

Foreword

In this issue of the *Quarterly* we are pleased to share with our readers the 2002 annual Reformation Lectures, delivered on October 31 and November 1 in Mankato, Minnesota. These lectures were sponsored jointly by Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. This was the thirty-fifth in the series of annual Reformation Lectures which began in 1967. The format of the Reformation Lectures has always been that of a free conference and thus participation in these lectures is outside the framework of fellowship. The views of the presenters do not necessarily represent the position of the *Quarterly*.

This year there were two presenters. The first lecture was given by Dr. Klaus Detlev Schulz. Dr. Schulz is an associate professor in the Department of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, since the fall of 1998. From 1994-1998 Dr. Schulz was a missionary in Serowe, Botswana for the Lutheran Church Mission of the SELK (Independent Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Germany). He also served as a guest lecturer at Concordia Theological Seminary during the fall quarter 1997.

In 1984 Dr. Schulz earned his B.A. degree at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. In 1988 he successfully completed his M. Div. studies at the Lutherische Theologische Hochschule, Oberursel, Germany. In 1990 he earned his S. T. M. degree at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. He then served in the SELK as vicar in Heidelberg, Germany, from 1990 to 1992. In 1994 he concluded his studies at Concordia Seminary by earning a Th. D. in Systematics and Mission. Dr. Schulz is presently the Chairman of the Pastoral Ministry and Missions Department at Concordia Theological Seminary. Dr. Schulz and his wife Cornelia are the parents of two children.

The second presenter was Professor David Haeuser. Professor Haeuser was born on September 25, 1947, in Winona, Minnesota. He

grew up on a farm outside Cochrane, Wisconsin, where he attended the public grade school. His high school years were spent at Dr. Martin Luther High School in New Ulm, Minnesota. He graduated from Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin in 1969 and from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin in 1973. He has taken additional coursework at the University of Texas at El Paso and at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

In 1974 he was married to Ruth Rodríguez in Mexico City. He was a vicar on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in East Fork, Arizona, and upon his graduation from the seminary was assigned to the Spanish-speaking congregation San Juan Lutheran Church in El Paso, Texas. While there he was also involved with the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico. After eight years in El Paso he accepted a call to teach at California Lutheran High School, then in Tustin, California. After three years he became pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Bell Gardens, California, a bilingual English-Spanish congregation, where he served for four years. For the last 13 years Professor Haeuser has served as a missionary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Lima, Peru. Professor Haeuser and his wife Ruth are the parents of four children.

The topic of the lecture was “Lutheran Missiology.” The first lecture, presented by Dr. Klaus Detlev Schulz, was entitled “Lutheran Missiology of the 16th and 17th Centuries.” In this presentation the essayist summarized the Lutheran stance on missions in the Reformation era and in the age of Lutheran Orthodoxy. The second presenter, Professor David Haeuser, discussed “Lutheran Missiology for the 21st Century. In this lecture the essayist presented the Lutheran theology of missions in the light of the challenges faced in the modern era.

As we begin the 21st century the church must always keep its

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Lutheran Missiology in the 16th and 17th Centuries

by Klaus Detlev Schulz

The Reformation Era and the Age of Orthodoxy are best known and respected as formative periods of Lutheran doctrine. Unfortunately, they reap far less unreserved respect for their stance on missions. To this day numerous studies, too many to count, in both the history and theology of missions hardly spend a thought, if even that, on both these centuries. Those of us who are indebted to the theological heritage of both the Reformation Era and the Age of Orthodoxy find such conspicuous ignorance exasperating and thus grope for a convincing defense. Our task today will be to look precisely at some of the concerns leveled against both these periods but then also attempt to shed some further light on them in the most favorable way without becoming victims to blind partiality.

I. Luther and the 16th Century

A. The criticizers and their criticisms

Every historian knows that there is a certain historic contingency to theology no matter the period. In other words, no theologizing takes place apart from historic events and circumstances. The Reformation Era and the Age of Orthodoxy are certainly no exception to this rule; they were periods where faith and context coalesced, giving rise to an understanding of missions that may be hailed as very uniquely its own. As we examine it we might consider it antiquated, particularly odd in its perception of world Christianity and the running of church affairs back home. Their point of view hardly resembles ours

today. But what exactly were some of these historic and theological factors influencing the concept of missions? Ruth Tucker in a study on the history of missions describes the historical hurdles preventing a mission program in the Reformation as follows:

The upsurge of Roman Catholic missions that occurred during the sixteenth-century Catholic Counter Reformation had no parallel among the Protestants. World-wide missions was not a major concern of most of the Reformers. Just holding their own in the face of Roman Catholic opposition and breaking new ground in Europe were significant achievements in themselves, and there was little time or personnel for overseas ventures. The Protestants, moreover, lacked the opportunities for overseas missions that were readily available to Roman Catholics who dominated the religious scene in most of the seafaring nations, and who consequently were able to travel with and live under the protection of explorers and commercial companies. The landlocked Swiss and German states, early strongholds of Protestantism, offered Protestants no such access to foreign lands. Furthermore, the Protestants did not have a ready-made missionary force like the Roman Catholic monastic orders.¹

These comments from a historian present a multitude of reasons of a historic nature for limiting the Reformation in its promotion of the missionary cause overseas: Addressing issues at home, facing stiff Roman Catholic opposition, lack of access to overseas colonies and no mission personnel to draw from. Such reasons make sense and would certainly redeem the Reformation from any criticisms only if it were not for those that are also theological in nature. Ruth Tucker

observes further:

Protestant theology was another factor that limited the vision of missionary enterprises. Martin Luther was so certain of the imminent return of Christ that he overlooked the necessity of foreign missions. He further justified his position by claiming the Great Commission was binding only on the New Testament apostles who had fulfilled their obligation by spreading the gospel throughout the known world, thus relieving succeeding generations from responsibility.²

These two reasons, the imminence of Christ's return and the missionary apostolate confined to the apostles alone, raise theological concerns that are disturbing to be sure. But can they really be understood as hemming factors for the missionary zeal? It is to both of these issues that we shall now turn—particularly the latter will have to occupy our minds—in order to come to a better understanding.

B. The Eschatological Motif: Christ's Imminent Return

In regard to the expectations of Christ's imminent return as casting inertia on Luther's support for missions, Ruth Tucker echoes a criticism that has been raised against Luther for well over a century by the great German missiologist Gustav Warneck (1834-1910)³ of Halle, Germany and his Roman Catholic counterpart Thomas Ohm (1892-1962) of Münster, Germany.⁴ Warneck has this to say:

Account has also to be taken of his [Luther's] doctrine of Election and of his Eschatology. To lay the whole stress upon the former ... is certainly one sided. But when Luther considers the Turks as the obdurate enemies in the last time by whom God visits the sins of Christendom, and looks upon the heathen and the Jews as having fallen under the dominion of the Devil—and that, too, not without their own fault—this view must from the outset paralyze every thought of missionary work among them. God, to be sure, has everywhere His elect, whom by divers means He leads to faith; but how he brings this to pass, that is a matter of His sovereign grace,—a human missionary agency does not lie in the plan of His decree. Add to this that Luther and his contemporaries were persuaded that the end of the world was at hand ... It was the general view, shared both by Luther and Melancthon ... that in the middle of the sixteenth century, some time in the year 1558, the last day would come. This eschatological conception of the Reformers ... clearly explains how we find in them no proper missionary ideas.⁵

In terms of Luther's association with the return of Christ one may perhaps offer a few words of correction. Luther was extremely critical of the calculations of a close associate of his, Pastor Michael Stifel, who in a publication projected the exact date of Christ's return to be the 19th October 1533 at 8.00 a.m. He thus turned down the request to write a foreword to this publication much according to Augustine's irritated invective against his own contemporary calculators: "To all those who make calculations ... 'Relax your fingers and give them a rest.'"⁶ Ohm, as well, considers Luther's doctrine

of election and his eschatology as a reason for what he calls a “fatalistic-quietistic” attitude for missions. Luther would place everything in God’s hands to call His elect to salvation in His own way without summon to missions. Such an opinion, however, is really alarming to any Luther scholar for it imposes on Luther an alien doctrine of predestination that has more similarities with Calvin than with Luther. For the hallmark of the Lutheran doctrine of predestination is a conscious decision for the universal salvific will of God—against a restricted duality of the elect and condemned—that is extended to people all through the preaching of the Gospel.⁷ Elert calls this basis the impact of the Gospel (*evangelischer Ansatz*)⁸ on which Lutheran theologians wholly entrust themselves. It must be preached worldwide and as this is done sinners are called to faith through the hearing of the Gospel. And this Gospel makes no distinctions of the elect versus the damned in the context of history but addresses all equally with the words of their redemption in Christ.⁹

Certainly, Luther did at times open up his own personal dismay at the obduracy of the Jews and other heathens, such as the Turks, for rejecting the gospel, namely Christ, so severely as they had done;¹⁰ one often links these statements with his heightened sense for apocalyptic thoughts. But their hardening and obstinate stance towards Christ Luther attributed to man’s sinful nature and attitude, much less to God’s unpredictable hidden will in the history of mankind.¹¹ In this connection Luther’s harshness and choice of words, against the Jews especially, leaves much to be desired, and post-World War II scholars have been quick to jump the gun of falsely accusing him for sowing the seed of anti-Semitism.¹² As Luther aged and the end of the world

approached, his opponents including the papacy, the enthusiasts and the Jews took on apocalyptic dimensions. They were seen to be under the wrath of God and used as the instruments of the devil to oppose the Word. Naturally, his harshness is not to be excused nor should it be emulated, but it reflects a disappointment in his heart that is of a theological nature, namely, that the Jews continue to reject Christ and his word and have remained unwilling to reconcile with Christianity. And yet, despite such notions his overriding concerns for their salvation was not lost; his lifelong commitment to winning of the Jewish people to Christ was a missionary one, based on his discovery of the Gospel. He did not consider such mission at any time relieved, not even by an apocalyptic turn of the remnant to Christianity.¹³

To be sure, Luther saw history very much the playing field between God and the evil foe as they are interlocked in battle. In this sense, Luther looked at the course of the Gospel in the world in realistic terms. Because of the reality of setbacks from sin and the evil one, his outlook on the course of the Gospel lacked enthusiastic and utopian ideals of a total Christianization of the world that are still common to mission endeavors today. In a sermon on Matthew 24: 14, Luther viewed the acceptance of the Gospel worldwide as a miracle of God against the devil, the Antichrist, and much less a human feat. To hear and possess the Gospel is a gift from God and those lands and people that have lost possession of it would, because of their sin and deception, be held accountable to God himself and His judgment. And this vacillation between possessing and losing the Gospel again was not an accomplished feat of the past but an ongoing process that would continue till the end of time, from which Germany might or

just might not be spared.

The Gospel was in Egypt, then it was gone; furthermore, it has been in Greece, in Italy, in France and in other lands. Now it is in the land of Germany; for who knows how long? The movement of the gospel is now among us; but our ungratefulness and scorning of the divine Word, pettiness and decadence make it so that it will not remain for long. There shall then follow after it a large rabble, and great wars will come later. In Africa, the gospel was very powerfully present, but the liars corrupted it, and after it the Vandals and the wars came. It went likewise also in Egypt; first lying then murder. It will also go exactly the same in the German land. The pious preachers will first be taken away, and false prophets, enthusiasts, and demagogues will step into my place and that of other preachers and divide the church and tear it apart. Then there will also be added to it wars, so that princes will make war among themselves. Even the Turks will teach them manners, before the movement in the world is finished. Then Judgment Day will come. St. Paul (Romans 11) also says that the gospel must be preached through the whole world in order that all the Gentiles may experience it, so that the fullness of the Gentiles may also enter into Heaven.¹⁴

This lengthy quote certainly portrays a gloomy and grim picture of the course of events in the world. But it reflects a reality that comes about with the rejection of the gospel, and in his time Luther considered that such a rejection against the gospel was taking

place with greater intensity than it did in the past. Obviously, such sinful behavior would call upon God's imminent judgment, with His patience wearing thin.¹⁵ It seems illogical, however, that this would instill in Luther a form of quietism. On the contrary, as the above quote demonstrates, Luther's reference to Romans supports a continual preaching of the gospel and with it came a sense of urgency so that "the fullness of the Gentiles may also enter into Heaven." In fact, the only means to curb the onslaught of Satan would be the preaching of God's word. It is the most powerful and only tool the church has at its disposal. Luther reminded the Pope of this who instead had resorted to brutal measures to address the marauding Turks:

The Pope curses those who supply Turks and Saracens with iron and wood, so that one would think that he honestly desires to do good for Christendom. If he, however, were Christ's vicar, then he would get moving, go there, and preach the gospel to the Turks, being committed to it with body and soul. That would be a Christian way to challenge the Turks and to increase and defend Christendom.¹⁶

It is unfortunate, however, that Luther's outspoken confidence in the Gospel was not matched with an unequivocal summons to action for the Lutheran churches. But the historical reasons mentioned above would warrant such reticence and not the eschatological motif in Luther's life and theology. Luther clearly laid the proper foundation on which later Lutheran missions flourished, once territories with heathen populations were accessible. The affirmation of the

universal nature of the Gospel and the sending of missionaries soon becomes an important part of Lutheranism when doors were opened. But would Luther have endorsed such a sending if, as critics are saying, his view on the mission apostolate was so restrictive? We shall have to examine this position in some detail.

C. The missionary apostolate

Any evaluation of missions in the 16th and 17th century stands or falls with the specific concept of missions one brings to the table. Those who affirm the missionary apostolate for today's time obviously promote a concept of missions that deploys individuals in foreign lands or to regions with a high heathen population. With such a concept we would obviously be greatly disappointed, for it did not take place in this explicit form. Such a disappointment was essentially expressed for the first time with Gustav Warneck who vehemently attacked the Reformation. Thereby he managed to contribute much to stigmatize the Reformation and Orthodoxy which to date has influenced many a majority of missiologists in the past and of today. Warneck bases his critique of Luther on his own concept of mission:

We understand Christian mission as the total activity of Christianity of planting and organizing a Christian church among non-Christians. This activity bears the name mission because it is founded on the commission of the head of the Christian church, is executed through missionaries (apostles) and reaches its goal as soon as such sending is no longer necessary.¹⁷

With this definition he reflects a concept of missions that emerged in the 18th century with the Danish-Halle efforts and the Moravian missions under the great Zinzendorf. Naturally, the Reformers of the 16th and 17th century have failed miserably if measured by such a definition. We do not see a crossing of boundaries nor is there an intentional sending of specific individuals for mission overseas. Missions for the Reformation Era and the Age of Orthodoxy must thus mean something else.

As a form of excuse for Warneck's indictment we are quick, as many have done before us, to point out the basic prevailing conditions then. We already mentioned how immersed the Reformers were in addressing issues at home, but an additional point in this discussion would have to be that the young congregations that emerged from the Reformation lacked the immediate perspective and reason for a missionary task. Still loyal to the *corpus Christianum* thinking, the onus of any ecclesial regulation which also includes foreign or overseas mission responsibility would have to lie on the territorial ruler or any other person or body of greater jurisdiction than that of the average believer.¹⁸ Entrusting ecclesial affairs to the government had indeed an inhibiting effect on missions. But territorial rulers soon took up missions where possibilities for it arose. One of these was, for example, the later beginnings of a mission activity under the territorial ruler of Sweden, King Gustavus Vasa who (1559) sent an individual by the name of Michael to bring the Gospel to the heathen Laplanders in Northern Scandinavia. Under the reign of King Gustavus Adolphus the Sweden mission was expanded in 1638 to its new colony "New Sweden" on the banks of the Delaware.¹⁹

And yet we should not forget that Martin Luther made a significant contribution by placing the missionary obligation on all Christians. Naturally, for the time being, he applied it to extraordinary circumstances where one happened to find oneself as a Turkish prisoner or in heathen surroundings. In such instances, where the ordered ecclesial structures are absent, the duly called *rite vocatus* would no longer apply but every Christian has not only "the right and the power to teach the Word of God but is under the obligation to do this; otherwise he runs the risk of losing his soul and of incurring the disfavor of God."²⁰ Luther may in this sense have given a boost to the lay apostolate. As the discussions around missions concentrated in the 17th century around apostolate and the office *rite vocatus* took the center stage, any discussions on the role of the laity soon disappeared.

What marked Luther's contribution in this discussion around the apostolate is his concept of missions in association with the preaching office and the witnessing activity of the church. He promoted a view that understood the church to be constantly on the move and expanding through the work of the Holy Spirit as the Word is being

witnessed in its vicinity and administered to it through Word and Sacrament. Luther saw no missionary concept divorced from the church but only tied to its ongoing life activity. Excerpts from his Large Catechism may attest to this: “The Holy Spirit continues his work without ceasing until the Last Day, and for this purpose he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work.”²¹ Just previously he has expanded this thought:

The Holy Spirit will remain with the holy community or Christian people until the Last Day. Through it he gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word. By it he creates and increases holiness, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in its fruits, which the Spirit produces.²²

Thereby Luther contributes towards a concept of missions that takes the church seriously. Luther did not know of outright mission efforts apart from the church that took place through a missionary office and a mission society. For him mission was the expansion of the church through the process of assimilation as new believers were added through the preaching and administration of the sacraments. In fact, this was greatly expounded on by the orthodox hymn writer and theologian Philip Nicolai and shared by Wilhelm Loehe some three hundred years later in his famous statement: “Mission is nothing but the one church of God in its motion—the realization of a universal, catholic church.”²³ Many may find this concept restricted in scope since it would hardly allow for the gospel to reach all unchurched areas of the world. But Luther shared with Melanchthon the common thought that Christian communities existed worldwide based on the apostolic preaching having reached all parts of the world, and that through them missions continued wherever such Christian communities existed.²⁴ By and large Luther could rest assured that the preaching of the Apostles had reached areas through their unique transient ministry. Such a ministry in this extraordinary fashion (*munus extraordinarium*) based on Mathew 28:18-20 (Mark 16:15-16) no longer existed. Though Luther offers little explicit details in his argumentation as the theologians of the Orthodoxy did, he reflected the common traditional thought that the unique apostolate had been replaced by the teaching and preaching ministry bound to the church

at a given locality.

To be sure, the apostles did, at first, go into other men's houses and preach there. But they had a command and were ordained and called and sent to preach the Gospel in all places; as Christ said (Mark 16:15): 'Go into all the world and preach to all creatures.' Since then, however, no one has had this general apostolic command; but every bishop or pastor has had his definite diocese or parish. For this reason St. Peter (1 Peter 5: 3) calls them "κλήρους", that is, 'parts,' indicating that to each of them a part of the people has been committed, as Paul writes to Titus also (Titus 1: 5). No one else, no stranger shall undertake to instruct his parishioners, either publicly or privately, without his knowledge and consent.²⁵

With the apostolic ministry being tied to the church, the mission of the church will continue. But such a restriction imposed on the historic apostolate must not always be understood as a deficit, for it takes, as we have seen, the life of the church, even that of the congregation seriously. With such a view Luther speaks out with renewed relevance and pertinence. "Missions is no longer understood as a thing which plays itself out chiefly on the outer edges of Christendom, but instead as a way of life or, rather, as a lifestyle for every Christian congregation within its particular surrounding."²⁶ Wherever the church exists worldwide the ongoing preaching and ministry of the church will bring people to faith.

An explicit sending to remote areas was thus not needed based on the fact that Christian communities existed in all parts of the world—the historic circumstances disallowed a sending of individuals anyway. This view was not diminished by the discovery of new lands. Luther was not so naïve as to think that all places in the world had actually been reached by the apostles the first time round, thus making preaching unnecessary. Discoveries of new places, islands and lands, in the world where the Gospel had never been preached not even generations before had already reached his ears, as he exclaims:

Was not Germany converted eight hundred years after the Apostles, and have not islands and countries been recently found in which nothing of this grace has appeared in fifteen

hundred years!²⁷

It is important to note then that while Luther concludes that the specific historic apostolate had been fulfilled in principle (*in thesi*) by the apostles, their preaching of the word would still continue to the ends of the world in concrete (*in concreto*) through the proclamation of the Gospel by the Christian communities all around the world. He likens the completion of the apostles' preaching and its continuation to a synecdoche, namely, that "one speaks of a whole thing although it is true of only a part." Comparing thus the Apostles' ministry and today's preaching he would say:

It is the type of preaching that was begun and so ordained that it should come into the whole world, and that already at the time of the Apostles had arrived in the largest and best part of the world ... Scripture describes it as if it had already happened. Scripture has a way of speaking that is usually called synecdoche, that is, when one speaks of a whole thing although it is true of only a part ... At that time the gospel was preached to all creation because it was the kind of preaching that went out, had begun and was ordained to come to all creation. In this manner, a prince might say that when an emissary is at his court and has gone out into the streets, 'The emissary is off to one place or another even though he has not yet arrived there.' Likewise, God has caused his gospel to go out to all creatures, even if it has not already actually happened yet.²⁸

A similar reasoning is given in Luther's famous Ascension sermon on May 29, 1522, where he gives an oft-quoted imagery of a pebble falling into the water to underscore the boundless dynamic of the Gospel:

Here there rises a question on this passage: 'Go ye into all the world,' as to how it is to be understood and held fast, since verily the Apostles have not come into all the world, for no Apostle has come to us, and also many islands have been discovered in our day where the people are heathen and no one has preached to them: yet the scripture saith their voice has sounded forth into all lands [Luther refers to Romans 10: 18]. Answer: their preaching has gone out into all the world, though it has not yet come into all the world. That outgoing has been begun and gone on,

though it has not yet been fulfilled and accomplished; but there will be further and wider preaching until the last day. When the Gospel has been preached, heard, published through the whole world, then the commission shall have been fulfilled, and then the last day will come.²⁹

It is on the basis of the above statements approving a continuation of the preaching and teaching that comments of Luther which indicate the Great Commission has been completed should be understood. Those texts affirming the continuation of the preaching of the Gospel must serve as the interpretation of the former statements that the apostles have preached and fulfilled their task.³⁰ We must concur with Werner Elert that this continuing completion of the apostles' preaching of the Gospel exonerates Luther from a lot of criticism, though Luther never spoke of an explicit sending or establishment of a mission society:

The idea of many later theologians—that the church of the present time is no longer obligated to preach among the heathen, because the apostles have already reached all among the heathen—is totally foreign to him, just as it is to Melanchthon.³¹

Luther's perception of the ongoing preaching in all parts of the world through Christian churches apart from an explicit sending might not offer a satisfactory solution to a problem in view of the magnitude of the heathen populations discovered. Should he not have been more explicit in the sending part? Scholars contend that in addition to confining the apostles' ministry, his concept of heathendom did not exactly spur him on either. Warneck's further indictment of Luther is that he had confined his concept of heathendom to the German situation. Other unbelievers outside the church hardly factored into his theological discourse. Indeed, it would be partly true that the Reformation was in fact addressing a semi-pagan situation at home—within the boundaries of baptism one may say—where heathen elements had resurfaced and their intrusions into the Lutheran doctrine had to be extinguished. To be sure there is also an existential component in Luther where the term heathen was also applied to himself and all Christians. Both he and all Christians emerged as the nations (*ta ethne*) of which the Great Commission speaks.³² But

beyond this tunnel vision one should also add that Luther embraced the unbaptized and unbelievers in faraway places. There are thus no indications that Luther's term "heathendom" (*Heidentum / ta ethne*) was confined only to the Christian nations emerging apart from the Jewish nation or the unchristian elements within the church back home. This is evident from what we stated above, and this wider scope would even come to the fore in his exposition on Psalm 117 that Warneck uses for his argument.

