# Journal of Lutheran Mission

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The Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod

Witness Always

To the Reader

# Why a Lutheran Journal on Mission?

As I read August Friedrich Christian Vilmar's delightful little book *The Theology of Facts Verses The Theology of Rhetoric*, it seemed to me that something similar had occurred in the field of Lutheran mission. Vilmar laments a theology that had drifted into esoterica and speculation, quite at odds with the solid facts of the Gospel. It seemed time to dispel with the rhetoric of missions and discuss the facts, to set the record straight so to speak, and more than that, to act. We aim here for a missiology of facts and action, not a missiology of rhetoric.

The rhetoric since the 19th century, even from Lutheran authors, stated that Martin Luther and those who followed him were not interested in mission. This understanding defines "mission" primarily as "going" to foreign lands rather than "making disciples by baptizing and teaching." When one understands mission in the way of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 28 as "making disciples," the Reformation itself becomes one of the greatest missionary activities in the history of the Church. There is a rhetorical tradition, however, that seeks to place Lutheran confessional ecclesiology (particularly Article VII of the Augustana) over against and even at odds with "mission." This rhetoric drives a wedge between confessional theology and missional commitment. This is a false dichotomy. Because the Lutheran Confessions are a correct exposition of the Holy Scriptures, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod affirms that the Confessions are, in fact, a correct exposition of the Holy Scriptures and, therefore, cannot be any more of a hindrance to mission than the Holy Scriptures themselves.

Dr. C. F. W. Walther, the founder of the Missouri Synod, was convinced that the Church as Church is responsible for proclaiming the Gospel to the world. He writes, "Here we see that it is the people of the New Testament, or the Holy Christian Church, that God has prepared or established, to show forth His praise in all the world. That means that the church is to make known the great works of God for the salvation of men, or that which is the same thing, to preach the Gospel to every creature. Even Isaiah gives this testimony, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit: The true mission society that has been instituted by God is nothing else *than the Christian church itself*, that is the totality of all those who from the heart believe in Jesus Christ."[1]

It is our desire to follow the tradition of mission that led to the founding of the Missouri Synod, to highlight and expound good examples of Lutheran missiology and to raise the height and breadth of discussion on mission so that every member of the Missouri Synod prays for the mission of the church, engages in it him/herself and supports it each according to their vocation.

The premier issue of this journal reflects papers and responses from the Summit on Lutheran Mission held in San Antonio, Texas, in November 2013. That event, the first of its kind, focused on Lutheran identity in mission. The desire is that the journal will encourage further discussion and dialogue around Lutheran mission.

We have solicited a large list of contributing editors not only from around the Missouri Synod, but from around the world who have made contributions in the field of Lutheran mission. We look forward to their future contributions. We also look forward to hearing from you, the reader, regarding our current issue as well as future issues.

The Harvest is plentiful. Let's go, therefore, making disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching!

President Matthew C. Harrison

[1] C. F. W. Walther. "The Mission Society Established By God," in *The Word of His Grace*, 17-34. (Lake Mills: Graphic Publishing Co., 1978), 20.

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# Table of Contents





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# Missio Dei

by Scott R. Murray

**There exists a circular relationship between mission and Church. Does the mission impetus give birth to the Church or does the Church give birth to the mission? The answer: Yes.**

What questions are being asked about mission today? I come at mission from the side of praxis. As a fulltime parish pastor of 30 years, I have been a missionary calling to repentance and baptizing unto life. Doing the mission and talking about doing the mission and then talking about the mission are very different things. Don't misunderstand me: It is valuable to do these things. But practice and theory aren't the same thing. That distinction alone is worth being concerned about. Practice and theory demand to be united for the benefit of both.

The context of the *missio Dei* is the world, a world shrinking because of the media. The foreign/home mission distinction is less and less significant. For instance, we are seeing openness to confessional Lutheran theology by theologically adept national church leaders in the developing world and a willingness to confess over against Western church bodies. Old ties, perhaps long taken for granted, are being sundered. Therefore, the Lutheran question of "How is this done?" demands an answer in a radically changed context in which Westerners are now becoming the mission targets of their former mission children. We are now like the parents who, in their dotage, come under the guardianship of their more vigorous child. Especially our African friends are showing us the way; parent and child are changing places. Given that fact, what does mission look like? I tell my dear friend Charles Wokoma, a Nigerian teaching at the Nigerian Lutheran seminary, that I expect his grandchildren to come to America and proclaim Christ to my grandchildren.

We are seeing openness to confessional Lutheran theology by theologically adept national church leaders in the developing world and a willingness to confess over against Western church bodies.

Questions are rising in those who think about the mission of the church. How does our theology inform our practice? In keeping with the strong and indissoluble tensions given by the divine Word and that cut through the whole corpus of Lutheran theology — like Law and Gospel, two natures in Christ, the two realms, office and priesthood — the *missio Dei* is also held in tension with the Church and her baptized priesthood.

There exists a circular relationship between mission and Church. Which gives birth to which? Does the mission impetus give birth to the Church or does the Church give birth to the mission? Of course, the answer is "yes." However, everyone seems to come out in a different place on this issue, emphasizing one or the other side of the equation.

Is there really a uniquely LCMS approach to mission? How does that correspond to Lutheran claims to catholicity? If there is such an approach, what does it look like?

The 16th-century Reformation responded to the deep anxiety of the late medieval world about the spiritual condition of the sinner in God's sight. Luther was concerned with assuring the sinner of righteousness in the presence of God. Mid and late 20th-century theologians simply dismissed the doctrine of justification as answering a question the modern person was no longer even asking. Luther's angst was no longer a problem relevant to the modern.

And yet anxiety is again on the rise. Peggy Noonan, in this past Saturday's Wall Street Journal, referred to a second "Age of Anxiety" made worse by the Obama administration with its Rube Goldberg provisions in the ridiculously named Affordable Care Act. "In the middle of a second Age of Anxiety they (the Obama administration) decided to make Americans more anxious."[1] Perhaps this

[1] Peggy Noonan. "ObamaCare Disaster Recovery," *Wall Street Journal* (November 2013): A15.

is the last big scheme that claims to fix everything thought up by baby boomers.

The *missio Dei* can name the ultimate cause of anxiety for people. Bodily health is an analogue to spiritual life. We die because we are fallen. We are attempting to forestall the last enemy in the mistaken notion that by so doing we are solving the great human problem. And then the Church and her children can bring the Bible's solution to that anxiety with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified for the world, who has defeated the last enemy. The answers remain the same.

Perhaps we need to recover the methods and fervor of our forefathers of the late nineteenth century who worked where Christianity had not been heard before.

The world is shrinking. How does that affect the *missio Dei*? Maybe so too are the issues; so too the methods prescribed to fix them. There is a rise of neo-paganism in the West. Perhaps we need to recover the methods and fervor of our forefathers of the late 19th century who worked where Christianity had not been heard before. They broke down strongholds. As St. Paul says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds" (1 Cor. 10:3-4). I'm not sure how many mission summits our forefathers had before they followed the Lord's mission impulsion, but off they went. If we leave here satisfied with having talked about the mission without delivering the Word that creates the Church, we shall have failed. And maybe the first stronghold to be assailed is our own hearts. These days together must remain a call to repentance.

*The Rev. Dr. Scott R. Murray is pastor of Memorial Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas, and is Fourth Vice-President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.*

# Evangelicalism: The Heartbeat of American Protestantism and the Awkward Companion of American Lutheranism

by Walter Sundberg

**One author suggests a return to Luther's theology, to he who stands behind the parties of Orthodoxy and Pietism. What does he have to say that might get us thinking, in terms of our own tradition, about mission?**

## Lutheranism and the First Great Awakening

The First Great Awakening — often dated from 1735 to 1742 with aftershocks extending at least to the death of George Whitefield, the great itinerant preacher, in 1770 — was arguably the single most important religious event of an extended nature in American religious history. Its theological blueprint was provided by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), pastor of a pivotal Puritan congregation, First Church in Northampton, Massachusetts, who dedicated himself to revival in large part because of the influence of his maternal grandfather, Solomon Stoddard (1643-1729) who also pursued revival — or as it was commonly called in that day "awakening" — for most of his sixty years of ministry. Like his grandfather, Edwards sought a way to escape the spiritual depression that gripped two generations of Puritans and that had compromised their faith in the Halfway Covenant (1662), which allowed church members who had not given personal testimony to Christ — the essential requirement for full membership and participation in the Lord's Supper — to have their children baptized. The effect of this decision was to define the church in terms of sacramental incorporation. This made the church an institution of convention instead of a community of the committed: an understanding that threatened the integrity and identity of the Puritan movement.

> Luther laments that for most people, Baptism makes no difference. They lose their way on the perilous journey on earth.

Edwards led an awakening in his church beginning in 1735 that resulted in a book that was *The Purpose Driven Church* of its day: *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1738). This book, especially given its 20 printings, provided a theological framework that separated "Old Lights" from "New Lights." Old Lights understood the church in terms of sacramental incorporation; New Lights defined the church in terms of adult commitment through testimony and helped to create the widespread popularity and social dynamism of the Great Awakening. As a good Puritan, Edwards taught that the normal beginning of genuine Christian life is spiritual transformation, the sign of which is when an individual publicly declares allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The principle of spiritual transformation undergirds the theology of conversion and preaching for the purpose of conversion that marked the awakening movement. Its most important leader was the master preacher George Whitefield (1714-1770), who in his seven trips to America between 1738 and 1770 was heard by approximately 80 percent of the colonists. Hearing Whitefield preached was the first widely shared event in the history of the American nationhood.

Commitment to awakening was a common feature of colonial Lutheranism. I will illustrate this with an anecdote. On the afternoon of August 13, 1748, in Philadelphia, John Nicholas Kurtz was examined for ordination to the Christian ministry so that he could be licensed to receive a call from the deacons of a congregation in Tulpehocken, Pennsylvania. This quintessential churchly activity is recorded as part of the minutes of the first convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania, the founding of which is recognized as the beginning of an organized Lutheran presence in America, 28 years before the Declaration of Independence. Present at the examination were the historic figures John Christopher Hartwig (1714-1796), who was at that time a missionary to German settlers in what is

now upstate New York and would later be the benefactor of Harwick Seminary, and Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-1787), who would become the patriarch of American Lutheranism. Muhlenberg is the one Lutheran pastor whom most Lutherans in America revere, whatever their Synod allegiance or ethnic heritage, as a figure of inspiration and theological guidance. According to the minutes of the Ministerium, "Candidate Kurtz" had been given these instructions for his oral examination:

> The candidate is to prepare a sketch of his life, giving, in as brief a compass as possible, an account of its chief events and of his academical studies. As this may readily become too extensive, it will suffice, if he briefly narrate: 1. His first awakening; 2. How God furthered the work of grace in his heart; 3. What moved him to study for the holy ministry, and where, in what branches and under whose direction, he has attempted to prepare himself.[1]

Kurtz must have given satisfactory answers to these questions for we know that on the evening of August 13, the deacons of the congregation in Tulpehocken extended him a call.

The pastors who formulated the examination questions for Kurtz practiced ministry under the rigorous discipline of what we know today as Lutheran Pietism. This movement whose most notable founder was Pastor Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705) began in Germany, nearly eighty years before the historic afternoon in August in Philadelphia. Spener sought to revive a church that was in steep decline. German territories in the 17th century had been through more than 100 years of religious warfare. During the worst part of this conflict, the so-called Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the population had been reduced by more than a third. This was a result of conflict stemming from the Reformation: Catholic against Protestant, Protestant against Protestant. Adding to the crisis, many ecclesiastics were little more than religious hacks and civil servants, more interested in collecting their pay and towing the party line of officials in power than preaching the Gospel. To reform the church, said Spener, many changes were required; above all, there had to be a revolution in religious allegiance among pastors in the church and recognition of the laity as active in the reform of the church as the priesthood of all believers.

"The office of ministry," said Spener, must "be occupied by men who, above all, must be true Christians."[2] And what he meant by this was nothing mysterious or arcane. Spener simply meant that pastors of the church needed to have experienced the dynamic impact of faith in Jesus Christ by being called as the disciples were called from their fishermen's nets, or challenged to "rebirth" as Jesus challenged Nicodemus or confronted and drafted for arduous service as Saul had experienced on the road to Damascus. Whatever consciously brought Christians to faith, this was the faith that was desperately needed.

Spener knew in his heart a principle that is common place among evangelists today: "Changed people change churches." As this principle is true so unfortunately is its contrary: "Unchanged people change nothing." In the church, unchanged people usually manage ecclesiastical organizations doomed to decline. To be *awakened* is to know that Jesus Christ alone is Savior and that the purpose of life is to love God and love the neighbor before satisfying the desires of the self.

Muhlenberg carried this theology to America. It informed his preaching, teaching and presiding. I will use his practice of presiding as my example. In 1746, Muhlenberg reported to his superiors back in Halle in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany, on his method of administering Holy Communion. His letter dated October 30 was but one many he would write throughout his life, the so-called *Hallesche Nachtrichten*, in which he described the conditions and spiritual state of Lutheran churches in the new land. The Sacrament, writes Muhlenberg, is given twice yearly in each congregation.[3] Those wishing Communion would be expected to speak with the pastor the week preceding. "One talks with them about the inner feelings of the heart and looks for growth and also gives the necessary admonitions, encouragement and consolation as the situation requires."[4] Through this private encounter, Muhlenberg as pastor learned about the congregation: "One gains an understanding of inner and outer conditions and one also gets an insight into relationships in the estate of marriage, between neighbors,

[1] *Documentary History of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium* (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1898), 19.

[2] Philip Jacob Spener. *Pia Desideria*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 103.

[3] John W. Kleiner and Helmut T. Lehmann, ed. and tr. "Letter 58" (30 October 1746), *The Correspondence of Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg*, Volume I 1740-1747 (Camden: Picton Press, 1993), 293-307.

[4] Ibid., 296.

parents, children and friends." On Saturday evening, a preparatory service of confession was held, the sermon being directed to repentance and the concerns and tribulations of parishioners: "Without reference to specific persons one arranges the preached word according to the concerns and circumstances one has noted in the particular conversation." After the sermon, the parishioners "form a half moon around the altar." Those guilty of "public offense" are singled out. They are once more examined by the pastor in front of the gathered congregation and urged to "true repentance" and "improvement of life." Thus private confession as interrogation (called *der Verhör* in German territorial church orders) and public confession are joined together. The congregation is urged to reconciliation with the offenders. Muhlenberg reports that most often parishioners readily forgive their brothers and sisters of public sins. "Then when everything has been settled members of the group bow their knees before God, and the pastor, kneeling in their midst, prays the confession." Catechetical questions about faith and the meaning of the Sacrament are directed to the entire gathering. These are followed by a conditional absolution: Forgiveness is declared to the penitent and the warning is given "that the sins of the impenitent shall be retained until they do an about-face." After this, the pastor is still not done. "Those who perhaps still have something against one another go to the parsonage with the pastor, are reconciled with one another and forgive each other their faults." On Sunday, the sermon focuses on Holy Communion. The elements are consecrated and distributed. "Afterwards the school teacher has to read the history of the Passion from the four Evangelists so that one may proclaim the Lord's death and consider the price he paid to redeem us."[5]

> In Luther's view, if preaching, Sacrament and liturgy have any purpose whatsoever, it is not to leave Old Adam as a lump of coal in the bin, but to move him to believe and become a Christian.

This practice conforms to Spener's understanding. Spener warns:

> There are extraordinarily many people who think only of discharging this holy work and of how often they do it. But they hardly consider whether their spiritual life may be strengthened thereby, whether they proclaim the Lord's death with their hearts, lips and life, whether the Lord works in and rules over them or they have left old Adam on his throne. This can only mean the dangerous error of the opus *operatum*.[6]

It also suited the needs of the American environment. In order to survive, let alone prosper in a society where people were largely left to their own devices, colonists had to be disciplined and self-governed. Muhlenberg's sacramental practice with its extended use of confession, both private and public, was an important way to uphold order and encourage mutual trust and sociability in village or town. It was also evangelical to the core, reminding Christians of their explicit obligations to their Savior. Christian faith entails moral behavior. It seeks the transformed self. Colonial Lutheranism was an evangelical religion. Lutherans and other evangelicals (at least those who practiced infant Baptism) were close companions. Evidence of this colonial relationship can still be seen today in yoked Lutheran/Presbyterian parishes that dot the landscape in Pennsylvania and other places.

## Lutheranism and the Second Great Awakening

But this companionship became awkward (to say the least) as the identity of American evangelicalism changed in the Second Great Awakening (1795-1835), especially under the influence of the most important of the revival preachers of the time: Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875). Finney preached that a relationship to Christ is a matter of free-will decision, that sanctification is the true measure of faith and that salvation is earned. Under Finney's influence, revival became a technique, the so-called "new measures" in which people at group meetings that would extend over days had their spirits aroused by dramatic appeals to make a decision for Christ. The meetings were deliberately staged and choreographed with preaching, sustained prayer and hymn singing to pressure people to commit themselves; this in the belief that excited emotions were the channel through which the Holy Spirit worked to bring an individual to the judgment of God and the grace of Christ. The imperative to examine

[5] Ibid.

[6] Spener, 67.

oneself, the fundamental purpose of Christian worship, was not a matter of repetition in the liturgical Divine Service, but rather a concentrated single event. Those who were moved to respond would go one by one to the front of the group, sit on the seat called the "anxious" or "mourner's bench" and receive the intercessory prayers of the evangelist and the group, culminating in conversion. Conversion was the goal of worship. This practice was considered by many to be manipulative,. It was also very successful.

Charles Grandison Finney's "new measures" turned the phenomenon of awakening into a method calculated to produce results. Finney's working assumption, shared among evangelicals of the time, was that "the common man, listening to the preaching of the church, was capable by the use of reason of assessing the full scope of his moral predicament as a lost creature under the judgment of God who has nowhere to turn but to the love of Christ."[7] Faith in Christ was an act of free will, not dissimilar to the ballot cast by an enfranchised voter in an election or a member of a jury at a trial making a decision based on the evidence. This was a theology fit for a republic founded on Enlightenment ideals and especially suitable for the age of Jacksonian democracy. The greatest itinerant evangelist of his time, Finney claimed to have reached 500,000 people in America and Great Britain. His influence, like Whitefield before him and Billy Graham a century later, transcended denominational allegiance.

Surveying and assessing this second awakening movement was the Lutheran Samuel Simon Schmucker (1799-1783), professor of Didactic Theology and chairman of the faculty at Gettysburg Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. In a pamphlet called the *Definite Platform* (1855), published under the auspices of the General Synod, which was the largest Lutheran denominational organization in America at the time,[8] Schmucker proposed that Lutherans revise their historic confessions to bring the church more in line with the evangelical environment of American Christianity. This environment emphasized the priority of individual religious conversion as an act of the will, distrusted any form of ecclesiastical hierarchy, devalued traditional dogmatic theology and shunned liturgical worship. This process of revision, for the purpose of what came to be known as the "Americanization" of Lutheranism, could only be accomplished, in Schmucker's view, if the Synod rejected the binding authority of any formal confession except for the Augsburg Confession. Subscribing to Augsburg was not a matter of obedience to every word. In Schmucker's view, the Confession is to be accepted "insofar as" (*quatenus*) it conforms with the teaching of Scripture not "because" (*quia*) it conforms with the teaching of Scripture. Finally, certain inherited teachings and practices of European Christianity not determined to be biblical or relevant to the new society in America needed to be eliminated. These included exorcism, the doctrine of original sin and guilt, baptismal regeneration, the real presence in the Sacrament of the Altar and confession and absolution.

How far this process of revision could go is illustrated by Benjamin Kurtz (1795-1865), an ally of Schmucker, grandson of the first Lutheran pastor ordained by a Lutheran synod in America and editor of the *Lutheran Observer* (1833-1861). Kurtz was mesmerized by the dynamic and successful Finney. Kurtz called the anxious bench "the archimedean lever which with the help of God can raise our German church [by which he meant the Lutheran church in America] to that position of authority in the religious world which is its rightful due."[9] Kurtz wanted nothing less than to import Finney's principles into the General Synod. The test came at the annual meeting of the synod of Maryland in 1845 where the effort was made to incorporate a revivalist theology of free choice into the church in a document entitled "Abstract of Doctrines and Practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Maryland" in which "the power of choice" was defined as man's "natural gift" by which at all times he "possesses the ability to choose the opposite of that which was the object of his choice. God "places before man the evil and the good," urging him to choose the good. If he does so, it is by the persuasion of "the truth," — that is to say, by an act of reason. Thus, "The sinner is persuaded to abandon his sins and submit to God, on terms made known in the gospel." The Sacraments are symbolical representations of Gospel truth. They are ancillary to the change of heart that follows voluntary submission to God: "This change, we are taught, is radical, and is essential to present peace and eternal happiness. Consequently, it is possible, and

[7] Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg. *The Bible in Modern Culture*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 200.

[8] Samuel Simon Schmucker. *Definite Platform, Doctrinal and Disciplinarian, for Evangelical Lutheran District Synods; Constructed in Accordance with the Principles of the General Synod* (Philadelphia: Miller & Burlock, 1855)..

[9] *Lutheran Observer* (17 November 1843) quoted in Arie J. Griffioen, "Charles Porterfield Krauth and the Synod of Maryland," *Lutheran Quarterly,* VII/3 (Autumn 1993): 279.

is the privilege of the regenerated person to know and rejoice in the change produced in him."[10] The Synod neither accepted nor rejected the proposed "Abstract" but instead tabled it for the following year. It was not taken up again.

Nor would it be. The 1840s saw the great wave of German immigration that would continue throughout the 19th century. Among these immigrants were staunch Lutherans influenced by the *Erweckungsbewegung*, which brought with it a revival of interest in Luther, the Reformation and the Confessions. That any Lutheran would propose free-will conversion was simply anathema. Charles Porterfield Krauth (1823-1883), Schmucker's theological rival, who benefitted by the new confessional impulse in American Lutheranism, made this judgment on the program of Americanization: "We cannot conceal our sorrow that the term, 'America' should be made so emphatic, dear and hallowed though it be to our heart. Why should we break or weaken the golden chain which unites us to the high and holy association of our history as a church by thrusting into a false position a word which makes a national appeal?"[11]

Luther wants nothing to do with a church that accepts people where they are and as they are and keeps all talk of conversion at a safe distance.

Lutheran Pietism, as represented by Muhlenberg, found a home in America. It prospered. By contrast, Lutheran Pietism, as represented by Schmucker, brought confessional conflict and was largely drowned by a flood of immigrants whose theological leaders were dedicated to pure doctrine. The fight with Schmucker has left a permanent scar. Lutherans are largely distrustful of American evangelicals. Any effort made to construct a theology of conversion, which has to undergird any serious effort at outreach and any program of missions, is treated with suspicion as some form of "decision theology." The tension and even opposition between Lutheran "orthodoxy" and Lutheran Pietism that has played such a dominant role in the history of Lutheranism never goes away. But the awkwardness is that evangelicalism in America is dynamic and expansive across races and ethnic groups. It is the natural form of Protestantism in the American context. Lutherans are in decline. They depended on white European immigration as a church. This immigration dried up over two generations ago.

## The Situation Today: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

In the light of this history, what is our situation today? I can only speak for the ELCA. The ELCA is a mainline Protestant denomination whose leadership is dominated by an unrelenting progressive cadre that cares neither for Lutheran orthodoxy nor Lutheran Pietism, but is dedicated to one article of faith above all others even though it is bringing the church to its knees and threatening the very viability of its national office, its 65 synods and its eight seminaries, let alone scores of congregations declining and splitting. Since 1988, the ELCA has lost 25 percent of its membership, 15 percent of which has been lost between 2009 and 2012; that is since the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in August 2009 approved the ordination of practicing homosexuals. This cadre is, in fact, practicing a bizarre form of martyrdom for a belief; it knows what is happening to the denomination as a whole and keeps right on doing it, even to its own self-destruction. What is this article of faith? *That the Bible and the Confessions must accommodate to the cultural imperatives of today's society and that imperatives are determined by a segment of the population and a minority segment at that: secularized, educated, middle-class, white people, vast numbers of which have drifted away from or take no interest in the church.* This is their mission; their form of evangelism is political activism. And they are relentless. That their policy on homosexuality does not attract the majority of people of color who are Christian and threatens fellowship with Lutheran churches of the global South where Lutheranism is growing means nothing.

I cannot help but think of the divine warning in Scripture: "Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" (Rev. 2:5).

I want to heed this warning by going back to "the works we did at first" as a church, that is, to Luther's theology, to he who stands behind the parties of Orthodoxy and Pietism and to whom both parties appeal to see what he says that might get us thinking, in terms

[10] Ibid., 283.

[11] Theodore G. Tappert, ed. *Lutheran Confessional Theology in America 1840-1880* (New York: Oxford, 1972), 47.

of our own tradition, about mission and the agent of mission. And I seek companionship with evangelicalism. The relationship may not need to be as awkward as it seems, although to get Lutherans to preach conversion is a tall order.

I wish to examine briefly two subjects: Luther on Baptism and Luther on the purpose of worship.

## Guidance from Luther

In his early baptismal orders of 1523 and 1526, Luther places the idea of Baptism as covenant in the context of the ancient tradition of spiritual warfare. The battle against Satan begins as soon as we enter the world. In Baptism, we flee from the prince of darkness. Baptism is an exorcism. This is ancient church teaching. It is also common among evangelicals, especially Pentecostals, and especially in the global South. Spiritual warfare is a dangerous enterprise and many lose their way. In his instructions to the Christian reader at the end of his baptismal order, Luther warns that "It is no joke to take sides against the devil." Baptism means that the child will be burdened with "a mighty and lifelong enemy." The child needs the "heart and strong faith" of fellow Christians along with their earnest intercession through prayer. Corporate faith demonstrated in intercessory prayer is the key to the Sacrament, not the traditional customs of a rite. "Signing with the cross … anointing the breast and shoulders with oil, signing the crown of the head with chrism, putting on the christening robe, placing a burning candle in the hand … are not the sort of devices and practices from which the devil shrinks or flees. He sneers at greater things than these! Here is the place for real earnestness." Luther laments that for most people, Baptism makes no difference. They lose their way on the perilous journey on earth. This is the fault of the church: "I suspect that people turn out so badly after baptism because our concern for them has been so cold and careless; we, at their baptism, interceded for them without zeal."[12] "Real earnestness" in corporate faith and "zeal" in intercessory prayer are both necessary to the effectiveness of the Sacrament. This is a corporate form of believer's Baptism.

When Baptism is not attended to in the church by prayer and faith, Satan rears his ugly head. Over time, his effect is destructive: "Though [Satan] could not quench the power of baptism in little children, nevertheless [he succeeds] in quenching it in all adults so that now there are scarcely any who call to mind their own baptism, and still fewer who glory in it."[13]

That brings us to worship. In Luther's view, if preaching, Sacrament and liturgy have any purpose whatsoever, it is not to leave Old Adam as a lump of coal in the bin, but to move him to believe and become a Christian. Luther places believers before the privilege and duty of explicit faith (*fides explicata*). The congregation is truly the agent of mission. In the midst of the congregation, one is called by the Word of God out of custom, lethargy, obedience to a hierarchy and outward participation in sacramental life (*ex opere operato*) into the fullness of an individual relation to Jesus as Lord and Master.

Public worship, Luther believed, would lead to "truly evangelical" private worship among those "who want to be Christians in earnest."[14] He writes of

> a truly evangelical order [that] should not be held in a public place for all sorts of people. But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian works. According to this order, those who do not lead Christian lives could be known, reproved, corrected, cast out, or excommunicated, according to the rule of Christ, Matthew 18 [:15-17]. Here one could also solicit benevolent gifts to be willingly given … Here would be no need of much and elaborate singing. Here one could set up a neat and brief order for baptism and the sacrament and center everything on Word, prayer, and love.[15]

It is in this intimate group that private confession and absolution takes places in which Christians, burdened by their sins and repentant, make oral confession to a fellow Christian, usually a minister, and receive this assurance: "As thou believest, so be it done unto thee [Matt. 8:13]. And I by the command of Jesus Christ our Lord, forgive thee all thy sin."[16] This absolution can be given by "one Christian [i.e., layperson] to another in

[12] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–86), 53:102.

[13] Ibid., 36:57ff.

[14] Ibid., 53:64.

[15] Ibid., 53:63ff.

[16] Ibid., 53:121.

the name of God." It is "absolutely valid."[17] According to Luther, private confession is not needed to prepare oneself for Holy Communion. Luther wrote no order for public confession.

This is the congregation in its ideal form — the converted, an assembly of hearts in one faith, the agent of change. Luther conceives of the congregation as ideal because he breaks with the visible church of Christendom mired in the inadequacies of conventional faith, lacking commitment and zeal. But as he raises up this ideal, he immediately laments: "I have not yet the people or persons for it, nor do I see many who want it."[18] Luther wants nothing to do with a church that accepts people where they are and as they are and keeps all talk of conversion at a safe distance.

