Concordia Theological Quarterly

CTQ

Vol. 65 No. 1
January 2001

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

Concordia Theological Quarterly, a continuation of *The Springfielder*, is a theological journal of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, published for its ministerium by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Its website is at http://www.ctsfw.edu/ctq/index.html.

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Concordia Theological Quarterly is published in January, April, July, and October. The annual subscription rate is $15.00 within the United States, $20.00 U.S. in Canada, and $35.00 U.S. elsewhere. All changes of address (including clergymen of the Missouri Synod), subscription payments, and other correspondence concerning business matters should be sent to *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825.

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Volume 65:1 **January 2001**

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Doctrine and Evangelism

Alvin L. Barry

One of my favorite biblical themes is faithfulness and outreach. In fact, at the 1995 convention of our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod I held up both of these words, "faithfulness" and "outreach," for the Synod to bear in mind as it moves into the future. Those who had been at the previous convention, in 1992, no doubt recognized that the two words were simply a paraphrase of something I had already said: "Keep the message straight, Missouri! Get the message out, Missouri!"

In 1998 the Synod in convention took a bold step. It resolved to spend three years in intensive preparation and the next ten years, the first decade of the new millennium (2001-2010), in extensive outreach with the gospel. This effort has been gathering steam under the title, "Tell the Good News about Jesus." Telling the good news, of course, is evangelism. Telling the good news about Jesus inevitably puts us into the realm of doctrine. Therefore this paper is entitled, "Doctrine and Evangelism." It is really just one more way of playing that one same violin string: "faithfulness and outreach," keeping the message straight and getting the message out.

Prolog

I do not like to be negative, or to begin with a minus point. But a terrible idea has been afoot in Christian circles for a long time. It has taken many different forms. If our Synod is to carry out its resolve to tell the good news about Jesus, we must face this idea head-on and correct it. The terrible idea is that doctrine and evangelism do not mix, that they are related to one another like water is related to fire. Perhaps you have heard it said, "Are we concerned about doctrine, or are we concerned about people?"

Concern about doctrine has at times suffered in the name of evangelism. Someone has shared with me an observation made by Richard Hofstadter, a professor of American history at Columbia University. He wrote that in the middle of the nineteenth century, theological discussion in most church bodies "was subordinated to practical objectives which were conceived to be far more important. The peculiar view or practices of any denomination, if they were not

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considered good for the general welfare or the common mission enterprise, were sacrificed to this mission without excessive regret. And the mission itself was defined by evangelism." This meant that, as many looked at it, "the bond that held most denominations together need not be a traditional, inherited, confessional bond."[1] Concern about doctrine was sacrificed to what people were convinced was the cause of evangelism.

There is another side to this matter, exemplified today by pastors and others who spend so much time on the finer points of theology—or at least on what they think is indispensable to such fine points—that they take no opportunity to tell the good news about Jesus to the unchurched. They run out of time, for they allow themselves to run out.

I am reminded of one churchman who said it would be good for theologians to swap places with frontline missionaries for a while. But of course, pastors and laypeople in congregations cannot afford the luxury of overspecialization. Those on the front lines have to be concerned about both faithfulness *and* outreach, doctrine *and* evangelism, confession of the truth *and* confessing the truth. Thanks be to our good and gracious God, this is exactly where the Scriptures equip us all to be.

Doctrine and evangelism are wedded in the history of the early church. This union lies embedded, for example, in the book of Acts. Let no one put asunder what God has joined together!

I like to recall that two events stood out as so important in the church of the apostolic era that each comes up three times in Acts. First is the conversion of Paul, which is described in chapter 9. Paul repeats it when he defends himself in chapter 22 and again in chapter 26. The other event is the conversion of Cornelius' household. Acts 10 gives that account. Peter, who preached to Cornelius and his family, tells the story again in chapter 11 and mentions it once more in chapter 15. These two incidents provide a powerful a clue to the message of Acts. They also say something about the church's faithfulness and outreach, not as an "either/or" proposition but a "both/and."

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[1]Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1963), 83-84.

Mission to the Gentiles

The conversion of Paul and the story of Peter and Cornelius share several features. The first is mission to the Gentile world. Mission to the Gentiles had been there from the very beginning in the apostolic church: "You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). One encounters a lot more Gentiles than Jews when going to the "ends of the earth."

But for many people it proved hard to support the idea of Gentile missions enthusiastically. There were several reasons, but let us not overlook plain old-fashioned prejudice that says, "Do we have to let *them* in?"

In some subtle and in some not-so-subtle ways, the Lord had been nudging the church toward the Gentile world throughout its early days. He moved the church dramatically forward through the outbreak of an intense persecution upon the stoning of Stephen. Christians started spreading out from Jerusalem, telling the good news wherever they went (Acts 8:4). At first they were talking about Christ only with Jews, but that was about to change.

Acts 8 goes on to tell of Philip proclaiming Christ to the Samaritans and baptizing them. They were delighted to hear the message. That is, they responded in faith. Yet the Holy Spirit did not come upon them, at least not in any visible or outward way, until Peter and John arrived from Jerusalem and could see what was going on (Acts 8:14-17). *Then* the Holy Spirit was outpoured in such a way that they could tell. The apostles could go back to Jerusalem and say, "This is the right move. It is okay to reach out to Samaritans." The Lord was nudging His people further and further in the direction of the Gentiles, but they had not altogether made it yet.

Conversion of Paul

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus proved to be quite a moment for mission to the Gentiles! For this Saul, eventually called Paul, was going to become the apostle to the Gentiles. When God told Ananias to baptize Saul, He added, "This one is My chosen vessel to carry My Name before the nations" – the ἐθνή in Greek, the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

Many have pointed out that Paul was the thirteenth apostle. Until then the number had been twelve. Judas was replaced after he killed himself,

then there were twelve again: twelve apostles, like twelve tribes in Israel, each descended from one of Jacob's twelve sons (Acts 1:23-26). But now, in the New Testament era, the gospel would go out everywhere, spilling over far beyond the bounds of Israel. There were no longer twelve apostles, but thirteen.

Number thirteen, Paul, was going to be prominent in telling the good news about Jesus to the Gentiles. Faced by an angry mob in Jerusalem, Paul later recalled that this was exactly what the Lord had told him shortly after his conversion: "Go, I will send you far off to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:31). "Not to the Gentiles!" the crowd must have thought. These words of Jesus obviously made quite an impression on Paul himself. He wrote to the Ephesians, who were mostly Gentiles: "But now in Christ Jesus, you who were *far off* have been brought near in the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). They had been brought near when someone like Paul took the saving message of God's word to them.

The Master planned that Paul would be apostle to the Gentiles, and by His grace Paul threw himself into this calling with great vigor. He wrote about agreeing with the so-called "pillars" of the Jerusalem church—James, Peter, and John—that he (Paul) and his associates would go to the Gentile world (Galatians 2:9). He wrote the Romans, "I am the apostle to the Gentiles and I magnify my ministry" (Romans 11:13). This same Paul, once anxious to travel to faraway cities persecuting Christians, was now eager to go to distant places like Spain in the service of his Lord and for the proclamation of the gospel. No question about it, the conversion of Paul was filled with implications for mission, especially to the Gentiles.

