruptly, soliciting the minds and spirits of even the intelligent and the affluent, luring them away from Jesus Christ and the truth He publicly made known. Roughly two-thirds of the world's peoples lack political principles that distinguish between religion and state; and traditional congregational life is not the most essential component that contributes to spiritual maturity in non-Christian traditions. Life for them in the marketplace is as important spiritually as life in the temple. Religion and life grow together in the sanctuary and in places where people make a living. The one without the other is unthinkable.

Christendom today is faced with the ongoing challenge of connecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people whose lives are shaped more in the marketplace than in any parochially dominated Christian environment. To be sure, modern Western civilization during its formative years benefited amply from a biblical worldview, especially as the Christianity of the time did not have to deal with its competitors in the wider marketplace of religion. Researchers surmise that today, however, after Christians and Muslims, people with no religious affiliation make up the third-largest group, globally. A 2010 study showed that the religions of Islam and Hinduism are gaining constantly in their numerical strength. Modern Muslims and Hindus are in head-to-head competition in terms of being the most missionary, reaching out in word and deed to the traditional strongholds of other religions.[3] Islam does have its own missionary methods, promoting a worldview for peace and justice and for establishing equality among all people, focusing especially on the underprivileged and isolated people groups. Muslims engage in such mission verbally, maximizing the opportunities through social media. Hinduism has already established its place in the global academy and developed its apologetics as a viable religion for the twenty-first century. Friendly conversation, not coerced conversion, is the goal. A glance at a Hinduism Web site shows a wide array of catechetical material that introduces the fundamentals of that faith at any level, throughout the world.

Modern Christian missiologists perpetually point to the global South and to the Far East to show how millions of new believers are added to the household of faith regularly in an ever increasing manner, while Christianity is steadily losing ground in the West, its historic stronghold, and becoming estranged from the Western mainstream.[4] It is to be noted that, although prominent church buildings have been Christian landmarks even in non-Christian cultures, this generation's new believers in Jesus Christ (Jesus followers) are attracted not so much to the institutional church or its structures as to communities that gather in the name of Christ, in homes and in the marketplace. In homes, they find security and a close-knit community that counts them in as one among them, allowing them to express the faith indigenously in tune with their culture and tongue. In the marketplace, they try out the new faith in new patterns of behavior that make them distinct from the rest of their friends and neighbors. These attempts intentionally undercut the mistaken notion that Christianity is a Western religion and that Christian missionaries are agents of Western colonialism. On the other hand, they demonstrate that faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord transcends cultures and speaks directly to each person who is drawn to Him, regardless of the culture or context in which their kind live as people and communities.

Such occurrences perhaps are a contemporary application of what St. Paul posited in his Ephesian correspondence. In Ephesians 2:11–22, Paul speaks eloquently of the (shed) blood of Christ breaking down the wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles, alluding to "the barrier fence in the temple, which separated the court of the Gentiles from the more sacred parts of the temple to which only Jews might be admitted, threatening death for the transgressing Gentiles."[5] Paul spoke of the alienation from God that all people suffer on account of human disobedience, as well as of the reconciling remedy God Himself executed for all people in Jesus Christ. Nothing short of the blood of Christ can draw men, women, and children of all nations to the temple where the Name of God resides. Only through Christ do they move from the marketplace to the narthex and from the narthex to the nave of this temple.

God has a distinguished relationship with those whom He gathers around the cross of Christ. Through His redeeming work, God has claimed a particular people for Himself. Already in Exodus, they are spoken of as God's "treasured possession," "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:5, 6), appellations that the apostle Peter has attributed to Christians in the New Testament (1 Pt 2:9). Commenting on this text, Walter Kaiser observes that what English translates as "treasured possession" ("special treasure," NKJ) signifies in the original text "property that could be moved as opposed to real estate that could not be moved."[6] When owners move, they do not leave behind their special treasures like jewels, wherever they go. God's people are His jewels, the treasures He moves around as He pleases to different locations in His world. Prized possessions appreciate in value, and owners preserve and rescue them against forces that are hostile to them, even if at risk.

Moving frequently from place to place in a fast pace has been very characteristic of life in the modern world. Travelers often find themselves in environments and situations hitherto unfamiliar to them, in spite of the precautionary measures they may have taken before they set out on the journey. Like the people of Israel, the lives of most people today are shaped more in locations and contexts where they live and make their living than where they were born and brought up. Mobility is on the fast track as people all over the world move around repeatedly for business and education, for building relationships internationally and for the sharing of their social, cultural, and religious values. At the same time, geographical proximity is no longer an inevitable prerequisite for intelligent conversation and for building meaningful relationships between peoples and communities, thanks to technology that has shrunk the world of communication into a microcosm.

A church that serves people who serve the world needs to come to grips with the issues and challenges that its membership faces as they live as responsible Christians who engage the world God has created for them. No one doubts that today's world is a marketplace. Unexpected changes occur in the vagaries of life lived in the public square. It just is that those who are obsessed with life in the marketplace assume that the church has lost its relevance for them, even in their spiritual pursuits. Nevertheless, if properly befriended, and the churches' claim on their lives made publicly known, they will be drawn at least to the narthex, the church's threshold. Today's church must make itself available for those who do not yet belong and make its narthex a welcoming space especially for outsiders and strangers.

In the history of the Christian tradition, the narthex included the baptismal font that enabled its membership to remember their own baptism as they were entering the nave for worship. While coming out of the worship center, the font galvanized them for living in the world as God's baptized children, with boldness and confidence. The narthex was accessible also for non-members and penitents to hear the Word and participate in worship apart from entering the nave where the members worshiped. The move from the narthex to the nave is only natural for the penitent and the contrite at heart, as God desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Children of God, who are privileged to enter God's cathedral with boldness and confidence that they are reconciled with God, must move to the narthex and to the world, inviting others who are stuck in the marketplace to come to His holy presence, His sacred space. It is possible that the early disciples with the apostles were gathering continually at the temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1), as many meeting rooms were available in the temple precincts (Lk 24:53). Believers in Jesus began to scatter from the temple in Jerusalem to the world at large, through towns and villages to the ends of the earth, to fulfill the Lord's words, "Just as my father has sent me, I am sending you" (Jn 20:21).

In today's global village, the church's narthex literally is the marketplace. In non-Western cultures, people are drawn directly from their marketplace to the church in an unprecedented way, carrying with them their cultures, spiritualities, and lifestyles, sending nonstop shockwaves to those who are used to expressing faith in Jesus Christ in specifically traditional ways. Throughout the non-Western world, insider movements are growing exponentially, building their own communities of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Large numbers of people are coming to faith, and they remain in their communities as followers of Christ and make a difference in the lives of their families and friends by giving expression to the faith in word and deed. For many who look at these new developments from the outside, the ways in which God is drawing people to Himself appear to be both "exciting and messy."[7] Moreau presents both detailed inventories of mission initiatives that draw people to Christ globally, as well as the instruments that have been developed to gauge their maturation in Christ. It is not easy for anyone outside these communities to reconcile with the ways in which these new followers of Jesus express their faith, especially as we know that they are living as Christians in cultures shaped by non-Christian religions.

These people are arguably at various levels of commitments and convictions of the Christian faith, the church, and its historic traditions. After all, they are living in the marketplace. The people of God will move on, proclaiming His redeeming love for all people in Jesus Christ. God places His special treasures wherever He wills for that purpose.

Endnotes

[1] Robert A. Derrenbacker, Jr., "Herod," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 580.

[2] Paul L. Maier, *Josephus: The Essential Works. A Condensation of Jewish Antiquities and the Jewish War*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1988 [1994]), 246.

[3] Tom Heneghan, "'No religion' is the third-largest world group after Christians, Muslims," *Reuters*, December 18, 2012, http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2012/12/18/no-religion-is-the-third-largest-world-group-after-christians-muslims/.

[4] Devaka Premawardhana, "Christianity Becomes Unfamiliar" in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 39, no. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 2011), 1–8.

[5] C. K. Barrett, *Paul: An Introduction to His Thought* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 156.
[6] Walter C. Kaiser Jr. *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 22.
[7] A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 159.

Articles

The Role of Sacramental Theology Among Emerging Post-Evangelicals

Tony Cook

Abstract: This article explores the role of sacramental theology among emerging post-Evangelicals and the opportunities that exist for Lutheran dialogue. It covers the basic tenets of sacramental theology in an emerging post-Evangelical context and the potential barriers that currently exist among Lutherans that threatens to jeopardize this opportunity. Special attention is given to the extremes of Lutheran Pragmatism and Lutheran Fundamentalism and the negative impact that these extremes have on presenting an authentically Lutheran narrative to post-Evangelicals who are seeking to explore a deeper sacramental theology.

Introduction

The role of sacramental theology among emerging post-Evangelicals provides the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with a tremendous opportunity: an opportunity to share our sacramental heritage with a generation of searching Christians for whom Baptism and the Lord's Supper were previously little more than ordinances. Unlike their more modernist Evangelical brethren, this group of young Evangelicals desires a form of Christianity that is not as tightly tied to Enlightenment methodologies, propositional truth claims, and believer-centric expressions of faith. While religiously different in their articulation and embodiment of the faith, the emerging post-Evangelicals reflect theological sensibilities strangely familiar to us as Lutherans—transcendence, mystery, and divine encounter in Word, liturgy, and Eucharist. In many ways, their sensibilities strike me as more Lutheran than those who have fallen captive to either modernist methodologies or Lutherans who unwittingly mimic the very form of Evangelical methodologies repellent to these young Evangelicals in order to attract young Lutherans. It is true that many emerging post-Evangelicals lack a fuller historic expression of sacramental theology and challenge many of us with their postmodern sensibilities; however, they provide an opportunity to share our rich sacramental theology while simultaneously examining our own unseen modernizing tendencies.

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Defining Influences

Much of this analysis is based on the emerging post-Evangelical trends found in the United Kingdom, the United States, and as represented in the writings and research of Robert Webber. Webber, in his book, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World*, provides a description of the rocky relationship that the concept of sacraments has had among Evangelicals.

> Traditionally evangelicals have stayed clear of the word *sacrament* because they have associated it with the Catholics or high church people "who are into religion but don't really care about being spiritual." This is unfortunate; it represents a misunderstanding of the word and its use.
>
> First, the fear of the word shouldn't be a Protestant fear at all. The word is freely used in the writings of both Luther and Calvin and appears here and there throughout Protestant history. If the founding fathers of the Protestant community were not put off by the word *sacrament*, neither should we.[1]

Webber goes on to say that:

> The word's negative connotations come from the Catholic past, when at its worst sacrament referred to a ritual that conferred God's saving grace without need of corresponding faith. This is known as *ex opera operatum* [sic*] (it works by the work). Then came the Enlightenment, which replaced the mystery of the sacramental action with an emphasis on the rational and understandable. Consequently, the free-church tradition … introduced the word ordinance. Jesus ordered us to be baptized and receive the Lord's Supper. The term itself suggests, "Do this because Jesus said to" or "It's what you do, not what God does that counts." Consequently, evangelicals are baptized "in obedience to God's Word" and receive the Eucharist not because doing so is divine but as a response to God's directive. Evangelicals substituted a premodern conviction that the elements of Communion are God's symbols of sacred or divine action with the reasoned conviction that they are personal symbols of faith.[2]
>
> *The Latin expression is *ex opera operato.*

Moreover, in his book, *Ancient-Future Faith*, Webber puts it this way:

> Consequently, we have shifted baptism and Eucharist from God's action to human action. Baptism has become the means by which the converting person declares his or her faith; the Lord's Supper has been reduced to an intellectual recall of Jesus hanging on the tree. We have reduced the ritual of water and of bread and wine to understandable actions. The mystery is gone.[3]

Webber's research points to the fact that younger Evangelicals are beginning to recover a definition of *sacrament* influenced less by perceived Catholic abuses and modern rationalistic interpretations and more by the church's historic grammar of faith. *Sacramentum* and *mysterium* bring to the concept of the sacraments what *ordinance* can not. What previously could only be spoken of as obedience to a command could now be seen as a mysterious union between God and man, centered in the actions of Jesus and not in the actions of His followers. The concept of God's doing something to us, placing His imprint on us in the sacraments, provide for these young Evangelicals a correction to the modern Evangelical anthropocentric orientation of the sacraments by presenting an opportunity to return theologically to their pre-modern origins.

Webber is not the only one, however, who highlights the importance of defining one's terms in order to open possibilities within the sacramental grammar of faith. In order to understand emerging post-Evangelical Christianity, one must resist the urge to use the modern connotation words such as "Catholic" and "Evangelical" and instead allow them to be heard in their wider sense. Rowan Williams in his 2008 address to the Fresh Expressions National Pilgrimage[4] makes this very point. "'Catholic' and 'evangelical' are words that belong together when they're properly used, because the good news isn't particularly good if it isn't the whole truth for the whole person."[5] In the same address, Williams clearly articulates the underlying sacramental tones that one increasingly finds in emerging post-Evangelical Christianity while highlighting the importance of a sacramental grammar that directs the action from God to man in Christ.

> …the sacraments of the Church are there not as mysterious rituals to deepen our sense of group identity—though of course they do that among other things. They are there to tell us what story it is that defines the shape of our world, and to take us further on our journey, on our following out the Son's journey. Something is needed to anchor what we're doing in what God is doing—in the event that is God's action, not ours. And the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion simply announce that here something is being done that isn't our work. We pour the water; God accepts us as sons and daughters. We pray over the bread and wine and share them; God renews in us the gift of his Son's life and hears our prayers as if they were Christ's, taking us for a moment into the fully reconciled joy that awaits us at the end of all things. Church is not primarily an event in which we do something, think something, feel something; it is being together in a situation where we trust God to do something and to change us—whether or not we notice it, let alone fully understand it…That's why, whatever the practical problems, one of the questions that fresh expressions of the church have to deal with is how to manage this crossover from what we do to what God does; how to create an environment in which church can happen in the fullest sense, with the sacramental life flowing through us as a sign and channel of God's action.[6]

If one is to define the attempt of Christians to live in a postmodern context in a post-Evangelical way as being "emerging," then many of the very people who reject the concept of emerging Christianity, even Lutherans, can themselves be considered emerging. The main difference is that many emerging Lutherans use a modernist approach to addressing the problem as compared to the postmodern approach of many of the emerging post-Evangelicals.

Living the Sacramental Life

Now that we have seen that these young Evangelicals are seeking a more historic understanding of the sacraments within the life of the Church, we need to reflect briefly on the ever-growing temporal significance that these sacraments have in their daily, embodied lives. The sacraments are seen as more than sacred actions whose benefits end at the conclusion of a liturgical service; they are also seen as divine action that speaks forth a radically different way of being that encompasses the whole of Christian life as manifest in the daily embodiment of our new identity in Christ. And not only are the sacraments seen as a vital part of the Christian life, the whole Christian life itself is seen as sacramental. Ian Mobsby in his book, *Emerging and Fresh Expression Of Church: How Are They Authentically Church and Anglican?*, writes:

> Emerging Churches tend to have rediscovered a more sacramental approach to everyday life. . . . We gather around weekly Eucharist. . . . We try to take a sacramental view of the whole of creation. . . . A sacramental life is a life lived in God, so each day is sacramental and we ourselves are sacraments of God in the world. . . . A defining characteristic of church has to be the regular participation in the community Eucharist.[7]

Webber expands this idea in his section on spiritual formation in his book, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World*, when he writes:

> … all of life is considered to be sacramental. That is, in all relationships, prayers, the reading of Scripture, meditation, or in experiencing the beauty of creation, an actual real tangible, and authentic encounter with God can take place through the synergism of God’s creational presence and the vulnerability and openness of the person who sees all things with an eye for God. Clearly, a large number of younger evangelicals are returning to baptism and the Eucharist as sacred actions, while some younger evangelicals are going even further, returning to a sacramental consciousness that encompasses all of the above (five ecclesial) sacraments.[8]

While the description of a sacramental consciousness might be foreign to some within Lutheranism, the concept helps to provide one with a sense of the deep sacramental integration within the daily lives of these young post-Evangelicals. Not only do the sacraments provide a connection to God and assurance of the justifying work of Jesus Christ, but they also transform the way they see their world. The sacramental narrative opens a way of seeing the world and being in the world in which the presence of God is in, with, and under His creation. This is one area within the sacramental theology of emerging post-Evangelicals that I believe can be helpful, even for those who have been raised within a sacramental tradition. For in my experience, Lutheran instruction on the sacraments tends to focus on the definition and number of sacraments, in opposition to other denominations, while sadly leaving the idea of living a life interpreted through the sacraments overlooked. This sacramental interpretation of life adds a richness that speaks in a powerful way to the frequently compartmentalized faith of American Christianity.

Avoiding the Ditches

By now it is hopefully clear that a tremendous opportunity exists for us Lutherans to communicate and catechize in the area of sacramental theology and practice, but in many ways we are losing the battle. It would be tempting to spend the rest of this paper critiquing the grammar these post-evangelicals use to express their faith, but that would be pointless. Why would we expect them to talk like us, when we have yet to reach out to them? It is more important that we examine ourselves to discover why we are missing out on this opportunity.

The problem begins in how we see ourselves. Many of us have fallen into one of two distinct ditches—that of Lutheran Pragmatism and Lutheran Fundamentalism. Many who find themselves entrenched in one of these ditches see a vast divide between them with no common ground. Ironically, as we shall see, people often become entrenched in one ditch or the other by making the same initial mistake of imitating some other expression of the faith.

Lutheran Pragmatism describes a well-meaning, yet identity-diminishing, attempt to engage missionally the culture around us with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Lutheran Pragmatism has frequently resulted in the imitation of Evangelical practices in order to reach the missing demographics within Lutheranism and "grow the church." In light of the post-Evangelical attitudes of many young emerging Christians, this approach is the opposite of what would be helpful. For younger Evangelicals searching for richer sacramental theology, mystery, liturgy, and a transcendent sense of the Church's historical identity, to imitate practices of modernist Evangelicalism is simply to offer them the very thing that they are rebelling against. Those entrenched in Lutheran Pragmatism often fail to take into account that their way forward, has already been shown, within Evangelical circles, to be a thirty-year-old unsustainable solution. As I tell my students, the 80s are over; let them rest in peace. Hiding our heritage, replacing liturgy with blocks of songs, and opening our altars in an attempt to appear friendly is not the best way to maximize the opportunity given to communicate the rich sacramental theology gifted to us in the Lutheran church. Instead, we are more effective when we embrace our Lutheran particularities and liturgical practices as a way of communicating the sacramental narrative of salvation, proudly identify our connection to the historical confessional church, and reject the fallacy that worship is about style of music, instrumentation, and trendy imitation of popular culture in an attempt to appear relevant to those immersed in a narcissistic American culture.

Lutheran Fundamentalism, on the other hand, is the well-meaning, yet identity-diminishing attempt to maintain the core tenets of Lutheranism in a changing culture. Like Lutheran Pragmatism, Lutheran Fundamentalism frequently results in the imitation of other Christian expressions, most frequently Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy, which many emerging post-Evangelicals find problematic. What is described by some as being truly Lutheran is at times more reflective of perhaps a romanticized sense of history, a longing to return to a liturgical tradition, and the mourning of a time when the church was the socio-metric center of society.

Frequently within this group, one can find recovering modernist Evangelicals who, after embracing the traditions of Lutheranism, discovered life-long Lutherans mimicking an Evangelical expression of Christianity eerily similar to the Evangelical past they intentionally escaped. The passionate defense of this newly found Lutheran heritage can result in misplaced anger, sinful rhetoric, and a legalistic approach to a particular form of liturgy that transforms the liturgy into a new law, thus destroying the Gospel it proclaims. This approach, combined with a hyper-masculine attempt to address the threat posed to the pastoral office by feminization and homosexuality becomes a stumbling stone for those who are willing to be taught the biblical truth concerning gender roles and sexual identity, but are turned off by non-biblical stereotypes.

Instead, we must recall our own journey of faith: the time in which we searched for answers, failed to articulate what we believe in a way that met the grammatical rules of a fellow brother's systematic rhetoric, and allow love for one another and orthodoxy to find their rightful place together. It is true that there are times to stand in defense, rebuking the Pope himself, but there are more times when gentle words and caring instruction given within the context of generous Christian hospitality and civility gain a hearing for the gospel truth. Regarding the gender role and sexual identity issues that plague America today, if we are to present the world with an example of what it is to be made as a man, let us strive to embody a biblical model instead of capitulating to the Paleolithic archetype of the American male.

In light of these two perspectives, time must be spent climbing out of the ditches before we as a body of Lutherans can make the most of the opportunity placed before us. We must spend time in dialogue, recovering a reflective balanced approach to the Lutheran faith and avoiding the frequent and growing polarization typified by Lutheran Pragmatism and Lutheran Fundamentalism.

Maximizing Opportunities for Lutheranism

Once we have begun to climb out of these ditches, and heal from the damage we have done to one another, how can we move forward in engaging the emerging post-Evangelicals in a way that facilitates the passing on of our confessional sacramental heritage? While there are many places to start, Webber provides a list of nine features that speak specifically to the issue of worship and sacraments:

1. A genuine encounter with God
2. Genuine community
3. Depth and substance
4. More frequent and meaningful experience of Communion
5. Challenging sermons and more use of Scripture in worship
6. Participation
7. Creative use of the senses; visual
8. Quiet, characterized by the inclusion of contemplative music and times for quiet personal reflection and intimate relationship with God
9. A focus on the transcendence and otherness of God[9]

Webber concludes by sharing two things that the younger evangelicals do not want in worship.

1. There seems to be a general reaction against the contemporary worship style. The highest negative response was given to entertainment and contemporary worship and to the music associated with this form of worship.
2. There also seems to be a general dislike of the style of worship we associate with the 1950s[10] traditional worship. . . .[11]

Reflecting on these lists and observations, we see both strengths and weaknesses perhaps within our own practices and larger family of faith. In the end, this article is not about vilifying a particular style of ministry within our Synod, but acknowledging that in our polarization both ditches have strayed from a faithful representation of our Lutheran heritage impeding our ability to reach out to the post-Evangelicals. I believe, however, that if we come together as brothers in Christ, we are perfectly poised to make a great impact on the future of Christianity in America. As Lutherans, we have exactly what many today are seeking: a tremendous history to share and a biblical understanding of how God encounters His people through Word and Sacrament. And perhaps it's just the opportunity we need to rediscover our confessional heritage, pull ourselves back from the brink of self-destruction, and embody the sacramental theology we have historically taught.

Conclusion

I am not claiming that emerging post-Evangelicals have the same theology and practice as what is considered to be orthodox within confessional Lutheranism. I am also not asserting that an emerging understanding of the sacraments is something that we should fully embrace. What I do affirm is this: We have a tremendous opportunity to speak to a generation of emerging post-Evangelicals from the richness of our history using a grammar that is authentically our own. We have been given an opportunity in our growing postmodern age to confess the gospel boldly and the sacraments that convey it. Let us be wise. Let us recognize that they are searching. Let us take this opportunity to pass on our heritage to a generation for whom what we offer is foreign while, at the same time, obviously grounded in the tradition of the church and the Scriptures. Let us speak with certainty, yet humility; confidence, yet concern; conviction, yet with recognition of the other brothers and sisters in Christ who have yet to hear what has historically been central to our Christian identity. We have a great God-given opportunity. It is our opportunity to lose. I leave you with the words of the Frank Schaeffer[12]:

> I've also noticed that while some people in the so-called emergent evangelical movement are reaching out to these young people the leaders of the mainline denominations both locally and nationally often seem blind to a huge new opportunity for growth and renewal staring them in the face. That new opportunity is the scores of younger former evangelicals diving headlong out of the right wing evangelical churches. . . . I don't get it. Where is everyone? Why is the "emergent" evangelical church reinventing a wheel that's been around for centuries? And why aren't the mainline churches letting us know they are there? . . . If the mainline churches would work for the next few years in a concerted effort to gather in the spiritual refugees wandering our country they'd be bursting at the seams.

Endnotes

[1] Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 180.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 100– 101.

[4] For those unaware of the term "fresh expression," it is described by the Church of England as "… a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples; it will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context." ("What is a Fresh Expression?," 2013, accessed October 25, 2013, http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/about/whatis.) In many ways, Fresh Expressions within the Church of England is, for me, an expression of church that fits the terms *emerging, catholic, and post-Evangelical.*
[5] Steven Croft, Ian Mobsby, and Stephanie Spellers, *Ancient Faith, Future Mission: Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Traditions* (New York: Seabury Books, 2010), 1.
[6] Ibid., 7–8.
[7] Ian Mobsby, *Emerging and Fresh Expressions of Church.* ([S.l.]: Moot Community Pub., 2008) 58–59.
[8] Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 181.
[9] Ibid., 189.
[10] It is tempting for some to see post-Evangelicals fascination with the past as a reason to return to a 1950s style. Scott Bader-Saye offers this caution: "this return to the past should not be confused with a nostalgia for the 1950s Protestantism or with a circling the wagons around a purer Reformation theology. The return is deeper, looking to the treasure of the medieval and patristic theologies and to the practices that have long been ignored by evangelicals." Scott Bader-Saye, "The Emergent Matrix," *Christian Century* 121, no. 24 (November 2004), 20–25.
[11] Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 189.
[12] Frank Schaeffer, "Missing the 'Mainline' Protestant Opportunity," *Huffington Post*, March 15, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-schaeffer/missing-the-mainline-prot_b_1344757.html.

Missional Communities and Community Formation: What Does the New Testament Have to Say?

Justin Smith

Abstract: The essential question for both the missional movement and traditional structured ecclesiologies is, "How should the church be structured?" While most agree that the New Testament writers say something about this, many disagree what in the New Testament is important for the formation of this community called the church. The assumption is that the New Testament prescribes a form for the church; yet, embodying the life of the New Testament church is more than choosing a leadership structure and living in certain sizes of communities.

Introduction

Many Christian books bemoan the loss of the church in one way or another. Like Cynics of long ago, they stand, preaching their message to any with willing ears. Stammering through church history and blundering around topics much larger than their appetites, these authors, whose books can be found in bookstores instead of libraries, proclaim a shallow message for the Christian community.

There are, however, a growing number of writers and Christian leaders who raise concerns over the status quo within the church, urge fresh thinking about the church and her mission, and recommend different forms of life and witness. The contemporary "missional" movement, reflected in much of the current talk about the "missional church" and "Missional Communities," typifies this concern and seeks to provide a better expression of being the church and for witnessing to God's salvation through Jesus Christ.[1]

A distinctive feature of the missional movement is that it does not take ecclesiology for granted. This stands in sharp contrast to many American Protestants, who think of churches as providers of goods and services (and so they shop for churches—and churches market themselves) and also to both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, who assume their churches to be the one true church on earth. As the name suggests, those in the missional movement believe that missiology should inform ecclesiology. Moreover, we often find that Missional Communities embody an expression of the church that seeks to serve the communities around them *without the need for institutional models of the church.* While the missional movement is new, they point back to the church prior to Constantine and the legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire and urge that this model represents the model for churches in an emerging "post-Constantinian"

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age.

The missional proposal for church and mission is more radical (in the sense of being more "to the root") than many proposals for mission and evangelism, and so it is not surprising that a lot of attention and a lot of opposition focuses on ecclesiology. On the other side of the missional movement are those who argue for a traditional structured ecclesiology. In other words, "community formation" characterizes a good deal of the present discussion and debate about Missional Communities. Therefore the topic of "community formation" provides a working terminology since community formation "has to do with the way the Christian church is structured and its life expressed."[2] At a basic level, community formation discusses the range of questions that church leaders, ecclesiologists, and scholars alike seek to answer, such as, "how should the church be structured?"

An important aspect of this discussion and debate is that both sides argue, at times emphatically, that the New Testament presents "their" position. The New Testament church becomes a guide for structuring the church today. Yet by looking to the early church and the way it was structured, many have seen in the New Testament a mere reflection of themselves. Or, to put it another way, "Traditionally, NT studies on church leadership have focused on church office as it developed in the NT and the few centuries afterwards. These studies often became an apology for the leadership structure of the denomination to which the author belonged."[3]

The role of the New Testament in the life of the church is essential. In the midst of ever changing groups and church structures, as seen with the missional movement, a look at the New Testament from a different angle might provide help in navigating the waters of a civilization that has moved past an assumed understanding of the church. The unspoken assumption, however, on both sides is that the New Testament has a definite prescription for the form of churches. I want to discuss and debate *that* assumption, especially on the part of proponents of Missional Communities. The question that this paper addresses is "How were the various New Testament communities formed and how do we account for the differences in community structures?" The New Testament presents various types of community formation aimed at the same goal, which is faithfulness to Christ until He returns. My thesis is that the New Testament presents to us an eclectic account of community formation because structures and orientation to life are secondary to the goal of a community, which is to live faithfully under the reign and rule of Christ until He returns. The New Testament does not present one model for the formation of the community called the church. Community formation, i.e. leadership structures and how the Christian life is expressed, is secondary to the focus of a community on the immanent return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some Hermeneutical Issues

First, however, we should consider some hermeneutical implications. Why? Because there is nothing obvious about what, for instance, Paul tells Timothy that would require one way of structuring the church over another. If we think that the New Testament, or elsewhere in the Scriptures, already says what we are convinced of, there is little more to do than ignore the divergent views within the church.

We must pay attention to this mindset because church leaders have, in fact, discovered in the New Testament "models" for the church that, surprisingly, line up with their existing ecclesiology. Roger Beckwith in *Elders in Every City* argues for an episcopal model from his study of the second century church.[4] It is not surprising that he finds the episcopal system present in the early church since he is an Episcopalian. Likewise C. F. W. Walther finds in Acts 15 a congregational model for the church that consists of laity and clergy voting in a convention when he says, "the Book of Acts tells us that at the first council of the apostles laymen not only were present but also spoke."[5] This observation became the basis for the structure and polity of the LCMS. The preamble to the LCMS constitution says as much in the reason for forming a Synodical Union: "The example of the apostolic church. Acts 15:1–31." The circumstances in Walther's ministry with Martin Stephan, the Marburg Colloquy, and the new American context for the Saxon immigrants might explain more about Waltherian polity and ecclesiology than Acts 15.

These are but two examples. Interpretive issues invalidate neither example of ecclesiology. Beckwith and Walther show that when studying leadership in the New Testament these "studies often became an apology for the leadership structure of the denomination to which the author belonged."[6] Venturing into this discussion will require us to be aware of our presuppositions about the Scriptures, the church, leadership, and how best to live the Christian life. Neither the New Testament nor the Bible is an answer book waiting to be probed. The Word of God is living and active. The Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures in the church. Looking to the Scriptures as a guide is commendable; to arrive at the same conclusions as the New Testament writers may be problematic.

While scholars and well-intended church leaders have clearly understood the Scriptures to be in support of their view of the church, ascertaining the perspective of the New Testament is not simple. The Scriptures need to be understood within their own contexts. Such a reading is not a simple straightforward assent to meaning in the text. Rather, understanding the Scriptures in this way is a matter of letting the best arguments speak, along with a willingness to let the Spirit work in the church and through the Scriptures to guide us in the truth (Jn 16:12–15).

One way that we can understand the Scriptures on their own terms is to study the contexts from which they come. Studying the social and historical background of the first century aids our understanding of the New Testament context and helps us to ask the questions for which the New Testament letters are the answer.[7] But how should we look at the New Testament? Many have tried to answer questions of ecclesiology and community formation by turning to the book of Acts, but this approach seems to be flawed from the outset. In the book of Acts, we are shown a narrative of the church's early life as it grew and developed into the Body of Christ. Luke, however, seems uninterested in answering questions about leadership, structure, or even what the Apostles did. Luke shows us a picture of what the Holy Spirit did in the early years of the church. "Luke presents the Holy Spirit in the role of the patron of the Jesus-community, for it is the Spirit who created the community and who continued to sustain it."[8] Furthermore, Luke's narrative complicates the picture of the church, since he is highlighting themes rather than reporting data.

Paul's letters offer a good starting place for a number of reasons. First, Christianity did not remain in Palestine after AD 70 and the fall of Rome.[9] Second, the communities around the Roman Empire founded by Paul were in urban areas where secondary sources commented on Christianity.[10] Third, Paul's use of the literary genre known as *paraenesis*[11] simplifies examining the topic of community formation in the New Testament.

For these reasons, the conversation focuses on the Pauline Epistles. For the sake of space, two communities serve as examples of the contextualization present in the New Testament, Ephesus and Thessalonica. These two communities represent two different kinds of contextualization, one (Ephesus) within a large Romanized city and the other (Thessalonica) within a large Macedonian and Greek city. Ephesus represents for this study a formalized structure of the church. Thessalonica represents a less formalized structure with a heavy emphasis on daily activity with one's community. With these observations in mind, we will begin by discussing the structure and community formation of Ephesus and Thessalonica with the goal of seeing how Paul encouraged these communities to remain faithful to the ascended Christ.

Structure and Formation in Ephesus

Ephesus, an important city in the Roman Empire, was one of the principal economic cities and a large administrative center in provincial Asia. Its importance remained through the reign of Diocletian into the fourth century.[12] Thessalonica and Ephesus, though both within the Roman Empire, differed in areas such as administrative structures, civic officials, and various rights of citizens. The difference in size between Ephesus and Thessalonica in the first century gives us an opportunity to see the diversity of community structures in the Pauline communities. For instance, Ephesus, where Paul leaves Timothy to appoint leaders, had a more structured community than Thessalonica.