This ideal congregation of "Christians in earnest" and in "private" is a seed planted. Just as Luther inspired many on the path to political freedom, so he inspired many to seek spiritual renewal in the church. Think of the Pietist conventicle, the Methodist class meeting or dissenter prayer-meetings — all rich sources for evangelicalism and the Protestant missionary movement in the 19th and 20th centuries. Luther's ideal reminds me of the new edgy house church movement of the present day, trying to advance the faith in China or revive it in Great Britain and, as I just read about last week, in Holland of all places. Christian faith is actually growing among Dutch young people in the age group 15-25. This growth is attributed in part to the success of the house church movement and the impact of the Alpha Bible Study program.[19]

Lutherans are part of this history — especially the Pietism that informed the mission-oriented theology of Muhlenberg. It is a theology that goes back to Luther himself.

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[17] Ibid., 53:116.

[18] Ibid., 53:64.

[19] Joshua Livestro. "Holland's Post-Secular Future," *Weekly Standard*, January 1/8. 2007, 25ff.

# Response to Walter Sundberg

by Lawrence R. Rast, Jr.

**How can we understand the tension-filled relationship of Evangelicalism and the Lutheran tradition in America?**

I'd like to thank the organizers of this conference for the opportunity to respond to my colleague Dr. Sundberg's excellent and thought-provoking paper.

First of all, let me commend Sundberg for putting his finger on a key tension in the Lutheran confession and, particularly, its practice. He captured that tension in both the statements and stories we just heard.

The question, it seems to me, surrounds the extent of accommodation. Years ago John Tietjen wrote: "Certainly we cannot simply transfer Reformation theology from the 16th to the 20th century without accommodating it or applying it to 20th-century conditions." There is a wondrous little slight of hand in this short quotation, whether intended or not: Tietjen conflates accommodation and application. That has been the nexus of the arguments regarding our life together in God's mission: Can one apply without accommodating? To what degree can we, must we, contextualize? No doubt you can add your own questions to these brief examples. These are not new questions; they have been present throughout the history of Lutheranism.

> Nearly all of the Lutheran confessionalists of the 19th century — whether in Europe or in the United States (or both) — were sifted through the sieve of this stream of Pietism.

"The only thing constant in life is change," François de La Rochefoucauld is said to have quipped. Those of us involved in missions — whether national or international — certainly know the truth of those words! Whether it is at a seminary, a denominational headquarters, the mission field or anywhere else, all of us continuously experience the shifting realities of this changing world.

The challenge to the Church is to understand and adapt to that change, yet in such a way as to maintain without any slipperiness the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Because we humans are parochial beings, God's Word challenges us to lift our eyes up beyond our immediate circumstances to the ultimate reality that is our life in Christ.

Still, if I've heard it once I've heard it a thousand times. Someone says, "We've never experienced change like this before; the challenges we face today are greater than any time in world history." Yes, I'll grant that there's a certain truth in this statement; history never absolutely repeats itself. And, yes, we do find ourselves today in rapidly changing circumstances. Yet such a perspective reveals a restricted understanding of the richness of the experience of those who have gone before us. Worse yet, it cuts us off from learning from them the imaginative ways in which they faced the unique character of their times.

Nevertheless, I believe it is a perfectly natural response. For we human beings are by our very nature tied to time. Personally speaking, world history begins with the day of our birth and ends with the day of our death. As a result, to engage the past is something that we must *work* at; it does not come naturally.

This is where Dr. Sundberg's paper is so helpful in identifying the tension-filled relationship of Evangelicalism and the Lutheran tradition in America. Indeed, the Evangelical tradition is an "awkward companion" to Lutheranism, present with us from the first (after all, we were the first Evangelicals!). A few points are in order.

First, his careful historical and theological distinction between the awakening and revival is extremely important, particularly in what this means for conversion. The great distance between Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) and the robust Calvinism of the First Great Awakening and the Arminianism of Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) and the Second Great Awakening is sometimes lost on American Lutherans who simply lump the two together into an unrecognizable mush that we label "Reformed." Here Sundberg's point that "Charles Grandison Finney's 'new measures' turned the phenomenon of awakening into a method calculated to produce results" is spot on.

This is particularly important and must be recalled in any conversation regarding evangelism and missions, particularly given the fact that the missional theology and practice that the United States has exported (see especially Africa) is of the type that compromises the biblical and confessional witness to the working of the Spirit through Word and Sacrament.[1] Nothing could be more at odds with the affirmation of Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the creed than the following quote from Finney.

> The church has always felt it necessary to have something of the kind to answer this very purpose. In the days of the apostles baptism answered this purpose. The gospel was preached to the people, and then all those who were willing to be on the side of Christ were called on to be baptized.[2]

Finney was not content with merely disparaging what Baptism effected; here he undercuts the divine institution of God's saving action itself. In light of this, it is was exceedingly curious to see Finney and none other than C. F. W. Walther connected as though their theology and practice were complementary in a Missouri Synod publication.[3] Simply noting that both men had a "passion for souls," the article makes no distinction between the two men in respect to how their radically different theological commitments actually framed their mission and evangelistic practice.

Second, his nuanced reading of Pietism is important in a setting where the multifaceted character of Pietism is often presented in an overly simplistic way, as though all expressions of Pietism are the same. They are not, and Sundberg does well to alert us to this reality.[4] At the same time, his tradition holds certain expressions of Pietism more highly than is typical for Missourians. Though Sundberg argues that Heinrich Muhlenberg (1711-1787) is "is the one Lutheran pastor whom all Lutherans in America revere," I have to admit that when we commemorated Muhlenberg's death in our chapel at Fort Wayne this past October 7, the preacher (who was not me) noted that while "we Missourians *like* Muhlenberg, we don't *love* Muhlenberg." Still, I think the point holds.

That said, Sundberg is correct to note Muhlenberg's confessional form of Pietism, which proceeded from a Law/Gospel dialectic and had its understanding of conversion rooted in the Word and Sacraments.[5] Indeed, nearly all of the Lutheran confessionalists of the 19th century — whether in Europe or in the United States (or both) — were sifted through the sieve of this stream of Pietism. Löhe, Walther, Krauth, Sihler and others all were affected by early 19th-century Pietism. In a familiar section of *Law and Gospel,* Walther writes:

> The second requisite for effective preaching is that the preacher not only himself would believe the things he preaches to others but also that his heart would be full of the truths that he proclaims, so that he would enter his pulpit with the passionate desire to pour out his heart to his hearers. In the best sense of the word, he must be "high-spirited" regarding his topic. Then his hearers will have the impression that the words dropping from his lips are flames from a soul on first. However, that does not mean that the Word of God must receive its power and life from the living faith of the preacher.
>
> But when a preacher proclaims what he has often experienced in his own heart, he will easily find the right words to speak convincingly to his hearers. When his words come from the heart, they, in turn, penetrate the heart of his hearers, according to the old saying: "It is the **heart** that makes eloquent." This is not the fake eloquence gained in speech lass, but the healthy *spiritual skill* of reaching the heart of hearers.
>
> For when the hearers feel that a preacher is deadly serious, they feel drawn by an irresistible force to pay the closest attention to what the preacher is teaching in his sermon. That is the reason sometimes many simple, less-gifted, and less-learned preachers accomplish more than the most highly gifted and deeply learned men.[6]

[1] Lawrence R. Rast, Jr. "Charles Finney on Theology and Worship." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 68 (January 1998): 63-67.

[2] Charles G. Finney. *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Leavitt, Lord, and Co., 1835), 248.

[3] "A Passion for Souls," *Evangelism News: The Newsletter of the Department of Evangelism Ministry, Board for Congregational Services* (February 1998), 3.

[4] For examples of the different varieties of Pietism, see Heinrich Schmid and James Langbartels, trans. *The History of Pietism* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2007) and Hans Schneider and Gerald T. MacDonald, trans. *German Radical Pieitism* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2007).

[5] See A. G. Roeber and John W. Kleiner, eds. "Henry Melchior Muhlenberg: Orthodox Pietist," *Henry Melchior Muhlenberg: The Roots of 250 Years of Organized Lutheranism in North America* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 1-15.

[6] C. F. W. Walther. "Thirteenth Evening Lecture" in *Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*, Christian Tiews, trans. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 125-26. Emphases in original.

At the same time, Walther recognizes that this "does not mean that the Word of God must receive its power and life from the living faith of the preacher; for the Lord says distinctly: 'The words that I speak, they are spirit, and they are life.' John 6, 63."

So that tension remains.

That tension has manifested itself repeatedly in the life of the LCMS and its mission both nationally and internationally. Sundberg's critique that to "get Lutherans to preach conversion is a tall order" likely stems from this tension, at least in part. When Walter A. Maier started preaching on the Lutheran (Half) Hour, some of his ministerial colleagues in the LCMS expressed concern over what they believed was the conditional language he used in regard to forgiveness and of his emphasis on the need for hearers to "accept" Christ.[7] Later David Luecke's *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance: Facing America's Mission Challenge* argued for Lutheranism to embrace its Pietist heritage uncritically as a way of interfacing with American Evangelicalism and to at least use a "confrontationist oriented approach" to moving people toward conversion.[8] Two overly brief examples, but you get the point.

> God is not time-bound as we are. All things are immediately present to Him. Our past, present and future is bound up in Him and His unchanging Word to us.

Finally, there is the question of accommodation. Here again, Sundberg's careful distinction between Muhlenberg's and Schmucker's versions of Pietism is of note. Where Muhlenberg sought to continue Spener's confessionalism, Schmucker argued for an accommodation, a fundamental readjustment, of the Lutheran confession to American sensibilities. Elsewhere I have argued that a form of this debate manifested itself in the LCMS controversies of the 60s and 70s.[9] I cited John Tietjen above. That little quote appeared in the following context.

> Because the Lutheran Symbols call justification by grace the chief article of Christian doctrine, and because *many* Lutherans have come to label it "the article by which the church stands or falls," *some* people have assumed that for Lutherans justification must be the organizing principle of theology — the hub from which all specific teachings radiate. Such theology was indeed valid at the time of the Reformation. But does *it provide the most effective and relevant means for* proclaiming the gospel today?
>
> Certainly we cannot simply transfer Reformation theology from the 16th to the 20th century without accommodating it or applying it to 20th-century conditions. But must we begin with justification at all? In fact, do we begin the theological task with some basic thematic expression of the gospel?
>
> No! Not if we want to assure a relevant proclamation of the gospel! For theology to be relevant, the theological task has to begin not with the gospel but with the situation to which it is to be addressed. The first step in theological formulation is to analyze the conditions of the world for whose sake the gospel is to be proclaimed. "The world writes the agenda," we are being told these days. True as that may be in other areas, it is true also for theology. The situation in our world should help shape our theology.
>
> Why? Because there is no "gospel in a vacuum." The gospel cannot be dealt with by itself apart from the situation to which it is addressed. It is ever so much more than a set of religious propositions, spiritual truths, or divine principles. If it were only that, it could be passed on unchanged from generation to generation. The gospel must always be addressed to particular conditions and circumstances. Therefore, it cannot be formulated in terms enduringly valid for every age and condition.[10]

[7] See Richard Shuta. "Walter A. Maier as Evangelical Preacher," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74 (January-April 2010).

[8] D. G. Hart. *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 158-161.

[9] Lawrence R. Rast, Jr. "Challenges to Inerrancy Today" in *Divine Multi-Media: The Manifold Means of Grace in the Life of the Church*, Luther Academy Lecture Series no. 11, John Maxfield, ed. (Saint Louis: The Luther Academy, 2005), 17-35.

[10] John H. Tietjen. "The Gospel and the Theological Task," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 40 (June-July-August 1969): 438-39.

I disagree. The Gospel can be formulated in terms enduringly valid for every age and condition. And it has been. To adopt Tietjen's approach leads to a vacuous, ever-changing theology, much like that described by Sundberg in respect to the current ELCA.

> In the light of this history, what is our situation today? I can only speak for the ELCA. The ELCA is a mainline Protestant denomination whose leadership is dominated by an unrelenting progressive cadre that cares neither for Lutheran orthodoxy nor Lutheran Pietism, but is dedicated to one article of faith above all others even though it is bringing the church to its knees and threatening the very viability of its national office, its 65 synods, and its eight seminaries, let alone scores of congregations declining and splitting. Since 1988, the ELCA has lost 20% of its membership, 15% of which has been lost between 2009 and 2012, that is since the ELCA Churchwide Assembly approved the ordination of practicing homosexuals. All of this is in fact a bizarre form of martyrdom for a belief; they know what is happening to the denomination as a whole and they keep right on doing it. What is this article of faith: *that the Bible and the Confessions must accommodate to the cultural imperatives of today's society*, which imperatives are determined by a segment of the population; and a minority segment at that: secularized, educated, middle-class white people, vast numbers of which have drifted away from or take no interest in the church. This is their mission; their form of evangelism is political activism.

To be fair, such accommodation has also manifested itself in the LCMS in the adoption of radical forms of Evangelicalism. The result has been a loss of the richness of the biblical witness and consistent practice of the Church.

At the same time, Sundberg's claim that Evangelicalism "is the natural form of Protestantism in the American context" demands further nuancing. That it became the dominant form of Protestantism in America was not "natural" in the sense that it was a given and, in fact, may be due more to historical and social realities than theological ones. Further, while he rightly notes that Lutheranism is in decline, so is Evangelicalism. Indeed, some presently are predicting "the coming evangelical collapse."[11] The jury remains out on these matters.[12]

So where do we go? In conclusion, to return to our earlier theme, for the sake of our future mission, we must recall that God is not time-bound as we are. All things are immediately present to Him. Our past, present and future is bound up in Him and His unchanging Word to us. For, in the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal God became incarnate and bound Himself to our time and our experience. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15)

This is the Christological center of the Lutheran confession, and it must be maintained. The challenges we face today are real; no one here is questioning that. However, the promises of God in Christ are greater than the challenges of this world.

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[11] Michael Spencer. "The Coming Evangelical Collapse," *Christian Science Monitor* online, March 10, 2009, http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2009/0310/p09s01-coop.html (accessed November 20, 2013).

[12] See also Lawrence R. Rast, Jr. "What is the Future of Evangelicalism? Adrift in a Sea of Individual Faiths—American Evangelicalism in the Early Twenty-first Century," *Modern Reformation* 17 (Nov.-Dec. 2008): 31-32.

# Ecclesiology, Mission and Partner Relations: What it Means that Lutheran Mission Plants Lutheran Churches

by Albert B. Collver

The Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver provides a historical overview of mission work and the planting of Lutheran churches, including an explanation of how confessional Lutherans may assess mission work, plant faithful Lutheran churches and encourage and support partner churches.

## Introduction: Tension between Mission and the Church/Ecclesiology

Herman Sasse, in his 1947 essay, "The Question of the Church's Unity on the Mission Field," writes, "Since the days of the apostles, the mission field has always been the place where church and that which is not church, divine truth and demonic lies, encounter each other and separate. It is also the place where the deepest questions of the Christian faith first arise and where the last judgments in the history of the church are rendered."[1] Ever since Gentiles heard the Gospel, came to faith and joined the Church, a tension has existed between "mission" and the "established church." In Galatians 2, Saint Paul writes about how Titus was not forced to be circumcised. This created tension within the established Church, which still met in Jewish synagogues and also in private homes. Saint Paul writes in Gal. 2:4-5, "Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in — who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery — to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you."

Ever since Gentiles heard the Gospel, came to faith and joined the church, a tension has existed between "mission" and the "established church."

Apparently, some Judaizing Christians thought that Saint Paul went too far by no longer requiring circumcision. The Scriptures indicate that Saint Peter struggled with eating unclean foods (Acts 10:9-16) introduced by the Gentile Christians—indeed, many a missionary has struggled with strange foods. In both of these cases, error entered the Church when a matter of freedom became a new law imposed upon Christians. What initially was a matter of indifference became a doctrinal problem when the Gospel was hindered. In the decades that followed, itinerant preachers who traveled from city to city and from settlements of one group of Christians to another became a matter of concern for the Early Church. These itinerant preachers frequently went into areas where a congregation already had a local pastor, sometimes stirring up dissension, schism and even heresy. Eventually, the office of itinerant preachers faded, although it was not entirely eliminated, as the Lord raised up more pastors through the Church. The point of this is not to review the history of missions throughout the Christian Church, but to illustrate Herman Sasse's point that "the deepest questions of the Christian faith arise" where faith meets unbelief, and this creates a tension between "mission" and the "established church."

This paper is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the story of how the non-Roman Catholic Church (Protestants) as an institution left behind the task of mission to mission-societies and other parachurch organizations. The second part of the paper proposes a way to evaluate the establishment of a responsible Lutheran church around the world, keeping the church firmly in the center of the mission endeavor.

## Brief Overview of the History of Mission Societies

The development of mission societies is a relatively recent development in the history of the Church. "The half century from 1772 through 1822 can be singled out as the time when, hand in hand, the missionary and the Bible Society movements appear on the world scene

[1] Hermann Sasse. *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters*, Volume 2, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941-1976), Kindle Locations, 4951-4953.

with a global concept of evangelism."[2] To understand the development of these mission societies, we need to touch upon the developments of the Reformation. During the age of Constantine until the time of the Reformation, mission work largely consisted of addressing the migration of peoples and the dispersion of people groups, or was connected to the expansion of a so-called "Christian State." During the age of exploration, the Christian church moved to the New World with the colonial powers. Spain and Portugal had ships while Germany did not, which explains in part why the Lutherans were not interested in global missions at the time of the Reformation.[3] With the expansion of the British Empire and the development of commercial trade and shipping companies, Christian missionaries began to travel to distant lands. In the 16th and early 17th century, the spread of Christianity largely was connected to colonial endeavors. Quite simply, churches that existed in nations that did not have their own armadas and fleets did not send missionaries. No ships, no missionaries.

As mission societies began to emerge toward the end of the 18th century as part of the *zeitgeist*, a significant influence was William Carey's *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens.*[4] William Carey (Aug. 17, 1761–June 9, 1834), a Particular Baptist minister, published his groundbreaking book in 1792.[5] Among Calvinists and many Calvinistic Baptists of this time, the belief was that the Lord would convert the heathen if He pleased to do so and that Christians did not have any responsibility to spread the Gospel to the heathen; after all, if the Lord predestined the heathen to salvation, they would be saved whether or not the church proclaimed the Gospel to them or not (hyper-Calvinist view). Carey's book emphasized the Christian obligation to take the Gospel to the heathen.

In a significant move in the history of exegesis, Carey re-interpreted Matt. 28:19-20 from "making disciples" by "baptizing and teaching" to "going" to foreign lands and proclaiming the Gospel. It should be noted that Matt. 28:19-20 in the Greek has one indicative or main verb, "make disciples." Christ commanded the Church to "make disciples" using the means of "baptizing" and "teaching" wherever the people of God reside. In most English Bibles, Matt. 28:19 begins with the imperative command to "Go!" However, in the Greek, the word "go" is, in fact, a participle ("going"). The major emphasis on Matt. 28:19 is not "Go" but rather "make disciples." The modern missionary movement and missionary society began in part as a shift in emphasis from "making disciples" to "going." Carey and his work were responsible in a significant way for this shift of thought.

> The Church, while located in a particular geographical region or among a particular people group, is not bound to that place. The Church is worldwide; it is catholic (or universal), and it is the living body of Christ. Therefore, the Church is found where Christ is, and Christ is present in the preaching of His Word and in the bestowal of His Sacraments.

Carey asks the question of "whether the Commission given by our Lord to his Disciples be not still binding on us."[6] Carey answers in the affirmative that the commission given in Matthew 28 is applicable to all Christians today. He writes, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. This commission was as extensive as possible, and laid them under obligation to disperse themselves into every country of the habitable globe, and preach to all the inhabitants, without exception, or limitation."[7] Carey notes that the commission in Matthew 28 was never repealed by Christ and is, therefore, still binding on all Christians.[8] Carey's work addressed a particular form of quietism among Calvin-

[2] Ulrich Fick. "The Bible Societies—Fruit and Tool of Mission." *International Review of Mission* 70, no. 279 (1981): 119-129.

[3] Gustav Adolf Warneck. *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time*, ed. George Robson (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1901). "Notwithstanding the era of discovery in which the origin of the Protestant church fell, there was no missionary action on her part in the age of the Reformation."

[4] William Carey. *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester: Ann Ireland, 1792).

[5] Particular Baptists are Baptists who followed the Reformed teachings of John Calvin, including the Calvinist teaching of predestination.

[6] Carey, 7.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 10. "We cannot say that it is repealed, like the commands of the ceremonial law; nor can we plead that there are no objects for the command to be exercised upon. Alas! The far greater part of the world, as we shall see presently, are still covered with heathen darkness!"

istic Baptists who did not believe that the Church had a duty to proclaim the Gospel to the world. Carey's work helped, supported and led to the creation of the modern mission society movement. In fact, Carey became known as the "Founder of Modern Missions."[9]

Although Carey was entirely correct to say that Matt. 28:19-20 is still binding and applicable to the Church today, the problem he was solving was one rampant among the Reformed (Church of England, Baptists, et al.) and was not a problem directly applicable to the Lutherans in Germany. Lutherans did not hold to double predestination as the Calvinists did. Nor did Lutherans regard Matt. 28:19-20 as only binding upon the apostles and the Early Church. In fact, the Lutherans used Matt. 28:19-20 as a proof text both for the institution of Baptism and the institution of the Holy Ministry. It must be kept in mind that Carey's work was intended to correct an error among Particular Baptists, not among Lutherans. A direct application of Carey's solution to Lutherans in Germany would be a fallacy and would lead to an incorrect assessment of the situation among Lutherans. In fact, as we shall see later, C. F. W. Walther and the Missouri Synod will react against the mission societies that Carey helped to create.

> The evaluation of a particular church, located among a particular people at a particular geographical location, must begin with and be rooted in the confession of the Church as found in the Nicene Creed and in the Augsburg Confession, Article VII.

Another factor that limited missionary activities of various Christian confessions, such as Lutherans, was the establishment of the state church. These churches received their funding through taxations. Areas and territories were divided up. Parishes and congregations were established. Imagine a superintendent or bishop who has a yearly budget to pay the salaries of his pastors, maintain the buildings, perhaps establish another congregation if the population increased and the like. The last thing on such a superintendent or bishop's mind was to spend his inadequate budget on sending a missionary to a people or a location outside of his territory. In fact, it might be illegal for him to do so. Ludwig Petri notes in 1841 the limitations of the German state church structure when he wrote, "The present arrangement of these authorities, their circle of affairs, their system of affairs, and their relationship to the state and the congregation are not designed to evangelize the heathen."[10] The state church structure simply was not equipped to bring the Gospel to foreign nations. Mission societies arose through the efforts of pious Christians to overcome the limitations of the state church. Petri notes, "In its present circumstances, the church most suitably carries out its commission to the heathen not directly through its official authorities, but through the free activity of its believing members."[11]

The rise of these mission societies in Germany, Scandinavia and England explains, in part, the article in the Missouri Synod's constitution that prohibits members of Synod from participating in "heterodox tract and mission societies." In order to increase their effectiveness (and funding) many of these mission societies did not pay a great deal of attention to confessional or denominational distinctions. A German mission society might send a Reformed pastor to the mission field as easily as it might send a Lutheran pastor. The founders of the Missouri Synod had two primary intentions by this section of the constitution: (1) To preserve pure and orthodox doctrine and teaching, and (2) that mission itself be carried out primarily by the Church and not primarily by mission societies. As such are the goals of and approaches to mission by churches in comparison to mission societies. The next section of the paper provides a brief evaluation of how mission societies evaluated mission work, while proposing a way that churches might evaluate mission work.

## Toward a Responsible Lutheran Church

Ever since Protestants began to engage seriously in mission work, there has been a question on how to measure the success of the work. Rome did not face the same difficulty, as success was the establishment of a Roman Catholic parish with local indigenous men receiving a seminary education. Success was the extension of Rome.

[9] John Brown Myers. *William Carey: The Shoemaker who Became "the Father and Founder of Modern Missions"* (New York: Fleming Revell Company, 1887).

[10] Ludwig Adolf Petri. *Mission and the Church: A letter to a friend (Die Mission und die Kirche: Schreiben an einen Freund)*, trans. David Buchs (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary, 2012), 5.

[11] Ibid.

Protestants faced a different challenge in determining success as there was no centralized authority or headquarters such as Rome. For many Protestants, the goal became the establishment of an indigenous church that no longer needed assistance from the missionaries. For more than 100 years the "three-self" formula has dominated discussion in Protestant mission circles as a means of determining success on the mission field.

Henry Venn (1796-1873), head of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880), head of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, developed the "three-self" formula: self-propagating (the church proclaims the Gospel on its own and does mission work), self-supporting (the church is able to support itself financially) and self-governing (the church is capable of making its own decisions and does not need to check with another church or mission society for permission). Later, the category of self-theologizing (the church develops its own theology or theological expression appropriate for its context) was added.

Venn and Anderson developed their three-self formula in response to the "rice Christians," that is, people who attended church as long as the missionaries provided food and material benefits. The three-self formula developed as a reaction against the paternalism and colonialism of the Western mission societies. It also had the goal of prompting rapid evangelization of the world and discouraging missionaries from being located in any one placed for too long. The objective of the three-self formula was to determine when a church had become indigenous. Initially, the missionaries provided pastors, teachers, the Divine Service, buildings, financing and leadership while training local indigenous people to take over the work and become self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing. Once this goal had been achieved, the missionaries could depart and move to another mission field. The three-self formula has dominated Protestant mission theory for more than a century.

The three-self formula provided the missionary society with a benchmark to know when a church became indigenous or mature. Proponents of the formula would argue that once a church becomes indigenous, there is no role for non-indigenous people. A weakness of this idea is that there is scant scriptural support for such a formula and it bases the definition of the Church on human goals rather than finding or locating the Church around the Word and the Sacraments. It also promotes a disconnect between the indigenous church and foreign churches. As much of Protestant mission work was based upon the work of mission societies rather than upon churches, the three-self formula perhaps disconnected churches from each other in an even more intense way. It does not foster the mutual responsibility church bodies have to one another to share, nurture and support each other in the body of Christ. It did provide a convenient way for missionaries to measure their success, and it provided a built-in exit strategy. Additionally, the three-self formula definition of an indigenous church offered a static definition of a church, rather than something more dynamic and living (hence, the rise of the *missio dei* movement to keep the sending/mission continuing).

> Admittedly, no metric is perfect and each has flaws but the assessment toward a Lutheran church is rooted first and foremost in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the administration of the Sacraments. Where this is occurring, there Christ's Church is found.

Although the three-self formula provides a way of evaluating a mission start or foreign church, thereby providing an evaluation or metric for the mission work, it is inadequate as an evaluation of partner churches most notably because its foundation is upon non-scriptural and non-Lutheran categories. For Lutherans, a better approach than the three-self formula is based upon the approach of Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf's (1910-82) "The Lutheran Church Plants Lutheran Missions," published in 1967. Hopf turns to Augsburg Confession, Article VII, which locates the Church where the Word is preached and the Sacrament is administered. The Church, while located in a particular geographical region or among a particular people group, is not bound to that place. The Church is worldwide; it is catholic (or universal), and it is the living body of Christ. Therefore, the Church is found where Christ is, and Christ is present in the preaching of His Word and in the bestowal of His Sacraments. Hopf writes, "The deeds of this very Christ in the preached and spoken Word of God, in Baptism carried out as mandated, and in the Sacrament of the Altar given out according to its

institution, are the only, but also absolutely certain marks of the church (*notae ecclesiae*)." In this sense, the Church is never indigenous but always Christ's Church that is one throughout the world. The one Church of Christ becomes a "particular" church when it is located in a particular place among a particular people.

The evaluation of a particular church, located among a particular people at a particular geographical location, must begin with and be rooted in the confession of the Church as found in the Nicene Creed and in the Augsburg Confession, Article VII. Because the three-self formula does not adequately take into account the true biblical and confessional nature of the Church, it will not fully define a mature or healthy church, nor help us completely identify a responsible Lutheran church. This kind of Lutheran church is responsible to the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. It is responsible for addressing its culture and its crosses theologically. It is responsible for the theological education of its clergy and the training of its people. It is responsible for raising up leaders to serve the Church. It is responsible for its own church affairs. And it is responsible for stewardship to support its workers, operations and mission work.

> The formation of a new partner church does not mean the end of the connection between it and the Lutheran church that originally sent the missionaries. Rather, it begins a new phase where each church encourages, helps and the supports the other to remain a responsible Lutheran church.

## Assessment Toward a Responsible Lutheran Church

1. Does the church have altars and pulpits from which the Gospel is proclaimed?
    a. What are its ecumenical and fellowship aspects?
2. Can the church address the crosses it faces and its culture theologically?
    a. Is it engaged in mission?
3. Can the church educate and provide her own clergy and church workers?
4. Can the church raise up and produce leaders?
5. Is the church able to run its own affairs?
6. Is the church practicing stewardship?
    a. What is its capacity to work outside of geographical borders?

### R1. Proclamation (Matt. 28: 18-20; John 20:19-23; 1 Cor. 2:4-5; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:21; Titus 1:2-3).