Peter and Cornelius

The conversion of Cornelius' household had similar import. Cornelius was a Roman, an army officer. He was not a Jew. His family was not Jewish. They were Gentiles, Romans. Perhaps they were God-fearing Romans, but Romans all the same. They were not distant cousins of the Jews who had gotten religiously mixed-up, like the Samaritans. They were not proselytes, adult converts who had come into Judaism.

Many factors might have initially tempted Peter to say "No" to an opportunity to visit this Roman centurion's home. When Cornelius' messengers went to fetch Peter, he was at the seacoast city of Joppa. Some centuries before, another messenger of God named Jonah had boarded a

ship from that same city and sailed out into the Mediterranean Sea because he did not want to go to the Gentile population of Nineveh (Jonah 1:3 and following). Now here was Peter, also a messenger of God, and the question arises all over: would he get on a ship too? Would he also try to run?

He would not, in part because God had prepared Peter with a vision in which the Lord told him to eat animals that were unclean under the ceremonial law (Acts 10:10-13). Later, in case Peter harbored any nagging doubts, he discovered upon reaching the home of Cornelius that an angel had told Cornelius in a vision to send his men to get Peter at Simon the Tanner's house in Joppa (Acts 10:30-33). These were the men who arrived just after Peter's vision ended (Acts 10:17-18).

Once again, mission to the Gentiles emerges as the theme. As his time with Cornelius unfolded, Peter noticed that the Holy Spirit was outpoured on this Roman household in the same way He had been outpoured on the Christians in Jerusalem at Pentecost. Peter said, "The Holy Spirit fell on them, just as also upon us, at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). He added, "God gave the same gift to them as to us" (Acts 11:17).

Application

Sometimes we are prone to say, "If only we were more like the first-century church." But we are like the first-century church. We also say, "Do we have to let *them* in?" Do our congregations readily accept people of all backgrounds?

In individual hearts and minds, we also ask: "Do we have to let *them* in? If we do, what kinds of problems will we have?" We believe that God loved the world, but we find it hard to think that he loved certain "undesirables" and that He wants us to share our love with them as well as the blessings of salvation. We also need to get the message about mission to the Gentiles. It is a good thing this message is repeated so often in Acts.

This is not a matter of giving ourselves a pep talk. For, in the end, it will not be pep talks that cause the outreach that has been going on for centuries in the history of the Christian church. This kind of effort cannot be sustained for so long a period of time on pep talks. There is something about the gospel message itself that simply will not stay contained. It reaches out to all people, no matter who they may be, and draws them in.

Justification by Grace, for Christ's Sake, through Faith

Besides mission to the Gentiles, there is another big point in common between the two stories that are repeated so often in Acts, the conversion of Paul and that of Peter and Cornelius. It is really the "other side of the coin" of mission to the Gentiles: justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith.

We have now moved onto some very familiar "Lutheran" ground. Moreover, we have moved onto unabashedly doctrinal ground. To mix the metaphor a bit, if we have been digging about on these grounds to unearth the relationship between doctrine and evangelism in Acts, we have just hit a gusher!

Sometimes the wonderful doctrine of justification by grace lies so squarely beneath our noses that we do not see it. We become surprised when we find it welling up from the Scriptures in yet another place. But here it is, in Acts.

Justification by grace forms the basis for mission to the Gentiles. It is the only reason and the only means by which Gentiles could come into the kingdom with no strings attached. Only it can explain why a Saul of Tarsus would be welcome in the church of Jesus Christ. It is the driving force in our Lord's gospel call to all people.

Conversion of Paul

At times, Paul mused in his epistles about how much zeal he had maintained for the traditions of the ancestors and how good a Pharisee he had been by all conventional standards. By his own account, he was

> circumcised on the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness which comes about in the law blameless. But the various things in which I was coming out ahead, I came to think of as one great big loss on account of Christ. Indeed, I go on considering them as a loss because of what surpasses them, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. On account of Him I have lost all things. I regard them as repugnant rubbish in order that I might gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which proceeds from the law but righteousness through faith in Christ—the kind that comes from God by faith (Philippians 3:5-9).

The robe of righteousness Christ had prepared for Paul and that Christ had placed on him, the righteousness Paul received by faith, was better than any robe of righteousness he himself could fashion. No matter how zealous Paul was, how faithful, or how sincere according to the traditions of his ancestors, he would always fall far short of God's demands. Elsewhere he wrote that he had been "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent person," immediately adding that "the grace of our God overflowed with faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." Paul summed it all up: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am number one" (1 Timothy 1:13-15).

Any of us can say the same thing. It was not only in place of Paul, but in place of you and me that Jesus cried out upon the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). And it was on account of Paul, the blasphemer, the persecutor, the murderer, that Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30) and died. It was on account of us as well.

Peter and Cornelius

But not only is the conversion of Paul about justification by grace. The story about Peter and Cornelius is too. Its emphasis on justification began already before Peter ever laid eyes on Cornelius. It started with Peter's vision. A sheet came down from heaven, the ceremonially unclean animals came out, the voice said, "Kill and eat," and Peter answered, "Lord, they're unclean." Then came the reply, "What God calls clean, don't go calling unclean" (Acts 10:13-15).

That point goes back to Jesus Himself, Who said: "It's not the things that go into a man that defile him. It's the things that come out of a man." Thus Jesus was declaring all foods clean (Mark 7:14-19). He would have to pay for saying things like that, not merely because people would grow angry at Him for saying them and eventually kill Him, but also because this was exactly what God wanted. Jesus went to the cross not because people put Him there, but because God did. He fulfilled the law in addition to paying for the sins of the whole world, your sins and mine too. No mere man could do it, but this was the Man Who was also God.

But it is not only in Peter's vision that justification by grace is taught in the story of Peter and Cornelius. It also comes in at the climax, when the Holy Spirit was outpoured on Gentiles who had been living all their lives without the Old Testament law. If salvation were by the law, they never should have received the Holy Spirit. But since they were receiving the

Holy Spirit, salvation is shown not to be by the works of the law. This was what Peter came to appreciate. He did not fail to note that the Holy Spirit descended upon his audience while he was speaking to them. There is an important rhetorical question in Galatians: "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?"(Galatians 3:2). The Gentiles in Cornelius' family obviously did not receive the Spirit by the works of the Law. They *did* receive Him by hearing in faith.

Application

Like the conversion of Paul, the story of Peter and Cornelius has justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith written all over it. Again, it is a good thing that these accounts are repeated so frequently in Acts. For it becomes too easy for us lose track of justification by grace. We slip into thinking, "It's too simple that way! Too easy! Too good to be true." But it *is* true.

This is the thing about the gospel message that will not stay contained. Since salvation is full and free in Jesus Christ, it is for everyone. Justification provides a basis for universal mission, evangelism to all people.