The Roman Empire considered Ephesus important, in part, for its accessible harbor on the Aegean Sea. Ephesus, as many other formerly Greek cities, was a free city with a Greek constitution. While certain Greek aspects could be found in Ephesus, such as the Temple of Artemis—known in the ancient world as one of the Seven Wonders—the city was on the same level as Rome, considered a world class city.[13] The diversity in Ephesus also provided a place for Jewish communities within the prominent city,[14] a demographic that Paul continued to strive after and incorporate into the Body of Christ.

In this context, the structure and formation of the church in Ephesus takes on a particular character. Scholars, such as Ian Howard Marshall, often point out that the later Pauline letters, the Pastoral Epistles, present a church structure more developed than those found in earlier letters. Marshall describes the Pastoral Epistles as "a process of transition in which the congregations at Ephesus and Crete were being adapted to new situations."[15] This observation is valid from one perspective, namely, the shift in language concerning leadership structures in the New Testament. The new situation included growth of the Christian community, a city different from other Pauline communities, and, later, Paul's imprisonment. On the other hand, Marshall and others fail to develop the need for a "transition." What was this new situation that necessitated a transition? Beginning with Ephesus we will consider the various ways in which the transition was a matter of context.

What kind of community formation took place in Ephesus? In the book of Ephesians, there is little that encourages a "model" for leadership. There is, of course, the difficult passage in 4:11, "some to be apostles, some to be prophets…" Yet, this verse is not encouraging specific types of leaders, but rather recognizing leaders at a foundational level (apostles and prophets) and leaders at the local level (shepherds, teachers, and evangelists).[16] Paul left Timothy at Ephesus so that leaders could be established in the communities there. Yet, it appears that the type of leaders Timothy was to appoint already existed. In Acts 20, Luke recounts how Paul summoned the Ephesian elders to Miletus. Paul knows these elders and even writes, "you know how I lived among you the whole time from the first days I entered into Asia" (Acts 20:18). Furthermore, Timothy is with Paul and a number of others as Luke records in verse 4. Later in his speech to the Ephesian elders, Paul specifies the length of time he spent with them saying, "Therefore, be watchful remembering that for three years night and day I did not stop admonishing each of one of you with tears" (Acts 20:31). Reconciling this chronology with the traditional view of the Pastoral Epistles may not be possible, but it does make more problematic the simplistic view that the church developed a highly formalized structure at a later date.

Despite whatever claims can be made about Ephesus and the leadership structure there, Paul's letter to the Ephesians has a different focus. Whereas 1 Timothy holds up imitation as a means for community formation through the qualifications of leaders, Ephesians presents the cosmic lordship of Jesus. Paul uses language of authority and power that could be used for Caesar saying, "that he [God] worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Eph 1:19–21). The reign of Jesus over all things guides the letter, with God the Father as the father of fathers for the household of faith—a metaphor with which the Ephesian church or anyone in the first century would have been very familiar. In Ephesians, community formation is understood through the cultural lens of a Roman city infatuated with power and authority.

The first letter to Timothy is an important letter for the church as the church grew into the second century. Scholars such as Roger Beckwith are correct to find episcopal models in the second and third century. Bishops and elders abounded in the early church, especially in the second century. Irenaeus (ca. 130–202 AD), bishop of Lyon, guarded the Christian faith against the Valentinians and other heretical groups. Leaders in the following centuries continued the leadership structures Paul encouraged Timothy to establish in Ephesus. As the church in Ephesus grew, more leaders from within the community were needed. For many, the growth of the church's structure and institution is problematic, if not the problem itself.[17] It may, rather, be symptomatic of the loss of the community's goal to remain faithful as the people upon whom "the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11). Yet, this loss of the community's focus is not by necessity a result of adopting a hierarchical structure. If anything, as we hope to demonstrate, a hierarchical structure may have been easily employed in a city like Ephesus.

The letter to the Ephesians and the first letter to Timothy portray a prototypical community for those in favor of a structured, hierarchical, ecclesiology. In Ephesus, the church answered part of the question concerning community formation, namely, how is the church structured and how is its life expressed? Unfortunately, as the church continued through the centuries, the answer was often one-sided in concern for structure. No more was there urgency for the life of the community, hoping and longing for the return of Christ to restore and make all things new. Rather, in leaving the other side of community formation largely unanswered, the church provided an implicit answer. Life was expressed in relation to the church as an institution. This ritualized life typified the medieval church.[18] In addition to ritualized relationships, the Middle Ages introduced other concepts into the church, such as a literal application of the Old Testament priestly class. From the Carolingian period on, the church's understanding of "offices" in the New Testament has been anachronistically understood through the lens of a clergy/laity divide with overtones of Old Testament Levites. [19]

If any community in the New Testament had once lived in a less structured manner, with an approach to formation that focused on one's orientation to life, it could be found in communities like the churches in Thessalonica.

Structure and Formation in Thessalonica

Thessalonica was a well-protected port city on the Aegean Sea in Macedonia. As a free city in the Roman Empire, Thessalonica had local autonomy, setting them apart from other cities in the Roman Empire. They remained essentially Greek until the mid-third century when they were colonized as a Roman city.[20] Thessalonica's social setting is different from many of Paul's other missionary cities. The record in Acts 17 of Paul's going first to the synagogue in Thessalonica does not imply that the majority of Christians in Thessalonica were from a Jewish background. The ethos of the community was largely gentile,[21] and Paul focused the believers there on the goal of living under Christ's lordship until He returns. In so doing, Paul, in his first letter to the Thessalonians, develops various themes that fit within our question of community formation.

It is possible that Paul's emphasis on work in 1 Thessalonians says something about his ministry among the Thessalonians. Some may consider it an argument from silence, yet the regions around Thessalonica—and throughout the Roman Empire—show a wealth of evidence for voluntary associations during this early period of Christianity. Associations such as worker guilds existed throughout Macedonia and the Roman Empire.[22] More will be said about associations and their place in the first century. Our focus, however, is on how these guilds (organization of people in shared or similar occupations) provided an existing network for Paul to spread the Gospel. Richard Ascough and John Kloppenborg convincingly argue that Thessalonica was a community "similar in composition and structure to a professional voluntary association."[23]

Work is an important theme in the first letter to the Thessalonians. Already early in the letter, Paul reminds the Thessalonians about work: "For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil, working night and day in order not to burden any of you, we proclaimed the gospel of God to you" (1 Thes 2:9). Later in the letter, Paul continues the theme of work saying, "And make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and mind your own affairs and to work with your own hands, just as we have encouraged you, so that you might conduct yourselves decently before those outside and may depend on no one" (1 Thes 4:11–12). At the end of the letter, Paul again reminds the Thessalonians about work, saying, "We beseech you, brethren, to give recognition to those who labor among you and care[24] for you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work" (1 Thes 5:12–13a).

Work as a major theme for the letter answers one half of the question concerning community formation. The Thessalonians were to orient themselves to life in a certain way. Paul, however, mentions little about the structure of the community. Therefore, it seems that 1 Thessalonians could be a good model for Missional Communities.

Organic structures, if one could call the churches of Thessalonica "organic," are what some in the Missional Community world advocate. Typically, those within the missional movement speak of the church before Constantine. This pre-Constantianism is exemplified, according to Alan Hirsch, as incarnational, a grassroots decentralized movement, and lacking sacred buildings.[25] Mike Breen's new book, *Leading Missional Communities*, describes the structure of Missional Communities as an extended family, drawing heavily on the Greek word οἶκος.[26] For Breen, the "household" concept is like an extended family. This concept is one among many present in the New Testament as a metaphor for the church. Breen makes a mistake, as did Walther, Beckwith, and others, by arguing for one model of community formation.

Breen, Hirsch, Walther, and the rest fail to mention what Paul tells the Thessalonians, "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, we do not have need to write to you, since you know well that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (1 Thes 5:1–2). There is something beyond the manifestation of the church in this present age. Paul has already shaped the Thessalonians to live this way (whether they actually did is another question). He now reminds them of their goal, to remain children of the day and to continue encouraging one another in the faith for the purpose of remaining faithful until Christ returns.

The Missional Community movement, unlike the Thessalonian church, is largely a reaction to the ubiquity of the church in the West. Missional Communities are not a model that flows out of a manifestation of the kingdom of God and an identity as new creation. The church in the West largely presented community formation as structure and program (e.g., mega-churches, VBS, new member classes). The Missional Community movement has taken up the question of the church's orientation to life: How do the members of the church live out their daily routines? Unfortunately, both sides too often fail to consider how their structure and orientation to life influence the goal of the community. For some, such as Hirsch, the goal seems to be a return to a way of life instead of a looking forward to its restoration. For others, such as Beckwith and Walther, the way the church is structured takes preeminence (mostly in reaction to problems), and only one part of community formation is considered. Organic movements underplay structure; hierarchical ecclesiologies are slow to shape lives.

Answering both parts of community formation with the goal of the community in mind might—or should—lead to diverse forms of communities seeking after that same thing, to be conformed to Christ and faithfully live under His rule and reign awaiting His return. The New Testament structured and shaped the identities of the people of God while using cultural expressions to help them live faithfully under Christ's lordship. Within these cultural expressions of organizing and living from the first century, we see a vast array of communities focused on the return of Christ.

Models for the New Testament Church in the First Century

Prescriptions for community formation were not, as far as we know, part of the revelation of the Gospel about Jesus Christ that Paul had received from Jesus. Although some scholars will attempt to understand everything Paul does through the Damascus road experience,[27] it seems that Paul and others in the New Testament operated within a culture whose communities regularly shaped the identities of their members. (Paul himself changed from being a zealous Jew to an equally zealous, though considerably less murderous, Christian).

Three cultural expressions of communities and organizations from the first century will help us to understand the structures of New Testament communities. The first organization within the Greco-Roman world we consider is the household structure. This structure, embedded in the daily lives of the culture, provided an accessible model for the church. The relationships of father, mother, children slaves, workers, business associates, etc., all functioned within a household structure. Household language even functioned within the political sphere. For example, the role of *paterfamilias* within the *familia*, or Greek οἶκος, held prominence in society. Julius Caesar was called the *Pater patriae*.[28] Within the New Testament, the household is held up as a metaphor for the church three times (Eph 2:19; 1 Tm 3:15; 1 Pt 4:17), and the phrase "household of God" places God as the *paterfamilias* of the distinctive community. It is notable that this cultural model is mentioned in both Ephesians and 1 Timothy. The church in Ephesus has God, rather than Caesar, as the *Pater patriae*.

A phrase that occurs throughout the New Testament is "the church in their house" (τήν κατ᾽ οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίαν), a phrase that may have something to do with the structure of a household. While translations of 1 Corinthians 16:19 take this phrase as a location—a house church—the New Testament may exemplify a broader understanding.[29] The phrase may even be translated "the church which is manifest in the household of Prisca and Aquila" (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:6; cf. Phil 2).[30] In Philemon 2, for example, "the church manifest in your household" (τῇ κατ᾽ οἶκόν σου ἐκκλησίᾳ) may mean that Philemon was a patron of a church, that is, the church met in his house, including his whole household.[31]

This structure and pattern of daily household life Paul used as a model for part of the church's life and structure, at least for an identification of certain communities. Yet, the household model has problematic aspects. Households were generally isolated from one another. They existed as separate economic units (our word *economy* derives from the Greek word οἶκος), and sharing resources could ruin one's household. The New Testament church, however, shared not only resources (Acts 11:29, 1 Cor. 16:1, Gal 2:19), but also teachings, and was unified by the same *paterfamilias* who had raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead. The household model does influence the structure and life of the community as we have seen, but, as Wayne Meeks points out, "apparently there were other social ideas at work."[32]

The second model for community formation in the Greco-Roman world was an association. Associations had a close relationship with the household model described above. Many associations were formed with close connection to households.[33] Associations were not alternatives to households, but another model for socialization. Voluntary associations[34] were common during the first century. There were various associations based on ethnicity, occupation, neighborhood, or cultic background. These were groups that shared something common. Associations of occupation were quite numerous throughout the Greco-Roman world. They consisted of food- related groups (such as fishermen, bakers, and farmers), potters and smiths, weavers, and builders (such as carpenters, stone cutters, and tent makers).[35] Professional associations provided a great way for Paul to connect to various communities.[36] The second letter to the Thessalonians exemplifies this work, as does the letter to the Ephesians and various other letters.

Much could be written about associations in the Greco-Roman world—and various ways Christianity relates to them—but the association is another cultural structure that Paul uses to form a community whose goal is the same. Associations, like households, were places where identities were formed and individuals were enculturated into a larger community of shared beliefs and values. That Paul worked in a city like Thessalonica, a city filled with various workers guilds, shows the close connection Christianity had with associations. Furthermore, critics of Christianity often identified it as an association.[37] Yet, there is still one more cultural piece to the Pauline puzzle.

The last model from antiquity for the New Testament church is the philosophical school. While this may sound odd at first, if we attend to the difference between philosophy in the Greco-Roman culture and how we conceive of philosophy today, we will see how philosophy in antiquity was the mode of moral formation.

In the Hellenistic and Roman world, philosophy was more than a mode of cognition. Thinking was necessary, but that was not the only focus of philosophy. To reduce philosophy to types of thinking anachronistically applies Cartesian philosophy to a different culture. The phrase, "*Cogito ergo sum,*" is the first principle of Western philosophy. Contrasted with this is the Hellenist view of philosophy as the model of moral formation. This was the first principle for philosophy in antiquity.[38] Philosophy was foremost a way of life in antiquity.[39] Imitation is an important theme that runs throughout education and philosophy. Paul repeatedly employs imitation in many of his letters, including 1 Thessalonians. Imitation of a model, a person, was integral to learning. The Stoic philosopher Seneca also noted the importance of imitation.

> But my letter calls for its closing sentence. Hear and take to heart this useful and wholesome motto: "Cherish some man of high character, and keep him ever before your eyes, living as if he were watching you, and ordering all

> your actions as if he beheld them." . . . Choose a master whose life, conversation, and soul-expressing face have satisfied you; picture him always to yourself as your protector or your pattern. For we must indeed have someone according to whom we may regulate our characters; you can never straighten that which is crooked unless you use a ruler.[40]

Similar wise words are found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, "Imitate me just as I imitate Christ." Imitation of someone else in the process of moral formation was conducted in a philosophical school. Moral formation occurred in other places as well, such as the household. Philosophy was, however, preeminent in this role.

These two aspects of philosophy in antiquity, namely, moral formation and imitation, shape Paul's letters more than associations or households. Yet, each is an example of a structure, a model, or an organization that Paul and others used in the process of community formation to meet the goal of the community, which is to live under the reign and rule of Christ until He returns to make all things new.

A Unified Vision: The Goal of the New Testament Community Lived Out Today

In one of the shortest explanation of the Christian identity, Paul calls the Corinthians the people "upon whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11). The return of Christ from the right hand of the Father is the hope of this new age. While we do experience the presence of Christ in His church, we often forget that He is ruling over His church and all of creation right now—even though we confess it each time we speak the creeds. Throughout this paper, I have tried to show the various ways in which the New Testament manifested itself in this new age. In some cities, like Ephesus, the church was manifest in structured ways as the gospel permeated the lives of believers. Often, this was a contextualized expression of the church. In Thessalonica, a region filled with association of worker guilds, the church was manifest through labor and networks of workers. In both cases, the question of community formation was answered. Both structure and orientation to life mattered. Both were, however, subject to the goal of the new age, a goal that the entire church shared.

Contextualization tends to polarize the topic of community formation. Some believe contextualization to allow almost any practices, whereas others claim that contextualization leaves the message of the community behind. We should, rather, see contextualization this way,

> Paul's missionary letters reflect contextualizations appropriate for a particular time, culture, and circumstance, which should be appreciated on their own merits—but should also guide us as we contextualize the Christian gospel for our own particular time, culture, and circumstances.[41]

As we consider various expressions of Christianity, such as Missional Communities, we should ask ourselves about the purpose of this contextualizing. If, as Hirsch and others express, our goal is to return to something, then we seem to have lost the *telos* of living under Christ's rule until He returns. If our goal is to preserve the church through structures, then we should rethink the role of the Holy Spirit, the faithfulness of God, and what it means to be a creature with limitations.

Many of the missional movement leaders are reductionist in their understanding of history, and they redefine the "church" in unhelpful ways. For all these faults, Alan Hirsch rightly says, "Christendom in fact is *not* the original biblical mode of the early church. . . . God's not going to strike us if we seek to find a better way to be faithful as well as missional."[42] Having examined the New Testament through its own cultural lens in this paper, I hope that the reader will see the ways in which the New Testament church sought to be faithful. Imitating Christ is a good way to remain faithful, mimicking past cultures will not accomplish this goal of the church.

Endnotes

[1] See, e.g., George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, eds., *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1996); Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1998); Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006); Reggie McNeal, *Missional Communities: The Rise of the Post-congregational Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011); and Mike Breen, *Leading Missional Communities* (Pawleys Island, NC: 3DM, 2013).
[2] Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), xi.
[3] Jack Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission: a Social Identity Perspective on Local Leadership Development in Corinth and Ephesus*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 168 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 1.
[4] Roger T. Beckwith, *Elders in Every City: The Origin and Role of the Ordained Ministry* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 2003).
[5] C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry (Kirche Und Amt)* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 332.
[6] Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission*, 1.
[7] First Corinthians 14 may best exemplify this idea of asking the questions behind the answer. Are women supposed to cover their heads in church? If we ask what Paul's answer is in response to (namely, the question), then we may find that something larger than a set of rigid "biblical principles for life" is at work.
[8] S. Scott Bartchy, in Longenecker, *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today*, 95.
[9] Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 11.
[10] Ibid., 9–16.
[11] *Paraenesis* "presents a series of precepts which will serve as a guide of conduct under fixed conditions." Theodore C. Burgess, "Epideictic Literature," *The University of Chicago Studies in Classical Philology*, vol. III (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902), 230.
[12] For an overview of Ephesus, see Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), s.v. Ephesus.
[13] J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Ephesus: Texts and Archaeology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 199–200.
[14] Josephus notes various Roman edicts concerning Jewish rights in Ephesus (Antiquities 12.223–30, 234, 237–40).
[15] Howard Marshall in Longenecker, *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today*, 122.
[16] Ephesians 4 has a ubiquitous place in the discussion of leadership in the church. The issues that surround Ephesians 4 and the debate about offices in the church are not the focus here. It is, however, striking that two of the five leaders described are temporary to the community, apostles and prophets. The other three are local leaders who continue the work of the former. See Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission*, 178–179. Debates rage over the number in the list. Five is the appropriate number,

counting shepherds and teachers as separate in the list. While theological reasons abound, the anaphoric use of καὶ ends the list functioning the same way as τοὺς δὲ. See Stanley Porter, §5:2.8.2.

[17] See Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 63.

[18] See Robert Norman Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215–c. 1515* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997).

[19] André Vauchez, *The Spirituality of the Medieval West: From the Eighth to the Twelfth Century*, Cistercian Studies Series no. 145 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1993), 12–24.

[20] Hornblower, Spawforth, and Eidinow, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, s.v. Thessalonica.

[21] D. Luhrman, in David L Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks, eds., *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 239.

[22] Richard S. Ascough, "The Thessalonian Christian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 2 (2000): 311–328. See also Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003).

[23] Ascough, "The Thessalonian Christian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association," 311.

[24] The participle προϊσταμένους may be governed by the same article as the first participle κοπιῶντας and the third (Granville Sharp Rule). Some, such as Malherbe, are inclined to treat these three as separate since verse 14 lists other functions. See Abraham J Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 310–311.

[25] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 64.

[26] Breen, *Leading Missional Communities*, 4–6.

[27] Paul Barnett, *Paul: Missionary of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008). Barnett seems to explain the Damascus road event, including the years before embarking on any missionary journeys, as the locus of all of Paul's knowledge.

[28] Suetonius *Lives, Julius* 76, notes that Julius Caesar was given this title. The mixing of political language with that of the *familia* has several implications, not the least of which is the importance of the *paterfamilias*.

[29] See J. Kloha, "The Trans-Congregational Church in the New Testament," *Concordia Journal* 34, no. 3 (2008): especially 177–78.

[30] Ibid, 177. The distributive use of the preposition κατά distinguishes one local manifestation of the church from another.

[31] Amiability toward and acceptance of other houses points to a distinction from the Greco-Roman *familia*, which would have been concerned for the house alone. This distinction is seen through the various collections Paul sends to other churches (Acts 11:29, 1 Cor 16:1, Gal 2:19). See MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations, 50 B.C. to A.D. 284*, 89–90 and also Justin J. Meggitt, "Review of Bruce Malina, The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels," *Journal of Theological Studies* 49 (Ap 1998): 215–219.

[32] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 77.

[33] Ibid., 77 fn 17.

[34] The term "voluntary association" should be cautioned against being understood in a modern socio-political sense. This is not the kind of voluntary association "as the supreme example of a society organized around voluntary associations." See Stephen G. Wilson "Voluntary Associations: An Overview" in Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and S. G. Wilson (London: Routledge, 1996), 2. Wilson notes "the most common ancient terms—such as *collegium, secta, factio, thiasos, eranos, koinon*—like their modern counterparts 'club' or 'guild" are broad in scope but not quite broad enough."

[35] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 39.

[36] While the unfortunate term voluntary association has connotations of "fellowship created by the voluntary associations of men" [Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 3.], this modern problem of voluntary associations is neither the focus of the paper nor the context for the term. In Greco-Roman studies, it refers to civil associations, not the church. That Paul networked, if you will, through such organizations is a matter of scholarly debate, one that seems likely given the content of the letters to the Thessalonians. See Richard Ascough in *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today*, 3–19.

[37] Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 10.96. Author's translations. "They [lapsed Christians] affirmed that the extent of their guilt or error was this, that they used to gather on a determined day before morning and sing to Christ as to a god, that they each took an oath not to involve themselves in crimes, but to commit no theft, nor robbery, no adultery, not fall away from the faith, nor refuse money entreated to their care.

When these things were done, it was their habit to separate and return to meet in order to eat a meal, without distinction, however, and innocently, which they did until my edict, that is, following your [Trajan's] mandate, I have prohibited associations (*hetearia*)."

[38] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 23. I avoid the term ethics, hoping that a contemporary idea of ethics is not imported. A separation of theology, ethics, and *paraenesis* is read into Paul's letters that further complicates how we understand Paul's exhortations. For a discussion of the separation of theology, ethics, and *paraenesis*, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 136–139.

[39] Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

[40] Seneca, *Epistlae Morales* 11.8–10.

[41] Longenecker, *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today*, 87.

[42] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 63.

Further Reading Suggestions

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A Small Expression of Faith

Matthew Wait

Abstract: Churches in America face many changes and struggles as a result of cultural and societal pressures. To address these challenges, many have realized that the root question to the problems facing the church is, “How ought we ‘be’ church?” Some have encouraged a “business” approach for the church and her mission, but, others have advocated something more radical: “missional communities.” Taking the idea of missional communities as a point of departure, this article highlights the difficulties facing the church in America, outlines a healthy way to be church, and provides an overall framework to look at the health of the church in America.

Introduction

Welcome to the world of tomorrow. In the past one hundred years, the people of the United States have created and used atomic weapons, landed men on the moon, put a television in every house, and placed a phone in every pocket or purse. A person can telecommute to work in India from his home in Minnesota, and all of your shopping needs can be delivered next day. We can even keep up to date with the latest news in our neighborhood or Cairo with the click of a button. The world has been and is changing at great speed.

It is in this world of commerce, television, and the American spirit that the church in the United States finds itself today. It may not be the “brave new world” of Aldous Huxley, but it certainly is new, and this means that Christians should be examining the health and vitality of their churches in contemporary America.

Of course, many have already been wrestling with questions about the future health of the church. Some churches respond by trying to fit into American life. For example, many adapt by thinking and acting like businesses: mega-churches that run like corporations and franchises; church boutiques that meet in store fronts; virtual churches; the avid use of marketing (“Will this Bible study sell?”). These commercial ventures seem to be an attempt to “save” churches the same way one might save a business. Others, however, have thought it time to take a close look at the way we perceive and define church. Among the most widely-discussed examples of the latter are authors associated with “missional communities,” including Hugh Halter, Matt Smay, Michael Frost, Alan Hirsch, and organizations like 3DM.
The forms or models for churches that they encourage are unlike any in common use in America. Most models focus on decentralized or “organic” expressions of church community. Instead of being centered on “Sunday morning” and the event of formal worship, they seek to move to smaller communities that meet outside of a formal church building for worship and life together. These communities are expected to be local gatherings of twenty to eighty people that function like an extended family. As

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a family, they share Christ, strengthen relationships in the church, and learn about God. For example, 3DM uses the words "out," "in," and "up" respectively to describe these three functions of the community. These communities are to be "missional" in the ways that they gather through parties and neighborhood functions; they may be expected to do two or three "out" events for every one "in" or "up" gathering that they have. They encourage this model of church because they perceive it to be working elsewhere—China, for instance—and they argue that it is a prominent model of church in the New Testament.

These writers and thinkers have helped me take a look at the church in America and have challenged some of my own presuppositions for how the church can be shaped. They have also persuaded me that their proposals for the church show us ways for understanding "church" that are worth thinking about, discussing, and trying out. What follows in this article are some of my own ideas that I would enjoy discussing and trying out. While my own vision may look similar to that of some of these authors (and indeed they are similar, as the authors have all been helpful in shaping me), I would like to be clear that I am going about something different. I am asking a different question and focusing on a different "mission." It seems that at the heart of missional communities is that the church is essentially evangelistic or outreach-oriented, and they argue that "missiology" should determine "ecclesiology," not the other way around.

For example, Frost and Hirsch argue in their book *The Shaping of Things to Come* that the contemporary, post-Christendom church "see itself again as a missionary movement rather than as an institution."[1] They distinguish "mission" and "church," and they insist that "Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology."[2] They might describe it by saying that the core heart of God is that all the world would know who He is. I start from the point that the mission of the church is to be the Body of Christ, that is, the church is to be a people who know who their Lord is and act like it. I believe that evangelism is crucial for the life of the church, but I would not elevate it above or separate it from knowing who God is. Reducing the life of the church into "up," "in," and "out" can have unfortunate results. It is helpful to focus first on "up," because in learning who God is we live like His people. I appreciate the critical edge of saying that "missiology determines ecclesiology," but I would also maintain that ecclesiology really is a determining factor for missiology. That means we focus on our spiritual community and also usher in others from outside the community. My question then is this: Is the church in America healthy and faithful? If it isn't, what can we do about it?

In answer of this question, I will sketch what the church in America looks like today and what is problematic about it. I will then outline what I find to be a healthy ecclesiology for the church today. Finally, I will suggest a model of church that could help maintain the church's health and vitality in this changing world.

The Church in Contemporary America

The church is too complex and America is too large to answer neatly the question, "What is the church in contemporary America?" But an important part of what is going wrong in many American churches can be identified in two words: "therapeutic" and "individualism."

This use of the term “therapeutic” comes from Philip Rieff, who argued in the 1960s that religion in Western cultures was not fading away before the forces of secularization but rather was changing radically. It was becoming “therapeutic.”[3] Rieff’s prediction is further elaborated on by sociologist Christian Smith in his book, *Soul Searching*,[4] in which he employs the expression, “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.” This term does not refer to a formal religion or organization, but rather to some basic religious convictions held by many teenagers in America today. While Smith’s book focuses on teenagers, he claims that many adults also hold to this faith.[5]

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (or MTD) is focused on a moralistic approach to living. Smith describes it as follows:

> First, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is about inculcating a moralistic approach to life. It teaches that central to living a good and happy life is being a good, moral person. That means being nice, kind, pleasant, respectful, responsible, at work on self-improvement, taking care of one’s health, and doing one’s best to be successful…
>
> Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is, second, about providing therapeutic benefits to its adherents. This is not a religion of repentance from sin, of keeping the Sabbath, of living as a servant of a sovereign divine, of steadfastly saying one’s prayers, of faithfully observing high holy days, of building character through suffering, of basking in God’s love and grace, of spending oneself in gratitude and love for the cause of social justice, etcetera. Rather, what appears to be the actual dominant religion among U.S. teenagers is centrally about feeling good, happy, secure, at peace. It is about attaining subjective well-being, being able to solve problems, and getting along amiably with other people…
>
> Finally, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is about belief in a particular kind of God: one who exists, created the world, and defines our general moral order, but not one who is particularly personally involved in one’s affairs—especially affairs in which one would prefer not to have God involved. Most of the time, the God of this faith keeps a safe distance.[6]

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism not only affects the faith of those worshiping, but it actually shapes the way that the church carries out its work. As Robert Bellah and others put it, the world encourages people to split their lives into distinct “public” and “private” realms. The public realm is the realm of work and school, of politics and the media. Here a person lives in the day-to-day rhythm of 9-to-5 (or more) work and does what must be done to be competitive. This realm is impersonal and unrelenting. The same person seeks in private life ways to find affirmation and meaning and ways to cope with day-to-day struggles.[7] Increasingly, people look to their religion for these things, and more and more they find it there, including in many churches.

Paradoxically, these churches end up encouraging or sponsoring this managerial dog-eat-dog life. The parent who works 90 hours a week can go to church on a Sunday and hear words of comfort and counseling that affirm a lifestyle focused on buying more and bigger instead of challenging that lifestyle. Instead of challenging people to live a faithful life as a member of the Body of Christ, the church provides therapy so that they can continue to live as the world would have them live. Churches turn their attention to social justice and psychological counseling, their staffs essentially serving as a team of managers and therapists.

One way that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism manifests itself in churches is in preaching. Its impact is evident in the way that Jesus is portrayed in many contemporary churches. The entire biblical narrative, extending from Creation to the Last Day, is reduced to John 3:16 and Jesus' dying to forgive your sins. Instead of fleshing out the biblical narrative and using it as a way to shape the hearers' lives to be a faithful people, the focus is only on the forgiveness of sins—and sometimes not even forgiveness but mere acceptance of sinners. Forgotten is the admonition to "go and sin no more." People who have worked hard to buy junk they don't need come to the church to receive words of therapy masked as gospel, encouraging them to go out and live their lives as they have been. Instead of being encouraged to follow Jesus as disciples, they are presented with a Jesus who is little more than a tool to make life more comfortable.

Another mark of a therapeutic deism in churches is the perceived necessity of programs. Programs are not wrong in themselves, but their predominance in a church's life can signal that the church has become a vendor for therapeutic services like religion and childcare. Alan and Debra Hirsch, in their book, *Untamed*, provide a simple test to determine if a congregation has become a vendor:

> Want to test this? Simply stop preaching every Sunday for six weeks, or close down the children's ministry, or stop some other "service" or another, even temporarily and see what happens. Attendance and tithing will drop immediately. Disciples tithe to the Lord; consumers are merely paying for services.[8]

Another concern in churches is how to create the most pleasant experience for people. The focus is on making the trip from the parking lot to childcare to worship back to the parking lot as easy as possible. It is based on the same model as a drive-thru eatery. As Rodney Clapp says, "They read McDonald's ads more carefully than they do the Bible, then declare, 'You deserve a break today, and the whole purpose of God's existence is to give it to you.'"[9] If your church disappeared tomorrow, would the surrounding community notice? If they did notice, is it because you were a community of the faithful or because you provided some service that could "feed" them?

The therapeutic model also explains why the ministry of churches so often looks like marketing. The world's worries and concerns for security are based on selfishness. Too often, however, this desire dictates our message to ourselves and those outside the church. "Today's evangelism is marketing, and today's pastor is expected to be a marketer. The marketer-pastor appeals to desires that already exist among the unevangelized."[10] This message might sound something like the following:

> First, look at the brokenness that invades your life—those things that cause guilt, shame, and grief. They exist because of a condition called sin—sin

> separates you from God and robs you of the peace, comfort and hope you desperately crave. And no matter how hard you try, there isn't anything you can do to make things right again on your own. *That's where Jesus comes in.* Jesus knows the misery you feel. Jesus makes the difference at that very point—when your pain intersects your cry for help. *Jesus is God's answer to that cry.*[11] (emphases added)

Jesus is a tool to fix your problems. Jesus is God's answer to the problems of your life.

Thus Rieff's prediction has come to pass. Instead of standing proudly and remaining faithful to the call of Christ, churches have allowed the needs of the world to dictate what the church ought to look like and do.

> The church does not exist to ask what needs doing to keep the world running smoothly and then to motivate our people to go do it. The church is not to be judged by how useful we are as a "supportive institution" and our clergy as members of a "helping profession." The church has its own reason for being, hid within its own mandate and not found in the world.[12]

Instead of listening to the Son of God who is seated at the right hand of the Father for direction, we have turned our ears to the dust to which we will return.

And yet Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is not our only problem. Indeed it helps to highlight yet another problem: how individualistic Christians have become in America. Even the way that we talk about Jesus has been reduced to saying that He is the forgiveness of your sins. "You (singular) are a sinner and Jesus died for you (singular)." The Lord of heaven and earth, who will restore all of creation and is currently reigning at the right hand of God over His church, is turned into personal fire insurance. I have heard it said in an LCMS church that "If you were the only person on this earth, Jesus still would have died for you." The gospel becomes personal rather than communal. Jesus is only a personal savior. As Americans we like this; we like being able to have "rights," but we fail to see that our rights are what damn us. As Hauerwas and Willimon put it,

> What we call 'freedom' becomes the tyranny of our own desires. We are kept detached, strangers to one another as we go about fulfilling our needs and asserting our rights. The individual is given a status that makes incomprehensible the Christian notion of salvation as a political, social phenomenon in the family of God. . . . The Church becomes one more consumer-oriented organization, existing to encourage individual fulfillment rather than being a crucible to engender individual conversion into the Body.[13]

Toward A Healthy Ecclesiology in America

The problems facing the church in America can be categorized and understood in several ways. The therapeutic and individualistic components are of great significance, but even these are not the heart of the issue facing the church. At the heart of the argument raised by both the proponents of "missional communities" and the critics of Constantinianism is the issue of ecclesiology, that is, the issue of "being church." In other words, the challenge raised by the therapeutic and by individualism in our churches is a matter of what it means to be "church."