The first assessment examines if a church has enough pastors to provide for the altars and pulpits in the church. The proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the administration of the Sacraments are at the heart of salvation and the heart of the Church. Some churches have a goal of one pastor for each congregation. Other churches expect for one pastor to serve two or three. Other churches use a combination of pastors and evangelists. The first dimension of this assessment is to explore whether or not the church has enough men available to preach. It evaluates if the church is using missionaries or pastors from other church bodies to serve at their pulpits and altars. It next evaluates if there are enough pastors to provide pastoral care in a responsible manner. For instance, if a congregation or preaching station only receives Communion once every six weeks because there are not enough pastors available to provide it, this would be reflected in the assessment. The assessment assumes that "proclaiming the Gospel" means that the Gospel is preached purely and is doctrinally sound. The assessment can reflect whether or not there is a weakness in the doctrinal training of the pastors. It also includes catechesis of the people. For instance, a church body might have enough pastors to fill the pulpits and serve at the altars but there is doctrinal weakness perhaps even to the point where fellowship would not be possible. Connected to that is the sub-point of ecumenical and fellowship aspects. This might show a church that is engaged in triangulated ecumenical relations that are not all in doctrinal harmony and agreement. It might show a church that has a Lutheran identity but is not yet at a place where fellowship with the Missouri Synod is possible. It also might reflect how ecumenically engaged a church is.

### R2. Theologizing

The ability of a church to address its culture and society in a theological manner is extremely important. Although people native to a culture understand their own culture

better than outsiders, at the same time they do not always have the training or theological acumen to address the intersection of their culture and Christianity in a Christian way. At other times, the church may have the theological acumen to address an issue but not the resources to produce materials.

Another component of a church's ability to address its culture and society is the way it engages in the missionary task. Is the church engaged in missionary outreach?

> Quite simply, the mission or evangelization of the world cannot be divorced from the Church. For us, this means that Lutheran mission leads to the planting of Lutheran churches.

### R3. Theological Education

Does the church have the capacity to train and produce pastors and church workers to supply the pulpits and altars of its congregations? How complete is the theological education? Does it produce evangelists but not pastors? Does it produce pastors but is not able to train the next generation of theological educators and church leaders? Is the theological education helping the church address the intersection of Christianity and its own culture and society? Is the theological education sustainable?

### R4. Leadership

Is the church producing leaders for the church offices, schools and other institutions? Does it need to rely on expertise from outside the church? Are there gaps (some positions the church is able to fill while others rely on outside assistance)?

### R5. Operational Ability

Does the church have a workable structure and governance appropriate for its situation? Is the structure and governance functioning? Smooth transitions between leaders? Internal dissension and lawsuits? Can the church manage its schools and institutions? Is the operation of the church afflicted by corruption and graft? Does the church have the institutional ability to manage projects and budgets?

### R6. Stewardship

Does the church teach stewardship? How much of the church's budget is funded externally? Are the core and essential operations self-supported? Or would vital components of the church's life diminish or cease if external funding was no longer provided?

Stewardship could further be subdivided into capacity to work outside the geographical borders of the church. Admittedly, no metric is perfect and each has flaws, but the assessment toward a Lutheran church is rooted first and foremost in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the administration of the Sacraments. Where this is occurring, there Christ's Church is found. In the case of a new mission plant, the missionaries themselves will proclaim the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. This is the beginning of the Church in that place. As that church is established by the Word of God, the missionaries will address the crosses faced and the culture theologically. The missionaries will train the pastors and the church workers of this new church. The missionaries will provide leadership and help raise up leaders in the new church plant; eventually, the new leadership of that particular church will assume the services provided by the missionaries. Initially, the missionaries will run the affairs of the new church. However, as new leaders are raised up, they will run the affairs of the church. Initially, the stewardship or the support is provided by the Lutheran church that sent the missionaries. As stewardship is taught by the missionaries and the new local pastors, church workers and church leaders, the newly-formed church practices stewardship.

Once the newly-planted church has leaders and can administer its own affairs, it ceases to be a mission station or start and becomes a partner church. Unlike in the three-self model, the formation of a new partner church does not mean the end of the connection between it and the Lutheran church that originally sent the missionaries. Rather, it begins a new phase where each church encourages, helps and the supports the other to remain a responsible Lutheran church. One church body with more resources in a given area has a responsibility to help the other that is lacking. The relationship is mutual. Each church assists the other as it is requested and as the other is able. The formation of a separate partner church from the sending church continues with a true partnership. The body of Christ assists the body of Christ.

In a similar manner, two partner churches may not have been given the same amount or all of the necessary resources to remain a responsible Lutheran church. Here

is where church relations and the other aspect of mission work continue. Work is done to help each church grow in the six areas. This may even lead to new mission work done in partnership between the two churches. The relationship and partnership is dynamic and based on the mutual respect and love for the other as the body of Christ.

The assessment toward a responsible Lutheran church provides both an evaluation of a particular church and also an assessment of the church relations and mission work of another church that is engaged in partnership with a particular church. It provides a tangible measure both of a particular church and of the work done by another church with the partner. It is not bound to any one type of activity, but it is connected to the phase in which a church finds itself. Care must be taken to avoid cycles of dependency and unwitting colonial attitudes and approaches. The partners must always be examining the relationship to ensure that it remains a true partnership of equals in the body of Christ.

For instance, one church may provide pastors to preach in the pulpits of the other church for a time. Once that particular church has enough local pastors, the work of the other church can shift focus to another area of the assessment. In the establishment of the particular church, the missionaries will baptize, catechize, preach and teach. Once the church is established and has enough local pastors, the work of the missionary changes from the primary work of pulpit and altar to supporting and encouraging the particular church in that work, perhaps through theological education or through grants for projects and the like. The nature of the work done by missionaries changes based upon the need of the particular church. The type of work is determined by mutual conversation and agreement between the two partners. In a similar way, the particular church has opportunity to assist her partner in remaining a responsible Lutheran church.

## Conclusion

The Lutheran Confessions locates the Church around the pure preaching of the Gospel and the correct administration of the Sacraments. Where the Word of God and the Sacraments are located, there is the Church. The mission of the Church of proclaiming the Gospel to the lost belongs to the Church and must be done by the Church. Petri writes, "The church has the indisputable right, grounded in its divine foundation, to oversee mission. Mission has the strictest duty to stand by its responsibility to the church. Every evangelical activity within the church, every task which comes into contact with the doctrine and the life of the church must be subordinate to ecclesial oversight. This proposition is clear in itself, for it inheres so naturally in the matter that an ecclesial **separation** results immediately if one tries to pursue a new course outside the obligations and rights of the existing fellowship."[12] Quite simply, the mission or evangelization of the world cannot be divorced from the Church. For us, this means that Lutheran mission leads to the planting of Lutheran churches. . Where a church already exists, our work must support, sustain and strengthen that church. Determining how to do this occurs in dialog with the partner.

The tension between the established church and the mission field can create the temptation to do mission work apart from or outside of the Church. This temptation should be resisted. Organizations such as mission societies, or entities more closely associated with the Synod such as RSOs, auxiliaries, districts and congregations, should work in coordination with the mission work of the Synod. It should work in a way that supports the Synod's mission work where it is weak, lacks capacity or fulfills a special need. For example, a RSO such as Bethesda who works with disabled people can bring capacity to the mission work of the Church not otherwise easily obtainable.

There is a warning here for the established church as well. When the state church structure hindered the ability of the people of God to proclaim the Gospel to a people in need of Christ's salvation, mission societies, tract and Bible societies arose. In the absence of mission work by the Church, the people of God fulfilled their vocation to share the Gospel with people, even though this occurred at times with a lack of order, a disruption to ecclesial structure and, more problematically, a lack of doctrinal oversight and quality.

For the well-being of the Church, it is best when the established church and mission efforts work together in a coordinated fashion. Working together, the established church, mission entities and partner churches can assist one another to support the body of Christ. The tension between the established church and the mission field will not leave us until Christ returns and establishes His everlasting kingdom. This tension exists because the

[12] Petri, 14.

mission field is the place where demonic lies and the truth of God's Word meet. May we work to proclaim the Gospel, support and enhance partner churches and pray to the Lord of the harvest that He send laborers, for the field is ripe for the harvest.

*The Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver is the LCMS director of Regional Operations for the Office of International Mission.*

What will the future of missions in the LCMS look like in the future? Rev. Dr. Jack Preus says it will be a lot more collaborative.

# The Future of Mission in the LCMS: Collaboration

by Jack Preus

I want to thank the planners of this event, Bart Day and others. It's good that we're here, putting our heads together to discuss what it means to do missions in a context that is very different from the days when our current mission model was devised. Second, I want to thank you for inviting me to participate. It's an honor to be included among such a great group of church leaders. And finally, I want to thank Al Collver for his presentation. It's a pleasure to provide a brief response.

I need to say right off that I'm not a missionary and never have been, at least in the traditional sense of the word. When I graduated from the seminary, I thought I would be called into the mission field because I was fluent in Spanish and Portuguese. I had majored in Latin American studies at university. I expected my first call would be to Venezuela or someplace like that. Instead, it was to Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif. I guess the Lord had other ideas in mind. So, I'm not a missionary. Nor am I or ever have been an official church-relations liaison, an official representative of the Synod in international affairs.

> This desire for greater, more direct involvement [by church members in mission work] is both understandable and, I think, largely wholesome. But it has often resulted in confusion and chaos when it has been the result of poor or no communication.

But I have had extensive international experience, having visited some 60 countries, and I have been given the privilege of viewing the mission enterprise from a slightly different perspective: as one who for decades has "come alongside" of those directly involved in the mission enterprise as a partner. Starting at Concordia Seminary, continuing through my experiences at Concordia Irvine and now increasingly through my involvement in a very significant ramp-up of international collaboration at Bethesda, I have had deep interest in things international for more than four decades.

As I mentioned, we're doing missions today in a different context. In fact, in some respects it's a new world. You know this better than I, but we're going to have to learn how to change and adapt. The future of missions in the LCMS, in my opinion, is going to look different. It's going to look a lot more collaborative. So, what's changed? Well, a lot. But a couple of changes I think have been most compelling and will require adaptation.

The first thing is the shifting voice of world confessional Lutheranism and as a result the shifting theological and political alliances. Thank God for the LCMS and our other International Lutheran Council partners. The voice of authentic Lutheran theology continues to be heard. But it seems clear that in the future the center from which that voice comes may be in a different place. There are now more Lutherans in Africa than in the U.S. In fact, there are more Lutherans in just two countries in Africa (Ethiopia and Tanzania) than there are in North America. There are still more nominal Lutherans in Europe than in Africa, but the decline in Europe, both in numbers and in Lutheran identity, is stunning. There can be no question about this: The center of world Lutheranism in the future is shifting. This requires a greater sense of respect and collaboration than in the past.

Another difference is that members of our churches today are no longer content to sit back and let the professionals go "to the ends of the earth" in order to

spread the Gospel. Nor are they willing just to send checks to the church headquarters so that the Synod can do mission work in their stead. They want to get directly involved. They want hands-on experiences. This has led to a proliferation of mission societies and short-term mission trips and activities. This desire for greater, more direct involvement is both understandable and, I think, largely wholesome. But it has often resulted in confusion and chaos when it has been the result of poor or no communication. We can all tell horror stories about unilateral and unadvised activities that have been carried out "in the name of the LCMS." You all know this better than I do.

So, the future of missions in the LCMS is going to be different. I can say with a fair amount of confidence what that future is going to look like because we've been given a glimpse of it. Bethesda Lutheran Communities — working in partnership with the LCMS's Office of International Missions, the Wisconsin South District of the LCMS and the English District of the LCMS — have forged a new model for mission partnership. This initiative is characterized by shared governance and strategic planning, mutual decision-making, clear communication and skin in the game. I'm speaking about the Dominical Republic Lutheran Mission.

There are two aspects or circles of support surrounding the mission:

1. The Management Team, which I'll say more about in a minute, and
2. The larger circle of international support partners, including several congregations in the U.S., the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina.

Our Memorandum of Agreement says that the goal of the Dominican Republic Lutheran Mission (DRLM) is to "plant and grow a confessional, Gospel-proclaiming, independent, national Lutheran Church in the Dominican Republic that ministers to and equips for service all those loved by God in Jesus Christ, including people who have developmental disabilities or other special needs and their families."

It describes the relationship between the partner organizations, which we call Managing Partners, the other partners and the DRLM by outlining criteria for the selection of Managing Partners, mutual objectives, individual responsibilities, commitments and partnership duration. We have two criteria for the selection potential partners:

1. Managing Partners will have a history of positive support for international mission efforts of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
2. Current Managing Partners will select new members according to the needs of the mission. We did that just this past year by inviting the English District to join, which it has done, and we were privileged to welcome it into this partnership earlier this year.

The objectives of this DRLM partnership are to:

1. Serve as instruments in God's hands to fulfill His mission of salvation to people in the Dominican Republic.
2. Work cooperatively in a unified, efficient and strategic way to advance the DRLM.
3. Support the DRLM through prayer, finances and other resource development.
4. Provide supporters and the church-at-large with information and reports concerning God's mission in the Dominican Republic.
5. Partner in carrying out both mission and mercy ministry in the Dominican Republic.

According to our agreement, the Managing Partners support the DRLM by:

1. Providing financial support, staff or service to the mission field equivalent of at least $30,000 annually.
2. Providing expertise and non-financial support for the development and implementation of any project in the Dominican Republic as appropriate.
3. Soliciting funding for projects in support of this partnership.
4. Publicizing the mission effort so that others in the LCMS can join in praying for and supporting the outreach of the DRLM.
5. Providing one representative to serve on the DRLM Managing Partner board.
6. Working with the Office of International Mission to evaluate annually the effectiveness of the mission team.
7. Performing an annual review of this agreement.
8. Regularly reviewing financial reports.

So, that's how we structure ourselves. This is clearly a different way of way of doing missions, and I think it's better. Some of you have had direct involvement in this project and can attest to the same. John Wille, Ted Krey, Dave Stechholz, Barb Below, Randy Golter, you've been there.

From Bethesda's perspective, this is a very fulfilling way to contribute to the mission of the LCMS. The commitment this mission has made to including people who have been marginalized because of their developmental disabilities has been stellar. From the very beginning, the mission and emerging Lutheran church in the Dominic Republic has had a strong commitment to helping the least of the least. Let me tell you about the six young people we rescued from the government-run institution in Santiago. We first visited them several years ago before I joined Bethesda. The children, who had a variety of disabilities, lived in filth and were severely neglected. All were medicated and many were restrained. One young boy was even kept in a cage as a way of controlling his behavior.

Our commitment is strong because we have been allowed to sit at the table in a meaningful way.

Our response was two-fold. First, we asked the institution to identify six children whom we would remove to a group home. They chose some of the children with the most severe disabilities, including the boy whom they had caged. Within a couple of months, all the children were off medications. All but one became ambulatory. Their behaviors improved to the point that five of the six are now attending school. Their condition improved dramatically with loving and professional care. The other thing we did was to provide training for all the staff at the institution. As a result, the place is now peaceful, calm and clean, and the condition of all the children has improved significantly.

We have seen miracles from God. From the perspective of a Recognized Service Organization (RSO), this direct involvement in what we might call a governance role is very engaging. Our commitment is strong because we have been allowed to sit at the table in a meaningful way. I think we have developed a model that could be implemented in many other places, as Ted Krey is trying to do throughout Latin America. It's a model that is characterized by shared governance and strategic planning; respect for the necessary role of LCMS Office of International Mission and also respect for the RSO; mutual decision making; clear, frequent communication; two annual meetings in the Dominican Republic and strong financial commitment. For these reasons, I believe that this model is to a large extent the future of missions in the LCMS. Thank you.

*The Rev. Dr. Jack Preus is executive vice president of Mission Advancement at Bethesda Lutheran Homes, Watertown, Wisc.*

# Teaching the Faith Once Delivered

by Charles P. Arand

How do Luther's Small and Large Catechisms assist us in carrying out a theology of missions when it comes to dealing with those outside the faith? In this article, the Rev. Dr. Charles P. Arand explains that they provide a framework for thinking about missions along with plenty of theological food-for-thought regarding our assumptions for witness.

We tend to associate the catechisms with teaching the faith to our children.[1] That observation alone suggests that we may connect the catechism more with education than with missions. Perhaps, however, we shouldn't be so quick to do so. After all, in Baptism children are snatched out of the jaws of Satan and transferred to the kingdom of Christ. They go from being a captive of Satan to becoming a child of God. Luther's baptismal booklet makes that abundantly clear.[2] So does the way in which Luther translates Matthew 28 in the Small Catechism: "Go and make disciples of the all heiden" (pagans/heathen),[3] namely, those who stand outside the people of God. And how does one do this? Baptizing and teaching. Thus catechesis certainly does have a mission dimension to it.

Catechesis becomes all the more important with the confession that the Church is gathered by the Word rather than being based on institutional structures and ritual piety.[4] In other words, the Church endures as it hands down the treasures of the faith from one generation to the next generation. And one wants to hand down to our children, the next generation, nothing but the life-giving Gospel of Christ. The confessors of the Book of Concord were keenly aware of that when they repeatedly said that they did not wish to bequeath their descendants any other teaching than that which was set forth in these confessional documents.[5] This role for the catechisms alone does much to establish the importance of the catechism for gathering people into the Church and keeping them there.

The Church endures as it hands down the treasures of the faith from one generation to the next generation.

But it need not stop there. We may also ask, what might the catechisms offer for a theology of missions when it comes to dealing with those outside the faith? Now, I am not going to suggest that the catechisms somehow provide a full-fledged manual on how to do missions. But I will argue that they do provide a framework for thinking about missions along with plenty of theological food-for-thought regarding our assumptions for witness.

## The Historical Setting of Luther's Catechisms

Before we look at its theological content, we need to consider briefly the historical settings of Luther's day and ours. After all, nearly five centuries separate us. Our respective contexts are very different in many ways even as our tasks are the same.

## The 16th-Century Context

When the visitations of the late 1520s were conducted in the environs around Wittenberg, they uncovered a dismal situation. Many people were largely Christian in name only as is evident from the prefaces of Luther's catechisms. Pagan influences and superstitions abounded. And this remained the case to some extent in the rural countryside around Wittenberg 50 years after the Reformation had

[1] See Robert Kolb's *Teaching God's Children God's Teaching* (Hutchinson: Crown Publishing, 1992; Saint Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 2012).

[2] References in this paper will be to eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert's *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2000). See, for example, the introduction to his baptismal booklet on pgs. 371-375.

[3] Kolb, Wengert, 359, footnote 78.

[4] See Robert Kolb, "The Sheep and the Voice of the Shepherd. The Ecclesiology of the Lutheran Confessions," *Concordia Journal* 36, 4 (2010): 324-341.

[5] Kolb, Wengert, "Conclusion to Part One of the Augsburg Confession,"58.

come, as uncovered by the Visitations of 1572 (e.g., the use of superstitious/homeopathic magic/zaubern).[6]

In addition, we must keep in mind that upward of 90 percent to 95 percent of the people in society were illiterate. Thus Luther wrote his catechisms for a culture of orality, to be heard more than to be read. His goal was to equip parents to teach their children — as the subtitle of each chief part indicates. However, perhaps in something of a reality check, Luther also addresses the catechisms to pastors[7] in recognition that most parents were either unable or unwilling to carry out that task (hence the important role of catechetical sermons in the sixteenth century).[8]

## The 21st-Century Context

We live today in a culture whose institutions and values have been shaped in large measure by Christian ideals.[9] We also have high rates of literacy compared to the sixteenth century. In addition, Bibles are abundantly available in multiple copies and translations and can be found in many (if not most) homes. Average Christians have access to biblical and theological resources unlike any other period in human history. And in the United States, Christianity has shown a certain vitality of religion unmatched in Europe.[10]

And yet, we are not dealing with a society (at least in America) that has never heard of Jesus. But their knowledge of Jesus is often distorted.

Yet we see the influence of those Christian forces diminishing today. Biblical literacy and religious literacy continues to decline.[11] Fewer people have grown up within the Church and gone to Sunday school or Christian day schools. As a result, fewer even know the biblical origin of certain common cultural references (e.g., "doubting Thomas"). And yet, we are not dealing with a society (at least in America) that has never heard of Jesus. But their knowledge of Jesus is often distorted. Their focus is far more on the person and personality of Jesus than the two natures in one person or the office and work of Jesus.[12]

## The Big Picture of the Catechism

In spite of our historical distance from the sixteenth century, our goals today should remain the same as they were for Luther. He did not write the catechism as a kind of information dump, theological dictionary or course in systematic theology.[13] To the contrary, Luther wrote the catechism in order to form Christians for, as he says, the catechism "contains everything what every Christian should know" (Luther's Large Catechism, Shorter Preface, 2; Kolb-Wengert, 383). We might say that he saw it as a handbook of the Christian life. To make that point, Luther added the word enchiridion (handbook) to the title page of the catechism in the 1531 edition. We might even think of it as something of a "survival guide" for the Christian life.

As a handbook, Luther grounds students in the Christian life by rooting them in the heritage of the church. He utilizes the components that he had inherited, namely, the commandments, creed, Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments. We have come to refer to them as the chief parts of the Christian life. The Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to them as the "pillars of catechesis."[14] And then like prior catechisms, Luther inserts a few other elements that he deemed important for his day: prayers, Bible passages and the like.

Luther then uses these various elements to set forth the contours of the entire Christian life. The first three chief parts provide the Christian with a view of life in the

[6] See Charles P. Arand, "'And Use Satanic Arts'? Another Look at Luther's Explanation of the Second Commandment," *Concordia Journal* (July 1998): 219-224.

[7] Kolb, Wengert, "Handbook, The Small Catechism [of Dr. Martin Luther] for Ordinary Pastors and Preachers," 347.

[8] See Mary Jane Haemig's dissertation, "The Living Voice of the Catechism: German Lutheran Catechetical Preaching 1530-1580" (ThD diss., Harvard University, 1996).

[9] See Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004)

[10] See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University, 1989).

[11] See Stephen R. Prothero, *Religious Illiteracy: What Every American Needs to Know and Doesn't* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008).

[12] See Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003); Richard Fox, *Jesus in America: Personal Savior Cultural Hero, National Obsession* (San Francisco: Harper, 2004); and Stephen J. Nichols, *Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to the Passion of the Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008).

[13] First, there are many topics that Luther does not cover in the catechisms. There is no treatment, for example, of the attributes of God or of the three-fold office of Christ or of His humiliation and exaltation. He suggests that these can be dealt with in later sermons (Second Article).

[14] *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2000).

world. It provides Christians with something of a story: God's grand story. The next three chief parts (Baptism, confession/absolution, Lord's Supper, baptismal booklet, brief form of confession and the marriage booklet) orient us to live our life within the Church. Finally, the last section (daily prayers and table of responsibilities) orients us to the everyday life of a Christian within creation.

So, what kind of Christian does he hope to form? Luther aims to orient one's entire life around faith. This is a vitally important point. Even though neither the Small Catechism nor the Large Catechism utilizes the language of justification, the emphasis of the entire Reformation comes through loud and clear in the way that each of the chief parts centers on the theme of faith. We might characterize its overarching theme as the "art of living by faith." It's an art in that it is not learned all at once nor is it something that one can apply to specific situations in a purely mechanistic manner.

For Luther the struggle for faith does not begin prior to faith; it commences once the Spirit has ignited the "spark of faith" within us. The moment we pray, we turn our backs on Satan, which is tantamount to a declaration of war. And so the life of the Christian is a life of struggle and a constant battle against those forces that would undermine and snuff out our faith.

Consider how the theme of faith shapes the Christian worldview in the first section of the catechism. The First Commandment and the "Close of the Commandments" enclose the other nine commandments with the words, "we should fear, love and trust in God." The First Commandment[15] is then woven through each individual commandment. Each article of the Creed opens with the words, "I believe." They conclude with the words, "This is most certainly true." Although Luther does not provide a definition of faith in the Small Catechism, one learns the "pro me" of faith by learning the grammar of faith. So notice how Luther teaches one to talk "faith talk." I believe that God made me, provides me, gives me, protects me, redeems me, purchases me that I may be His own, calls me, enlightens me, etc. Each petition of the Lord's Prayer is a prayer for faith over and against Satan's attacks and assaults upon our faith. This is especially apparent in nearly every petition of the Large Catechism. But even in the Small Catechism, note how we repeatedly acknowledge that this petition is indeed carried out by God "without our prayer" but we pray that it may occur within our own lives as well.

From this view of life in the world offered in the first three chief parts, we move into the life of the Church that we might describe as the "nourishment of faith." Here faith is born and strengthened by means of the Word that is carried to us in the sacraments from Baptism to confession to the Lord's Supper. Perhaps the best example of the theme of faith here is found in the fourth question of the Lord's Supper regarding those who are worthy and well-prepared, namely, "those who believe the words, given for you and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

The final section of the catechism deals with daily prayers and vocation. We might characterize this as the "exercise of faith." In light of justification, Luther helps the Christian to embrace life on earth as service to God. The rhythms of daily life provide the context and opportunity for our daily prayers. You have to get up in the morning? "Pray." You have to eat? "Pray." You got to bed at night? "Pray." And note how the theme of faith emerges again. For example, what advice does Luther give in the evening prayer? "Lay your head down on your pillow and go to sleep." In other words, don't lay there tossing, turning and worrying about tomorrow. You just prayed, "into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul and all things."

So pulling all of this together, we might characterize the various sections of the catechism as dealing with aspects of a life of faith, namely: the "need for faith" (the Ten Commandments) since as creatures we cannot live without faith; the "gift of faith" (Creed) as it recounts all of the gifts of God from creation to the resurrection thus engendering and strengthening faith; the "battle cry of faith"[16] as prayer puts us on the front lines of the war with Satan; the "nourishment of faith" (sacraments within the

[15] Where the Small Catechism weaves "fear and love" through the Ten Commandments, the Large Catechism focuses more on "fear and trust."

[16] See "The Lord's Prayer in Luther's Catechisms: The Battle Cry of Faith," *Concordia Journal* 21(January 1995): 42-65.

church), and the "exercise of faith" (our prayer lives and vocations within the world).

## A Few Catechetical Assumptions/Guidance for a Theology of Missions

In this section, I'm going to highlight a few catechetical insights that might provide us with some working assumptions for thinking about mission and witness in the twenty-first century.

## The Theological Structure of the Catechism

Let's begin with the structure of the first three chief parts. There has been a fair amount of debate about the ordering of the catechism over the years, namely, whether or not to begin with the Ten Commandments or the Creed.[17] Below are two things we can discern.

First, the catechism gives us a Law/Gospel structure for the Christian life. Obviously, one of the most distinctive features of Luther's catechisms lies in the way in which Luther began the catechism with the Ten Commandments. He is the first within the Christian tradition to do this intentionally and deliberately. The traditional ordering since Augustine was Creed, Prayer andLord's Prayer, which was meant to correlate with Paul's "faith, hope and love." Luther adjusted the ordering for the sake of writing a manual that could be used in helping people prepare for confession/absolution in 1520. Thus the commandments diagnoses our condition, the Creed provides the "medicine" and the Lord's Prayer describes how to take that medicine. By the late 1520s, the pattern remains the same, but Ten Commandments take on a bit more of a pedagogical emphasis as Luther writes the catechism for the instruction of the young.

Second, the distinction between the Law and Gospel pattern of the catechism must in turn be considered within a larger creedal framework or, better yet, within the larger creedal narrative of the catechism. Consider the following:

Luther for the most part interprets the Ten Commandments in light of the theology of the First Article of the Creed. After all, the Law presupposes the goodness of God's gifts and provides the instructions for the proper use of those gifts according to God's purposes. In addition, the Ten Commandments deal largely with the First Article gifts of God. Thus it is not without accident that where the Small Catechism concludes with the words, "for which it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey," the Large Catechism attaches the words, "as he has enjoined in the Ten Commandments"(LC II, 19; Kolb-Wengert, 433). Thus we have God's gifts (First Article) and the proper use of them (Ten Commandments). Misusing these gifts through idolatry results in their terrifying accusations as they come crashing down upon us. This brings us to the doorstep of the Second Article.[18]

The Second Article provides the center or fulcrum of the catechism, or at least its first three chief parts, holding it together in unity. It picks up where the First Article leaves off, but presupposes that something has gone awry between those two articles for now we find ourselves captive to Satan and thus "lost and condemned." (The First Article of the Large Catechism fills in some of the blanks by noting that we don't like to acknowledge these gifts as coming from God and so "swagger about and boast and brag" as if have these gifts of ourselves).[19] And so, the Second Article opens the way for our rescue and deliverance to Christ's kingdom along with life under the lordship of Christ. And so how does Christ bring us under his rule having defeated "sin, death and the devil"? By sending the Holy Spirit, (Augsburg Confession, Article 3, 405; Kolb-Wengert, 38-39) who in turn brings us under the rule of Christ. This then becomes the focus of the Third Article of the Creed.

Luther then expounds the Lord's Prayer in light of the Third Article. The connection is not hard to see. To borrow from the Apostle Paul in Gal. 4:6, the Holy Spirit goes into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" And so we move from the Third Article to the Lord's Prayer. In addition, for Luther the struggle for faith does not begin prior to faith; it commences once the Spirit has ignited the "spark of faith" within us (Formula of Concord, Article 2, 54; Kolb-Wengert, 554). The moment we pray, we turn our backs on Satan, which is tantamount to a declaration of war.[20] And so the life of the Christian is a life of struggle and a constant battle against those forces that would undermine and snuff out our faith.