[T]here are among ourselves, Turks, Jews, heathens, non-Christians all too many, both with openly false doctrine and terribly scandalous life ... *Wherever* there are heathen—or a country or a city—there the Gospel will penetrate and will convert some to the kingdom of Christ. The Gospel and baptism must come to the *whole world*, and preach to the whole creation ... Christ is preached as far as the heavens and the firmament extend.³³

Only in light of his look on worldwide paganism both at home and the world beyond will Luther's prayer in the Large Catechism on the second petition, "Thy kingdom come" be given full credit. The prayer is considerate of both the heathendom within German territories but then to its existence in a worldwide context. Here, too, he expounds on the expansive nature of the Gospel to a world beyond.

Dear Father, we ask you first to give us your Word, so that the gospel may be properly preached throughout the world and that it may also be received in faith and may work and dwell in us, so that your kingdom may pervade among us through the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit and the devil's kingdom may be destroyed so that he may have no right or power over us until finally his kingdom is utterly eradicated and sin, death, and hell wiped out, that we may live forever in perfect righteousness and blessedness.³⁴

D. Concluding remarks

We may conclude this section with the following observation and go somewhat beyond:

a. In view of reforming the Christian church, the *Corpus Christianum*, the missionary promotion of the faith was a subsidiary concern or role

to the above. Luther did not have in mind a mission organization or a mission society promoting missions, if that's what we are looking for. But mission is not an illegitimate child of such a theological endeavor; it rather is strongly embedded in the theology of the Reformation. Luther's theology is a valuable source (German: *Brunnenstube*), as one writer put it.³⁵

b. The theology of Luther and the Reformation offers crucial initial approaches and aspects for a theology of missions. They are not explained and applied in view of an explicit missionary task, but they are foundational (axiomatic) for the understanding of the historic dimension of the church and constitute a prerequisite for our missionary action. I will mention four aspects to underscore this point: The **first** is the affirmation of the universal dynamic of the Gospel.³⁶ In the discussion of the eschatological motif, we have shown that the core belief of the Reformation was that of the universal call of the Gospel that continues in time throughout the world. The confidence placed in the Gospel and its teleology is backed by a theocentric outlook, a trust in God who through His word seeks the lost sinner, at home and abroad. We may state it slightly different. It is central to Luther's soteriology that the doctrine of justification is given a mission motif, since it explains and becomes the event of salvation: Through faith and not one's doing. And its missionary dynamic lies therein that it should not be stingily appropriated to oneself but that it points to the salvation of all of humanity. It embodies a freedom from sin and a transformation for those who are in need of salvation and in desire of it. In this sense the doctrine of justification bears also a motive for missions.³⁷ The **second** point is that though Luther considers the extraordinary ministry of the apostles completed, he sees its continuation through the church with the ministry of preaching and the witness of the laity. Though Luther does not summon for an explicit sending, he presents us a missionary ecclesiology. Through the preaching and teaching of the *rite vocatus* ministry and the witnessing of believers the church is in an outward motion. Part of the Lutheran Reformation had been to dismiss an ecclesiology that seeks its validation in its hierarchy and a transplantation of it in the mission field. Church is rather an organism that exists in the preaching and administering of the word, and as a fruit of that activity the church continues to grow and flourish.

The **third** component is the expression of faith in given contexts. The Reformation ushered in a process that has become the rule for any missionary endeavor. Until then, worship was much committed and tied to the Latin mass worldwide. Luther's demand that one should "watch the mouth of the people" (German: *dem Volke aufs Maul zu schauen*) was not just a plea for the preaching in the vernacular, but it paved the way for establishing a self-expression of the faith of a people and its theological legitimization. Hearers should believe and understand what is being said and preached in their own tongue. Any mission endeavor is thus confronted with questions of hermeneutic, the interpretation and communication of its faith to the unbaptized. The translation of both Testaments into the official Saxon language, the publication of German chorales and hymns, the liturgy of the German mass, the adamancy of proper education and catechetical instruction at schools and being a church of the neglected masses, these and many other projects of the Reformation directly benefit the mission of the church as well.³⁸

II. The Scope of rite vocatus in 17th Century Lutheran Orthodoxy: Is it Parochial or Universal?

A. Introduction

Lutheran orthodoxy remained by and large loyal to the position of Martin Luther. There is however also evidence of a certain hardening of positions on some issues. One of these is the intense focus given to a *rite vocatus* ministry and its relation to the ministry of the apostles and to their universal call. Lutheran orthodoxy made it an art to argue that the apostles had preached to the whole world. Therefore, it was the fault of those who rejected the first proclamation of the gospel when an area did not possess the Gospel in their day. In the course of these discussions, the names of Philip Nicolai, Johann Gerhard and Johann Heinrich Ursinus surface as they address their opponents—the Jesuits, the Anglican theologian Hadrian Saravia and the Lutheran nobleman Justinian von Welz. To this end, orthodoxy

had to correct two groups that represented these individuals:

- 1) The outside opposition of the Roman Catholic Church and its supporters that had usurped and monopolized the missionary apostolate, and
- 2) the mystic-enthusiastic interpretation within the Lutheran church that threatened to destroy the homogeneity of the Lutheran belief system.

Among Roman Catholic circles, the Jesuit order especially was responsible for launching much of the Counter-Reformation.³⁹ They proved to be outspoken critics of the Reformation, also in terms of missions. Opponents such as the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) leveled accusations against the Lutheran Church. They held that it was nothing but a sectarian movement; it had yet to convert a heathen overseas, which showed that it does not possess the salutary Gospel. Bellarmine applies this criticism also to the Protestant areas in Germany, Poland and Hungary for they, too, still had many Jews and Turks among them.⁴⁰ In contrast to the local, non-missionary and sectarian movement called Lutheranism, the Roman Catholic Church placed no limitations on the historic apostolic missions. It argued for its continuation in its monastic form that took on apostolic poverty and the sacrifice of celibacy as the only legitimate form of missionary service to the heathens. In contrast to this they scorned Protestant pastors for remaining fixed to a parsonage where they led a happy and content family life.⁴¹ These discussions were further fueled by a Calvinist and later Anglican theologian, Hadrian Saravia (1531-1613) who in 1590 published a treatise entitled “*De diversis ministrorum evangelii gradibus, sicut a Domino fuerunt instituti*” (Concerning the different orders of the ministry of the Gospel, as they were instituted by the Lord). In his own peculiar fashion he underscored the Catholic position in arguing that there were no limitations to be placed on the apostolic missions for today but that it continued in the same unlimited form in the episcopacy of the church.⁴² If we add to the mix Justinian von Welz, whose theology and ideas embraced mystic-enthusiasm, we could perhaps understand some of orthodoxy’s anxiety and attempt to vanquish any extraordinary mission propositions and as a defense posit against them the ordered life of the congregation and

the proper installation of an office to the local setting according to Augsburg Confession XIV. In all these cases Lutheran orthodoxy challenged the indiscriminate, yes, naïve rendering of the apostolic office to its time without any important distinctions. For this reason all propositions for missions became subject to a barrage of criticism from Lutheran orthodoxy that might perhaps at times seem to be overly allergic and sensitive.

B. Lutheran Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism (including Hadrian Saravia)

An important authority on missions in the 17th century orthodoxy was the famous hymnologist and theologian at Hamburg, Philip Nicolai (1556-1608).⁴³ In a book entitled “*Commentarii de regno Christi*,” (1597) Nicolai struggles with Scripture and geography to demonstrate how the world in all areas has had the Gospel preached in its midst by the apostles. He perpetuates thereby the tradition largely attributed to the historian Eusebius of Caesarea (260-339).⁴⁴ His underlying contention is also to state that a sending was thus no longer necessary. He cites Psalm 19:4-5; Romans 10:18, Colossians 1:6. He furnishes further proof with a grand and detailed geographic survey that includes notations to ethnology, culture, sociology and religions. All parts of the world—including the newly discovered areas such as Brazil, Peru and the West Indies—were in possession of the Christian gospel even if it meant only a “breeze” of it.⁴⁵

There is, however, an important point we should make to the above. Nicolai also adds in his survey the important notion that there is no perfect tense to such a preaching of the Gospel; it continues all over the world to this very day.⁴⁶ Does that mean that Nicolai is willing to accept the work of the Roman Catholic mission? Though mistakes and heresies existed, orthodoxy on the whole displays an astounding ecumenical openness by recognizing the work of their opponents, the Roman Catholics.⁴⁷ Orthodoxy had access to reports on mission work in the East where the Jesuits assumed a strong presence with individuals such as Franz Xavier in East India and Japan and Mathew Ricci in China. From a report in 1564 given by a Jesuit missionary to Japan, Johannes Baptista Montius, orthodoxy

could ascertain that the Jesuit missionaries were making proper Christians. They instructed heathens in the basic and fundamental Christian doctrines such as the Decalogue, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and baptism, and abstained from the erroneous doctrine on the primacy of the pope, purgatory, on indulgences and merits.⁴⁸ The faculty of Wittenberg in 1652 thus concluded that the Jesuits were not making a Papist "much less a Jesuit, but a Christian just as we are".⁴⁹ Such ecumenical mindedness was not out of the ordinary for Lutheranism, nor was it a wholesale dismissal of its own particular doctrine of beliefs. But Lutheran orthodoxy stood firmly rooted in the tradition of the Augsburg Confession (Article VII) and thus considered the Lutheran church as part of the church catholic in all parts of the world where the Word was preached and the sacraments rightly administered. Nicolai's ecclesiology in *De regno Christi* is a clear testimony to this claim.

Still, the efforts of the Lutheran Churches themselves could not be left unsaid either. Though modest in comparison to the grand project of the Romans, it was necessary to reject Bellarmine's argument that the Lutheran church lacked the salutary Gospel and failed to promote it, and thus is sectarian. According to Nicolai, the Lutheran church really comprised the heart and spiritual center of the church catholic through her preaching of the unadulterated Gospel and the pure gift of forgiveness. Moreover, the Lutheran church has also been engaged in the practical missionary task of translating the Bible and publishing Lutheran literature in all parts of the world. Thereby it will positively influence other denominations and take a foothold in other lands apart from those that are already Lutheran. Examples of such an expansion is already evident in the fervent translation projects of the Psalms, the New Testament, and Luther's home postil by Primus Truber (†1586) into the Slovenian language; a project enthusiastically

embraced also by the Lutheran Duke Christoph of Württemberg.⁵⁰

Nicolai's grand presentation of the universal church at work is an attestation to the missionary nature of the church. It might have placed limitations on the apostolic missions. He did not call or summon for an explicit sending of individuals since the preaching of the apostles in all parts of the world had been completed and they were now in possession of the Gospel. Nonetheless, his attempt to prove his point from a survey of the world geography seems somewhat strained and far-fetched. But at least Nicolai offered an ecclesiology that looked at the activity in Word and Sacrament as a continual activity worldwide. The catholic church is missionary in her movement.⁵¹

The open-heartedness and ecumenical inclusiveness that Lutheran orthodoxy extended to the Jesuits must however not be understood as a *carte blanche* endorsement of the Roman Catholic mission. Philip Nicolai's grand scheme in *De regno Christi* was certainly also a significant defense on behalf of orthodoxy. But it lacked the systematic qualities for which orthodoxy is known. These surfaced with the famous theologian Johann Gerhard.

B. 1. Johann Gerhard (1582-1637)

A few decades after Philip Nicolai's famous tract, *De regno Christi*, Johann Gerhard responded with his position in his famous *Loci Theologici* written particularly against the Roman Jesuit and

controversialist Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) and the claims made by Hadrian Saravia. For our task we shall examine specifically the chapter “On the ministry of the church”⁵² and on “Election and Reprobation.”⁵³

To reject an unprecedented and naïve rendering of the apostolic office, Johann Gerhard draws distinctions between the apostles and all successors in order to explain exactly what belongs uniquely to the apostles’ office and which of their functions may be transferred to the successors of the apostles. Three areas of the apostles’ ministry according to Gerhard should be considered:

- 1) It was a ministry of teaching the Gospel and administration of the sacraments together with the power of the keys;
- 2) It assumed episcopal oversight and inspection not only over the flock of Christ but also other elders (*presbyteres*);
- 3) And, it was given the authority (*potestas*) of preaching the Gospel in the whole world through an immediate vocation (call) that also includes the esteemed gift of performing miracles and the undiminished authority to which is joined the privilege of infallibility.

Gerhard willingly ceded the first two points to the pastoral office. But he refused to hand the third point down to the successors of the apostles. The apostles’ immediate universal call was uniquely theirs. They have been given a transient, non-local ministry joined with the gifts of miraculous signs and infallibility. These may not be transferred to their successors. The church instead has the pastoral office in its non-transient form that is tied to the church.⁵⁴ If the church had been given that universal charge and the transient form of ministry, why then, Gerhard asks, have not all Christians left for foreign lands?⁵⁵ Gerhard then unfolds his arguments that speak against an unhindered transposition of this unique authority to their successors.

a) The proper authority of the apostles (*potestas apostolis propria*) is lacking in the church today. This unique authority, which included the commission to preach in all parts of the world and plant churches (*mandatum praedicandi evangelium in toto terrarum orbe ac ubique fundandi ecclesias*), is bound to the apostles alone. And Scripture

shows (Mark 16:15; Romans 10:18; Colossians 1:6-23) that they have accomplished their task; in most parts of the world the Gospel has been preached.⁵⁶

b) To become an apostle requires a direct and extraordinary call (*immediata et extraordinaria vocatio*). The immediate call (*vocatio immediata*) no longer applies to today but it has ceased when the apostles installed the first elders in a specific congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). This also shows that all the successors of the apostles were meant to work in a specific bound locality (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:2). The non-local and transient activity of preaching the word no longer applies to the church. The apostles' preaching was told to be everywhere, but the office of those who are teaching and preaching today is confined to a special place (*ad certum locum est adstrictum*). For Gerhard there is thus a difference between cooperating (Greek: *synergia*) with the apostles in the preaching of the Gospel and an equal and unrestricted participation in the apostolic authority and power.⁵⁷ Besides the authority to pursue a transient ministry, Gerhard upholds also as unique to the apostles' office their gift of infallibility, the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit such as healing, speaking in tongues⁵⁸ and finally also of having been direct witnesses of Jesus Christ's teaching.⁵⁹

In all of this we should however not forget to make a certain correction to a possible misinterpretation of the above. What Gerhard and all of the orthodox theologians also testified to was the universal will of God that is based on Christ's death on the cross as a universal merit for all.⁶⁰ The universal call of the Gospel thus supersedes the historic work of the apostles and it continues to this day. God intends to save all unbelievers to repentance and faith in Christ. The church must continue to proclaim the Gospel and pray constantly for all (1 Timothy 2:4-2; 1 Peter 3:9).⁶¹ The apostles have done their share in bringing the Gospel to all parts of the world and completed it at that,⁶² but the church's responsibility to proclaim the word worldwide has certainly not ceased.

It is true that the apostles were the last group of the three to whom God gave His gospel to the world in its unrestricted form. Through Adam and the Protoevangel (Genesis 3:15), after the flood through the covenant of Noah (Genesis 9:9-11) and through the

preaching of the apostles (Acts 17:30; Colossians 1:16). The reason why this universal gift of salvation is no longer amongst all people is that past generations have rejected the preaching and have thus robbed not only themselves but also all of posterity of the salutary doctrine of justification. They have inexcusably brought damnation on themselves.⁶³ For this reason the sins of the parents and not the mercy of God are responsible for posterity's lack of the true knowledge of God.⁶⁴ But for Gerhard the fact that God once gave the Gospel to the world proves that God has no intentions to predestine a limited few. And so, the Gospel has a missionary dimension of wanting to embrace all of humanity for their salvation.⁶⁵ This universal call of the Gospel remains undiminished, for it is a power to strengthen the church and have it gathered.⁶⁶ In fact, the church is taken up into it by this universal gathering of the Gospel. More precisely, the instrumental cause through which this is done is the ministry of the church embracing the preaching and the administration of the sacraments.⁶⁷

Gerhard's affirmation of the continual universal call of the Gospel outlasting the historic apostolic office⁶⁸ raises the important question, namely, what most suitable form of a ministry would then in his mind support such a preaching of the universal gospel? Here one senses orthodoxy's predicament. We previously heard that Gerhard, as all of the orthodox, was reluctant to endorse a missionary and transient ministry divorced from its ecclesial setting. Only the pastoral office exists as the continued form of the apostolic ministry. That was evident from scriptural texts (Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5) and underscored by the sixth canon of the Council of Chalcedon which states explicitly that no one ought to be ordained absolutely but only to a specific church.⁶⁹ There is thus in the mission of the church no place for vagabonds, transient individuals who feel themselves called immediately, perhaps via an internal call as the Anabaptists and enthusiasts would or in the form of the Roman Catholic orders sent to regions where there is no church.⁷⁰ And yet one wonders why Lutheran orthodoxy did not exploit the full potential of their position. For would they not have been open to the sending of pastors to a specific ecclesial context and local setting in faraway places? Indeed, nothing seems to speak against such a concept of sending a ministry of preaching the word that could build on the foundation

of the apostles not in its transient form but rather wherever churches have been planted. There they could continue to build on the preaching of the apostles and recover what has been lost to heathendom.⁷¹ Gerhard actually likens the cooperation between apostles and the preachers of the church to that of building a house. The former have laid the foundation of the house already but the latter may continue to build on that foundation.⁷² For this task the church has the power to call and the promise of Christ's continual presence.⁷³ Such a ministry, though parochial, could assume a universal dimension by being transferred to young Christian churches throughout the world. Thereby Lutheran orthodoxy would actively contribute to the call to preach the Gospel that resounds undiminished today as it did in the time of the apostles.⁷⁴

Sadly, though, the potential of actually sending individuals escaped the purview of Gerhard and the orthodox. The vast expanses of the heathen world outside of Christianity were not given any due consideration. In part Gerhard's and orthodoxy's reticence is explicable from their common indictment of all unbelievers. The Gospel is not theirs and need not be theirs any more because they or their ancestors have rejected the first preaching of the apostles. The fault lies with them for having rejected it and also in the fact that it at times had not been diligently preached in all places.⁷⁵ This hamartiological motif unfortunately does not motivate orthodoxy to pursue a mission endeavor. Gerhard's elaborate attempt to prove that the preaching has in fact reached all parts of the world and that no one is proclaiming the gospel for the first time seems, as with Philip Nicolai, forced and hard to accept. Of course, Gerhard also had tradition on his side from historians such as Jerome and Ambrose who also claim that there exists no nation to whom the Gospel has not come.⁷⁶ But still, Gerhard's positive comments on the universal will and call of the Gospel lose their sparkle in light of these sweeping comments on the actual historic accomplishment of the preaching of the Gospel. Indeed his apologetic defense against Robert Bellarmine and Hadrian Saravia overshadows the initial positive thoughts spent on the expansive call of the Gospel to all. The universal motive so endearing to Lutheran theology, as Gerhard himself brought to light, was not matched with the call to missionary action itself. A further

point not to be underestimated in this connection was that the Lutheran orthodoxy had grown accustomed to placing ecclesial matters, which would include also foreign projects, in the hands of the political authority who would act on behalf of the entire church.⁷⁷

B. 2. Wittenberg Faculty Statement (1652)

The opinion of the Lutheran Faculty passed on April 24, 1652 is so often chosen as the classical scapegoat for Lutheran Orthodoxy,⁷⁸ for it, some argue, called for a total boycott on missions.⁷⁹ It was compiled as a response to the questions (scruples) posed by a nobleman, the Reichsgraf Erhardt von Wetzhausen from Vienna. On 27. February 1652 he addressed the Faculty in a letter. He asked the question (or scruples), how should one expect that in the east, south and west people should come to faith from preaching “when he sees no one of the Augsburg Confession go there to preach and to save as much as 100,000 people from damnation”? He explicitly quotes Matthew 28:19. His question intentionally inquires why Lutheran mission was not done.⁸⁰

In its response the Faculty hardly goes beyond what Gerhard already stated. It raises three points:

First, the Great Commission, *ite in mundum universum* of Matthew 28:19, is restricted only to the apostles. All successors have been assigned to a local setting.⁸¹

Secondly, in response to the question why no one of the Augsburg Confession is going to other parts of the world, the Faculty refers to natural revelation that all are required to seek and search for God (Romans 1 and 2; Acts 17:27). It also refers to the three time preaching of Adam, Noah and the apostles. Through their universal preaching the heathen had been exposed to the Gospel but had rejected it. For their punishment God withdrew the preaching from them. For this reason “God is not guilty, much less bound, to retribute what once was rightfully taken away (*quod semel juste ablatum est*)”.⁸²

At the same time the Faculty concedes that there are still ample “occasions and opportunities to inquire about the Gospel that is spoken of all over the world, also in the middle of Turkey, Persia, India, Russia and Tartars.” For

under God's wonderful, providential guidance true believers would on occasion fall amongst barbaric nations and unbelievers and may in certain measures practice their worship through which others may be led to the true recognition of God, as Philip Nicolai has adequately demonstrated in his books *De Regno Christi*.⁸³

As a third and final point, the faculty points to the obligation of the colonial powers, which have come into possession of other foreign lands. On them rests the obligation, as it once did with king David and Solomon, not merely to

establish and keep peace and order among their citizens but especially promote proper worship services, build churches and schools and install preachers, that thereby everywhere the true recognition of God may increase, His name hallowed, His kingdom expanded and furthered. As a consequence, the kings of Sweden and Denmark have established in those barbaric lands who have been placed under their rule true worship, but that the kings of Spain, France and England, including the Dutch who have sent and continue to send their preachers in newly discovered islands, in West and East India may thus not promote their superstitious, false, papistic and Calvinistic, but bring to the people evangelical truth and *fundamenta Christianae pietatis*, wherein we agree with them...⁸⁴

The Wittenberg opinion rightfully placed important restrictions on Matthew 28:19-20 with its "immediate call to preach the Gospel of Christ not just at one place or in the church city or land, but in the entire world." They understood this commission as a *personale privilegium* (personal privilege) of the apostles that no successors inherit. The Faculty of Wittenberg, too, had reduced the pastoral ministry to an activity back home. Though they acknowledged a preaching activity worldwide, they, too, like Gerhard were unwilling to contribute towards it beyond their boundaries. If only they had linked up such a local ministry with the universal call of the Gospel. But then perhaps that would be understood as a concession to those that were aiming at reforming the Lutheran church from within and thereby threatening its homogenous character. Thus a "yes" to missions itself would then also become a "yes" to the dubious endeavors of Justinian von Welz

and his supporters. That had to be avoided at all costs.