It also constitutes the most powerful tool to be used in evangelism. The message of justification by grace reaches out to people right where they are, dead in trespasses and sins, without hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:1, 12). It brings them in by showering upon them all the blessings our Lord bought at such a great cost. The apostles knew this, as did our forefathers in our own Synod:

> The only means the apostles know to carry out the work that Christ has given them to do is the Gospel. They have a mighty confidence in the effectiveness of the Gospel under all conditions and circumstances; they face people who are friendly and are willing to listen, and they tell them the Gospel-story; and they face howling mobs, who drag them out to stone them, and they tell them the Gospel-story; the jailer who was narrowly saved from committing suicide, and the governor who for two years hopes to extort a bribe, and the king who feels uncomfortable and would rather not have

listened . . . and the adulteress who has almost forgotten how to blush, they must all hear the same story.[2]

Finally, the doctrine of justification by God's grace becomes a norm for evangelism within the larger setting of the normative Scriptures. I find it interesting that in the Acts 15 council, mission to the Gentiles was evaluated in two ways. Peter pointed out that it went hand-in-glove with justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith, and James showed that it was in accord with the Scriptures. So in our day, we can ask: in our various outreach efforts, are we remaining faithful to the great truth of justification by grace? It is too good to be true, but it is true! And are we standing on the Scriptures? There is no way we can consider the audience —not the message—to be sovereign.

Justification becomes the beating heart of all our doctrinal faithfulness to God, for it lies at the center of all our church's teaching. Luther, who knew a thing or two about this topic, said that justification by faith "is the chief point and cornerstone, which alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves and defends the church of God; and without it, the church of God is not able to subsist for a single hour."[3] Or, putting the same thing another way, he said, "Where this single article remains pure, Christendom will remain pure, in beautiful harmony, and without any schisms. But where it does not remain pure, it is impossible to repel any error or heretical spirit."[4]

Epilog

In this article I have examined the two major events that are repeated in Acts, the conversion of Paul and the story of Peter and Cornelius. Both of these accounts have two central themes in common: mission to the Gentiles and justification by faith.

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[2]Theodore Hoyer, "Missionary Forward Movement in the Light of the Book of Acts," *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Convention of the Southern Illinois District of the Ev. Luther. Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States assembled at Belleville, Illinois, October 15-19, 1934* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), 30.

[3]Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe,* 58 volumes (Weimar, 1883-), 30 II:650.

[4]*FC SD* III:6, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church,* edited by Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 540.

Notice how Acts itself describes these events. The last time the story of Paul's conversion is told, Paul noted that God said He was rescuing Paul "from the people and from the *Gentiles*, to whom I send you [mission to the Gentiles] to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive *forgiveness* of sins and a share among those who are sanctified *by faith in me* [justification by faith]" (Acts 26:17-18). Elsewhere, after Peter told the story of the conversion of Cornelius' family, the Jerusalem church responded: "Having heard these things they were silent, and glorified God saying, 'God has also *given* [grace] the *Gentiles* repentance unto life'" (Acts 11:18). For his part, Luther observed that Acts "emphasizes so powerfully not only the preaching of the apostles about faith in Christ . . . but also the examples and the instances of this teaching, how the *Gentiles* as well as Jews were *justified* through the Gospel alone, without the law."[5]

To speak of the close connection between biblical, Christ-centered doctrine and vital, vibrant evangelistic outreach is relatively easy to do on the basis of Acts. It amounts to pointing out what fairly jumps off the page almost every time you turn one. The big challenge arises in our own minds and hearts. For recognizing the close relationship of doctrine and evangelism, of faithfulness and outreach, really calls upon us to refocus both our perceptions and our priorities.

Under the heading of perceptions, we need to be acutely aware that in the more than fifty years since World War II, the theology of evangelism in virtually every church body across our country has been influenced by the theology of the Evangelicals. It is a broad, but essentially accurate, statement to say that "The whole American Evangelical experience has become the primary evangelistic paradigm for Lutherans in North America."[6] In reclaiming a Lutheran view of evangelism we will perhaps need to change the way we perceive the evangelistic challenge and the ways the propose to meet it.

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[5]*Luther's Works,* American Edition, 55 volumes, edited by J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-1986), 35:363.

[6]John Pless, "Liturgy and Evangelism in Service of the Mysteria Dei," *Mysteria Dei: Essays in Honor of Kurt Marquart,* edited by Paul T. McCain and John R. Stephenson (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1999), 226.

We are also invited to refocus our priorities. Looking at the history of the early church, it is impossible for us to come away with a smugly contented and self-satisfied attitude as regards the church and its role in the world. Acts tells us of a persistent, even pugnacious church that did not wait for the world to come to it. It went into the world with the gospel message, confronting unbelief and unbelievers with the sword of the Spirit, even in situations where everything seemed stacked against the evangelistic cause. Nor did the church wait until all its internal problems were solved before it reached out. In the process of outreach, the church learned a few lessons from the ascended Lord the hard way, lessons of patience and persistence.

Doctrine and evangelism definitely go together in Acts. I hope and pray that they do for us too, and that together they continue to shape both our Synod's perceptions and its priorities. For ultimately, the only ,good news we have to tell is the good news *about Jesus*. And what an opportunity the Lord has given us to tell it at the start of a new decade, century, and millennium!

As we tell this good news about Jesus, God will bless—richly and mightily.

Luther and World Missions: A Review

Pekka Huhtinen

Introduction

In 1881 a pietistic professor of missions at the University of Halle, Gustav Warneck, published the first edition of his influential *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time.* From the outset, Warneck criticizes Luther and his fellow reformers for their alleged failure to recognize any missionary obligation to the heathen and to set up mission institutions: "We miss in the Reformers not only missionary action, but even the idea of missions" (9). Luther, Warneck claims, was not "a man of missionary spirit in the sense of seeking the Christianising of the heathen" (10). The Reformer held that "Christianity had already fulfilled its universal calling" (12). While Warneck makes some allowances for the circumstances of the day—the Lutheran states lacked "immediate intercourse with heathen nations," and were preoccupied with "the struggle . . . against papal and worldly power" (8)—the general tenor of his chapter on "The Age of the Reformation" is to damn the missiological efforts of Luther and his immediate successors with faint praise.[1] Warneck grants that some of Luther's sayings suggest he was cognizant of the church's missionary task "even in the present," for example, its task of witnessing to Jews and Turks. But the reformers failed to set up any "systematic missionary enterprise" (14). The Swedish King Gustavus Vasa's endeavor to incorporate the Lapps into the Evangelical Church is tarred with the same brush. Warneck deems it no "proper mission to the heathen, as it consisted only (!) in the sending of pastors and the establishment of parishes" (24).[2]

No less severe is Warneck's second chapter, "The Age of Orthodoxy," where the Lutheran dogmatician, Johann Gerhard, is taken as representative of "the negative attitude of orthodoxy. . . towards missions to the heathen" (28). Only in "The Age of Pietism" (chapter III), with its

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[1]Melanchthon, Bucer, Zwingli, and Calvin fall under the same condemnation as Luther (17-20).

[2]In citing this passage in Warneck, Elert adds the exclamatiion mark after the word "only"! See Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, 397.