What would count as a healthier ecclesiology? To answer this, we should first be more specific about how these problems are ecclesiological. D. G. Hart's book *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism* provides helpful definitions and distinctions between what he called "pietism" and "confessionalism."

Hart expresses concern that the usual terms of "liberal" and "conservative" fail to represent fully American Protestantism. He observes that both liberals and conservatives encourage a "faith that produces compassion, virtue, and harmony," that is, "religion [that] is a benign influence that affects everyday life positively."[14] Liberals and conservatives do disagree about what that influence should be, but both promote an individualistic faith that puts stress on good conduct in one's life and emphasizes helping one deal positively with the circumstances in that life. At the same time, they discount the importance of the church, giving rise to elevated skepticism regarding history, tradition, and institutions. The emphases, of course, look very much like Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

Hart called such Protestants "pietists" and describes pietism as highly individualistic. Pietists assume that one's relationship to God is fundamentally a personal affair confirmed by personal experience and validated by personal activity. The focus may be on one's own spiritual journey or on making Jesus one's personal savior. This relationship is centered in a personal experience, whether of divine grace, of being "born-again," of speaking in tongues, or of the subjective certainty that God is speaking directly to one in the Bible. This relationship expresses itself in one's own life in, for example, pursuing justice, alleviating suffering, or holding traditional values.[15]

These values help to form a skewed ecclesiology, that is, a distorted account of what the church is to be. Pietism's stress on the individual gives the church community a back seat in the formation of the believer's understanding of how God relates to the world. It reduces the gospel to being between "me and Jesus" or "me and the Bible." As a result the individual loses sight of the Body of Christ, namely the church. Instead of focusing on belonging to the Body of Christ, the pietist's central concern is believing "rightly" in Christ. This individual focus also brings with it a skepticism of historic aspects of the church, such as creeds, dogma, sacraments, clergy, and historical theology, to name a few.

Hart contrasts pietism with a form of Christian religion that he calls "confessionalism." Confessionalism, as Hart uses the term, puts emphasis on the community over the individual, both the present local community and the historic community. A confessional church is a church bound together, not by intellect or personal decision, but by the blood of Christ and the Spirit who calls us by the Gospel to live as members of the church of God. Pietists see the world as an "either/or": either it is sacred or it is profane. This distinction applies to one's own person and life and to all of society. Thus, there is nothing uniquely holy or special about the community and life of the church. Confessionalists, however, see things differently. As Hart explains,

> Unlike pietist Protestantism, which attaches great religious significance to public life and everyday affairs, confessionalism situates the things of greatest religious meaning in the sacred sphere of the church and its ministry. At the same time, it places those areas that believers share in

> common with nonbelievers in a different sphere, one that is not inherently profane, but neither is it holy. For the confessionalist, some endeavors are holy, such as the ministry of the word and sacrament; some are common, such as baking and banking; and some are profane, such as prostitution and racketeering.[16]

Even from this brief description, it is clear that "confessionalism" reflects a higher view and deeper appreciation of "church" than that in the much more common "pietist" streams of American Protestantism. With its centeredness in Christ, His means of grace, and the common confession of the church, it indicates a healthier and more faithful ecclesiology. To be confessional today means that we are bound together through our baptisms into His life; being confessional is not principally about intellectual assent to a doctrine; it is about a way of life. This way of life is shaped by Christ's life, and Christ's life is not reducible to the God of a therapeutic deist or a pietist.

Simply put, for the confessionalist, the story of God and salvation is a story that focuses on the Bride of Christ and His church, instead of the individual's salvation. This doesn't mean that individuals don't count. Rather, it is a way of reminding individuals that they are members of the Christ's body, which is not just a fact to be known but a truth that challenges the believer to live out each day. This means, first, that if we truly believe that Jesus is the ascended Lord who sits at the right hand of the Father reigning over heaven and earth, then our proclamation of Christ must become robust once more. No longer shall we speak in reductionist terms of a Savior whose sole job is forgiveness of an individual's sins, but instead of a God who created a good creation that became fallen, a God who ached for His people so much so that He freed them from the bondage of Egypt and wandered with them in the wilderness, a God who promised to send a Messiah who would make a new and everlasting covenant with His promised people, a Messiah who lived, died, rose again, ascended, is ruling, and will come again for His bride, the church.

And what of the Lutheran Confessions? As already implied, "confessionalism" is not defined principally by these documents. The documents, however, are nonetheless essential to the identity of the Lutheran churches and basic to their life and witness. They help us to learn and preserve a grammar to speak and live according to this story and at times provide correctives when we speak the story incorrectly or live in ways that contradict the story. However, being confessional is more than an intellectual assent or adherence to the propositional content of the Lutheran Confessions. Being confessional means that we are centered not simply on the confessional documents, but primarily on the Christ they confess as the Lord of the Church. We are brought into His body, the church, and formed to be His disciples. Being confessional is being a mature, faithful member of the Body of Christ. The way that one becomes a member of the body is through baptism. The way that one becomes mature and faithful is through discipleship.

It is on this point—discipleship—that many American churches come up short. Instead of discipling fellow believers by calling out their sin, encouraging them in weakness, and shaping their thoughts, we seem to take the advice of "the three wise monkeys"[17] and remain ignorant to the whole discussion. When a church does call someone out on sin, that person can, and frequently does, leave and go somewhere else to receive therapy. As a result, church communities often ignore specific sin, unless it's a really bad one. But we avoid sensitive subjects, such as divorce, greed, trust in money, and certain sexual sins. Such talk could scare people away. After all, we want to be "missional." The problem is that "missional" in these cases means bringing people into a faith that isn't fully Christian. We are being missionaries for Christian Moralistic Therapeutic Deism when we ignore sins and ignore our responsibilities of discipleship.

If the church practices healthy discipleship, it will have a different look. A person who is fully instructed about God and His creation also will learn to love his neighbor. When we spend time learning about God, we not only grow in relationship with Him, but we also see the need to be in relationship to each other. The scriptures tell us a story of God who walks with His people, not individual persons. He called on prophets to bring the people back to Him and even promised that through His chosen people the nations would be brought to Him. Being a Christian means knowing God and, as a result, also your fellow believers. When you know God, you reach out to the nations. Your heart aches as His heart ached for those that are not a part of the fold.

We begin to serve our neighbors and support each other in community because we are actually being shaped to see the world differently, to see the world as God would have us see it. As the church shapes and molds people, it teaches them to read the scriptures and culture[18] faithfully thereby encouraging them to live in a way that is faithful to the calling of Christ. Sadly, the church has fallen short of this responsibility and has left the job of formation to the culture so that when we approach the scriptures, the world, the church, and even God, we do so with the eyes of the world rather than the eyes of Christ. (If this weren't so, then why is the story of Noah a punch line to a joke instead of a promise?) As disciples of Christ, we are formed by the community of the faithful through the church. As disciples of culture, we are formed by the world to be empty consumers. It's time (and has always been the time) to make/be disciples of Christ. We need to be shaped to see God's hand in our daily lives caring for us, but also shaping us to be His children in His body.

Discipleship is one area that "missional communities" are on track. They encourage a life centered on being communal and living out the call of Christ, not just speaking and believing rightly about that call. The problem is that the dialogue of missional communities often plays down important aspects of confessionalism, such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, the significance of clergy, and other historic aspects of the church of Christ. One purpose of my dialogue with and about missional communities is to promote a return to confessionalism through a healthy ecclesiology that focuses on expressing ourselves in smaller ways.

Nuts and Bolts

You may be thinking, "What does all of this have to do with 'small expressions of faith' and 'missional communities'?" Isn't this is pretty abstract stuff? To some extent it is, but I am convinced that our problems are rooted in the very beliefs we hold concerning the church. If time and space allowed, this essay would delve more deeply into the analysis of that subject and its effects on our ecclesiology and theology because these abstract concerns have very practical results in the way we do discipleship in the church.

It is time to explain why and how smaller expressions of church can facilitate a healthy ecclesiology through discipleship. No longer should discipleship look like Alicia walking into church and passing her un-churched friend Jess off to the religious professional, e.g., the pastor. Rather, we should consider a different understanding of the process of discipleship. In this understanding, members of communities are expected to be teaching and discipling one another. One pastor cannot hope to adequately walk with one hundred different people to show them how to live like Christ. But he could walk with ten people and help each of them to show others how to live. Each community has members of varied ages and walks of life; those who have walked with Christ longer are expected to walk alongside and disciple those newer to the faith. All receive instruction and care from the pastor, but they also receive instruction and care from the rest of the community. This practice will also encourage family units in their transmission of the faith. It is often hard enough for parents to talk to their children about the faith, and it only gets harder when we separate families into four different Bible studies the moment they walk into the building. Through smaller communities, families will be better equipped to disciple children.

The expression of church that I am suggesting embraces an "organic" model of gathering. "Organic" refers to a church formed and maintained in a more decentralized way. The organizational elements of the community are kept to a minimum to enable the community to deal with decisions with greater ease and flexibility (no more 3-hour voter meetings over whether or not to change the carpet). The organic nature of the church is also an attempt to keep church focused on being the church and not on supporting a church. In other words, by staying smaller organizationally and not building up programs, the pastor and people are better able to focus on what they are as a church instead of on the resources necessary to maintain a large, structured ministry. Simply put, an organic church can help keep the pastor as a spiritual leader instead of a manager.

Think of a "tribe" or "community"[19] as the basic unit, each "tribe" consisting of a collection of smaller groups of ten to twenty persons. For example, a tribe consisting of fifty to one hundred people might consist of seven to ten smaller groups ranging from ten to twenty people each. These smaller groups gather weekly to read and hear the Word of God proclaimed and also to receive the Lord's Supper, i.e., they gather for worship. In addition to these smaller group meetings, the full community comes together once a month to celebrate a larger corporate gathering.[20] This gathering should also offer the opportunity to worship and to stay connected to the larger church. What the gathering looks like is flexible.

The term "organic" is used to connote not only "living," but also "growing." Of course, true "church growth" is a matter of God's Word and Spirit, not human planning and efforts. But we ought to live in the expectation that God's Word is living and active and that the seed will bear fruit. And this life applies not just to every individual Christian but also to all churches.

To be organic, the small church makes more practical sense, because its organic nature can be helpful in becoming a church that reaches the lost and plants more churches, as Alan Hirsch explains in chapter 7 of *Forgotten Ways*. To put it another way, organic models of church can split and make new churches with greater ease. The simplicity of meeting at homes with very limited seating compels the church to split and continue to grow in each neighborhood where it expands. Larger churches create a highly structured and ordered expression of church that is not easy to reproduce. Many church plants today spend much, if not most, of their time dealing with funding. How can the church planter raise enough money for the sound system, the children's coordinator, the building, his own salary, and all of the other hidden costs? An organic structure seeks to be simple. As a result, it can be more easily reproduced fiscally and also because it is easy to learn and model for others. If something can be reproduced easily and with comparatively little cost, it will be easier to create more gatherings and tribes.

Another important component to this expression is the relative freedom from fiscal restraints. A tribe that meets only once a month does not require a church building. They can rent space in an existing church building and meet on a Saturday or some other day that a church building is not typically used. Not owning a building avoids having to pay utilities, insurance, and other costs associated with a building. Also, the individual communities are expected to be discipling each other and caring for each other. When an individual goes into the hospital, the community turns out to encourage, pray with, and support a person and his/her family. Why is this freeing financially? Because the pastor that shepherds this tribe might be freed to work part time. He is not writing sermons every week, and he isn't expected to be at every hospital visit. He also isn't expected to be at every missional gathering, but has built up leaders in the individual gatherings that he is mentoring. With no responsibility for a building or full-time salary, a tribe is free to give back to the community in which they live or to support efforts of other area churches.

To recap: Seven to fifteen groups of seven to twenty people, each with its own leader, meet once a week in houses or other venues to worship and be shaped. The groups live in close proximity and interact throughout the week to help shape and form each other to be disciples. These groups all come together for corporate worship to reinforce the greater unity of the church as a whole. In the midst of these groups is the pastor who works closely with the leaders and also pastors the church as a whole.

I'm sure that I have missed some aspect or piece of what a small church could look like, but that is the goal. I am not trying to create a detailed and specific ministry plan, just an idea of where to begin and questions that are helpful to ask. Now that I have explained what this expression of church could look like, I will explain why it is orthodox and how it helps to address those problems that I listed above concerning the church in America.

What Will Small Churches Do?

First of all, smaller churches will be "confessional" through their emphasis on community. It is not just an emphasis on being together, but an emphasis on being part of the community of God's people present and past. The community sees its connection not only to the church gathering in that place but also to the church throughout time and in all places. Such an emphasis on seeing the connection to the historic church means that the tribe will not be making up a new confession, but will be reciting the confession that has been handed down through the church in the creeds, the Lutheran Confessions, and other important works of the church. The community is rooted in receiving God's gifts of grace, not in an institution or what we give to God in intellectual belief. A tribe is inherently focused on bringing the believer together with others in a close and personal way. A missional community seeks to connect its members in a deeper way and expects each community and tribe to care for each other in a manner that larger expressions of church often struggle to achieve.

The tribe is also linked to the historic church. As Robert Webber explains in *Ancient-Future Faith*, the historic church is important to the emerging movement. The practices, rituals, and rites of the historic church become crucial in worship gatherings. Not only do they appear, but they are also explained, and the community has a deeper understanding of the symbols' meanings. After all, what good is it to have an archaic symbol (a pelican for instance) on an altar if no one knows why it is there?[21] The community is also taught the historic creeds in a way that makes the story of God's redemption their story. The creeds are not only read and confessed, but connected to worship and every aspect of life so that the community learns not only how to speak them, but how to interpret each moment of their life through creedal eyes. The historic confession of Jesus as Lord is taught not only intellectually, but becomes something that believers are encouraged to live out through the stirring up of fellow believers (Heb 10:24). And in our own church body, believers are to be taught the Lutheran Confessions and why we tell the story of Jesus Christ the way we do. No longer are the confessions to sit in obscurity through either disregard or blind acceptance. As Hermann Sasse says,

> Here we must note a fact which at first glance seems hardly believable. <u>The Lutheran Confessions no longer play the role in the life and in the theological thinking of the Missouri Synod, in fact, of all of American Lutheranism by far which they played during the 19th century.</u> . . . Even in the churches of the Synodical Conference the confessions are now the undebatable or no longer debatable presuppositions of the church rather than the expression of the great consensus of faith…[22]

Being a smaller body will also reduce the programmatic emphases that larger churches often have. Programs are not in and of themselves bad. The problem is when the programs become the focus of the community and the main ministry arm. The church is not meant to support programs; programs are meant to help facilitate and support the church. When programs are no longer the primary focus, the community is freed to focus more on building relationships and connecting people to the historic community of faith. As a tribe, or in conjunction with other area churches, the sum of the communities is still able to leverage resources to do some major projects and programs that a group of ten believers couldn't. The church no longer worries about being relevant to the community through creating bigger and better programs; instead, the church lives like the community she is supposed to be and through that is already relevant because she is being held accountable to Jesus and not to an institution or the world. Its success is not measured by the world or its ability to fix what the world sees as problematic.[23]

Not only is a small expression of church able to remain orthodox and confessional, but it could also help to highlight how each tribe is connected to the greater church, the Body of Christ. The reader may have noticed in this article that in the phrase, "expression of 'church,'" "church" has usually been in quotes, and that "tribe" is also used instead of "church." The reason that a community is called a tribe is to highlight the fact that they are part of a larger community known as the church. Naming a group a Christian tribe helps to communicate that the church is made up of all of the people who are in Christ, just as the twelve tribes of Israel made up the people of Yahweh, Israel.

The reason I have given preference to "tribe" over "church" is that the word "church" seems to be more often solely associated with a building than the believers in that building or the greater Body of Christ. People will go to great lengths to uphold and maintain a building at the neglect of the people in and around it. The building, like programs, is no longer there to support believers but is to be supported by believers. I sometimes wonder if it would be better for a community to lose its building to a fire so that the members could realize that they are the church, not the four walls they were trying to hold up. The church does not need walls.

These smaller expressions are expected to be local gatherings of Christians. A group is not to be formed like a social club to which you drive 30 minutes to make it to the gathering you prefer. The group also aids in living out the church's God-given duty of vocation to the neighbor. If members of the group are connected and living near each other, it is easier for them to support each other in regular contact, to bring new members into the community, and also to support neighbors who need help outside of the Christian community. The group should be active in restoring community through volunteer efforts, parties, little league, and all the other things that a community does naturally, i.e., be a neighbor. If a neighbor needs to have his lawn cut, then the community does it. The community is not to bring the issue to a board and petition for a mowing drive at church to see if they can mow 50 lawns in an afternoon. Instead, neighbors helps neighbors because they have the time and are being urged to help by others in their missional community.

To accomplish this purpose, the church must teach and demonstrate the fullness of vocation. Vocation is not about family *or* work *or* church *or* being a neighbor. Vocation is about family *and* work *and* church *and* being a neighbor and all the other aspects of life a person is called to. When a church expects a person to be at worship, Bible study, men's group, youth group, volunteering, and serving on a council on top of the rest of life, a person does not have time for much else. As the church grows in programs in which it expects people to participate and volunteer, it pulls people out of their natural circles of influence. A person who is always at church cannot possibly have the time to be a good neighbor.

These smaller expressions are formed through community connections and ties present in the existing neighborhood or community. The exclusion of a person because he "doesn't fit" is unacceptable. That person is a neighbor, and Jesus was pretty direct when He said we have to love our neighbors. They belong in the tribe because they belong at the throne of God singing praises to Jesus their Lord.

These communities are able to tell the story of Jesus, to celebrate what it means to be part of one true church, and to remain orthodox and confessional in a time of confusion and struggle.

FAQ

In discussing my idea with others, several questions have come up repeatedly.

Are you saying larger expressions of church can't work? No, I'm not. I do believe that large churches frequently and inadvertently fall into some traps of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism or pietism. Consequently, they need to take a serious look at these questions and consider how they can address that problem in their midst.

What is the basic difference between your idea and those promoted as "missional communities"? I touched on this briefly at the beginning of the essay, but would like to reiterate it here. Missional communities are too focused on saving the church through outreach. I believe they often-times are focused on the unbeliever at the expense of being part of the Body and knowing who God is.

Isn't this just another small group ministry? No, small groups are intended to supplement regular worship, whereas these small group meetings are the regular worship. However, small groups formed with the intention of addressing my concerns of Therapeutic Deism could be a way of facing those problems for larger churches.

How could this form of the church ever be launched? I don't believe this is a church that is launched in the traditional way that planting is done. It is an expression that requires a pastor who has been living in an area and is already forming strong connections to other Christians. It could also be that a church releases its pastor or one of its pastors to start these communities as a plant in their area.

You talk about being free from being at church all the time, but then you said you need to be active with your gathering throughout the week. How are those different? The need to be active with members of the community is not meant to be just you and your community getting together and hanging out, partying, or doing churchy things. You actually live life together instead of just being together at church. You learn to love each other's neighbors, live with each other's burdens, and teach each other how to live out the story of Christ.

Many pastors are already stretched pretty thin. A "tribe" sounds like more work. Is it? It depends on your context. You could be in a place with people who get this idea and understand what the Body of Christ should be about, and this could all happen very easily. Or, you could be in a place where the people have been listening to the gospel of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism for decades, and it will take much time to help them see the church as it ought to be viewed.

You seem to be suggesting not only a different expression of "church" but also a different way to preach the Gospel. Is that right? And why is that? Yes, I am focused on preaching the Gospel in a different way because I believe that we have stopped telling the full story. I am encouraging a style of preaching that not only proclaims the forgiveness of sins, something that is certainly important, but also that Christ is currently reigning at the right hand of God. If we believe that last statement to be true (and we claim to in the creeds), then the way we live each day should be different and our preaching must communicate it.

It is hard enough to get people to do evangelism when the congregation is large and organized. How can evangelism work in this form of church? You aren't suggesting that it is enough to be organized for growth, are you? It is difficult to do evangelism when a congregation is large and organized or large and unorganized because people expect the organization and the programs to do the evangelism. The fundamental problem with most evangelism in today's culture is that it trusts the organization for growth. I am arguing that it isn't about the organization, but that disciples make disciples. I believe that smaller communities help to form healthier disciples and that, as a result, healthy disciples do evangelism.

Conclusion

A smaller expression of faith has the chance to tell the story of Jesus Christ and to celebrate what it means to be part of one true church. If the LCMS were to support and stand by those communities, it would be a blessing for the church in America. But even if you don't look to form any smaller communities, the thing you must do is ask yourself, "Am I inadvertently supporting another gospel, which is no gospel at all?"

Endnotes

[1] Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2003), 16.
[2] Ibid. See also 208–209.
[3] Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: The Uses of Faith after Freud* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).
[4] Christian Smith with Melissa Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[5] Ibid., 166.
[6] Ibid., 163–164.
[7] Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1986), 44–48.
[8] Alan Hirsch and Debra Hirsch, *Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship*, foreword by Rick Warren (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 139.
[9] Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1996), 21.
[10] Ibid., 164.
[11] "Who Is Jesus?" The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, June 7, 2013, http://lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=955.
[12] Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 39.
[13] Ibid., 32–33.
[14] D. G. Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), xvii.
[15] Ibid., xvii, xxvii–xxviii, 19–20.
[16] Ibid., xxiii.
[17] That is, see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.
[18] "Reading culture" faithfully means that we interpret and see the events of our lives as Christ would have us see them since we are part of his church.
[19] Tribe and community are used instead of "church" for reasons that will be explained later.
[20] The once a month idea is slightly arbitrary. The community should organically decide how often it wants to celebrate as a full tribe. While this should be regular, how regular needs to be determined by context.
[21] I am not against the old symbols; I'm against symbols that the community isn't instructed about.

[22] Hermann Sasse, *Scripture and the Church: Selected Essays of Hermann Sasse*, ed. Jeffrey J. Kloha and Ronald R. Feuerhahn (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 1995), 205.
[23] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 39.

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Change: What Can We, and Why Should We?

Scott F. Rische

Abstract: Change is a constant part of our lives. If the unchanging mission from our Lord to proclaim His unchanging gospel to a rapidly changing world is to be fulfilled, pastors and leaders are going to have to deal with and lead change. "WHAT can be changed?" and "WHY would and should changes be made?" are questions that are important to be able to answer with clarity and conviction. Faithfulness, fruitfulness, and freedom in the gospel are critical truths and principles to understand and apply as changes are considered, and made, for the sake of Christ and His mission.

Change has always been a part of God's creation and design. In Genesis 1, we read that there was morning, and there was evening. The sun came up, and the sun went down. Since the time God made the trees and fields, things have been growing and changing and reproducing. God commanded Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply." This meant that the population of the world was going to change and increase. Change and growth were God's design and idea.

For this reason, change is a constant part of our lives. We are changing, our world is changing, the cities we live in are changing, and our churches are changing; and because of the sinfulness of men and the brokenness of our world, not all those changes are positive or good. If we are going fulfill the unchanging mission our Lord has given to us to proclaim His unchanging gospel to a rapidly changing world, it is going to mean that we as leaders are going to have to deal with and lead change.

And so, if we are going to consider leading change for the sake of the mission, the inevitable questions we will have to answer are these: WHAT can we change, and WHY would and should we change it? Answering these questions is important in order to provide clarity about what can be changed and why the changes are needed. The answers enable pastors and leaders to articulate and communicate the changes in a way that people can understand and receive them. Such clarity also provides and underlies the convictions that pastors and leaders need in order to have the courage to direct changes for the sake of the mission. Pastors and leaders must be prepared to respond to the questions, and sometimes the objections, that people will raise as changes are discussed and introduced.

Let's consider the "why" question first. Why make changes? What should be the reason and motivation?

The "why" is that we have been given a mission, a purpose from God that we have been called into and even commanded to fulfill. God, incredibly, has invited us into HIS mission of "reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19) and His work of restoring the relationship He created all people to have with Him. God would have not given us this mission if He were not serious about this mission being fulfilled.

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His call is a call of faithfulness to His mission, as well as a promise that with that faithfulness there will be fruitfulness.

He has called us to be both "faithful" and "fruitful"

In John 15:1–16, Jesus speaks about faithfulness and fruitfulness. According to these words of John, Jesus does not command fruitfulness. Instead, He promises it. In fact, Jesus says that it is HIS calling and HIS desire that we do bear fruit: "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit" (v. 8) and "I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit" (v. 16). The reason He does not command us to bear fruit is that bearing fruit is not within our power to bring about by our own ability or decision. Jesus does not hold us accountable for something over which we have no control.

Rather, Jesus commands faithfulness. Jesus says that we are to "remain," or "abide," in Him. Jesus says that in order to bear fruit we need to be connected to the vine, to Him, and that if we remain in Him, and His words remain in us, we WILL bear much fruit (vv. 5, 7). That is His promise! In verse 10, Jesus reveals how we "abide" and remain connected: it is through obeying, or "faithfulness." Jesus not only gives us the promise of fruit bearing, but He also gives us the pathway to fruit bearing. That pathway is faithfulness. For Jesus, faithfulness and fruitfulness are not an either/or, but a both/and.

In Matthew 25:14–30, Jesus teaches the parable of the Ten Talents. In these words, it is very clear that Jesus is expecting faithfulness; and it is also very clear that Jesus is fully expecting fruitfulness as a result of that faithfulness.

In Isaiah 55:10–11, God certainly promises that wherever His Word is faithfully being proclaimed, there will be fruitfulness. His Word does NOT return empty.

In Matthew 28:19–20, Jesus' command, "Having gone, disciple all nations, . . . baptize, . . . teach," certainly assumes faithfulness, and "all" nations certainly assumes fruitfulness.

The book of Acts is a picture book of faithfulness and fruitfulness.

According to God's Word, it is impossible to be faithful and not also be fruitful**.** Yes, there are different seasons. One missionary or worker for the harvest may go to a place where the gospel has never been sown. Most of his time will be spent plowing. Yet, a plowed field is fruitfulness. Another missionary may work where the fields have been plowed and will do much sowing. Sowing the seeds of the gospel is fruitfulness. And finally, another missionary may harvest where another has sown. Harvesting is fruitfulness. Unfortunately, harvesting often has become the only measure of fruitfulness and therefore, faithfulness. However, one's faithfulness cannot always be measured by narrow numerical fruitfulness. Though that may true, since the fruitfulness that God desires is that all nations are made disciples, we cannot and should not ever be satisfied when there is little or no fruit. Though we may have peace about our faithfulness, we need to remain restless for fruitfulness.

All this is not to say that there is something we can do to *make* the Church grow. Jesus in John 15 says very clearly, "apart from me you can do nothing." Farmers cannot make a single seed grow, but they can do many things to help their crop grow better and bear more fruit. When they do, we call them "faithful" farmers. We don't condemn farmers when they are faithful in their labors in order to be more fruitful, just as we should not condemn Kingdom workers who are faithful in order to be more fruitful.

- Farmers are not trying to play God when they go out and plow their fields.
- Farmers are not trying to play God when they go out and sow seeds in their fields.
- Farmers are not trying to play God when they go out and cultivate or irrigate or fertilize.
- Farmers are not trying to play God when they go out and harvest a field that is ripe.
- Farmers are not trying to play God when they do all they can to make their crops more fruitful for the sake of the harvest.

Let it be said clearly again: Farmers cannot make a single seed grow, but they can do many things to help their crop grow better and bear more fruit. When they do, we call them faithful farmers. And if the farmer should do that for the sake of a worldly harvest, shouldn't we certainly be doing all we can for a spiritual harvest and for the sake of the mission?

All this gives us the WHY behind leading change for the sake of the mission: greater fruitfulness for the Kingdom, more "fish" being caught, more disciples being made, more people restored in their relationship with God through Christ, more people in heaven forever with God.

God permits us to ask, in fact, compels us to ask: "What can we do, and what changes can we make, in order to be more fruitful?" We can, and need, to ask, "How can we be more faithful in order to be more fruitful?" We are being "faithful" when we do NOT change what God says should never be changed. However, we are also being "faithful" when we change, for the sake of the gospel and the mission, anything that can and needs to be changed. The question always has to be, "How we can be more faithful to the command of our Lord Jesus to make disciples of all nations in order to be more fruitful?"

Paul certainly gives us this inspiration in 1 Corinthians 9:22–23: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

These words lead to the next important question: "What can we change?"

The simple, but important, answer to remember (because we can quickly start to get confused as people express their own opinions) is: Whatever God's Word allows and whatever God's Word does not forbid. That is pretty broad, but it seems from God's Word that God meant it to be that way. God is not interested in limiting or hindering His Kingdom work getting done! God would not command us to "make disciples of all nations" and then put up obstacles that would prevent or limit us from fulfilling His command.

Yet, when it comes to change, legalism often seems to creep in, and sometimes even prevail, instead of the "gospelism" that Paul understood and by which he lived and functioned, as just noted in 1 Corinthians 9. God's people, throughout the ages, seem to have the unfortunate capacity to determine certain ways (often in their opinion the only ways) that God's work is to be or should be done in areas of "adiaphora" (things neither commanded nor forbidden by God). They then would go about finding ways to impose those limitations on others and on those who would come after them. At times, it has been in the name of ecclesiastical or denominational unity. At other times, it has been in the name of biblical or confessional purity. It has even been argued for in the name of Lutheran integrity and identity. While that may be understandable or even expected within some traditions, it seems ironic and almost impossible that a Lutheran denomination, born of a reaffirmation of the gospel and the condemnation of the legalism that had been replacing the gospel, would turn around and make laws again where God has not made them.

On the other hand, just because God does not command or forbid something does not mean that it should automatically be changed. Paul recognized that even though something may be permissible, it may not be beneficial (1 Cor 10:23–24). However, the reverse is also true, that just because something is beneficial does not mean that it should made binding and therefore not be changed.

Legalism comes in basically three forms:

1) Making laws where God has not made them,

2) Attempting to enforce laws God did not make,

3) Teaching God's laws in ways He never intended.

Let's deal with the last one first: teaching God's laws in ways He never intended.

It is legalism, and the most damaging legalism of them all, to teach that people must obey God's laws in order to be loved and saved by God. This is why Paul so strongly condemns it in his letter to the Galatians (Gal 1:6–9; 3:1–14; 4:8–11; 5:1). "No one is justified before God by the law…" That is not how God intended for His law to be taught and used. "For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph 2:8–9).

However, it is *not* legalism to teach God's laws or teach people to obey God's laws. If so, God was a legalist to give His laws to Moses, and Moses was a legalist to give those to laws to the people of Israel. This would mean that Jesus was a legalist when He taught His disciples how to love others and to not judge in Luke 6:27–42. This would make Paul a legalist when he taught the Colossians how to love one another in Colossians 3:12–17. None of them was a legalist simply by teaching God's laws. It is not even legalism to teach God's people that they will be blessed if they obey God's commands. It is just the truth! Consider these passages of Scripture:

- Joshua 1:8, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your heart…*Then you will be prosperous and successful.*"

- Ephesians 6:1–3, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord…*that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth.*"

- John 15:10, "If you obey my commands, you *will remain in my love…*"
- John 13:17, "Now that you know these things, *you will be blessed if you do them.*"
- Revelation 2:10, "Be faithful, even to the point of death, *and I will give you the crown of life.*"

It *is* legalism to teach people that they will be blessed in a certain way, or that the only way to be loved by God or to blessed is to obey. This is simply not true. "He [God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Mt 5:45). It *is* legalism to threaten God's people with the law in order to motivate them to follow after Christ. But is *not* legalism to teach that people will be blessed if they obey, or if after hearing God's law, God's people feel convicted by that law and change the way they are thinking or living.

Legalism is not biblical, and, therefore, it is not Lutheran. It is legalism to make laws where God has not made them; doing so is adding to God's Word and a violation of "Sola Scriptura." A rejection and condemnation of legalism was one of the primary, if not the primary, reason for the Reformation!

Understanding such matters is very helpful as we consider what changes we can make in order to be more fruitful for the sake of the mission. In leading change, we need to be asking: "What does God command? What does God allow, and what does God forbid?" We should not be saying "no" to anything to which God says "yes"; neither should we should we say an unthinking "no" to anything that God has not forbidden. If we say "no" to what God has said "yes," then traditions, human opinions, or an ecclesiology based on the opinions of people instead of on divine revelation, will shape the gospel of Christ and the mission. Rather, Christ and His mission should shape us and our traditions, opinions, and ecclesiology. It is as Jesus said in Mark 7:8, "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

So, then, what can we do to be more fruitful? What changes for the sake of the mission must and can we make, based on God's Word?

To illustrate, let's focus on one key area of ministry, where changes are often needed and where changes often make a significant difference for the sake of the mission, but where legalism sometimes is present. It is an area where, even if changes are not made, growth and renewed vitality often follow just by the willingness and openness of God's people to consider changes for sake of the mission.