[17] See chapter four of Charles Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (Saint Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000) for a more complete discussion, which is summarized here. See also Albrecht Peter's five-volume commentary on Luther's catechisms (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House).

[18] And so Luther notes, "Therefore, if we believe it, this article should humble and terrify all of us." Preceding that, he notes that this is because we misuse the gifts of God and fail to "thank him or acknowledge him as Lord or Creator" (Kolb, Wengert, 433).

[19] Ibid.

20 C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1943) picks this theme up as well.

## "I Am a Creature!" First Commandment — First Article Assumptions

Now let's consider a couple implications that arise for us out of Luther's interpretation of the first commandment in light of the First Article of the Creed. First, what question is Luther asking here? Note that he is not asking whether or not there is a God. He assumes that there is one. Nor is he asking the question, "What is a god?" He assumes that people see that a god is that to which you look for all good things (LC I, 2). Nor is he asking the question, "Should you have a god?" He assumes that you already have one. Why? Because as creatures, we must look somewhere for life. No, the question is solely, "Which god is yours?"[21] That will determine whether one has true faith or false faith (LC I, 2-3).

Think for a moment about Luther's starting point. He works with an anthropology that assumes that we are creatures. Consider how he opens his explanation to the First Article in the Large Catechism. He asks, "What does it mean to confess that God is the creator?" He answers remarkably (and perhaps surprisingly),[22] that it means I am a creature, "I am God's creature" (LC II, 13; Kolb-Wengert, 432). Now, by definition, creatures do not have life of themselves. They are not self-sufficient and self-sustaining. They must seek life from outside of themselves. Luther makes this abundantly clear in his explanation to the First Article of the Creed. As human creatures, we need to look somewhere for what Kolb frequently refers to as "identity, security and meaning."

> Luther aims to orient one's entire life around faith.

By beginning with the assumption that we are creatures, Luther works with a recognition that everyone is already a part of God's story by virtue of being His creatures and living in His creation! God is the creator; we are His creatures. That is who we are and what we are. It defines our core identity. In fact, we are His creatures before we are His children.[23] We are human creatures who have now been adopted as children of God in Christ. And because people are creatures they cannot live without a god. The only question left is, "Where do you look for such things?"

By interpreting the commandments in light of the First Article, Luther shows that the Law's accusations do not come out of the clear blue. The Law is already at work within the world.[24] In other words, as we encounter the Ten Commandments and experience them as "the crushing force of God's design for human life when they are not taken seriously" (Kolb), or we experience them as the "weight of life" (to borrow a phrase used by Barry Lopez in a different context). And because I am "God's creature," I am accountable to the Creator.

So what might we take away from this? We begin by listening to people's stories, their hopes and their problems. We listen to hear on what they may be centering their lives and where they look for security and meaning. And we listen to the ways in which the Law is bearing down upon them, the ways in which God's design for life has come crashing down upon them due to their idolatry. At that point, we can lead them to see that these idols cannot bear the weight of their faith; they will not hold up when the going gets tough. They will not rescue the person out of their predicament.

## "Jesus Has Become My Lord!" Second Article Assumptions

Interestingly, Luther never uses the "j" word, namely, the language of justification, in order to express the Gospel. Perhaps it is because as he is addressing peasants who would have little conception of how courtrooms work or be familiar with legal language or its metaphors. Instead Luther uses the feudal language of lordship, something that the average person would understand well as they lived with it every day. And with it, Luther utilizes the language of victory of the powers that enslaved us, (sin, death and the devil) into which he incorporates the vicarious satisfaction (with Christ's holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death).

[21] As an aside, I always thought that Luther's starting point made more theological sense than those two questions that arose out of James Kennedy's *Evangelism Explosion* several decades ago. Do you remember those? "If you were to die tonight, do you know without a doubt that you would go to heaven?" And second: "If God were to ask you why should I let you into my heaven, what would you say?" Now, those questions presuppose that (1) that someone believes in heaven and (2) that they want to go there. Now, I've been told that those are still fairly reasonable assumptions, especially if one lives in certain regions of the Bible Belt.

[22] In that Luther does not proceed to a discussion of God's nature or attributes.

[23] In conversation with James Nestingen, he pointed out that the Gospel restores us to our creatureliness. "To be glad and content to be a creature [versus wanting to be more than a creature]—that is redemption."

[24] See Gustav Wingren, *Creation and Law*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1961)..

The catechisms thus give us a narrative that portrays how God created us and how we lived in paradise. But then the devil led us into captivity. We no longer had a lord or king. Instead we lived only under tyrants and jailers.[25] The Small Catechism then picks up the story with the scene of a battlefield. On one side of the battlefield, lined up from horizon to horizon are Satan and his minions. We are captives behind enemy lines. Then Christ appears on the battlefield (like David battling Goliath). By virtue of His vicarious suffering and death and by virtue of His resurrection, Christ defeats Satan (Luther's "marvelous duel" image), frees us from that captivity and carries us to His kingdom where we live in everlasting "righteousness, innocence and blessedness."

What might this suggest for the ways in which we articulate the Gospel in various contexts? As we listen to people, we identify those images or metaphors that allow us to bring the Gospel to bear upon their lives.[26]

## Life in the Church: Third Article — Lord's Prayer Assumptions

A couple of important insights for missions emerge in Luther's treatment of the Third Article of the Creed.

First, it provides an orientation to the focus of the Spirit's work and how He carries it out within individual Christians. The catechism makes the point that the Holy Spirit's work is to direct us to Christ or bring us to Christ. In other words, the entire focus of the Spirit's work is Christ. He sanctifies us by bringing us to the Lord Christ to receive His benefits (LC III, 39; Kolb-Wengert, 436). This establishes a very close link between the Second and Third Articles, virtually treating them as aspects of one event (i.e. being brought under the lordship of Christ). And then over and against the semi-Pelagianism of Gabriel Biel's nominalism, it makes the point that we cannot come to faith by our own efforts. As such, this article helps us to address concerns raised by both Pentecostal theology and Evangelical decision theology respectively.

In the second half of his explanation, Luther moves toward the Church as the context and setting of the Spirit's work. Note how the article starts out with the individual Christian confessing, "The Holy Spirit calls me by the Gospel." Luther then connects that Spirit's work in the individual with the Spirit's work in the Church. And so the article continues, "even as" (*gleichwie*) the Spirit does so for the entire Church. The "*gleichwie*" here parallels its usage in the Second Article where it states that we will live under Christ and in His kingdom "even as" (*gleichwie*) he is risen from the dead." One might suggest then that second statement depends upon the first. So the Spirit calls me by the Gospel "even as" the Spirit calls and gathers the entire Christian church on earth. Or as Luther puts it, the Church is the "mother that begets and bears every Christian" (LC III, 42; Kolb-Wengert, 436).

> When it comes to missions, we must take into account the entire life of the person coming to faith. We cannot be content with the moment of conversion (not that we have been), that is to say, with the igniting of the "spark of faith." Satan will do his best to extinguish that faith. And so we prepare and equip people with what they need for a lifetime of struggle.

We do not promise that the life of the Christian within the Church is a life of ease or prosperity on this side of the second coming. It is a life under the cross. For Lutherans, the life of struggle does not precede faith; instead it commences with birth of faith. In confessing that Jesus has become our Lord, we declare war on Satan. He now devotes all his energies toward undermining and destroying our faith. For Luther, prayer becomes our weapon in the "spiritual warfare" in which we now find ourselves embroiled. So for what do we pray?

Consider the Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer. We have to remember that, originally, the introduction and its explanation were not part of the Small Catechism. So the Third Petition summarizes the first two petitions, which deal with God's name and faith, respectively. In the First Petition, we ask that God's name be proclaimed and honored. This takes place through the Word. Name and Word belong together. In the Second Petition, we pray

[25] Luther provides a nice account of that narrative in the Large Catechism (Kolb, Wengert, 434).

[26] Here we might consult J. A. O. Preus' book, *Just Words: Understanding the Fullness of the Gospel* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000) and Robert Kolb's *Speaking the Gospel Today: A Theology for Evangelism* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995).

that God's name and Word create and strengthen faith that we may believe and live a life worthy of God's name. Now the Third Petition prays that both of those petitions may be answered over and against all those that would resist the Word and undermine faith, that they instead support us in faith.

So what might we take away from this? Well, when it comes to missions, we must take into account the entire life of the person coming to faith. We cannot be content with the moment of conversion (not that we have been), that is to say, with the igniting of the "spark of faith" (FC II, 54). Satan will do his best to extinguish that faith. And so we prepare and equip people with what they need for a lifetime of struggle.[27] All of this occurs within the context of the Church (thus leading into the final section of the catechism … but that is for another day).

## Conclusion

The catechism doesn't do everything. It was not intended as a comprehensive systematic theology for all times. It was, however, intended as a handbook for Christians, even what we might call a survival manual for the Christian life. As such, it gives us basics. But those basics provide us with starting points for thinking through the questions that we encounter in our own day. This is, in part, what gives us its timeless value.

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[27] See Article Two of the Formula of Concord regarding the ups and downs of how we experience faith (Kolb, Wengert, 555, 557).

# Challenges to Teaching the Faith as a Component of Mission Strategy

by Terry Cripe

**As a response to Dr. Arand's paper, "Teaching the Faith as a Component of Mission Strategy," President Cripe details how pastors, teachers and parents can best carry out the all-important task of passing on the faith through imparting, receiving and applying that which is found in Luther's Catechism.**

Thank you for inviting me to respond to Dr. Arand's fine paper on teaching the faith as a component of mission strategy. I would like to focus on the word "teaching" in the theme, "Teaching the Faith as a Component of Mission Strategy" in my response. President Harrison has reported the diminishing number of children who remain in the church after they have been confirmed, which indicates that when it comes to handing on the faith to the next generation, we have some challenges to overcome. I want to raise them using an acronym whose letters you know from a different context: IRA. Imparting the faith, Receiving the faith and Applying the faith.

Imparting the faith requires those who are apt to teach. If parents have found themselves inadequate, pastors have not been the best equipped teachers either. When I was in seminary, I had one course in parish education. I did not learn how to teach anything from that one course, except why the then new *Mission: Life* curriculum was deeply flawed. From the number of conversations I have had over the years, I have learned that many pastors would rather have a boil lanced than teach seventh and eighth graders the catechism. We have rationalized that it must be the age; we should teach them when they are in 10th or 11th grade instead. We have said it must be because the children are distracted by a plethora of after-school activities, Saturday sporting events or the onrush of hormones. Or else it is that they are raised by uncommitted parents. We have convinced ourselves that divorced families are the culprit. We have tried Concordia Publishing House (CPH) materials, Australian curricula, Don Ginkle or Abdon workbooks and who knows who else. Perhaps we have tried to write suitable materials ourselves when, like the fabled princess and the pea, we couldn't get comfortable with anyone else's materials.

President Harrison has reported the diminishing number of children who remain in the church after they have been confirmed, which indicates that when it comes to handing on the faith to the next generation, we have some challenges to overcome.

Finally, in a fit of desperation, we have even tried to rationalize the children's boredom by comforting ourselves with the theology of the cross. If the children find learning the catechism challenging or exciting, the pastor must be doing something wrong. The children are supposed to suffer through it, an attitude often reinforced by parental remembrances of their own catechism experiences. Teachers in school systems are sometimes visited by the principal to evaluate how they teach in the classroom. If we believe that teaching the faith is an essential piece of mission strategy, perhaps those who are trained to teach, those who have proven themselves to be good educators, ought to sit in on the confirmation class and evaluate how we pastors teach. Our current dropout rate post-confirmation demands it. As for catechizing adults, if we have located the "fault" in the teen years with their attendant handicaps, then surely we would do better passing on the faith to adults! But can that happen when the instruction consists of three one-hour meetings on a Sunday evening? How many pastors have observed that once adults completed the so-called "adult information course," their attendance at church fell off, just like their teenage counterparts' did? The truth is, whether one is an adult, a teen or an elementary student, you know when you are sitting

in the presence of a master teacher. Nobody has to drag you or threaten you to attend. It's not just that they teach well. It is that the student learns and the faith is imparted.

Receiving the faith presents challenges related to culture. As Dr. Arand notes, Luther's culture was an oral culture. Oral cultures are largely illiterate and without formal education. Truths are received and passed on through memorization. From one perspective, Luther was right to call the church a "mouth house." But for the Church to be an effective mouth house, it must also be an effective "ear house." In his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, author Neil Postman recounts an interesting fact about the Lincoln-Douglas debates.[1] Douglas would speak for an hour or more, Lincoln would speak for the same amount of time and rebuttals from both men followed. The crowd would disperse for lunch and then return. When it came time for question-and-answer from the crowd, the nature of their questions indicated that the audience had followed the content of the debates quite closely. Consider the length of the sermons that Walther and his contemporaries preached during the same period of our nation's history. Let today's average preacher try to speak past 15 minutes, and he will see that we are no longer a culture of primary orality. The popularity of PowerPoint shows that our culture is far more visual. Curiously, most PowerPoints contain not pictures, but printed words. Lots of them. But that only gives an important clue to the limits of orality in our day: What the ear hears must be reinforced by what the eye sees. If hearers are no longer able to retain what they hear over time, neither do speakers use the rhetorical techniques that could make receiving easier. Members of a primary oral culture impart and receive truths through the spoken word in a dialog fashion that also relies upon memorization. We had a fairly easy time of memorizing as long as the public schools required it — some Shakespeare, the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Long before the advent of iPods and the like, memorization dropped out of favor in the schools. So, many pastors cut back on what they required to be memorized. When schools weren't teaching students *how* to memorize texts, pastors lost an important ally. And yet, as recently as this week, an article urging Americans to memorize the Gettysburg Address was published in *USA Today*. "Memorizing is internalizing," Ken Burns, the man behind this push, asserted. That is an important truth with which we would do well to wrestle when coming at the task of passing on the faith to the next generation. Despite no longer being a primary oral culture, there is one part of our culture that is still heavily oral (or should I say "aural"): music. I see countless teens and college-aged folks walking around with ear buds connected to an iPod or its equivalent. Skillful use of repetition, rhythm and rhyme — the three "R's" of oral transmission — virtually guarantee that lyrics will be implanted in the memory. Several years ago, I purchased a CD of two vinyl LPs I listened to last when I was in high school. To my surprise, I could sing along with just about every one of the 22 songs on that CD without missing a word. There have been sporadic stabs at setting the catechism to music in our history, but so far, nothing has stuck for a multitude of reasons. And yet the potential help in receiving the faith could be tremendous were this able to be done successfully, especially when one considers how much of today's music is really rhythmic rhyming speech.

> If we believe that teaching the faith is an essential piece of mission strategy, perhaps those who are trained to teach, those who have proven themselves to be good educators, ought to sit in on the confirmation class and evaluate how we pastors teach.

My final concern has to do with Applying the faith. Dr. Arand lays out the structure and order of the catechism in a marvelous way. I wish someone had done that for me years ago. But a clue about why that didn't happen can be found in a TED talk by James Flynn entitled, "Why Our IQ Levels Are Higher Than Our Grandparents.'"[2] In that talk, he notes that the score of 70, which those of the earlier part of the previous century achieved on the IQ test would, by our standards, classify them as having developmental disabilities. Conversely, the 130 that

[1] Neil Postman. *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (New York: Viking Press, 1986), 40-44.

[2] James Flynn. "Why Our IQ Levels Are Higher Than Our Grandparents.'" *http://www.ted.com/talks/james_flynn_why_our_iq_levels_are_higher_than_our_grandparents.html*

many score today would be categorized as gifted by their standards. Why the difference? The areas of the test where huge advancement has been made are the areas requiring abstract thought. In the early 20th century, Alexander Luria did research among the people of his day to discover their capacity for abstract thought and their ability to classify things. For instance, he asked one man, "What do a fish and a crow have in common?" The man replied, "Nothing. You can eat a fish but you can't eat a crow. One swims, the other flies." Luria replied, "But aren't both animals?" "No," the man replied. "One is a fish and the other a bird." He said to another man, "There are no camels in Germany. Hamburg is a city in Germany. Are there any camels in Hamburg?" The man replied, "Well, if it's large enough, there ought to be camels there. If there aren't any, perhaps the town is too small." To a third interviewee, Luria said, "The North Pole is covered with snow. Wherever groundcover is white, there the bears are white. What color are the bears at the North Pole?" The man replied, "Such a thing is to be settled by testimony. If a wise man came from the North Pole and told me the bears are white, I might believe him. But every bear I've seen has been either brown or black." Another interviewee complained, "How can we solve problems that aren't real? None of these is real."

But teaching how to struggle with the abstract "what-if" questions is equally important if the Christian faith is to be transmitted to the next generation as more than a series of facts one needs to remember in order to pass through the pearly gates unscathed, or as a series of propositions to which one must assent in order to become a member of a congregation.

The 1910 proficiency test given to students in Ohio tested for answers to concrete questions such as, "Name the state capitols." Today, those questions are largely abstract, such as, "Why is the largest city of a state rarely its capitol?" During the years of racial tension, during the course of a conversation with his parents and grandparents, Dr. Flynn asked, "What if you woke up black one morning?" "That is the dumbest thing you've ever said," came the reply. "Nobody has ever awoke to find themselves black." In 1910, only 3 percent of the workforce was employed in a job that was cognitively demanding. Today it stands at 35 percent.

Now where I am headed with this is that the transmission of the faith in our circles has been largely concerned with the concrete. That is what gets taught in oral cultures where the catechism began. It is the place where one must begin. But to navigate daily life as a Christian, one must be able to imagine him or herself in a variety of "what-if" situations and be able to apply the concrete he or she has learned. A personal incident: When studying at Princeton Seminary, I nearly failed the midterm exam on the Gospel of Mark. The professor was mystified because I had done well in class participation. I explained to him, "At Springfield, our exams asked only true/false, fill in the blank, and multiple choice questions." His test, all essay questions, assumed we had mastered the cognitive requirements, so it consisted only of questions that made us use the cognitive base to tease out and develop the themes present in Mark's Gospel.

The title "Adult Information Class" betrays this same intent to transmit facts. When Dr. Arand observed that the Table of Duties is the most neglected area of the catechism, he testified to our tendency to focus on the concrete facts and let thinking about how it might apply to vocation slide. His further notice that Luther omits certain topics from the catechism — such as justification, the two natures of Chris and the like — puts Luther's catechism in sharp contrast to the doctrinal tour-de-force of the so-called "Schwan catechism." But teaching how to struggle with the abstract "what-if" questions is equally important if the Christian faith is to be transmitted to the next generation as more than a series of facts one needs to remember in order to pass through the pearly gates unscathed or as a series of propositions to which one must assent in order to become a member of a congregation. Dr. Arand's paper helps us focus on the catechism as enchiridion, a handbook for daily living. In a culture that thrives on relationships, developing one in which the faith can be imparted, received and applied will be a blessing for our future.

*The Rev. Terry Cripe is president of the LCMS Ohio District.*

How steeled are we to confess the faith, knowing that times of hostility toward those who hold to a clear, biblical confession are rapidly approaching?

# What Will Happen to Missouri?

by Randall L. Golter

The Rev. Bart Day wanted me to have immediate reflections on the afternoon papers, not knowing what they were ahead of time, and thus, the following are a few thoughts scribbled notes just crafted in your midst while we all were listening. Therefore, they are admittedly somewhat scattered and unprocessed. These might be added to your own processing, study, in the days ongoing.

First, I am thankful for this gathering, an intentional gathering with a joyful focus on the conversion of sinners, all sinners, everyone everywhere. Such narrowed attentiveness, of course, is the Lord's too, as exhibited in His ongoing creation and preservation of humanity, even as the Day of Judgment remains a future, near moment. He Himself, the One who remains the crucified, is not done with the distribution of His gifts.

Dr. Sundberg's remarks on the immense decline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America are significant, even though we all knew it to be so. Of course, we lament for them, for their loss of biblical truth. For we hear the Lord's words that only the truth sets one free (John 8:32). If truth is lost, so is the freeing of sinners from the bondage of sin and unbelief.

But what about us? What will happen to Missouri? How steeled are we to hold and confess — with the rapidly coming times of hostility toward those who hold to a clear, biblical confession?

But if we cower in fear, the defeat is already a reality. It reminds me of a question I asked Dr. Darius Pekunas at the International Lutheran Council conference in Palanga, Lithuania, this past August. I queried, "What should Missouri do with the apparent coming persecution?" Before you hear the answer, you must understand that Dr. Pekunas wrote a book on the persecution of the Lithuanian Lutheran Church from 1946-1956, when the KGB agents paid parishioners to give false testimony against their pastors. The pastors then were interrogated and expelled to Siberia, with most losing their lives there. Then, taxes were raised on the churches so high that they had to close. The Communists had in mind the extermination of the Germans; the devil, the extermination of the Church.

> Headed our way may very well be the cleansing and purifying by the Lord Himself, so that the idols fabricated every day by the church are exposed and she remains useful for His purpose of making Christians.

In response to the question, he pondered only a brief moment and said, "Preach the Gospel; administer the Sacraments." Simple yet profoundly true. And even more so, for these words exhibit a clear and explicit trust where God Himself bestows His salvific, operative works to the sinner. Justification remains God's work as He does this through His means of grace. The Church is where Christ is, where He presently works through His Word and the Sacraments. Where the Word and the Sacraments are, there is the Church.

This is not to say, of course, that the Church is the source of the mission. Christ is. The Church is His instrument through which He does all His work (LC II, 61-62). The Church — pastors and lay people, each with in their vocation — is how God works His mission.

Dr. Collver's helpful proposal to set forth a form of metrics toward emerging or present partner churches makes me wonder if the same metrics might be used — and agreed to — by the partner churches toward

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. What might our church partners write to measure Missouri's life as church? What dangers are present for a church body that is more mature, that is, in terms of age over and against many church partners (not all) but perhaps not necessarily so in life together or witness or mercy? Spiritual myopia is not overcome or even possible by some internal optical assessment. Outside forces may be the Lord's intended way to make Missouri most useful for Him.

Headed our way may very well be the cleansing and purifying by the Lord Himself, so that the idols fabricated every day by the church are exposed and she remains useful for His purpose of making Christians. As the multitude of delightful opportunities present themselves to be co-workers with other churches, it appears to me that repentance is needed now. Deference with deep humility to other church partners and emerging churches and placing their needs ahead of our own, is needed now more than ever. Even as we attempt to be careful, faithful, yet frugally liberal with His resources, the present reality is that we may need church partners more than they need us, not fiscally, of course, but for strength to be and act as His church in mission. They may need to pray us through these coming times even as He works His mission here and through the partner churches globally. Of course, Jesus is praying His Church through these present and coming times as He always has.

Even as we attempt to be careful, faithful, yet frugally liberal with His resources, the present reality is that we may need church partners more than they need us, not fiscally, of course, but for strength to be and act as His church in mission.

The shift, though, is happening. Embrace it by faith. In other words, how is it, Missouri, when you're the minimal partner at the table? You better get used to it.

One more thought here: With this emerging paradigm now, what is needed most from our church partners is for them to be stalwarts of the faith, even as they need that of us. They teach and live the faith, as we imitate by faith. The catechism, as Dr. Arand reminded us, may become even more so the most important missionary book — next to the Scriptures — for the present day mission. It orients life around, from and in the Gospel, the preached and given Christ who remains crucified. There we go again: the Gospel, oral and sacramental. Missionaries — pastors and laity, the Church — are armed with the Gospel so that the heathen may praise the Lord.

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What are direct challenges to our mission identity?

# LCMS Mission: A Paradigm of Its Own

by Klaus Detlev Schulz

## The Birthplace of Lutheran Missions

As a way of introducing our topic this morning, I'd like to start by taking you back for a brief moment to the birthplace of Lutheran mission. Where did it begin, and what are its contours? Though often without great appeal, history is missiology's treasure chest, and recalling events and statements from the past is an indispensable task. The year was 1842 when Friedrich Wyneken was traveling in Germany, and there he came into contact with leading Lutheran theologians and missiologists. As a result, when Wyneken returned to America in May 1843 after two years in Germany, he was a changed man from a more general theologian of greater latitude to one clearly focused on an ecclesial consciousness that the Lutheran church needed to be expanded among the settlers in America.[1] One contributing factor toward Wyneken's change must have been his encounter with the thoughts of a leading Lutheran missiologist in the 19th century by the name Ludwig Petri,[2] who in his famous document *"Die Mission und die Kirche"* (Mission and the Church), outlined a comprehensive and pivotal description of Lutheran mission. Petri's reflection on mission was necessary. With the rise in Lutheran consciousness, precipitated particularly by Klaus Harms and his 95 Theses in Kiel in 1817, Lutherans took issue with the prevalent mission concepts and practices of Pietist missions (e.g., the Moravians and Unionistic mission societies like Basel and the North German Mission Society).[3]

> Our Synod in North America finds itself caught up with a predominantly white American membership that begs for greater attention given to ethnic diversity and recognition of the vernacular.

In brief, Petri's trenchant points were these: The Church needs mission, and yet mission also needs the Church. Mission has its right to exist only from the Church because the Lord did not want a church and mission but a missionizing church (27-28). Only in the name of the Church can mission educate, send preachers

[1] Norman Threinen. "F. C. D. Wyneken: Motivator for the Mission," *Concordia Theological Quarterly,* 60, no. 1-2 (January-April 1996): 19-45.

[2] In a letter to Petri, dated May 22, 1842, which was read out loud to the leading confessional Lutheran participants of the Hanoverian Pentecost Conference (*Die Hannoverische Pfingstkonferenz*), Wyneken acknowledges that he is also familiar with Petri's missiological position. Applying it to America, he pleads that the help provided must go against ecclesial indifferentism. Mission "must be given by the entire Lutheran Community and from within it must rise preachers who are focused, churchly, vibrant in faith, sober, yet burning with love." (E. Petri and Ludwig Adolf Petri. *Ein Lebensbild* [Hannover: Verlag von Heinr. Feesche, 1888], 280.)

[3] Ludwig Adolf Petri. *Die Mission und die Kirche* (Hannover: Hahn'schen Hofbuchhandlung, 1841), 14, 17-15, 20.

of the Gospel and have them preach to the non-Christians (29). If she, the mission, says she does it in the name of the Lord and not in the name of the Church, then she is decapitating the body of Christ (29). Mission must also desire the teachings and confession of the Church to protect the missionaries from preaching personal and idiosyncratic wisdom (30). In fact, the commissioned missionary shall not think that he can bring the heathen only a Gospel without the Confessions as well as the dogmatic struggles the Church has gone through throughout the centuries. That would be disingenuous and inconceivable (8 , 6) since a pure Christianity in the "pure Gospel" sense cannot exist. Every preacher brings with him "exegesis, interpretation and particular rendering" of the Gospel, justification and the Sacraments (9, 28; 10, 10). Thus, though there is latitude in expressing liturgy and ceremonies, all heathens have a right to hear what mature Christianity teaches and confesses, and this would prevent them from repeating the same mistakes the Church has already gone through (8, 28; 9; 5, 10). The Church is obliged to watch over mission. Thus, mission societies must submit themselves under the Church and become part of the missionizing Church (31).[4]

Wyneken heard and brought back such thoughts to North America. It was an ecclesial consciousness that necessitated individual members be enfolded in a confessing Lutheran church. The ecclesial positivism entertained by Petri and Wyneken — namely that the Evangelical Lutheran Church offers the Gospel like none other in its purity and that this mission finds its culmination by gathering people in Word and Sacrament — is one he envisioned for North America. And he shared such an ecclesial commitment with other founding fathers of the LCMS such as C. F. W. Walther[5] and Wilhelm Loehe.[6] It is true that until 1842, Lutheranism conceptually still followed, by and large, Luther's individualized form of mission: That if a Christian would find himself the only Christian in a foreign place, he assumes the task for himself to gather believers.[7] However, as soon as Lutherans actually became involved in mission, they realized that the Lutheran church must back and support any missionary endeavors.[8] In their mission, individual congregations and church bodies would aspire to represent the Evangelical Lutheran Church by preaching the pure Gospel and administering the Sacraments rightly (AC VII). However, that should not be misunderstood as promoting an "ecclesial narrowliness." Lutheran mission maintains an ecumenical breadth by furthering the body of Christ — the one, true and catholic Church. As Loehe would put it, "For mission is nothing but the one church of God in motion, the actualization of the one universal, catholic church."[9]

## Assuming Its Rightful Place in Ecumenicism and Pluralism

Though many challenges today are different from past decades, the theological and missiological orientation of wanting to pursue Lutheran mission still applies to

[4] Ibid. See also E. Petri, 329-331.

[5] See C. F. W. Walther. "Theses on Communion Fellowship with Those Who Believe Differently," eds. Lawrence White and Paul T. McCain (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1990), 4. "The true visible church in an absolute sense, or part of the same, is that church in which the Word of God is preached purely and the Holy Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution." When he talks of the Church in the absolute sense Walther was not denying the reality itself: "A true visible church in an absolute sense is a group of Christians, in which there is certainly always evil men and hypocrites intermingled, but among whom the pure unadulterated Word of God and sacraments are found" (Ibid., 6). By contrast, there is also the Church in the relative sense which consist of a mixed group "in which the Word of God and the Sacraments are only generally and fundamentally present" (Ibid., 7).