C. Lutheran Orthodoxy and the Mystic-asceticism within its boundaries.

C. 1. Justinian (von) Welz (1621-1668)⁸⁵

Justinian von Welz was a nobleman (Baron) in exile driven from Austria to Germany because of the counter-Reformation. He is always hailed as the lone challenger from within against Lutheran stagnation and inertia and pursuing the cause of foreign missions through an evangelical “hermit life” (*vita solitaria*), a “Jesus-love-me society” that would serve as the organ for missions within Germany and beyond its boundaries. However, from the outset it became clear that his underlying quest was less ecclesial in the sense of promoting the faith of the Lutheran Church. It was rather a self-chosen endeavor that proved to be impracticable and theologically dubious.

In 1663 Welz published his first tract entitled *De Vita Solitaria* subtitled the “*Hermit Life according to God’s Word.*”⁸⁶ Although this tract relates less to the missionary task itself, it reflects Welz’s missionary ideals inasmuch as they represent a quest to revive monastic holiness for missionary purposes. It reflects his source of influence: theologians such as Eusebius of Caesarea (260-339), Augustine of Hippo (354-430), but then also the medieval mysticist, Thomas á Kempis (1379/80-1471), and Johann Arndt (1555-1621), the most influential Lutheran devotional writer and promoter of a mystical tradition within Lutheranism. Welz encourages an evangelical asceticism that shuns all trivial amusement and popular habits of food and dress for a life that rather seeks to dedicate itself in both will and spirit to God, like Elijah and John the Baptist.⁸⁷ There was a sense of urgency in his plea that reveals a strong eschatological motive. For wherever one has contact with men of this world one should witness to them of the impending judgment and of being mere strangers and pilgrims in this world. The elements of approaching death, the last judgment, pain and suffering should also exhort one to pursue spiritual discipline. But Welz had no intention to establish a new sect. He rather hoped to “counteract lukewarmness among nominal Christians, to arouse

the slumbering, and to lead the erring from the path of destruction to the narrow path of salvation.”⁸⁸

Welz continued his quest with a series of publications.⁸⁹ In a tract from January 1664 entitled *A Christian and Sincere Admonition to All Orthodox Christians of the Augsburg Confession Concerning a Special Society Through Which with the Help of God Our Evangelical Religion May be Spread*,⁹⁰ he addresses all those of the Augsburg Confession, namely, the Lutheran Church, particularly those in their various standings according to their economical, political and spiritual orders. Welz, being a member of the nobility, uses this tract to argue his cause before the *Corpus Evangelicorum* of the Imperial Diet (*Reichstag*) of the Holy Roman Empire.⁹¹ In it he laments over the spiritual coldness of evangelical Christians at his time, their unwillingness to share the Gospel, the length of time wasted by students waiting for their first call instead of working in the field, and the ostentatious lifestyle of many in the church. He does so by raising three important questions:

First, is it right that we evangelical Christians keep the gospel to ourselves alone, and never seek to spread it?

Second, is it right that we have so many theological students everywhere and give them no opportunity of helping to work in the spiritual vineyard of Jesus Christ elsewhere, but prefer to make them wait three, six, and more years for a parish, or simply become German schoolmasters?

Third, is it right that we evangelical Christians spend so much money on all kinds of ostentatious dress, luxuries of food and drink, many unnecessary amusements and expensive habits, but until now have given no thought to means of spreading the gospel?⁹²

Welz seriously questions the integrity of the prayers in the church when one asks for the erring to be led to the truth but has no action to match that request. This would also finally silence the papist’s reproaches against the Lutherans “for calling ourselves true-believing and good Christians, and yet not once attempting to propagate our religion in distant lands.”⁹³ He then sets forth a detailed proposal towards the establishment of his society and he also includes, almost as a

form of concession, the ordination of such emissaries.⁹⁴ Of course, his proposal for a society should not be construed as something entirely new. Rather, he seeks “to renew the ancient and honorable enterprise of propagating the gospel through a society,” more specifically the promulgation of the evangelical faith of the Augsburg Confession.⁹⁵ For this reason the society should become an instrument of an organized church that pious promoters from all spheres of society support.⁹⁶ Unlike his opponents, Welz would even concede to a second preaching built on those already done in the past, “for what can the miserable heathen do about the fact that their ancestors despised the preached word and thrust it away from themselves?”⁹⁷

In view of a possible rejection of his proposal Welz composed another treatise as a supplement to the previous one entitled: *An Invitation to the Approaching Great Supper and a Proposal for an edifying Christian Jesus-Society dealing with the Betterment of Christendom and the Conversion of Heathendom, Brought to Light through the good intention of Justinian*. (Nürnberg. 1664).⁹⁸ It, too, strongly espouses the motive of love for Christ and the neighbor; it should serve as enough an incentive to preach to the heathens.⁹⁹ This dual commandment of love and the Golden Rule (Matthew 7: 12) stands in stark contrast to his repeated defiance of the love for the world.¹⁰⁰ But it certainly underscores his mystic-ascetic and ethical inclinations that were part of a movement that sought a spiritual renewal within the Lutheran orthodoxy.¹⁰¹ His instant recourse to the motive of love as a reason to send faithful and devout missionaries certainly preempted the epoch of Pietism, especially with Zinzendorf.¹⁰² For Welz love lays forth a basic principle for the recruitment for missionaries. “Concerning the call to this work,” he states, “the law of love pertains not only to the clergy but to all Christians; nor is God bound so that he may not call a man to it extraordinarily.”¹⁰³ All Christians were included by virtue of their baptism and they had the motive of love as its corollary. Welz thereby raised a sore point in the eyes Lutheran orthodoxy. His summons to all Christians to missions threatened the ministry *rite vocatus* and infiltrated Lutheranism with enthusiastic notions.

A further noticeable element in Welz’s program is its exclusive confessional character. For “whoever wishes to belong to this society

must be a confessor of the true evangelical doctrine (i. e. of the Lutheran Church), and no Jesuit, papist, Anabaptist, Schwenkfelder, or Rosicrucian will be accepted, even if he intended to slip in by means of an honorable life."¹⁰⁴ And yet, despite his plea for confessionalism, he could not turn the tides in his favor. Though Welz had received some initial support,¹⁰⁵ Lutheran orthodoxy overall expressed even less of an appreciation for Welz's project than they had done with the Jesuits.¹⁰⁶ The verdict passed by the Regensburg Diet, before which he had pleaded his case, judged his mission project "impracticable."¹⁰⁷

It obviously seems that Lutheran orthodoxy had little in common with Welz's claim for a missionary apostolate. Their reticence was based on a number of issues. It was an exasperated response to Welz's extreme criticisms of the spiritual authorities and the magistrate. It was a rejection of his spiritual-mystic piety, which next to the ordinary call (*vocatio ordinaria*) knew also of an immediate, extraordinary call (*vocatio extraordinaria*). Finally, it was a disapproval of his friendship with the scorned spiritualist opponent of the orthodoxy, Pastor Friedrich Breckling (1629-1711) and Johann Georg Gichtel (1638-1710), a religious enthusiast and theosophist that adversely influenced the outcome of Welz's appeal.¹⁰⁸ What ultimately tipped the scales from favorable responses to such an outspoken rejection was the verdict of the Superintendent in Regensburg, on whom fell the task to evaluate Welz's case.

C. 2. Johann Heinrich Ursinus (1608-1667)

Superintendent Johann Heinrich Ursinus of Regensburg responded to Welz's vehement attacks. He did so in a tract *A Sincere, faithful and Earnest Admonition to Justinian*,¹⁰⁹ which he published anonymously. Ursinus was a well-respected person and of some influence within orthodoxy. Ursinus, as many of the nobility, had serious questions about the actual implementation of Welz's project asking: "Tell us once, where will you begin. All at once in the whole of heathendom?"¹¹⁰ Since it was thought that Christians were all over the world, one had serious reservation as to how a handful of Germans would find room in the midst of the Turks, Persians, Arabs and Asia when there were already Christians in their midst burning with

missionary zeal.¹¹¹ As for the other regions such as Japan and China where heathens have heard nothing of the name of Jesus there has been a strong expulsion of missionaries. Ursinus is thus perplexed as to how Welz would tackle such a daunting task among regions that seem extremely hostile to Christianity.¹¹² In view of this Ursinus exclaims: “Dear Justinian, stop dreaming, lest Satan deceive you in a dream.” The parable of the Good Samaritan demands a love not for transient ministry but rather “to those who according to God’s will are near us and around us, and as far as this ability reaches.”¹¹³ Christians, he states, are obliged to preach the Gospel “especially to the heathen among whom or near whom they dwell, with all practice of Christianity to give occasion for their conversion.”¹¹⁴

Instead, Ursinus entrusts the furtherance of the Christian faith to the majestic works of God. “God wants all men to be helped... Just so he will also create powerful and sufficient means so that all are helped according to the measure of his grace.”¹¹⁵ Ursinus echoes here a common theme in Lutheran orthodoxy that portrays God as the God of history who will direct the course of events for the promotion of the Christian cause. The encouragement to a preaching of the Gospel worldwide falls by the wayside. One relies on the almighty God and Him to open the doors: “God shows the opportunity and means, to further the kingdom of Christ.”¹¹⁶ One wonders a little, though, why Ursinus was not willing then to accept the fact that God had perhaps chosen at this time Welz’s project to further the Christian faith.¹¹⁷

D. Conclusion

The Lutheran church of the 16th and 17th century struggled to safeguard its own existence from criticisms coming from both outside and within. It also lacked any contact and immediate access to heathen nations. The hindrances to carrying out its missionary task were therefore largely historical and circumstantial. Unfortunately, we find no comments of regret being made over such hindrances. Explicit statements or words of encouragement to pursue a missionary task are also absent. As I tried to demonstrate, orthodoxy certainly did not deny the universal and salvific will of God and that he had entrusted the church with the Gospel for the entire world. They were

even willing to make concessions to the mission work of the Jesuits so that an ecclesiology was presented that described God gathering believers into his church throughout the world through His word and sacrament. But they left mission to God and entrusted Him with the mighty task to decide when and in which way the Gospel should be brought to the nations. The Lutheran theologians did not pursue a sending-of-individuals-mission-project themselves. Even if such a project was to be initiated and carried through, the onus lay very much on the shoulders of the territorial government. But how could they as official regents of the church call ministers of the church to regions that were not theirs? Surely that would be a political violation of all peace accords with the Roman Catholic Church and its lords.

Moreover, the orthodoxy placed great emphasis on the ecclesial context. It hated to abandon the correct procedure of calling, sending and installation of individuals to a church setting (as was prescribed in Augsburg Confession XIV). To them the thought of vagabond pastors roaming in foreign parts of the world and gathering believers wherever they saw fit was unbearable. And perhaps even the handing over of ecclesial affairs to the lords was a grave mistake on their side. The lethargy of the lords to respond favorably to Welz forced him to take questionable routes in affiliating himself with theologically doubtful individuals in order to pursue his plans.

Lutheran orthodoxy thus reacted always with extreme caution and sensitivity. And in many instances rightly so. The Romans and Saravia had monopolized the universal nature of the Gospel for themselves either through the monastic orders or for the episcopacy. In Welz and his companions they detected mystic-enthusiastic and theosophist tendencies that jeopardized the office *rite vocatus*. Obviously certain propositions made by the orthodoxy in this connection sound strained. The first time preaching of the apostles, the concept of hardening and the unpardonable guilt of the heathens for having rejected such preaching of the Gospel by the apostles comes across as forced and lop-sided especially in view of new lands being constantly discovered. But the orthodoxy remained rigid and countered with grand surveys to prove that even the slightest “breeze” of the Gospel had reached foreign parts such as Brazil. Here one could have expected less rigidity that would allow the guilt and sinfulness of so

many heathen nations to be complemented with a strong motive for preaching the universal and salvific will of God for also such foreign nations.

One important dogmatic argument that captured all was the nature of apostolic missions and the office *rite vocatus*. They deduced the pastoral office from the office of the apostles. But in doing so they refused to transfer the extraordinary components of the apostles' office, such as the commission to roam around the world, to posterity. The pastoral office of the Lutheran orthodoxy was instead tied only to the congregation. Other offices in view of missions besides that of the pastor were not known in the Lutheran church; they made no provisions for a missionary office.

But this should not necessarily be seen as a deficit. For in the arguments of orthodoxy the nature of the *rite vocatus* office was discussed and not the universal claim of the Gospel as such. One should thus not throw the baby out with the bath water. For there is no indication from orthodoxy that one may not seek out a strategy to send pastors to a specific locality in the world for word and sacrament ministry. Today's mission work overseas does not differ much from churchly work back home, since so many independent partner churches now exist worldwide. They are dependent on foreign assistance which may be given in the form of a missionary pastor who engages his pastoral and mission activity at a specific locality. Orthodoxy warns us not to abandon the ordaining and commissioning of pastors, and use migrant workers or vagabonds engaged in a transient ministry as the apostles did. Missionary work is pastoral work devoted to a patient and dedicated service in a personal relationship with believers within a given locality. To make mission merely an enthusiastic endeavor for immediate success or a hobby of a motivated crowd would really be mission romanticism.¹¹⁸ For this reason the Lutheran orthodoxy still deserves to be heard in today's context of mission.

Endnotes

¹ Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya. A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 67. Apart from these comments Ruth Tucker has no chapter on the 16th or 17th

Centuries.

² *Ibid.*, 67.

³ Gustav Warneck's, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time*. Edited by George Robson. (New York—Chicago—Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906), pp. 8-24.

⁴ Horst Bürkle, *Missionstheologie* (Stuttgart Berlin Köln Mainz: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1979), 44.

⁵ Warneck, 15-16.

⁶ Luther assigned Pastor Michael Stifel to a neighboring parsonage after Stifel had fled his home area in northern Austria as a result of the Counter Reformation. Stifel entered his calculations in the book: "*Rechenbüchlein vom Endchrist. Apocalypsis in Apocalypsim.*" One may see Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther. Band 3: Die Erhaltung der Kirche 1532-1546* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1987), 20.

⁷ So also the Lutheran Confessions: "Therefore, if we want to consider our eternal election to salvation profitably, we must always firmly and rigidly insist that, like the proclamation of repentance, so the promise of the gospel is *universalis*, that is, it pertains to all people (Luke 24[:47]). Therefore, Christ commanded preaching 'repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations' Formula of Concord XI, 28. *The Book of Concord*. Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 645.

⁸ Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*. Volume 1. Translated by Walter A. Hansen (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 385.

⁹ Bürkle, 44.

¹⁰ To demonstrate this point to all Christian believers Luther translated in 1542 the *Confutatio Alcorum* (Confutation against the Koran) by an Italian Dominican monk and missionary Ricoldus (†1320). Luther verified the truthfulness of this tract by carefully reading the Latin translation of the Koran, and his commentaries offer at times correction. Title of tract: “*Verlegung des Alcoran Bruder Richardi, Prediger Ordens.*” *Verdeutsch und herausgegeben* von M. Luther. 1542. *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar Ausgabe - WA). Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883-1993 (WA 53, 261-396).

¹¹ “Such boasting of the God of the Turks, Jews and all Unbelievers is therefore plainly nothing ... since they deny Christ, who is true God and Man, and do not accept him, they, therefore, also have for God, which they boast created heaven and earth, one who is nothing more than a mere name or delusion of God ... For they do not want this God, who is a Father and gives his Son and has richly poured the Holy Spirit over us, but instead they slander and rage against him in the most horrible way.” Sermon on Matthew 8:23-27. 31. January 1546 Weimar Edition (WA) 51, 150, 38-152, 29. Volker Stolle, *Church from all Nations. Luther Texts on Mission*. Translated by Klaus Detlev Schulz and Daniel Thies (to be published), 53-54.

¹² His first tract in 1523: “*That Jesus Christ was a born Jew*” still reflects his conciliatory approach towards the Jews and hope of converting them. They should be given fair treatment rather than be dealt with like dogs as the opponents have done. Through kind instruction in Scripture many will be won over to Christ: “I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from Holy Scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians ... They will only be frightened further away from it if their Judaism is so utterly rejected that nothing is allowed to remain.” *Luther's Works: American Edition*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1986. (LW) Vol. 45, 200; see also his sermon on Matthew 4:1ff. held on February 14, 1524 in WA 15, 447, 11-22; Stolle 40). Luther hoped to Reform Judaism much as he hoped also to reform the church, and his suggestions for their fair treatment contributed much to them being tolerated in the territories. As the years passed his hopes for a reconciliation of Christian and

Jews faded and with it also went his kindness and openness towards them. His letter “*Wider die Sabbather an einen guten Freund*” (WA 50, 309-337) in 1538 still reflects a moderate tone which soon turned to a bitter tirade in his last three tracts: “*Von den Juden und ihren Lügen*” (1543) (WA 53, 412-552) and “*Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi*” (1543) (WA 53, 573-648) and “*Von den letzten Worten Davids*” (1543) (WA 54, 16-100). His hope of their conversion had almost dissipated and their obstinate rejection of the word should be met with forceful measures from the government leading to their expulsion from the territory.

¹³ For a fair treatment one may see: Walter Holsten, *Martin Luther. Schriften wider Juden und Türken* (München: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1936), 525-526. 538-539; Arnulf H. Baumann, Käthe Mahn and Magne Saebø (eds.), *Luthers Erben und die Juden* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1984), 12-16.

¹⁴ Sermon on Matthew 24:8ff. 1539, WA 47, 565, 11-566,3. Stolle, 54-55.

¹⁵ *A Campaign sermon against the Turks*. 1529: “Since the end of the world is at hand, the Devil must attack Christendom most horribly with twice the power as formerly and give us the proper finale before we go to heaven”. (WA 30 II, 161, 31-162, 29); Stolle, 58; “I maintain that the Last Day is not far off, because the gospel is offering up its final strength, and it is like it is with the light. When it is about to burn out, then it makes a great thrust at the last, just as if it were going to burn yet a long time, but in this way it dies. Thus it also appears with the gospel, as if it would now extend itself widely. I am concerned, however, that it may die in the same way with a ‘whoosh’ and thereby the Judgment Day shall come. It is the same way with a sick person. When he dies, he usually seems the freshest at the end, as if he would again recover, but in a ‘whoosh’ he is gone”. (Table talks as recorded by Kaspar Heydenreich. 1542 WA Tr 5, 184, 4-12.) Stolle, 55.

¹⁶ *Bulla coenae domini*. 1522 WA 8, 708, 27-209, 8; Stolle, 45.

¹⁷ *Evangelische Missionslehre. Ein missionstheoretischer Versuch*. Volume 1: Die Begründung der Sendung (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1897), 1.

¹⁸ Erasmus of Rotterdam already bemoaned *expressis verbis* in his tract (“*Ecclesiastes sive de ratione concionandi*”) the lack of enthu-

siasm for missions. Since Erasmus is still to be regarded part of the Roman camp, we agree with Warneck that he does not serve as a good evangelical Protestant witness. Warneck, 9.

¹⁹ Preston Laury, *A History of Missions* (Reading: Pilger Publishing House, 1905), 26-35; Elert, 397.