Fruitfulness seems to follow leaders and congregations where there is a spirit of humility, openness, and a commitment to do whatever is needed in order to be faithful to God's mission.

But there is also something else that is true of this area. Even though it is an area that may be in need of change for there to be greater fruitfulness for the sake of the mission, resistance to change in this area also often seems significant. For this reason, a pastor and the leadership will need to have clarity and courage: clarity about WHAT can be changed and clarity about WHY those changes are needed. That clarity will give them the conviction that they need, and that conviction will give them the courage that they need. But though changes in this area often are met with resistance, it is also often an area that proves to be key in providing a great amount of fruitfulness.

The area we are talking about is worship.

For most pastors and leaders, at least in Lutheran congregations, there is no question that the gospel is what is to be shaping the heart of the message and the core of their worship. But a question that is sometimes not asked as passionately is this: "How is the gospel allowing for the shaping of new forms of worship?" Do pastors, leaders, and congregations believe that they have as much freedom in their worship forms as they believe there is in the gospel that they proclaim every week when they come together for worship?

Is the gospel what is shaping their worship, or the law? Though certain forms may indeed carry the gospel and may have been written with the gospel at the heart and core of the message and of the worship, are those forms of worship being chosen and used as a matter of the law, or the gospel? Are they being chosen freely, or as a matter of obligation? Are Christ and His mission shaping the worship, or are men's laws or expectations shaping it? Have certain forms been moved from being a "beneficial form to consider using," to a "binding form that is to be used in all places and for all times" for the sake of what has been defined as "good order" and for the sake of "unity"? Has a "good" way to worship been made the only "true" way to worship as a sign of being a faithful Lutheran?

In Article VII of the Augsburg Confession we read these words:

> For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the gospel be preached in conformity with the pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. It is as Paul says in Eph. 4:4, 5, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism."[1]

Elsewhere we also read:

> We further believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority, and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, as long as it does so without frivolity and offense but in an orderly and appropriate way, as at any time may seem to be most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church.[2]
>
> Therefore we reject and condemn as false and contrary to God's Word the following teachings: 1) That human precepts and institutions in the church are to be regarded as in themselves divine worship or a part of it. . . . 4) When such external ceremonies and indifferent things are abolished in a way which suggests that the community of God does not have the liberty to

> avail itself of one or more such ceremonies according to its circumstances and as it may be most beneficial to the church.[3]

Thus, the question must be asked: Do you form your worship around laws you believe you are to follow, or do you form it around the gospel that is trying to form you?

There is no place in the Bible where we are told to worship in one particular way, nor to repent for worshiping in some particular way. Jesus, given the chance in John 4 when talking to the woman at the well, does not prescribe one exact way or form, but only asks for worship to be done in "spirit and in truth." If there was ever a moment when Jesus could have and should have given us the formula for a correct form and the most God-pleasing way to worship, it would have been then. But He didn't. He did not prescribe a form of worship that shapes one's heart. Rather, Jesus described the shape of a heart that forms one's worship.

So what do we find in Scripture instead? We can find in Scripture where people are called to repent, not for worshiping with some incorrect form, but for not worshiping with their whole hearts and lives.

Again, we should make no laws where God has not made them, and that includes laws around worship. When we make laws about the way one should worship, we carve the very heart out of that worship; and one is no longer free to truly worship the One God with his whole heart, which is the only kind of worship God deserves and truly desires. There is a big difference between arguing for something that is not specified in Scripture because it is beneficial, and arguing for something not specified in Scripture and then making it binding.

And why are laws created by men so devastating to our lives of worship? There are at least three possible effects of those laws which can carve the heart out of one's worship:

- Laws cause <u>anxiety</u> that comes from trying to do it "right" or "correctly," which destroys the joy and freedom that the Scriptures describe should always accompany our worship.
- Trying to do worship right brings about a <u>fear</u> that comes from wondering if you are doing it wrong. John said that love drives out fear. The opposite is also true, that fear drives out love.
- Laws result in <u>judging</u> another's worship as being faithful, God-pleasing, or properly motivated, or deciding who is doing it right and who is doing it wrong. David came under his wife's judgment when he worshiped in a way she thought "undignified." See 2 Samuel 6:13–15.

Maybe the best question we can be asking is this: Whose worship is it, and for whom is it? Is it ours? Our congregation's? Or is it God's and for God? How we go about worship should be the same as what God would want; and what we allow or refuse should be the same as what God would allow or refuse. What does God accept as "acceptable" worship? Luke 18:9–14 clearly answers that question.

> To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by

> himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Where to go from here

So what is the best way, in the freedom of the gospel, to make decisions about what forms of worship to use? If certain forms are going to be written and chosen and used, what are the best ways to go about making those decisions? While legalism (requiring that a certain form of worship be used in all places for all times) is not biblical, leaders and congregations do need to choose together what their worship is going to be like and choose what forms they will use. What is a Christ-Mission-centered way to create and choose what those forms will be?

Hopefully, the following three principles will be helpful in some way:

- First, make certain that the worship is consistent with God's Word and the Call of God that is found in the Word that He has given us.

The content and patterns of worship that God's people have followed throughout history can be found in God's Word. Songs, hymns, spiritual songs, scripture, prayer, the sacraments—all these are evident in God's Word. And the Word clearly shows that God's desire for worship is that it be done in "spirit and in truth" resulting in repentant, believing worshipers who love Him with all their heart, soul, body, and mind, as well as love their neighbors as themselves.

People worship when they know they have been saved, when they know that they have been delivered from certain death. To Moses, in Exodus 3:12, God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." Israel's deliverance from Egypt and bondage was going to culminate in worship. And their deliverance began with worship. As we read in Exodus 15, after coming through the Red Sea, they worshiped!

Nathan was a prophet, but Nathan was also used by God as a worship leader in King David's life. God used Nathan to bring about a deep conviction in David's heart for his sin, and through that recognition, a renewal in David's faith and relationship with God, such that David was moved to write in Psalm 51: "Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of my salvation….O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise."

In Matthew 14:33, after being delivered from the storm, the disciples "bowed down and worshiped Jesus."

It's the deep, and even sometimes spontaneous worship and celebration, that comes from seeing God as He really is—holy and righteous and all-knowing and all-powerful—and because of that, seeing ourselves as we really are, unholy, unrighteous, unknowing and weak. And mourning our broken condition, we worship as we realize that that we have been saved from certain death and given a whole new life.

Likewise, in Romans 12:1–2, Paul writes: “Offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship.” It is also the worship of living out with our lives what God has done and is doing in and through us. We worship not only when we see and believe Christ’s being obedient unto death for us, even death on the cross for our salvation; we also worship when through our death and being made alive again we obey and follow Jesus. In John 14:15 and 15:10, Jesus said that the evidence of our love for Him is our obedience to Him. Our obedience in no way gains us His love, but our obedience keeps us in His love and is the living testimony of our love for Him and is our “spiritual act of worship.” And it is not just about our worship of God through our lives and actions; others are also led to worship God because of our lives and actions.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:12–15:

> This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

- Second, make certain that the worship is consistent with the context and culture into which God has called a congregation.

This principle is listed second rather than third because after God and His Word, the second priority for the Church needs to be His mission. It is where some disagreement also begins to arise as people consider different forms of worship. As stated at the beginning of this article, God is on a mission, and He has invited His people into His mission with Him. Believers and congregations are part of the context in which they live, and so the worship needs to communicate and connect with those within the Church: the believers and family of God. But all believers and congregations are also part of a larger context into which they have been called to share the gospel, and so the worship also needs to communicate and connect with those outside of the Church—with unbelievers.

The spoken word and the sung word are the two primary means of communication in the typical worship service. The words that are sung are carried along by music. It’s easy to comprehend that words must be clearly communicated and clearly understood, but that music is also a “language” is often overlooked or misunderstood. Choosing words that can be understood by both the “insider” and the “outsider,” as well as choosing music that communicates to both the “insider” AND the “outsider” are important decisions when considering how best to fulfill the mission of God in a particular place.

While worship should never be made into evangelism, Christ-centered worship certainly can be, and often ends up being, evangelistic because the means of grace, namely, the Scriptures, are being read, sung, and proclaimed, and the Sacraments are being administered. "Faith comes by hearing" the Word of God (Rom 10:17). But that someone is speaking God's Word does not necessarily mean that someone will be hearing and understanding it. (Imagine someone who knows only English listening to a sermon in Chinese). One really "hears" only if he or she understands, and that is what making worship consistent with the context is all about. It's not about adding anything to the Word of God so that it has power. The Word is powerful in and of itself. But it is about removing barriers that would inhibit and limit the hearing of God's Word by people who are in desperate need of hearing it. Thank the Lord that He has given us the freedom to consider our forms of worship and even shape new and different forms of worship and music that are consistent with the context in which a congregation finds itself.

These first two principles, considered together, can be a great help to congregations in finding unity around the forms of worship they use. Making certain that the worship is consistent with the Word of God and the Call of God, as well as consistent with the context and culture in which a congregation finds itself, are of tremendous value in leading the members of a congregation to get beyond their own personal preferences in choosing and accepting different forms of worship. These first two principles, when applied, help the members of a congregation to find unity around the forms of worship being used because those forms are being chosen for something bigger, greater, larger, and more far reaching than just themselves. The forms are being chosen for reasons that transcend personal opinions and preferences. The forms are being chosen for God on the basis of God's Word, and are being chosen for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in this world; for the sake of those who still have yet to hear God's Word and believe in Jesus Christ. Worship that honors God and His Word, and reaches out to people who do not know God, always blesses, strengthens, and deepens the believers' faith and relationships with God as well.

- Third, make certain that the worship is consistent with the capabilities of the people who have a share in this calling.

People will always do their best when people are allowed to do what they do best. It honors God and it honors the gifts He has given to His people and the people to whom He has given those gifts when we employ the gifts and talents and passions of all the people God has brought together in a particular place. While to reach people in a certain context may require additional gifts and resources, for which we ask our Father in heaven, the first response should always be to celebrate and use the gifts He has already given to the people gathered in that place. Before becoming discouraged, believing that what we have is not enough (the disciples thought this when all they had were two fish and five loaves of bread), what if we would first lift up to heaven what we do have and give thanks as Jesus did, and then be wonderfully surprised when what we already have is more than enough to accomplish whatever God is calling us to do?

Conclusion

Hopefully, these three principles can be helpful starting points for conversation, as well as tools, as forms of worship are created or considered. Once applied, leaders can put forward those forms that grow out of these principles and invite people to participate in those forms because they are beneficial (not binding), first, in worshiping Christ for all He has done, and beneficial also in building us up and sending us out for all that Christ has called us to be and do.

Again, worship is an area where, even if changes are not made, growth and renewed vitality often follow just by the willingness and openness of God's people to consider changes for the sake of the gospel and the sake of the mission. Fruitfulness seems to follow leaders and congregations where there is a spirit of humility, openness, and a commitment to do whatever is needed in order to be faithful to God's mission.

However, worship is only one area that the gospel needs to touch and influence and lead. There are many other areas of church and ministry where the principles explained in this article regarding the WHY and WHAT of change need to be considered and applied. God's plan and desire is that we are both faithful and fruitful, and that we make no laws where He has not made them.

As stated earlier: God permits us to ask—in fact, compels us to ask: "What can we do, and what changes can we make, in order to be more fruitful?" We can and need to ask, "How can we be more faithful in order to be more fruitful?" We are being faithful when we do *not* change what God says should never be changed. However, we are also being faithful when we *do* change, for sake the mission, anything that can and needs to be changed.

May God guide us all as we seek Him and follow Him.

Endnotes

[1] In Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 32.
[2] FC SD X.9 in Tappert, 612.
[3] FC Ep X.8, 12 in Tappert, 494–495.

Acuerdo de Güigüe

The Güigüe Agreement

Introduction: Mark Kempff

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He cares for His flock. We are His flock. The gifts of shepherding the flock of believers have been given to church. These gifts are to be used to the glory of the Gospel and to the nurturing of the flock. To shepherd is to follow Jesus, hear His voice in His Word and communicate it in the context, needs and realities of the flock, gathered and cared for in congregations and church bodies. To shepherd means to listen, learn, respond, and act in the Gospel for the well-being of the church. To shepherd often times involves guiding believers through the "valley to the shadow of death," knowing that the evil one "stalks as one eager to devour," especially those new in the faith.

It was precisely during a retreat (March 22–25, 1994) in the Abadía "San José" (a Roman Catholic retreat center) in Güigüe, Carabobo, Venezuela, that a group of Lutheran pastors, leaders, and missionaries serving the Lutheran Church of Venezuela—conscious of their responsibilities to guide the Lord's flock and to guard and protect it from threats and dangers— worked long hours to prepare a study document for the members of the Lutheran communities in Venezuela. This declaration of faith with spiritual encouragement and advice came after numerous situations of spiritual warfare in several congregations. After much study of the Word, daily strengthening through Holy Communion, prayer, and the mutual counseling, consolation, and comforting of the brothers, THE GÜIGÜE AGREEMENT became a reality. It was immediately shared with all Lutheran congregations in Venezuela. And now, years later, becomes available for others (both in Spanish and English), for the spiritual warfare which the church faces continues because it is not a "wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12).

Acuerdo de Güigüe

Nosotros, pastores, líderes y misioneros luteranos trabajando en la Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela (ILV), y conscientes de nuestra responsabilidad de guiar el rebaño del Señor, cuidar y protegerlo de toda amenaza y peligro, presentamos a los miembros de las comunidades luteranas en Venezuela, las siguientes afirmaciones y consejos:

AFIRMAMOS:

1. Que a pesar de las opiniones de pensadores modernos que niegan la existencia de los poderes demoníacos, sí existe un poder espiritual personal que en la Biblia es llamado Satanás, el Diablo, y el Maligno. *San Juan 8:44; Apocalipsis 12:7–9*

2. Que este ser espiritual es el líder de todo un ejército organizado de ángeles caídos, o sea, demonios. *Efesios 6:12*

3. Que estos seres espirituales malignos constituyen un peligro para los seres humanos, porque sus principales funciones son influenciar, cegar, tentar y engañar a la humanidad. *II Corintios 4:4 y 11:14–15; I Pedro 5:8–9*

4. Que estas funciones pueden conducir al endemoniamiento de personas. *San Marcos 5:2–3*

5. Que no obstante, el poder de las fuerzas demoníacas, Jesucristo, por medio de Su muerte, resurrección y ascensión a la diestra de Dios Padre, ha vencido a Satanás y ha recibido suprema autoridad sobre Satanás y sus demonios. *San Mateo 28:18; Efesios 1:18–23; Hebreos 2:14–15*

6. Que el poder y la autoridad de Cristo son accesibles a los miembros de Su Iglesia. *Filipenses 2:10–11; Efesios 2:6; Colosenses 1:13–14; San Juan 2:14*

7. Que, sin embargo, Dios permite que Satanás y sus demonios tengan cierta libertad para actuar hasta que regrese Cristo. *San Mateo 4:1–11; II Tesalonicenses 2:8–12; I Pedro 5:8–11*

8. Que, en aquel día, Satanás y sus demonios serán definitivamente despojados de su poder y eternamente encarcelados en el infierno. *Apocalipsis 20:10 y 19:21*

9. Que percibimos la actividad satánica en dos ámbitos: en el ámbito social (la corrupción política, la destrucción de la familia, las guerras, el abuso de las drogas, la violencia,. inmoralidades sexuales, etc.) y en el ámbito espiritual (el brote de sectas falsas, la proliferación de diversas formas de ocultismo, los ataques que rompen la buena convivencia en las iglesias, la desviación de la fe y de la práctica cristianas, etc.). *Efesios 6:10–12; I Juan 4:1–4*

Puesto que se han visto algunas actividades satánicas en perjuicio de nuestras comunidades luteranas en Venezuela,

ACONSEJAMOS:

1. Que ningún miembro de nuestras comunidades participe en tales grupos como: los Rosacruces, los Gnósticos, la Nueva Acrópolis, círculos de metafísica, espiritistas, santeros, etc. *Apocalipsis 21:8*

2. Que ningún miembro de nuestras comunidades participe en tales prácticas como: consultas a curanderos, consultas a los muertos, lecturas de horóscopos, de cartas, de tabaco, de las aguas (orina), y de café, tablero de Ouija, ensalmes, etc. *Deuteronomio 18:9–13*

3. Que ningún miembro de nuestras comunidades utilice tales objetos como: azabaches, talismanes, amuletos, paquetes mágicos, cruces magnéticas o cualquier otro objeto que ha sido usado en ritos paganos o satánicos. *Hechos 19:18–20; I Corintios 10:20–22*

4. Que ningún miembro de nuestras comunidades guarde en su casa libros de magia, literatura y videos pornográficos y de terror, discos de grupos satánicos, ídolos de cualquier tipo, etc. *I Timoteo 4:1*

5. Que los miembros de nuestras comunidades no den lugar a Satanás por medio de: rencores, odios, pecados no confesados, celos, etc. *I Corintios 7:5; II Corintios 10:3–5; Efesios 4:26–27; I Timoteo 3:6*

6. Que ningún miembro de nuestras comunidades participe en ceremonias de exorcismo ni solo, ni sin la orientación y la autorización de su iglesia. *Efesios 1:18–23; Apocalipsis 12:10–12*

7. Que cada comunidad, como iglesia de Cristo, actúe con amor y discernimiento en el Espíritu Santo, cuidadosamente y con prudencia. *II Timoteo 1:7; I Juan 4:1–6 y 2:18–23*

8. Que en cada comunidad haya hermanos capacitados en el cuidado espiritual que pueden ministrar a las personas que sufren de aflicciones espirituales. *Josué 1:9; II Timoteo 2:1–2; I Pedro 4:7–8; Santiago 4:7–10*

9. Que nuestras comunidades se cuiden de caer en una fascinación obsesiva con lo demoníaco y de dar más tiempo o importancia al enemigo que a Jesucristo. **Porque Cristo es y será el centro y el motivo de todas nuestras actividades.** *San Juan 6:40 y 14:6; Romanos 8:31–39; II Corintios 5:17*

10. Que en cada comunidad se enseñe la importancia de que cada miembro esté preparado para salir victorioso en la guerra espiritual, asumiendo su posición de autoridad con Cristo mediante el uso de toda la armadura que Dios ofrece. *Efesios 6:10–20; Colosenses 2:15 y 3:5–10*

11. Y animamos a que todos los miembros de nuestras comunidades se fortalezcan por medio de: la meditación diaria de la Palabra, recordando diariamente el bautismo, y la participación constante en la adoración pública y en la Santa Cena, la confesión sincera del pecado, la oración constante y ferviente, y la alabanza por medio de los cantos. *San Juan 5:24; II Corintios 4:8–18; Gálatas 3:26–27; Hebreos 10:12–18 y 23–27*

12. Que los que han tenido participación en prácticas ocultas sean animados a experimentar la liberación de culpa y la paz de conciencia por medio de la confesión y la absolución en el nombre de Cristo. *San Mateo 12:43–45; II Corintios 3:17; Gálatas 5:22–25; I Tesalonicenses 5:19–24*

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22–25 de marzo de 1994

The Güigüe Agreement

We—Lutheran pastors, leaders, and missionaries serving the Lutheran Church of Venezuela *(Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela - ILV)*—conscious of our responsibility to guide the Lord's flock and to guard and protect it from threats and dangers, present this study document to the members of the Lutheran communities in Venezuela, as a declaration of faith with spiritual encouragement and advice:

WE AFFIRM THAT

1. Despite the views of modern thought that deny the existence of all-evil demonic powers, indeed there is a personal all-evil spiritual power who in Scripture is called Satan, the devil, and the evil one. *John 8:44; Revelation 12:7–9*

2. This all-evil spiritual being is the leader of an organized army of fallen angels called demons. *Ephesians 6:12*

3. These evil spiritual beings constitute a danger for humans, because their primary functions are to influence, blind, tempt, and mislead mankind away from God. *II Corinthians 4:4 and 11:14–15; I Peter 5:8–9*

4. These diabolic functions can cause people to be possessed by an evil spirit or evil spirits. *Mark 5:2–3*

5. These demonic forces, however, have been conquered and condemned by Jesus Christ, through his death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God the Father. Christ received supreme authority over Satan and has defeated him and all his demons. *Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:18–23; Hebrews 2:14–15*

6. The power and authority of Christ are accessible and given to members of his Church. *Philippians 2:10–11; Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 1:13–14; John 2:14*

7. God, however, allows Satan and his demons limited freedom to act until Christ returns. *Matthew 4:1–11; II Thessalonians 2:8–12; I Peter 5:8–11*

8. On that final day, Satan and his demons will be permanently stripped of their power, condemned, and eternally jailed to hell. *Revelation 19:21 and 20:10*

9. Satanic activity is perceived in two areas: the social realm (political corruption, the destruction of the family, wars, drug abuse, violence, sexual immorality, etc.) and the spiritual realm (the outbreak of false sects, the proliferation of different forms of occultism, attacks that destroy the unity in the church, the deviation from faith in Christ and Christian practice, etc.). *Ephesians 6:10–12; I John 4:1–4*

Since there has been satanic activities to the detriment of our Lutheran communities in Venezuela,

WE ADVISE ALL MEMBERS THAT

1. No member of our communities participate in such groups as the Rosicrucians, the Gnostics, the New Acropolis movement, groups dedicated to the study of metaphysics, spiritualism, *santería,* or black magic, or in any kind of dabbling in witchcraft. *Revelations 21:8*

2. No member of our communities participate in such practices as consultations with healers related to the occult, consultations with the dead, palm readings, horoscopes, Tarot readings, tobacco reading rites, water (urine) reading rites, coffee reading rites, the Ouija Board (or similar games), enchantments, etc. *Deuteronomy 18:9–13*

3. No member of our communities use such objects as good luck charms (*azabaches*), talismans, amulets, magic packets, magnetic crosses, or any other object that is used in satanic or pagan rites. *Acts 19:18–20; I Corinthians 10:20–22*

4. No members of our communities have in their homes books on magic, pornographic literature, videos and games that deal with horror and terror, music produced by satanic groups, idols of any type, etc. *I Timothy 4:1*

5. No member of our communities give place to Satan by means of keeping grudges, harboring hatred, holding on to unconfessed sins, giving reign to jealousy, etc. *I Corinthians 7:5; II Corinthians 10:3–5; Ephesians 4:26–27; I Timothy 3:6*

6. No member of our communities become involved in exorcism ceremonies, especially acting alone without the guidance and the authorization of their church. *Ephesians 1:18–23; Revelation 12:10–12*

7. Each community, as Christ's church, act with love and discernment in the Holy Spirit, and doing so carefully and wisely. *II Timothy 1:7; I John 4:1–6 and 2:18–23*

8. In each community, there be brothers equipped in the spiritual care who can minister together to people suffering from spiritual afflictions. *Joshua 1:9; II Timothy 2:1–2; I Peter 4:7–8; James 4:7–10*

9. Our communities exercise caution by not falling into an obsessive fascination with the demonic by giving more time or importance to the enemy than to Jesus Christ so that Christ may continue to be the very center and reason for all of our activities. *John 6:40 and 14:6; Romans 8:31–39; II Corinthians 5:17*

10. Each community teach the importance of each member's being prepared to emerge victorious in spiritual warfare by trusting the authority of Christ through the use of the full armor that God gives to his own. *Ephesians 6:10–20; Colossians 2:15 and 3:5–10*

11. All members of our communities be strengthened by means of meditating daily on God's Word, daily remembering their Holy Baptism, participating in the sacrament of Holy Communion, daily exercising of sincere confession of sins, participating in public worship with song and praise, and being involved in constant and fervent prayer. *John 5:24; II Corinthians 4:8–18; Galatians 3:26–27; Hebrews 10:12–18 and 23–27*

12. Those who have participated in occult practices be admonished to experience the liberation from guilt and peace of conscience through confession and absolution in Christ. *Matthew 12:43–45; II Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:22–25; I Thessalonians 5:19–24*

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The Gates of Jerusalem: Rethinking and Rebuilding Missions in the Light of Nehemiah's Approach

Getachew Kiros

"African-immigrant leaders in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod came together at their first-ever national conference Aug. 9–11 in Bowie, MD, adopting bylaws and a strategic framework for their outreach ministry and electing its officers under the theme "Holding Together in Unity for the Kingdom's Work." (Reporter-Online Version from 09/13/2013). At that meeting, the name of the African immigrant mission was altered to African Lutheran Missions in the Americas-ALMIA. Furthermore, the author of this paper, the Rev. Dr. Getachew Kiros was elected unanimously to lead the new African Lutheran Missions in the Americas-ALMIA as national President.

Abstract: In this paper, I attempt to offer some suggestions for mission based on the life and ministry of Nehemiah. Serving God in the old and modern times seems to have common traits that can be applicable contextually. We might ask whether there is a good ancient model of mission that we all can learn from and, if possible, apply today. There are many ways of doing missions. However, some common factors are foundational. In this article, we consider some of these common factors and the characteristic pattern of Nehemiah's burden, vision, and *koinonia*-oriented rebuilding project. We look at the first three gates of Jerusalem that Nehemiah and his people rebuilt and repaired. From them we can learn lessons that can be helpful for our current mission endeavors.

Introduction

Sometimes the mission task can seem impossible, especially when the hindrances are great and the risk zones we are entering seem to be overwhelming. This study examines Nehemiah's first three chapters and the scenarios around Nehemiah in and near the end of 446 BC. Part one of this paper delves into the risky mission in which Nehemiah found himself. Part two discusses his prayer-driven vision. Part three delves into Nehemiah's mission approach, and part four discusses the three gates of Jerusalem and derives conclusive lessons from them.

Getachew Kiros grew up in the Mekane Yesus Lutheran Church in Ethiopia. For a time he has served the Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in Sweden. He received his Ph.D. from Fuller Theological Seminary and in 2007 joined the LCMS through the colloquy program.

1. Mission in Risky Zones

God's mission may expose leaders to diverse risks, depending on the context into which the leader ventures. However, these risks can be mitigated if ample preparation is done in prayers, research, and careful planning. As in Nehemiah's time, a variety of oppositions may attempt to hinder God's work. Nehemiah, who was the cupbearer[1] of king Artaxerxes' New Year or birthday banquets, took a big risk when, after four months of preparation in prayers and fasting and careful planning for the appropriate time, he decided to show his emotions to the king. Williamson notes that Nehemiah was aware that he "was exposing himself to considerable danger,"[2] because the king's decree in Ezra 4:20–21 prohibited anyone from rebuilding Jerusalem. Furthermore, "a gloomy appearance, as well as lack of courtesy, might well be interpreted as evidence of plotting against the king."[3] In a risky mission call, what can a leader do, even after much preparation in prayers? It is at such a time that missiological wisdom, preparation in prayers, vision, smart planning, "receptor-oriented" communication, and diplomatic skills are *sine qua none* for this task and any mission.

2. Prayer Driven Vision of Building for Unity

A vision may be born out of the burden of an important cause, calamities, deep concern, or realizing the necessity of an important issue. Nehemiah began with a prayer of repentance. "It can be outlined as follows: (a) invocation to God; (b) confession of sins; (c) request to the Lord to remember his people; (d) request for success."[4] In chapters 1–2, we can see the process of birthing his vision. The vision to rebuild the wall and the gates of Jerusalem arose from deep concern for God's people and the burden that Nehemiah felt when he was in Susa.[5] He heard of the destruction of Jerusalem and the deplorable reality of the people of God in it. In the month of Kislev, [6] Hanani, one of Nehemiah's brothers, came from Judah with some other men; and as he questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile and about Jerusalem, they told him about the latest "breaking news" from Jerusalem, saying: "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire" (Neh 1:3). When Nehemiah heard these things, he "sat down and wept." For several days, he "mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven" (Neh 1:4). His concern and burden for his people and Jerusalem prompted him to do corporate and personal heartfelt confessions. He pleaded:

> Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. (Neh 1:5–7)

In this confessional prayer, we can discern a faithful servant-leader who cared not only for the external and internal structural building of Jerusalem, but also for his people's spiritual wellness and unity— seeking harmony between the Word of God and the people of God. It is self-evident that Nehemiah was called to serve and lead at such a time as this. He humbly confessed not only his own and his family's sins, but also the sins of his fellow Israelites. Nehemiah was an exemplary leader who sees the rhyme and reason of the destruction of Jerusalem. For him, it was not only the wall and the gates of Jerusalem that were destroyed; it was also the collective spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing of his people. It meant that the word of God was neglected and that the community of faith was tarnished and had to be restored through deep repentance, as well as careful and precise planning, including taking risks for such a cause as rebuilding the community of God's people.

3. Nehemiah's Mission Approach: Right Planning at the Right Time

As noted above, in any biblical mission endeavors, it is indeed important to prepare in prayers and depend on the grace of God. The global mission field is complex and requires us, like Nehemiah, to be equipped with prayers for our missions. Nowadays, we need deep-level, community-oriented, and scripture-driven prayers. We also need to be equipped with the knowledge of missions, anthropology, Scripture, and the sacraments. More than any time in history, we also need to be intentionally equipped with our Lutheran confessions so that we can speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15) and in deeds.

Nevertheless, it is also imperative to plan and do so at the right time. As Benjamin Franklin observed, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail."[7] Nehemiah strategically planned, patiently waiting in prayers, planning and preparations that lasted four months. He did not respond to his vocation in actions right away. As Williamson notes:

> This period of waiting upon God is not to be regarded as a sign of weakness on his part. From the later narrative, we know that he was a dynamic man of action. But if a true vocation has been received to serve God, such a testing time of waiting is often to be expected; prayer during such a period will be an indication of whether the call has been genuine and whether commitment to it is unwavering.[8]

Nehemiah carefully planned to approach the king for permission at such a time when the king was happy and having a feast. As he prepared wisely, "he awaited an indication that it was God's time for him to move. Meanwhile he had faith to pray not only for a restoration of his people's fortunes, based on his knowledge of God's covenant mercies, but also for the specific reversal of the king's previous edict (Cf. v 11 with Ezra 4:17–22)."[9]

3.1. Communication Skills—Nehemiah's Decisive Missiological Touchdown

Nehemiah was an excellent communicator with delicate diplomatic skills.[10] In his request to the king, he avoided sensitive issues and sought common issues as he responded: "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" (Neh 2:3). Here, Nehemiah elicited sympathy from the king and carefully avoided mentioning Jerusalem; rather, he referred to his ancestors' burial city, which is a customary concern of the ancient Persian culture. The turning point was achieved. We may call it the first missiological touchdown for Nehemiah. "The king's open invitation for Nehemiah to state his request marks the turning point in the conversation"[11] and the future outcome of the Nehemiah's re-building project. His request was granted in the form of the king's letter and he was ready to go (Neh 2:6–8).

However, it is often true that when leaders called by God are working for the common good of the people of God with the vision of planting or starting a new worship center or the restoration of God's worship place, there will unfortunately be others who disapprove of the move. They may even become displeased when God's good hands seem to lean towards His people through His leaders. In Nehemiah's time, it was Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official who, upon hearing of Nehemiah's mission, became "very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites" (Neh 2:10). However, Nehemiah had nothing to fear because he was skillfully equipped with an authoritative letter from king Artaxexes.

We may say much the same for us today. The Lord Jesus Christ gave us the mandate to do mission work by proclaiming the Gospel to all and every person of all ethnic nationalities because He had been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ [τῆς] γῆ) (Mt 28:18). Thus, we see here also a corporate or communal task of the Great Commission, because our Lord said, as you (pl) go, (*peruentes*) therefore (οὖν) you (pl) disciple them (*mateteusate*), again, you (pl) baptize them, (*baptizontes*) in the Name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit—you (plural) teach them (*didaskontes*) etc. Therefore, like Nehemiah, who skillfully organized his people for the task of restoring a place of worship to God and the gates of Jerusalem, it seems imperative for us wisely to do similar communal and organized contextual approaches to our missions.

3.2. Understanding the Mission Field

Upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah wanted to know and understand firsthand the works to be done. He surveyed the walls and inspected the gates of Jerusalem during the night to avoid unwelcome opposition before he started anything (cf. the incident in Ezra 4:12). He was a cautious and wise leader. Thus, to fulfill his surveys, he was accompanied by only a few men and one animal to keep his actions discreet. The fact that we know Scriptures, pray regularly, and trust in God does not mean that missiological or theological research is unnecessary. "Nehemiah needed to know where to rebuild the old walls and where to reconstruct the new one…. Some things are better not publicized before their time."[12]

In our time, what we learn from Nehemiah is that doing research on those things we want to accomplish before tackling them is important. Therefore, scriptural and missiological research can serve as very helpful tools in delivering our faith messages to people. Research helps us understand what is at stake, what to do and not to do or say. It also enlightens on us what to expect. For example, a Hindu person who is attempting to flee the law of karma may at first reject the idea of being born again (Jn 3:3) because by his own reasoning he is praying and living an ascetic life to avoid the vicious and endless reincarnation cycle of Samsara: birth-life-death-rebirth or reincarnation.

The Bono'o people of the French Camerouns told the first missionaries: "But we want to go to hell, if it is a hot place." For the Bono'o concept of a good place after death "is one which is always hot—never subject to chilling winds with accompanying sickness and suffering."[13] In other words, if we do not do anthropological research beforehand, we cannot "see the rhyme and reason behind other cultural beliefs and practices because we have acquired our own beliefs and values as the result of the molding process of our own culture, of which we have been largely unaware."[14] According to Nida, an anthropological understanding of cultures and other religions "helps us to see and comprehend more clearly not only the reasons for others' behavior but also the bases of our own."[15] However, this does not mean that we, as the community of believers, should water down our core Christian confessions. It simply means that we need to be well-informed missionaries about our neighbors far and near so that we can fulfill the Great Commission. Hence, being equipped with knowledge and the grace of God, we are called by our God to be ontologically in communion (*koinonia*) for a common missional purpose.