[6] Wilhelm Loehe. *Three Books about the Church*, trans. James Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969). "If the Lutheran Church has the pure Word and sacrament in a pure confession, it obviously has the highest treasures of the church unperverted. It thus has God's fullness and the living source from which all deficiencies may be supplied, and it can claim for itself all the advantages of which other denominations justly boast" (Ibid., 113). And on page 115: "Because it has Word and sacrament in a pure confession, the Lutheran Church is the foundation of truth, and from its waters all thirsty souls in other churches have their thirst quenched."

[7] Martin Luther. "The Right or Power of a Christian Congregation or Community" in: *Luther's Works, Vol. 39: Church and Ministry*, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehamnn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 310. "If you say, 'How can this be? If he is not called to do so he may indeed not preach, as you yourself have frequently taught,' I answer that there you should put the Christian in two places. First, if he is in a place where there are no Christians he needs no other call than to be a Christian, called and anointed by God from within. Here it is his duty to preach and to teach the gospel to erring heathen or non-Christians, because of the duty of brotherly love, even though no man calls him to do so … In such a case a Christian looks with brotherly love at the need of the poor and perishing souls and does not wait until he is given a command or letter from a prince or bishop. For need breaks all laws and has none. Thus it is the duty of love to help if there is no one else who could or should help. Second, if he is at a place where there are Christians who have the same power and right as he, he should not draw attention to himself. Instead, he should let himself be called and chosen to preach and to teach in the place of and by the command of the others."

[8] Wilhelm Maurer. *Die Sendende Kirche. "Über die entscheidende Wende in der Entwicklung der evangelischen Missionsbewegung in Deutschland,"* in *Lutherisches Missionsjahrbuch*, ed. Walter Ruf. Vol. 18. (Neuendettelsau: Freimund Druckerei, 1952), 56-87.

[9] Loehe, 59.

the LCMS today.[10] As a result, her mission assumes a legitimate place in the midst of ecumenical trends. In his formidable project, his *magnum opus* entitled T*ransforming Mission*, the late David Bosch placed mission of the 20th century into what he called the "emerging ecumenical paradigm."[11] Until then, he said, missions in the 18th and 19th centuries were mostly represented by Pietist movements and mission societies that were non- or trans-denominational or by denominational church mission societies that exported Lutheranism, Presbyterianism, Anglicanism and the like to other lands.[12]

A significant change came in 1910 with the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh. Though still in a nascent stage, it immediately brought a sense of church unity among Protestantism that had not been known before, and it was a unity motivated by a concern for the world and its evangelization. This quest of joining together for a common witness to the world and setting aside theological bickering was hailed by theologians like Martin Kähler and Karl Barth as the fundamental ecclesiological breakthrough. To them, Christianity's *Zerrissenheit* (disruption), that is, its absence of unity, is a token of sin, unbelief and a disregard for Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17:21.[13]

The allure of the LCMS seems to be its confessional orientation that positively affirms a Lutheran identity, which the LCMS shares with 36 partner churches of the International Lutheran Council. Together, they speak a small, yet significant voice in the broad sea of alliances and movements of our present age, and the commitment to that cause is the conviction that this is the truth of Scripture.

The allure of this new ecumenical style was great, and it immediately took a steep trajectory, spawning movements in the mid-20th century such as the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches, with its subsidiary mission committee, the International Missionary Council. However, since New Delhi (1961), that common witness suddenly was abandoned for a project of humanizing the world through inner-worldly agendas of transforming social and political situations. This collapse of mission from a proclamatory to a non-proclamatory character gripped most mainline denominations. This erosion of missions was strongly criticized by missiologists such as the evangelical Lutheran Peter Beyerhaus and the evangelical Donald McGavran. This led to the formation of the Lausanne Movement in 1974, a conservative movement uniting evangelical Christians. Wheaton, Ill., became the central location, and guidance was given by the Fuller School of World Missions with Donald McGavran's *Church Growth* principles. This evangelical movement itself is in jeopardy also, if one goes with the latest analysis of John C. Dickerson, *The Great Evangelical Recession*, who diagnoses a serious breakdown of its own identity.

## Flirtations with Evangelicalism

To go along with Bosch's analysis — made in 1992 and that declares our day and age as the era of ecumenicism — would be a prejudice against those who follow their own paradigm, such as that of the LCMS. Indeed, the Missouri Synod's Office of International Mission could easily shed light on the fact that Christian churches are looking for guidance from what they believe the LCMS represents. The allure of the LCMS seems to be its confessional orientation that positively affirms a Lutheran identity, which the LCMS shares with 36 partner churches of the International Lutheran Council. Together, they speak a small, yet significant voice in the broad sea of alliances and movements of our present age, and the

[10] One should note that throughout her history, the LCMS has repeatedly affirmed Walther's *Theses on Church and Ministry* as her official position. The missiological ramification of that decision has yet to be explored.

[11] The periods mentioned are: (1) The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity, (2) The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period, (3) The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm, (4) The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm, (5) The modern Enlightenment paradigm, (6) The emerging ecumenical paradigm. Cf. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 182–83. For a critical reflection on Bosch's second paradigm, the Greek Patristic Period, see Alan Kreider's "Beyond Bosch: The Early Church and the Christendom Shift," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29, vol. 2 (April 2005): 59–68.

[12] The German period is examined in two volumes by Johannes Aagard, *Mission, Konfession, Kirche: Die Problematik ihrer Integration im 19. Jahrhundert in Deutschland,* vol. I–II (Denmark: Gleerops, 1967).

[13] Bosch, 459.

commitment to that cause is the conviction that this is the truth of Scripture.

However, when it comes to linking LCMS's mission to its ecclesial identity, a disparity between the two became evident to onlookers. I recall a discussion over this very issue a number of years ago with an important LCMS mission representative. We were pondering the shape and nature of our LCMS mission, at which point I was told that mission should be likened to a single model of a car such as a Cadillac, which looks the same to all onlookers and its drivers. Mission is generic enough for all to hop on and drive it. However, I soon realized that this comparison was a disingenuous description of our LCMS mission since over the years it had embraced concepts of mission that were very specific "models." Moreover, every other year, a new Cadillac rolled onto the belt looking different than the previous one. This left me, as a missiologist, on the constant run, trying to catch up with the next latest model in missions.

A brief synopsis may be of benefit to us all here. In the 80s and 90s, the allure of evangelicalism's church growth principles was great. The goals for numerical growth and the programmatic approach avoiding barriers set too high for new seekers also impacted the LCMS's worshipping culture and its ministry. This concern led the LCMS leadership to create a special task force whose document "For the Sake of Christ's Commission" offered a helpful direction, yet it never found its way into LCMS mainstream church planting efforts.[14] In the mid-90s, a new trend emerged with a meta-church strategy. It embraced the use of cell groups and the leadership formation strategies of Carl George and George Kennedy. Internationally, this concept surfaced as a strategy for missionaries to raise indigenous leaders who would then take on the role of planting churches at a rapid pace, multiplying geometrically. This strategy was often broad based, occurring mostly with models of education that were alternative to seminary-based education, such as through Theological Education by Extension (TEE). Reflecting back on this strategy, it became evident that it was too slow in creating pastoral leadership through ordination. In the last decade, a new shift occurred with LCMS mission that embraced an expansionistic vision of reaching of 100 million nationally and internationally. That vision had precedent cases like that of Hudson Taylor's vision for China a hundred years earlier[15] or those expressed in the 1990s by other denominations.[16] For a decade now, our international mission, like all denominations, has seen a noticeable withdrawal of career missionaries and a rise in volunteerism and short-term mission projects.[17] Nationally, the prevalent missiological influences come either from mega churches that focus on reaching and keeping the older generations or from emergent church promoters who ponder to reach the young, the forgotten generation, through new innovative ideas that seek to abolish the "strangeness" of the Church.[18]

> If travelling light means abandoning a worshipping Christian culture around Baptism and the Lord's Supper, then our mission is inevitably on a collision course with religions alien to it.

This brief synopsis of the last thirty years or so may remind us that our mission never had a generic approach but was always very particular in what it was doing. Much of its influences came from dabbling with missiologies, ideas and strategies that came from evangelicalism, which is, we are told, struggling to stay afloat with its own mission identity. There is no doubt that an engagement with missiologies and contexts other than ours needs to happen. Yet it must occur with an affirmation and awareness of one's own identity prior to such a missiological engagement

[14] The Church Growth Study Committee. *For the Sake of Christ's Commission* (Kirkwood: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2001).

[15] Hudson Taylor's visionary expansionism done to the "glory of God" calculated that there if there were 1000 missionaries, they could daily reach about 50 families, so that the Gospel could in a 1000 days, that is in less than a year, reach the 50 million families in China. Thus, about 1000 missionaries were prepared for China.

[16] David Barrett and Todd Johnson. *World Christian Trends* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2001), xiii-xiv. Klaus Detlev Schulz. *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 7.

[17] Those who remained in the long-term track are now called Network Supported Missionaries raising their own support or part of it. This model came about because of a sheer lack of funds. However, it should be noted that this puts LCMS mission in the faith-based mission camp one that was significant for Karl Gutzlaff and Hudson Taylor versus the church-mission concept, which always had the church that sends also assume responsibility for raising support for their missionaries.

[18] Timothy Tennent. *World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 29. One may see also Andrew Bauer's *A Lutheran Looks at Mega Churches* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2012).

so that a critical and constructive dialogue may occur. LCMS mission has the unique tradition that fuses the Church, confessing the Gospel and missions, and with that focus it may confidently address the world today. Admittedly, the world changes constantly; new trends and challenges emerge. And the way to address them is not by mere repristination or invoking nostalgic sentiments. The answer for LCMS mission lies in its ability to engage a missiological conversation with the challenges and contexts of our time critically and constructively and then respond to them fittingly and appropriately. In view of that plea, I'd like to highlight three areas from Africa, Asia and North America with the use of case studies where perhaps further thought and critical engagement is needed.

Our Synod in North America finds itself caught up with a predominantly white American membership that begs for greater attention given to ethnic diversity and recognition of the vernacular.

## Preserving a Focus on What's Ethnic and Vernacular

*Example 1: Africa and the Conference at Kikuyu in 1913*

We turn to Africa. The year is 1913, and the focus is on the famous conference at Kikuyu, which sought to shape the future of Protestant missions for Africa. In the eyes of many English scholars, this conference was regarded as the most important conference since the Reformation. The conference's goal was spearheaded by the Anglican community, and it was to establish one, single, English-speaking Protestant church for East Africa. Later in 1947, such a project was successfully achieved in South India with the formation of the Protestant Church of South India, a union of multiple Protestant church bodies. Since denominational structures had not yet been that deeply entrenched in East Africa, as in Europe and America, this thought had its appeal. Thus, "The primary question was whether the young church in this African country, founded by the missionary agencies, should replicate the historic denominational churches of the West, or whether there should be a united Protestant church with no organic connections to outside bodies."[19] Major missionary societies attended, such as the Anglican Church Missionary Society; the Church of Scotland Mission; the Africa Inland Mission, an interdenominational mission represented by American Charles Hurlburt; the United Methodist Mission; and representatives from German Mission societies, particular the Leipzig Mission Society, which worked predominantly in Tanzania.[20] Noticeably absent were the native African clergy, who had been working since the first ordination in 1885.

The proposal for the conference pushed for a common membership at which non-Anglicans could commune at Anglican altars and the other way around. It was also agreed to have a uniform length of instruction for the catechumenate. It affirmed the common goal to use Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but it allowed each to be administered according to the tradition of each denomination's liturgy. Yet the hope for a common order was also expressed. The overall basis for that unity would be the acceptance of the Holy Scriptures and the historic creeds.[21]

The Lutheran representatives at the conference refused to sign the agreement. One reason was that it would be a confessional compromise. The Lutherans had just undergone their own attempt to find some unity among the multitude of tribal churches that they were forming, which, after a long discussion, had ended in an agreement to unite them all under Luther's Small Catechism.[22] The Lutherans were working among a number of tribes of the Bantu and the Hamite background, such as the Dshagga and the Masai, and they were focused on creating tribal churches. The unity among them was achieved by providing a confessional basis for them all and not with the church organization or structure.[23] In contrast to the English representatives, the Lutheran missionaries aimed at bringing the Gospel in the specific mother language of each of these tribes. In contrast, the English and

[19] Colin Reed. "Denominationalism or Protestantism? Mission Strategy and Church in the Kikuyu Conference of 1913," *International Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (October 2013): 207-212.

[20] The five major mission societies from the continent in east Africa were: Leipzig (Lutheran), Berlin III (later called Bethel Mission predominantly Lutheran), the *Brüdergemeine* (called themselves friends of the Augsburg Confession).

[21] Reed, 207.

[22] Paul Rother. "*Ein Schritt auf dem Wege zur Einheit der Kirche Christ in Ostafrika*," *Lutherisches Missionsjahrbuch*, (1951-1952), 88-95.

[23] Ibid., 93.The tribes in the region were numerous: the Nyakusa, Safwa, Nyika, Kinga, Sangu, Bena, Hehe, Luguru, Sagara, Saromo, Suaheli, Digo, Shambala, Pare, Dschagga, Ro, Arisha, Masai, Nyiramba, Turu, Wembere, Haya.

Catholic missionaries chose to speak with translators. In the aftermath of World War I, the British Empire took over most of the area, and English was introduced as the dominant language much to the dismay of Lutheran missionaries who thought it was robbing the natives of their identity.[24]

In his overall appraisal of the Kikuyu conference and mission work in East Africa, Julius Richter identified two distinctly different Protestant mission types, what he called the continental and the British type.[25] Though both types shared the common goal of bringing the Gospel to the people, they set about achieving it in different ways. According to Richter, the continental missionaries studied assiduously the people and their country and mastered the African languages. Their mission was passionately devoted to the building-up of the congregations whose spheres of life and polity would be permeated with the yeast of the Gospel and endow the people and community with a sense for Christian morality. However, the missionaries stayed away from enforcing final organizational and structural independency on these native tribal churches. Though well meant, this reticence toward promoting final structure made the missionaries efforts appear at times patriarchal.[26]

Richter proceeded to describe the second type, the one pushed by Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian traditions. The British mission, he said, drove towards the establishment of independent bodies, yet for Anglican and Methodist missions that took mostly "the characteristic drive of creating overwhelmingly Anglican or Wesleyan church provinces, whereby among the Methodist mission there emerged a strong impact towards emotional revivalism signified by a restless upheaval of emotional tension and release. In the Presbyterian, especially the Scottish mission, the basic trend was the characteristic drive for higher education, as it occurred back home, to ensure intellectual and economical progress." In terms of this second type, Richter observed, "Creating the English gentlemen became the goal of all efforts. English church orders and churchly practice, English language and way of life, English school systems and English educational goals are imposed as if it was natural to the African."[27] And since the Africans had the remarkable ability to copy things like the self-assured demeanor of the Englishmen that he found attractive, the transferal of the English way of life had its power.

Yet to Richter this was not the power of the Gospel. The basic premise of this mission type is the expectation that in Africa, the African is to be trimmed to live a life of dependency under the ruling white race, and he is helped best and most expediently if he is pushed back and loses his own specific racial characteristics, assimilating his tribal traditions into the British milieu.[28]

What do we learn from this African episode? I think Kikuyu efforts speak a word of caution and concern to us all. Though the era of colonialism is over, the post-colonial times also carry power structures and influences predominantly of Western churches to the rest of the world. We live in a global age where global issues seem to dictate the agenda. Globalization has its effect of sucking up local identity into a broader a global system.[29] A result of the globalization trend is that it shapes people around the world in terms how they live, think and act, and as a result, it changes cultures.[30] The stigma of a worldwide McDonaldization is real, and many churches seem content to walk its line. The Kikuyu conference informs us that a very key component of Lutheran mission is to establish a confessional unity and relationship with others and yet to support the vernacular and locality. The danger of colonialism, of creating replicas of what is considered the English or American gentleman seems to be over, and yet the trend of post-colonial Westernization also desires a form of cultural homogenization in which Western cultural norms replace local culture, resulting in the loss of cultural diversity and identity.[31] That trend seems irreversible, and yet our heritage informs us that the tribal and vernacular concerns of the people are still valid. Since Martin Luther's advice in an Open Letter toward translating the Bible, there seems to be imprinted on Lutheran missionaries this unwritten rule of immersion.[32]

[24] Ibid., 91.

[25] Julius Richter. *Geschichte der evangelischen Mission in Afrika* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1922), 772-773. See also 616-618.

[26] Ibid., 772.

[27] Ibid., 773.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Brian Howell and Jenell Williams Paris. *Introducing Cultural Anthropology. A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2011), 205.

[30] A result of that globalization is that the old tradition of the matrilineal society of the Khasi in northeast India is dying out, being exposed to the global patrilineal dominance.

[31] Howell, 206.

[32] Notable pioneer missionaries such Bruno Gutman for Tanzania and as August and Carl Strehlow for Australia have shown how Lutherans pay particular attention to the article of creation.

This concern for the vernacular is not only an international issue. Our Synod in North America finds itself caught up with a predominantly white American membership that begs for greater attention given to ethnic diversity and recognition of the vernacular. As Pascal once noted, "We think playing upon man is like playing upon an ordinary organ. It is indeed an organ, but strange, shifting and changeable. Those who know only to play an ordinary organ would never be in tune on this one. You have to know where the keys are."[33] Indeed, "Knowing where the keys are" is an integral part of Lutheran mission, and once played intentionally, the efforts can lead to successful multiethnic church-planting efforts in this country as well.[34]

## Lutheran Ecclesial Missions Put to the Test

***Example 2: The 11th Triennial Convention of the Asia Missions Association***

Whereas the first example expresses an ethnic and linguistic concern, the second one leads us to ponder ecclesiology and how the LCMS's ecclesial missiology can respond to that ecclesiological challenge. In a recent conference of all evangelical partners — called by the Asia Missions Association to Seoul, Korea, October 7-11, 2013, and entitled "Discipleship in the 21st Century" — presenters spoke of what discipleship and church is needed if mission is to succeed in Asia. The barrier to mission was acknowledged as being mainly religious. The breakthrough of the Gospel was not occurring among the people groups where prominent religions are Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and other traditional religions.[35] The tone for the conference was set by the opening address of Dr. David J. Cho, the founder of the David Cho Missiological Institute and the co-founder of the Asia Missions Association in 1975. He encouraged all participants to "be creative to develop Asian strategies" and said that all who are involved in missions to Asia should "not try to copy the Western model of mission and follow their ways without carefully examining their motivational and historical background."[36]

Cho did not refrain from specifics to explain what precipitates his call for change. He said, "The traditional concept of missionary meant mostly ordained clerical missionaries and few medical specialists. Today, however, the concept of missionary has changed very much. All kinds of professionals and businessmen are serving in various mission fields more effectively, actively and extensively in places where Christian mission work is restricted."[37] In view of strategies, he proposed: "Traditional Western mission strategies concentrated on planting denominational churches and constructing bible schools, seminaries, and hospitals. These mission works were a kind of project-oriented approaches. Today, the trends have shifted to insider movements, frontier missions, churchless Christianity movements, community development, etc."[38]

Dr. Cho's plea set the stage and tone for the seven plenary presenters. In essence, all called for a moratorium of missions done in the traditional Western style. Instead, they proposed a lighter and more successful "low-church" version that embraced discipleship and non-ecclesial structures against the conventional church planting and church growth concepts.[39] The Roman Catholic speaker Dr. David Lim pointed to the persecution of Christians in many parts of Asia and said that for this reason Christians, Catholic and Protestants should join their efforts. Instead of proselytizing one another, he suggested that they should work together as co-disciples of Jesus Christ, establishing Christ-centered communities (CCC) such as house churches in people's residences and workplaces, doing so through lay-led disciple multiplication movements. That can be complemented with community development plans such as business-as-mission and tentmaker movements, workplace ministry

[33] Groothuis, 43.

[34] Mark Deymaz. *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2007).

[35] "Reports and Presentations" contained in "File: Discipleship in the 21st Century Mission, 40th Anniversary Asia Missions Association, 11th Triennial Convention, October 7-11, 2013 Seoul, Korea."

[36] Ibid., 1. "Most Asian missionaries," he observes, "are following the Western ways of mission, what they observed on how and what Western missionaries in their mission fields have done without questioning. So, they are falling into the same mistakes that Western missionaries have made." And in Reports, pg. 2, Cho summons for a reconstruction of strategy for Asia: "We, the Asian mission leaders, should be creative to create our own Asian strategies and methodologies to avoid same mistakes Western mission leaders have fallen into. We, Asians, are not the same as the white Westerners. Then we should distinguish ourselves as Asians and create Asiatic approach to doing mission. We, Asians, have our own unique resources that Westerners did not possess" and "it should be possible to develop alternative scenarios far from Western strategies in the future global affairs."

[37] One may add here that denominations like the Assemblies of God operate in countries with the "business as mission" model.

[38] Ibid., 2-3.

[39] Ibid., 12. For the Japanese context, Dr. Kyu-Gong Kim advises "training" not merely "educating" disciples who will not adopt a passive attitude but be trained as Lord's workers at the forefront of Japanese mission. The means to achieve that is through the bible and prayer alone.

and campus and professional evangelism.

For Lim, missions to Asia must become an insider movement that avoids transplanting denominational churches (complex Christendom) that are mostly non-contextual (foreign looking) and that have, almost always, produced in the past "marginalized Christians who are separated from their communities — despised and rejected by their family and friends, not because of the Gospel but because of their extra-biblical forms/traditions, perhaps often unknowingly, resulting from 'extraction evangelism.'"[40] Lim further observed that the dominant modern trend conveys the message that conformity to modernity is the route to success and that the people's cultures and languages are dead ends. He bemoans the fact that Christian churches reinforce this cultural oppression by not valuing and promoting the vernacular. "Non-native-speaking church workers and expatriate missionaries must become convinced and must labor to convince indigenous Christians that Christ truly seeks to inhabit and transform their culture and worldview from within and from the inside out."[41]

The above discussions at the AMA Conference and the particular interest of its Asian representatives to have a church expression that is not formed by foreign church-planting intrusions, predominantly from the West, challenges our Lutheran ecclesiology and missions. It is true that Evangelicalism's individualism, lay discipleship and leadership coupled with a non-ecclesial or low-church consciousness has tread much lighter in the Asian context than its Lutheran counterpart. In light of that, we may raise the question: "What should an ecclesial missiology look like and what aspects of it may be treated as negiotable and which may not?" Looking back at the formation of LCMS's first partner church in India, the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC), mistakes may have been made in pushing for it to be an organizational structure with boards and ministries that were a replica of the LCMS and which, as a result, have to this day become a far too heavy burden to carry for the IELC.[42] The question is, "What ecclesial visibility and what profile for worshipping and practicing Christians must our mission create or support in the context of religions inimical toward Christians?"

Finding answers to these questions is important in view of them also being raised in and for our North American context. In view of these successful subculture and sub-religious Christian movements like the church-house movement in Asia, Western scholars propose the same approach for us here in order to reinvigorate the growth of Christendom. The gist of this position can be gleaned from Alan Hirsch's popular book *The Forgotten Ways*,[43] which debates the value of the Chinese Jesus Movement for the West by pointing it out as the most staggering phenomenon of our day, "unparalleled in history," and that due to persecution it organized itself around the recovery of a simple Christology and structure, "travelling light" by ridding itself of "unnecessary impediments, including that of a predominantly institutional conception of ecclesia. For an underground church, all the clutter of unnecessary traditional interpretations and theological paraphernalia is removed. It has neither the time nor the internal capacity to maintain weighty systematic theologies and church dogma. It must 'travel light.'"[44] This peculiar recovery of simplicity unleashed "the capacity to rapidly transfer the message along relational lines. Freed from philosophical density of the academy and from dependence on the professional cleric, the gospel becomes profoundly 'sneezable' — viral epidemic … to be profound and yet simple — easily grasped by any person, and in many cases illiterate peasants."[45]

It seems that Lutheranism on the whole, and the LCMS's mission in particular, has the theological and missiological potential of defining strategy for Asia around the witness character of the laity, especially

[40] Ibid., 1-5.

[41] Ibid., 13.

[42] I am aware of the LCMS appraisal of the "Churchless Movement in Asia" at *www.lcms.org*

[43] Alan Hirsch. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006).

[44] Ibid., 85.

[45] Ibid., 86. He continues, "In order to recover the ethos of authentic Christianity, we need to refocus our attention back to the root of it all, to recalibrate ourselves and our organizations around the person and work of Jesus the Lord. It will mean taking the Gospels seriously as the primary texts that defines us. It will mean acting like Jesus in relation to people outside of the faith; as God's Squad, a significant missional movement to outlaw bikers around the world puts it, "Jesus Christ—friend of the outcasts" (94). That pertains to leadership also: "A renewed focus on leadership is absolutely essential to the renewal and growth of the church … The question is, "*what kind of leadership?*" The church has got plenty of "leaders" now, but they're not effectively impacting our culture." See Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch's *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st- Century Church*, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishing, 2003), 165.

through the vocation of all Christians,[46] and one that travels light by avoiding an imposition of church organization and structure on partner churches. However, being Lutheran in focus, LCMS's mission cannot travel light theologically.[47] If travelling light means abandoning a worshipping Christian culture around Baptism and the Lord's Supper, then our mission is inevitably on a collision course with religions alien to it.[48]

## A. Redirecting Resources and Volunteerism Back to North America

*Example 3: Inner-City Chicago*

I begin by reading to you a letter I recently received from a Specific Ministry Pastor student, Steven Warren, who serves Zion Lutheran Church as its pastor. Permitted to do so, I read: "Zion is a small African American Lutheran Congregation located on the Southeast side of Chicago in the Roseland Community consisting of 68 members on the rolls with an average attendance of 30 for Sunday morning worship. Approximately eighty percent of the congregation is new members as of Sept. 2009. Roseland like many neighborhoods on the south side of Chicago has many fatherless children and is plagued by gangs, drugs/alcohol abuse, and unemployment. In 1994 the membership was 260 souls with an average attendance of 130 for Worship Service. Zion once had a school with grades Kindergarten thru eighth grade.

In the year of 2000 the school was closed and Zion experienced some rough times due to internal strife within the congregation. This internal strife was caused by rouge members who rigged the election for our Board of Directors which allowed them to take control of the Church and Ministry. This lasted for five years and nearly destroyed the congregation and the ministry. Zion struggled for five years and eventually the faithful members regained control of the Church and Ministry. In 2009 Zion excommunicated 8 individuals. The rogue members left Zion drowning in debt, and facing the possibility of being closed and the property being sold. After several meetings with N.I.D. President Dan Gilbert it was determined that Zion would remain open and begin anew as a New Start New Believer Ministry. I was installed as Vicar in Sept. 2010 and began my on-line studies in the SMP Program (at Fort Wayne) and I am presently in my third year. In the spring of 2012 Mission Facilitator Rev. Mike Mast spoke with me concerning the possibility of another church supporting Zion's Ministry. This led to a connection with St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mt. Prospect IL. St. Paul has provided support by paying my tuition for the first semester of this year and will continue to pay until Zion is able or if need be until I complete my studies. We at Zion are in the process of starting an after-school Art, Music and Poetry program for the children in the surrounding community and St. Paul has begun the process of determining how best it can support this project."

What is not stated in Steve Warren's report is that St. Paul's Lutheran Church has a very active short-term volunteerism. Positively, one should note, as the challenge with Zion in Chicago developed, St. Paul's redirected some of those resources toward the ministry of keeping that urban ministry with Steve Warren going, and at that quite successfully. Thus, we may ask, "Is St. Paul's initiative to redirect some of its resources from short volunteerism to community development indicative of a paradigm shift for Lutheran mission?" One would wish that this be the case. To be sure, there is no reason to whitewash short-term volunteerism oversees as all negative and it would benefit LCMS mission overseas to abort it. However, what would be helpful is a careful analysis of how resources spent and what contribution they make toward developing those who receive such foreign assistance. Perhaps from that research would come more initiatives like St. Paul to redirect some of its resources to community development ministries in this country.

Ever since Robert D. Lupton published his *Toxic Charity*,[49] such questions should be asked. Religious tourism, as he calls it, has become a growth industry: "1.6 million American church members took mission trips in 2005 — an average of 8 days long — at a cost of

[46] Perhaps a route to take missiologically is to embrace more intentionally the vocational aspect of ecclesiology: "The Church is also vocational in her service to and in the world. In addition to the ordained ministry of the Church, mission includes the sanctified life of Christians. Through their witness and conduct, all Christians serve the mission of the Church by extending the Word into all realms of society. Christians need not scout about for good works or purposes in their life; the call for specific good works comes along with each specific vocation" (Schulz, 300).

[47] We may recall Petri's words that no heathen should be relieved of that what the mature Christianity has come to confess throughout the centuries.

[48] One may consult here "Churchless Christianity (Movements to Jesus/Insider movements. An Evaluation from the Theological Perspective of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod." (December 2012), *www.lcms.org*

[49] Robert Lupton. *Toxic Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011).