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emphasis on a "living, personal, and practical Christianity," did Protestant missions first strike deep roots and begin to bloom.

Undoubtedly one of the most able and spirited responses to Warneck's picture of a "missionless Lutheranism" is Werner Elert's chapter on "Missions" in his classic, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (385-402). Elert asks pointedly: "How could Luther, who expounded the Psalms, the Prophets, and Paul, have overlooked or doubted the universal purpose of the mission of Christ and of His Gospel?" (386). The Erlangen systematician demonstrates Luther's awareness of "the boundless dynamic of the Gospel" (*evangelischer Ansatz*) which impelled the Reformation to reach out to "the Jews at home, the Turks in the Balkans, and the heathen Laplanders in Scandinavia" (394). In so doing, Luther, like Wilhelm Loehe after him, saw missions as "nothing but the one church of God in motion – the actualization of the one universal, catholic church."[3]

If Elert's essay has a deficiency, it is only that one would wish for more than he could say in eighteen pages. This "deficiency" has been remedied by a Swedish scholar, Ingemar Oberg, in his comprehensive *Luther och världsmissionen*.[4] The following summary was supplied by the Reverend Pekka Huhtinen of Helsinki, Finland, who spent the 1996-1997 academic year doing missiological research at CTS.

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Preface

Generally speaking, missiological literature makes a negative assessment of Luther's contribution to mission. After reading and researching many of Luther's sermons and biblical lectures (Weimarausgaben) Oberg realized how misunderstood Luther has been.

Oberg's book aims to clarify what is theologically most important to the Reformer in regard to mission, and what Luther says about the church's duty to proclaim the gospel among non-Christian nations.

Luther did not use missiological terms (for example, "mission motive,"

[3] *Three Books about the Church*, translated by James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) 59; Elert, 390.

[4] (Abo and Turku, Finland: Abo Akademi, 1991), 670 pages.

"world mission" or "mission") in the same technical sense as we use them today.[5] But he uses such words as *senden* (send), *Sendung* (sending), in Latin *mittere/missio,* when he speaks about bringing the gospel to the nations.

Luther is, first of all, a Bible interpreter and reformer. Reading and working with the Bible made Luther the Reformer! The aim of this research is not to make Luther a mission strategist. Luther is approached more as a theologian of mission than as an exponent of mission practice.

1. Research Hypothesis and Method

This book aims to demonstrate the missiological aspect of Luther's theology. The book responds to the thesis of modern theological research that Luther's theology has little or nothing to do with missiology today. Oberg's hypothesis is that we can find what he calls "mission universalism" in Luther's theology (one may see Luther's interpretations of Matthew 6:10; 13; 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24). He contends that Luther research up to this time has been too pragmatic (for example, G. Warneck and J. Richter).

Luther's missiological viewpoint may be found in his theology, which focuses on God's constructive work in the church through the word and sacraments. Organizational and technical points are secondary. Church and mission are integrated in Luther's theology. To proclaim the gospel (we would use the word "mission" in this connection!) to the nations, both Jews and Gentiles, originates from the Bible. Mission is, first of all, the work of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, through the instruments of "word and sacraments."[6] Then comes the role of men (the office of the ministry and the priesthood of all believers).

To understand the limitations to which the reformers were subjected in their mission outreach, the historical context of the Reformation has to be considered. The Reformation was at the very beginning confined to Middle and Northern Europe for two important reasons: 1) the powerful Roman Catholic Church in the West, East, and South; and 2) the strong

[5]The terms "world mission" and "mission," became more common about 200 years after Luther's death.

[6]In modern missiology the expression "missio Dei" could be used in this connection.

wave of Islam (in Islamic areas mission propaganda was forbidden under penalty of death). In addition, until 1588 (the defeat of the Spanish Armada) only the Spanish and Portuguese were able to do seafaring. The religious policy of Europe (*cuius regio, eius religio*) did not favor an expansive mission (compare obstacles to mission work in China or Iran today).

Luther was primarily the Reformer and defender of the Christian faith. Therefore it is necessary to have a sufficient understanding of Luther's writings (sermons and biblical exposition). The false conclusion that Luther's theology lacked a missiological perspective stems from a superficial comprehension of Luther's material (for example, G. Warneck, L. Bergman, and their followers in modern Luther research).

Oberg's research method, on the other hand, is historical and systematic in nature. Luther's own texts and their theological motifs are in the center of this research.

2. Some Essential Theological Aspects of Luther's Mssiological Thinking

Luther's theological thinking is trinitarian and at the same time Christ-centered. In his theological structure, God the Creator is the important starting point. The world and all people are His creatures. The Creator's hand, power, and care extend to the evil and the good, Gentiles, Jews, and Christians as well.

Man was created good by God, but Adam's fall was catastrophic for all mankind in every age. Since the Fall, human nature has been deeply corrupted by unbelief and sin (original sin). Man's behavior is ruled by unbelief, self-centeredness, and self-righteousness both in his relationship with God and with his neighbors. However, the "natural man" has some knowledge of God and God's law.

Luther's missiology has to be seen in the context mentioned above. God's plan of salvation and mission belong firmly together. The activities of churches and missions are important, but more important is what God has done. God does not reject man, but gives him his righteousness and salvation.

God is present in an active way as the Creator and Preserver of life among all nations. Thus we can say that God is present everywhere

already through His creation. His work and almighty power can be seen among all the nations, not merely as an indefinite law of nature, but as the power of the Creator. In Luther's theology the creation itself shows God's righteousness and love. However, the natural and fallen man cannot fully understand God's creative activity. Man can meet God in an objective way in creation, but only through God's word (law and gospel) can man understand God's activity in creation. God provides for His creation "purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me." This is explained in Luther's Small Catechism (the first article, Creation). God's action through Christ for man's salvation has to be proclaimed in connection with God's action in creation.

In Luther's theology this world is a battlefield. There is a battle between God and satan, between God's kingdom and satan's kingdom (see *De Servo Arbitrio*). This dualism is important for the Reformer's missiology. Mission means fighting. Man can never be in a neutral position in this world. He is either in God's kingdom or satan's. Preaching the gospel (mission) is not possible without cross and suffering.

Man has a so-called "natural knowledge" (*cognitio naturalis*) or "natural presentiment" about God. It is not a negative thing in itself. According to Luther, this can be seen in Paul's teaching. However, this natural knowledge has to be seen in the light of man's fall, for man without Christ is blind and under satan, sin, and death. Natural theology and religion never lead to redemption from satan, sin, and death (see Romans 1:21 and following). Luther teaches that (a) man has an undefined, abstract knowledge (*notitia*) of God (for example, eternity, power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness) written on his heart (see Romans 1:19-20), but (b) when man begins to apply (*usus*) this intuitive knowledge to a certain god, he merely adds to his sin. The result is heresy and idolatry. In history we can see that the abstract natural knowledge of God led the Romans to worship Jupiter, Mars, and Venus. But we can meet the same kind of situation also in Judaism (law religion), heathenism, and even in western Christianity (*opera legis, legalis*, moralism). On the basis of human faith (*fides humana*) humans cannot understand God as the God of grace, but only as a tyrant or judge.