3.3. Organizational Approach—*Koinonia* in Action

In patristic views, being comes from the inherent *koinonia* and the being of the Triune God Himself. "There is no true being without communion. Nothing exists as an 'individual,' conceivable to itself. Communion is an ontological category."[16] It means that true being is God's way of being. God's way of being is being in *koinonia*, which implies relationship and fellowship. However, it is not a passive *koinonia*; but rather dynamic and active in creation. This also was true for Nehemiah. In the rebuilding effort of the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah did "not take sole credit for the rebuilding: on the contrary he distributes the credit generously, beginning with the high priest, the grandson of Joshua, the high priest who was the companion of Zerubbabel."[17] Moreover, the lists of the people that Nehemiah provided reminds us of previous lists of Israel's "mighty men" (2 Sam 23:8) with their actions of high valor against the enemies of the people of God. However, in the rebuilding task of Jerusalem's walls, Nehemiah had a community of Israelites in action. The lists of heroes came from all kinds professional backgrounds, including priests, goldsmiths, perfumers, district rulers, temple servants, gatekeepers, and merchants.[18] This list implies the fullness of the people of God who took the risk of endangering their lives with one common vision in mind: to dwell with God, serve and worship Him in Jerusalem.

Visionary and skilled leaders may begin God's mission alone as trailblazers. However, the whole task of mission can be completed only by the corporate and united and harmonious work of all God's people at all places. Therefore, Scripture and the Holy Spirit do call us into an action-oriented fellowship (*koinonia*) because by grace "we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Pt 2:9). We notice in Nehemiah chapter 3 that Nehemiah was an excellent organizer. Recalling David's heroes or "mighty men" who battled against their enemies in 2 Samuel 23:8, the task of a hero in Nehemiah's time was to rebuild and repair the gates of Jerusalem in an action-driven *koinonia*. Breneman notes that about forty-five categories of constructions and ten gates are mentioned in Nehemiah 3.[19] Nehemiah planned all these building activities, organized groups that came from non-homogeneous professional backgrounds, and orchestrated the infrastructure to provide materials. Indeed, he accomplished a great task because he transfigured his vision towards a communal reality.

3.3. Transforming the Vision into a Social or Communal Reality

Nehemiah means "the Lord Comforts." God used Nehemiah to reunite, encourage, vivify, and uplift the discouraged and despaired exiles (immigrants) and bring them hope.[20] Nehemiah summoned and told the Jewish people of his time what was at stake. He also told them of the blessings of God that rested on him. In Nehemiah 2:17–18, he says: "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace. I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, 'Let us start rebuilding.' So they began this good work." Nehemiah was a great communicator and motivator. He told them why they should rebuild Jerusalem by expounding the dangers of not rebuilding on the one hand and the blessings at hand on the other. In this way, he was able to form a social reality and a community of believers catching the vision to rebuild the gates and walls of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 1–7 and 11–12, written in the first person, record Nehemiah's "memoirs." In these chapters, we have a far-flung look into the missionary life and heart of an outstanding servant of God, whose mission was to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, making him unique among the Old Testament characters. Nehemiah was an outstanding and energetic leader, able to combine a profound trust in the Lord with accurate administrative planning, careful missional organization, and unobtrusive and yet energetic actions. Yes, today's mission and church leaders can joyfully find inspiration in Nehemiah's missional commitment, character, and life.

Nevertheless, as in Nehemiah's time, God's vision is always community oriented, a task in *koinonia*. It addresses and engages the many varieties of people and people groups (*ethne*) in history. In our time, the Great Commission's purpose is to reach all ethnicities or nationalities (*panta ta ethne*). Thus, it is not the task of only one ethnic group or people group; rather it should involve all ethnic groups, homogeneous or heterogeneous. In any case, it takes the engagement of the whole people of God on earth to fulfill the Great Commission. Learning from Nehemiah, we can suggest that the task of God's mission is effectively done if people of all backgrounds and professions are involved in every contextual gate near their homes in the rebuilding of God's mission wherever is needed. Every person's gift is there to fulfill a corresponding mission need or task. Thus, Nehemiah orchestrated every person's gift to rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem in a counter-clockwise manner, beginning from the sheep gate all the way to the inspection gate and finally finishing their mission at the sheep gate. However, because of space limitations, I will focus on the "sheep gate," the "fish gate" and the "old gate" as follows.

4. The Community of Priests Built and Consecrated Gates

The Sheep Gate

"Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel" (Neh 3:1). Moreover, the sheep gate was the first to be built. The rebuilding mission began and ended where it started, the sheep gate. It was their primary task. It is called the sheep gate because it was the gate through which the sheep were brought for sacrifice in the nearby temple. It was located on the northeast part of the wall. Again, it was a cooperative task. The clergy worked together to build and consecrate this gate.

For us today, Christ is the High Priest of the new covenant, who also is the Lamb sacrificed for our sins. The sheep gate represents the first task of Christian endeavors. It is the realization of Christ as the Lamb of God, who sacrificed His life for us. It is where our Christian journey, our mission, and everything else about our churches are based. It speaks to us today that our lives and ministries should begin with Christ and must be Christ centered. The people in the New Testament ministerial offices of pastors, apostles, teachers, and evangelists are called to build up and work with Christ, our High Priest, in Christ-centered ministries and missions and build up action-oriented *koinonoi* in unity and harmony. Christ is the Good Shepherd, and He is the sheep gate. Therefore, Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you; I am the gate for the sheep" (Jn 10:7).

> I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:9–11).

Everything that we do in missions begins and ends with the message and Word of Christ's death and resurrection. Our salvation, justification, the sacraments as the means of grace, and life eternal depend on the message of the cross and His resurrection.[21] We have nothing to say to the world without the crucifixion of Christ on the cross and His resurrection. The sheep gate therefore speaks to us of the cross and the sacrifice that Jesus made for our sins. It is the starting point of everything in Christendom. However, our experience of salvation in Christ does not make us passive; rather, like Nehemiah we move on to the fish gate as follows.

The Fish Gate

The fish gate (cf. Neh 12.39; Zeph 1:10; 2 Chr 33:14) was the "way through which fish came into the city's fish market."[22] The fish gate was connected with the sheep gate. It speaks to us today about doing mission and outreach to reach the unsaved, to be fishers of people. The joy of salvation and the forgiveness of sins received through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God (*Agnus Dei*) gives us the freedom and joy to share our experiences of faith in the Lamb of God with all people. God's grace in Jesus Christ called people who were fishermen to become fishers of people. "As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother

Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him" (Mk 1:16–18). Thus, what comes after following Christ is willingness to be sent by Him to fish for people.

Theologically speaking, a Christological focus should empower us by the Holy Spirit in the Word and the Church to engage in the theology of mission and outreach as a community of believers so that we may do mission or plant mission-oriented Gospel proclamation networks to fish for people by sharing the love of Christ to them. Every person on earth is a candidate to be the recipient of God's love through Christ by virtue of our network of missions and the preaching of the Gospel. Mission that searches for the lost people for whom the Lamb of God came and died is the next step. As with the gates that Nehemiah and his people worked to rebuild, in *koinonia* we need to re-think mission and the re-building of mission places in the U.S., and Europe. In Europe, the gates of mission and Gospel proclamation are slowly and systematically being destroyed by secular humanism, whose parent is the Enlightenment. By implication, a huge mission field is here among us. People come to the U.S., Canada, and Australia for many reasons, including that there is freedom in these countries that many people groups cannot have in their home countries. Therefore, Western countries, including Europe, have become major mission fields. They are our contextual fish gates that deserve our attention.

Christ was intentional when He told His disciples that He would send them out to fish for people. He knew that the gospel would not go to the ends of the world if His disciples were not sent to preach the gospel to all people. In other words, repairing and rebuilding the fish gate is imperative for our survival. It is Christendom's ontological, but also existential, question. Can our Christian faith continue to exist in the lives of the next generations without doing missions and gospel outreach? The answer is no. In Matthew 5: 17, Christ reminds us: "you are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot."

The Old Gate

The Old Gate can be said to speak to us about the old ways of truth. Also called the Jeshanah Gate, it was repaired by Joiada, son of Paseah, and Meshullam, son of Besodeiah. "They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place" (Neh 3:6). The term "Jeshanah" gate means "old" or "ancient" gate. The elders of the city would meet at this gate to discuss matters of community importance and issue of judgment on disputes (Jo 20:4; Ru 4:11; Prv 31:23). This gate represents both the eldership of the city (the leaders of the body) and their guidance in the "ancient paths" of God (Jer 6:16) in spiritual growth. Of interest is that two men are chosen to be rebuilders of the Jeshanah Gate: Uzziel, the goldsmith, and Hananiah, the perfume-maker (cf. 1 Pt 1:6–7; 2 Cor 2:14–15). Pastoral elders are the goldsmiths and perfume-makers of the *koinonia* of the community!

A person who has experienced the sheep gate (Christ-centered life) and then the fish gate (mission and outreach) soon sees the need for experiencing the old gate (reclaiming our Christian heritage), that is, learning the old ways of truth that never change despite the claims of modern post-foundationalism. Jeremiah 6:16 states:

"Thus says the Lord, stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls." We may understand this as learning the traditions of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. We certainly need to learn the ancient ways of prayer in the Book of Acts. In an era of murders, terrorism, and mass killings on films and in reality, it is high time for us to fortify our old and good Lutheran teachings of Luther's Small and Large Catechisms. And, more than ever, we need to learn, study, and reflect on the Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostolic Creeds.

In conclusion, the mission of God deserves intentional preparations in class and in prayers before undertaking it. It also deserves our careful planning, careful surveys, and research regarding the people whom we seek to reach. God's mission also deserves leaders who, like Nehemiah, can organize and think in terms of *koinonia,* a community-driven mission task force. From a Christ-centered life and ministry flow the care and love that reaches out to and influences the world. The early church operated this way, and it flourished, to the point of becoming the religion of the Roman Empire during Constantine. Following the Arian controversy and ecumenical councils on doctrinal issues, such as the nature of Christ, attempts to reach out to the heathens and the Jews diminished significantly as the focus of the church was back to square one, discussing Christology in abstract philosophical terms. The contextual "fish gate," namely, reaching out with the power of the gospel to the people outside, was put aside because the situation demanded it. Consequently, some of the centers of Christianity in North Arica and Asia Minor were lost.

Hence, Christ-centeredness is the firm basis for our continued mission work all through the "fish gates" of our times. We do missions for God's sake because we are called to become the "salt" and "light" of this world so that we may glorify God through our missions. We also do missions for our own sake. We keep our "saltiness" as we do mission and reach out to others with the love of God. It is an existential issue. We all do this. If we have a light bulb that does not give light, we throw it out and replace it with another. The same is true for the salt that has lost its taste. We do not keep it at all. Hence, we do missions so that our true faith in Christ might perpetually continue to be the salt and light of the world. We also need to value and understand our heritage. The "old gate" reminds us of that. The prophets, the apostles, the early church, the apostolic fathers, and last, but not least, the Reformation with Luther as its leader are our heritage. We need to know and study it. It also reminds us of our old nature that we had without Christ. It reminds us of our old and sinful past that has been transformed through the forgiving and therapeutic works of Christ on the cross—the remission of our sins by His blood.

Endnotes

[1] "Royal cupbearers in the antiquity, in addition to their skill in selecting and serving wine and their duty in tasting it as proof against poison, were also expected to be convivial and tactful companions to the king. Being much in his confidence, they could thus wield considerable influence by way of informal counsel and discussion." See Hugh Godfrey Maturn, (H. G. M.) Williamson, *Word Biblical Commentaries: Ezra, Nehemiah*, vol. 16 (Waco: Texas, Word Books, 1995), 174.

[2] Ibid., 204, 179.

[3] Ibid., 179.

[4] Mervin Breneman, *The New American Commentary, An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Ezra Nehemiah Esther*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 10 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 171.
[5] "Susa is about 150 miles (241 km.) north of the Persian gulf. In 521 B.C., Darius I made Susa his administrative capital. From 518 to 512 he built a palace there." It was the winter residence of the Persian kings. The events Esther Book and the vision of Daniel Chapter 8, took place in this place. See, Breneman, *Ezra Nehemiah Esther*, 169.
[6] The month of Kislev spans from "parts the month of November–December." It would be the third month in the Jewish calendar if the year begins in Tishri. However, it would be the ninth month if the year begins from Nisan.
[7] A quote from Benjamin Franklin. Benjamin Franklin, *Good Reads*, accessed on October 1, 2013, http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/460142-if-you-fail-to-plan-you-are-planning-to-fail.
[8] Williamson, *Word Biblical Commentaries: Ezra, Nehemiah*, 175.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Breneman notes that "May the King live forever was the common formula for addressing the king as we see in Dan 2:4." See Breneman, *Ezra Nehemiah Esther,* 175.
[11] Williamson, *Word Biblical Commentaries: Ezra*, *Nehemiah,* 179.
[12] Breneman, *Ezra Nehemiah Esther,* 180.
[13] Eugene A. Nida, *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1983), 24.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 18.
[17] Matthew Levering, *Ezra & Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 137.
[18] Levering, *Ezra & Nehemiah*, 138.
[19] Breneman, *Ezra Nehemiah Esther*, 184.
[20] Cf. Isaiah 57:14–21. Also, see Breneman, *Ezra Nehemiah Esther*, 168.
[21] Cf. Timothy F. Lull, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1989), 155.
[22] Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 204.

The Contribution of Fifohazana to Mission–Evangelizing in the Malagasy Lutheran Church

Randrianasolo Dimbiniaina Havanjanahary

Abstract: The Lutheran Church of Madagascar, having orthodox Lutheran roots, has engaged in Healing Ministry by performing exorcism with a confessional Lutheran approach since 1894. Taking the reality of Satan very seriously, this Confessional Lutheran Church constantly engages in the practice of exorcism that is established upon the Word of God to fight and to conquer Satan. In this Lutheran Church's worldview, exorcism is not only performed on people who are demon possessed, but it is also performed on people who experience afflictions or illnesses (physical, mental, spiritual), depressions, struggles in life, conjugal issues (broken relationship between husband and wife), and family dysfunctions (broken relationships between parents and children). This article offers the Western Lutheran Church a contextualized response to the needs of the Christians within their context in dealing with demonic possession and spiritual warfare in a Confessional Lutheran approach.

INTRODUCTION

The Fifohazana Branch of the Malagasy Lutheran Church has been an essential factor in her mission–evangelizing, her numerical growth, and in the maintenance of good spiritual health. Although there are seven other branches structured in the church, no other branch contributes more to the mission–evangelizing of the church than the Fifohazana does.[1] In addition, the Fifohazana Branch trains members in other branches to develop a mindset for mission–evangelizing. In this manner, the Fifohazana Branch prepares the minds of Christians for an active mission–evangelizing.

Differences regarding the approach to the practice of mission–evangelizing by the Malagasy Lutheran Church can be better perceived when she is compared with her other Lutheran sisters, as the Malagasy Lutheran Church embraces the Fifohazana's approach to the practice of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands.[2] These differences are very significant for understanding the Fifohazana's practice of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands,[3] the commissioning of Mpiandry[4] (the literal translation is "Shepherd", but "exorcist" is the equivalent meaning), and the establishment of Toby[5] (Mercy Camps). These practices are extracted from the

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Scriptures and applied to the context of the church. An example of these is the understanding of the Fifohazana's practice of exorcism. It is rooted in Jesus' practice of exorcism during His earthly ministry. The objective of exorcism in this manner is to manifest and make visible the presence of the kingdom of God by defeating the realm of Satan.[6]

This article seeks to challenge Western theologians on the idea of mission–evangelizing with the Fifohazana's practical conception of exorcism within the Lutheran context. The intention here is not to say that the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana's approach of doing mission–evangelizing is the best approach, but to provide an understanding from the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana's worldview on the approach of mission–evangelizing. Therefore, to accomplish this task, the paper is divided into three sections. In the first section, an etymology of the word "Fifohazana" will be provided to help understand its meaning. Next will be a brief summary of the history of the Fifohazana regarding its founding and its relation to the Malagasy Lutheran Church. The second section will provide an outsider's theological reaction to the Fifohazana's approach to the conception of exorcism. Finally, as a member of the community of the Fifohazana, I will provide an insider's theological analysis of the conception of exorcism by the Fifohazana.

I - THE HISTORY OF FIFOHAZANA AND THE MALAGASY LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement, dating from 1894, has a history of over a century of contribution to the life of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. The essential task of mission–evangelizing by the Fifohazana comprises the renewal of the faith of the Christians in the Church and the conversion of non-believers to the Christian faith.[7] It is accomplished by means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands. Dr. Rakoto Andrianarijaona, the first Malagasy President of the Malagasy Lutheran Church, affirms the Fifohazana movement as God's salvific instrument of saving people. By the divine works of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands saves people from death (spiritually as well as physically) by drawing them out from the realm of darkness and placing them into the kingdom of light, in which they become God's children.[8]

This practice may be unfamiliar to the Lutherans in the West and can cause confusion that leads them to mistake it as non–Lutheran. To avoid such misconception, the word "Fifohazana" must be defined. Moreover, a brief but concrete history of the Fifohazana must be provided so that a broad comprehension of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana's understanding of mission–evangelizing may be formed.

The etymology of the word "Fifohazana"

The word "Fifohazana" means "to be awake, to be alive, and to be active." It would be difficult to translate the word "Fifohazana" into the corresponding Western Lutheran vocabulary without giving it a negative connotation. The latter, however, would be mistaken. Translating any word into an established culture is to attach to it the baggage of preset stories and meanings. For this reason, it is best to avoid the literal translation of Fifohazana into "revival" and "awakening," as these words have negative connotations for Lutherans due to the historical implications of revival movements around the world. A different translation of the word "Fifohazana" must be provided.

The etymology of the word "Fifohazana" is derived from the Malagasy root "*foha*." It is defined as "to be in the state of alertness, to be alive, and to be active." From this root is the verb "*mifoha*" which means "to be awake, to get up and be active." [9] Therefore, the word "Fifohazana" (réveil) means "to be awake, to be alive, to be active."[10]

The implication of the word "Fifohazana" that is used by the Malagasy Lutheran Church is rooted in Ephesians 5:14, **"**Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."[11] In this text, the word "wake up" (ἔγειρε) is to state a purpose in regard to Christian faith and life. The Word of God, the Sacraments (Baptism and Eucharist), and the Holy Spirit are the means that keep the Christians who are members of the Fifohazana alive by faith in Christ as well as active in the faith. In this manner, faith leads them to be active in love, and the first action of love is to preach the Gospel to others.[12]

The teaching of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana affirms that being active in faith does not imply that salvation is acquired by doing good works. Rather the living faith rooted in Jesus Christ leads to doing good works. This teaching is in agreement with Martin Luther's teaching which says, "The motivating force behind all Christian ethics is God's love. Faith is active in love. Faith brings us to Christ and makes Him our own with all that He has; then love gives us to our neighbor with all that we have."[13]

Now that the meaning of the word "Fifohazana" has been provided, the history of how this movement came about and its relation with the Malagasy Lutheran Church can be made more accessible.

Historical roots and characteristics of the Fifohazana

The birth of the Fifohazana became the turning point for the faith of Christians in Madagascar, leading the believers to walk a life in Christ Jesus in accordance with the Holy Scriptures. With the introduction of Christianity in Madagascar by the missionaries from the London Missionary Society in 1818, the ancestral worship and other idol worship became threatened. The reaction of the new queen, Ranavalona I, who came to power in 1828, was to reassert traditional Malagasy values against the intrusions of European cultures, including Christianity. Therefore, the years from 1835 to 1868 were a time of the Malagasy martyrs who embraced the Christian faith.[14] Fortunately, the rise of Queen Ranavalona II in 1868 opened the door to Christianity, as she herself embraced Christianity. Ramambason describes her years of reign as the occasion of tremendous growth in the number of Christians in Madagascar.[15]

Pastor Randriamandroso Edmond, a Malagasy Lutheran Church history professor, asserts that in the beginnings of the Lutheran Church in Madagascar, from 1866 to 1894, the church had experienced struggles in maintaining a healthy spiritual life. Although there were church regulations and disciplines, many Christians were still holding onto their old mode of life and continued practicing idolatry and ancestral worship in various forms. However, he argues that the birth of the Fifohazana movement in 1894 began to improve the walk of life of the Christians in the Lutheran Church, even though the battle against syncretism continued.[16] The task of the Fifohazana movement was specific:

> Fifohazana is to preach the true Word of God by the means of preaching–exorcism–laying of hand that is accompanied by signs (Mk.16:20) to reveal that the Word of God is neither dead nor sleepy. And it cannot be articulated like a myth because the Word of God is living, active, and powerful (Heb. 4:12); "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35) says the Lord Jesus.[17]

Different authors on the history of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement emphasize that the Fifohazana movement was initiated by the Spirit of God by means of four individuals: Dada Rainisoalambo in 1894 (founder of Toby Soatanana—FLM), Neny Ravelonjanahary in 1900 (founder of Toby Manolotrony—FJKM), Mama Nenilava Germaine in 1941 (founder of Toby Ankaramalaza—FLM), and Pastor Rakotozandry Daniel in 1946 (founder of Toby Farihimena—FLM).[18] The emergence of this Fifohazana movement occurred in different regions and different time periods during the French colonization.[19] Each of the four key figures of the Fifohazana movement experienced a spiritual awakening and the renewal of the faith as the fruit by the work of the Holy Spirit.[20]

Hans Austnaberg asserts from his analysis that visible signs that accompanied the preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands by Rainisoalambo, Neny Ravelonjanahary, Mama Nenilava Germaine, and Pastor Rakotozandry Daniel demonstrated the power of God, as well as the presence of the kingdom of God. The Fifohazana movement reached the entire Island of Madagascar.[21] Ramambason believes that Jesus' establishment of the Fifohazana movement is a reaction to the powerlessness of the ministry of several pastors (both missionaries and Malagasy) to respond meaningfully to various problems that church members faced.[22] In addition, he asserts that these four Fifohazana founders had strong links to the Lutheran Church because the establishments of the Toby (Mercy Camps) were located in areas that were formerly allotted to Lutheran Missions.[23]

The birth of the Fifohazana movement began with Rainisoalambo's spiritual renewal in 1894.[24] For this reason, Rainisoalambo is believed to play a key role in establishing a new meaning for churchmanship. Years earlier he was baptized when the missionaries from the London Missionary Society came to evangelize in his hometown, Soatanana, located in the region of Fianarantsoa.[25] Not long afterward, they built a Lutheran church there. Rainisoalambo received the knowledge of the Scriptures from these missionaries, and soon he was assigned to work as a catechist in his local congregation. Paradoxically, his intention of becoming a Christian was not for the love of God; rather, his motive was that the missionaries promised him that as an employee of the church he would receive a salary. However, before long, he became disappointed because the missionaries were not true to their word. As a result, he lost heart, turned his back on the church, and returned to his previous heathenish life as a diviner, healing through ancestral medicines and embracing idolatry.

Soon after that, a period of political crisis struck Madagascar when the French declared war on the Malagasy monarchy and people. It was a time of bitterness and trouble. At this time, an epidemic also struck Rainisoalambo's town, where he also fell ill.

According to the history of the Fifohazana in Madagascar,[26] on the night of October 14, 1894, Rainisoalambo's life was transformed because after he prayed that God would cure him of his illness, which was bringing him closer to death each day, Jesus appeared to him in a vision, instructing him to throw away all of his charms and idols so that he might receive healing. Due to his obedience, Rainisoalambo's illness immediately left him. Following this experience, Jesus sent him on a mission to evangelize. Transformed into a whole new person in Christ Jesus, Rainisoalambo began preaching the Word of God the next day, leading to the repentance of his family members. He then instructed them to surrender their charms and idols. After he performed exorcism–laying of hands on them, they were cured from their illnesses also. October 15, 1894, became the day of the birth of the Fifohazana movement in Soatanana.[27]

On June 9, 1895, Rainisoalambo gathered twelve men from those who converted to Christianity and taught them the Scriptures. He called these men "*mpianatry ny Tompo*" (disciples of the Lord) or "*Apostoly*" (Apostles).[28] Rainisoalambo's usage of the word "disciples of the Lord" and "apostles" here is in agreement with that of Robert Scudieri, who stresses that it is not used to refer to content but rather to the function of being "sent."[29] For this reason, Rainisoalambo set them on a severely disciplined course of hard work, purity, love for prayer, and reading of the Bible.[30] After completing their training in the year 1899, Rainisoalambo sent the *Apostoly* as the first Fifohazana mission–doers to the four corners of Madagascar. The gentiles who were won by Jesus by their means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands were brought to the Lutheran Church for baptism.[31] In Holder Rich's analysis, she asserts that the term "*Apostoly*" later fell out of use as a likely response to the pressure from missionaries. It was replaced by the word "*Mpiandry*."[32]

Austnaberg specifically highlights that Rainisoalambo instructed these twelve men not to follow the model of the missionaries and pastors in the Lutheran Church when preaching about Jesus and the forgiveness of sins. Even though those missionaries and pastors preached the power of Jesus Christ, they did not dare to cast out sicknesses, demons, and evil spirits.[33] In addition, Rainisoalambo strictly emphasized to the *Apostoly* that they should never separate preaching the true Word of God from signs. This instruction, established upon the biblical narratives, later became one of the essential characteristics of the Fifohazana: illustrating the visualization of God's kingdom through signs (Mt 10:1–15; Mk 6:7–13; Lk 9:1–6).[34] Furthermore, Rainisoalambo instructed these men never to separate the Fifohazana movement from the church, but rather to work in the church, with the church, and for the church.[35]

Sigmund Edland asserts that in 1895 the movement became recognized by the missionaries and Lutheran pastors. However, at first, they were uncertain about embracing this new practice, as the *Apostoly* of the Fifohazana movement put emphasis on healing and driving out demons or evil spirits by the means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands. After engaging in a theological analysis of the practice, the missionaries recognized that the central focus of the movement's mission–evangelizing was not on the signs but was Christological.[36] Its objective was to lead people to repentance for a new life in Christ. After that, the word "Fifohazana" was incorporated by the Malagasy Lutheran Church Body.[37]

The second Fifohazana movement came about in 1900 by the means of Neny Ravelonjanahary, who lived in a town called Manolotrony in the region of Fianarantsoa.[38] The characteristics of her ministry were said to be preaching of repentance and healings by the means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands.[39]

The third Fifohazana movement was established through Mama Volahavana Germaine (Mama Nenilava) in her hometown Ankaramalaza, which is in the southeastern region of Fianarantsoa. Her mission of evangelizing began on August 2, 1941. However, it was only years later in the 1960s that this mission–evangelizing by the means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands was recognized by the Malagasy Lutheran Church as a Fifohazana movement.[40] The essential characteristics of Mama Nenilava's ministry were preaching of repentance and exorcism–healings.[41] According to the authors of the history of the Fifohazana, Mama Nenilava is distinguished from the other Fifohazana founders in that during her mission–evangelizing, she traveled to the four corners of Madagascar for the purpose of preaching the Gospel and doing mercy works.[42] Sigmund Edland asserts that she also traveled overseas to France and Norway for the purpose of this Fifohazana mission–evangelizing.[43] In recognition of her striving in this Fifohazana movement and the mercy works that she had accomplished, the king of Norway presented her with a medal of honor. However, because of political formality, this medal was addressed to Philibert Tsiranana, the President of the first Republic of Madagascar, who then offered it to Mama Nenilava in an official ceremony in 1969.[44]

The fourth Fifohazana movement originated in 1946 by Rakotozandry Daniel, a Lutheran pastor, in a village called Farihimena in the region of Antsirabe. The essential characteristic of his ministry was the preaching of repentance. His engagement in Fifohazana mission–evangelizing was basically oriented towards Christians who did not have a walk of life in accordance with the Scriptures.[45]

The relationship between the Toby Fifohazana (mercy camp—a community of healing) and the church

The creation of the Toby (Toby Soatanana, Toby Manolotrony, Toby Ankaramalaza, Toby Farihimena)[46] by the four Fifohazana founders was part of their mission–evangelizing. Cynthia Holder Rich refers to these Toby as "Healing Communities of the Fifohazana."[47] She affirms that healing and conversion to Christianity take place in these Toby. Furthermore, she observes, "One striking feature of this Fifohazana movement is that it centers healing under the Christological understanding of Jesus as the One who heals. The healing is not understood based on miracles or signs, but is understood by faith in Christ through the proclamation of the Word of God."[48] This understanding has an impact on the entire life within the Toby.[49] For this reason, people with various sicknesses and illnesses, including those who are demon possessed and demon influenced, are brought to the Toby to seek healing.

In certain situations when families lose hope of a cure by ancestral healers or hospitals for their loved ones who are sick, they approach the Toby as a last resort. Metaphorically speaking, the Toby becomes God's container for cleaning, renewing, and healing. The healing of the sick who are admitted to the Toby cannot be predicted. Some patients receive healings immediately after the preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands and leave the Toby healthy. Others, however, stay for days or months. Still others stay for many years, depending on God's will to heal them completely.[50]

The community of the Toby is expanding for two reasons. First, there are Christians who come to stay because they are closer to the church, the Lutheran hospital or dispensary, and the Lutheran elementary and secondary schools for their children. Everything that they need can be reached within a short distance. The second reason relates to the non-believers who come to seek healings. At the Toby, they hear the proclamation of the Word of God that leads them to grow in Christian faith. By the work of the Holy Spirit, they convert to Christianity, are baptized, and become members of the Lutheran denomination.

In Hans Austnaberg's observation, the Toby Fifohazana's relationship with the church is important to prevent seeing the Fifohazana movement as an independent institution or church.[51] Instead, all of the activities by the Fifohazana follow the laws and regulations of the church, thereby emphasizing that the Fifohazana works with the church and for the church. Cynthia Holder Rich asserts that the Fifohazana movement is unlike the religious organizations on the African continent that are gathered under the acronym AIC,[52] in that the Fifohazana movement has never been separated from the Lutheran church. Years later, in 1985, the movement was incorporated officially as a branch into the structure of the Malagasy Lutheran Church.[53]

The Fifohazana and the Mpiandry

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana Branch understands its conception of Mpiandry[54] (shepherds who serve as agents commissioned by the Malagasy Lutheran Church to perform exorcism) in connection to Luther's teaching about the universalism of the priesthood:

> The Christian's calling is characterized in two distinct ways: it is characterized by the possession of the grace of Christ, and by the Christian's acceptance of the role of "servant."[55] . . . Christians share in Christ's High Priestly ministry. They are all priests–yet they are not so for their own sake, but for others. Priesthood belongs to Christ, and Christians possess it by their baptism and their faith.[56] . . . Every function of the member of Christ's body is a ministry, and Christ Himself is the primary holder of every ministry. This implies that all Christians are known by one word "servant." Therefore, servanthood is the key to priesthood.[57]

Furthermore, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana asserts from the handbook for teaching Mpiandry that the call to serve as Mpiandry in the church and in the Toby is rooted from Scriptures as:

> A true calling comes from the true God and it is based on God's work, not on the person's zeal, or other people's advice, or from problems in life, or dreams and visions. God's call to salvation is distinguished from his call to a special service in the church. The calling of Isaiah is set as a model, when God asked the prophet: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8) There are many ministries in the church and when God calls a person, it is important to become aware of which kind of service His calling concerns. In addition the Fifohazana emphasizes that the work of Mpiandry and other service functions in the church supplement each other.[58]

By this the Fifohazana advocates that the person who responds to the call of Mpiandry has a mindset that he or she is a servant of Christ and thus belongs to the church, serves in the church and in the Toby. For this very reason, the Fifohazana Committee set a law regarding the qualification to serve in this special office. First and foremost, it requires that the individual must be a baptized Christian and who partakes in the Eucharist.[59] This action affirms that the individual is not new to the Christian faith and has knowledge of the Lutheran Confessions and doctrine as well as a walk of life in Christ Jesus. Secondly, the Christian must receive a call. The Fifohazana handbook greatly emphasizes that "Nobody becomes Mpiandry, if the individual has not been appointed to serve in this ministry by God."[60] This call must be approved first by the local pastor of the congregation.[61] Afterwards, it is reported to the pastor who is the president of the district of the church where the Christian is a member. [62] Following the approval by both pastors, the Christian is then admitted to basic Lutheran Theological Training for Mpiandry in the local church of membership. Thus, the local pastors within that district contribute to the teaching of those who have been admitted to this program for the next two years.[63]

Those admitted to the program are instructed in Luther's Small Catechism, the Augsburg Confession, Lutheran biblical theology (Old and New Testaments), Lutheran dogmatics, Lutheran ethics, Malagasy Lutheran Church history, the Fifohazana history, and Lutheran practical theology, including the practice of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands.[64] The MLC considers this instruction vital for securing the purity of the Lutheran confession and doctrine.[65] After the completion of the two years of training, the candidate is evaluated. If approved, the individual is put on the annual list for commissioning of Mpiandry in a liturgical ceremony that is led by the president of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. But if the candidate is not approved, then he or she is placed under observance for a limited time before being reevaluated. After being commissioned, the Mpiandry is encouraged to participate in further theological education that is provided monthly by each local church.