²⁰ “The Right and Power of a Christian Congregation or Community to Judge All Teaching and Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proved from Scripture” (1523) *Works of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia Edition, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg Press, 1915-1932; reprint Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), 4:80. Luther goes on in saying: “When he [the Christian] is in a place where there are no Christians, he needs no other call than the fact that he is a Christian, inwardly called and anointed by God; he is bound by the duty of brotherly love to preach to the erring heathens or nonchristians and to teach them the Gospel, even though no one called him to this work ... In such circumstances the Christian looks, in brotherly love, upon the needs of the poor perishing souls, and waits for no commission or letter from pope or bishop. For necessity breaks every law and knows no law; moreover, love is bound to help when there is no one else to help.” Elert, 389. One may also see the “*casus necessitatis*” (case of emergency) presented by Philip Melancthon’s *Treatise on the Power and Primacy* 67 (*The Book of Concord*, 341).

²¹ *The Large Catechism* (LC) II, 61 (*The Book of Concord*, 439).

²² LC II, 53 (*The Book of Concord*, 438).

²³ Wilhelm Löhe, *Three Books about the Church*. Translated by James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 59; Elert 390.

²⁴ This comes across with Melancthon’s description of the “*ecclesia per totum orbem dispersa*” (the church scattered through the entire world), Apology VII, 10. 20 (*The Book of Concord*, 175 and 177).

²⁵ Psalm 82:4. Translated by C. M. Jacobs, in *Luther’s Works* 13. *Selected Psalms*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 64-65.

²⁶ Stolle, 3.

²⁷ Sermon on Titus 2:11-15; WA 10 I, 1, 21, 3-23, 14; Stolle, 63.

²⁸ *Ibid.*; Stolle, 64.

²⁹ Stolle, 15. This text was preached on 25. May 1525 (WA 17 I, 257-

8), and then again on 22. May 1533 (WA 37 I, 77-78). (One may also see a sermon on Matthew 22:9 held on 22.10.1525, the Sunday before Simon and Jude: “Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you can find”. There he states with regard to the preaching of the Gospel: “It is still not finished. This time period continues in which the servants go to the streets. The apostles began, and we call together to the present day. The tables will be full when the advent of the Last Day arrives and the Gospel is known to the whole world.” (WA 17 I, 442, 31-443,9); Stolle, 17. Warneck 14.

³⁰ For a balanced interpretation of both quotes, one may see Paul Drews, *Die Anschauungen reformatorischer Theologen über die Heidenmission*,” in *Zeitschrift für praktische Theologie* (1897), 19: 1-26.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 387.

³² Warneck, 12.

³³ Warneck, 11, claims that Luther applied the term “heathen” only to himself and all Christians. “When it is said in the 117th Psalm, ‘Praise the Lord, all ye heathen,’ we are assured that we are heathen, and that we also shall certainly be heard by God in heaven, and shall not be condemned, although we are not of Abraham’s flesh and blood.” Stolle, 64.

³⁴ LC III, 54 (*Book of Concord*, 447). One may also see Luther’s hymn (*Lutheran Worship* #288): “May God embrace us with His grace,” especially stanza 1: “... Let Jesus’ healing power be, Revealed in richest measure, Coverting ev’ry nation.”

³⁵ Johann Schmidt, “Die missionarische Dimension der Theologie,” in *Das Wort und die Wörter*. Festschrift Gerhard Friedrich zum 65. Geburtstag. Edited by Horst Balz und Siegfried Schulz. (Stuttgart—Berlin—Köln—Mainz: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1973), 193.

³⁶ Elert, 385. Werner Elert calls it a trust in the “impact of the Gospel” (“evangelischer Ansatz”) which manifests itself in two ways: “(1) faith in the omnipotence and the universal teleology of the Gospel and (2) the affirmation of the mission to proclaim the Gospel”.

³⁷ Klaus Detlev Schulz, *The missiological significance of the doctrine of justification in the Lutheran Confessions* (Dissertation: St. Louis, 1995); Georg Vicedom, *Die Rechtfertigung als gestaltende Kraft der Mission* (Neuendettelsau: Freimund Verlag, 1952).

³⁸ Bürkle, 45-46.

³⁹ Wilhelm Maurer, “Die Lutherische Kirche und ihre Mission,” *Kirche und Geschichte. Gesammelte Aufsätze*. Band II. Edited by Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls and Gerhard Müller (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 192.

⁴⁰ Johann Gerhard comments on Bellarmine’s accusations, *Loci Theologici*, Volume II. Edited by Preuss (Berlin: 1864), Locus V, Section IV: *De Quarta ecclesiae nota a Bellarmino assignata, videlicet amplitudine sive multitudine et varietate credentium*, 422-435. The inactivity in missions was also criticized from within Lutheran circles, for example the Wittenberg theologian and professor Balthasar Meisner (1587-1626) in 1625. One may see here the exhaustive study on the Lutheran orthodoxy, Wolfgang Gröbel, *Die Mission und die evangelische Kirche im 17. Jahrhundert* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1997), 8.

⁴¹ Maurer, 192.

⁴² Excerpts of the Latin text are published in: Werner Raupp (Ed.), *Mission in Quellentexten. Von der Reformation bis zur Weltmissionskonferenz 1910* (Erlangen: Verlag der Evang.-Luth. Mission and Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1990), 61-62; Gröbel, 71. The English text is taken from *Classic Texts in Mission & Evangelization. A Reader’s Companion to David Bosch’s Transforming Mission*. Edited, with Introductions by Norman E. Thomas (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 41-43. For further references one may also see, L. B. Smith, *The contribution of Hadrian Savaria to the doctrine of the nature of the church and its mission*. Dissertation (Edinburgh 1966); Though Saravia takes his treatise as an occasion to argue for missions—especially in a chapter entitled “*Mandatum omnibus gentibus praedicandi Euangelium, Apostolis in coelum receptis, etiam Ecclesiam obligat*” (The command to preach the Gospel to all nations binds the Church, since the Apostles have been taken up into heaven)—a close reading of it soon uncovers the real purpose and underlying motive; it is not so much to appeal for missions but to argue for an episcopal constitution—not an exclusively Roman one—understood as a continuation of the apostolicity for today, against the Calvinistic form. He demanded that in the episcopacy which goes back to the apostles and Jesus Christ, the church

of Christ possesses an undiminished inheritance of the apostolic authority which she requires for her own upkeep and completion of the for-all-times-applicable (perpetual) Great Commission. In Baptist-like hermeneutic, though guided with a different set of motives, Saravia indiscriminately applies the historic dominical mandates to his context, and he does this by raising four statements with which Johann Gerhard, Johann Fecht (1636-1716) and Johann Georg Neumann (1661-1709) especially take up issue. On the Reformed side it was Calvin's successor Theodor Beza (1516-1605). (Raupp, 61). Here are Saravia's main arguments 1) "It matters not at all that the apostles are said to have had extraordinary power; for indeed by the same reason it would be possible to deny anyone the power of baptizing and of preaching the gospel. For if they were extraordinary things with the apostles, they were not able to leave them to posterity; and the same reasoning demands that neither were they able to leave the authority for preaching the gospel or for baptizing after their own time." 2) "For the command of announcing the Gospel to unbelieving nations referred not only to the age of the apostles, but to all peoples which might exist until the end of the world. Indeed, Matthew in his last chapter where the Lord says there is given to him all power in heaven and on earth, and here orders that, going they should teach all nations, etc., says: 'I am with you even to the end of the world.'" 3) "If the apostolic authority had been temporary, a purely personal and peculiar gift, and not intended for their associates and helpers, they would be present for the Lord's work for which they were destined. Yet since they knew their ministry and those things for which they enjoyed authority rather to have been given to the church than to persons, they understood the making of companions in their apostolic power, whom they also understood as their successors". 4) "It is necessary, therefore to have many helpers and colleagues for the Lord's work. And if they are not able to perfect it themselves, what is begun is left to those following to complete. And if indeed with the apostles there were to have migrated to heaven the apostolic deputation, and especially the care of several churches, the bishops whom the apostles left as their successors would have judged the further propagation of the gospel in no way as referring to them, and the kingdom of Christ would never have grown to such an extent." 5) "Has indeed the gospel after these

fifteen hundred years come to every nation?... From such reasoning do I then conclude that the mandate of this deputation for preaching the gospel retains its force and obligation in the church for as long as there are peoples who do not know the Lord... The church therefore possesses this designated authority through the keys, which the Lord gave not so much to Peter and his colleagues as to the church. It can then do today what formerly in the right circumstances it was capable of, namely of committing to [those] suitable for the purpose the office of preaching the gospel with apostolic authority." *Classic Texts in Mission & World Christianity*, 42; Gröbel, 71.

⁴³ Willy Heß, *Das Missionsdenken bei Philip Nicolai*. (Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1962). Wolfgang Gröbel, 9.

⁴⁴ Gröbel, 8; Heß 92.

⁴⁵ In doing so, he displays surprisingly innovative thought: The Brazilians, for example, though they are under God's wrath for having rejected preaching, still perpetuate a form of baptism that priests conduct in their temples with the signing of the cross. One may see Walter Holsten, "Die Bedeutung der altprotestantischen Dogmatik für die Mission," *Das Evangelium und die Völker. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theorie der Mission* (Berlin-Friedenau: Verlag der Buchhandlung der Gosnerischen Mission, 1939), 148-166.

⁴⁶ To draw the distinction between the first time preaching of the apostles and that of today, Nicolai employs two terms: *mission* proper and *propagatio*. The former belongs to the apostles and the latter to the preaching office in the church today. In the *propagatio* the preachers of the church continue the mission of the apostles. But in contrast to the apostles, this *propagatio* no longer embraces the universal migrant or transient component of the apostles but only those elements of the apostolic office that contain the preaching office over word and sacrament. Heß, 92-96.

⁴⁷ One should add in view of foreign missions work, that foreign territories were still not available in the 17th century. Colonies and foreign lands remained in Spanish and Portuguese hands and in accordance with the *cuius regio, eius religio* agreed upon in the peace of Augsburg in 1555, Lutherans had no claim on them. In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church pursued missions actively and expansively. To avoid disarray and confusion within the ranks of its monastic

orders as to who is to go where, Pope Gregory XV in 1622 passed the “*Congregatio de propaganda fide*,” to streamline its mission. Gröbel, 10.

⁴⁸ One may see Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, Volume II. Edited by Preuss (Berlin: 1864), V, Section IV: *De Quarta ecclesiae nota a Bel-larmino assignata, videlicet amplitudine sive multitudine et varietate credentium*”, 422-435. Gerhard concludes: “*Ex his apparet, Jesuitas in primis Christianae religionis rudimentis tradendis a Pontificiis traditionibus et superstitionibus sibi temperare ac fundamentalibus fidei Christianae articulis imbutos, decalogo, symbolo apostolico, oratione Dominica mediocriter informatos baptizare, ut dubium nulum sit, quam plurimos hac ratione Christo lucriferi, qui papalia dogmata vel non intelligunt, vel in tentationum igne abjiciunt.*” Ibid., V, 432. Maurer, 190-191. Gerhard shared this opinion not only with Nicolai but with many others such as the Pastor Johannes Müller (1598-1672). Gröbel, 18 and 89.

⁴⁹ Gröbel, 84-89.

⁵⁰ Heß, 159-162. Johann Gerhard seconds this opinion in his *Loci Theologici*, Volume II. Locus XXII. De Ecclesia. Caput IV. An sit ecclesia. “*Ex vocatione per verbum perpetuo durante recte colligitur ecclesiae perpetua collectio et conservatio*”; with references to countries such as Iceland, Greenland and Lapland where thousands of people have been converted from their ethnic idolatry to the true God through particular Lutheran churches, their rulers and bishops. Ibid., V: 528: “*in quibus regionibus evangelii praedicatione multa hominum millia ab ethnica idolatria ad verum Deum sunt conversa.*” Gerhard demonstrates further that the Augsburg Confession was handed to Emperor Charles V in both German and Latin and then immediately translated in Spanish, Italian, French, Belgian and English and sent to the Pope and other kings and lords. In addition, when the Augsburg Confession was read aloud representatives from all nations in the empire were attending as well. In this way the Augsburg Confession became known to Christians all over the ecumenical world. Ibid., V, 427.

⁵¹ Heß, 160-161. Though Nicolai’s missiological influence was lost in the 30 years war (1618-1648), two hundred and fifty years later Wilhelm Löhe revived his missionary ecclesiology by citing major

portions of *De Regno Christi* in his *Three books about the Church*. Translated and edited by James Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969). One may also note that in loyalty to the Reformation and orthodoxy Löhe refrained also from an explicit sending of a missionary, for he, too, knew of no such office. Instead, he posited a missionary ecclesiology in its movement, missions is part of the life of the church to which the preaching activity is bound. For this reason the sending of individuals was thus not a sending of missionaries but really a handing over of their service to already existing churches and Christian colonies in whose midst their services would continue. Christian Weber, *Missionstheologie bei Wilhelm Löhe: Aufbruch zur Kirche der Zukunft* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996), 295.

⁵² Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, Vol. VI, Locus XIII: *De Ministerio Ecclesiastico*, (Lipsiae: J. C. Hinrichs, 1885), Caput III. *De causa efficiente ministerii ecclesiastici*. Sectio II. *Quotuplex sit vocatio ad ministerium*, pp. 48-55. Also *Ibid.*, Caput V: *De Forma Ministerii*. *Sectio Posterior: De Gradibus et Ordinibus Ministrorum Ecclesiae*, pp. 145-148; Raupp, 67-69; Elert, 385-402.

⁵³ Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, Volume II. Locus VII: *De Electione et reprobatione*. Also: Caput IV. *De universali Dei misericordia et beneficia erga omnes voluntate*, 58-59.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Caput V: *De Forma Ministerii*. *Sectio Posterior: De Gradibus et Ordinibus Ministrorum Ecclesiae*, 145: “*respectu primi omnes veri et sinceri ecclesiae ministri, respectu secundi omnes episcopi apostolorum successores dicuntur ecclesiastica loquendi consuetudine... Respectu tertii, in quo etiam apostolatus proprie consistit, nullus fuit apostolorum successor, sed apostolatus fuit ordo temporarius et extraordinarius.*”

⁵⁵ This argument surfaced frequently amongst orthodox theologians, as for example with Johannes Mueller (1598-1672). Gröbel, 16-17. 127-129.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 145: “*Mandatum praedicandi evangelium in toto terrarum orbe ac ubique fundandi ecclesias ad apostolos proprie spectavit... Ergo cum apostolis mandatum et potestas illa desiit.*”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 146. A) The church does not possess the gift of absolute infallibility (*Infallibilitatis absolutae*). The teachings of the apostles

were directly God-breathed (Greek: *theopneustos*; 2 Timothy 3:16) and true in and of themselves (Greek: *autopistos*) and must therefore be afforded the same authority as the teachings of the prophets in the OT (*ac parem omnino cum doctrina prophetarum in V.T. obtinet auctoritatem*); B) The ability to perform miracles (*thaumaturgia miraculosa*) has passed with the apostles as well. The apostles had received a special authority to perform miracles (Matthew 10:1; Mark 16:16). Included in this authority is also the ability to speak in tongues (Acts 2:3). Therefore the special authority to perform miracles, the gift of languages and other extraordinary gifts of the Spirit no longer apply to the church. (“*Jam vero donum miraculorum, donum linguarum et peculiaris illa Spiritus sancti charismata hodie non amplius vigent in ecclesia.*”)

⁵⁹ Ibid., 146: “*Atqui nemo eorum, qui hodie docendi officio funguntur, Christum in carne vidit aut coram docentem audivit. Ergo ipsorum ministerium non est functio apostolica proprie et specificè sic dicta.*”

⁶⁰ Ibid., 66: “*Caput VI: De Universalitate Meriti Christi.*” Therein: “*Jam vero Christus pro omnibus omnino hominibus pretiosam suam sangonem in ara crucis profudit. Ergo nemo eorum absoluto aliquo decreto a Deo rejectus.*”

⁶¹ Ibid., 58.

⁶² Ibid., 73-74. Elsewhere he quotes Scripture in support: Romans 10:18 and Colossians 1:6. Ibid., 148.

⁶³ Ibid., 58 (and 73): “*Deinde causa, quare non veniant plures ad agnitionem veritatis, non est in Deo, sed in ipsis hominibus.*” Raupp, 67-68. Melancthon paved the way with the argument of inexcusable guilt. Raupp, 26-27.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 75: “*Parentum ergo peccata, non Dei justitiam et misericordiam accusent.*”

⁶⁵ A point he continues to make in his chapter on the Gospel and on the Ministry. Ibid., III, 161. Locus XIV: De Evangelio; Ibid., VI, Locus XIII: De Ministerio Ecclesiastico: “*...detestamur errores Calvinianarum...*”; 286; Volker Stolle, *Zur missionarischen Perspektive der lutherischen Theologie im 17. Jahrhundert,* *Theologie und Kirche* (1994), 23.

⁶⁶ As Gerhard would say in his section on the church. Ibid., V, 279.

Locus XXII. De Ecclesia. Caput IV. An sit ecclesia. “*Ex vocatione per verbum perpetuo durante recte colligitur ecclesiae perpetua collectio et conservatio*”; Stolle, 23.

⁶⁷ Ibid., V: 281: “De Causa Efficiente, Principali et Instrumentali Ecclesiae:” Therein he states: “*Causa instrumentalis, qua Deus in collectione ecclesiae utitur, est ministerium ecclesiasticum complectens praedicationem verbi et administrationem sacramentum.*”

⁶⁸ Ibid., V, 283: With regard to the lasting duration of the universal call enunciated by the Great Commissions of Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15 (and Colossians 1:6), Gerhard states: “*...ex quo tempore vocatio totius plenitudinis gentium toto terrarum orbe dispersarum inchoata continuata est usque ad haec nostra tempora et durabit usque ad mundi finem.*”

⁶⁹ Ibid., Locus XIII: De Ministerio Ecclesiastico, Caput III. De causa efficiente ministerii ecclesiastici. Sectio II. Quotuplex sit vocatio ad ministerium, 49: “[A] vocatione apostolica, quae potestatem docendi inter omnes gentes continet, distinctum est officium reliquorum ecclesiae doctorum, qui ad certas ecclesias vocantur nec habent absolutam potestatem docendi ubique in omnibus ecclesiis...inde in concilio Chalcedon. Can. 6. Statutum fuit, neminem absolute ordinari debere nisi ad certam et specialem ecclesiam.”

⁷⁰ In his discussion on legitimate and illegitimate calls Gerhard states: “[I]nterim tamen monemus, primo, ob internam sive arcanam illam vocationem neminem debere partes ministerii sibi sumere, nisi accedat etiam externa et solemnis ecclesiae vocatio, ne anabaptisticis confusionibus et enthusiasticis revelationibus fores aperiantur.” Ibid., 48.

⁷¹ Suggestions to this effect are made by Stolle, 25-26.

⁷² Ibid., 148: “*Aliud est fundamentorum in domus exstructione positio, aliud eiusdem ad culmen usque perductio; prius ad solos apostolos pertinet, posterius ad reliquos ecclesiae ministros.*” Stolle, 25.

⁷³ Ibid., 56 and 147.

⁷⁴ Ibid., Locus XXIV: De Magistratu Politico, 447: “*Jam vero universalis illa vocatio gentium non coepit tempore nativitatis Christi, sed per praedicationem apostolicam, eademque adhuc hodie durat*”; Stolle, 26.

⁷⁵ Ibid., V, 282: “*Circa primum membrum notandum est, quod vocatio*

sit universalis respectu Dei mandantis, ut evangelium annuntietur omnibus hominibus, ac volentis, ut illud ab omnibus audiat, et oblata in eo beneficia vera fide ab omnibus recipiantur; fiat autem particularis culpa hominum, primo quatenus quidam Epicuræo contemptu verbum aspernantur, quidam etiam ministros eius persequuntur et violenter a se repellunt; deinde quatenus culpa majorum amissum verbum non semper in omnibus ubique locis actu prædicatur..."

⁷⁶ Ibid., 433: "Hieronymus in c. 24. Matth.: *Non puto, aliquam remansisse gentem, quæ Christi nomen ignoret.* Ambrosius in c. 10. Rom.: *Ubique audita est et in omnem locum pervenit prædicatio nominis Christiani. Ubi enim prædicantis hominis præsentia deficit, sonus tamen et fama pervenit.*"

⁷⁷ The church according to Gerhard consists of three orders: "*Porro cum in ecclesia sint tres distincti status sive ordines: ecclesiasticus, politicus et oeconomicus, sive presbyterium, magistratus et populus...*" Ibid., 54.

⁷⁸ Its text can be found in Gröbel, 84-89.

⁷⁹ How easily this is done can be seen from James Scherer who states that the universal perspective was totally absent. Written for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). James Scherer, ...that the Gospel may be sincerely preached throughout the world. A Lutheran perspective on Mission and Evangelism LWF Report 11/12 November 1982, 18.

⁸⁰ Gröbel, 85; Stolle, 27.

⁸¹ It argues the point also with biblical texts such as Mark 16:20; Romans 10:18; Psalm 19:4.; Colossians 1:23 that their message has already gone out into all parts of the world to those who have been uniquely bestowed with gifts to heal and raise the dead and to speak the languages. All successors have been placed by the apostles at a specific locality of cities and churches to which they are tied, as can be seen from Acts 14:23; 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1.

⁸² Gröbel, 87.

⁸³ Ibid., 87.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 87-88.

⁸⁵ Read: James Scherer, *Justinian Welz: Essays by an Early Prophet of Mission*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 7-46. Raupp, 82-92; Gröbel, 33-67.134-139.

⁸⁶ Original title: “*De Vita Solitaria, das ist / Von dem Einsidler Leben / Wie es nach Gottes Wort / und der Alten Heiligen Einsidler Leben anzustellen seye.*” Gröbel, 34.

⁸⁷ Welz pointed to Paul’s text in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 as the proper guideline for Christians.

⁸⁸ Scherer, 15.