True knowledge about God (*cognitio evangelica*) is possible only through the word, the gospel. In the gospel we can meet the true God (*theologia*

crucis). This is the fundamental basis and motivation for mission, evangelization, and reformation. We know about God through Christ, and we meet Christ in the gospel. He is the incarnate Christ, not the cosmic Christ. We receive Christ by faith. Through faith we understand who God is, and who we are.[7]

In Luther's theology *cognitio naturalis* is identical with *cognitio legalis*. In practice, they both mean man's own way to reconciliation with God, contrary to *cognitio evangelica*, which means God's way to man through Christ.[8] Luther's ecclesiology and missiology are Christ centered. Christ is the Lord and His kingdom truly comes through the word and sacraments. But God calls man to his ministry. Spreading the gospel (mission) is the duty of all Christians (the priesthood of all believers). The whole church has the responsibility to do mission work. Instead of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Luther emphasized the ecclesiastical unity (*communio sanctorum*) between laypeople and the office of the ministry. But this does not mean the two are the same. Laypeople (all Christians) are needed to witness and serve with their talents and gifts of grace, and the office of the ministry (the public ministry, *ministerium publicum*) is necessary for the distribution of the means of divine grace (word and sacraments).[9] For the public ministry, both the internal and external call (*vocatio interna, vocatio externa*) are needed. Unlike the priesthood of all believers, the office of the ministry is limited in nature. On the basis of the Bible, a woman cannot be ordained and serve in the office of the ministry.[10] Both the priesthood of all believers and the office of the ministry are established and given by God. They belong to God's order for His church's mission. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit do mission through the word and sacraments and the other marks of the church (*notae ecclesiae*[11]).

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[7]One may see Luther's commentary on John (Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 58 volumes [Weimar, 1883-], 1:23-29). All subsequent references to the Weimar edition of Luther's works will be abbreviated as *WA*.

[8]The concept of *cognitio* is the burning issue in missiology today. Regarding the problem of knowledge, see Luther's commentaries: Romans (*WA* 56:177), Deuteronomy (*WA* 28:611), Galatians (*WA* 42:631; 44:84), and Isaiah (*WA* 31 II:235).

[9]Luther rejected the priest-centered ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church.

[10]Luther's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and following (*WA* 30 III:518-27, *WA* 12:309).

[11]In his 1539 treatise *On the Councils and the Church*, Luther mentioned seven

3. The Missiological Perspective in Luther's Biblical Exposition and Sermons

The Old Testament

On the one hand, Luther points out that the Old and New Testaments are different, but on the other hand, he emphasizes the deep connection between them. This connection is based on salvation history: the promise (Old Testament) and the fulfilment (New Testament). Christ is a reality already in the Old Testament according to Luther. The focus of the Old Testament and New Testament is Christ. Luther's method of Old Testament interpretation can be called a "prophetical and christological" method. Faith is the same from the very beginning until the very end of the world. Therefore Genesis 3:15 is the so-called proto-gospel in Luther's interpretation of Genesis. Reconciliation through the Christ-seed (woman's seed, offspring) has been preached already from the days of Adam and his descendants. The essential missiological difference between the Old Testament and New Testament is that the old covenant considered only the Jews, but the new one in Christ is universal in nature. However, the promises given to Abraham were already promises of Christ. On the basis of texts from Genesis, Luther concludes that the church's mission is universal.[12]

The Psalter also includes the prophetic message about Christ. Actually, Luther considers most psalms to be messianic. He sees a clear centrifugal universalism (versus the Sinai covenant's particularism) in the Psalter: salvation has to be preached among all the nations under the sun. Christ's universal authority was proclaimed first in Jerusalem, but it should be proclaimed to all nations. Luther mentions that this proclamation was first made in the days of the apostles, and it continues until the end of the world. On the basis of Luther's interpretation of the Psalms[13] it has been claimed (for example, L. Bergman) that Luther did not consider world mission necessary after the apostolic era, because he mentioned that the apostles fulfilled their mission. However, he also

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characteristics of the church: God's word, holy baptism, sacrament of the altar, the office of the keys (absolution), the holy cross, the office of the ministry, and prayer (*WA* 50).

[12]See the Genesis commentaries (*WA* 14 and *WA* 24).

[13]*WA* 5: 546, 8 and following.

emphasized that mission continues until Christ's parousia.[14]

The centrifugal aspect is emphasized also in the interpretation of Psalm 110. In 1535 Luther had preached long sermons on this psalm between Ascension Day and Pentecost, because he considered these events especially significant for the movement of world mission from Jerusalem to the ends of the world: the risen Christ on the right hand of the Father, and the Holy Spirit's empowering for mission.[15]

Luther taught that the prophets in the Old Testament spoke both for that historical time and for the coming Christian Church. Luther considered for example, Isaiah 9:2 and following (the Old Testament lesson for Christmas Day) a clear missiological text, which should be viewed in the light of Christ's incarnation.[16] The same viewpoint can also be recognized in Luther's commentary on Zechariah.[17]

The New Testament

The synoptic Gospels make it clear that Jesus preached the gospel in a certain historical situation, among the historical people of Israel. But at the same time they make it clear that Christ's saving work is not only for the Jews but for the Gentiles as well. The gospel is universal and directed towards all people. The universal gospel with its centrifugal dynamic has to be preached to all nations. Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are God's universal deeds of salvation.

The Lord's Prayer's "thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10) and the parables of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13) indicate that God Himself builds His kingdom through the word. God's kingdom is constantly fighting against satan's kingdom. Mission is possible only through the power and work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Christ Himself has given his church the mandate for mission. It is interesting that Luther did not deal often with the "Great Commission" in Matthew 28:18-20. Instead we have many sermons from Luther on the other great mission texts (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:19-23). In his sermon on Matthew 28:18-20 (1525), Luther focuses more on

[14]See Psalms 19, *WA* 31 I: 580, 1 and following.
[15]See *WA* 41: 123.
[16]See also Isaiah 11:10 and following; 46:1, 6; 60:1-6, 19/*WA* 10:19 and 25.
[17]See *WA* 23.

baptism and the name of the Trinity than on mission work. However, he mentions that mission is not man's but God's work, and has to be done in His name. Mission work rests on Christ's almighty power and commission.

Luther's interpretation of Mark 16:15-16 (in his Ascension Day sermons) is full of missiological insights regarding world mission. Mission means both task and mandate. Misson has to be based on Christ, faith in Christ, and confession of Christ. Christ's sacrifice and resurrection are the foundation of mission.

The mission commission of John 20:19-23, as well as John 14-16, are important texts for Luther's missiology. In these passages he emphasizes the Holy Spirit's decisive importance to the church and its mission. The Holy Spirit makes mission possible through the word, sacraments, and pastoral care (the office of the keys). "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (20:21). In the parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10:12 and following), Luther identifies "other sheep" (verse 16) with the heathen to whom Jesus was sent as well.