Ramambason asserts that the function of the Mpiandry is recognized by the wider community as lay mission–doers.[66] The Fifohazana Branch emphasizes that the Mpiandry is not a pastor and does not function as a pastor, for the call of Mpiandry is distinguished from that of a pastor. The Mpiandry (who is under the authority and supervision of the pastor) serves in the church by the means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands, home visits, prayer fellowship, and mercy works in the Toby.[67] Another critical distinction is that the Mpiandry does not receive any salary for the services.

The organization of mission fields among Protestant churches in Madagascar

In relation to the mission work in Madagascar, the Protestant missionaries experienced struggles in light of the mission oriented towards the Gentiles and the Muslims. To provide a solution to this obstacle, the Protestant Mission Society organized an ecumenical conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, from June 13–23, 1910. However, Pope Pius XI opposed this gathering and later condemned it in a letter issued in 1928, titled "Mortalis Animos," in which he declared that only the Pope had authority to call for ecumenism.[68] In spite of this opposition, the missionaries who had attended the ecumenical conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 decided to organize an ecumenical conference among Christian Churches in Madagascar. Therefore, the first ecumenical conference was held by the Protestant missionaries on October 12, 1913, in Antananarivo and was called "Intermissionaire Conference."

Sigmund Edland highlights that the Lutheran Church, the Reformed Church (Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kritsy eto Madagasikara—FJKM), and the Anglican Church came to participate in this first Ecumenical Conference between Christian churches.[69] The Catholic Church refused to participate. The objective of this gathering was to organize and divide regions as mission fields for preaching the Gospel.[70] But in 1927, the Anglican Church declined further participation because of the dissatisfaction of how the regions as mission fields were divided.[71]

In 1935, the Lutheran Church and the Reformed Church (FJKM) came to be called the Malagasy Protestant Churches. However, according to Daniel Ratefy, this name was later changed by the decision of the Protestant Ecumenical Conference held in Antsirabe in 1958 to National Council of Protestant Churches in Madagascar (Fiombonan'ny Fiangonana Protestanta eto Madagasikara—FFPM).[72] Years later, a Protestant Ecumenical Conference held on September 15–22, 1971, cancelled the decision made earlier in 1913 regarding the division of regions as mission fields. This later decision allowed the Malagasy Lutheran Church and the Reformed Church to go anywhere freely on the island to do mission.

The birth of the Malagasy Lutheran Church (Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy)

In the year 1949, Pastor Johannes Skauge, who was the acting General Secretary of the Norwegian Missionary Society, was sent to Madagascar. The intention was to investigate if the Lutheran Church in Madagascar was able to be independent or not.[73] Therefore, the first General Synod Conference was held on November 10, 1950, in Fianarantsoa to seek this response. The conference gathered the five (5) large bodies of the Lutheran Church bodies in Madagascar (the central, the West, the East, the Southeastern, and the Southwestern). The missionaries who were appointed as superintendents to the Lutheran Church were present, as well as other missionaries from the Norwegian Missionary Society, the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Board of Mission (American), and local native pastors.[74]

The unanimous vote that took place during the conference on this date gave birth to The Malagasy Lutheran Church (Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy—FLM). But since Madagascar was still considered a French colony during this period in history, and the local natives were not authorized to lead any organizations or institutions, K. Monson of Faradofay, who was one of the superintendents, was elected as the first president of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. However, after Madagascar won her independence from France on June 26, 1960, another General Synod Conference was held in Toliary in 1961. Dr. Rakoto Andrianarijaona, a church history professor at the Lutheran Seminary of Theology (the present Lutheran Graduate Seminary of Theology) in Fianarantsoa, was elected as the first Malagasy to be the president of this church body.[75]

The Council of the Christian Churches in Madagascar (FFKM)

The opposition of Pope Pius XI during the Vatican II Council in 1928 became a motive for an ecumenical relationship among the Christian Churches in Madagascar.[76] The motive for this ecumenism was a better approach to mission by uniting the strengths of the Christian churches in Madagascar, including the Malagasy Lutheran Church (FLM), the Reformed Church (FJKM), the Anglican Church, and the Roman Catholic Church, which were the four oldest Christian churches in Madagascar. An Advising Committee concerning Theology was established by these four churches. The members of this committee met and constructed a proposed constitution for the unity of the four Christian churches in Madagascar.[77] This proposal was sent to the four church leaders (Pastor Ranaivojaona Razafimanantsoa [FLM], Reverend Joseph Ramambasoa [FJKM], Cardinal Victor Razafimahatratra [EKAR—Roman Catholic], and Bishop Ephraim Randrianovona [EEM—Anglican]) on November 26, 1979, for approval. The proposed constitution was then sent to the committees of each of the four church bodies on December 18, 1979, for approval. The Church Committees of each church body approved it and sent feedback.

It was declared on January 20, 1980, that the National Council of Christian Churches in Madagascar (Fiombonan'ny Fiangonana Kristianina eto Madagasikara—FFKM) was officially established.[78] The first Official Ecumenical Conference was held at Cenacle—Ambohipo in Antananarivo on July 12–15, 1980. Cardinal Victor Razafimahatratra was elected as the first president of this FFKM. The approved Constitution of the FFKM was then sent on August 11, 1980, to the Ministry of Interior for an approval by the government. A few years later, on January 11, 1985, the FFKM was officially recognized by the Malagasy government as the official representative of the four Christian denominations in Madagascar.[79] In addition, the FFKM was recognized by the government as a respected institution.

Although there are other church bodies in Madagascar that would like to be a part of this Christian organization, their confessions and theology do not agree with the Christian confessions and theology established by the FFKM and thus prevent them from joining it.[80]

The arrival of the Christian faith in 1818 and the emergences of the Fifohazana movements in 1894, 1900, 1941, and 1946 contributed to the growth of the Christian faith in Madagascar. The characteristic features of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement to the mission–evangelizing by the means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands contributes to the church's numerical growth and, at the same time, maintains the spiritual life of the church.[81] In this understanding, the Fifohazana lays emphasis on the Word of God as the kernel for mission–evangelizing and that by faith in Christ alone people are saved and healed. In this sense, the healings are visible signs of demonstrating the power of the Word of God.

However, some questions have been posed and uncertainties arise regarding the conception of exorcism by the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana. Thus, the following section will present the reaction of those outside of the Fifohazana movement regarding the usage of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands. The goal is to respond to the questions that are raised towards the practice of exorcism by the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana in mission–evangelizing.

II - AN OUTSIDER'S MISCONCEPTION OF THE MALAGASY LUTHERAN FIFOHAZANA'S APPROACH TO THE PRACTICE OF EXORCISM–HEALING

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana understands the concept of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands that is incorporated into the practice of mission–evangelizing as a vehicle for the Holy Spirit to bring the Gospel to people.[82] This understanding is foreign to the MLC's (Malagasy Lutheran Church) Lutheran sisters, as the only practice of exorcism that can be found in the Lutheran Confessions is related to the baptismal liturgy.[83] Therefore, the practice of exorcism by the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana creates uncertainties, and questions emerge. However, Luther himself acknowledges that the means God uses to carry out His work of salvation is unlimited and unfathomable. Cyril Eastwood quotes Luther: "God appears to acknowledge and bless many features of the pattern of the church which are not acknowledged by the whole church. The majesty and scope of the divine purpose may not always fit into the narrow limits of an institution even if that institution is chosen by God."[84]

Taking this approach I intend to bring into discussion reactions from outsiders on the practice of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands by the Fifohazana. Therefore, I seek to provide responses to the following outsiders' questions: (1) Is the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana just another social and charismatic movement? (2) Does the practice of exorcism by the Lutheran Fifohazana arise from a Lutheran understanding of the Word of God?

Is the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana Movement just another social and charismatic movement?

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana Branch has understood itself since its beginning as a vehicle for mission–evangelizing to bring people to Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the Word of God. The objective for this Fifohazana Branch in this approach is to lead people to repentance so that they will make a change in their walk of life according to the Scriptures.[85] In fulfilling this mission–evangelizing, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana puts emphasis on the proclamation of the Word of God as the only foundation for salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.[86]

In Rich's analysis, the problem of understanding the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana lies in the misconception of its foundation, characteristics, and practice, for negative connotations have been articulated concerning revival/awakening movements from around the world. However, Rich asserts from her analysis that each movement has its own foundation, characteristics, and practice. She draws an example by referring to the African Independent Churches' (AIC) revival movements on the African continent. For in the AIC, there is a tendency to incorporate native culture into the Holy Scriptures.[87] Victor E. W. Hayward supports Holder Rich's analysis and asserts that the conflicting issue with some of the African Independent Church movements is that they would rather give room for culture to influence the Holy Scriptures than have the Holy Scriptures transform the culture. He asserts that in this way:

> [African] Independent Churches [put] emphasis upon myth and ritual, rhythm, music and dance; which is considered as an African way of worship; a more indigenous religious expression;[88] in order that worship and faith may be integrating experiences; so that worship may be real.[89]

Hayward further highlights that the problem in this situation is the incorporation of African traditional beliefs into church teachings. He points out that such practice can be found, for example, in the Zionist groups (or Aladura Churches), which, though putting emphasis on the Holy Spirit, incorporate the same emphasis on the spirits of the ancestors into the Christian teachings.[90] Other African cultures similarly influence the teachings of Christian church bodies. For example, African churches, such as the Ethiopian, emphasize independence with the motive of liberation from all Western influences.[91] Robert Bennett affirms that this liberation includes the AIC's breaking away from Orthodox Christianity so that the movement becomes more of an African production.[92]

Another revival movement that might be associated by outsiders with the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement is Pentecostalism. The characteristics of the Pentecostal movement may appear to have similarities to those of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement from an outsiders' view, but practitioners of the latter find the association most objectionable. Although the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana does practice exorcism–healing, its foundation is sharply opposite to that of the Pentecostal movement, for the latter puts emphasis chiefly on healing[93] as well as speaking in tongues, making them important aspects of the church's mission. In this understanding, for the Pentecostal movement, salvation is rooted in signs and miracles. In addition to this problem, Walter J. Hollenweger asserts that healing evangelists within the Pentecostal movement in America associate healing with fund-raising to secure their lifestyle and financial situation.[94] J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu supports Hollenweger's assertion regarding the Pentecostal movement and thus affirms:

> Pentecostalism is a movement of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is essential for the Pentecostal movement to prove its belief by demonstrating experiences. By this the movement emphasizes salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit, in which pneumatic phenomena, including speaking in tongues, prophecies, visions, exorcism, healing and miracles in general, perceived as standing in historic continuity with the experiences of the early church as in the Acts of the Apostles, are sought, accepted, valued and consciously encouraged among members as signifying the presence of God and experiences of God's Spirit.[95]

In relation to the healing evangelists of the Pentecostal movement, the radio and television evangelists also contribute to the negative connotations of revival/awakening movements. William Packard claims that these radio and television evangelists have been enormously influential in America over the years because of their persuasive strategies of using mass media to promote and propagate their movements.[96] Packard claims that even as they employ this most pervasive preaching medium, these evangelists spoil the Word of God.[97] Their ways of preaching sour the Gospel by replacing salvation by faith in Jesus Christ with salvation from one's effort[98] and by using resources of his/her own mind (gnostic scientism).[99] Packard describes this as a thinly disguised Pelagianism of self-help, self-healing, self-saving, and self-delusion.[100] Packard also comments that using the same persuasive media in the practice of exorcism, the televangelists are merely putting on an act to win people. These revival evangelists demonstrate their ability of doing healings through clapping hands on the lame, the blind, the deaf, and even the retarded, as they command the devil to leave the bodies of the afflicted.[101] The use of such strategies aims at achieving numerical growth, as well as gaining financial prosperity through the evangelist's public performance of making miracles happen.

Thus, the outsiders' analysis of the characteristics of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana can lead to misconceptions that result from linking it with characteristics of the revival/awakening movements described above, especially on the issue of exorcism–healing. Although healing is central to the mission–evangelizing of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana, the Word of God is strongly stressed as the only foundation for all God's salvific works by faith.[102]

Does the practice of exorcism by the Lutheran Fifohazana arise from a Lutheran understanding of the Word of God?

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana understands the Word of God as the only foundation for receiving salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.[103] In addition, the Word of God alone ought to be and remain the only guiding rule of all teaching; everything must be totally subject to God's Word.[104]

The Lutheran teaching affirms that Satan and his demons are real[105] and that Satan and his demons are constantly at work tempting us to sin by leading us to turn away from Jesus Christ.[106] Satan's purpose is to make us scorn and despise the Word and the works of God.[107] Luther acknowledged that Satan and his demons are able with their schemes to take possession of individuals, lead them to sin, and cause illnesses and afflictions.[108] In response to this assault, the Word of God commands us to fight against Satan and his demons by means of Jesus Christ: "[I]n my [Jesus Christ's] name they will cast out demons" (Mk 16:17). Even Luther understood this and thus fought Satan and his demons in his life by means of the Word of God and prayer (a form of exorcism).[109]

Regarding this fight against the enemy of the faith, Lutheran teaching acknowledges that our human nature is completely corrupted by sin. Our flesh is vile and inclined to evil.[110] As a result, we constantly sin. As a consequence of our sinful natures, the Law condemns us as sinners. And through the Law our sinful natures are exposed (Rom 7:7–25). The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana understands that Lutheran teaching affirms that this very Law also leads us to fight against sin and our sinful nature through daily contrition and repentance by approaching the cross of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:3–13; Eph 4:22; Col 3:10).[111]

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana describes this contrition and repentance as performing exorcism on one's self and thus understands that these fights against Satan and his demons, sin, and our sinful nature are a form of exorcism.[112] For this reason, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana teaches that this battle is not against flesh but against "the spiritual forces of evil" (Eph 6:12). Therefore, it is essential for the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana to establish the practice of exorcism upon the Word of God. Without the proclamation of the Word of God beforehand, there is no exorcism. By hearing the Word of God, people may come to faith in Jesus Christ and receive salvation.[113] The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana asserts that the application of the Law and the Gospel can be found in this exorcism event. Lutheran teaching acknowledges the understanding of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana and affirms that the application of the Law is to lead people to self-recognition as sinners and ultimately to contrition and repentance. The Smalcald Articles emphasize that:

> This repentance teaches us to recognize sin: namely, that we are lost, neither hide nor hair of us is good, and we must become absolutely new and different people.[114]

In the same understanding, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana applies the Law in exorcism to condemn Satan, sin, and all enemies of the faith in Jesus Christ. This application is performed by the Mpiandry, who casts out demons, sin, illnesses, and other evil forces by the name of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (Mk 16:17).[115]

On the other hand, Lutheran teaching affirms that the Gospel offers people, by means of their faith in Jesus Christ, the promise of grace, forgiveness of sins, justification, sanctification, reconciliation on account of Jesus Christ, and eternal life.[116] The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana asserts that the proclamation of this Gospel is applied by the Mpiandry by the means of laying on of hands on the people who approach them. However, the words that are spoken in this laying on of hands by the Mpiandry are not mere words; rather, they are the Word of God that offers forgiveness of sins, empowerment, as well as the promise of God in the form of prayer.[117]

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana affirms in this sense that its understanding of the practice of exorcism arises from a Lutheran understanding of the Word of God; for in the Word of God alone, forgiveness of sins and salvation can be received through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is essential for the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana to establish the practice of exorcism upon the Word of God, for without the proclamation of the Word of God there is no exorcism.

III – AN INSIDER'S THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPTION OF EXORCISM BY THE MALAGASY LUTHERAN FIFOHAZANA

The practice of exorcism is one of the essential characteristics of the mission–evangelizing of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana. But first and foremost, the proclamation of the Word of God is claimed to be most significant, as it is the foundation for all of the activities of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana, including the practice of exorcism. The source for this practice by the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana is understood to be the model that Jesus provides during His earthly ministry. The Gospels articulate that the practice of preaching–exorcism is an essential event in the ministry of Jesus; for in this particular event, Jesus manifests His power and authority through visible signs to declare the presence of the eschatological kingdom,[118] as well as to claim the defeat of Satan and his demons (evil spirits), illnesses, and evil powers.[119] Where the kingdom of God exists, Satan has no power.[120]

In this final section, as a member of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana, both as a pastor and a Mpiandry, I intend to provide an insider's view and theological analysis of (1) exorcism in the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana's understanding; (2) the conception of the practice of exorcism by the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana; and (3) the characteristics of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana as a mission–evangelizing movement.

Exorcism in the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana understanding

The practice of exorcism is understood in various ways by the people outside of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana. As an outsider, Eric Sorensen describes the practice of exorcism as the removal of evil spirits (demons) from a possessed individual. He refers to it as the struggle to establish authority and to exert control over demonic possession.[121] Similar to Sorensen's understanding, Richard H. Bell describes exorcism as the driving out of evil spirit(s) with a consequence of some physical change that leads to the process of healing.[122] Supporting Bell's contribution, James D. G. Dunn acknowledges that exorcism is the act of casting out demons in order that the demon-possessed individual may receive healing.[123]

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana acknowledges that these descriptions fit into the understanding of exorcism. However, at the same time, it asserts that there is a broader understanding of the meaning of possession and of the practice of exorcism than what has been described by Bell, Sorensen, and Dunn. Therefore, to arrive at the view of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana on the need for exorcism in the broad sense, outsiders must understand that Satan and his demons (evil spirits) are real and able to possess and create evil works inside of any individual, including Christians (cf. Mt 9:32–33; Lk 8:30). And these evil works can vary.[124] The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana agrees with Lutheran teaching, as it quotes from Luther's Large Catechism in describing various evil works:

> His [Satan] purpose is to make us scorn and despise both Word and the works of God, to tear us away from faith, hope, and love, to draw us into unbelief, false security, and stubbornness, or, on the contrary, to drive us to despair, atheism, blasphemy, and countless other abominable sins.[125]

By understanding that Satan and his demons work (Eph 6:12) not only on individuals, but also in places, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana asserts that it is also appropriate to exorcise such places as homes or lands. The reason is that these places have been locations used to offer heathenish sacrifices and are inhabited by demons or evil spirits. As a result, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana finds it appropriate to perform exorcism to remove Satan and his demons from these locations.[126]

Therefore, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana claims that it is essential in exorcism that the kingdom of Satan (cf. 2 Cor 10:5), which imprisons people in many ways (torment, demonic possession, illnesses of all kinds, unbelief, depression, hatred, conjugal issues, family disorder, drug addiction, alcoholism, and the like), must be destroyed first to allow the establishment of the kingdom of God inside of people (cf. Lk 17:21) so that they may receive the promise of God.[127]

The conception of the practice of preaching–exorcism–laying of hands by the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana affirms that the understanding of the practice of exorcism is developed from the words of Jesus to His disciples: "In my name they will cast out demons; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mk 16:17, 18; cf. Mt 10:1–15; Lk 9:1–6; 10:1–12). It is also based on the model He sets in the Gospels by driving out demons (evil spirits); by healing the sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf, the unbelief, and the lepers; and by raising the dead (Mt 8:1–4, 14–17, 28–34; 9:1–8, 18–26, 27–31, 32–34; 17:14–20; Mk 5:1–20; 5:21–43; 7:24–30, 31–37; Luke 5:12–15, 17–26; 7:11–17; 13:10–17; 18:35–43; Jn 9:1–40; 11:1–44).[128]

From such an understanding, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana translates the word "exorcism" into two Malagasy words for the conceptualization of the practice as *asa* and *fampaherezana* (*asa sy fampaherezana*).[129] And it is from these two words that the meanings and functions are developed according to the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana vocabulary. The word "*asa*" is shortened from the phrase "*asa famoahana demonia*" meaning "casting out demons," which refers to the liberation that is applied in the first part of the exorcism event.[130] This first part of exorcism consists of the Mpiandry's casting out of demons, illnesses, and other forms of possessions and demonic influences upon the people who attend the event.

The word "*fampaherezana*" in the vocabulary of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana means "to build upon a strong foundation and to receive empowerment."

This word is related to the second part of the practice of exorcism, in which *fampaherezana* is applied through prayer by the means of laying on of hands (*vavaka fametrahan-tanana*) by the Mpiandry upon the people who approach them. The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana emphasizes that the words articulated in such prayer are more than mere words; they are the articulation of the Word of God (1 Pt 4:11). The purposes for this *fampaherezana* are to build up the people on a strong foundation by leading them to have faith in Jesus Christ, to give them the forgiveness of sins, to reconcile the people with God through Jesus Christ, to consolidate their faith in Jesus Christ that they may receive salvation, to empower them with the strength of the Holy Spirit, to assure them of the promise of God, and to lead them to offer themselves to God (as a living sacrifice) as well as to have a walk of life in Jesus Christ.[131]

The *fampaherezana* is rooted in the words of Jesus to the disciples after His resurrection when He gives them the Holy Spirit and the authority to forgive sins (Jn 20:21–23). The words spoken in the prayer in the *fampaherezana* are given by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:14–17). The core of the prayer in the *fampaherezana* is the forgiveness of sins, as well as the giving life to Christians as children of God; for whoever is led by the Spirit is a child of God (Rom 8:14) and a temple where the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor 6:19).

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana claims that there is a sequential procedure to follow for the practice of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands. The model that Jesus sets in the Gospels is the proper model to follow. Of utmost importance is the proclamation of the Word of God, for it is the foundation for the practice and is followed by the *asa sy fampaherezana (*exorcism).[132] Kingsley Asahu-Ejere endorses this understanding of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana that Jesus first proclaims the Word of God and then follows it with the exorcism.[133] On the same understanding, Raniero Cantalamessa affirms that this exorcism event reveals how God manifests His divine power through visible signs, affirming the defeat of the realm of Satan, sin, death, evil spirits, illnesses, and evil powers.[134] In addition, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana asserts that the preaching of the Word of God and the practice of *asa sy fampaherezana* are directly connected with the establishment of the kingdom of God in the hearts of people.[135] Furthermore, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana emphasizes that the fight against Satan and his demons by casting them out in exorcism and defeating them means that the kingdom of God is here. Yes, the eschatological kingdom is present, but not fully present; therefore, we must continue to fight. In this understanding, the performance of exorcism affirms that we are still in this world, continuing to fight the good fight (1 Pt 4:1–6; 1 Tm 6:12). In addition, Jesus claims that if He casts out demons with God's finger the kingdom of God has arrived (Lk 11:20).

Furthermore, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana claims that casting out demons is a sign of believers.[136] Fighting the devil by self–exorcism is a commitment given at the baptismal event as well as at the confirmation event by Christians.[137] By understanding this commitment, self–exorcism (fighting the devil as well as sin) is daily practiced by Christians. The fulfilling of God's commandments by Christians is understood as a fight against the devil. Still, daily contrition and repentance is also affirmed as a fight against the devil, as well as casting him out. In addition, the

Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana affirms that the exorcism performed by the Mpiandry is a public affirmation of each believer's self–exorcism that is accomplished daily.

The liturgy for the practice of exorcism

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana claims that the practice of exorcism is not something extraordinary. Rather, the practice follows an orderly liturgical structure that has been conceptualized as Lutheran.[138] Thus, the Word of God is the kernel of the practice of exorcism in this liturgy. It is the foundation for and the essence of the exorcism, for its purpose is to offer salvation by faith in Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the Word of God.[139] Timothy Quill endorses this claim from a Lutheran perspective regarding the use of liturgy to construct a Lutheran form of worship. He says:

> Worship forms are based on doctrine. Worship practice reflects and communicates the beliefs of the church. Liturgy articulates doctrine; The variety of forms which make up the historic liturgy share a common biblical and theological understanding of how man acts in God's presence, and more importantly, how God has chosen to be present and how God acts toward those gathered in his Name. God acts through his Word and Sacrament.[140]
>
> It is in the very nature of the Divine Liturgy to be a liturgy of the Gospel–gifts given and received in faith. Liturgical worship is not simply religious words and talk about God, salvation, forgiveness of sins, and eternal. Rather God is truly present in His word and body and blood, forgiving sins, saving, sustaining, sanctifying and strengthening our faith in Christ.[141]
>
> Wherever the pure Gospel comes, there the great liturgy of the true church revives.[142]

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana asserts that understanding the importance of the Gospel from this Lutheran view shapes a liturgy that is oriented for the practice of exorcism in a Lutheran approach. Therefore, primary in the liturgy of *asa sy fampaherezana* (exorcism) must be the proclamation of the Word of God in connection with the liberation brought by Jesus through His death and resurrection, as well as repentance and renunciation of the devil.[143]

The *asa sy fampaherezana* proceeds from the proclamation of the Word of God by the pastor or an appointed elder of the Mpiandry.[144] It begins with a hymn inviting the Holy Spirit to come and lead the attendants who attend this exorcism to receive faith in Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the Word of God, to lead each individual to contrition and repentance, and to ask God for the forgiveness of sins. The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana asserts that during this hymn the Mpiandry, who are all clothed in white robes, encircle the gathered attendees from the front to the back of the church. And the seven Mpiandry appointed to lead the exorcism, including the four appointed to read the four Gospel texts in sequential order (Jn 14:12–17; Mk 16:14–20; Mt 18:18–20; Jn 20:21–23) for establishing the *asa sy fampaherezana*, come to the front of the church and face the attendees.[145]

The seven Mpiandry all share responsibility in this exorcism in the corresponding order. The first Mpiandry is appointed to give the opening prayer before commencing the practice of the exorcism. The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana affirms two purposes for this prayer: first, to call on the name of the Lord, asking Him to come and be present at the exorcism, as well as to ask for His mercy (Ps 50:15; Acts 2:21; Rom 5:9); and second, to lead the attendees to open their hearts to Jesus, to repent of their sins in order to receive forgiveness, and finally to lead them to have faith in Jesus Christ so that they may receive salvation.[146]

The reading of the four Gospels (*vakiteny fampiorenana ny Asa*) for establishing the *asa sy fampaherezana* follows the opening prayer. The four Gospel passages—namely, John 14:12–17; Mark 16:14–20; Matthew 18:18–20; and John 20:21–23, arranged according to the liturgy for the *asa sy fampaherezana*—are read by the four appointed Mpiandry in consecutive order. The first reading commences with the statement: “In the name of Jesus Christ, let us hear the Holy Scriptures for establishing this Holy work of God”; the last reading concludes with “Amen.”[147] The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana affirms that the reading of these four Gospel passages is essential, for each of these passages articulates the words of establishment for the practice of exorcism.[148]

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana liturgy for the *asa sy fampaherezana* highlights that the *teny fampibebahana sy famoahana demonia* (short word leading to contrition and repentance and then the casting out demons), which follows the readings of the four Gospels, are interconnected and cannot be separated. In addition, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana claims that emphasis is repeatedly put on contrition, repentance, and the asking for forgiveness of sins in this *asa sy fampaherezana*.[149] This emphasis is heard in the proclamation of the Word of God, in the opening prayer for the practice of *asa sy fampaherezana*, as well as after the reading of the four Gospel texts before the actual driving out of the demons by the Mpiandry. The persistent repetition of contrition and repentance is to lead the attendees to recognize and acknowledge before God that they are sinners who ought to repent and are in need of the salvation that is offered in Jesus Christ.[150] However, the liturgy for the *asa sy fampaherezana* stresses that the words articulated by the appointed Mpiandry in the *teny fampibebahana* are brief (not more than two minutes) and must be in connected to the Word of God proclaimed beforehand. Therefore, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana claims that it is essential that the Mpiandry who articulates the *teny fampibebahana* should lead the attendants to contrition and repentance.[151]

The *asa fandroahana demonia* (casting out of the demons) begins immediately after the *teny fampibebahana*. The liturgy for the *asa sy fampaherezana* highlights that the Mpiandry who is appointed for the *teny fampibebahana* leads the *asa fandroahana demonia* by articulating the words “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, come out of this person, leave this person, Satan” and demonstrating authority over Satan (cf. 2 Tm 1:7). The name of Jesus is used to drive out demons, as well as to heal (Acts 3:6, 16, 4:8–12; Eph 1:18–23). The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana strongly emphasizes that the Mpiandry should realize that they are agents of the Holy Spirit in the *asa fandroahana demonia*. Therefore, the Word of God is repeatedly articulated by the Mpiandry during the *asa fandroahana demonia*, for the Word is the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12).[152] For this reason, the words that the Mpiandry articulates should be, “Jesus commands you to leave this person immediately, Satan. Come out of him/her, for you have no authority over him/her. Jesus is the only one who has authority. Satan, leave this person, for you are the enemy that Jesus already conquered. Satan, you have no right to speak to his/her mind and heart. Jesus commands you to come out of this person immediately, Satan."[153] The Mpiandry can also articulate these words: "In the name of Jesus, come out of this person, you spirit of deceit. Get out of this person, you rebellious spirit. Come out of this person, you spirit that causes illnesses/drug addiction/alcoholic."[154]

The *fampaherezana: vavaka fametrahan-tanana* (building upon a strong foundation and receiving empowerment by the means of laying on of hands) is performed in the form of prayer on each of the attendees who approach the Mpiandry following the *asa fandroahana demonia*. The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana affirms that in this *fampaherezan*a the attendants approach the Mpiandry to receive the *vavaka fametrahan-tanana* (prayer by laying on of hands). In this prayer performed by the Mpiandry, all of the attendees are brought to meet God, whom they have accepted as Lord and Savior (Rom 10:9), to receive forgiveness of sins from God so as to reconcile with Him (Lk 5:18–20), to maintain the faith in Jesus Christ in order to have a walk of life that bears good fruit (Mt 3:8), to receive the Holy Spirit and the blessings (Acts 8:15; 9:17; 10:44; Mt 19:13; Jn 14:27), and to receive healing (Mt 8:3, 15; Mk 6:5; Lk 4:40; 13:13; 14:4; Acts 28:8).[155] The rules set for the *asa sy fampaherezana* by the Malagasy Fifohazana emphasize that the words articulated in the prayer for each individual are unique according to that particular person—whether he or she is an adult, a youth, or a child. In addition, the prayer should consist of the following: (1) "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (the opening of the prayer); (2) "your sins are forgiven"; (3) "receive the Holy Spirit"; (4) "may the peace from Jesus Christ be with you"; (5) "Amen" (the ending of the prayer).[156]

The Mpiandry who is appointed to say the closing prayer (prayer of thanksgiving) is in charge of the closing of the *asa sy fampaherezana* event. The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana highlights that the content of the closing prayer should consist of the following: praising God for giving His Word, for His presence during the *asa sy fampaherezana* event, for giving His mercy, for His blessings upon the people who are present, for responding to prayers, and for giving the Holy Spirit.[157] Afterwards, a closing hymn is sung, followed by the Lord's Prayer. The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana advocates that if a pastor is present during this event he is asked to close the *asa sy fampaherezana* with the liturgical benediction. However, if a pastor is not present, then the Mpiandry appointed to say the closing prayer gives the benediction: "May the peace from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior be with you. Go in peace."[158] Following the benediction, the *asa sy fampaherezana* comes to a close and the congregation departs.[159]

The characteristics of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana as a mission–evangelizing movement

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement sees itself as a vehicle for the mission–evangelizing of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. For this reason, Rainisoalambo (the first founder of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement) has strictly instructed from the beginning that the Fifohazana movement must never be separated from the Malagasy Lutheran Church. It must always maintain unity with the church,[160] for in the church and through the church, God works His salvation by the means of the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist).[161] In light of the understanding of this unity with the church and the characteristics of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement, Cynthia Holder Rich finds the characteristics of the revival/awakening movements found on the African continent to be in utter contrast to the characteristics of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana. She affirms that the differences lie in both the foundation and the purpose of the movement.[162] In her analysis, she asserts that, first, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana does not consider itself a small church within a large church; and, second, it does not have any characteristics similar to religious organizations on the African continent that are gathered under the acronym AIC (African Independent Churches).[163]

Hans Austnaberg supports Rich's analysis in this regard and thus highlights some essential characteristics that make the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana stand apart from those of revival/awakening movements on the African continent. He quotes:

> Firstly, the Fifohazana is established upon God's word (the Holy Scriptures) and the teaching given by Jesus to the four founders (*Dada* Rainisoalambo, *Neny* Ravelonjanahary, *Mama* Nenilava Germaine, and Pastor Rakotozandry Daniel). [And] since the teachings of the founders are grounded in God's word (the Holy Scriptures), their teachings too, are considered a basis, upon which the Fifohazana is built. Secondly, the Fifohazana maintains unity with the church. Therefore, the Mpiandry belongs both to the Fifohazana and the church. In this sense the Mpiandry must co-operate with the pastors. . . . The unity of the Fifohazana movement with the church is grounded in the histories of the four founders, because God gave the Fifohazana movement to the church and made the founders co-operate closely with the pastors and other church–workers.[164] . . . Finally, emphasis is put on the unity both of the "Tobilehibe" (great Toby) as well as the "zanatoby" (small Toby) and in the commissioning of Mpiandry. The model of Toby–life is Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan and there is an indispensable link between the Mpiandry and the Toby.[165]

In this same understanding, the Malagasy Lutheran Church Constitution claims it is essential that the Fifohazana movement retains unity with the church. Thereby, the Fifohazana movement aims at assisting the Christians in the Malagasy Lutheran Church to live their lives according to the Scriptures and, at the same time, offers non-believers in communities outside of the church salvation by faith in Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the Word of God.[166]

Furthermore, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana affirms that its characteristics also stand in opposition to that of the Pentecostal movement. Although healing is essential to the mission–evangelizing of the Fifohazana movement, it neither lays emphasis on nor establishes salvation upon miracles, signs, or healings as the Pentecostal movement does.[167] Rather, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana affirms that emphasis is put upon the Word of God as the only foundation for salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.[168]

The Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana emphasizes both the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. Firstly, the Word of God leads non-believers to faith in Jesus Christ so that they may receive salvation, as well as for the care of the well-being of the Christians in the community of saints. In addition, the Word of God and the Sacraments are God's salvific instruments. Baptism is a sacramental grace to receive repentant Gentiles, as well as children of Christians, into the community of the saints. The Eucharist is also a sacramental grace that offers forgiveness of sins and empowerment to continue the fight of faith by resisting and driving out Satan and his demons in one's life. Secondly, the Lutheran Confessions (Luther's Small and Large Catechisms and the Augsburg Confession) help the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana to articulate a sound Lutheran doctrine in the execution of all of its activities, including teaching and practice.