2.4 billion."[50] The problem, he says, is that churches and organizations are strategically at fault in that they follow the model of "doing for" the poor rather than a "doing with" paradigm. The concern on his side is that in granting money to those in need creates dependence and conflict not independence and respect.[51] People view themselves as charity cases for wealthy visitors, turning them into beggars.[52] The fault is with U.S. churches' unexamined generosity, with those who through naïve "vacationaries" spend millions of dollars traveling around the world creating a welfare economy that deprives people of the pride of their own accomplishments — all in the name of Christian service.[53] In the end, he observes, "Most work done by volunteers could be better done by locals in less time and with better results."[54]

It seems that the volunteerism is best left alone, after all our members' motivations are not at fault. However, compassions often have unintended consequences. Moreover, the reality is that the United States represents a mission field today, and resources for intentional church-planting strategies should be made available in this country.[55]

## Conclusion

I have presented three areas of concern that pose a direct challenge to our mission identity. Though our heritage has endowed us with a conscious combination of Church, confessing the Gospel and mission, we may step forward into this world with that missiological consciousness both nationally and internationally, by addressing the vernacular and ethnicities with the Gospel (example 1), speaking to the Asian context (and the world) with a clear ecclesiological discernment of what is necessary and what not (example 2) and redirecting our resources to an ever needy, though what still seems "less" attractive to many, urban context (example 3).

*The Rev. Dr. Klaus Detlev Schulz is supervisor of the Ph.D. (Missiology) program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and Dean of Graduate Studies.*

[50] Ibid., 14.

[51] Ibid, 28.

[52] Ibid, 21.

[53] Ibid, 21.

[54] Ibid, 16.

[55] Research alone confirms a significant shift in U.S. population configuration. In 2001, more than 29.4 million Americans said they had no religion, more than double the 1990 number. This is more than Methodists, Lutherans and Episcopalians combined, according to the American Religious Identification Survey 2000. People with no religion now account for 14 percent of the nation, up from 8 percent in a 1990 survey. Fifty percent of Americans call themselves religious, down from 54 percent in December 1999. An additional 33 percent percent call themselves "spiritual but not religious," up from 30 percent, and about 1 in 10 say they are neither. From Cathy Lynn Grossman. "Charting the Unchurched," *USA Today*, March 2007. See also *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*, 71.

What's the difference between "church" and "mission"?

# Response to Detlev Schultz: "LCMS Mission — A Paradigm of Its Own"

by William W. Schumacher

I'm grateful to Professor Schulz for his paper and the argument he sets forth about how we in the LCMS should connect "church" and "mission." There is much to discuss here, and we should pursue this conversation long beyond the few minutes I have for a response today.

I will focus mainly on the need for clearer definitions of both his main terms. What exactly do we mean when we speak of "church" and "mission"? Without greater clarity, I think we will often speak past each other.

> We operate with deeply differing notions of what "mission" is or should be, and those differing presuppositions make conversation more difficult.

First of all, "church." Professor Schulz builds a case for the important role of the church in overseeing or steering mission activity. While Professor Schulz often seems to use this term as a synonym for our denomination, it is surely just as consistent with our tradition to understand the word, first of all, in a congregational sense. It could also, depending on context, refer to "tribal" churches (*Volkskirchen*); some kind of international body, such as the International Lutheran Council (Why do we call our denominational headquarters the International Center?); or even perhaps the *una sancta*. The question is, which kind or sense of "church" legitimizes these activities we call mission? To which "church" should mission societies submit?

Ecclesial authority and legitimacy are inherent in our vocabulary of "mission" and "missionaries" as we generally use those terms. Those terms were not used in this way in the ancient church, but they originated in the Jesuit missions of the 16th century. According to that usage, a "missionary" is defined as an ecclesial agent who is authorized by the church somewhere else and who is thus accountable somewhere else. This means the missionary is not primarily accountable to the people he serves — the church where he works — but to other people, another church.

This disconnect between authority and service, between ministry and accountability, is a serious tension in our own theological and missiological history. In an international context, it often means that we (i.e., European/North American Christians who are, after all, generally funding these efforts) are only willing to recognize and take seriously churches where we have sent missionaries to work as churches to the extent that it suits us and perhaps to the extent that they agree with us. Because of an imbalance of power, money, access to education and the like, we should hear a bitter irony in Schulz's description of German missionaries in East Africa: "The missionaries stayed away from enforcing final organization and structural independency on these native tribal churches." Such paternalism, or even (neo-)colonialism, still looms as a danger as long as "we" conceive of international missions as "our" right, as something *we* do for *them*, according to a divine order of "mission" from the rich to the poor, from the powerful to the weak, from the West to the rest and so on.

I think David Bosch has some helpful insights in this regard. (I probably have a more positive assessment of the value of Bosch's book than my colleague does.) Bosch argues that "mission as church-with-others" is a key feature of what he calls the "emerging ecumenical paradigm." And while the word "ecumenical" certainly has negative baggage for us, we might start by taking more seriously our "ecumenical responsibility" together

with our Lutheran partners in the International Lutheran Council as churches, not simply the objects of our mission efforts. Bosch suggests: "A donor syndrome is still very much in evidence in the affluent churches of the West and a dependency syndrome in churches of the Third World."[1]

We should ask whether this is still true, and perhaps even true of us and our partners. If I take as an example one very important and positive program with which I am familiar, the Global Seminary Initiative,[2] we should ask why our partners have not been more involved in the planning and structuring of this very important initiative. That is, other churches function almost entirely as "recipients," and while this is not necessarily the same thing as dependency, it should prompt us to reflect carefully about how we conduct ourselves.

In a domestic or national context, there is the same temptation to paternalism/colonialism especially (but not only) when we speak about (and plan and design and fund) so-called "ethnic missions." While we generously acknowledge that (as Schulz puts it), "Our heritage informs us that the tribal and vernacular concerns of the people are still valid,"[3] we are too likely to assume that white Anglos of northern European origin are not such a "tribal" or "ethnic" church, but rather the normative embodiment of transcendent, supra-cultural truth.

Should we make distinctions between terms like "mission," "evangelism," and "witness?"

Here again a reminder from Bosch is helpful when he urges that the emerging mission paradigm involves "the re-discovery of the local church" and argues that the "church-in-mission" is always local. This is certainly nothing new to the LCMS, as our own theological tradition emphasizes the local church so strongly.

Now we need to turn briefly to the term "mission" and try to be more explicit what we mean when we use it. Should "mission" be understood functionally, as all efforts, or at least organized efforts to communicate the Gospel with those outside the faith? Or does "mission" refer to certain kinds of organizations, such as mission societies? Should the term be taken as a structural component of our denominational org chart (as in Office of International Mission, Office of National Mission, Chief Mission Officer[4])? Perhaps "mission" means every intentional effort by Christians (or by the Church — and what is the difference?) to ensure that those outside the faith hear the Gospel (AC V)? Should we make distinctions between terms like "mission," "evangelism," "evangelization" and "witness," and if so, why and how do we make those distinctions?

Once again, I think David Bosch's analysis is helpful in sorting out these questions and untangling these threads. In this regard, we must first of all keep clearly in mind that his series of "paradigms" does not simply describe a historical sequence, but that all the paradigms coexist (and, in a sense, compete) in the contemporary church. And despite Bosch's labels, the various paradigms are not fundamentally to be identified with denominations or confessional traditions. For example, we hear — within our own Synod — voices that insist that the true and only authentic mission of the church is simply to live out its liturgical and sacramental life. "The Church is the aim, the fulfillment of the Gospel, rather than an instrument or means of mission … Mission is not to be regarded as a function of the church … The Church is the aim of mission, not vice versa."[5] Those are expressions of the "ecclesial missiology" of the Eastern Church. On the other hand and at the same time, we may encounter in our own LCMS the assumption of universal or global jurisdiction that gives our church (our Synod) the legitimate authority to send missionaries anywhere in the world, coupled perhaps with assumptions of superiority and often militaristic language about the conquering advance of the Gospel (read through our mission hymnody and note how much military language is there), and these are features of what Bosch calls the Roman Catholic paradigm. Many more in our Synod, of course, put much less emphasis on ecclesial authority and focus on the responsibility and right of individual Christians to be creative and entrepreneurial in building

[1] David Bosch. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 380ff.

[2] Editors' Note: The Global Seminary Initiative is based on the desires of LCMS partners who have requested theological education in their respective areas.

[3] Klaus Detlev Schulz. *Mission from the Cross: the Lutheran Theology of Mission* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 10.

[4] Editors' Note: The purpose of a Chief Mission Officer is, in non-profit organizations, to keep an organization on task with its goals and priorities. *Mission* here is not used in the sense of *missionary.*

[5] Bosch, 207.

structures and choosing activities in direct obedience to Christ's Great Commission — with little regard or patience for ecclesiastical niceties. These folks reflect what Bosch calls "mission in the wake of the Enlightenment." And they probably resonate with the view of mission historian Andrew Walls, for whom the mission societies are a "fortunate subversion of the church."

These different paradigms are not past periods in the Church's history, nor should they be used as labels for this or that denomination. Chances are, they all coexist in this room (maybe even inside your head!). The fact is, we operate with deeply differing notions of what "mission" is or should be, and those differing presuppositions make conversation more difficult. At the very least, let each of us be clear what we're talking about when we say "mission."

Forgive me if I have misunderstood, but I take it that Detlev's unique LCMS paradigm is a version of the 19th-century confessional reaction against non-denominational (or specifically unionistic) efforts that de-emphasized Lutheran doctrinal distinctives. Bosch also discusses this confessional reaction in his chapter on Enlightenment missions, and he quotes Scherer's rather harsh assessment: "The kingdom of God was reduced to a strategy by which Lutheran mission agencies planted Lutheran churches around the world. Questions were seldom asked at this time about the relationship of these churches to the kingdom of God. Their very existence appeared to be its own justification, and no further discussion of mission goals was required."[6]

I submit to you that we can and must be able to ask such questions and give a fuller account of the relation between "uniquely Lutheran missions," "uniquely Lutheran churches" and the kingdom of God.

Finally, but by no means least, I missed in Prof. Schulz's paper an adequate engagement with the foundational insight that "mission" in the proper sense of the word is neither an ecclesial activity in obedience to a divine command, nor an ecclesial structure for oversight and control of such activity. Mission must be understood, first and always, as *missio Dei*, the mission of God, in which God is the primary actor. The *missio Dei* embraces the whole biblical narrative from creation to new creation, and it centers in the decisive intervention by God in the person of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. God is still at work in the world to carry out His mission, and He calls the baptized into fellowship with Him in Christ, and that means also cooperation in the *missio Dei*, what God is doing. "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation … Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 5:18ff).

Such a focus on the missio Dei as the starting point and guiding theme in our missiology fits well with a (solidly Lutheran) doctrine of the Word. For we know that the Word of God is not simply divinely accurate information or data to be downloaded, but God's own power through which the Holy Spirit continues to work to create and sustain saving faith in Christ in those who hear the Gospel. Lutheran missiology revolves around hearing the Gospel, and that puts us together with the world as hearers of what God does in Christ. As Bosch says, "The church is itself an object of the *mission Dei*, in constant need of repentance and conversion; indeed, all traditions today subscribe to the adage *ecclesia semper reformanda est*."[7]

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6 Ibid., 332.

7 Ibid., 387.

**What is the theology for *Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia)* as the Church's mission?**

# A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century —

## IN FULFILLMENT OF 2013 RESOLUTION 1-031A AND ADOPTED BY THE BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSION ON FEB. 24, 2014*

by Matthew C. Harrison

**1. God.** Where the Holy Trinity is present via the Gospel and received in faith, there cannot but be *Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia).*[1] These three reflect God's very being as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, and they encompass His holy and gracious will for all in Christ Jesus — namely that all come to believe in and bear witness to Christ, reflect divine compassion and live together in forgiveness, love and joy in the Church (AC I).

**2. Humanity.** It is the deepest offense to natural man that, apart from the life-giving witness of God in Christ, he is blind, dead and an enemy of God (Eph. 2:8-9); incapable of "true fear of God and true faith in God" (AC II 1; 1 Cor. 1:22-25); and is, therefore, helpless under the damning and merciless hammer of divine Law (Jer. 23:29). The condemnation of the Law knows no respect for persons, much less class, ethnicity or sex. The witness of the Gospel (Word and Sacrament) is the sole source of life for the dead, the only remedy for sin, death and the devil. Thus, the entire life of the Christian individual and the church is lived in and for the fact that "the Son of man came to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

**3. Christ, the content of the Gospel.** Christ Himself is the content of the Gospel, and thus of the Church's mission of *Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia)*. The Gospel is defined by Christ's person, words and works, and it transcends time and space. Just as "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow," so the Gospel is the unique once-for-all offering of Christ, the God-man, for the sins of the world (Heb. 10:10). "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "The work is finished and completed. Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by His sufferings, death, and resurrection" (LC III 38). The communication of the Gospel may vary culture to culture, but the fundamental definition of the Gospel as justification is timeless because it is biblical (Rom. 3:21-26; 4:5). "We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven" (AC IV).

**4. Christ, the Source and Model for the life of faith.** Faith lays hold of Christ, and from Him it is enlivened and given its impulse and model for *Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia).* Jesus spends Himself completely (Mark 1:38) to bear

*In November 1991, the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) released a document, "A Theological Statement of Mission." Just as the current document is the result of a Synod convention resolution (2013 Res. 1-03A), the 1991 CTCR document was produced as a result of Synod a convention resolution (1986 Res. 3-02). For decades, the Missouri Synod has passed resolutions in conventions in support of mission. This reflects how the Missouri Synod takes seriously Christ's mandate for the Gospel to be proclaimed to the entire world. The 1991 CTCR statement on mission and the current document demonstrate how each generation and age of the church must confess and put into practice the faith given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. The two documents while written in different styles are in harmony with one another, expressing the same truths about Christ's mission and the church's response to our Lord's mandate. In fact, the CTCR statement on mission states about itself, "This statement was not envisioned as an end in itself but as a tool that would be available for possible use by the various units of the Synod as they seek to develop their own individual mission statements." In this regard, the 1991 CTCR statement has served as a helpful tool.

[1] *Witness, Mercy, Life Together* is an attempt to describe what the Church always has done — proclaim the Gospel, care for people's bodily needs and have fellowship and community together as the Church. Whatever titles are given to these activities or terms used to describe them, these basic activities have been a part of the Church since the beginning. See Albert B. Collver's *Witness, Mercy, Life Together: Bible Study* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House), 2011. In *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), Detlev Schultz describes both the Trinitarian nature of mission as well as the activities of the Church and Christians that could be described in terms of *Witness, Mercy, Life Together.* Schultz uses the terms "proclamation, confession and witness," the church's *diakonia*, "a new community … an ecclesial reality for mission."

witness as the Son of God sent for the salvation of the world (John 3:16). Jesus has compassion on the needy within and outside the community of faith (Mark 7:28). Jesus establishes a community of believers who are "brothers and sisters" (Acts 2; Mark 3:31 ff.), who are "not to Lord it over each other" (Matt. 20:25) but to live together in forgiveness (Matthew 18), love (John 15) and mutual service (John 15:12; Mark 10:45; Philemon 2). "Oh, faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good" (FC SD V 10). While the Church's work of extending of Christ's *Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia)* in community will always be but a weak reflection of His own, where there is no Witness, Mercy, Life Together in forgiveness and love, there is no Church, no faith in Christ. To paraphrase Luther, Christ is both *sacramentum* and *exemplum*, both sacrament (gift) and model for the Christian.

> The Church can no more ignore the physical needs of people than Christ could have refused to perform healings or persons can be separated into body and soul in this life.

**5. The saving Word of God.** God's means of bringing salvation in Christ is the Word of God proclaimed: "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:8-9). "That we may obtain this faith," our confession says, "the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted" (AC V).[2] Thus the Church, the assembly of all believers in Christ, is found *where* the Word of God is found, where "the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel" (AC VII).[3] The Word of God — read, spoken, proclaimed — will not return to God empty but will accomplish His purpose (Is. 55:10-11) and will bring people to faith in Christ "where and when it pleases God in those who hear the gospel" (AC V).[4] That is why the Church is not recognized by individual faith or works, which may be invented or contrived, but by these external marks, "the pure teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the gospel of Christ" (AP VII and VIII).[5] Therefore, where the Word of God is found; where Holy Absolution is proclaimed (the specific announcement of the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ); where Holy Baptism is done in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; where Christ's true body and blood are given by His Word of promise, there you will find the Church, the assembly of believers in Christ, and there you will find Christ Himself. Moreover, where Christ's Church is located in the Word and Sacraments, there you will find *Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia)* (Gal. 2:8-9).

**6. Witness is the sacred and fundamental task of the Church.** Bearing witness to the saving Good News of God for us in Jesus is the fundamental task of the Church (Matt. 28:19). This leads to the making of disciples. The apostolic witness is connected to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The preaching of the Gospel consistently proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah promised by the Old Testament Scriptures, preached the damning Law in full force ("You killed the author of life" [Acts 3:15]) and preached forgiveness through repentance, faith and Holy Baptism. This apostolic message is to predominate proclamation by called preachers within the community of believers, the proclamation of evangelists to those outside the Church and the witness of every Christian in the context of his or her vocations in life. It is the sacred task of preachers to know the Scriptures ever more profoundly and constantly to seek to improve the craft of preaching that the Gospel may be preached in its biblical fullness and with clarity to its hearers. It is the sacred task of preachers to equip the saints to bear witness to Jesus to their friends, family and others who are placed before them in their daily vocations. The Word of God is equally effective for salvation, whether proclaimed by Christ, the angels, called preachers or shared by common Christians among one another or with those who do not yet know Christ's forgiveness (Is. 55:11). In order to carry on Christ's witness into the world, the Church is entrusted with training, teaching and making pastors through theological education. This witness will accompany the Church's corporate

[2] Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds. *Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 41.

[3] Ibid., 42.

[4] Ibid., 41.

[5] Ibid., 174. (Compare with Ignatius, "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans:" "Where Christ Jesus is, there is the catholic church," 8).

work of mercy (the mercy is Christ's) and will dominate the Church's life together. "Where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one comes to Christ the Lord" (LC II, 45).

Dr. C. F. W. Walther asked to whom the responsibility to preach the Gospel among all people of the earth has been committed. He answered:

> Here we see that it is the people of the New Testament, or the Holy Christian Church, that God has prepared or established, to show forth His praise in all the world. That means that the church is to make known the great works of God for the salvation of men, or that which is the same thing, to preach the Gospel to every creature. Even Isaiah gives this testimony, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit: The true mission society that has been instituted by God is nothing else than *the Christian church itself,* that is the totality of all those who from the heart believe in Jesus Christ.[6]

**7. Witness and confession.** Witness and confession are two inseparable aspects of the Church's life in this world. Witness to Christ is as simple as John 3:16 but as fulsome as the Gospel of the incarnation; humiliation and exultation of Christ; His Baptism and ours; Absolution; the Holy Supper; the doctrines of grace, conversion, election, bound will and more. The Gospel is, in fact, replete throughout the Scriptures and to be applied pervasively and winsomely in manifold ways according to the need of the hearers. As confession, the witness of the Gospel rejoices in standing for the creedal truth as it is in Jesus. It is as simple as the earliest confessions of the faith ("Jesus Christ is Lord," Phil. 2:11; LC II, 27) or the Small Catechism or as replete as the Nicene Creed or the Formula of Concord. The Church's goal is always witness unto salvation in the simple message of salvation by the blood of Jesus and growth into the full confession of the orthodox Lutheran faith. The Lutheran Church rejoices that salvation is found wherever simple faith in Jesus and His merits is found, but it always seeks a witness and confession consisting of the "whole council of God" (Acts 20:27). Lutheran mission is creedal and catholic.

**8. Mercy as sacred vocation.** The Church is Christ's body, and as such, she continues His life of mercy as a witness to the love of God for body and soul. The Church has a corporate life of mercy toward those within the orthodox fellowship of believers, toward the broader community of Christians and to those outside the Church (Gal. 6:10). The Church can no more ignore the physical needs of people than Christ could have refused to perform healings or persons can be separated into body and soul in this life. Thus, the Early Church heartily and vigorously continued Jesus' ministry of healing and care for the needy (Acts 6; 2 Corinthians 8-9). This witness, through mercy accompanying the Gospel, has been a missiological force of the Church in its great periods of advancement, especially in times of desperate need and persecution. The care for the widows (Acts 6) and Paul's collection for Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8-9) are the great prototypical models for mercy for the Church for all time. We care for people in need, not with any ulterior motive, nor even in order to proclaim the Gospel. We proclaim the Gospel and care for the needy because that's who Christ is, and that is who we are as the Church in this world (John 14; Acts 4:12).

When the same doctrine is recognized in another Christian or in a church body, we have a life together.

**9. Life Together as bestowed and lived.** Our Life Together in Christ's church is not acquired by human decision or merit; it is a gift. Just as one does not elect one's own family, so we are brought into Christ's holy people by the action of the Triune God. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). The Lord has called, gathered, enlightened and sanctified us through the Gospel to live together as His church. Life in this community is a gift that entails responsibility. We see this in Paul's exhortation to Ephesians to bear with one another in love, "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), even as he is quick to add that we were called into the one body of Christ and faith in a singular Lord. We cannot create the unity of the body of Christ; that is given. But we are to be on guard against teachings and practices that would tempt us away

[6] C. F. W. Walther "The Mission Society Established By God," in *The Word of His Grace* (Lake Mills: Graphic Publishing Co., 1978), 20.

from the one Lord, the one faith and the one Baptism that keep us in union with the one God and Father of us all.

**10. *Witness, Mercy, Life Together* in the apostolic church.** The apostles testified to *Witness (martyria), Mercy (diakonia), Life Together (koinonia)* in the apostolic Church. An example of this can be found in Gal. 2:7, 9-10. The apostles divided up the task of proclamation (witness) to the circumcised and the uncircumcised. The apostles remembered the poor (mercy). The apostles extended the right hand of fellowship (life together).

It is through the prophetic and apostolic witness to Christ delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures — the Spirit-inspired and inerrant Word of God — that we have access to Jesus and life with Him.

"Bearing witness," says Luther, "is nothing but God's Word spoken by angels or men, and it calls for faith."[7] In Acts 1:8, the risen Lord says of His apostles that they will be His witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and beyond those borders to the end of the earth. It is the apostles who with their own eyes have seen the Lord, touched Him with their own hands and heard His voice with their ears (see 1 John 1:1–4) who are designated witnesses. We are witnesses only in the derived sense that our words echo the reliable testimony of the apostles. To bear witness is to speak not of ourselves but of another — Christ Jesus. The apostolic Church is sent to repeat the witness of the apostles that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is the only Lord who saves.

"You notice," said Luther, "that concern for the poor is the other work of the apostles."[8] Saint Paul exhorts the church to care for the poor. In the third century, Tertullian wrote how the pagans would say of the Christians, "See how they love one another."[9] The way that the Church cares for the needs of those within the Church is a witness to the world. Yet the mercy of God does not stay within the Church but goes out from the household of faith into the entire world.

"We preach the Gospel," said Luther while commenting on Galatians 2:9, "in unanimous consensus with you. There we are companions in doctrine and have fellowship in it; that is, we have the same doctrine. For we preach one Gospel, one Baptism, one Christ, and one faith. Therefore we cannot teach or command anything so far as you are concerned, for we are completely agreed in everything. For we do not teach anything different from what you teach; nor is it better or sublimer."[10]

The life together of the apostles was based upon having the same foundation in Jesus Christ, that is, holding to the same doctrine. This life together is not created by us but by the Lord. When the same doctrine is recognized in another Christian or in a church body, we have a life together.

**11. On being Lutheran today for the sake of *Witness, Mercy, Life Together*.** "The Gospel and Baptism must traverse the world,"[11] said Luther. This is what Lutheran missions cares about — faithfully preaching repentance and faith in Jesus' name, baptizing and teaching so that those who belong to Christ in every nation are built up in His Word and fed with His body and blood. Mission is, to use the words of Wilhelm Löhe, "the one church of God in motion," calling, gathering and enlightening unbelievers through the pure teaching of the Gospel. This definition lies at the heart of what it means to be Lutheran in mission. Lutheran mission is defined by an unqualified (*quia*) subscription to *The Book of Concord* as the correct exposition of the Holy Scriptures. We are in harmony in the one biblical Gospel and the Sacraments instituted by Christ. Rejecting theological pluralism and its offspring universalism, Lutheran mission is grounded in the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ, knowing outside of His Word, which is spirit and life, there is only darkness and death.

[7] Martin Luther. "Lectures on Zechariah" (1527) in *Luther's Works*, vol. 20, ed., Walther Miller, trans. Hilton Oswald (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 213.

[8] Martin Luther. *Luther's Works, Volume 20: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5-6; 1519, Chapters 1-6*, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton Oswald, Helmut Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 2:10.

[9] Tertullian. *Volume 3: Apology 39.6 Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody: Hendrickson Publising, 1996), 46.

[10] Martin Luther. *Luther's Works, Vol. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4*, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton Oswald, Helmut Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), Ga 2:9.

[11] Werner Elert. *Structure of Lutheranism* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 386.

**12. The Church today as a community of *Witness, Mercy, Life Together.*** When the German mission leader and theologian of the last generation Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (1910-1982) asserted, "The Lutheran Church can only do Lutheran missions," he was observing that the Lutheran confession is inseparable from mission.[12] There is no Church without mission, and no mission without the Church. Evangelism becomes the Church's mission when its goal is gaining souls for the local community of believers and planting the church as a witnessing, merciful community of believers. When confession and mission are pulled apart, both suffer. Mission without confession is reduced to zealous fanaticism. There can be no confession without mission for confession takes place before God and in the presence of a listening world. The mouth of confession is the voice of mission always proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the God who justifies the ungodly, giving life to the dead in the forgiveness of sins. And this forgiveness of sins is found only in the Christian Church where the Holy Spirit "daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers," to use the words of the Small Catechism. That is why, in the Book of Acts, those who received the preaching of the apostles were baptized, being added to the Church, says Luke (Acts 2:41). In the church created by mission, which has at its heart the preaching of the Gospel, those brought to faith "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). Church and mission go together; you do not have the one without the other.

Faith is not created by human enthusiasm, crusades for social justice or strategic planning. Faith comes through the word of the cross.

The claim, no doubt disputed in our day, that Lutheran missions lead to Lutheran churches is far from a parochial appeal to brand-name loyalty or mere denominationalism. Instead, it is the recognition that the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies a holy Christian people through the pure preaching of the Gospel and Sacraments administered according to the divine Word. Lutherans are glued to the scriptural truth that the Spirit works faith in the hearts of those who hear the Good News of Jesus crucified and risen when and where it pleases Him. Faith is not created by human enthusiasm, crusades for social justice or strategic planning. Faith comes through the word of the cross. That's what Lutheran mission is given to proclaim. It is precisely in this Lutheran understanding of mission that mercy and life together converge.

Lutheran mission celebrates First Article gifts of language and culture. Lutheran mission has no interest in changing the culture of a people as long as those conventions and culture are not sinful. In fact, Lutheran mission, as found in the Reformation, seeks to bring the Gospel to people in their native language. Lutheran mission teaches that Christian churches are to be subject to the governing authorities and do not engage in revolution. Lutheran missions seeks to build capacity in the newly planted churches so that, in the unity of faith and confession, these younger churches may mature and live as true partners together with us in *Witness, Mercy, Life Together.*

**13. Word of God.** The Triune God is a speaking God. By His spoken Word, the Father brought creation into existence (Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 33:6; John 1:1-3). Christ who is the eternal Logos speaks His words, which are "spirit and life" (John 6:63). The Word of Christ's death and resurrection — the message of God's reconciliation of sinners to Himself — is preached. It is this preaching that creates faith since "faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). The Holy Spirit breathed out by Jesus to His apostles on Easter evening (see John 20:22)and inspired them to put His Word into writing "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). It is through the prophetic and apostolic witness to Christ delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures — the Spirit-inspired and inerrant Word of God — that we have access to Jesus and life with Him (see 2 Tim. 3:15 and 2 Pet. 1:16-21). The Holy Scriptures are to be interpreted in light of their being given by the Triune God. "The exegesis of the Holy Scriptures cannot contradict their inspiration."[13] Both interpreter and context stand under the Holy Scriptures and are, in fact, interpreted by the divine Word. The internal clarity

[12] Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf. "The Lutheran Church Plants Lutheran Missions," trans. Matthew C. Harrison and Rachel Mumme. Unpublished, 2013.

[13] Oswald Bayer. "Theology as Askesis," in *Gudstankens aktualitet*, trans. E. M. Wiberg Pedersen, et. al. (Copenhagen: Forlaget ANIS, 2010), 49.

of Scripture is mediated through the external clarity of its own words. Far from being an imposition on the Bible, the right distinction of the Law from the Gospel is nothing other than the distinction between "letter" and "Spirit" (see 2 Cor. 3:1-18). Without this distinction, the Holy Scriptures remain a dark book (see AP IV, 5-6; FC V, 1-27).

The Scriptures stand in the service of preaching. Preaching that conforms to the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures is the oral Word of God and, therefore, a means of grace. Preaching is never merely descriptive but always a kerygmatic, efficacious proclamation that delivers condemnation to secure sinners and consolation to those broken by their sin. Preaching is always a speaking of either the Law or the Gospel in the present tense, creating repentance and faith in those who hear where and when it pleases God (see Is. 55:10-11; AC V, 2-3).