In his exposition of Acts, Luther sees how Christ's resurrection and ascension meant a decisive change for world mission. The essential mission instruments were preaching and baptism. Mission is carried out under the direction of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All Christians are needed for mission. The priesthood of all believers and the office of the ministry work together in mission. The Reformer realizes also that the radical gospel leads to conflict with religions of law (natural religions).

On the basis of the epistles of the New Testament, Luther emphasizes the importance of *paranesis* and deeds of love. However, *paranesis* is based on Christ's self-sacrificing love. *Paranesis* cannot produce good deeds. The good deeds are effected by the Holy Spirit. Christian love and holy life open doors for mission.

Luther does not speak about "foreign mission" and "home mission," not even about mission fields. Mission means, first of all, spiritual fighting against satan, unbelief, and ungodliness everywhere in this world. He does not even give us any systematic missiology or missiological theories. Luther's view is often centered on Germany and Europe, but preaching the gospel to the heathen is a burning issue for him as well.

4. Luther and mission in practice

Luther and Jews

The issue of the Jewish people and their faith was important to the Reformer. Already in his first lectures on the Psalter (1513-1515) he dealt with this problem. Also, in his last sermon in 1546 (three days before his death), he spoke about this issue.

The general attitude toward Jews in Luther's day was quite negative and anti-Semitic. Jews were called parasites and bloodsuckers. Theologians were also influenced by this negative atmosphere and propaganda. What about Luther? Is there some difference in thinking between the young and the older Luther?

The lectures on the Psalter express Luther's criticism of the Jewish interpretation of the Scriptures, their legalism, stubbornness, and their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.[18] He even calls the Jews the "worst enemies of the church." However, these statements are more gentle than in his later works.

His Romans lectures (1515-1516) express already a harsh criticism: Jews do not understand either the Old Testament's nor the New Testament's teaching about righteousness through faith. Jews are compared in this connection with pagans and self-righteous Christians. They all need grace and faith in Christ for salvation. A special problem seems to be Paul's comments on the final salvation of Israel in its entirety (*massa Iudaeorum*, Romans 11:25-26). He finally comes in his interpretation to a *pars pro toto* position. In other words, he concludes that the final salvation includes the whole of Israel as the *massa sancta* (*nota bene*: the issue of predestination was an actual problem to Luther at that time). However, Luther feels a growing sympathy towards God's people Israel. He even warns Christians against adopting a superior attitude towards Jews.[19] Instead of a negative and proud attitude he recommends Christian love.[20]

His main criticism of Jews concerns their rejection of the Messiah. But at the same time Luther has a vision to bring them, as well as Gentiles, to Christ (the centrifugal mission concept). Not only Jews, but other people

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[18]*Dictata super Psalterium*, *WA* 3.

[19]See his interpretation of Romans 11:22.

[20]See *WA* 3, *WA* 6, and *WA* 56.

too, including Christians, are guilty of Christ's death. Jews have played a servant's role in God's plan of salvation. Luther's approach to the Jewish problem was gaining a stronger missiological motivation. This does not mean an organized mission but it means compassionate concern to bring the gospel to Jews in Germany and its neighbors. He really thought that Jews would accept the gospel, because for God everything was possible.[21] The practical instruments for mission among Jews and Gentiles are the same: acts of Christian love, preaching, and prayer.[22]

In the commentary on the Magnificat in 1521, Luther makes it very clear that God's promises to Israel are still valid.[23] The gospel was given first to Jews. We cannot behave unkindly towards them, but we have to preach the truth of the gospel to them. Then some of them will become Christians. Nobody can become Christian if one takes the attitude that was commonly taken towards Jews.[24] Stephen is mentioned as an example of the right attitude towards Jews.[25]

An interesting document is Luther's booklet, *Dass Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sei* to Bernhard Gipher in 1523.[26] Luther was convinced of the power of the gospel, and optimistic in regard to preaching the gospel to Jews and leading them to their true Messiah. In this booklet he deals with themes like Christ's virgin birth, and His two natures as God and man. He says that Jews should first get to know and love Christ as man. Then they will be able to accept Him also as God. The booklet is clearly missiological. But it is also christological. The purpose of the booklet was to encourage Christians to do mission work maong Jews, leading them to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, whom the true Jewish believers of the Old Testament knew already. Luther did very intensive exegetical studies of the Old Testament and rabbinic scriptures in order to communicate with Jews and understand the Jewish interpretation of the Scriptures. Actually he had many discussions with Jewish scholars. In this booklet Luther also opposed the social discrimination against Jewish

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[21]See *WA* 5: 428, 27 and following.

[22]See *WA* 5: 428, 39 and following.

[23]Luke 1:46-55, *WA* 7.

[24]See *WA* 7: 600, 26 and following.

[25]See *WA* 10 I:1, 265, 3 and following.

[26]Bernhard Gipher was a Jew who studied in Wittenberg. He became a doctor in Hebrew studies, was influenced by Luther's teaching and preaching, and became a Christian.

people (mission's two elements: teaching/preaching and life). In the letter to Bernhard, he expresses the hope that Bernhard could become an instrument (missionary?) among Jews in Germany: "Quem velim tuo exemplo et opere et apud alios Iudaeos vulgari, ut, qui preordinati sunt, vocentur et veniant ad David regum suum . . . ."[27] At that time Luther no longer considered Romans 11:25-26 problematic.

From the 1530s, Luther's attitude toward Jews became more critical for many different reasons. In German society Jews were active and skillful in business. They charged high interest rates, which Luther did not appreciate. However, the more serious problem was theological: the Jews refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah. They were like Turks, Gentiles, and false Christians, who are all enemies of Christ and faith. Indeed, the Jews had become active in their propaganda, especially in Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland, and gained many converts among Christians. Luther was becoming quite skeptical regarding the salvation of the entire Jewish people. In spite of that he interpreted the salvation of the Jews according to Romans 11:5, that "there is a remnant chosen by grace."[28] In those days Luther worked very hard to promote the OT's christological understanding and the doctrine of the Trinity (for example, the Genesis lectures 1535-45). On the one hand, he even said that Jews do not have the privilege of being called "God's people," because the true Israel is those who believe in Jesus. But on the other hand he still hoped that a part of the Jewish people could be led to Christ.[29]

Although Luther wrote the apologetic and very polemical article *Von den Juden und ihren Lugen* ("Concerning the Jews and Their Lies") in 1543, he still had the vision of winning some of them to Christ. Luther realized that his good will towards them could be abused by the Jews, who used his kindness for their own propaganda. This was also politically problematic because of the official religious policy of *cuis regio eius religio*. In this article Luther, in a polemical manner, points out that the Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament is false, and their faith also is false. According to Psalms 51:7, all people, including Jews, are by nature under God's wrath.[30] The most basic problem with the Jews was always the

[27]Compare Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:11; *WA* Br 3:102.
[28]See *WA* Br 5:452.
[29]See *WA* 30 II: 224, 225; *WA* Tr 1:161; *WA* Tr 6:363.
[30]See *WA* 53:426.

issue of the Messiah (Christology). Jews even accused Christians of polytheism and used some blasphemous expressions (like "magician" and "harlot") for Jesus and Mary.