⁸⁹ Late in the year of 1663 Welz published his first missionary tract, “*A Brief Report on How a New Society is to be Established among Orthodox Christians of the Augsburg Confession.*” Original title: “*Ein kurtzer Bericht / Wie eine Neue Gesellschaft auffzurichten wäre / unter den rechtgläubigen Christen der Augspurgischen Confession. Mit einer Christlichen Vermahnung &c. Von Justiniano.*” German original text found in Gröbel, 138-139 and the English translation in Scherer, 49-54. Though he did not yet promote with this tract a detailed presentation of his own missionary plans, he nonetheless uses it to encourage both Lutherans (the Marburgers) and the Reformed to overcome their differences—as the Lutherans had with the heretic Georg Calixtus (1586-1656) of Helmstedt—and to join hands to preach in unison for the cause of the heathens. And the candidates of the ministry should do so as well rather than sitting idly and waiting for a call. Justinian also makes the contentious claim for a timeless and universal understanding of the dominical command of Matthew 28 (including Matthew 24 and Mark 16) and dismisses its particularistic interpretation. “Why do they not take pity on the unbelieving peoples of other places in the world, in view of the clear command of Christ that the gospel is to be preached in all the world (Matthew 28)? ... I do not consider it right that a particular command (i. e. to the apostles only) should be made out of the words of Christ: ‘Go and teach all nations.’ For the words following about holy baptism are universal, and heeded by all churches.” Scherer, 50.

⁹⁰ Original title: “*Eine Christliche und treuhertzige Vermahnung An alle rechtgläubige Christen / der Augspurgischen Confession, Betreffend eine sonderbare Gesellschaft / Durch welche / nechst göttlicher Hülffe / unsere Evangelische Religion möchte außgebreitet werden / von Justiniano.*” Gröbel, 35. English text found in Scherer, 55-79.

⁹¹ “The Corpus Evangelicorum was a loose assembly of state counsellors [sic] representing the interests of some thirty-nine Protestant

kingdoms and territories within the Holy Roman Empire.” Scherer, 17.

⁹² Scherer 59.

⁹³ Scherer, 61-62.

⁹⁴ Scherer, 72.

⁹⁵ Scherer, 76 and 57.

⁹⁶ Scherer, 63-64.

⁹⁷ Scherer, 76; Stolle, 29-30.

⁹⁸ Scherer, 80-90; Original title: “*Einladungs-Trieb zum heran-nahenden Großen Abendmahl...*”, Stolle, 30.

⁹⁹ Scherer, 81: “For if the commandment, ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself,’ is eternal, so must also the command, ‘Go teach and convert all peoples,’ be eternal and valid still, since it is according to reason that if I wish salvation for myself, out of love I should assist others, of whom each one is my neighbor, to attain the same.” See also page 86 where love to Christ and toward all men are listed as causes number two and three to preach the Gospel to the heathens. Welz also lists other causes or reasons for the promotion of missions, the universal salvific will of God (1 Timothy 2:4), the preaching of the Gospel through which faith is given (Romans 10:18), the dominical commissions (Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:19), the ethical motive of letting your light shine forth before the heathen (Matthew 5:14, 16), and finally the strong eschatological motive. Gröbel, 60-61.

¹⁰⁰ One may see his personal conviction in the previous tract: “*A Christian and Sincere Admonition:*” “Know therefore, dear reader, that I observed in the teachings of Christ that it is a great hindrance for one who truly wants to follow Christ to think too much about earthly things, and be too much encumbered by them (Luke 14:26). So my intention is to put everything aside for the sake of Christ; even what the children of the world hold in esteem—money and goods, honor and respect—I have determined to suppress from my heart entirely for the love of my beloved Lord Jesus Christ.” Scherer, 74.

¹⁰¹ This becomes evident from the rules he set down for joining his society. Those who wish to join “must also have learned true Christianity from God’s Word, from Luther, from Thomas à Kempis’ first two books on the *Imitation of Christ*; from Johann Arndt’s *True Christianity*, from Joachim Luetkemann’s *Foretaste of Divine Goodness*,

from Heinrich Mueller's *Heavenly Love-Kiss*, or from my simple writing called *The Hermit life*." Scherer, 84. The works of Arndt, Lutkemann and Mueller all stress in some form or another the mystical union between Christ and the believer; evidence of a movement that claims spiritual renewal within the Lutheran orthodoxy.

¹⁰² Welz would serve as a precursor of Zinzendorf known for his depth of love for Jesus. Stolle, 32.

Lutheran Missiology for the 21st Century

by David Haeuser

If the Church instead of theorizing and speculating will improve her opportunities, facilities and resources, it seems entirely possible to fill the earth with the knowledge of Christ before the present generation passes away. With literal truth it may be said that ours is an age of unparalleled opportunity. "Providence and revelation combine to call the Church afresh to go in and take possession of the world for Christ." Everything seems to be ready for a general and determined engagement of the forces of Christendom for the world-wide proclamation of the Gospel. "Once the world seemed boundless and the Church was poor and persecuted. No wonder the work of evangelizing the world within a reasonable time seemed hopeless. Now steam and electricity have brought the world together. The Church of God is in the ascendant. She has well within her control the power, the wealth, and the learning of the world. She is like a strong and well appointed army in the presence of the foe. The only thing she needs is the Spirit of her Leader and a willingness to obey His summons to go forward. The victory may not be easy but it is sure."¹

We are only a century removed from those heady words of optimism spoken by John Mott predicting that the entire world could be evangelized in a generation. An influential magazine from the early 20th century adopted the name "The Christian Century" with the same spirit of optimism. At the close of the 20th century the talk is of the multiple billions who do not know Christ, many of whom are in lands which are presently closed to gospel preaching. Voices are heard, some filled with glee, others with dismay, proclaiming the post-Christian era. Many large church bodies can be described only as apostate. Christian missiologists extol the benefits of interfaith dialogue with the representatives of non-Christian religions so that Christianity may benefit from the testimony to God's work among those outside the Church. Paganism and non-Christian religions are enjoying a resurgence in many parts of the world, including what has been the heartland of Christendom and the base from which mission-

aries have traditionally been sent. The heralded spirituality of the new and postmodern age, rather than a benefit for Christianity, presents Hindu paganism under a new and seductive guise.

How are we as confessional Lutherans in the 21st century to view our mission task and opportunity? How shall we react to the challenges and difficulties of the new century? How applicable are the principles which have guided Lutheran mission practice in the past? These are some of the questions which confront us as we consider Lutheran missions in the 21st century.

In his book, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, South African missiologist David J. Bosch lists the following historical paradigms of mission: those of the Eastern Church; Medieval Roman Catholic; the Protestant Reformation; Post-enlightenment. Taking the central Bible passage of each paradigm, Bosch compares the first three in this way: "If the 'missionary text' of the Greek patristic period was John 3:16 and that of medieval Catholicism Luke 14:23, then one may perhaps claim that Romans 1:16f is the 'missionary text' of the Protestant theological paradigm in all its many forms."² Among the many aspects of mission theology in the Reformation which remained from the medieval period Bosch lists an insistence on the correct formulation of doctrine and the idea of a Christian state in alliance with the church. As new aspects in the reformation paradigm, he lists the centrality of the article of justification by faith, the *articulis stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* (the article by which the church stands or falls). People are to be seen "from the perspective of the fall, as lost, unable to do anything about their condition." A third point is that the Reformation stressed the *subjective dimension of salvation*. God confronts the individual with the message of salvation. A fourth aspect is the *priesthood of all believers*. Bosch interprets this tenet as an affirmation that "the believer stood in a direct relationship with God, a relationship that existed independent of the church." He feels that Luther, under pressure from the Anabaptists, was "forced to fall back on to a more rigid understanding of office: he denied the validity of any office that was not linked to the existence of geographically defined parishes and rejected the idea of anybody appealing to the 'Great Commission' for the justification of an extraordinary and non-territorial ecclesiastical office." Finally, Bosch

considers the *centrality of the Scriptures* in the life of the church a contribution of the Reformation Paradigm of mission.

While we may question some of Bosch's assertions, we shall give special attention to the question of the lasting validity of the first, second and last points as a foundation for Lutheran mission also in the 21st century. We shall look to Scripture as our foundation, from there we will affirm the conviction that humans are lost without Christ, or *the need for missions*; we shall see God's inexplicable love for a lost world as the *basis for missions*; we shall see the message of justification by faith alone as the central message of our proclamation, *the means of missions*. Along the way we shall briefly examine several modern mission theories in the light of these fundamental presuppositions of Lutheran mission. Finally, we shall take a look at the situation that confronts Christian mission at the beginning of the 21st century, or *the context of missions*.

The Need For Missions

What are some of the basic theological convictions which will need to guide our mission work as confessional Lutherans in the 21st century? As we consider the need for missions, the first crucial conviction is that since the fall of Adam into sin mankind is totally enslaved by sin and bound to destruction. Mankind is by nature under the wrath of God, he is hostile toward God, he cannot take even one step in God's direction through his own power or efforts. Though man is fundamentally religious, his natural religion is in fact an affront to God and is in opposition to God's own plan for man's salvation.

Since Adam fell into sin, mankind is totally enslaved by sin. This is the teaching of the entire Scripture, both in the Old and the New Testaments. Though Adam was created in the image of God, in communion with him, holy like him and with an intimate knowledge of God, after the fall he engendered a son after his own image, sinful like him (Genesis 5:3). God destroyed a sinful mankind in the flood because "every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5). Though Noah and his family were saved by faith during the flood, the natural condition of their heart was no different from those who had perished: "every inclination of his heart

is evil from childhood” (Genesis 8:21). Luther comments concerning this passage: “Careful note must be taken of this passage, since it clearly shows that the nature of man is corrupt. This knowledge of our corrupt nature is necessary above all else; without it the mercy and grace of God cannot be properly understood.”³ David confesses that this was his nature in the words of the 51st Psalm: “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5).

Jesus reminds us of the same truth in John 3 when he says “flesh gives birth to flesh” (John 3:6). He means that parents who have a sinful nature produce children whose nature is also sinful. Paul tells us the same thing, applying it personally to all of us who are Christians: “Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath” (Ephesians 2:6). By nature we were children of wrath, that is, we are born into this world subject to the wrath of God, before we have done anything good or bad. As a result we were “dead in ... transgressions and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

However, we should not misconstrue what we have said as if this were simply a passive condition. On the contrary, every fiber of our being is by nature hostile to God and fights against him and his intentions for us. Paul tells us: “The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God” (Romans 8:7-8). In 1 Corinthians 2:14 he reminds us: “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

In keeping with these statements of the Scriptures Luther exclaimed:

By nature all hate God and the things that are of God. This is not felt except in temptation. The whipped son is angry with his parent. No one likes discipline, not even God’s. Natural man would prefer that there be no law, because he is not able to perform what it demands. The sin that has been committed is the second tyrant, and it brings forth the third, namely, death and damnation. Who could be happy when he is answerable to these three?⁴

In the Smalcald Articles he wrote: “This hereditary sin is so deep

and horrible a corruption of nature that no reason can understand it, but it must be learned and believed from the revelation of Scripture” (*Concordia Triglotta* 477, I, 3).

Since man cannot accept the things of God by nature, since he is spiritually incapable of understanding them, it is evident that man is helpless to take even the first step toward God. No one can be saved on his own initiative or using his own natural powers. If God did not provide the initiative and the way, no one would be saved. You and I who are here today would not be saved.

We repeat that the whole thesis of those who deny the fundamental conviction that all religions apart from that which God has revealed in the Bible are roads to damnation take the very heart out of missions. When one ecumenical proponent of dialogue with the non-Christian religions states that the goal of dialogue is to make the Christian a better Christian and the Buddhist a better Buddhist, mission proclamation has been effectively destroyed.

Part of man’s rebellion against God is his refusal to admit that his own ideas and religious strivings are in reality idolatry and rebellion against God. Luther, commenting on Isaiah 65, says:

Who can believe this, that our ideas apart from the Word are evil? The ungodly do not want to believe that their life is without the Word, but the fathers and the Holy Spirit say much that is not in Scripture. This is what they have found. To them I reply: We must not believe holy men, because their words can be opinions. Scripture says (John 14:6), Christ is ‘the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’ The best ways traveled in human religions are here called *ways that are not good*.⁵

This places us squarely before one of the great challenges to Christian mission in the 21st century. Religious tolerance can be a great blessing. No government today is called to be a theocracy as was the government of ancient Israel. Force and government decrees are not the way to win people for Christ. However, in our day tolerance has come to mean that no one can claim that his own religious ideas or beliefs are truer than any other, that each religion offers a variant road to the same place. This is not only false, it is deadly to mission.

According to the Scriptures, other religions are not different roads to the divine, they are in opposition to God, the product of a

corrupt human understanding. They are an expression of rebellion against the true God, and lead only to condemnation. This is an unpopular stand to take in this age of post-modernism, yet if we take God's word seriously we can arrive at no other conclusion. "For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens" (Psalm 96:5). "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen" (Romans 1:19).

Many voices in Christendom today reject this testimony. And with it they reject missions in the sense in which we have understood them. Karl Rahner, a Roman Catholic scholar, speaks of "anonymous Christians." These are people who follow the light that is available in their own religions, do what is right, and therefore are saved even though they may never have heard of Christ. Others claim that God has worked in a saving way among the Jews with the result that the Judeo-Christian tradition is valid for us, but that he has also worked through other religious traditions, so that those religions are valid for those who hold to them, and salvation is available to them through the tenets of their own religion. J. van Lin in his article "Models for a Theology of Religions" summarizes this position.

God can and does meet people outside the revelation in Jesus. For all these reasons non-Christian faiths can be viewed as ways of salvation just as the Christian faith is a way of salvation, since in such traditions people are attempting, each in his or her own way, to respond to God's active presence among them.⁶

According to Catholic scholar Schillebeeckx, quoted in the same article:

Religions, churches are the *anamnesis*, i. e. the living recollection among us, of this universal, 'tacit' but effective will to salvation and the absolute saving presence of God in the history of our world. By virtue of their religious word, their sacrament or

ritual and their life-style, religions — synagogues and pagodas, mosques and churches — prevent the universal saving presence from being forgotten.⁷

With this conviction, it is not surprising that mission is reduced to dialogue with non-Christian religions, an attempt to discover and celebrate the varied ways in which God has made himself known in the different traditions. In an article in *Theology and Mission*, David Hesselgrave quotes a participant in dialogue.

Dialogue does certainly involve first and foremost from the Christian side the rejection of the impatience and polemics and partisan controversies of the past — largely because the Christian theological foundations on which these once rested have now been widely revised. Once this point has been passed, and once it has been accepted that there is a common ground between believers, dialogue may turn in any one of a number of directions — intellectual, personal, secular or contemplative. Its advocates almost all assume, however, that the causes of past intolerance have to do with the doctrinal and other constructions that men have built around their central religious commitment, and seek for areas of common concern in which those constructions are transcended, penetrated or avoided.⁸

A Buddhist participant states:

Although there is general agreement that theologically oriented and action oriented dialogue is most desirable in a situation of religious pluralism, for the purpose of mutual understanding and enrichment, for dispelling suspicions and prejudices, and for harnessing moral and spiritual values to eradicate social evils and promote and foster social justice, the Buddhists strongly feel that ‘evangelism’ is most undesirable and incompatible with dialogue.⁹

In reaction to this pluralistic approach to world religions, we may point out that the *opinio legis*, the idea that salvation is essentially a result of the works of the law, has penetrated large segments of Christendom. This idea is idolatry, an expression of rebellion against God and his plan of salvation, whether it is presented in an ostensibly Christian garb or whether it appears in a non-Christian system. Where this opinion holds sway, it is not surprising to hear

that all the religions are merely different masks for the same path of return to God. The idea that man himself has a religious capacity, that he can by his own efforts find God, that a noble life of faith in whatever god he may believe in will save him, contradicts directly what Scripture states is the only way of salvation.

Hans Werner Gensichen comments on Romans 3:9, (“We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin”):

It is important to realize how radical Paul’s argument really is. Recent Roman Catholic theology has prided itself on eliminating precisely that radical note by admitting that all good people, within and without the church, will necessarily be saved. The difference between heathen and believers would thus be reduced to a value judgment on degrees of goodness in men. But that is not the point at all, although such differences are not meaningless. The point is that even the good man, Jew or Gentile, religious or non-religious, is not justified before God by being good, and it is that basic predicament of man which is most clearly manifested in the missionary situation.¹⁰

Because these ideas form a part of our own nature they present an especially dangerous challenge to our sense of urgency for missions and evangelism. Paul Hiebert comments:

Most Western Christians have yet to develop epistemological foundations that enable them to affirm the uniqueness of Christ as the only way to salvation and life eternal, and to boldly witness to the truth in winsome ways... Today Western Christians ride to work with Muslims and Hindus who are good people, often better than some Christians they know. How can they declare that these people are lost? The easy solution is to stress tolerance, to live our own lives and let others live theirs, and to hope that communities can somehow coexist in peace in the same nation and world. One of the greatest challenges to the Western church is to lay again the theological foundations of the uniqueness of Christ, and to train its members how to proclaim this with humility and love.¹¹

If we are to be active in missions, we need to learn to see others as the Bible sees them, as “lost and condemned creatures,” as people in need of a Savior, as people who by themselves and by their own

lights, including their religious light, are bound only for hell.

The Reformed missiologist, J. A. Bavinck, summarizes well this first basic presupposition of missions:

In its deepest essence biblical anthropology recognizes that man is a sinner, a rebel, an exile, a displaced person. Within his deepest nature, man is ever concerned with God. God makes him anxious, man seeks to escape God by shoving him aside beyond the horizon of his experience. Man feels assaulted, hunted, and oppressed by God, and he rebels. Such is the awful mystery in the life of every man, the drama enacted in his most hidden parts. It is an integral part of his fallen human nature, a part of his being a son of Adam. This is what man is, this is his existential basis, the ground on which he stands.¹²

It was the consciousness of this predicament when Luther knew God only as the severe judge that led him to cry out: “Love God? I hated him.”

The Grounds For Missions

When we see the utter helplessness of mankind without the Christian message, we have seen the need for missions. We turn our attention now to the grounds for missions. God in his inexplicable mercy determined to save a lost humanity by sending his own Son into the world in our flesh to redeem us through his death on the cross.

God sent his Son. In that sense, Christ himself is the true missionary. It is he who came first to bring about our salvation, then also to proclaim that salvation throughout the world. According to Psalm 22, the Christ who was forsaken by God and crucified for our sins, after his resurrection would praise God in the midst of the great congregation (Psalm 22:25).

God himself provides the ground for missions. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Despite our total lack of ability, despite our active enmity against God, without our being able to take a single step to make amends or

merit in the slightest this attitude of God, he loved us. "If God had not been a missionary God, all of us would have been lost. But God was willing to pay the price to bring about reconciliation with mankind, which includes people of all tribes, tongues, peoples, and nations, until he comes again."¹³

This is also a theme which runs through the entire Scriptures. Already in the Garden of Eden when mankind had forfeited its blessed communion with God through disobedience, God announced to the first couple, and thus to all mankind, that the Seed of the woman would come and crush the serpent's head. When mankind even after the terrible judgment of the flood had once again abandoned God's promise and the nations had turned to their own ways, God called Abraham and repeated the promise to him. Even though the nations had abandoned God, and he would for a time let them walk in their own ways, God promised to Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3) and "through your offspring" (Genesis 22:18).

Isaiah proclaims that "In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.'" While the picture is of the nations streaming to the house of the Lord, the temple in Jerusalem, the way in which this will actually take place is that "The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2-3). The message of salvation ("law" in the general sense of "instruction") will be proclaimed among the nations so that they too may know their Savior and walk in his paths.

Luther comments:

The Gospel will be published among all nations, and some will

be converted everywhere. For the Gospel sanctifies in every place and bears fruit, as Paul says in Colossians 1:6 and as Isaiah says below in 55:11: “My Word ... shall not return to me empty.” Therefore all nations shall come to this mountain, that is, to the church, which is called a mountain. To this place the souls gather through faith; for when the Gospel is heard, hearts grow soft, rejoice, and come running.¹⁴

In the New Testament the risen Christ speaks to his disciples: “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47). God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), and in keeping with that desire the apostles are sent as witnesses to the crucified and risen Christ “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Indeed, this is essential if God’s own saving will for mankind is to be carried out, for “there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:12-13). But then Paul goes on to point out that if this will of God is to be carried out, the church must faithfully fulfill the mission which God has given her. “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (Romans 10:14-15).

Returning to John 3:16, we observe that the fundamental ground for missions is the love of God, a love directed toward the world: “For God so loved the world”. This love is all the more inexplicable when we consider that the object of God’s love is the very world that has been disobedient, the world which continues in its unabated hostility toward God, the world which had absolutely nothing lovable about it. “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10).

God sent his Son. Jesus is in fact the true missionary, even as he is the content of our missionary message. “He gave his one and only Son.” This Son of God has not only taken our flesh and blood and become fully man, he also took upon himself the burden of the sin and guilt of the entire world of sinners and has paid the frightful penalty for the sin of all mankind on the cross. That is what it means to say that God “loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” He is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). His sacrifice was made not only for a limited number. “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). It is because “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19) that the church has a missionary message to proclaim. This is the true “universalism” of the Christian message.

Nevertheless, the missionary message of the church must also be an exclusive message, for “salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Christ alone is the Savior. “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

This message of Christ being the exclusive Savior of mankind is another of the bedrock convictions which must guide Lutheran mission for the 21st century. It again runs counter to the broad flow of post-modern thought. We have seen that many reject that God’s saving work for mankind comes to people only through the proclamation of Christ as the one who died as our substitute and rose again as the divine declaration that mankind has now been justified before God through the death of that one who “had no sin” but who was “made... to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). We have seen that many wish to find a saving presence of God also through the message of the other great world religions. Thus, J. van Lin summarizes the position of those who espouse what he calls a “theocentric pluralistic approach.” He states: “That which took place in Jesus and which the first Christians experienced of God’s involvement in human lives in him can possibly happen also in other saviors and in the experience of their followers.”¹⁵ He continues his summary:

Jesus cannot reveal God in his fullness. However unique the

relationship was between Jesus and God, Jesus remains only a contingent phenomenon. The historical Jesus-event does not close off other roads to God and therefore cannot be absolutized as the sole divine norm for human conduct, including religious conduct.¹⁶

However, Jesus himself said: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). And Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:5 states clearly that “as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” Christ is the exclusive Redeemer and Savior of mankind, and must be proclaimed as such.