> The content of our witness is always Christ, crucified and raised from the dead for all. In so doing, we are inviting others into the same life we have received from Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the only real life there is: that given in Word and Sacrament.

Preaching is not limited to the sermon but is also individualized in the absolution where God's servant is entrusted to speak words that forgive sins now (see John 20: 21-23; SC V). The absolution is eschatological, that is, it brings the verdict of the last day into time as Christ says, "I forgive you your sins." The absolution leaves no room for doubt for it is God's own Word of promise to be trusted in life and death.

**14. Baptism.** Baptism is far more than a rite of initiation. While it is a line of demarcation between unbelief and faith and hence not optional for mission, it is more than an entry point into the Christian life. Dr. C. F. W. Walther wrote, "Let us never forget that through Holy Baptism we have all joined the mission society which God Himself has established."[14] Baptism is best thought of as present tense, hence, "I am baptized" and not "I was baptized." Luther notes, "I am baptized, and through my baptism God, who cannot lie, has bound himself in a covenant with me."[15] Baptism is the Triune God's gift whereby He demonstrates His mercy by bestowing on us a new birth (see John 3: 3-6; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; Titus 3:4-7). Baptized into His own name (Matt. 28:18-20), we have God's own pledge and witness that we belong to Him through the forgiveness of sins (see Acts 2:38-39) and are heirs according to the promise (Rom. 6:1-11; Gal. 3:26-29; Col. 2:12-14). Therefore, Baptism will not be withheld from infants or from new converts to the faith. Since it is by Baptism that we are joined to the body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:12-13), this Sacrament is foundational for our life together.

**15. Lord's Supper.** Hermann Sasse described the Sacrament of the Altar as "the church's heartbeat."[16] In this Sacrament, Christ gives His body and blood under bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink. It is His testament in which He bestows the fruits of His saving sacrifice on the cross: His body given into death and His blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Luther underscores the forgiveness of sins in the Small Catechism as he engages in a threefold repetition of the words "given for you" and "shed for the forgiveness of sins." These words show us that the Sacrament of the Altar is the testament of God's sure mercy for sinners. When we come to eat and drink Christ's body and blood, we come as beggars to the feast of heaven. In this Sacrament, we are not accessing Christ by liturgical mimesis;[17] rather we are proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes (see 1 Cor. 11:26). Eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper does not create life together (*koinonia*) but confess and express this unity we have in the proclamation of Christ's death. Life together (*koinonia*) in confessing Him is always Christ's work and

[14] Walther, 24.

[15] Martin Luther. *Luther's Works, Vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I*, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton Oswald, Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 36..

[16] Hermann Sasse. *We Confess the Sacraments*, trans. Norman Nagel (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 151.

[17] Mimesis means "imitation, mimicry."

Christ's gift by His Word. Hence the practice of closed Communion is a necessary corollary of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.[18] Bringing contradiction in teaching or life in the Holy Communion fails to give witness to Christ and what He gives us in and with His body and blood.

**16. Priesthood of the Baptized.** The apostle Peter writes to those who have been "born again to a living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3), that is, to those who are baptized into Jesus' death. He describes us as "living stones" that are built up as a "spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). This priesthood is holy, that is, it is cut off from the uncleanness of sin and set apart to live by faith in Jesus Christ. Notice that the New Testament does not speak of us as individual priests, each going his or her own way and doing the work of a priest for ourselves. Rather the New Testament speaks of our lives lived within a company of priests, a priesthood.

> Bearing witness to the saving Good News of God for us in Jesus is the fundamental task of the Church (Matt. 28:19).

The priesthood offers spiritual sacrifices. These are not sacrifices that atone for sin. Jesus did that once and for all on the cross (see Heb. 7:27). The sacrifices that we offer are spiritual sacrifices, the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit (see Ps. 51:17). This is the life of repentance: daily dying to sin and living in the newness of Christ's forgiveness. In other words, the whole life of the believer is one of sacrifice. This is the point that Paul makes in Rom. 12:1 where he writes, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Everybody in the ancient world knew that sacrifices were dead, not living. Jerusalem's temple resembled a slaughterhouse more than a church. The priest, smattered with blood, looked more like a butcher than a clergyman. Paul's words must have jarred his original readers for he writes of a living sacrifice. We present our bodies as living sacrifices for we have died to sin in Baptism and now live in Christ's resurrection (see Rom. 6:1-11).

This priestly life is our vocation, our calling. We live it out in our daily callings in the congregation, in civic community (citizenship), the family and the place of work. Here we who have received mercy from the Father show forth that mercy in our dealings with others, and it is here that we bear witness to Christ by "proclaiming the excellencies of him who called us out darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

Going about our daily vocation as baptized members of Christ's royal priesthood, we testify to Christ, speaking His saving Word, the same Word we regularly hear in preaching and the same Word we read for ourselves in Holy Scripture (e.g., through personal and family devotions). The content of our witness is always Christ, crucified and raised from the dead for all. In so doing, we are inviting others into the same life we have received from Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the only real life there is: that given in Word and Sacrament. Baptized believers will often be found urging others, believers and unbelievers alike, to "come and see" (John 1:39) what Christ has done for them and for all.

**17. Office and offices.** There is one office that Christ has instituted for the proclamation of His Word and the giving out of His Sacraments. This is the Office of the Holy Ministry (see John 20:21-23; AC V, XIV, XXVII). Through the call of the Church, the Lord places qualified men into this office (see 1 Cor. 14:33-38; 1 Tim. 2:8-

[18] The Missouri Synod has used different nomenclature to express the idea of closed Communion at various times in her history. Different terms have been used to describe the same doctrine and practice. The terms "closed Communion," "close Communion" and "close(d) Communion" are equivalent terms. Article VI of the Missouri Synod's Constitution states as a condition of membership in the Synod, "Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description." Article VI:b provides additional clarification by defining unionism and syncretism as "Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession." The practice of closed Communion then does not include receiving Communion at churches that hold heterodox positions. The Missouri Synod has adopted Dr. C. F. W. Walther's *Church and the Office of the Ministry* as its official position in 2001 (Res. 7-17A). In Thesis VIII of Walther's *Church and the Office of the Ministry*, Walther writes, "Here the saying of Augustine holds: 'Believe and you have eaten.' As I said before: To receive the Sacrament is a mark of confession and doctrine. Therefore, whoever does not regard as true the doctrine of the church in which he intends to attend the Sacrament cannot partake of the Sacrament in that church with a clear conscience." (Download Walther's Thesis VIII at *http://goo.gl/gKqIOq*) Werner Elert. *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, trans. Norman Nagel (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 76. "By 'closed Communion' we mean the restricting of participation to full members of the congregation." Participation in Holy Communion is directly connected to church fellowship.

14). The men who serve in this office are to be properly trained and capable (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 2 Tim. 2:1-7; 4:1-5; Titus 1:5-9) of the task of being stewards of the mysteries of God (see 1 Cor. 4:1-2). The Church may not be without this office for it is to this office that Christ has entrusted the preaching of His Word and the administration of His sacraments. No one puts himself into this office nor does the Church have the right to refashion the office into something other than what the Lord has instituted or to put men into the office without being called and ordained (see AC XIV). The Church does live in freedom to create offices that assist those who are placed in the one divinely-mandated office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. These helping offices (auxiliary offices) would include deacons, deaconesses, evangelists, schoolteachers, catechists, cantors, parish nurses, workers of mercy and the like. These are valuable offices of service to the Body of Christ and the world, but they are not to be confused with the Office of the Holy Ministry itself. The Office of the Holy Ministry might be said to be the office of faith as Christ instituted it so that faith might be created in the hearts of those who hear the preaching of Christ crucified. Helping or auxiliary offices are the offices of love for through these callings the love of Christ is extolled in word and deed as His mercy is extended to those in need.

Those whom Christ through His Church has placed in the Office of the Holy Ministry do not lord it over the priesthood of the baptized, but they stand among the baptized, as one of them, holding an office of service, seeking only to give out the Lord's gifts as He intended (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

**18. Worship: *koinonia*, freedom, catholicity and the limits of love.** Questions of liturgical diversity and uniformity need to be set within the context of the distinction between faith and love. Faith is freed by the Gospel from all works of self-justification, but faith is not freed from the Gospel or the means that Christ has instituted to bestow the Gospel (the pure preaching of this Good News and the right administration of the Sacraments according to the divine Word; see AC VII). Preaching and Sacraments require form, and this form is catholic rather than sectarian or self-invented. Lutherans gratefully inherited the Western liturgical tradition filtered through the sieve of justification by faith alone and honor it as our heritage (AC XXIV). Lutherans make a distinction between what Christ has mandated and what His Word prohibits. In between the two are "adiaphora" or "middle things," which are neither commanded nor forbidden by God. The middle category of adiaphora does not mean that these matters are unimportant or indifferent; they are to be evaluated by how they confess the truth of the Gospel and Sacraments. In times when a clear confession is called for, the Formula of Concord reminds us, matters of adiaphora may cease to be adiaphora (see FC SD X). Ludwig Adolph Petri notes that mission "must abstain from establishing confessions, accepting new customs in the divine service, uniting separated confessions and the like. As soon as mission begins to do something like that, it is manifestly in the wrong, for none of those tasks is charged or relegated to mission."[19] This is to say that matters of liturgical practice are not best left to the individual but should reflect our confessional consensus so that both the freedom of faith and the love for brothers and sisters is maintained. Love is always given to patience and deference to the weakness of the fellow believer (see Romans 14), but it may never be used as an excuse to compromise the truth of our confession. Liturgical diversity within the larger catholic context will be guided by the need to maintain unity in both faith and love (see FC SD X, 9).

**19. Visitation.** Sometime after his first missionary journey, "Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are'" (Acts 15:36). So the Church today — following also the example of the apostles, Luther, Melanchthon and others — engages in evangelical visitation, appointing people to the task so that we encourage and assist one another in the confession of Christ before the world. In our Synod, we come along side one another to advise one another from the Word of God. The focus of our visitation of one another is faithfulness both to the mission of Christ through the Church to the world and to our clear confession of Christ's saving work. Visitors are enjoined to come to the pastors and congregations and mission stations as a brotherly advisor, reminding them of the joy of serving in the mission and ministry of the church. Visitation is a continuing task in the Church, carried out through all segments of the Church's life together. When we visit our partners around the world, it must also be in the same Christ-centered spirit as the Lord's apostle who, before his visitation with

[19] Ludwig Adolph Petri. *Mission and the Church: A letter to a friend (Die Mission und die Kirche: Schreiben an einen Freund)*, trans. David Buchs (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2012).

them, writes to the Romans, "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you — that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Rom. 1:11-12).

**20. Two kingdoms/discipleship.** Luther observed that the kingdom of Christ is one of hearing while the kingdom of the world is one of seeing. Discussions of the place of the church in the public square inevitably lead us to reflect on how the Triune God is active in His creation. Luther's teaching on the two kingdoms does not segregate God's activity into the holy sphere of church leaving the world to its autonomous devices. God is at work in the world in two different ways, with different means and with different ends. Hence Luther can use the imagery of the ear to indicate God's right hand governance whereby He causes His Gospel to be preached to bring sinners to faith in Christ and through faith inherit eternal life. On the other hand, the left-handed work of God is identified with the eye, with seeing. In this kingdom, God uses Law to measure and curb human behavior so that His creation is not plunged into total chaos and so that this world, subjected to futility (Rom. 8:20), is preserved until the Last Day. Authorities in the kingdom of God's left hand evaluate on the basis of evidence that is observable. Here distributive justice is the order of the day. But in the kingdom of His right hand, God's verdict is the absolution, the proclamation of a forgiveness of sins not achieved by merit or worth. When the two kingdoms are mixed or muddled, Law and Gospel are confused.

Lutherans are concerned to keep the teaching of the two kingdoms straight and clear for the sake of the Gospel, which alone gives forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. Luther fumed that the devil is incessantly seeking to "brew and cook" the two kingdoms together.[20] Satan would like nothing better than to dupe folks into believing that salvation comes through secular government or conversely that the Church is the institution to establish civil righteousness in the world. Either confusion displaces Christ and leaves sinners in despair.

The teaching of the two kingdoms is necessary for the sake of the Gospel. This teaching guards us from turning the Gospel into a political ideology. The Gospel works eschatologically not politically as it bestows pardon to sinners and establishes peace with God. It is a faith-creating word of promise heard with the ear, trusted in the heart and confessed with the tongue. Christians, who live by faith in this promise, also live in this world where we use our eyes to see, to discern, to evaluate. The realm of the political is not to be dismissed as ungodly or unworthy of the Christian's involvement. God is at work here too. But He is at work here to protect and preserve His creation, making it a dominion where life can flourish. God's left-handed work is not to be confused with salvation, but it is a good gift of daily bread to be received with thanksgiving by those who know the truth.

So Lutherans neither put their trust in political processes nor do they eschew political involvement. The teaching of the two kingdoms is an indispensable gift in an age beset by temptations both to secularism and sectarianism.

**21. Stewardship.** The question of stewardship begins not with what I have but with what the Lord has given me. Therefore, stewardship begins with the gifts of the Triune God. This is reflective of the way that the apostle Paul deals with stewardship in 2 Corinthians 8. Paul does not start with an assessment of the resources of the congregation or with legalistic instructions about how much they should be doing to meet their quota. Rather, he begins with God's grace, with God's undeserved gift in Christ. Christians give not to win God's favor but on account of His prior gift, salvation in Christ Jesus. In 2 Corinthians, stewardship is connected with assisting those in need, in showing mercy.

This is the pattern of Christian stewardship. Just as in Romans 12, Paul makes his appeal to Christians that they present their bodies as living sacrifices by the mercies of God, so here Paul wants his hearers to know first of all about God's grace. Anchored in the unmerited riches of God's mercy for sinners in Christ, the Macedonians are eager — yes, begging — for the opportunity to take part in the offering. They exceed the apostle's imagination or expectation. What do they do? They give themselves first to the Lord and then, Paul says by the will of God, they give themselves to us.

Lutheran missions seek to be good and faithful stewards of the resources the Lord has given to His church.

[20] "The devil never stops cooking and brewing these two kingdoms into each other. In the devil's name the secular leaders always want to be Christ's masters and teach Him how He should run His church and spiritual government. Similarly, the false clerics and schismatic spirits always want to be the masters, though not in God's name, and to teach people how to organize the secular government. Thus the devil is indeed very busy on both sides, and he has much to do. May God hinder him, amen, if we deserve it!" (Martin Luther, "Psalm 101," 1534, *American Edition*, Vol. 13, 194-195.)

Faithful stewardship seeks to build capacity in partners while not creating harmful dependencies. In this way, the entire body of Christ may be strengthened in its stewardship. We recognize that we are accountable to each other in our mutual confession of the faith and in our handling of valuable resources — human, financial and property. The financing of missions and use of funding requires transparency at every level lest the witness of Christ be diminished, mercy be overshadowed by greedy self-interest and our life together fractured.

**22. Lutheran identity.** Mission, as with the entire life of the Synod, will be guided by confessional identity and integrity. Bound to the Holy Scriptures as the infallible Word of the Triune God and convinced that the Book of Concord confesses what the Bible teaches, we will joyfully and without reservation make this good confession before God and the world in light of the last day (see Matt. 10:32; 2 Tim. 4:1-8). We will not be ashamed to be Lutheran in all that we do. Like our forefathers at Augsburg, we will speak God's testimonies before kings and not be put to shame (Ps. 119:46). We will teach this theology without duplicity at home and globally to any and all who are open to hear our confession. Given the seismic shifts in world Lutheranism away from the historical confession of the Lutheran church, we will seek to strengthen lonely and disenfranchised Lutherans who seek to be faithful in doctrine and practice.

**23. Theology of the cross** The "theology of the cross" (see 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5) stands in sharp contrast to the prevailing theology — the "theology of glory." The theology of the cross shows God at work under opposites giving life through death, showing mercy in wrath, making Himself known in His hiddenness and manifesting strength in weakness. The theologian of glory attempts to access God by way of various ladders: moralism, rationalism or mysticism. The theologian of cross confesses God condescending to humanity in the weakness of the baby of Bethlehem and the man of Calvary. The theologian of glory would judge a church successful on the basis of how well it accomplishes certain goals defined by the tenants of this world. The theologian of the cross recognizes that the Church is hidden under suffering and defeat.

Christ's Church faces many enemies from within and without. She bears the mark of the holy cross, not as an identifier for its own sake, but as a consequence of bearing witness to and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church in every place bears the Holy Cross to some degree. The Church in some places bears what appears to be a smaller cross than the Church in other places, yet no matter how small or big the cross it serves the same purpose: a witness (*martyria*) to the world and, as Formula of Concordia XI confesses, "to conform us into the image of the image of the crucified Son of God." It should not surprise us, the Lord's people, that His holy Church takes on the appearance of the crucified Son of God. In fact, it is a great honor and joy that the Lord conforms us into His image. This is why St. Paul says in Romans 8, "I know all things work for good." The life of the Church is cruciform in shape. The apt words of Hermann Sasse ring true: "All that we think and do in the church has to be cleansed by the theology of the cross if we are to escape the perils of a theology of glory."[21] The theology of the cross will forever be a litmus test of the genuineness of *Witness, Mercy, Life Together* in our midst.

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[21] Hermann Sasse. *We Confess Jesus Christ*, trans. Norman Nagel (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 52.

# Book Review

The Rev. Dr. Christopher Mitchell reviews a recent Lutheran World Federation publication and explains the danger behind its anti-biblical hermeneutic.

## *"You Have the Words of Eternal Life:" Transformative Readings of the Gospel of John from a Lutheran Perspective*, published by The Lutheran World Federation

by Christopher Wright Mitchell

The importance of hermeneutics for the theology and mission of the church can hardly be overestimated. All Christian churches begin with the Bible. The hermeneutics employed to interpret the Bible determine the direction in which that church will move and what its message will be. Sound hermeneutics enable a church to proclaim faithfully the Word of God, through which He bestows eternal life in Jesus Christ. Corrupt hermeneutics destroy the ability of a church to preach the Gospel and eventually steer a church into heresy, apostasy and eternal judgment.

Traditionally the field of biblical hermeneutics has begun with the goal of interpreting the divine message of the sacred Scriptures with accuracy and fidelity based on the text's original language (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) and analyzing how it spoke to its first audience, taking into consideration such contextual factors as the ancient historical and cultural settings. Then traditional hermeneutics asks how the original meaning is to be articulated for the Church today. Recognizing that the Word of God endures forever and remains universally true, the goal is to apply God's message appropriately given our vastly different languages and diverse historical and cultural settings. The purpose of the entire hermeneutical enterprise, from written text to proclamation to contemporary appropriation by faith, can be compared to the evangelist's own stated goal: "These things stand written for the purpose that you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so that by believing you have life in his name" (John 20:31, reviewer's translation).

It may be impossible to summarize the contents of this book in a way that is completely fair to all of the diverse viewpoints presented in the essays. Some degree of oversimplification is unavoidable. This review endeavors to offer some summary comments based on commonalites shared by authors, supported by the explicit statements of some and indirectly by others, despite possible protestations by still other contributors. Afterward, some specific comments will be offered about each of the essays.

> Not just the acceptance, but the advocacy of sexual sin can only take place after the Word of God has been completely nullified through "transformational hermeneutics."

This book is an edited collection of essays from scholars around the world. They offer a variety of nuanced and learned perspectives. Some are constructive and insightful; others less so. Some disagree with others in certain respects, and a few might even be said to contradict themselves. This book, then, does not present one simple or coherent thesis, but an array of ideas. Assumedly the publisher intends the reader to look for common threads that run throughout the essays. On the other hand, ithe juxtaposition of competing and even conflicting viewpoints might suggest that such hermeneutical diversity is tolerable or even welcome within the Church. A book that lets clashing ideas stand beside one another intimates that there is no "right answer" to some hermeneutical questions or that what is "true" for one church in one part of the globe may not be "true" for another (as some of the essayists argue explicitly). This raises the question, then, of whether the sponsoring agency (Lutheran World Federation or LWF) believes in the concept of absolute, eternal "truth" (a key theme in John) or whether it is proposing that "truth" is a relative concept in constant need of redefinition, as is openly advocated by some of the essays.

The book as a whole discourages the pursuit of traditional hermeneutics, namely, the first importance of seeking to understand the biblical text more fully so as to be able to proclaim its message more faithfully. Instead, various essays attack the very idea that the biblical text is truth or even that its original message can be discerned by readers today. Instead of letting Scripture be interpreted by Scripture alone, authors argue that the Church should proclaim interpretations that are shaped by the particular context, needs and wants of each hearing community. Authors clearly urge churches not to place the highest priority on preaching the biblical teachings about the person and work of Christ for our salvation; instead, they urge churches to be open to novel interpretations of the Word that the Spirit allegedly is inspiring in the Church today. The result is an open-ended view of the Word of God as something flexible and always changing or in need of change, a tenet of a kind of progressive revelation, not unlike that of the church of Rome. At its core, this view of the Word is anti-Lutheran. It destroys the (commonly called) formal principle of Lutheran theology — that the Scriptures are the sole source and norm of the Christian faith and life — that was so vital to the reformers that they placed it at the start of the Formula of Concord (and which some authors quote before leaving it behind). This hermeneutic is anti-ecumenical and schismatic because it fractures the unity of the Church built on the Word. Indeed, it is anti-Christian, for it is by remaining in the Word that one remains a disciple of Christ and receives knowledge of the truth (e.g., John 8:31-32). This hermeneutic leaves the Church vulnerable to heresy, if not a sponsor of it.

This should be of great concern to any Christian or church body who understands that Christ's love entails a paradigm for marriage and sexuality.

It also affects the shape of the Christian life in the realm of sexuality and marriage. Already page 8 refers to the "ethical" issue "of human sexuality." In the middle of the book (e.g., pp. 41-46, 71), convoluted gender-neutral language for God appears (e.g., "Godself" in place of "Himself"), raising the question of why the LWF (with the acquiescence of all but one author, Wilson; see the revealing footnote on p. 85) is so adamant about avoiding the biblical gendered language about the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Suspicions that distorted language for God is linked to a distortion of gendered human relationships are explicitly confirmed in the penultimate essay of the book (Melanchthon), which condones adultery, degrades marriage and actually praises sexual "transgression." In what can only be called blasphemy, the essay suggests that the polyandrous Samaritan woman of John 4 may be the one "opening the eyes of Jesus" (p. 145)! Jesus is the one who needs to be enlightened by the adulteress living in sin! The reader of these essays must wonder whether homosexual relations too are on the interpretive horizon. Not just the acceptance, but the advocacy of sexual sin can only take place after the Word of God has been completely nullified through "transformational hermeneutics." This should be of great concern to any Christian or church body who understands that Christ's love entails a paradigm for marriage and sexuality (cf. John 2:1-11; 3:29; also 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:16-24; Ephesians 5).

A recurring thesis (apparently deriving from Grosshans) is that the Bible, the Holy Scriptures and the Word of God are not identical, coterminous or concurrent, but are a trichotomy. These three distinct entities are distanced from each other sequentially: "The Bible is a book (*like other religious books*) which becomes Holy Scripture in its use in the church and which *may* become the Word of God when people are addressed by it in a salvific way" (p. 25, emphasis added). The purpose of this artificial partitioning is to permit different churches to have different and even contradictory understandings of what the "Word of God" is. Thus the Bible or Scripture no longer serves as the clear, authoritative source and norm for all doctrine and practice. Instead, each church body can end up with its own "Word of God" shaped by its own particular "context." These essays not only allow, but actively call for churches to construe the same biblical texts in different ways that permit doctrines and practices that may deviate from those in the Bible (see below). This document makes no exegetical attempt to justify the trichotomy of Bible, Holy Scriptures and Word of God (Grosshans attempts to extract it from a single Luther statement taken out of *context* [!]). The Bible can be considered "like other religious books" only if one has already renounced the Bible's divine inspiration and normative character or has elevated the Scriptures and beliefs of other religions to be on par with Christianity (hardly something justified by the Gospel of John). The trichotomy's fallacy can readily be

demonstrating by pondering any number of biblical texts. For example, Ezekiel is told, "Prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, O mountains of Israel, hear the Word of the Lord" (Ezek. 36:1; see also 6:3 and 36:4, 6). The divine message is "the Word of the Lord" even when addressed to geographical features and not (directly) to any people, nor in any salvific way (it is part of a judgment oracle). The definition's inclusion of "in a salvific way" (p. 25) would prevent any of the Bible's judgments from being considered a "Word of God." Such a radical Gospel reductionism opens the door for churches and their members to indulge in any kind of sin they like.

The remainder of this review will touch on noteworthy points made in each essay in the order they appear in the book, since the ordering clearly is intentional.

First, however, the book's subtitle deserves attention: *Transformative Readings.* The verbal adjective "transformative" implies that someone is transforming something from one state or condition into another. Who is doing the action? On what object? By what means? And to what end? The Preface (Junge) answers: "Biblical interpretation contributes to solidifying Christian commitment to *social transformation*" (p. 5, emphasis added). Thus by means of biblical interpretation (via the proposed hermeneutics), Christians are to commit to transforming society. Absent is the language of missions or evangelism or ministry or even any reference to Jesus Christ. Nothing is said here about the proclamation of the Gospel nor the conversion of unbelievers nor the bestowal of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Word and Sacrament. Many Scripture passages depict the mission Jesus gave to His Church, none is better known than the Great Commission to "make disciples of all nations" by "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" and by "teaching them to observe everything I have commanded" (Matt. 28:19). Christ's commission is to be the mission of the church "until the consummation of the age" (Matt. 28:28). But in the Preface, any hint of that mission has been replaced by "social transformation."

Laudably, the Introduction (Mtata) mentions some basic and essential hermeneutical principles. It alludes to the Rule and Norm of the Formula of Concord with its quote from a LWF document: "The Lutheran churches subscribing to the LWF have committed themselves to 'confess the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only source and norm of its doctrine, life and service.' " The author goes on to include the creeds and confessions of the Lutheran Church (pp. 7-8). Perhaps the Introduction is amending the Preface. Then, however, the Introduction pursues a second kind of "reading" mentioned in the Preface: "'Reading' is one's ability to make sense and make the best of (maximize) one's environment" (p. 7). The reader's own context is to shape the reading of the biblical text. This reviewer affirms a partial truth in this agenda: Certainly every interpretation is inevitably shaped by the interpreter's presuppositions (part of the hermeneutical circle or spiral), but that is reason for the interpreter to be self-aware and self-critical, not a license for proposing whatever interpretation seems most expedient for accomplishing social transformation.

The essay denies that truth can be communicated through a written text, that any Scripture passage has one correct interpretation and that anyone today could claim to know what a Scripture passage really means.

The Introduction then advocates the avoidance of "two extremes." "The first is to assume that what is written in the biblical texts should be taken literally and applied directly to contemporary life. The second is to assume that, due to their antiquity, the sacred texts are too alien to be relied on for shaping contemporary faith and life. Maneuvering between these two extremes is one task of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) hermeneutics process of which this volume is the first product" (p. 7). Thus the envisioned agenda would seem to involve a *via media* between literal(istic?) interpretation and rank unbelief. Again, there is some truth here. For example, as the Gospel of John shows, the Law of Moses that was prescribed for Israel is recast by Jesus in His teachings for His disciples and the church. But why should a study of biblical hermeneutics even include the second "extreme," namely, that Scripture is irrelevant? Such a wide and broad road leaves room for many travelers to abut the second extreme.

In "Lutheran Hermeneutics: An Outline," Grosshans develops the trichotomy of Bible — Scripture — Word of God previously mentioned in the Introduction (and above in this review): "One's engagement with the text is determined by whether one is simply reading the ' Bible,' the 'Holy Scriptures' or encountering the 'Word of

God'" (p. 20). This novel construct enables people with "a shared hermeneutical framework" to have "plurality and conflicting interpretations" (p. 22). In other words, it prevents the Bible from functioning as the source and norm of faith and life for all Christians. In several places, the author seems to contradict his own quotations or summaries of Luther, e.g., "Luther did not understand every biblical text to be of relevance for Christians" but Luther believed "without doubt the entire Scripture is oriented toward Christ alone" (both on p. 27). If "all Scripture is oriented toward Christ alone," and Jesus Himself declares that the Scriptures testify to Him (John 5:39), then every biblical text is in some way relevant for believers in Christ. On the next page, Grosshans rightly states that Luther "believed the Holy Scripture to be self-authenticating: Holy Scripture has and needs no guarantor other than itself." But this militates against Grosshans' view that interpretation is validated by the interpreter and his particular context. The author then seems to side with Flaccius versus Schwenckfeld (pp. 35-40), with Flaccius advocating the inspiration of Scripture and the importance of the Word and Sacraments as the means by which God deals with us, and Schwenkfeld advocating the role of faith and the Spirit even before and apart from Scripture. However, the position of Flaccius excludes Grosshans' trichotomy and the overall thrust of the essays collected in this book. In his conclusion, Grosshans attempts to depict traditional Christian hermeneutics as a kind of imperialism: "The Triune God is not an imperialistic emperor who has only one message for everybody in the world and wants everybody to live their lives in the same way." Such inflammatory rhetoric is undoubtedly designed to evoke antipathy from those in post-colonial contexts. Is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ God's "one message" for all humanity? Is not the new baptismal life in Christ the "same way" in which God desires everyone to live?