We conclude with Robert Bennett's words regarding the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement in contrast to the African Independent Church revival/awakening movements, as well as to those of the revival/awakening movements in America: "[by the means of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement] the Malagasy Lutheran Church continues to be Orthodox while retaining a practical belief in healing ministries, which includes the deliverance from demonic influences."[169]

The practitioners of Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana would agree with Bennett, claiming that it is essential to hold and practice a sound Lutheran doctrine. For this reason, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana movement emphasizes that all of its activities are based on three main pillars: "the Word of God, faith, and prayer."[170] However, stress is put on the Word of God as the only foundation for salvation that is received by faith in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

The practice of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands by the Mpiandry of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana is essential to the church's mission–evangelizing. Although healing is central to the Malagasy Lutheran Church's mission–evangelizing, the Malagasy Lutheran Church emphasizes that the foundation for salvation is rooted in faith in Jesus Christ from the proclamation of the Word of God. The Malagasy Lutheran Church thus demonstrates in its practice of the Fifohazana movement that it is possible to remain orthodox and maintain sound Lutheran doctrine and teaching, while at the same time retaining a practical belief in healing ministries that include deliverance from demonic influences by the means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands.

Although further questions regarding the practice of exorcism and the approach to it by the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana may arise among sister Lutheran church bodies around the globe, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana affirms that its approach to the practice of exorcism is from a Lutheran perspective and understanding of the Scriptures. The intention of this article is to provide a basic, concrete understanding of the Malagasy Lutheran Church's approach to mission–evangelizing through the Fifohazana's practice of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands, as well as to offer a challenge to fellow Lutherans to reevaluate their healing ministries in both spiritual and physical dimensions.[171]

Endnotes

[1] The Malagasy Lutheran Church (FLM) has eight Branches. Each branch shares the same objective of making disciples by the means of preaching the gospel, beginning in the church, then spreading out into the community, and finally reaching out to all nations. These branches are *Saloma* (Bible study for children and adults), FKTLM (Malagasy Lutheran Christian Youth Association), FS.FLM (Malagasy Lutheran Scout Association), FBL (Women's Lutheran Association), FDL (Men's Lutheran Association), VLM (Malagasy Lutheran Blue Cross), and FiFil (Lutheran Fifohazana Association). The Constitution of the Malagasy Lutheran Church states clearly that the main task of the Fifohazana is to preach the Gospel by the means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands to all people, beginning in the church, at the Toby and reaching out to the surrounding communities, including those that are occupied by non-Christian inhabitants. Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy: *Lalam-panorenana sy Fitsipika ary Toro-hevitra* (Antananarivo: TPFLM, 2001), 83–84. See footnote 5 for the usage of the word "Toby."

[2] It is highlighted in the basic teaching of the Mpiandry book that the Mpiandry (exorcists) in the Lutheran Fifohazana Branch are instructed to collaborate with the pastor in the local congregation including in mission–evangelizing activities that are initiated by the Church. In this manner, the Mpiandry do not work independently but instead work together with the Church. This also emphasizes that the Mpiandry work for the church for the benefit of the kingdom of God. *Foto-Pampianarana momba ny Asan'ny Mpiandry: Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, Ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, Edisiona faharoa (Ankaramalaza: Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, 1997), 17–21.

[3] The practice of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands will be further developed in the history of the Fifohazana in the first section of this work.

[4] Explanation about the Mpiandry is given in the section of this article called "The Fifohazana and the Mpiandry" on page 252.

[5] A "Toby" is a "Mercy Camp" dependent on a local Lutheran Church. There are two levels of Toby: The "*Tobilehibe*" (Mother Toby) and the "*zana-Toby*" (small Toby). These are communities that take care of people who are mentally or physically ill and demon possessed. This community is called a "healing community" because of God's healing work that occurs there. The Mpiandry in the Toby works together with the pastor of the local Lutheran church in caring for the patients who are admitted at the Toby. When it is necessary according to the physical or mental sickness of the patient, the Toby also works with the local Lutheran hospital that is located nearby the Toby and the Lutheran church. Preaching the gospel, exorcism, prayer sessions, and learning the Scriptures are daily activities held at the Toby. The Toby also does mercy works for the surrounding community to help the under-privileged (the poor, the widows, the old, the handicapped, and those children from very poor families). For example, the Toby helps by making it possible for children from poor families to go to school. Tobilehibe, Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana. Foto-pampianarana Momba ny Asan'ny Mpiandry* (Edisiona faharoa: Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, 1997), 29–41.

[6] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, edit., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. by Charles Arand, Eric Gritsch, Robert Kolb, William Russell, James Schaaf, Jane Strohl, Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 447, 449.

[7] Hans Austnaberg, *Shepherds and Demons: A Study of Exorcism as Practised and Understood by Shepherds in the Malagasy Lutheran Church* (New York: Peter Land Publishing, 2008), 1.

[8] Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy, *Ny Tantaran'ny Fifohazana eto Madagasikara* (Antananarivo: TPFLM, 2001), 3.

[9] François Rakotonaivo, *RAKIBOLANA Frantsay-Malagasy (Dictionnaire Français –Malgache)* (Fianarantsoa: Baingan'Ambozontany, 1996), 824.

[10] Ibid., 823.

[11] "ἐγείρω" 1. Transitive: wake, rouse; raise, help to rise; raise the dead; raise up, bring into being. Passive: awaken; be raised; rise; appear. 2. Intransitive (only in the imperative): Get up! Come! F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed., revised by Frederick W. Danker (The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 54.

[12] *Fitsipika Fototra Itondrana ny FiFiL* (Antananarivo: TPFLM, 2001), 1–2.

[13] George W. Forell, *Faith Active in Love: An Investigation of the Principles Underlying Luther's Social Ethics* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1954), 187.

[14] Laurent W. Ramambason, *Missiology: Its Subject-Matter and Method: a Study of Mission-Doers in Madagascar* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999), 42.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Edmond Randriamandroso, *Tantaran'ny Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy Atao Indray Mijery* (Antananarivo: Edisiona Fampielezana Literatiora Loterana, 1989), 20.
[17] The English translation is mine. Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza *Foto-Pampianarana momba ny Asan'ny Mpiandry: Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, Ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, Edisiona faharoa (Ankaramalaza: Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, 1997), 15.
[18] Ramambason describes that in the Malagasy culture people use parental terms to refer to the founders (to show respect): *Dada* means "Dad," *Neny* or *Mama* means "Mom," and *Dadatoa* means "uncle." Laurent W. Ramambason, 62. The term "FLM" refers to "Malagasy Lutheran Church" and the term "FJKM" refers to "Malagasy Reformed Church of Jesus Christ" (Calvinist).
[19] Ibid.
[20] Hans Austnaberg, *Shepherds and Demons*, 42–43.
[21] See Appendix 1 for the locations of these four large Toby Fifohazana in Madagascar.
[22] Laurent W. Ramambason, *Missiology*, 57.
[23] Ibid., 60.
[24] Bruno Rabarihoela, *Fifohazana Tobilehibe Efatra Miray ao amin'ny FFPM: Ny Tantara, Ny Fampianarana, Ny Fitsipika* (unpublished, Tsangambaton'ny Taon-Jobily 2000), 21.
[25] A. Thunem, Pastora Rasamoela Josefa et al., *Ny Tantaran'ny Fifohazana eto Madagasikara.* (Antananarivo: TPFLM: 2001), 13.
[26] Ibid., 17.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Robert J. Scudieri, *The Apostolic Church. One, Holy, Catholic and Missionary* (Fullerton, CA: Lutheran Society For Missiology Book Series, 1995), 16.
[30] Hans Austnaberg, *Shepherds and Demons*, 42.
[31] A. Thunem, Pastora Rasamoela Josefa et al., *Ny Tantaran'ny Fifohazana eto Madagasikara*, 17. See also Sigmund Edland, *Tantaran ny Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy* (Ivory – Avaratra, Fianarantsoa: ed. SALT, 2002), 137.
[32] Cynthia Holder Rich, *Indigenous Christianity in Madagascar: The Power to Heal in* Community (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2011), 9.
[33] Hans Austnaberg, *Shepherds and Demons*, 42.
[34] Ibid.
[35] A. Thunem, Pastora Rasamoela Josefa et al., *Ny Tantaran'ny Fifohazana eto Madagasikara*, 51.
[36] Cynthia Holder Rich, *Indigenous Christianity in Madagascar*, 7.
[37] Sigmund Edland, *Tantaran ny Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy*, 140.
[38] Dictionary of African Christian Biography, *Ravelonjanahary c. 1850 to 1970 Protestant (Reformed) Madagascar*, http://www.dacb.org/stories/madagascar/ravelonjanahary.html
[39] Hans Austnaberg, *Shepherds and Demons*, 43.
[40] A. Thunem, Pastora Rasamoela Josefa et al., *Ny Tantaran'ny Fifohazana eto Madagasikara*, 190.
[41] Ibid., 53.
[42] Ibid., 200–264.
[43] Sigmund Edland, *Tantaran ny Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy*, 170.
[44] A. Thunem, Pastora Rasamoela Josefa et al., *Ny Tantaran'ny Fifohazana eto Madagasikara*, 203.
[45] Ibid., 117.
[46] The locations of these Large Toby (Mercy camps) are shown on the map of Madagascar in Appendix 1.
[47] Cynthia Holder Rich, *Indigenous Christianity in Madagascar*, 7.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 8.
[51] Hans Austnaberg, *Shepherds and Demons*, 44–45.
[52] Cynthia Holder Rich, *Indigenous Christianity in Madagascar*, 77. Rich refers to the usage of the term "AIC" as to being variously defined as "African Independent Churches," "African Indigenous Churches," "African Initiated Churches," or "African Instituted Churches."
[53] *Fitsipika fototra itondrana ny Fifil* (Antananarivo: TPFLM, 2001), 1.
[54] The word "Mpiandry" in the Malagasy language can be used in singular or plural form. Mpiandry is a layperson (man or woman). He/she is commissioned to serve in the church and for the church by the means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands, home visits, prayer fellowship, and mercy works in the Toby. Mpiandry is not a pastor and does not function as a pastor. Another critical distinction is that the

Mpiandry does not receive any salary for the services in the church. Furthermore, the Mpiandry is under the authority and supervision of the pastor of the congregation where he/she is a member.
[55] Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: The ETWORTH Press, 1960), 13.
[56] Ibid., 45.
[57] Ibid., 246.
[58] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana. Foto-pampianarana Momba ny Asan'ny Mpiandry* (Edisiona faharoa n.p.: Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, 1997), 29–30.
[59] Ibid., 29.
[60] Ibid.
[61] The call to become a Mpiandry is not the same as the call for a Pastor to serve in the Office of Ministry, although that both of these calls are received from Jesus. However, the call must be analyzed by the one who received the call as well as by the Pastor of the congregation where he/she is a member, if it truly is from Jesus or not (1 Jn 4:1–3).
[62] It is essential to make the distinction on the usage of terms regarding the church hierarchy system in the Malagasy Lutheran Church. The use of the word "synod" in the MLC is equivalent to the LCMS description for "district." And the use of the word "district" in the MLC is equivalent to the LCMS "circuit."
[63] Fifohazana Miray ao amin'ny FFPM, *Fitsipika Anaty. Fandaharam-pampianarana ho an'ny Mpiomana ho Mpiandry* (ed. Soatanana–Manolotrony–Ankaramalaza–Farihimena: TPFLM, 2000), 20.
[64] Ibid., 7–8, 20.
[65] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 32–33.
[66] Laurent W. Ramambason, *Missiology*, 60.
[67] Fifohazana Miray ao amin'ny FFPM, *Fitsipika Anaty*, 15–19.
[68] Pope Pius XI, "MORTALIUM ANIMOS," Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1928, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos_en.html.
[69] Sigmund Edland, *Tantaran ny Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy*, 148.
[70] Jean Rabemanahaka Williberton, *Tantaran'ny Protestanta*, ed. Fiombonan'ny Fiangonana Protestanta eto Madagasikara (n.p.: TPFLM,1993), 39.
[71] Sigmund Edland, *Tantaran ny Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy*, 148.
[72] Daniel Ratefy, *Ny Fiombonan'ny Fiangonana Protestanta eto Madagasikara: Ny lasa, ny ankehitriny, ny ho avy* (Antananarivo: Imprimerie, Madaprint, 1983),48; Also see Jean Rabemanahaka Williberton, *Tantaran'ny Protestanta*, 54.
[73] Pastora Rakotomalala, *Tantaran ny Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy Tao Anatin ny 130 Taona [1867–1997]* (Antananarivo: TPFLM), 16.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Pastora Rakotomalala, *Tantaran ny Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy Tao Anatin ny 130 Taona*, 17.
[76] Daniel Ralibera, Dominichi Jean Pierre, Esoavelomandroso Manassé et al., *I Madagasikara sy ny Fivavahana Kristiana* (Fianarantsoa, Edisiona Ambozontany, 1992), 430.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ratongavao Charles Raymond, Razafimanjato Roger, Ramino Paul, et al., *Kristy mampihavan Antsika* Ed. FFKM (n.p.: TPFLM, 2007), 9; Also see Daniel Ralibera, Dominichi Jean Pierre, Esoavelomandroso Manassé et al., *I Madagasikara*, 430.
[79] Daniel Ralibera, Dominichi Jean Pierre, Esoavelomandroso Manassé, et al., *I Madagasikara*, 430–31.
[80] *Tari-dalana Momba ny Ekiomenika* (Fianarantsoa: Impremerie St. Vincent de Paul, 1985), 48.
[81] Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy, *Ny Tantaran'ny Fifohazana eto Madagasikara* 83–84.
[82] Hans Austnaberg, *Shepherds and Demons*, 55.
[83] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, 373–75.
[84] Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers:* 37.
[85] Preaching the Word of God for repentance and making a change in the walk of life to be in accordance with the Scriptures was strongly articulated in the mission–evangelizing of the four great Malagasy Fifohazana movements of 1894, 1900, 1941, and 1946. And this is still the essential objective of the present day mission–evangelizing of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana.

[86] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 17.
[87] Victor E. W. Hayward, *African Independent Church Movements* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1963), 9.
[88] Ibid., 72.
[89] Ibid., 9.
[90] Ibid., 34–46
[91] Ibid., 27–29.
[92] Robert H. Bennett, *Western Theology Meets African Spirituality: Spiritual Healing in Madagascar*, (Lecture of International Association for Mission Studies 2012 Conference, Wycliffe College, Toronto, August 16, 2012), 14.
[93] Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen, ed., *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (UK: Regnum Books International, 1999), 19, 23. Also see R. G. Robins, *Pentecostalism in America* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2010), 80–82.
[94] Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments* (Worldwide Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 229–30.
[95] Karen L. Bloomquist, editor, *Lutherans Respond to Pentecostalism: Theology in the Life of the Church. Vol.4* (Minneapolis: Minnesota: Lutheran University Press, 2008), 9.
[96] William Packard, *Evangelism in America: From Tents to TV* (New York, NY: Paragon House Publishers, 1988), 162.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 163.
[99] Ibid., 165.
[100] Ibid., 164.
[101] Ibid., 176.
[102] Cynthia Holder Rich, *Indigenous Christianity in Madagascar*, 71–77. See also Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 17.
[103] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 17. See also Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 304, 447.
[104] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 528–29.
[105] Ibid., 119.49.
[106] Ibid., 235.
[107] Ibid., 454.
[108] Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Library of Christian Classics) (New York: Westminster John Knox P, 2006), 44, 46, 59.
[109] Hans Naegeil Osjord, *Possession & Exorcism* (Oregon: New Frontiers Center, 1988), 3. The context that Luther faced in his time cannot be compared to the contemporary context of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana regarding the understanding of the practice of exorcism. There is a difference in time, space, culture, context and understanding. However, the purpose for the need of exorcism in Luther's understanding is still the same as of the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana, which is to cast out demons.
[110] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 448, 452.
[111] Ibid., 318, 577. Also see Hilton C. Oswald, ed., *Luther's Works: Vol. 25 Lectures on* Romans (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 433–35.
[112] In relation to the Lutheran teaching of exorcism, the Malagasy Lutheran Fifohazana acknowledges that baptism is also considered as exorcism. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 373–74.
[113] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 74–77.
[114] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 317–18.
[115] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 100–104.
[116] Ibid., 127.
[117] Ibid., 73. The Mpiandry are encouraged during their two years of Lutheran Theological Training to have the love for reading the Scriptures. The purpose is to lead them to always read the Scriptures for the Word of God is the means that the Holy Spirit uses to bring faith to people that leads them to repentance, to receive forgiveness of sins, salvation and the promise of God.

[118] Richard H. Bell, *Deliver Us from Evil: Interpreting the Redemption from the Power of Satan in New Testament Theology* (Tübingen, Germany: Nohr Siebeck, 2007), 89.
[119] Eric Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity*, edited by Jörg Frey, Martin Hengel, Otfried Hofius (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2002), 128–29.
[120] Robert H. Bennett, *From Darkness Into The Light: A Phenomenological Study of the Events Surrounding Exorcism and Conversion As Found in the Fifohazana Movement of the Malagasy Lutheran Church* (Diss., Concordia Theological Seminary, 2010), 7.
[121] Ibid., 132–33.
[122] Richard H. Bell, *Deliver Us from Evil*, 66–67. John J. Pilch explains the use of the words "curing" and "healing" by stating that "[curing] is to disease as healing is to illness. Technically speaking, when therapy can affect a disease so as to check or remove it, that activity is called *curing*. And when an intervention affects an illness, that activity is called *healing*." See John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 93.
[123] James. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdsmans Publishing Company, 1975), 44–45.
[124] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 79.
[125] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 454.
[126] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 79.
[127] Ibid., 74.
[128] Ibid., 79.
[129] Ibid., 73–77. The words exorcism and "Asa sy Fampaherezana" are used alternately throughout this third section. However, these words either in English or Malagasy articulate the same meaning and usage.
[130] Ibid, 74.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 71–76.
[133] Kingsley Asahu-Ejere, *The Kingdom of God and Healing-Exorcism (Mt. 4 17–5:12)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 111.
[134] Cantalamessa, Raniero, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus: The Mystery of Christ's Baptism*, Alan Neame, trans. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 22.
[135] Ibid., 17.
[136] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 77.
[137] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 373–75; Lutheran Service Book (Confirmation Liturgy), 272–74 cf. Malagasy Lutheran Church (Confirmation Liturgy).
[138] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 80–120.
[139] Ibid., 80–84.
[140] Timothy C. J. Quill, *Why the Liturgy is Important* (manuscript unpublished), 1.
[141] Ibid., 4.
[142] Ibid., 3.
[143] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 80.
[144] Exorcism is practiced on Sundays when the Eucharist is not distributed. Thus, the sermon that is preached by the pastor on that Sunday establishes the practice for the exorcism event. The exorcism event takes place after the offering. In addition, the time to hold this practice varies from church to church, depending on each church's organization. Some Lutheran churches may practice exorcism one Sunday in a month and others may practice it two Sundays in a month. Exorcism can also be practiced on a weekday. The church's organization depends on the need of the members of each congregation.
[145] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 88.
[146] Ibid., 89–91.
[147] Ibid., 92.
[148] Ibid., 91–93.

[149] Ibid., 94–95.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., 96–97.
[152] Ibid., 100.
[153] Direct quote by author.
[154] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 101.
[155] Ibid., 111.
[156] Ibid., 113.
[157] Ibid., 119.
[158] Ibid., 120.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Hans Austnaberg, *Shepherds and Demons*, 55.
[161] Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 174.
[162] Cynthia Holder Rich, *Indigenous Christianity in Madagascar*, 67–95.
[163] Ibid., 77.
[164] Hans Austnaberg, *Shepherds and Demons*, 55.
[165] Ibid., 56.
[166] Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy: *Lalam-panorenana sy Fitsipika ary Toro-hevitra*, 83.
[167] Karen L. Bloomquist, 9.
[168] Cynthia Holder Rich, *Indigenous Christianity in Madagascar*, 71–77.
[169] Robert H. Bennett, *Western Theology Meets African Spirituality*, 15.
[170] Fifohazana Tobilehibe Ankaramalaza, *Ny Fifohazana, Ny Toby, Ny Mpiandry, ny Asa sy Fampaherezana*, 77.
[171] Robert H. Bennett, *Western Theology Meets African Spirituality*, 17.

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APPENDIX 1

THE FOUR LARGE CENTERS OF
TOBY FIFOHAZANA (Tobilehibe) IN MADAGASCAR

Toby Soatanana founded by Rainisoalambo (1894)

Toby Manolotrony founded by Neny Ravelonjanahary (1900)

Toby Ankaramalaza founded by Mama Volahavana Germaine (1941)

Toby Farihimena founded by Pastor Rakotozandry Daniel (1946)

There are also small Toby that have the same tasks as the Large Toby (Tobilehibe). These are scattered throughout different regions on the island and are built next to Lutheran churches. These small Toby (zana-Toby) are under the organized structure of the Large Toby (Tobilehibe) and obey the laws and regulations of the Large Toby. Thus, any independent actions by the small Toby are not adopted or practiced by the Large Toby. The creation of small Toby, as well as the bringing in of new converts into the Malagasy Lutheran Church throughout the island, are fruits of the mission–evangelizing by means of preaching–exorcism–laying on of hands by the Fifohazana movement.

Roland Allen and the Coming Kingdom

Robert Schmidt

Abstract: Roland Allen's emphasis on the ministry in missionary churches opens the door to a number of ways in which the church can work to change society. In so doing he makes some very important connections between the promises of the prophets, Jesus announcement of the coming kingdom, and Paul's missionary methods. In so doing he again invites the church to bring the good news of the Kingdom of God to the modern world.

When I first encountered the writing of Roland Allen, I did not detect much concern on his part about changing society. He argued that over the years the purpose of overseas missions had subtly changed. In the beginning there was a conversion to Christ; dealing with other social concerns would follow. In his day, however, he saw that order reversed. Missionaries spoke of the gospel of enlightenment, the gospel of healing, the social gospel and the gospel of sex equality. The uplift of people became the gospel itself.[1] Allen criticized this approach for two good reasons. First, he argued that it simply did not work. Secondly, he criticized it because it was not in agreement with Paul's mission.[2]

Yet when one examines more fully the implications of Allen's emphasis on the ministry in missionary churches, he opens the door to a number of ways in which the church can work to change society. He makes some very important connections among the Hebrew prophets, Jesus' announcement of the coming Kingdom, and Paul's missionary methods. In so doing, he again invites the church to bring the good news of the Kingdom of God to the modern world.

Is there really good news for a world deeply divided between rich and poor, where war threatens over scarce resources? What kind of gospel speaks to people who worry more about the planet's future than about personal sin? Who wants to believe in faiths that seem to fuel prejudice, imperial overreach, or terrorism? Yet, as faith is discarded as boring, irrelevant, and even pernicious, a miasma of despondency has settled over societies around the world.

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Promises of the Kingdom

Into such a world Jesus says, "The Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the good news" (Mk 1:15). Jesus did not need to explain what He meant by the Kingdom of God to His first listeners. Attuned to the promises of the prophets, even their casual readers felt their pulses quicken at the announcement. There would be forgiveness of sins, even for those who oppressed the poor. Scarlet sins would be washed whiter than snow (Is 1:18). Good food would satisfy the hungry (Is 25:6). They would be radiant over the grain, the wine, and the oil (Jer 31:12). Water would abound in the wilderness (Is 43:19). The dry land would rejoice with singing (Is 35:7).

The sick will be healed. The deaf will hear and the blind will see (Is 29:18). The lame man will leap like a deer (Is 35:5,6). To the landless came the promise, "They shall sit every man under his vine and fig tree" (Mi 4:4). All understood that this was a promise of employment and a home. Slaves and hostages would be released. Those in bondage in Babylon would be free and come home. Sons and daughters would come from afar (Is 60:4). The coming one would proclaim liberty to the captives (Is 61:1). In the proclaimed Kingdom, there would be peace between peoples. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together" (Is 11:6). Yes, and they will beat their swords into plowshares and not learn war anymore (Mi 4:3).

The New World Society

The promises of forgiveness, food, water, healing, jobs, liberation, and peace resonate deeply in the hopes of people everywhere. They are no less than the outline of a New World Society. Were they even partially realized, they would constitute very "good news" to every generation.

Forgiveness

Behind the gated communities in every land from Greenwich, Connecticut, to Kensington Gardens, London, to Lagos, Nigeria, live the very rich. With their sumptuous lifestyles there may also be a twinge of guilt as they pass the very poor on their way to work. In the New World Society, there is also forgiveness for the very rich, releasing them from the need to constantly justify themselves. In the cross of Christ, they were reconciled to God, opening them up not only to share their wealth but also to seek greater economic justice for the vulnerable.

Food

The promise of food is also a vital ingredient of the New World Society. Access to land, agricultural inputs, education, roads to market produce, and massive help during times of famine are all possible. For the hungry within a given society, food aid by churches, food banks, and government aid programs have all been helpful. In the wider world, economic development in China, India, and Southeast Asia has reduced the number of starving people and provided new hope for that region of the world.

Water

In the midst of climate change and increased population, the prophets' promise of water in the wilderness has special relevance. For the lack of clean, drinkable water, children around the world get sick, gardens cannot be grown, animals must be sold or slaughtered before their time, and women must walk miles each day to wash or even get a pail of water. No one thing might improve the lives of millions of people around the world more than available good water, especially in dry and arid regions.

Healing

The New World Society will also experience healing. As mothers across the world know, one of the best blessings they can have is a healthy child. When blindness, deafness, or another debilitating illness cripples children, our hearts go out to the children and their families. In the United States, among the working poor, there is often no affordable health insurance. When there is little or no access to adequate medical care, a promise like this has real meaning. In many nations of the world the problem is much worse. Sometimes there are tens of thousands of patients for every doctor and few hospitals for the entire population.

Home and Work

In a world of millions of refugees, immigrants, people moving for jobs, and the desperate landless poor, the promise of land is sweet indeed. Living on one's own land is not only a pattern for security, but it satisfies a deep-seated need within the human heart. The poetic, prophetic image of having one's own vine and fig tree also speaks to the hope of unemployed youth around the world in urban environments. With meaningful work, they can own a home, raise a family, and lead a very fulfilling life.

Release of Captives

As the children of Israel were released from captivity by the mighty acts of God, so will captives and prisoners be released in the coming Kingdom. That dream of liberty lives on in prisons throughout the world for people who are held and tortured for their political beliefs. It is also the dream of hostages held against their will and the women held captive in the sex trade. Though forbidden by law in nearly every country of the world, slavery still exists and by some accounts is a growing problem. The promise of liberation has a special meaning for all those held captive in such slavery.

Peace between People

The twentieth century has been the bloodiest century in world history. Millions and millions of people have been killed by two world wars and various conflicts raging around the world. The twenty-first century has begun with more wars and the threat of larger conflicts to come. In addition to the wars themselves, huge amounts of money have been spent for armaments, not only by super powers but also by the poorest of nations. For people then and now, the promise of beating swords into plowshares, turning weapons of war into instruments of peace, is a precious pledge.

The Church and the Kingdom

The Gospels spell out Jesus' focus on the Kingdom. It is so valuable it is worth selling all to obtain it (Mt 13:44–46). It grows like plants from seeds sown by a man in a field. Some of it produces much fruit, others a little, and others none at all (Mt 13:1–23). The results are always spotty. There are weeds among the wheat and bad fish among the good (Mt 13:31–32). Though the results are less than perfect, the growth is inevitable. The Kingdom grows like a mustard seed. Though it begins small, it will become such a big bush that birds will be able to nest in its branches (Mt 13:31–32). The Kingdom works in society like leaven swells a lump of dough. True, the growth is sometimes slow. Watching a seed germinate or leaven working in dough is sometimes imperceptible. However, after walking away for a time, one comes back to see the marvelous changes that have taken place both in individual people and within the entire society.

Jesus began the Kingdom movement by forgiving sins, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and reconciling enemies. Even death was no barrier to the promises of the Kingdom when He raised people from the dead. Finally, Jesus warned that whole nations will be evaluated by whether they have fed the hungry, given water to the thirsty, welcomed strangers, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and imprisoned. Judgment on both societies and individuals will be based on whether they helped fulfill the promises of the Kingdom (Mt 25:31–46).

In the first three centuries, the church continued Jesus' Kingdom work. People sold their farms to be able to help feed the hungry. Peter and Paul healed the sick.

When Christianity became the approved faith of the empire under Constantine, the Kingdom of God was subsumed under the rule of the state, albeit a "friendly" state. At times the state was helpful in Kingdom concerns. Now the state would worry about peace between nations. Now, for the first time, Christians fought in Caesar's army. Clergy were educated and compensated. To house growing number of worshipers now that the faith was popular, church buildings needed to be built and cared for. Slowly and subtly, the church's mission was no longer announcing the Kingdom, but building the church in Caesar's kingdom.

As clergy were celebrated and fêted in Caesar's realm, some disaffected followers of Jesus headed for the desert, first as hermits and later to monasteries. The early monasteries and convents focused again on Kingdom work. Hungry visitors were fed; the sick were cared for. Landless and unemployed might share in the monasteries' property and prosperity. Some monks even helped bring peace between warring chieftains. In troubled times, the monasteries were places of refuge and beacons of hope.

In later times, many monasteries were less interested in serving others than in serving themselves. At the time of the Reformation, prosperous monasteries often seemed like ripe plums ready for the picking. As kings and princes plundered them to enhance their own power, the Reformers called on the society and the state to help with Kingdom work. Cities would have to care for the sick. Kingdom work now became divided. The church, with its ministries of word and sacraments, would concern itself with forgiveness and hope for eternal life. Society and the state would have to pick up, if they would, the more mundane aspects of Kingdom work.

The division of Kingdom work between church and state was not without its blessings. Under the nation-state system, taxes could be levied to support hospitals and health care, supply food aid, and provide employment and drinkable water. In so doing, the state and society provided far more aid than churches ever could. Yet, that division between church and state had its down side as well. With their own divisions between rich and poor, states have had a difficult time in addressing gross financial inequalities in their societies. Nor have they had the global perspective to work assiduously for peace between nations unless it was in their own self-interest.

The division of Kingdom work between church and state has also had a negative effect upon the church. Some aspects of social ministry continue to be carried out by church bodies or by non-governmental institutions supported by them. Local congregations, however, have not done much. They cannot afford to. Because they have limited themselves chiefly to the spiritual aspects of Kingdom work, the vision of their work has become myopic. Indeed, the church is often dismissed as merely handing out spiritual blessings to people who do not feel the need for them. As a result, in the affluent nations of the world, many congregations are getting weaker and are just struggling to survive.

Current Church Crises

In his "Foreword" to the 1962 edition of *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes which Hinder it* Kenneth Grubb writes: "He [Allen] shows us how to start again from the beginning, but he is not always so clear about how to start from halfway down the course."[3] He is commenting on Allen's proposal that the ministry of the church should be staffed largely by non-stipendiary clergy, i.e., clergy who do not depend on compensation from the church for their income. Grubb was noting that such methods of clergy compensation are easier to put in place from the beginning than to introduce them after clergy have been paid. While Grubb was speaking about the policies of international missionary societies, these words might also describe the application of Allen's ideas to contemporary congregations in Europe and America. How might one introduce the concept of non-stipendiary ministers to congregations and parishes that have known the ministry only as professional, university- and seminary-trained clergy for centuries?

Paradoxically, the current church crises of aging congregations, dwindling attendance, and church closures in Europe and America may be opening up the possibility and potential of new forms of the church. The crises are real. The Church of England reports that about twenty church buildings are closed as worship venues every year.[4] Similar statistics are true for Germany, France, most of Europe and also America.

Perhaps the biggest crisis that organized churches face today is the loss of young people. Seventy percent of Protestants aged 18 to 30 drop out of church before age 23 and give multiple reasons for their departure. Robert Wuthnow writes, "Unless religious leaders take younger adults more seriously, the future of American religion is in doubt."[5] When asked why they left the church, 22% said that the church often ignored the real problems of the world. Others said that the church was not relevant to their career or interests.[6]

Both the closing of many churches and the exodus of young Christians, many of whom retain their faith, can be understood as the death knell of Christianity as we have known it. However, these crises might also provide a wonderful opportunity to refocus its message both on the good news of the Kingdom and on new forms of the church led by non-stipendiary ministers.