In that situation Luther made some harsh proposals: Jews' traveling in Germany should be limited, or they should even be driven away from Germany (which was considered a Christian nation) to their own country. Their propaganda (religious expansion) had to be hindered by burning the synagogues, Jewish prayer books and Talmud, and by prohibiting the teaching activities of rabbis. The synagogues were compared to heathen temples. Judaism was seen as a threat to *unum corpus Christianum* and to Germany as a part of it as well. Jews' attacks on Christ and Christianity should not be tolerated by German Christians. Luther was no longer very hopeful about the Jews' conversion to Christ, but he did not lose the hope that God's word had the power to lead Jews to conversion. This fact can be seen also in *Von den Juden und ihren Lugen*, especially in its last twenty pages. Here Luther's teaching sounds again like the Luther of 1523 (*Dass Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sei*). Luther was conscious of his crude, sometimes even non-Christian manner of speaking about the Jews, but it was no different from the way he spoke about Christ's other antagonists, including the Roman Catholic Church and the pope.[31]

Luther's last sermon (February 1546) expresses hope and missionary concern for the Jews. He says that if Jews convert and accept Jesus, they are our brothers. He is still quite polemical, but not as severe as before. He again emphasizes Christian love and prayer as a means of leading Jews to their Messiah, Jesus Christ.[32]

Luther and Muslims

In Luther's approach to Muslims there is both an apologetic and a missiological dimension. Islam was both a political and a religious threat to Europe, because Islamic Turkey was at that time a powerful state with

[31]Oberg mentions that Nazis abused Luther's harsh attitude toward Jews. However, Nazi Germany's terrible deeds, like concentration camps and the holocaust, cannot be supported from Luther's teaching. Oberg mentions that one should remember Luther's advice regarding his teaching: those writings which are against the Scriptures should be buried 10 ells (6 meters) under the ground. See *WA* 53:522-551.

[32]See *WA* 51:195, 96.

expansionistic goals. Thus, in this connection, the "Muslims" means, in practice, Turks.

Luther thought that, from an eschatological viewpoint, both the papal church and Turks represented the Antichrist, the papal church even more than the Turks! There are three writings by Luther that are especially important in regard to the problem of Islam. They are *Vom Kriege wider die Turken, Heerpredigt wider den Turken,* and *Vermahnung zum Gebet wider den Turken.*[33] It is interesting that we do not have any writings, for example, from Zwingli or Calvin regarding the Islamic issue.

Nevertheless, Luther had something positive to say about Muslims (for example, their love for each other and their care of children). His fundamental view of the Islamic problem was that the Turks were God's rod (*virga Dei*) and satan's tool, sent because of sin and apostasy. However, God could use even Turks for leading Christians to conversion and Christ. The threat of Islam was not only political, but first of all a spiritual one. Therefore repentance and prayer are emphasized as true weapons in his writings. He makes clear the difference between the spiritual and secular realms. The Christian church has to take care of the spiritual realm. But it is the duty of caesars and princes to take care of the secular realm. This was his principle also regarding Muslims. When Vienna was threatened by Turks in 1529, he did not consider the war a religious war. Luther opposed all forms of violence in promoting mission ("sword mission"). Christ came to the world and sent His gospel to us for our eternal salvation from sin and hell.[34]

Muslims have to be approached with spiritual weapons (repentance, apologetics, mission). However, Christians should also know the Koran. Then they could stand against Islam. By reading the Koran, Christians could understand Islamic faith and life, but also see the lies of the Muslims. Actually, Luther worked intensively to obtain the Koran in Latin. Only part of it was available. The first Latin version was published in 1530 in Venice, but the pope ordered that it be burned. However, in 1542 Luther got hold of the Koran in Latin. He added his own preface and critical remarks (confutation) to it. It was published

[33]1528, *WA* 30 II; 1529, *WA* 30 II; and 1541, *WA* 51, respectively.
[34]See *WA* 30 II, 108, 111.

under the name *Confutatio Alcorani.*[35] Thus Luther followed the human *ad fontes* principle in his missiological approach. He said that the Koran itself, with its scandalous stories, is the best weapon against the influence of Islam and the Turks. However, Luther considered Islam to be a demonic enemy which had to be taken seriously. He identified Allah with satan, whom the Muslims used for their political and religious expansion.

As with the Jews, so with the Muslims, Christology was the most important issue in Luther's argumentation. Because the Muslims did not believe in Christ as God's Son, true God, their soteriology was false. Islam was just legalism. Luther expressed many times his missionary concern for Turks. During the Reformer's last years we can find some quite pessimistic expressions about mission among Muslims, but this is only one side of the story. Until his very last years he hoped to see the "spring of the gospel," the time of God's coming (new visitation) also to the Muslims. He was looking forward to the time when the ascended Christ would do His mission also in Turkey. Mission would be uncompleted until Christ's parousia.[36]

Epilogue

Luther was not a mission strategist in the modern pragmatic sense, but he had a strong mission motivation. His theology includes a clear missiological dimension, which sometimes comes to a very practical expression. Luther considered mission to be the universal proclamation of the gospel until the parousia.

Let us thank the Reformation for its contribution to mission (for example, the pure gospel, the Bible translation, the Small Catechism, and the reform of worship, among others)!

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[35]See *WA* 53:272-396.

[36]Lutheran pre-orthodoxy and orthodoxy (for example, Johann Gerhard) approved the theory that the gospel had been preached among all nations already in apostolic times, but this does not fit with Luther's teaching. It is based on an erroneous interpretation of Mark 16:20; Romans 10:18; Psalms 19:4 and following; and Colossians 1:23.

The *Augsburg Confession* and its Missiological Significance

Karl Hartenstein[1]

Translated and edited by Klaus Detlev Schulz

"I will also speak of your decrees before kings, and shall not be put to shame."[2] These words from Psalm 119[3] are written on the title page of the *Augsburg Confession*. Four hundred years ago, in the chapter-room of the old bishop's palace, a small group of Protestant princes and representatives of free cities read this work before the assembled diet in Augsburg. It was a decisive moment for all of Christianity. Christian Beyer, the chancellor of John the Steadfast, not only read the Augustana –