"Luther's Relevance for Contemporary Hermeneutics" (Hentschel) includes a strident (militaristic, imperious?) attack on the very idea of absolute truth: "From a Christian perspective, truth cannot be understood as a true and verifiable statement about reality" (p. 64; compare "What is truth?" [John 18:38]). "Even such words as 'meaning,' 'reading,' 'history,' or 'truth' are not really clear and have changed their meaning over the centuries" (p. 65). Moreover, the essay denies that truth can be communicated through a written text, that any Scripture passage in fact has one correct interpretation and that anyone today could claim to know what a Scripture passage means. "With reference to the Bible, this means that we cannot understand it from an objective and stable position" (p. 51). "The widespread assumption that literal meaning is to be identified with historical meaning and the author's historical intention is the literal truth of a text is obviously neither reasonable nor valid" (p. 54). The author anachronistically asserts that such postmodernism also characterized ancient times: "The idea that a text may have just one meaning that once grasped remains firm and unchanging for all time is a modern concept, which neither the biblical authors nor Martin Luther subscribed to" (p. 54). Really!

At the dawn of the eschaton, God will indeed "make all things new;" it is His prerogative! But until then, the church has no such prerogative; we are bound to His Word.

The inspiration of Scripture (e.g., 2 Pet. 1:21) is transmuted: "the biblical text itself cannot be seen as complete and sufficient … biblical hermeneutics must be grounded in the concept of a reader whose reading process is *inspired* by the Holy Spirit" (p. 57, emphasis added). Thus, *inspiration* supposedly is what happens when moderns read and interpret Scripture. In the 16th century, Luther strove against this kind of open-ended doctrine of revelation when Rome claimed the pope (and councils) had such power. This essay's view (see also Olson's concluding reflections) might be perceived as a reiteration of Rome's doctrine but with modern scholars occupying the papacy. The clarity of Scripture and the hermeneutical axiom that Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture are also redefined by Hentschel (pp. 65-67). "A formal understanding of the Lutheran *sola scriptura* misses the point about his hermeneutical insights for he knew that the texts of the Bible cannot be brought together to form a unambiguous theological system" (p. 67).

These hermeneutics deny that it is possible for anyone to be sure what a writing means. "If the meaning of relevant words is ambiguous, how then can a sentence, i.e., a network of words, or even a whole text, a network of sentences, be clear at all? Hermeneutics warns us about taking too simply the idea that a biblical text says what I think it means" (p. 66). "Interpretations that propose being the one and only true interpretation of Scripture

are to be criticized" (p. 67). Here the Bible is being treated far worse than any other kind of literature. Diligent study of other ancient texts in their original languages (e.g., the Moabite of King Mesha's stele or the Attic Greek of Plato) does enable a modern learned reader to gain a fairly good grasp of what those ancient authors likely meant. Why should we consider biblical texts to be inferior and incapable of the same kind of communication?

A self-contradiction inherent in this approach is susceptible to a *reductio ad absurdum*. Did the author of this essay intend for it to communicate any meaning? If it were impossible for a reader in a *different* context to determine with any degree of confidence the author's original intended meaning, why did the author bother to write in the first place? And why should anyone read it, if any reader who claims to know what it means ("true interpretation") is "to be criticized"?

"An Introduction to the Gospel of John and Questions of Lutheran Hermeneutics" (Koester) is the most exegetically satisfying part of the book. At last, an essay that truly engages Scripture! It is not structured by (nor concerned with) the tripartition of Grosshans. Instead, it develops themes in the Gospel in a helpful sequence wherein each theme builds on previous ones. Taking a cue from Luther, Koester first focuses on "the Word" who became incarnate (p. 70). Next, Jesus' words are connected to His seven signs (actions). "Because the signs are ambiguous, the Gospel must shape the readers' understanding of them through the words of the surrounding literary context" (p. 76). Both Jesus' words and His signs are interpreted in light of His crucifixion and resurrection, where His work reaches fruition and He communicates God's love, which forms community. The author demonstrates how the Lutheran dialectic of Law and Gospel is "helpful" for the interpretation of John (p. 78–79). These hermeneutics are largely in accord with traditional Lutheran theology.

The reason why this book on hermeneutics has chosen to focus on John becomes clear here: It is because of the way this Gospel depicts the relationship between the Word and the Spirit.

> What readers living after the first Easter have are the words of testimony handed on through the community of faith. The Gospel presents this testimony in written form so that those of later generations might believe and have life (Jn 20:30–31). The Gospel also recognizes that words do not create and strengthen faith on their own and that it is the Spirit that continues to make the words effective (p. 80).

The conclusion calls for Christian unity: "The Gospel of John speaks of a unity or oneness that centers on a shared faith, which brings people of different backgrounds together in the crucified and living Christ" (p. 84). Instead of "shared faith," however, the basis for Christian unity is Christ and His Word (through which the Spirit creates the faith that is shared).

Doctrinally, "Law and Gospel (With a Little Help from St John)" (Wilson) is one of the best essays (together with Wannenwetsch) because of its solid Lutheran theology of Law and Gospel, based on Scripture, in harmony with Luther and with salutary application to the Church today. There seems to be no spurious transmutation of traditional theological vocabulary. "Law and gospel — more precisely, the distinction between law and gospel — is one of the nearest and dearest characteristics of Lutheran theology. It is not one piece of the puzzle among others, but the hermeneutical expression of justification by faith" (p. 85). Much more is quote worthy.

"Political Love: Why John's Gospel is not as Barren for Contemporary Ethics as it Might Appear" (Wannenwetsch) pleases the reader who delights in a literary turn of phrase or who is looking for sound theology and practice. Initially it explores the moral or ethical dimensions of the Gospel of John before turning to broader topics of hermeneutics:

> We are to embrace a canonical approach that assumes the authoritative role for Christian discourses of Scripture as a whole, which implies the challenge to withstand the impulse to flee from or ignore the apparently difficult, non-congenial or scandalous passages in the canon… . In keeping with the Reformation slogan of relating Scripture and Tradition as norma normans to norma normata, I suggest reading Scripture as a sort of critical interlocutor of our tradition, so as eventually to trigger a fresh reading of both (p. 95).

The essay also appears to affirm historic Christian values about the vital role of the family in society, including reproduction and pedagogy (i.e., the birth and raising of children, pp. 103–104). In the context of the present volume, it is indeed refreshing and encouraging.

"Exploring Effective Context — Luther's Contextual

Hermeneutics" (Westhelle) starts by defining "context" by recourse to the etymology and analogy of weaving a tapestry to emphasize rightly the importance of interpreting biblical texts in their original contexts. But the rest of the essay focuses almost exclusively on the "effective context" of the receivers (readers) of the text. He begins rather abruptly in the 19th century with Schleiermacher, Heidegger, Gadamar and Ricouer (persons already explored in previous essays), then the historical critical method and liberation theologies. "The meaning of a text changes decisively depending on a series of factors: the author's setting, the circumstances under which a text is read, and also texts that are in- or excluded" (p. 108). This author, too, apparently presumes that Scripture has no absolute, enduring meaning. The eternal God was not able, or did not intend, to communicate an immutable message through the Scriptures; or whatever the original, authorially-intended meaning might have been, readers today are unable to recover it with any certainty because of our own different contexts. He invokes "the fundamentalists" as hermenutical opponents who "reject the importance of any sense of context: the grammar and placement within the work, the circumstances surrounding the author, and definitely the context of the receiving end were decried. The letter, the written word, is to be maintained in its assumed pristine purity" (p. 110). This reviewer puzzled over who the author might intend to include among these unidentified "fundamentalists" and whether he has set up a straw man. In any event, confessional Lutherans (past and present) who adhere to the high view of Scripture hardly fit this description. (Exegetes will notice a few gaffes, e.g., the assertion that Gnosticism was pervasive already in the first century A.D. context of John's Gospel (p. 109), and a couple of Greek mistakes, e.g., the statement about the connotation of *parousia* on p. 117 and the transliteration *metamorphete* on p. 119.)

The author of "Lutheran Hermeneutics and New Testament Studies: Some Political and Cultural Implications" (Becker) has resided in lands whose cultural and political histories have been strongly influenced by Luther. She starts out "looking for Lutheran tendencies in recent Protestantism in European cultures and/or in a globalized world" (p. 122) and perceives a stream of tradition from Paul to Luther (accused of anti-Judaism) to Bultmann to contemporary Protestant theology. "This leads us to the following preliminary conclusion: Our dealing with Lutheran hermeneutics partly has enormous political implications. In this light, it becomes obvious that it is still a matter of debate to what extent Luther's theological focus on justification and its hermeneutical implications are, in principle, legitimate or at least useful" (p. 125). She perceives the Church's agenda in these terms: "Twenty-first-century Lutheran hermeneutics still faces an immense political dimension. It will have to figure out how the Pauline doctrine of justification can be based on New Testament writings in such a way that it finally stabilizes the peaceful coexistence of Judaism and Christianity in and beyond European culture(s)" (p. 125). This presupposes that a cultural peace is the top priority and that the message of the New Testament itself — about justification! — may need modification in order to accomplish the higher goal. Modern political and social needs take precedence over Scripture. Since the doctrine of justification (AC IV) is the article by which the Church stands or falls, the very life and existence of the Church is at stake here.

"Bible, Tradition and the Asian Context" (Melanchthon) confronts the reader with horrific human rights violations in the context of armed conflict in the Indian state of Manipur. The author's strategy seems to be to convince the reader that these atrocities are so appalling (which indeed they are), the Church must make the righting of these wrongs the supreme agenda. The interpretation of Scripture is subservient to these goals: Defend human rights, protect the poor, make communities inclusive (in terms of caste, ethnicity, religions and people infected with HIV and AIDS), protect the environment and resist oppression. "This requires that scholars provide interpretations of Scripture and tradition that are in some organic manner connected to the many communities that experience the problems highlighted above. *These interpretations have to be different from traditional biblical interpretations,* innovative, and constantly in dialogue with the new questions and issues as they emerge on the continent" (p. 138, emphasis added). In this vision, Scripture has ceased to be the only source and norm for the Christian faith and life. There is no talk about the Church as the gathering of the baptized around the Word and Sacrament to be conformed to Christ to be led by the Spirit into truth.

The author speaks autobiographically about this reordering of priorities. After mentioning "sola scriptura," "the centrality of Christ," and "the sacrament of baptism"

(p. 143), she states:

> I agree that my identity as a Lutheran should draw upon my Lutheran heritage. But I am also an Indian and a woman and all these should also figure in the manner in which I approach the Bible … How can one best address the complexities of the Bible, the Lutheran tradition and the Indian context without privileging any one in particular?

Thus the essentials of the Christian faith are not to be "privileged" over other concerns. Even one's identity as a baptized believer is reduced to the level of other identity markers, contradicting Gal. 3:26-29, where Baptism into Christ supersedes matters of race, gender and socioeconomic status.

Melanchthon declares that interpreters of Scripture must be bold in "challenging traditional and orthodox ideas about *gender roles,* inequity, caste discrimination, corruption and power abuse" (p. 138). She praises feminist scholars who have "developed 'outlaw emotions' that afford them the unique opportunity to create alternative epistemologies" (p. 141). What are "outlaw emotions"? Are these impulses "outlawed" by Scripture (i.e., ones that are condemned by the Law of God)? That the author may be suggesting as much finds support in the sexuality on display on pp. 144–45. "Outlaw" sexual sin appears to be sanctioned by the author's remarks about the adulterous Samaritan woman in John 4: "I do not see this woman as one of ill repute nor do I judge her for having five husbands. I celebrate her agency and the role she played in perhaps *opening the eyes of Jesus* … Living with someone who was not her husband, she transcended barriers of gender and religion and made a space for herself that was characterized by freedom and agency." Such women "attain new power by renewed transgression" (p. 145).

In this author's scenario, it is not Scripture that opens our eyes to the presence of Jesus. Rather, the roles have been reversed: Human sexual "transgression" is so empowering, the transgressor apparently is able to open "the eyes of Jesus!" Is He the one who is blind? What kind of Christology is presupposed here? If the message is that Jesus needs to be enlightened by sinners as the revealers of truth, is this not blasphemy against our Lord?

"The Role of Tradition in Relation to Scripture: Questions and Reflections" (Olson) brings this volume to a close. Thankfully, the perspective returns to being a predominantly Lutheran one, focused on "the tradition of the church catholic" and "the proper relationship of Scripture and church tradition" (p. 154). The author traces the history of the patristic "rule of faith" back to Gal. 6:16. The Early Church (e.g., Irenaeus) distinguished the rule of faith from Scripture, but both played a role similar for later Christian interpreters. The author follows Pelikan in concluding that "the Christian tradition has retained a remarkable consistency in the midst of its expansions and rearticulations … over a broad swath of time (centuries and millennia) and of geography (every major region of the world)" (p. 159). *Sola scriptura* is to be "understood within a Trinitarian framework. The Protestant principle of *sola scriptura* did not suggest that Scripture should be interpreted apart from any confessional tradition. Sola scriptura assumed the use of Christian tradition to guide biblical interpretation." Moreover, "'Christ alone' is the prior principle undergirding 'Scripture alone.' … Scripture proclaimed in the community of faith is the place where the living Christ encounters the church in the ministry of Word and sacrament" (pp. 160-161). Further reflections on Luther's doctrine of the clarity of Scripture are helpful.

Unfortunately, the final essay ends badly with an appeal (like that of other contributors) for the Church to employ hermeneutics that open it up to new (novel) interpretations: "Such a hermeneutic would be both informed by the rich resources of the Christian tradition while at the same time being open to the voice of the living God in Jesus Christ who works through the power of the Holy Spirit to 'make all things new' (Rev 21:5)" (p. 168). Biblical eschatology assists here. Revelation 21 is about what happens *after* the *parousia* or return of Christ. At the dawn of the eschaton, God will indeed "make all things new;" it is His prerogative! But until then, the Church has no such prerogative to alter the Scriptual message; we are bound to His Word.

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# Book Review

**The Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver III comments on the 84-year-old book by W. G. Polack: *Into All the World: The Story of Lutheran Foreign Missions.***

## *Into All the World: The Story of Lutheran Foreign Missions,* published by Concordia Publishing House

by Albert B. Collver

Some 36 years after the Missouri Synod engaged into foreign mission work (1894), William Gustave Polack (1890-1950), a professor of history and liturgics at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from 1925 to 1950, wrote the story of Lutheran foreign missions. The book apparently was written as a text for mission classes at the seminary. Eighty-four years later, the book has value for a couple of reasons.

First, the book attempts to address the accusation that Martin Luther, the Reformation and the Lutheran church were not interested in mission. Second, the book provides a history of Lutheran mission work that is unknown to most contemporary church-goers and leaders alike. For those interested in contemporary church relations and ecumenism, the book details the work of 19th-century Lutheran mission societies that provided the genesis of churches such as the Lutheran churches in India, Liberia, Madagascar and Ethiopia. The book also demonstrates that the Church in general, and Lutherans in particular, have taken an approach to mission that sends pastors to proclaim the Gospel and to establish seminaries, that establishes schools to educate children, that provides for human care and that translates important texts beginning with the Scriptures, the Small Catechism, the Book of Concord, selected writings of Luther and then other helpful Christian literature.

> In one sense, Dr. Luther believed that Jesus' command to proclaim the Gospel to the world was fulfilled by the preaching activity of the apostles. At the same time, Luther "recognized the duty of Gospel-preaching and that it is obligatory upon every age of the Church."

The Introduction defines a missionary as "one who is sent" (pg. 1) and quotes John 20:21: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." He states that Jesus Christ is the "great Master Missionary," and because of this, Jesus sent out apostles to be His missionaries. Next, to address at this point the unstated criticism that Luther believed the task of proclaiming the Gospel to the nations was completed by the apostles, Polack writes, "The apostles did a great work, but they did not complete the task. Other Christians who came after them continued the work of teaching and preaching the Word of Salvation" (pg. 1). Polack's point is that the task of proclaiming the Gospel is handed down generation to generation.

He concludes the Introduction: "The church of to-day is also engaged in this work, and every Christian bears a part of the responsibility" (pg. 1). In describing the story of Lutheran foreign missions, Polack demonstrates by example how "every Christian bears a part of the responsibility," from the sent missionaries that included pastors proclaiming the Gospel, school teachers bringing Christian instruction to the young, doctors and nurses, agricultural experts, and other workers and laborers who assisted. For those not sent, both pastor and lay, his story shows how they supported the mission work with prayer and financial support.

The first chapter, which is titled, "The Biblical Background for Mission-work," and the second chapter, titled, "Survey of Missions from the Days of the Apostles to the Reformation," seek to provide a brief history of missions before the Reformation. Polack notes that although the missionary work of the Christian church began with Christ and particularly the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the Old Testament contains a

number of passages on the subject. The Old Testament "indicated in various ways the growth and glory of His Church" (pg. 3). After discussing various Old Testament passages, Polack states that the New Testament provides a fuller revelation regarding the missionary idea. The main New Testament passage for mission work in the New Testament is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creation." Polack notes that the "Great Commission" appears five times in the New Testament but "not always in the same form and in the same connections and relations" (pg. 7). He concludes "no one can read the New Testament without being impressed by the fact that missions are a most vital factor in Christianity and that the men most closely associated with our Lord during His earthly ministry were thoroughly awake to this fact" (pg. 11).

At any moment from the time of the apostles until the present, Christ could return in His glory. The Gospel has gone out into the world, and any delay in His return is related to His gracious will to allow more time for the Gospel to be proclaimed.

In the second chapter, Polack recounts the missionary activity of the apostles. He also indicates where tradition said the various apostles brought the Gospel to the world. Saint Paul crosses the sea bringing the Gospel to Asia Minor, Cyprus, Macedonia and finally to Rome; John to Asia Minor, Matthew to Ethiopia, Peter to Palestine and Babylon. Thaddeus went to Armenia and Persia, Andrew beyond the Black Sea, Philip to Scythia and Phrygia (modern Turkey), Bartholomew to Arabia and Thomas to India. The Gospel went to the entire world known to the Apostles.

Over the next 200 years in the post-apostolic period, Christians were persecuted and the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. Polack highlights key individuals who were missionaries to the pagans such as Ulfilas, Martin of Tours, Patrick, Columba the Elder, Augustine of Canterbury, Boniface, Ansgar, and Cyril and Methodius. Polack notes, "Thus the Church of Christ was spread during these centuries into all parts of Europe … By the end of the Middle Ages all of Europe had been brought within the pale of the Christian Church, but the Church itself had become seriously corrupted" (pg. 25). As Christianity advanced in the North, in the South where it had once flourished, it was overtaken by Islam. The Middle Ages drew to a close with the discovering of the New World and new opportunities for mission work.

In chapter three, Polack treats "The Age of the Reformation." At the beginning of the chapter, Polack notes that of the past four hundred years of Lutheran history, "The last one to two hundred years of the history of the Christian Church have been years of exceptional missionary activity" (pg. 34). In the 500 years since the Reformation, the Church has had the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel over a larger geographical area and to more people than at any other time. The Church has had more converts over the past 500 years than during the previous 1,500 years of the Church's history before the Reformation. The Church also has had more martyrs. More Christians were killed for their faith in the 20th century than in the previous 19 centuries of the Church's history. It is estimated that there were 45 million martyrs during the 20th century. In other words, a Christian is martyred every five minutes — making Christians the most persecuted group of people on earth. The new missionary age also has brought about a new period of martyrdom.

Polack begins his discussion about "The Age of the Reformation" by stating, "The Reformation restored to the Church the Gospel in its purity and in all its fullness" (pg. 34). It is of great significance that the Reformation restored the Gospel, for without knowing the pure Gospel, without have the message and doctrine to preach, in the worst case, there is no mission activity and in the best case, it is hindered. People frequently take for granted that the Church possess the pure Gospel and do not realize the challenge in keeping the purity of the Gospel. Mission work involves two aspects summarized succinctly by former Missouri Synod President Alvin Barry, "Get the message straight! Get the message out!"

The contemporary era seems to have emphasized one over the other at various times, usually at the expense of getting the message straight. Polack correctly notes the major aspect of the Reformation was "getting the message straight" and would encourage the reader not to underestimate the importance of that. In fact, the movement of the Church from one region of the world to another region is in part caused by a lack of thankfulness by people for the Lord's Word proclaimed in truth and purity. Formerly Christian lands, such as North Africa, Europe and

perhaps the United States, are caused in part by a lack of thankfulness and a lack of concern about keeping the message straight.

Even in 1930, the Lutherans in general and the Missouri Synod in particular faced the accusation that Reformation was not interested in mission. Polack quotes Dr. Gustav Warneck's monumental work *History of Protestant Missions*: "Notwithstanding the era of discovery in which the origin of the Protestant Church fell, there was no missionary action on her part in the age of the Reformation." This accusation against Martin Luther and the Reformation is oft repeated in missiology books throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. These accusations continue to be leveled against the Lutheran church both by people outside the Lutheran church and by those within who have been influenced by these missiology thinkers. Behind these charges are assumptions both about the definition of mission and the Church. If "mission" is defined as "Go into the world," then Luther and the Reformation were not missional. If "mission" is defined according to the verb in Matt. 28:19 as "make disciples" wherever you are by baptizing and by teaching, then Luther and the Reformation were among the greatest missionaries in the history of the Church. Most contemporary works on missions define being missional as "going" someplace, even though this is not the verb used by Jesus in the Great Commission.

The book helps us see that mission is, at its heart, the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which happens every Sunday in the local congregation, in various settings as Christians share the hope that they have and abroad on the foreign mission field.

As to the charge the Reformation and Luther did not "Go" into the world, Polack notes that it is based on "insufficient knowledge of history" and "on false judgment of the circumstances" (pg. 36). One aspect of the accusation involves Dr. Martin Luther's understanding that the preaching of the apostles "has gone out into all the world, though it has not yet come into all the world" (pg. 37). In one sense, Dr. Luther believed that Jesus' command to proclaim the Gospel to the world was fulfilled by the preaching activity of the apostles. At the same time, Luther "recognized the duty of Gospel-preaching and that it is obligatory upon every age of the Church" (pg. 37). Luther's view is consistent with the doctrinal position that all prophecy and commands of Christ are fulfilled so that He can return in glory at any moment. At any moment from the time of the apostles until the present, Christ could return in His glory. The Gospel has gone out into the world, and any delay in His return is related to His gracious will to allow more time for the Gospel to be proclaimed.

Another aspect of the accusation that the Reformation and Luther were not interested in missions revolves around the historical circumstances of the Holy Roman Empire (that is, the German lands at the time of the Reformation). The German people did not possess a navy or ships, as the predominantly Roman Catholic countries of Spain and Portugal. It would be two more centuries before sea travel became relatively common place for the rest of the world. (Not unlike the present age when people can travel in relative ease around the world on jumbo jets.) Part of the so-called lack of interest among Lutherans to take the Gospel to the world was simply the inability to do so. Polack notes, "A further reason why the Evangelicals in the Reformation Age did not carry the Gospel to the heathen in foreign fields was the fact that these were inaccessible to them. Throughout the sixteenth century foreign commerce and shipping, colonization and conquest, were under the exclusive control of the servants of Rome" (pg. 41).

Polack addresses these charges and points out: "Most of the critics of Luther hold that by missions we must think only of the evangelization of the heathen who have not the Gospel, of foreign missions in our modern acceptation of the term. That, however, is not correct, and our Church has never defined missions in this restrictive sense … we can truly say that the entire Lutheran Reformation was a missionary movement. It brought the Gospel to thousands who had had little or nothing of the saving Light before. In fact, Luther and his disciples were fairly submerged in the mightiest missionary undertaking since the days of the apostles" (pgs. 38-39). He concludes, "The dissemination of Gospel-truth into all corners of Europe, beginning at Wittenberg and going out into all parts of the Continent and the British Isles, was itself one of the greatest missionary movements in history … When Luther gave back to the world the Bible, the source of all true faith and Christian service, he laid the foundation for

all the Protestant missionary movements that came after him" (pgs. 42-43).

One of the single biggest hindrances to mission was the establishment of the State Church and the rise of rationalism. By definition, the State Church is concerned with the people within the State, not outside the State. The resources given to the State Church are to be used within her territorial boundaries. Polack notes, "No Protestant state church has made foreign missions, from the beginning, the concern of the Church as such" (pg. 81). Polack observed, "Only in a number of free churches, especially in America, are missions the affair of the Church as such. We may call this one of the evils of state-churchism" (pg. 81). All of the Lutheran churches and most of the other Protestant churches were state churches, and as such the State did not have an interest in investing resources in foreign missions. Because Rome was not beholden to any one State (in fact, the States were beholden to Rome in many cases), mission work flourished in the New World under the direction of the Roman Catholic church.

By the end of the 18th century, pious Lutherans and other pious Protestants who heard the call of Jesus to make disciples of all nations formed mission societies. Polack notes, "But as the State, of which the Church in Germany was a part, does not provide funds for missionary work, this necessitated the formation of voluntary societies in order to turn the new interest and zeal into practical execution" (pg. 82). Bible and mission societies came into existence and were funded by individuals rather than by the State. Both pastors and lay people were members of the mission societies. Some of the mission societies established missionary seminaries or houses of study. Several mission societies founded in the 19th century continue to exist and function today. Although many mission societies were unionistic in nature, some intended to be distinctly Lutheran. For instance, the Leipzig Mission Society desired (1) to carry on the work of missions in the spirit of the Lutheran Church, (2) to give the missionaries a thorough course of instruction, (3) to adapt the preaching to the needs of the people (4) and to leave the heathen unmolested in customs not in conflict with the Word of God (pgs. 95–96). The Hermannsburg Mission Society desired, "All the Lutheran symbols and especially the beautiful Lutheran liturgy to be recognized and used by mission-churches as well as by churches in the fatherland" (pg. 97). The mission societies carried out the mission work in foreign lands where the State Churches were unwilling to go.

The history of the mission societies had a significant effect on the Missouri Synod. Some of the pastors who later joined the Missouri Synod were initially sent by mission societies in Germany. Additionally, the Missouri Synod's Constitution did not allow members of the Synod (pastors, teachers and congregations) to cooperate and work with "heterodox tract and mission societies." In fact, the Missouri Synod was founded with the intention of doing missions as a church rather than through mission societies. Polack writes, "At the organization of the Missouri Synod in 1847 Foreign Mission effort was designated as one of its objectives, but the extensive Home Mission work to which the Synod was called to give immediate attention made it impossible to begin missionary operations in non-Christian countries. Nevertheless a mission among the American Indians in Northern Michigan was carried on" (pg. 124). Polack also notes that the Synodical Conference was formed in 1872 with the intention of carrying out foreign missions between the cooperating Synods.

In chapter nine, Polack treats, "The Foreign Missions of the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States." As noted above, the Missouri Synod was founded with the intention of doing foreign missions. In 1893, the Missouri Synod resolved to begin mission work in Japan. However, these plans did not materialize, and the Synod began work in India. On Oct. 14, 1894, the first foreign missionaries for the Missouri Synod, Theodore Naether and Franz Mohn, were commissioned to serve in India. These men had been affiliated with the Leipzig Mission Society, but they found it necessary to depart for reasons of conscience. The Leipzig Mission Society was not remaining distinctly Lutheran so these men sought out the Missouri Synod.

Polack outlines the methodology used by the Missouri Synod in foreign mission. "Evangelization by missionary preaching tours was one of the chief methods of making Christ known to the people" (pg. 130). "Christian day-schools are considered to be equal in importance to evangelization" (pg. 131). "It is the policy of the mission to employ only Lutheran teachers" (pg. 145). Medical work began. "Divine services are conducted regularly at all stations and outstations" (pg. 131). Orphanages were established. A seminary was built. The elements of Missouri Synod mission, while not always called *Witness, Mercy, Life Together*, nevertheless followed this pattern.

Polack concludes his book: "Thousands and thousands of heathen have heard the Gospel-message, and

many, far more than we know, have been won by it for life eternal. May God help us to realize this thankfully, and may the blessing of God inspire us at home and aboard to still greater self-sacrificial and consecrated service! For the love of our Savior and of the whole redeemed human race let us labor while it is day" (pg. 156). Indeed, let us labor while it is day.

*Into All the World: The Story of Lutheran Foreign Mission* is a forgotten book that still tells a helpful story — a story that corrects some misperceptions some people still hold today regarding how the Reformation and Lutherans view mission. (Download the book at *http://www.scribd.com/doc/164714545/Into-All-the-World-Lutheran-Missions-1930*) The book helps us see that mission is, at its heart, the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which happens every Sunday in the local congregation, in various settings as Christians share the hope that they have and abroad on the foreign mission field. The basic elements of mission have not changed: (1) Proclaim the Gospel (Witness), (2) Show mercy and charity to those in need (Mercy), (3) Hold Divine Services and build schools and seminaries (Life Together). Polack also helps to show how Lutheran and Protestant mission emerged out the State Church by using mission societies. He also shows how the Missouri Synod sought to be different by being a church engaged in mission rather than carrying out this task through "tract and mission societies." The history of the first Lutheran mission efforts are as inspiring today as they were then. The book is a quick and easy read, well worth the time for those interested in mission and the history of missions.

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