As another participant in the Iguassu Dialogue stated: “To relativize Christ is to deny him.”¹⁷ He points out that this false Christology, the very basis of post-modern religious pluralism, which reduces Christ merely to another human point of contact with the divine among many, is to accept as correct the very thing that Judaism and Islam since the beginning have alleged against Christianity. “The most serious charge which Jews and Muslims have leveled against Christians all through the centuries would actually be true: we have elevated a human being to the place of God and have worshipped him there.”¹⁸

Alongside the conviction that men are helpless, lost and condemned by nature, totally unable to take even the first step toward their salvation, we also affirm and maintain that in Christ God has provided the full and complete remedy for the tragic condition of mankind. In him mankind has full and complete redemption, but only in him, so that “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16).

Without this fundamental conviction we would have and could have no mission. Hans Werner Gensichen reminds us that

for Paul the message of justification by faith in Jesus Christ is not merely one possible topic of missionary preaching but in itself validates all efforts to cross the frontier between faith and non-faith. Precisely because the Gospel of Christ is the good news of salvation, of peace between God and man, it cannot be domesticated but presses out into all the world. Conversely, no mission to the nations could be justified which offered less than

the full content of the saving Gospel message.¹⁹

He also reminds us that

The entire New Testament knows of no *missio Dei*, no mission of God, except through Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate. And just as ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself’ (2 Corinthians 5:19), God continues to be active in the proclamation of Christ’s lordship in order to save all mankind.²⁰

The great missionary commission which the risen Christ has given to his church must be seen in the light of God’s earnest desire for the salvation of mankind which led him to send his own Son to take our flesh and become the sacrifice for the sins of an entire world of sinners. It is for this reason that Christ on the first Easter Sunday told his disciples: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). As he brought about the reconciliation of mankind, the disciples were to announce to sinners that reconciliation in the message of the forgiveness of sins. “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven.”

Shortly before his ascension, he reminded his disciples that he held all authority. He then authorized them to be his agents in continuing his mission for the salvation of mankind. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

They had been made disciples, called by Jesus himself to faith in him as the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world, “the Christ, the Son of the living God”, the only one who had “the words of eternal life”. Now they were to make disciples of “the nations,” of those who had been redeemed by him, through the word of the same Christ. This is not to be understood as a legalistic command, a danger against which Gensichen warned,²¹ but rather as sweeping up his church in his own exalted mission of bringing salvation to the nations.

The sweep of this commission is world-wide. They are to make disciples of “all nations.” Thus the mission which Christ commended to his church embraces the full extent of the promise once made to Abraham, that all the families of the earth would be blessed

through him and through his seed. As all have been redeemed, disciples should now be gathered from all the nations. The glorious church of the Book of Revelation, a church composed of “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” (Revelation 7:9) will be the result of the church’s carrying out this commission.

John Stott well summarizes this global sweep of the Christian mission:

I pray that these words ‘all the families of the earth’ may be written on our hearts. It is this expression more than any other which reveals the living God of the Bible to be a missionary God. It is this expression too which condemns all our petty parochialism and narrow nationalism, our racial pride (whether white or black), our condescending paternalism and arrogant imperialism. How dare we adopt a hostile or scornful or even indifferent attitude to any person of another colour or culture if our God is the God of ‘all the families of the earth’? We need to become global Christians with a global vision, for we have a global God.²²

The Means Of Missions

The means which the church is to use to carry out this mission are baptism and the word. Disciples are to be made by “baptizing ... and teaching”. Lutheran mission in the 21st century will need to continue to be centered in the means of grace, the gospel in word and sacrament. While it is true that Christ has once for all died for all mankind on the cross, the benefit of that death comes to us in word and sacrament. “But we know that Christ has died for us once, and that he distributes this death through preaching, baptizing, the Spirit, reading, believing, eating, and in whatever way he wishes, wherever he is, and whatever he is, and whatever he does.”²³

We will continue to prize Holy Baptism and to rejoice over every adult or child who is added to Christ’s church through this means of grace. We will consider it to be a “visible word,” as Augustine called the sacraments, the powerful word of gospel promise individualized as water is applied “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” We will take seriously that in this sacrament God himself is active, bringing to faith or strengthening

faith, granting forgiveness of sins, a new birth, and a new life in union with Christ. A missionary from another church commented when I had recently arrived in Peru that on the foreign field all the petty differences which separate the churches back in the USA pale into insignificance in comparison with the great themes that unite us. I mentioned baptism and the Lord's Supper. "Yes," he said, "differences on baptism and the Lord's Supper are so peripheral as long as we have the gospel." "For us Lutherans," I responded, "baptism and the Lord's Supper are not peripheral, they are the gospel!" There God proclaims to the individual, "Your sins are forgiven," and with that declaration conveys his forgiveness. That is the heart of the gospel which we are called to proclaim to the nations.

Gensichen reminds us of this central role of baptism in our missionary practice and theology.

The church's uncertainty about the relationship of baptism to the mission always indicates not only an inadequate understanding of baptism but that the sense of mission has been weakened. If the mission is to be governed by the universal lordship of the living Christ, it must aim at conversion; if it aims at conversion, in the sense explained earlier, then it aims at nothing less than the kind of believing participation of the whole man in the living Christ. Baptism is not just an optional symbol of such participation but the effective initiation into it, instituted once and for all by Christ himself.²⁴

But together with baptism must go teaching if we are to make disciples in the sense in which Jesus uses the term in Matthew 28. "The *kerygma* [missionary proclamation] aims at baptism while the *didache* [instruction of the disciples] presupposes it."²⁵ Those who are won are to be taught "everything I have commanded you." This implies that one of the tasks of the mission must be the study of the Scripture at every level, from the home Bible class and church-centered Bible class to the training of workers who will be able to carry on the mission of the church without the missionary.

But it is precisely at this point where mission work presents some of its greatest challenges. How do we communicate the message to peoples of diverse cultures and worldviews? How can we be sure that what we are saying is also what is heard by the person receiving

the message? These are fundamental questions for the practice of missions in the new century.

We correctly maintain that as Christ has redeemed all mankind, the gospel message of the forgiveness of sins has universal application. Nevertheless, the gospel must be proclaimed in specific and widely varying human cultures. Those who are engaged in Biblical studies know that for a correct understanding of the Scriptures it is necessary to be aware of the differences in culture and worldview between the various periods of writing of the Biblical authors and our own age and culture. Only thus can the same message be proclaimed in appropriate terms to those of our age and culture.

In the same way, for the faithful proclamation of the gospel across contemporary cultural boundaries and teaching to observe all things that Christ has commanded his church it will be necessary to be aware not only of where the Biblical worldview differs from our own cultural understanding and practices, but also of where both differ from the third culture. While in one sense it is true that “the Bible is all you need,” Norman Ericson points out that

Such a statement fails to recognize the many factors which create distance between the modern reader and the ancient literature. Among these factors are historical setting, socio-cultural setting, ideological environment, geography and demography. While we appropriately emphasize the timelessness of God’s message through His Son and the apostles, we must also recognize that it was delivered into an environment, a context. And it cannot be fully understood or transmitted into another context or environment without a full comprehension of the original context.²⁶

It is this difficulty which led Bengt Sundkler to define mission work itself as essentially “translation.”

Mission is translation, in its widest meaning: interpretation into new thought-forms. But mission implies, too, a task of translation in a more specific sense: the translation of the message of salvation into more than a thousand languages. According to the teaching of the Bible, the vast variety of languages of man is not only beauty and richness: it is also a curse. It is the task of mission to break the curse and replace it by understanding and unity.²⁷

This obviously implies a knowledge of the people with whom

the gospel is to be shared. We must know what their fears are, what form the idea of salvation by works takes concretely in their system of thought. We need to understand what connection their customs and practices have with their beliefs. All this requires that the person who wishes to communicate the gospel to a person of another culture must first be a listener and learner.

Sundkler laments that often little opportunity is given to gain a profound knowledge of the context in which we must make our gospel proclamation.

It is probably true to say that the areas of contact between the Church (or the mission) and the non-Christian religions are more circumscribed now than they were a mere thirty years ago. Too few missionaries are given the opportunity of getting to know the non-Christian religions, and of taking an active part in the real missionary task of confrontation between the Gospel and the religions. This is a serious matter. The demands of love are such, that before witness can be borne to the Lordship of Christ over men of other faiths, the messengers must know—and know intimately—the people concerned. Knowledge of the social and religious milieu in which the service of Christ is to be fulfilled is an absolute necessity, quite apart from the interpretation the missionary places on the relationship between the Gospel and the religions. This has been made abundantly clear in the experience of the young churches. If it be true that Christ is Lord over men of other faiths, and the Answer to the questions raised by the religions, then to bear witness to Him requires close knowledge of the situation of those religions. For the Final Answer cannot be accepted as a real answer until it becomes the answer to a real question and a real desire, the answer to the concrete questions asked by real men and women.²⁸

He points out that Augustine recognized the difficulty of using the church's terminology to communicate with the pagan Romans of his day. "Two persons meet, and in the course of the conversation both use the word *salus*; the Christian means 'salvation from evil,' the non-Christian still uses the term in its classical sense of 'good health.'"²⁹ When the early Wisconsin Synod missionaries began their work among the Apaches, they looked for an Apache term for God. After diligently inquiring of the people concerning their beliefs, they found *Bi k'ehko ihi dnán*, the "one according to whom life is" or

the Creator. When the first missionaries to the Navajos began their work, they simply used the English word God. The word itself was incomprehensible to the people, until Christmas time, when the missionaries brought a Christmas tree into the church. “Now we know what the missionaries are talking about,” said the Navajos. “We are supposed to worship the cedar tree.” In Navajo, the word *gad*, pronounced much like the English “God,” is the word for the cedar tree. David Hesselgrave reports concerning an evangelist who was going to India. He asked him what he was going to preach on. His reply: “What else? You must be born again.” Hesselgrave reports that he told the individual: “Please go some place else other than to India.” He explains. “For Indians, that’s not good news, that’s horrendous news. You’re reinforcing their great problem, that is, their attachment to samsara, to reincarnation. In fact, they hear this and they will say, ‘Oh, no, he says it too. You’ve got to be born again.’”³⁰ Their cultural background and worldview cause them to hear the term with a completely different meaning than that which the speaker thinks he is communicating.

This does not mean that we will omit anything that Christ has taught us, only that we must do the hard work of finding terminology that will permit us to speak in a way that will be understood by the audience.

Sundkler reminds us that not only must we understand the target culture, we must also understand thoroughly the message to be communicated.

The message of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is a message of repentance, conversion, change and newness of life. This means making a radical break with the past; ‘The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come,’ 2 Corinthians 5:17. It follows that in order to be able to translate at all, the would-be translator must know his original text, through and through. *In order to preach the Gospel in Zulu you have to know the Gospel, and not merely Zulu [italics mine]*!³¹

Of course, as he points out, one must also “know not merely the Gospel; he must know Zulu, Zulus and Zululand,” but it is essential that the missionary know the unconditioned message of the free forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ and proclaim that message,

and not a confusion of law and gospel that gets passed off as the gospel.

What role do the Lutheran Confessions play in our “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”? There are those who insist that to use such documents from the history of the Western church is to stifle the contextualization of the gospel in the young churches, to impose foreign categories on other cultures. However, one thing that can be observed in all of church history is that Satan isn’t all that original. He’s a brilliant packager; he’s good at making the same old goods appear new and fresh and attractive, but he generally uses variations on the same old errors to attempt to deceive the church. The same attacks on the Trinity which the early church faced in Arianism and against which she responded in the Creeds have been revived today both by cults that have spread to the worldwide fields from America and in home-grown heretical movements. The same attacks on the sacraments that Luther and the Lutheran church faced in his day confront the newer churches of our day, with even more force. The same false teachings on free will, the same idea that man must do something to merit at least partially his salvation are widespread in the spiritual surroundings of the mission churches of today. Not to use the clear statements of the Creeds and the Catechisms to arm the young churches against the attacks of Satan would be to fail in a great duty of love toward our brethren of the new churches.

E. H. Wendland, the veteran Wisconsin Synod missionary in Central Africa, comments in this regard:

There are even those people who claim we must dispense with all confessional statements because they come out of foreign cultures. We don’t believe that the Apostles’ Creed, however, is any more or less expressive of American culture than it is of African. To deprive national churches of some of the important truths which historic Christianity has expressed in its confessional formulations is in our opinion considering them to be intellectually inferior as well as culturally insensitive.

Just to give one example: the “Watchtower Movement” (Jehovah’s Witnesses) has had a greater impact on Africa than anywhere else in the world. Not to make full use of the Nicene Creed in places where Arianism has resurfaced in such a crass form would be a dereliction of Christian duty.³²

I recall reading someplace that F. Dale Bruner, a Presbyterian I believe who at that time was teaching at the Union Theological Seminary in Manila, the Philippines, used Luther's Large Catechism as the textbook for his dogmatics course. He found that the concreteness and down-to-earth-ness of Luther resonated with his students and made theology something that spoke to their everyday lives and concerns. Certainly, historical texts like the confessions also need to be "translated," that is, the cultural and historical situation out of which they sprang needs to be taken into account, but doing that sort of work will help the members and leaders of the new churches to see and evaluate parallel movements and errors in their own context. As they compare the confessional writings with the Scriptures, they too will confess these doctrines not as a matter of denominational distinctive doctrines, but because they are Scriptural doctrine. Every layperson who learns from Luther's Small Catechism will have more knowledge of Biblical sacramental doctrine than the graduates of most seminaries in the developing world.

Once again, E. H. Wendland observes:

There is no more valuable instrument in the missionary activity of our Lutheran Church, both at home and abroad, than Luther's Small Catechism. Next to the Bible it is the first book in need of translation in our world mission fields, whether in Indonesia or Central Africa. It presents the teachings of God's Word, as Luther himself declared, "in the simplest way." It gives us an especially favored position, one might say, among all Protestant churches which are engaged in Christian teaching and in outreach to others.³³

Bengt Sundkler also reminds us of the role which the liturgy can play in instructing and strengthening the younger churches.

The church year and the liturgy are factors which the missionary church ignores at its peril. The threat of syncretism from the sects has prompted churches in Africa to stress the dogmatic and catechetical function of the liturgy: a richly developed Evangelical liturgy is able to convey solid instruction in the biblical drama of salvation.³⁴

This, of course, is one of the roles which Luther assigned to the liturgy in his preface to the German Mass.

The new churches will also need solid training for their pastors and teachers. They will face not only the traditional beliefs of their own peoples, cults and sects imported from the West, and the other great missionary religions such as Islam, but sects such as the African Independent Churches, the Israelite sect in Peru, and many other homegrown syncretistic movements. They will have to be able to stand on the Scriptures and the Confessions and say: "Thus saith the Lord." *Lehre und Wehre*, Doctrine and Defense, Walther named the theological journal of the Missouri Synod in a day of great religious confusion in our country with its dangers for the Lutheran German and Scandinavian immigrant populations. The future leaders of the mission churches will also need to be able to teach Biblical doctrine faithfully, and defend their flocks against the erroneous teachings that surround them. For that they will need a thorough theological education.

The work of carrying the gospel to all nations is to continue to the end of time. Christ's promise to his apostles implies this. He told them: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

We must be very clear, however, that the gospel is the only means of building up the church of Christ, something that is as true on the foreign field as it is at home. Gensichen warns us:

There is no lack of worthy substitutes which easily take the place of the missionary concern—a sudden outburst of ecumenical enthusiasm, intensified social service, or an active interest in aid to underdeveloped countries. All have something to do with the mission of the church. But can they replace the sharing of the saving faith with those who have never heard of it?³⁵

Christian missionaries will live their Christianity also in the form of help given to those who are in need. They may even aid in the formation or construction of schools, hospitals, drug treatment centers, or other institutions. Nevertheless, they dare never convert these projects into the means of grace which are to build the church. Only God can build his church, and he has chosen to do it only through the proclamation of the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. Gensichen

also warns of the danger of confusing *kerygma* and *diakonia*, the mission and the ministry of the church. He points out:

But this does not mean that *kerygma* and *diakonia*, the mission and the ministry of the church should be confused, or that Christians should attach to their acts of serving love the intention to predispose people to believe. "When service is no more and no less than the expression of real love, it is a witness to Christ and what he can do for men; but if it is given in order to be a witness, then it fails." Nor should Christian service introduce justification by works through the backdoor, as it were. There is a world of difference between what Luther called the "pious" works in which man seeks himself and his own righteousness perhaps even by giving them a deliberate evangelistic purpose, and the "good" works which, as Luther put it, are good because in them God "accepts his own mercy." ... When all is said and done, there is no substitute for the outgoing proclamation of the gospel; there is no substitute for the mission which is intended to bring Christ to those whom he has called; and there is no substitute for the communication of a faith which is prior to the fruits which it is meant to produce lest it be perverted into a means of self-assertion.³⁶

Luther also reminds us of the centrality of Christ crucified for our mission proclamation when he says:

So this is the work of Christ: He made us the freest of all with the true freedom. All other teachings make each one bear his own burden. All sects, ceremonies, and laws are institutions of the world. Only this teaching of Christ frees us from our burden. One has sinned, another bears the punishment. Therefore all self-righteous sects are opposed to this teaching. If they themselves discharge their debt by their own works, Christ makes satisfaction by His hand in vain. This, then, is the Christian religion: One has sinned, Another has made satisfaction. The sinner does not make satisfaction; the Satisfier does not sin.³⁷

He also asserts: "Before God this alone is religion: the forgiveness of sins. Outside of this He knows nothing."³⁸

The Context Of Missions

Finally, we give attention to the context of missions for the 21st century, the situation which confronts the church and its mission. We

are confronted with a world in which European and North American Christianity for the most part has lost its first love, a world in which Southern Christianity is growing rapidly in numbers and influence, a world where non-Christian religions show a new militancy, nevertheless a world in which the gospel will still bear fruit, a world where the former missions will become mission-sending churches.

Northern Europe and the United States have been the primary sending countries for the past several centuries. Increasing secularization and the theological breakdown in many of the churches will almost surely decrease the European and North American contribution to the evangelization of the world in this century.

Some statistics from the Netherlands illustrate what has been happening. In 1849 only 10% of the Dutch population reported on the census forms that they had no church. A recent figure is 57%. Today there are 566,000 Muslims and 71,000 Hindus in the Netherlands.³⁹ Mainline churches in the USA have also been losing members at a fairly rapid pace since the highpoint was reached in the 1950s.

We live in a cauldron of religious pluralism, with institutionalized (as well as popular) opposition to claims to the uniqueness of Christ as the only truth and the only Saviour. We live in cultures where Christianity has been so marginalized that most people could not articulate clearly the core beliefs of the Christian faith, and indeed increasing numbers of men and women live out their lives without ever encountering the gospel in coherent form.⁴⁰

While this quote refers to the European scene, it increasingly characterizes North America also. The consumer mentality of our country has extended also to the religious scene so that

young Americans prefer 'designer religions.' Individuals select the components that appeal to them, even if they draw from several religions. If they commit to one, they tend to emphasize those parts that they like. 'I'm comfortable with that,' is a common phrase. A conversion may be profoundly felt but transient. Since religion is individual, it is poor form to intrude one's own religion on others unless they ask about it. A person may share his story, but should not push others to follow.⁴¹

To a great extent, the media and academia attack Biblical Christianity, so that

for many Americans, Christianity is suspect. They think it has contributed to patriarchal sexism, ecological rape of the earth's resources, racism, the fostering of low self-esteem because of an emphasis on people being sinners, and repression of emotions. Politically, they identify Christianity with right wing extremists.⁴²

Two conclusions appear inescapable from the foregoing. First, far fewer missionaries will be going to foreign fields from Europe and the USA in the 21st century than in the 20th. Nevertheless, churches which still hold to the theological truths we have outlined in the first part of this paper will continue to have a vital role to play in carrying out God's commission to his church. Second, our own land will more and more become a mission field. The rapid increase in adherents of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and neo-paganism with their radically different worldviews from Biblical Christianity will also present our congregations on the home front with formidable challenges of cross-cultural communication of the gospel if some of these neighbors are to be won for the Savior. Add to this the waves of immigration, and even the challenges of cross-language communication on the foreign field will not be able to be evaded by congregations within the USA if we are to be faithful to the mission which our Savior has commended to us.

A second aspect of the context of 21st Century missions is that we face a world in which southern Christianity is growing rapidly in numbers and influence. One author points out that "in 1900, most Evangelical believers were in North America, England, and Northwest Europe. Today, these regions comprise perhaps only 25% of the world-wide Evangelical Church."⁴³ Philip Jenkins, in the current issue of *The Atlantic* states: "During the past half century the critical centers of the Christian world have moved decisively to Africa, to Latin America and to Asia. The balance will never shift back."⁴⁴

Mr. Jenkins gives the statistics and draws a conclusion.