Roland Allen to the Rescue

In his day, Allen was "prescriptive" in writing about the need for non-stipendiary clergy in new mission congregations. This was the whole argument of his first book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*[7] As telling and cogent as the argument was, it was met with great resistance, partly because it went against everything that missionary societies were doing. Who was this Roland Allen telling others how they should be doing their mission work?

In our day, Allen's argument is not so much "prescriptive" as much as "permissive." As a result Allen's insights are much less law than they are good news. What does a congregation do when it is too small to keep up a church building and pay its pastor? Allen comes to the rescue by saying that the building can be sold and the pastor replaced by elders (bishops) who are blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior etc. (1 Tm 3:2f.). It would be perfectly suitable to bless (ordain) several leaders and continue to be the church in this place.

After an acceptable time of grieving for what has been lost, members can look to the future with a sense of relief. Now there is no need to sorrow over the loss of membership and the selling of the building. Though less money is collected, none of it is spoken for. Suddenly there is more money to be given away than before. People can meet in homes, in the back rooms of restaurants, or any other available space. Were church members, however, simply to leave their buildings and clergy for small groups or house churches, the church might still age and die. Roland Allen was not simply concerned about the form of the church; he was also very concerned about the relevance of the church to every culture and concern.

Allen and the Relevance of the Church

As a missionary, Roland Allen was very concerned to make the Christian message meaningful to those to whom he was sent. However, he found that insisting on an institutional training for local clergy and promoting their professional status often removed them from the living concerns of their people. In writing about Christ's education of the disciples Allen writes:

> Christ trained His leaders in the midst of their own people, so that the intimacy of their relation to their own people was not marred and they could move freely among them as one of themselves; we train our leaders in a hot house, and their intimacy with their own people is so marred that they can never thereafter live as one of them, or share their thoughts.[8]

Allen was concerned about making the gospel relevant to people of different ethnic cultures in the missionary lands. Thus, he advocated that people from within those cultures were the best people to evangelize and nurture their own people. He believed that every group had its own natural leaders and teachers. He regretted that by insisting on professional training of a few elite pastors the natural leaders were silenced and the church might lose their gifts.[9]

Often young people and other disaffected folks constitute a similar "alien culture" to church goers today. Thus, they may well be "out of reach" for a university- or seminary-trained parson employed by a congregation or church body. The alienation is compounded by the supposed need to remain aloof from political and social questions to concentrate on the preaching of a narrow gospel and the administration of the sacraments. No wonder that the church becomes more irrelevant and isolated from common concerns.

To bridge the growing gap between the church and society, we need both a new message and new messengers. The new message is really the old message that "the Kingdom of God is at hand." The church no longer needs to be concerned about its survival, its control, or its influence. Its mission is not to build the church but to bring the hope of the Kingdom, the new world society. Allen is right that this hope is centered in a conversion to Christ. Allen writes:

> If we set Christ first, faith in Christ first, the Name of Christ first, we set men on a sure road to something that is infinitely good, but that progress is in Christ, not in our intellectual, moral, and social doctrines, and we cannot set them on that path except by bringing them to Christ. We must put Christ first.[10]

Christ is key, but Christ's message was about the coming Kingdom. The good news of the coming Kingdom is that Christ forgives sins, feeds the hungry, provides water for the thirsty, heals the sick, provides jobs and homes, liberates the captives and brings peace between people. The evangelism message for today is that in Christ there is hope for all of these concerns shared widely among all the peoples of the world.

Together with the new messages (really the old one), the church needs new messengers. These are the voluntary clergy. One might say these are the "old clergy" responsible for the tremendous growth of the church in the first three centuries. Allen defines voluntary clergy as follows:

> Voluntary clergy are men who earn their living by the work of their hands or their heads in the common market, and serve as clergy without stipend or fee of any kind.[11]

Coming from the society and not the seminary, such clergy would intimately know the problems and concerns of the people they sought to reach. They would not have to learn the culture; they would have been brought up within it. Furthermore, because they require no funds, each local congregation would have more resources to help the people in their neighborhood. In fact, in the pattern of congregations in the New Testament, they might even have money left over to help the needy in congregations elsewhere.

How might congregations led by voluntary clergy bring the hope of the coming Kingdom to their community? Which of the promises of the Kingdom would a small house church be able to address? Since clergy coming from their own society would know their own people and the struggles they face, Allen had the confidence that they would know what to do and how best to do it.[12]

The Prophetic Ministry of the Church

As the state and societal organizations took over significant areas of social ministry, some in the church felt excused from social responsibility. Others left the church to get on with what they felt was the real mission of helping the vulnerable. Still others in the church have felt a great responsibility to speak to the powers that be, to advocate help for the hungry, for the environment, for the sick, for the unemployed, for the captives, and to bring peace between nations. Church conventions and convocations have passed resolutions and church hierarchies have issued statements. However, as the influence of the church has waned, these statements and resolutions have largely been ignored.

Meanwhile, on the streets, thousands, if not millions, of people have sought to address the rising inequalities between rich and poor and the mass unemployment of a whole generation of young people. As the largest corporations dwarf many medium and small nations, states are no longer even able to address some of these global issues. Needed is a vantage point above and beyond the nation-state to address these issues and the means to do it.

Allen was right: Christ is the key. The vantage point for addressing global issues is the cosmic Christ. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers" (Col 1:15–16). Lost in much of contemporary politics is precisely the world-wide vision of the cosmic Christ and the Kingdom He promised.

If Christ is the vantage point for a prophetic ministry, what are the means to address world needs and promote some global solutions? In the past, had some courageous clergyman addressed world needs and suggested some political solutions, many in his congregation would have left, saying that these matters are not really the business of the church. Others would criticize such action and warn that, if he continued in his ways, the church would lose its contributors and might have to close.

Though Allen does not speak to this concern, his promotion of the voluntary clergy does. For Allen, the church did not need any money to survive and thrive. Therefore, it was free to speak out then, and also, now. Where will the church gather to speak out on the important issues and be present in humanitarian crises? If voluntary clergy are part of the unemployed demonstrating on the streets, the signs they hold can be the prophetic message for the day. If the voluntary clergy are distributing blankets, tents, and medicines in an earthquake, famine, or flood, the church there will speak volumes in its concern.

But, do those speaking out really need Christ and His church? Can they not simply demonstrate and help? Of course they can. However, Christians working in the coming Kingdom will want to be where this kind of "Kingdom action" is taking place. Empowered by their faith in Christ and moved to be part of His Kingdom work, Christians will bring with them a sense of hope, focus, inspiration, and endurance.

The Sacraments and the Kingdom

If the church building is gone and the remaining group cannot afford a full-time pastor, what will be the shape of the church and its focus? For Allen, the church from its beginning met and grew around the sacraments. Allen writes:

> He (Paul) taught them the form of the administration and the meaning of the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. There is not a shadow of evidence to support the notion that the sacraments were considered optional in the early Church. In the writings of St. Paul it is taken for granted that every Christian has been baptized and that all meet habitually at the Table of the Lord.[13]

One of the reasons why Allen wanted voluntary clergy to be ordained was so that it would be possible for Christians throughout the world to receive the sacraments as often as they wished. In commenting on the importance of the sacraments in the theology of Roland Allen, Åke Talltorp writes:

> In the theology of Roland Allen, the Sacraments are regarded as constitutive for the Church. "Christ instituted his Church when He ordained His Sacraments."[14] "There is no question that it is the observance of the rites of Christ which stamps the Church. It is the celebration of Holy Communion which is the crux. That is the key of the situation. That is the great witness which Christians bear before the world."[15] The reason for the local Church to be properly constituted is its task as a witnessing community.[16]

What might the church look like in preparation for an "occupy protest," as an emergency medical unit in a disaster area, or in a quiet village that has closed its church building? There would be a gathering for inspiration, sharing hope, urging endurance, and centered in the sacrament. Then in the sacrament would again be the incarnation of God present among us, centered in Christ's sacrifice for us and giving us the power to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of the Kingdom. As members share the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine, they are reminded of our task to forgive sins, share food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, and healing for both the body and the conflicts between people.

We Are Not Alone

Struggling with world unemployment, disease, poverty, hunger, and war, each small group of Christians may feel helpless in the face of such overwhelming challenges. Yet, we are not alone. In advocating the use of voluntary clergy, Roland Allen faced one of the greatest challenges to his thesis. By letting clergy arise from within the congregation, he would be undermining the unity of the church. What if each small group would go off on its own and lose contact with other Christians of the same persuasion? In answering that challenge, Allen opened the door to an entirely different concept of the unity of the church and, in so doing, shows us how

Christians, and even people of other faiths, can work together for a new world society.

Like St. Paul, Allen believed that Church unity was a given. It was not something to be created because it already existed. Churches were not independent; they were extensions of the one Church. There was only one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all. As a result, there could not be two churches in different places with one head, yet not be in communion with one another.[17]

Allen believed that there were two ways of maintaining that union which already existed. One was through the transplant of the laws and customs of the founding church to the younger churches. This had been done through church laws, central administration, *a priori* tests of orthodoxy, and the universal application of precedents.[18] Allen, however, believed that unity maintained on the basis of law was wrong. He writes:

> St. Paul was a preacher of a Gospel, not of a law. His Epistles are full of this. He reiterates it again and again. It was not simply that he was a preacher of a Gospel in contradistinction to the teachers of the Jewish law, he was a preacher of Gospel as opposed to the system of law. . . His method was a method of Gospel, not a method of law.[19]

Allen asserted that Paul was more interested in a spiritual unity. Paul taught unity chiefly by taking it for granted. Secondly, he used his position as a Pharisee with a Greek education to bring about an understanding between the two cultures. Thirdly, he encouraged the younger churches to make contributions to the poor in the mother church. Last of all, he encouraged great communications between the churches through letters and a network of visitors.[20]

For the foreseeable future, there will continue to be a wide variety of churches, with or without denominational labels. Some will continue to have professional paid clergy and an increasing number will have voluntary clergy. Yet for those who take for granted the unity of the church under our common Lord, we realize the profound truth that we are not alone and there are many to help in the coming Kingdom.

With the focus on the Kingdom of God, the New World Society, are we also working with those of other faiths? Of course we are. Has it not warmed our hearts to see the Red Crescent ambulances work together with those of the Red Cross in times of an emergency? Focused on the promises of the Kingdom, Christians freely work with those of all faiths and those who have no religious faith to bring healing to our world. Working with others we also witness to Christ who brings us the enduring hope that the Kingdom is at hand.

The Apostolic Ministry

Today, who will give permission that closing a church building is all right, that it would be a blessing to ordain voluntary clergy, that instead of worrying about the church's survival we should concentrate on the promises of the Kingdom? It is not likely to come from the headquarters of a church body or from a successful mega-church. It is not currently the goal of the universities and seminaries that educate clergy.

Nearly all of those who have been nourished by Roland Allen's writings, and have celebrated his influence in their lives and ministries, have been deeply connected with the missionary work of the church. For them "apostolic" is not a term that carries with it ecclesiastical authority. Rather, it describes the function of being sent by Christ to bring the good news of the coming Kingdom.

Needed in our day is a new "apostolic ministry" for churches in crises. Allen believed that there would be a continuing need for excellent academic education. St. Paul had that type of education, and it is still necessary for today, not to serve as the pastor of a local congregation, but to be an "apostolic minister" in the pattern of Paul.

Even as Christ said, the Kingdom of God is at hand, so too, a new pattern of church life is at hand. Perhaps we will only start with twelve or so "missionary types" who have imbibed the good news from Roland Allen. However, clergy now losing their congregations might rethink their vocations. Some might well take on secular occupations and become "voluntary clergy" Others, inspired by St. Paul, might well choose to become apostolic ministers. Institutions training clergy for non-existing congregations might rethink their mission and educate many of their students to be missionaries like Paul.

Roland Allen brought good news to missionaries struggling to create churches in new lands in the pattern of the ones in their homeland. Today he continues to bring good news to congregations that no longer can continue in the patterns of the past. In doing so, he frees congregations and their leaders from their concerns to keep the church going. In that freedom Christians can again concentrate on bringing the good news that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

Endnotes

1 Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1962), 80.

2 Ibid., 88.

3 Kenneth Grubb, "Foreword," in Ibid., vii.

4 Church of England. "Closed Churches are Available For Disposal" [http://www.churchofengland.org] April 2012.

5 Robert Wuthnow, quoted in *U.S.A. Today*, "Young Adults Aren't Sticking with the Church" [http://www.usatoday.com] August 6, 2007.

6 The Barna Group, "Six Reasons Young Christians Leave the Church" [http://www.barna.org] August, 2011.

7 Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours* (London: World Dominion Press, 1956). The first edition was published in February 1912.

8 Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), v.

9 Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 138.

10 Allen, *Spontaneous Expansion*, 84.

11 Roland Allen, "The Case for Voluntary Clergy" in *The Ministry of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 147.

12 Allen gives a number of examples of how local congregations in villages were able to build a school, take care of an orphan child and provide for a funeral of poor widow in *Missionary Methods*, 224–255.

13 Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 116.

14 Quoted from Roland Allen, "The Church in Western Canada. Need of Voluntary Priests" *Church Times* Dec. 5, 1924. 665.

15 Quoted from Roland Allen, "Voluntary Clergy" *Kenya Church Review*, September 1932, 4.

[16] Åke Talltorp, *Sacrament and Growth: A Study in the Sacramental Dimension of Expansion in the Life of the Local Church, as Reflected in the Theology of Roland Allen* (Uppsala: International Tryck, 1989), 50.
[17] Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 164–165.
[18] Ibid., 168–171.
[19] Ibid., 190–191.
[20] Ibid., 172–174.

Mission Observer

The Power of Prayer in the Birth of a Nation

Victor J. Belton

A vote took place on January 9–15, 2011, in the African nation of Sudan to determine if it should remain one nation or divide, forming an independent South Sudan. Results were reported on February 7, 2011, with 98.83% of the voters favoring independence. The consequence is that as of July 9, 2011, there is a new nation on the continent of Africa: South Sudan. The vote and celebration occurred in 2011, but God had already put one very important piece of this desire of the heart of mostly Christian South Sudan into play in 1999.

That is the year that Evangelist Bafel Paul Deng, his sister, his wife, and nine children were accepted as refugees into the United States of America and came to reside in the state of Georgia through the work and ministry of Christian resettlement agencies, including Lutheran Refugee Services.

Evangelist Deng, a Presbyterian when he lived in Sudan, searched with other members of his community for a place that would receive him and his family. He wanted to hear the Gospel proclaimed, to have his children baptized, and to have his family and the growing Sudanese community in Atlanta catechized so that they would grow in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and their new American brothers and sisters in Christ. It was early 2001 when Evangelist Deng knocked on the doors of Peace Lutheran Church, Decatur, Georgia, and found a home there that would ultimately lead him back to Sudan, fully trained and prepared to lead the emerging nation on the eve of the election for independence.

Bafel served as one of the major leaders of the Sudanese community in Atlanta. Since he was of the Nuer tribe, many of the Nuer in metropolitan Atlanta came with him to Peace Lutheran Church. Evangelist Deng, like many Africans, is a gifted linguist, speaking not only his native tongue Nuer, but also English and Arabic. Thus, when the Sudanese community came to worship, he was the logical choice to serve them. Bafel knew he would need additional training to serve them well. With the assistance of Dr. John Loum of Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri, and others, Evangelist Deng was able to attend the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology. After graduating from that program and from Concordia Seminary in 2009, Evangelist Deng was ordained Sunday, May 31, 2009, at Peace Lutheran Church in partnership with the Sudanese Evangelical Lutheran Church, the assembly that was established through his ministry.

Victor J. Belton currently serves as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in Decatur, Georgia. He also serves on the LCMS's national Board of Directors. He has spoken nationally in a variety of venues and has helped to begin a ministry in Sudan Africa along with Sudanese Evangelist Rev. Bafel Paul Deng.

Even though Evangelist—now the Reverend—Pastor Bafel Paul Deng was ordained into ministry and installed as pastor of the Sudanese Evangelical Lutheran Church in Decatur, Georgia, he never forgot about his native Sudan. In fact, he returned to Sudan in December 2005 with a delegation from several entities of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It was during that time back in Sudan that he began to understand that, when peace was established, the Sudanese of his homeland would need all the gifts, talents, and skills that he could develop in the United States. They would need him even more than the Sudanese in America because they would be lost like sheep without a shepherd and there would be few ministers of confessional Word and Sacrament ministry in South Sudan.

In 2009, Reverend Deng, with the consent of his family, returned to Sudan to help in the restoration of the nation. Reverend Deng believed then and believes now that peace will come through the development of ministries in the South that deliver the mercy of the Lord Jesus, along with proclamation of the Gospel, teaching, and other aid. To that end, he established and continues to work with Peace of Christ Lutheran Church and a project he calls the Mercy Ministry Center that will house a hospital, school, clinic, and worship center.

After Reverend Deng returned to Sudan, the Vice President of Sudan employed him as the Minister of Religious Affairs for the Upper Nile States of Sudan. In that role, Reverend Deng was responsible for the location and implementation of ministry and worship centers of all denominations and types in the Upper Nile region. It is in this role that the Lord Jesus used Reverend Deng to call the entire nation of Sudan to prayer on the eve of the vote for independence.

Reverend Deng was praying in his upper room, much like Daniel praying in Babylon or Nehemiah lamenting the state of the nation of Israel, seeking the favor of the Lord on the nation. While he was praying, the Lord Jesus seemed to be saying to Reverend Deng that the nation would make a serious mistake were they to take this vote without first coming to Him and seeking His counsel in prayer. Reverend Deng went to the authorities and the Vice President and shared the results of his prayer. The Vice President told him to do what was on his heart, and so Reverend Deng began to spread the word that there would be prayer in the city square on the eve of the election.

The people came from all over South Sudan, a variety of tribes, speaking the common language of Arabic. They came to pray, to seek the will of the Lord, and to encourage one another. Reverend Deng passed out candles in anticipation of prayer going on late into the night. He led the people in prayer, song, and devotion. He proclaimed the Word of God from Genesis 13. In this text, Lot was moving about with Abram with their flocks and herds and tents; but the land could not support them while they stayed together, and so they parted company. Lot chose the whole plain of the Jordan toward the east and lived among the cities of the plain near Sodom. Abram lived in the land of Canaan as his reward and inheritance.

Reverend Deng used this text from Genesis 13 to proclaim the word that God loves all Sudanese and that even if they cannot live together, they continue to be related by blood. He spoke of how all those who believe in Jesus and have faith in His sacrifice are related by a better blood than Abram and Lot. They are related by the blood of the Lamb, who sacrificed His life to save all humankind from the wages of sin, hell, and death, so that they might be acceptable before God. He let them know that despite the outcome of the vote, the blood continues to call all the Sudanese people to a life of reconciliation and peace.

It is phenomenal that God would use the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to train and deploy the Reverend Bafel Paul Gak Deng into a ministry that would call the entire nation of Sudan to prayer on the eve of the election. The Lutheran Church trained him, taught him the confessions, instructed him in exegesis, and equipped him to serve the Kingdom of God in this most important matter for the nation of Sudan and the new South Sudan.

Reverend Deng recalls how the nation received the word of God with joy. He recalls how the light from the candles, thousands of them, pierced the darkness that night on the square. He recalls remarking that our Lord Jesus is truly the Light of the world. He remembers how people slept peacefully on the square that evening and rose in the morning to cast their votes in peace and in the confidence that they were in compliance with the word of God, regardless of the outcome. There would be peace through development; and even though they did not know it, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was God’s servant in preparing their pastor to speak the Word of forgiveness, comfort, and assurance in this most special and important time. To God be the glory, in the name of the Lord Jesus, both now and through endless ages.

Book Reviews

BASEBALL AS A ROAD TO GOD: Seeing Beyond the Game. By John Sexton. New York: Penguin Books, 2013. 256 pages. Hardcover. $27.50.

We are all looking for ways to connect meaningfully with people—especially youth—who are disconnected from the church. They not only don't come to worship, but increasingly they also don't know the biblical narrative. Our theological words and church paths mean nothing to them.

John Sexton is an active Roman Catholic and professor at New York University. For ten years he has been teaching a very popular seminar with the title, "Baseball as a Road to God." It has been a way to use the experiences and emotions of baseball to help students understand the experiences and emotions of religion. In this book—and presumably also in his course—he uses church language to describe baseball experiences. The chapter headings are: "Sacred Space and Sacred Time," "Faith," "Doubt," "Conversion," "Miracles," "Blessings and Curses," "Saints and Sinners," and "Community."

Prof. Sexton, of course, is a lifelong baseball fan. He relates his first quasi-religious experience as a young boy rooting for the Brooklyn Dodgers in their epic World Series battles with the New York Yankees. When the Dodgers finally won in 1955, he describes the experience as "ineffable," and he continues to use this religious word throughout the work (21 "ineffable" topics are listed in the very thorough index). Might that emotion help the non-religious understand what religion is all about: experiences that go beyond what mind and words can comprehend?

Similarly, Sexton uses experiences in baseball to illustrate analogously what people of religion experience. He describes his course as a "laboratory" for students "to develop their capacity for contemplation, sensitivity, awareness, and mystical intensity" (7). Throughout the book, Sexton draws on the writings of major theologians and sociologists such as Mircea Eliade, William James, Rudolf Otto, Karen Armstrong, Paul Tillich, Abraham Heschel, Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Francis of Assisi, and Teilhard de Chardin. Clearly, this is a way to get the non-religious into the writings of major religious thinkers.

The book is filled with the history and trivia of baseball, which always engages baseball fans. It's what they are interested in, and it keeps them going through the religious stuff. Does it work? I don't know. I am a baseball fan ("Go Cubs—next year"), and I found the baseball lore engaging. The theology also was mainstream.

I would have liked references to the biblical narrative, drawing the non-religious into the Scriptures. There are only two references to Jesus and four to Paul in the Index. I understand, though, that as a Roman Catholic, his theology is rooted in the history of the church, not in "Scripture alone." Nonetheless, Sexton's course and book are valiant and creative attempts to reach people where they are.

Herb Hoefer

CONTEXTUALIZATION IN WORLD MISSIONS: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models. By A. Scott Moreau. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012. 429 pages. Paperback, $28.99.

This volume assesses various evangelical models of mission globally, especially those of the last thirty years, and offers a summary of lessons drawn from them for the entire Christian Church. Through this study, author Scott Moreau presents real life examples of how the Christian faith intersects with a variety of cultures without watering down the faith, yet honoring the cultures and value systems of those who are new to the Gospel. Moreau had been a long-term missionary in Africa and is currently professor of Intercultural Studies at Wheaton College.

Moreau argues for a profitable blending of proclamation and praxis in Christian mission. Some Christians intentionally serve the poor and work for social justice and peace in the name of Christ, discounting the verbal proclamation of salvation in Christ alone, while others preach Christ and show the least concern for the transformation the Gospel brings to peoples and communities. Moreau, however, holds that Christian mission by design is holistic. The Christian message and its practical application complement each other. Proclamation and social transformation dovetail. This is true equally for the "Christian" West, the Global South, and the East.

The book recapitulates recent anthropological and sociological theories to offer a constructive template for missiology today. Seasoned theological thinking must lead to "doing things" that relate directly to the fundamental levels of people's existence. "Our praxis includes living our lives in Christ's name on behalf of victimized and marginalized peoples" (137). Christians represent the One who first came to our world and demonstrated in word and deed the will of God for all people. Contextualization is a means by which that demonstration manifests in our world today (97).

Tables, maps, and charts reinforce the narrative throughout the book, and together they engage the reader fully for an appreciation of cultures and faithful witnessing of the one true faith across cultures. The book is a welcomed addition to the resources for the missional classroom, Bible study groups, and leadership training sessions. The author has promised PowerPoint slides that help in that endeavor, just for the asking.

Each chapter concludes with a list of key words for review, questions for reflection, and a bibliography for further reading. Six appendices (325–380) provide various "Maps on Contextualization" that illustrate the book's overall theme. These are based on different categories that missiologists have developed for relating in varying degrees the biblical message with people who may be new to the faith or are distanced from its core.

Members of mainstream churches often find Christian engagement with culture and world religions at best fuzzy and murky. They hold their own missionaries suspect for fear that contextualization methods contradict Scripture and the ecclesiastical traditions. Others argue that interpretation of the Christian message in any age is a "dialogue between text and context in an ever-refining spiral" calling for a critical engagement between the horizons of the text and those of the particular historical contexts of its readers and hearers (96).

This book supplies invaluable tools for the church for encountering the new challenges that Christians face as they witness the faith to a generation that is consistently losing its Christian underpinnings. At the same time, Moreau writes of new believers who are added to the household of faith, especially from the two-thirds world, in unprecedented ways. He provides a variety of examples of new Christians taking their initial steps in the faith and of the levels of maturity that they achieve, examples which may at times overwhelm or startle traditional Christians. A careful reader of this book will resonate with the prophetic voice that St. Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians 9:22: "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some." With Paul (1 Co 9:22), the proclaimers of Christ struggle to become all things to all people for the sake of communicating the one truth throughout the world. With Paul, they also understand that only God gives the increase in His mission.

Other themes that contemporary missiologists have been dealing with receive their fair share of attention in this volume. Less threatening to and more eye-opening for the perceptive reader, *Contextualization in World Mission* presents for the church of the twenty-first century a case for speaking the Gospel boldly and without fear. Translation issues such as "vernacular credibility," religious issues such as "insider movements," demographic issues that address the struggles of "pathfinders" who newly embrace the faith are skillfully embedded in this narrative. This is a workbook and a working book for those with a heart for God's mission.

Victor Raj

IN PURSUIT OF GREAT AND GODLY LEADERSHIP: Tapping the Wisdom of the World for the Kingdom of God. By Mike Bonem. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012. 288 pages. Hardcover. $24.95.

The question, "How do we as the people of God maximize the resources He has invested in Creation (God's Left Hand) to benefit His Right Hand?", is one with which many leaders within the church have struggled, especially in recent years and decades.

It is this question and tension with which Mike Bonem struggles in the book, *In Pursuit of Great and Godly Leadership*. For Bonem, the essence of the answer lies with Jesus Christ. It is what, or rather Whom, you communicate that has the greatest impact on others. If a ministry is about people or personalities, it is doomed to fail. However, starting with the premise of focusing the spotlight on Christ crucified and resurrected, then everything—not only preaching and teaching—but also the raising of funds, the influencing of people, and the generation of support will come naturally, that is, of God's own volition. For example, when it comes to being a leader, he observes:

> Effective leaders don't take inappropriate risks. Their decisions are clearly led by God and are shaped by the counsel of godly advisers. But when the Spirit moves, they are willing to step out in faith (24).

Of course, if the leader acts with "faithfulness" rather than "effectiveness" as the goal, he then faces the question of results. At this point, things get tricky, difficult, and hazardous very quickly. How does one measure success in God's Church? Bonem, like many others, shies away from counting heads and dollars as evidence for success, but what is left? Spiritual growth of members, and its measurement, are, in this reviewer's opinion, always ingredients that can lead to pietism of some sort, as the focus becomes, once again, (as Luther puts it) "one's belly-button."

However, Bonem does well by answering a question with a question: "When it comes to measurement, many Christian leaders wonder, 'Are all the important goals quantifiable?'" (113). His answer is, "No." In his response, he quotes Dan Reiland: "We're far more story-tellers than we are numerical at the larger level. God just seems to add the numbers if we don't worry about them too much" (113).

Bonem also addresses the question of working together. The key concept for this question is "culture," which for him is "the way we do things here" and includes not just the things that are done but also (quoting organization expert, John Kotter) "norms of behavior and shared values among a group of people" (170). Here, too, he stresses the importance of focus:

> In the exemplary organizations, everything—vision, management systems, hiring and employee development practices, and resource allocation—is driven by the core ideology. (174)
>
> It is absolutely essential to not confuse core ideology with culture, strategy, tactics, operations, policies, or other noncore practices. Ultimately, the only thing a company should not change over time is its core ideology. (192)

But Bonem's appreciation of business models and practices has a definite limit: "My greatest fear about the use of secular leadership principles is at this fundamental level. The things that are proclaimed as business best practices do not have God at the center" (205).

He is entirely correct. This is a well-founded fear, as many of the practices of those following a type of "Church Growth" model demonstrate. The focus tends to lean toward gathering money and support—much like a business—rather than preaching, teaching, and administering the Sacraments to those who would hear, learn, and eat and drink. The CEO pastor seemingly turns less and less to God's Word and the Confessions and relies more and more upon the latest craze to "fix" the church. A trust that God promises to guard and protect His Church is essential.

Finally, it is important to note (as Bonem seems to do early in the book) that the tag, "Tapping the Wisdom of the World for the Kingdom of God" is actually misleading. Any "wisdom of the world" ultimately is received from the Most High God. And it is from this wisdom that God reveals Himself to His Creation in Himself—dead, upon a cross, and, three days later, resurrected from the dead. It is this "foolishness" upon which God's Church must stand. It is this "foolishness" that we, the Church, are called to proclaim to our neighbor whom God places in front of us. The Church's labor is to then wrestle with the question, "Where exactly is the line between 'in the world' and 'of the world' in God's call to His Church?"

The book's greatest strength is its dealing directly with this tension. In each of the chapters, Bonem attempts to place God at the center of the problem—to remember why the Church actually exists. Also, in terms of research, Bonem certainly demonstrates due diligence, gathering information and data from a wide variety of churches and their leaders.

However, the weaknesses of the book are along the same lines. It seems to this reviewer that the book gathers information from (and delivers it to) primarily large churches. The more usual smaller parishes, with their limited budgets and manpower, are seemingly overlooked. At times, this book seems a better fit for those pastors who are in charge of a multi-parish campus, or, more-so, District Presidents. In addition, as this book is more of a report rather than a solution-guide, Bonem shies away from giving answers but rather presents what different churches actually do.

Overall, this reviewer must first admit that Bonem's book gives one quite a bit to think upon after reading it. This reviewer always will remain tentative when applying business principles of the world to "fix" God's Church. It is necessary to trust in the promise of God that He will safeguard it. But, it is also necessary to not shirk, and even at times reclaim, God's gifts of authority and leadership that He gives to us both in Natural Law and also by the power of His Word and in calling of men into the Office of the Holy Ministry. May God grant to the leaders of His Church continued wisdom and discernment regarding these gifts.

John Werner

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Contributors can familiarize themselves with previous issues of *Missio Apostolica* at the Lutheran Society for Missiology's website (www.lsfmissiology.org). Click on the Publications link to view PDFs of previous issues for free.

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Grounded in the mission of the Triune God and guided by Lutheran theology, *Missio Apostolica* serves as an international forum for the exchange of ideas and discussion of issues related to proclaiming the Gospel and confessing Jesus Christ globally, with attention to both theory and practice and to the specific challenges posed by cultural and religious contexts.

Formatting and Style

Please utilize and consult the Turabian style, 7th edition, for citations. Feel free to use http://www.eturabian.com/turabian/index.html for help with this style. Please use endnotes rather than in-text parenthetical citations. Here are some basic examples:

[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.

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 the sentence.

Spelling should follow the latest edition of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. Words in languages other than English should be italicized.

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Format: Please submit articles in single spaced Times New Roman 10-point font with 0.5" paragraph indents.

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Consider Contributing to the May 2014 or November 2014 Issues

James Scherer (retired missions professor at Yale University and *Missio Apostolica* author) writes in the article on “Missiology” in Eerdmans-Brill’s *The Encyclopedia of Christianity,*

> Missiology stands ready to offer the church guidance and direction for its task of global mission. It plays a vital role as a handmaid to biblical and theological studies, reminding the church of its essential missionary nature and recalling the church to its primary vocation of bearing witness to God’s salvation in the entire world.

This message comes to you as an invitation to take part in the missiological task. We live in a world full of need, a world which—even though it often does not recognize it—can ultimately find relief only in the Good News of Jesus Christ. Lutherans have a critical part to play in the discussions of how this world is to be addressed and how the church is to be recalled “to its primary vocation of bearing witness to God’s salvation in the entire world.”

We ask that you consider writing for *Missio Apostolica*, the international journal of the Lutheran Society for Missiology (LSFM). We publish articles that deal with missiology from a Lutheran biblical perspective. We also publish articles about Lutheran mission in action—reports from the field.

The publication welcomes contributors from all Lutheran missions and churches worldwide.

Missio Apostolica is available on-line as an open access journal. The link below will take you to the May issue that deals with outreach to the Millennial generation and give you an idea of the kinds of articles published in *Missio Apostolica* (http://lsfmissiology.org/?p=552). It is also available in a print edition ($30/year for individuals; $50/year for institutions) and is indexed and available full-text online at *ATLASerials*® (*ATLAS*®).

While we are looking for a variety of articles for the May 2014 issue, we are also particularly seeking articles dealing with the challenge of urbanism for the November 2014 issue. If you have thought about a missiological subject and considered writing, or if you have written about a particular missiological topic and are prepared to share your ideas with the missiological world, we hope that you will consider publishing them in *Missio Apostolica.* We will be glad to work with you in getting your ideas into print.

We know that the world of Lutheran mission is populated by thoughtful, creative, and dedicated people all over the world, whose ideas should be heard and whose ideas could make a difference in the mission and ministry of the Lutheran church. We hope that you will accept this invitation to write. Please favor us with your reply. The submission deadline for the May issue is March 15, and the submission deadline for the November issue is September 15.

Closing,
Dr. Victor Raj
Missio Apostolica
Editor and Chairman of the Editorial Committee