In the global South (the areas that we often think of as the Third World) huge and growing Christian populations—currently 480 million in Latin America, 360 million in Africa, 313 million in Asia, compared with 260 million in North America—now make up what the Catholic scholar Walbart Buhmann has called the

Third Church, a form of Christianity as distinct as Protestantism or Orthodoxy, and one that is likely to become dominant in the faith. The revolution taking place in Africa, Asia and Latin America is far more sweeping in its implications than any current shifts in North American religion, whether Catholic or Protestant.⁴⁵

Lest we think that with a sigh of relief the growing number of third world Christians can allow us to rest easy, we ought to consider what kind of Christianity is growing so rapidly particularly across Latin America and Africa. A very high percentage of these new Christians are Pentecostals. Jenkins states:

Pentecostal believers reject tradition and hierarchy, but they also rely on direct spiritual revelation to supplement or replace biblical authority. And it is Pentecostals who stand in the vanguard of the Southern Counter-Reformation. Though Pentecostalism emerged as a movement only at the start of the twentieth century, chiefly in North America, Pentecostals today are at least 400 million strong, and heavily concentrated in the global South. By 2040 or so there could be as many as a billion, at which point Pentecostal Christians alone will far outnumber the world's Buddhists and will enjoy rough numerical parity with the world's Hindus.⁴⁶

David Bosch, the South African missiologist, points to the same phenomenon. In the 20th century “a novel and virile version of Christianity, the Pentecostal Movement, made its appearance and has since grown to become the largest single category in Protestantism, outstripping the Lutheran, Reformed and Anglican movements.”⁴⁷

Many of the movements which have developed and are growing in Africa and Latin America are syncretistic and legalistic. One observer reports that

besides the usual statistics, in which the available 100 percent is divided among the various religions and denominations, one also encounters surveys reporting, for instance, that “100 percent of the country is animist, and of those 33% have been Muslimized and 11% Christianized.”⁴⁸

I recall a conversation after a Bible class in one of our new groups in Lima. A visiting neighbor from one of the Pentecostal churches asked what we did if one of the members fell into sin. I replied that we tried to show him his sin and bring him to repentance, and that if he repented he was told that his sins were forgiven. In his

church, he said, if someone fell into sin he was simply booted out. Conversion was considered to be from sin to sainthood. There was no concept of being converted from sin to “*simul justus et peccator*,” both saint and sinner at the same time. There is a proliferation of churches in Lima where the gospel is that if you accept their message and discipline, suffering will end in your life. Despite the outward growth, multitudes are still in need of a plain presentation of the law of God and a clear presentation of the unconditioned gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

We also face a resurgence of traditional religions. Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, which some observers a century ago thought were destined to disappear, are now growing in militancy. The syncretistic nature of Hinduism and Buddhism are attractive to those who espouse pluralistic post-modern ideologies, and doctrines such as reincarnation and a search for God in the inner self are becoming common. The exclusiveness of Biblical Christianity is not only offensive, it is incomprehensible to many.

Sundkler describes the tenets of the Hindu Ramakrishna Movement.

(i) That all religions are true and good, and that there is therefore no reason why any man should change his religion. (ii) That God reveals Himself everywhere, in all men, in all gods, and supremely in a number of *avatars* (incarnations)... It was, of course, easy on this view to incorporate Jesuswami into the system. (iii) That the Hindu people are a spiritual people, while the civilizations of the West are materialistic. Hinduism is the most spiritual of all religions.⁴⁹

Regarding Islam, Bertil Engqvist informs of an Islamic World Festival in 1976, where an Islamic spokesman proclaimed:

Islam doesn't belong to East or West. It is God's message ... to each man whatever his background, nationality, color, race or language might be ... Man is looking for a new future.... Islam is today offering mankind ... a new alternative as a foundation for the order of life and society.

Engqvist then goes on to say:

As we enter the 21st century, that vision of the Muslims has not faded but developed in such a way that we today have over 15 satellites and hundreds of radio stations broadcasting Islamic teaching. Scores of publishing houses, university courses, and cultural centers around the world exist with the purpose of sharing their message. TV stations are focusing on the demands from an ever-increasing Muslim population as they claim their rightful say in the development of the nations.⁵⁰

All across Sub-Saharan Africa Islam is growing nearly as rapidly as Christianity, and in many areas where it has achieved dominance, such as Northern Nigeria and Southern Sudan, the result has been persecution of Christians. Nor is Islam's spread limited to the areas contiguous to its traditional bases in the Middle East, Northern Africa, Central Asia and Indonesia. Bengt Sundkler reminds us:

Islam is certainly not static, having no missionary will of its own—least of all in these days. The 'immovable block' is on the move, in the whole of Africa and Indonesia; at the same time Islam is at present experiencing a mighty ideological renaissance. Its leaders now look upon Islam as a world religion, a faith, too, for what they are convinced is the irreligious West.⁵¹

There are growing numbers of Muslims here in the USA, and even some Peruvians have embraced the message of Mohammed.

Nevertheless, Sundkler feels that Lutheranism has unique resources for confronting the attraction of Islam. He writes:

The preaching of the Gospel by means of humble, self effacing service creates contact and bears its fruit. True, the usual way is to meet the legalism of the Quran with Christian moralism, but that particular way is not quite as effective as some people imagine. Sacramental Christianity, on the other hand, is able to express a more radical theocentricity than any Muslim legalism, particularly when combined with the message of the boundless forgiveness which is in Christ. The encounter with Islam gives the Christian preacher a new joy in forgiveness, and the contrast with Muslim legalism exhibits the breadth and depth and height of the Gospel.⁵²

The challenges to mission work in the 21st century will be great. Nevertheless, we can expect that God will continue to bless

our efforts to reach people of other cultures, languages and nations with the gospel of salvation. God himself has assured us that the word that goes forth from his mouth “will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). We have seen that God is a missionary God, who has sent his own Son into the world to save it, and who then sends his church into the world with the saving word. Relying on that word and proclaiming it, we can also trust that God will bring his elect from every nation and tongue into his kingdom.

Considering the natural opposition of mankind to the gospel, perhaps any mission “success” ought to surprise us. Nevertheless, solely through God’s blessing of the use of his means of grace, people are won, sometimes at a frustratingly slow pace, sometimes in what seem to be massive movements. Where the results seem to be slow in coming, we will patiently trust that God nevertheless is carrying out his purpose through our proclamation of the gospel. Where there seem to be abundant visible results, we will attribute all the glory to God, and not to ourselves.

Bavinck states:

And what is striking here is that for Paul God alone can open the door. The missionary is confronted by insurmountable obstacles; by himself he can find no opening in the wall of opposition. But the strong unwillingness that first greets the missionary breaks down under the gracious working of God’s presence and blessing. For this reason missionary work borders on the miraculous; by its very nature it depends wholly upon the divine working of God.⁵³

This is a fact which we must remember. Church Growth theology seems to glorify visible success, and perhaps is more a reflection of the North American cultural worship of success and visible short-term results than a Biblical theology of missions. We are told that we must concentrate on “responsive populations” and occupy “resistant fields” only lightly. Nevertheless, there are no populations where natural man is favorably disposed toward the gospel. Only God, through the gospel, can create responsive hearts. E. H. Wendland states:

One critic suggests that “church growth people assume you can

make Christians the way you make cars and sausages.” The missionary becomes a professional agent geared to the philosophy that success is the *sine qua non* of church work. The Bible does, of course, contain success stories. But it also records places, especially in the General Epistles, where scattered little groups are called upon to face the world’s hostility without losing hope. One could point to places in Africa where missionaries waited years before winning the first convert. Today these same areas are witnessing the most rapid church growth in all the world. One wonders what might have happened if the early pioneers had not been willing to bear the heat and burden of the day! Had they pursued church growth strategies, they would not have persisted as they did.⁵⁴

Our participation in the church’s mission task is a venture of faith. It relies on God’s promises and trusts in his blessing. We will neither despair when in some fields the results are few nor will we become proud when glowing reports can be sent home. As Gensichen puts it:

Here as elsewhere the testimony of the Bible does not appeal primarily to our determination and skill or efficiency but to our faith. Only faith can dare to enter into the theological dimension of God’s mission and leave the beginning, the end and everything to him and yet stand ready to be used for God’s purposes in history. Only faith can obediently and actively pursue the missionary intention, trusting that in, with and under its own work—inadequate as it is—God’s work is being done. Only faith can grasp the missionary dimension by looking out to the vast universal horizon which God himself has opened up by sending his Son into the world and for the world. Only faith can be certain that its own going-out into the world of unbelief does participate in God’s concern for the world—even though this infinitely exceeds any human planning and acting.⁵⁵

Luther reminds us that

God’s Word bears fruit mainly where this is least expected and, conversely, produces least where most is expected. Here we find the heathen of Nineveh coming to faith, though they had not heard the Word of God before; and we find that the Jews, who heard the Word of God daily, abandon their faith. From this we must learn, on the one hand, not to despair of anyone and, on the

other, not to place undue confidence in anyone.⁵⁶

He also reminds us that “The majority are always hardened. Few are they who tremble at the judgment of God, and yet on their account the promises of God must be proclaimed.”⁵⁷

Finally, the 21st century will be a time when the former mission churches will become mission sending churches. This is not something new. Sundkler nicely summarizes the progression of gospel outreach as it forms the church in other lands in the following:

She has not grown up of herself, by virtue of her own natural resources: she is sent by others, from other lands, incorporated as a link in the long, holy chain created by the Holy Spirit in and through the tradition and history of the Church, sent from Jerusalem and Antioch to Greece, Italy, Gaul and Ireland; from the country of the Franks and Saxons and Angles to the country of the Swedes and Goths; from Sweden to Zululand, from Sweden to Minnesota, and from Minnesota and Kansas to Tanganyika and Hong Kong. The Church in Africa is not a spontaneous growth; she has been sent by others, planted like some exotic shrub by the emissaries of missionaries of other churches.⁵⁸

Already a large percentage of the missionaries working in Asia are sent from Korea. Our own churches owed much to the German mission societies of the 19th century or to the Norwegian state church’s recognition of its responsibility to those who had emigrated. In the 20th century our synods became mission-sending bodies, both to evangelize the heathen and to help German emigrants in other lands. Now some of those bodies are sending missionaries across national borders or even across oceans, as in the case of the former LCMS mission in Argentina sending missionaries to Spain. That trend will likely continue.

How important, then, that we establish churches which will be faithful to God and to the Scriptures, who together with us will joyfully confess the doctrines of the Lutheran Confessions and will in their turn bring the pure and unconditioned gospel to still other peoples. Our efforts may be weak and plagued by sin and mistakes. Still, God has deigned to use the mission outreach of sinners and weak people such as us to bring the glories of salvation to many throughout the world. Stephen Neill has said of the missionaries that have gone

out into the world: “[They] have on the whole been a feeble folk, not very wise, not very holy, not very patient. They have broken most of the commandments and fallen into every conceivable mistake.”⁵⁹ Nevertheless also here God’s strength is perfected in our weakness. As another writer states: “Critics of mission work in Africa usually give up on mission when they come across the manifest display of human weakness. But this is a gross failure to understand that God uses the weak things of this earth to manifest his glory. A lot has been done by weak missionaries to establish the church of Christ in Africa.”⁶⁰ In spite of our failings and mistakes, God has planted his church in new lands and other cultures. The missionaries that a church of redeemed sinners sends out are also sinners, sent to proclaim the same message that has saved and comforted them in their sins. And through them still other souls by God’s grace receive the comfort of the good news of their own redemption.

As we respond to our privileges as the redeemed children of God by taking the message of his redemption to the ends of the earth, we will in fact be fulfilling one of the purposes of our redemption. We shall let some final thoughts of Dr. Luther close this presentation.

He is saying that Christians are not only such as praise God, but they will also produce others and be concerned about their enlightenment and conversion. These are the two tasks of the Christians, to glorify God and to convert others. He who converts an ungodly man brings the best sacrifice, not offering an ox but a living sacrifice. This is the sum of the prophets, to attribute to the Christian these two sacrifices: to praise God and to convert sinners, instead of all the endless ceremonies of the Law.⁶¹

May God bless our participation in his mission for the salvation of many throughout our land and the world.

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Reaction One

by David Haeuser

I would like to thank Dr. Schulz for his informative essay. His observations on the opinion of most missiological writers on the lack of a mission theology on the part of Luther and the others are accurate. Nevertheless, Dr. Schulz has given us some definite guidelines to help us evaluate the opinion of the many writers on missions who take a negative viewpoint on the Reformation's contribution to missions.

He notes that the critics often fail to take into account the historical circumstances of the era of the Reformation. Why didn't the reformers mount a massive outreach program to the heathen? Wasn't that simple negligence on their part, or blindness toward a major thrust of Scriptural theology? A simple understanding of the circumstances which Dr. Schulz has enumerated in his paper will show that the criticism to a large extent is baseless.

I am reminded of conversations with participants in the early days of the Wisconsin Synod mission to the Apaches. The early missionaries basically did not follow what became accepted missionary practice during the latter half of the 20th century. I suppose that their approach could be termed paternalistic, rather than the so called indigenous approach of founding a church that from the beginning would be self-supporting, self-disciplining and self-propagating. Later generations at times have criticized the early Apache missionaries. What the critics fail to recognize, some of the second generation participants pointed out, is that the Apaches were prisoners of war when the Apache mission began. They depended totally on the government. They weren't permitted to hunt or raise their own food. They had to report daily for roll call and receive their rations from the government. If one was missing the soldiers were sent into the hills to find him. How were they supposed to form a self-supporting church from the beginning? Good question. The lack of a historical perspective really leads to unjust judging of people who did the best work possible in their circumstances. And God blessed those efforts and brought a large portion of the Apache people into the Lutheran church.

Dr. Schulz has mentioned the idea of the imminence of judg-

ment day as a damper on zeal for missions. He is right to question this conclusion. Really, the same argument should have been a brake on any activity whatsoever to reform the church or simply to live a useful Christian life. There have been eschatological movements in the history of Christianity where people, sure that Christ would come again on a certain date, abandoned their jobs and their homes to await the Second Coming. When Luther was asked what he would do if he knew that the following day would be the last one for the world, he is supposed to have responded: "Plant a pear tree." For Luther, the important thing was to be occupied in one's own vocation which God has given him or her. Being ready for Christ's second coming was a matter of faith, first of all, and faithfulness in one's vocation, in the second place, as a fruit of that faith. For the Christian preacher, that means the continued proclamation of law and gospel, "in season and out of season." For the Christian lay person who finds himself in heathen surroundings, included in his duties, on pain of losing his own salvation, is witnessing to the word of Christ, as Dr. Schulz pointed out in his paper: In circumstances where there is no ordered preaching of the gospel, "every Christian has not only 'the right and the power to teach the Word of God but is under obligation to do this; otherwise he runs the risk of losing his soul and of incurring the disfavor of God.'"

Luther's ruminations on the likelihood of the gospel being lost in Germany and passing to other peoples, as had happened so often in the past, are hardly compatible with the idea that Luther had no room in his thought world for the worldwide extension of the gospel. On the contrary, he often speaks of the need for the gospel penetrating the whole world. For instance, in his comments on Isaiah 26:2 he says: "*Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter in.* This is not a city that is accessible to the few but one that is open to all who enter and is full of people. Thus all should have access to the church."¹

The quote from Luther's commentary on Psalm 82:4, which some represent as maintaining that because the apostles evangelized the world it is enough for the church to receive the preaching of those who have been called to pastor the existing churches, is rather to be understood as an attack on a false proselytism which ignores

the public ministry which God has called to his service and misuses the priesthood of all believers as a pretext to subvert all order in the church. Luther balances both truths nicely in his commentary on Isaiah 40:9 when he says: “Every Christian is also an evangelist, who should teach another and publish the glory and praise of God. But the order must be preserved intact so that we do not teach in a confused manner. I would, however, rather hear him who has been sent, and I will hear him, than preach myself, unless I were sent myself. For we must be humble, and we should outdo one another in showing honor (Romans 12:10).”²

Luther points out that rather than an unbiblical proselytism, the Christian’s recourse is prayer to God for the welfare of his church.

It is not lawful for me to forsake my assigned station as a preacher, to go to another city where I have no call, and to preach there. (As a doctor of divinity, of course, I could preach throughout the papacy, provided that they let me.) I have no right to do this even if I hear that false doctrine is being taught and that souls are being seduced and condemned which I could rescue from error and condemnation by my sound doctrine. But I should commit the matter to God, who in His own time will find the opportunity to call ministers lawfully and to give the Word. For He is the Lord of the harvest who will send laborers into His harvest; our task is to pray (Matthew 9:38).

Therefore we should not intrude into someone else’s harvest, as the devil does through his sectarians. With ardent zeal they claim to be saddened that men are being so miserably led astray, and to want to teach them the truth and rescue them from the devil’s clutches. Therefore even when a man seeks, with pious zeal and good intentions, to rescue with his sound doctrine those who have been led astray into error, this is still a bad example, which gives ungodly teachers an excuse to intrude themselves, after which Satan himself occupies the see. This example does a great deal of damage.

But when the prince or some other magistrate calls me, then, with firm confidence, I can boast against the devil and the enemies of the Gospel that I have been called by the command of God through the voice of a man; for the command of God comes through the mouth of the prince, and this is a genuine call. Therefore we, too, have been called by divine authority—not by Christ immediately, as the apostles were, but “through man.”³

Again, Luther's historical circumstances enter into the thoughts expressed here. He certainly never envisioned a situation such as we have in most parts of the world today, with a multiplicity of denominations and confessions occupying the same geographical area. A parish for Luther had pretty definite borders. However, the fact that many other churches feel free to approach people who are under another's direct spiritual care to attempt to get them to change their membership does not give us a license to do the same. Obviously, we will also be ready to give the reason of the hope that is in us to anyone who asks us, and we will clearly present to him the true gospel of salvation by grace alone and by faith alone through Christ alone. Then we will let the results of our testimony to the Holy Spirit.

A part of leaving the results to God and simply trusting in his word is to recognize that even the sixteenth and seventeenth century Roman Catholic outreach that went along with their colonization was not without its blessings. During those centuries when in his wisdom God did not see fit to present the opportunity for ready access to the heathen to the Lutheran Church, missionary orders traversed the seas with the conquistadors and claimed vast territories such as Latin America and the Philippines for Rome. Here too, however, God rules in the midst of his enemies. Only he knows how many children, baptized by the priests and monks "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," died at a young age in the faith which the Holy Spirit worked through baptism and are now in heaven with their Savior. It is true that many are led astray by the teachings of their church as they grow up, nevertheless, even among the adults there are those who hear the gospel in the liturgy and the readings in the mass and trust in their Savior rather than in the saints and their own merits. And many who are inactive and really have no church, nevertheless do consider the Holy Trinity to be the true God and consider the Bible to be God's message to mankind, so that our mission work in Latin America is much more like bringing the gospel to people who are in a pre-reformation state than evangelizing people with a totally pagan framework of reference. It was good to see that Philip Nicolai had already recognized this.

Another point emphasized by Dr. Schulz bears repeating. For

Luther, the church, faithfully proclaiming the word, is by nature a missionary body. I particularly liked the quote from Solle: “Missions is no longer understood as a thing which plays itself out chiefly on the outer edges of Christendom, but instead as a way of life or, rather, as a lifestyle for every Christian congregation within its particular surrounding.” Warneck had defined mission as “the total activity of Christianity of planting and organizing a Christian church among non-Christians.” He stated that it reaches its goal “as soon as such sending is no longer necessary.” One wonders whether this is an adequate definition, and whether that goal can ever be reached. Hans Werner Gensichen states: “Paganism, both in its religious and secular forms, is an ever-present temptation within the Christian church. Luther knew only too well why he occasionally had to address his Wittenberg congregation as ‘pagans.’ There is a genuine missionary frontier which runs right across the community of believers, right across the heart of every Christian; and the church would neglect its task if it did not continuously attack that frontier with both the gospel and the law.”⁴

Tomorrow we will hear of the nations of the former sending churches in Europe and North America being the target of mission endeavors from what were the mission fields of Asia, Latin America and Africa. Certainly nothing less than the entire church as a missionary church will be an adequate response to the opportunities which God is placing at the doorsteps of our congregations today. Gensichen points out that “while in early Christianity the church was the mission, and mission was the business of every local congregation, more recent missionary history has developed along different lines. It would be wrong to speak of an absolute separation between church and mission. The fact is, however, that the missionary society ... has become the symbol of a distinction between church and mission which is more than just an organizational division of functions.”⁵ Luther’s emphasis on the church itself being the agent which extends the church through its faithful use of the means of grace provides a corrective to this dichotomy. “Churches are arising everywhere. Everywhere church rises from church where there were none before. We Gentiles are called children of Abraham, as Paul says (Galatians 4:28). So also we shall be called by the name of Jacob. Everywhere

men shall come confessing that they are the church and that they are the Lord's."⁶

I also appreciated the survey of the specific issues faced by orthodoxy as the fathers grappled with the challenges that faced them with respect to missions. Again Dr. Schulz has demonstrated that, despite shortcomings on their part, the unbridled criticism to which the 17th century fathers have been subjected is not entirely warranted. We may wish that they had found a way to encourage Lutheran participation in outreach to the heathen in a concrete way. The modern missionary movement began with pietism, and has not completely overcome its influences in such areas as individualism, a tendency toward unchurchly missions, and a "gospel" message which at times is more law than gospel. Greater sensitivity on the part of those who valued so highly an ordered church life and the unconditioned gospel to the plight of those who really had no access to the gospel might have helped to avoid some of those deficiencies.

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Reaction Two

By Klaus Detlev Schulz

Professor David Haeuser presented us with an enlightening and thought provoking analysis of today's mission challenges. Certainly, the problems undermining the genuineness of missions are endless. The visionary optimism of Christianity's dominion through missions, voiced a mere 100 years ago by John Mott, proved to be unrealistic. Romantic notions of adventures, as expressed in the pun: "baptizing in the morning and shooting buffaloes in the afternoon" are also corrosive in nature. But Prof. Haeuser perceptibly singles out one defective missionary motive that threatens the reality of missions itself: the defiance of humanity's plight before the Triune God. In view of lenient proposals suggesting alternative salvation schemes among other religions, Prof. Haeuser's insistence on sin (the hamartiological motive) and Christ is still the best antidote. Only those motives that actually consult the will of God as revealed to us in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions will keep the future of missions secure. Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions are also clear on the uniqueness and finality of Christ in the scheme of salvation for the world, and important missiologists underscore this claim as well: Hans Werner Gensichen, David Bosch and Bengt Sundkler. In this connection I'm reminded of Daniel T. Niles' words: "Mission is one beggar telling the other where to find food," or of Luther's meaningful theological observation: "We are beggars, that is true." Indeed, the disturbing reality is that Christianity is no longer considered the sole provider of that food.

Prof. Haeuser then proceeds to highlight the missionary means of word and sacrament. In this connection, he is also fully aware of the contextual challenges facing these means, the proclamation of the Gospel in particular. The threat comes in two forms: Firstly, the scriptural and traditional position holds that the appropriate response on the side of us humans to such proclamation is conversion worked by the Holy Spirit. With that purpose in mind, we can engage ourselves only guardedly in dialogue. To be sure, in such cases we would encounter harsh criticisms and be blamed for being ingenuous to the

other dialoguing partner, speaking to him like an elephant talking to a mouse, as it were. But full justice to the means can be given only if we consider proclamation as the only and ultimate means of bringing God's salvific intentions to the nations. Secondly, we may be deterred by the frequent discussions highlighting the cultural and contextual limitations of our Christian faith. Indeed, the question should be asked, as to what may and what may not be considered "trans-cultural" elements of our faith and thus less prone to cultural constrictions and changes. Undoubtedly, the task of translating our message is vital. But as we engage in the process of translation we should shy away from sentiments that "go overboard." We are to hold in check all those elements we consider as non-negotiables of our Lutheran faith. Naturally, the boundaries around indispensable truths will be set differently from person to person. But from a loftier and more objective perspective we could all agree that Lutheranism contains elements that are timeless in character. In this connection it seems rather odd, does it not, that the Lutheran Confessions are often accused of being of Germanic background and hence less helpful. Surely that same invective could be made against Scripture as well as against its Jewish and Greek background.

Prof. Haeuser's description of the shift of Christianity from Europe to other regions of the world is certainly worrisome. Europe's Christianity has ceded to indifference and downright rejection of the Christian message. Luther's imagery is helpful, the rain cloud has past over that continent and moved to other regions. Moreover, Christianity in other continents faces equal challenges. In every way Islam, South America's Pentecostalism, Africa's syncretism and Asia's world religions have become global and recognizable forces.

Prof. Haeuser's cautionary words to the concept of "responsiveness" are well taken. But it remains puzzling why some regions in the world such as Tanzania and Namibia experience faster growths than elsewhere. God certainly has his hands in such a play and he determines the course of the Gospel in his own way. Conversely speaking, should Lutheran missions in deference to patience and theology of the cross continue to "linger on" in many areas where God's word has more or less been completely rejected? In view of a possible stagnation in our missionary zeal, we would do well to face

reality head on and not despair over the hostile reception Christianity receives in many parts of the world. As we ponder all these questions and challenges for missions, we become painfully aware of our human limitations and we do well to place all concerns into the hands of Him who fulfills and accomplishes all work. I thank Prof. Haeuser again and wish him Godspeed on his travel back home.

Sermon on Selected Passages of Joshua at the Installation of Bethany Lutheran College President

by Adolph L. Harstad

VITA

Dr. Dan Bruss, Bethany's seventh President was born in Milwaukee and raised in Franklin, Wisconsin. He received his undergraduate degrees from Bethany Lutheran College and Augsburg College (MN), a Master of Arts in chemistry from Minnesota State University, Mankato, and earned his Ph.D. from Montana State University in 1985. Dr. Bruss taught at Central College in Pella, Iowa, since 1990. He was named full professor in spring 2002, and was the school's Natural Science Division Chair since 1999. He has also taught full-time at Albany College of Pharmacy (NY), and has been a visiting professor at Drake University (IA) and Cornell University (NY). Bruss began his academic career as a chemistry instructor at Bethany Lutheran College in 1975 where he taught until 1981. Dr Bruss has been an active member of the American Chemical Society and has published within the field of chemistry. Bruss and his wife, Kathryn, a 1979 graduate of Bethany, have two children, Elisabeth, a Bethany freshman and Robert, a sophomore at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School.

Ancient Pictures

With Application For Bethany Lutheran College And Her New President

It is fascinating to gaze at old photos that provoke thoughts about our present and our future. I recently perused Time magazine's edition of the best photos of 2002 and relived the past year while thinking about what the future may hold. At the beginning of the 21st century we contemplated old pictures from the 20th. We saw

snapshots like these: an early behemoth computer that filled a huge room but had less memory than our personal computers; the Wright Brothers proudly displaying their little contraption that would change the world of travel but also create a 9-11; Dr. Jonas Salk with his precious vaccine; and Dr. Martin Luther King before thousands in Washington proclaiming “I have a dream.” Some old pictures are just entertaining. Others hold special meaning because they rouse thoughts about where we are today and where we are headed.

We are at the start of a new era at Bethany. Tonight we install the seventh president of this college. As we close one era and enter another, gaze with me at some Ancient Pictures with Application for Bethany Lutheran College and Her New President. All of the pictures we will look at come from the sacred album called the Book Of Joshua. We will not be looking at scenes of the past just for their historical value. We will find the meaning that God has placed into those pictures for our spiritual benefit. We ask his Spirit to direct our viewing.

Photo # 1: Standing before the LORD is a man with a challenge who is now poised to lead.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

This picture was probably from the spring of 1406 B.C. Joshua and Israel were camped east of the Jordan at a site called “The Acacia Trees.” The river, which was at flood stage, still separated them from the land that the Lord had promised them.

The scene captures a time of both challenge and transition for Israel. The immediate challenge involved crossing the surging river with the whole nation and then conquering Canaanites who awaited them on the other side. It was a time of transition because the only national leader that Israel had ever known was gone. The Lord had earlier chosen Joshua to be the head of Israel, and he was now taking charge. The new leader needed encouragement for the huge challenges ahead lest he become terrified at the thought of his responsibilities

and discouraged in his work.

The new leader was a practical man who had proven himself as a capable general. He was an intelligent man who “was filled with the spirit of wisdom” (Deuteronomy 34:9). And he was a man of God-given faith, “a man in whom is the Spirit,” who “followed the Lord wholeheartedly” (Numbers 27:18; 32:12). But he was only one mortal man with a huge responsibility placed on him through his divine call to service. He needed strength. He needed encouragement. He needed the promises of the Lord. He needed the Lord himself. The Lord never gives a task for which he does not also provide the means to carry it out. The first nine verses of the book of Joshua and particularly the verse we just read illustrate that point.

Like Israel at “The Acacia Trees,” we are now experiencing a transition at this campus “high amid the trees.” After two decades under the direction of a faithful servant, a new president takes charge at Bethany. We are making the transition to a four-year institution. Also like Israel, Bethany faces big challenges. With budget deficits looming for our federal government and our states, how will Bethany fare with its budget? Can we maintain a smooth transition to the baccalaureate program? Can academic excellence be upheld? Can a cordial working atmosphere prevail on this campus? Most important, can Bethany sustain its focus? Can it live up to its motto and mission of being a college where there is “one thing needful?” Can Bethany really be a school that offers “an education that lasts beyond a lifetime,” as our website and billboards claim?

Dr. Dan Bruss, you have big challenges before you. May I remind you, therefore, that it is God himself who has called you through the Board of Regents to your position as Bethany’s president. Your doctor’s degree and other achievements are evidence that he has given you wisdom. Your career as a scientist, educator, and administrator is evidence that he has made you a practical man. Your Baptism and your Christian faith are proof that he has made you “a man in whom is the Spirit.” Like Joshua, you have been called and prepared for the challenges at hand by God himself.

Still you may feel unprepared and inadequate. Then listen again to the promise of God’s gracious presence with you now, a promise given also to Joshua: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and

courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” That same promise is renewed in the New Testament for all Christians (Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20). Take that promise from your Lord here tonight at this time of transition and challenge. He is with you right now, and he will be with you in all of your work at Bethany. Let any terror and discouragement be discarded in the presence of your Lord.

***Photo # 2: Piled up is a heap of stones
with rich meaning.***

And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’” (Joshua 4:20-22)

This second picture was taken soon after the whole nation of Israel had crossed the Jordan River without so much as getting their feet wet. The Lord had piled the surging Jordan up in a heap. Through a mighty miracle he created a dry corridor so that his covenant people could plant dry feet on the soil of the land he had promised them. Then he commanded that a memorial be built so that Israel would remember his mighty deed at the river. At the command of God, Joshua set up twelve memorial stones at Gilgal so no one could forget. When anyone asked what those stones were all about, Israel could give clear testimony about the grace and power of God displayed at the Jordan.

The Bethany campus displays much stone. Built up around us here are stone buildings such as Old Main, Teigen Hall, Gullixson Hall, Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center, the new Meyer Hall of Science and Mathematics, etc. According to the campus map in the academic catalog, the buildings of the immediate campus number exactly twelve, like the memorial stones at Gilgal. A fair question to ask about all the buildings of Bethany is “What do these stones mean?” What should they mean? What do we want them to mean? What would they mean if the mission of Bethany were to change?

Publications of Bethany Lutheran College articulate very

clearly the Christian mission and philosophy of this school. Its motto is ἐνός ἐστὶν χρεία, “one thing is needful.” Jesus Christ and his Gospel are at the center of life here and give Bethany its very reason for existence. The academic catalog says boldly, “Specifically, the college confesses that through faith in Jesus Christ the individual receives the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.” The first objective listed for its students is that they “grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by means of the Gospel.”

What do these stones on McMahon Hill mean? Are they simply memorials to achievements of the ELS? Do they just sing the praises of past presidents, instructors, and financial supporters? No, they are memorial stones calling attention to our God of grace. They shout of what he does in hearts through “the one thing needful.” The cross of Christ on the steeple of this Trinity Chapel towers high over the whole campus. It reminds us that all these buildings are to be memorials to “blessed Jesus, King of grace.” These stones mean that we owe all to “Jesus, crucified for me” and that we want all who enter this institution to be able to say about him, “(He) is my life, my hope’s foundation.”

“Mission creeping” or “focus shifting” will continue to be Satan’s goal in regard to Bethany. He wants the superscription over Bethany to become a little more ambiguous. How long is the list of colleges that started out with a clear Christian mission but lost it along the way? Some of them are excellent academic institutions with great reputations. But their stones have lost their greater meaning.

I asked a number of people associated with Bethany and our synod this basic question: “What do you think is the biggest challenge that the new president of Bethany faces?” Their answers were just about identical. They all spoke words like these: “Maintaining Bethany’s distinctive Christian mission as the school continues to expand.”

Dr. Bruss, Satan may arrive regularly on campus with his most compelling reasoning. Stripped of their sophistication, his words may come across something like this, “Mr, President, tear down these present stones! Get with the post-modern philosophy and ease off on this ‘one thing needful’ idea. You could have a real ‘pearl’ here in Bethany with just a little mission adjusting. Start speaking a little

less of ‘Christian truth’ and a little more about ‘culturally conditioned religious ideas’ taught at Bethany. Give a little more credit to ‘other equally valid religious traditions.’ Who knows the respect Bethany could begin to gain with the public if you just back off a bit from too definite a mission and too sharp a focus.”

But tonight we Bethany people say to you, “Mr. President, build up these stones.” Joshua assured that the stones at Gilgal had rich meaning as memorials to God’s grace and power. Now may God use you to build up the stones of Bethany so that they ring out like a clear trumpet blast, “One thing is needful. Jesus is our glory and salvation.” You don’t have to make the waters of the Minnesota river stand up in a heap, or knock over the walls of a city, or make the sun stand still like Joshua. But it is your special role, given by God through the call of the Board of Regents, to build up these stones.

Photo # 3: Rising high are two mountains dotted with worshippers of all kinds.

All Israel, aliens and citizens alike, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the LORD, facing those who carried it — the priests, who were Levites. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had formerly commanded when he gave instructions to bless the people of Israel. (Joshua 8:33)

The scene pictured here must have been one of the most impressive worship services in all of history. Think about it. Tens of thousands of worshippers were on one mountain and more multitudes on the other. The Lord was at center of all the worship through the vehicle of the ark of the covenant. The worshippers were a diverse group, but united in covenant faith. There were Jewish citizens and also aliens who joined the faithful. Imagine the sound dynamics of thousands of people booming “amen” as the Scriptures were read from the two mountains.

Tonight we have a similar scene here at Trinity Chapel. We can’t match the numbers on Gerizim and Ebal. But our worship here

is equally impressive, because God and his word are at the center of all we are doing here. We are a diverse group, brought together by God-given faith. May the expression “aliens and citizens alike” in our text remind us of the outreach mission of Bethany and what has happened and, Lord willing, will often happen here in the future. Some students may come to Bethany only for an academic education and the chance to play a varsity sport. But they may leave with much more. They may learn to sing from the heart with us, “Hence, all earthly treasure! Jesus is my Pleasure; Jesus is my Choice.” They may sing their personal “Amen!” to “On my heart imprint thine image.”

The confirmation service on Mounts Gerizim and Ebal must have inspired and encouraged Joshua in his role as leader. We are here for the strengthening of our faith and the faith of those around us. We are here for your encouragement through the Lord, Dan. We are doing what the writer of Hebrews urged: “Let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25). May this worship service encourage you as you are installed as president.

***Photo # 4: Straight overhead is the sun
stopped dead in the sky.***

So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel! Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal. Joshua 10:13-15

This photo is unique and inspiring. It captures a phenomenon seen just once in the history of the universe. God caused the sun to stop dead in the sky. He did this at the prayer of a man. Joshua was helpless and powerless alone. It was evident that there was not going to be enough daylight for Joshua and his army to complete their work of conquering the enemy forces. So he prays, God listens, and God answers.

There may well be times for you, Dr. Bruss, when all seems hopeless and lost as you face big challenges. There may be days when you think that all you can do is run up against brick walls or drown in despair, when you think you have to live in gloom and the sun will never shine again. On those days especially remember this picture from Joshua 10. Know that the God you pray to, the living God revealed in Scripture, is not some puny and powerless being. Didn't he knock over walls at Jericho so that Joshua did not have to knock his head against walls? Didn't he cause waters to stand up in a heap in the Jordan so no one drowned literally or drowned in his sorrow? When Joshua prayed, didn't God make the sun stand still in the middle of the sky so that Joshua had sunshine to work in? That's your God. He has not changed from the days of Joshua. Go to him boldly in prayer. "Every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variation nor shadow of turning." (James 1:17)

Photo # 5: Resting in the soil of the Promised Land is a man credited as a faithful servant.

After these things, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel. (Joshua 24:29-31)

This last picture is a burial scene. It is anything but depressing. It is triumphant. It shows Joshua's body resting in the soil of the "promised land" that had become the "promise-fulfilled land."

At this final earthly scene Joshua is called "the servant of the Lord." That title has God's grace written all over it. Joshua was not perfect. The Bible records his sins and weaknesses several times. But he is credited with being "the servant of the Lord." Like us, he was counted forgiven through the perfect Servant, Jesus Christ. Though Joshua lived more than a millennium before his namesake Jeshua/Jesus, he was counted perfect through faith. God accepted

Joshua's service through the perfect service of his Son.

That's our joy. At the end of our lives on earth, because of Jesus' perfect service for us, God will say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." That is inspiring for us. In Christ we know the outcome of our lives even as we live and serve on earth.

Our time for service here is short. Who knows when God may call us. Preparing a will in recent days has emphasized to me my own mortality and the brevity of life on earth. How many more New Year's Days will you experience? None? One? Ten? How many more semesters at BLC will we be a part of? How many more times will we be able to sing "On My heart" or "One Thing's Needful?" The answer to those questions is: a definite, limited number, and then no more on this earth. Time for service here is running out.

Our prayer for you now, Dan, is that God will use you "while it is day" for service to Bethany College. Your sins and shortcomings he will forgive through your Savior. The final scene of your life on earth is already assured through him. With courage and confidence, therefore, serve Bethany as its seventh president "for such a time as this." (Esther 4:14)

Sermon on Luke 7:11-17

By Phillip K. Lepak

Jesus' Heart Goes Out to Us

Text: Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and "God has visited His people." And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region. (Luke 7:11-17)

Introduction

Dear fellow redeemed, the death of a loved one seems to cause a change in us. A little over a week ago, I saw a lot of people scurrying about, cleaning King of Grace Lutheran Church, preparing it for the funeral of Paul Madson. There were people scrubbing floors, dusting and cleaning windows, setting up chairs, preparing music and bulletins. Not one of them had to be there, but each had felt the suffering and separation that death had caused, and so their hearts went out in remembrance of their friend, Paul, to his wife and children, and their hands were busy showing their love and concern.

The funeral was held the next day. O, that Jesus would have come by Saturday before last! He would have seen Paul in that coffin! Perhaps His heart would have gone out as it did to that widow in our sermon text. Perhaps He would have said, "Don't cry." Perhaps He would have said, "Young man, I say to you get up!" And Paul would have sat up and begun to talk. But Jesus did not come by that funeral.

He did not say, “Don’t cry.” He did not say, “Young man, I say to you get up!” Or did He?

Will He come by your funeral? Will He come by my funeral? Will He say to our survivors, “Don’t cry, he lives, she lives!” Will He say to us, “Arise, come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.” These are the biggest questions of your life. How will they be answered? Will your funeral be empty of promise, or full of faith in Jesus and eternal life in heaven? How will you live out your life here on earth in the meantime?

The Lord would have us ponder these questions daily. He wants us to know what He means when He says, “His heart went out to her,” and “Don’t cry,” and “Young man, I say to you, get up.” This morning, listen to the Word of our Lord. He has a message for all of us that is full of compassion, hope and eternal life.

Part 1 - His Heart Went out to Her

“Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and His disciples and a large crowd went along with Him. As He approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, His heart went out to her.” What a sad picture God paints here! Death, separation, hopelessness, sorrow, a widow who has lost all means of support and a beloved son all in one day, a town mourning the loss of one of its sons.

Is there a better summary of this place where we all live? This world is a place of bitter death and unrelenting decay. I’m sure that, like us, these villagers of Nain and this widow were casting about for something to hang on to. Death has a way of making all of life unsure; it’s only by our own forgetfulness and blindness that we manage to see permanence in this dying world.

We are a dying race that is through and through cursed by sin. “By one man sin entered this world, and death through sin and thus death spread to all men, because all have sinned.” What hope are you going to hold onto when you realize that you are dying? I hope that it is not money or memories or family or prestige or your own strength

or any worldly thing. These all will be gone. They were gone for this son of the widow. They were gone for my friend, Paul. They will not be there for you either. What can I trust then? “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” Jesus’ heart goes out to you, just as it did for the son of the widow.

God looked upon our fallen race, dead in sins and trespasses, and He desired not to destroy but to restore. “He would not have the wicked die, but repent and turn away from their sins.” He “would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.” So in His unfathomable love, when the time was right, He sent forth His Son to redeem us. By His suffering there is healing; the brokenhearted and dying have hope.

Part 2 - Don't Cry

So don't cry, dear Christians. “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” There is hope, not wishful thinking but a real hope, a sure expectation of what is to come. Jesus gives us a foretaste when He returns this son of Nain to life. Jesus has real power over death. So He confidently says, “Don't cry.” He doesn't mean, “Stop crying.” Or “Everything'll be ok.” He means, “I'll take care of this for you.” That's His message to us in the Bible. “Don't cry. Though everything about this situation is bleak, I'll take care of this for you, dear Christian, dear brother.”

Can He do what He promises for us? For the proof there are three places to look. Look up from this little village to the hill of Golgotha where Jesus took your place in death. Then look below that hill to the tomb. Jesus was laid there to decay in death, but He did not see decay. Instead after three days He arose to life. Then look toward heaven, where Jesus came from and where He ascended to.

Jesus is the Son of God, God come in human flesh to receive in Himself the punishment for our sins and to die in our place. See Jesus, whom death could not hold. See Him who will draw us up to be with Him in the heavenly places. Don't cry, dear Christians, Jesus' heart has gone out to us; the Master of Death and Giver of Life is calling, “Get up! Your sins are forgiven. Where O death is your sting!”

Part 3 - Young Man? I Say to You, "Get Up!"

What a surprise that young man must have had when he opened his eyes again in this world! Imagine the love that his mother and friends must have expressed to him. Imagine the second opportunity to live.

When you and I open our eyes, it will not be to this world again, with all its disappointments and bitter tears. Even now with eyes of faith we see beyond death to the place where Jesus has gone ahead to prepare for us. We see even now that after death we will open our eyes in the heavenly places.

Look with your eyes of faith. See the sureness of Jesus' love and compassion. Look at the certain hope of His resurrection, and the everlasting life that He has given you in Himself. Now live your life seeing by faith.

No one would have stood about idly and scoffed at preparing for Paul's funeral. Just so it would be absurd for us to stand about idly and scoff at Jesus' death or ignore His resurrection or forget His love. Come, let us work together. Let us show our love of Christ. Let us have compassion for each other in our weaknesses. Let us bring the hope of salvation from God's mouth to our ears, and let us share the words of eternal life in Christ.

Conclusion

I tell you, Jesus did come by Paul's coffin the Saturday before last. Not one saw Him with his eyes, but He was seen by faith. He is saying even now to those who remain, "Don't cry." Paul is not dead. Yes, his eyes are now closed to this place of death, but then again that is all that those eyes could see. It is by faith that Paul saw Jesus, and though his body lies now in a coffin, yet he has sat up in his heavenly home and even now speaks with the saints who have gone before, and even God, face to face.

There is compassion in God's Word. It is grace, undeserved love for dying sinners like us. It changes us, puts hope in our hearts. Nothing in all this world will be able to separate you from the love of

God which is in Christ Jesus. There is eternal life in this Book. He will one day whisper to those who believe, "I say to you, get up." Believe this, for it is God's Word to you, and He cannot fail. Amen!