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[1]The following article is a translation of an essay by Karl Hartenstein, "Die Augsburger Konfession und ihre Bedeutung für die Mission," *Evangelisches Missionmagazin (EMM)* [Stuttgart and Basel: Evangelischer Missionsverlag] (December 1930): 353-365. The *EMM* is now merged in the *Zeitschrift für Mission*. The Basel Mission Society, for whom Hartenstein served as mission director from 1926-1939, was a dominant and influential mission agency in the modern era of missions. Founded in 1815, it became a para-church mission organization for Pietism in Württemberg, the Anglicans in England, the Swiss Reformed and, before the Leipzig mission society ceased its ties with Basel in 1836, also for the Lutherans in Saxony [See: Wilhelm Oehler, *Geschichte der deutschen evangelischen Mission* (Baden-Baden: Wilhelm Fehrholz, 1949), 1: 163-179, 214-217]. Yet it was not unusual for such institutions to have, on occasion, incumbents as directors who were remarkably Lutheran in their approach. The essay by Karl Hartenstein, a Lutheran from Württemberg, is testimony to this. Together with pivotal figures such as Walter Freytag and Karl Barth, he dominated the European field of missions for many years. Hartenstein's own particular contribution in the pre- and post- World War II period was the introduction of the concept of mission as the "*history of salvation*" – thereby feeding off the early findings of Oscar Cullmann, a noteworthy professor in Basel who later published his work, *Salvation in History*. This concept, when coupled with Barth's affirmation of the "*Triune God (missio Dei)*" in missions and Freytag's *eschatology*, contributed substantially towards making missiology a noteworthy theological discipline both at academic institutions and in missionary movements. [See: *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Mission*. Edited by Gerald H. Anderson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 282]. This essay captures basic missiological affirmations from a Lutheran perspective and demonstrates how a confessional document of the Lutheran Church can relate to contemporary contextual issues, which, by and large, have remained pertinent to this very day.

[2]*The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 31. In further references, this edition will be abbreviated as *Book of Concord*.

[3]Psalm 119: 46.

as this Confession became known—before the emperor and empire, but confessed it "with a distinctness of voice and utterance which well accorded with the clearness and firmness of the belief it expressed."[4] A small group of confessors stood with him, surrounded by the assembled estates of the Holy Roman Empire. Five princes and two free city representatives dared to confess the scriptural message of the Reformation. They were prepared to sacrifice their lives for Christ, as Wolfgang, the prince of Anhalt, observed in those days: "For pleasure, I often go for a ride with others. Why then should I not, when there is a need, also saddle my horse in honor and obedience to my Lord and redeemer Jesus Christ and, sacrificing my body and life, rush towards the eternal wreath in the heavenly life?"[5] Here the spirit of the first witnesses bursts forth. With the courage of the apostles and martyrs, they boldly confessed. They were determined to obey God rather than men. Luther wrote from the Coburg to Augsburg: "I will not and cannot fear such wretched enemies of God. Their defiance is my pride, their rage my cheer. Let the devil tremble, but we will not be afraid. The dear word, the wedding ring, is ours. We will ask for nothing else."[6] These are not mere words, but testimonies of people for whom Christ had become more important than anything else in the world. Accordingly, they had to confess the unique, precious, eternally true word before kings and beggars and before the world in which they lived. The *Augustana* became a priceless gift to millions of Protestant Christians. It thus befits us to reflect seriously upon the words that our fathers, with whom we belong to the one church of Christ, have left us in this Confession. We ask ourselves, what this Confession may tell us as a mission society, which desires to be nothing but a church of God *in actu confessionis*—a church confessing His word in the world. What does this Protestant Confession have to say to mission?

Confession and mission—declaration of faith and proclamation—are inseparable in two ways. Scripture tells us, what confessing Christ means: To follow Christ, to devote ourselves and sacrifice our service to Him.

[4]Leopold von Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation* (Leipzig: Dunker und Humblot, 1873). The quote is taken from its translation: Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Reformation in Germany* translated by Sarah Austin (London: George Routledge & Sons; New York: E.P. Dutton, 1905), 605.

[5]Hans Preuß, *Luthertum um 1530 in Wort und Bild* (Berlin: Furche Kunstverlag, n. d.), 34.

[6]Preuß, *Luthertum um 1530*, 55.

Ultimately, though, everyone's discipleship and all services are tested by one thing. Do we proclaim Him before the world? Do we go forth and praise Him through word and deed as the Savior of the world? The confessors of Christ have at all times been His messengers, witnesses, and missionaries. We can only confess Christ in giving testimony to the kings and beggars of this world and not be ashamed of Him. Mission is testimony. Mission is confession.

Mission and confession also belong together in another sense. We use the word "confession" also in its other, derived meaning. We thereby mean those words, in which the content of the testimony has found its expression. We also mean clearly formulated, precisely defined documents that regulate our discipleship—our personal testimony. Already early on, the church of the confessors laid down confessions to establish clarity in its own practice, to protect itself from a corruption and dilution of the message and to show the succession of forthcoming generations the right paths and roads. So also the *Augsburg Confession* wishes to be nothing but an explanation of that which we can only confess through the deeds in our life. For those who want to confess Christ through word and life, it is a description of proper discipleship and a beacon for every individual's decisions.

Mission, too, has gratefully used such confessions. To be sure, our mission of Basel is transconfessional. It has never bound itself to a certain Lutheran or Reformed Confession. But it has, for its own instruction and education, always gratefully used the *Augustana* "as an outstretched arm towards Christ,"[7] and as a clear guide for messengers and confessors, so that they may, in their preaching of the word and in their life of obedience, give a "clear confession." The national churches as well expect from us a clear confession, succinct words to ward off paganism and all syncretism, to voice in all clarity the truth and conviction of its new world, the church of God, to the old world from which it comes. Therefore, in the history of Basel's mission, the *Augustana* has offered great services in our seminaries and in instruction in all of its fields[8] And

[7]Leonhard Fendt, *Der Wille der Reformation im Augsburgischen Bekenntnis* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1929), 12.

[8]The significance of the confession for mission is once again acute in the controversy between the German Protestant Missionary League (*Deutscher Evang. Missionsbund*) and the East Asia Mission. This League is a confessional fellowship. Its confession to Christ unites all German speaking missions with one another. It binds every missionary to the word of God, protects him from all missionary individualism, and

so it is, that the mission demands a clear confession, especially because, on a higher level, mission aspires to be confession, testimony, witness, and discipleship.

Thus far we can say: to have a confession is to be a missionary, a confessor to the world, like our fathers. This is the first point. To have a confession also means to do mission correctly, to testify clearly and truly about Christ and His work in one's commission, in agreement with the confession of the fathers of the church. This is the second point. Our question therefore is this: How can the *Augustana* assist us to testify and confess Christ and His word correctly to the world? We shall have it illuminate four aspects for us.

I.

The *Augustana* begins its first article by witnessing to the living and true God.[9] It does not speak of a god in general. (For example, it immediately contrasts itself expressly with Islam). It speaks of the one, true God of whom humanity is ignorant, unless He reveals Himself to it through His Son. It is the Father of Jesus Christ, who becomes known here, not just any god, not any general concept of god. It is the God of Scripture, who reveals Himself, not the so-called gods found in thousands of religious documents over all the world. It is the God, who through His Son, entered the world of sin and death and revealed Himself as the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit. By confessing the Triune God at the outset, the *Augustana* has avoided every syncretism. It thereby rejects any claims that the Indians[10] or the Muslims, when they speak of god, imply the God of the Bible. There is no other God than He who is the Lord of the world revealed in Christ. Such is the grand entrance presented in this confession.

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underscores his position as a witness. Thus it was inevitable that the East Asia Mission was rejected for the sake of the confession, clarity, and truthfulness in affairs. One may see *Kirchenblatt für die reformierte Schweiz* 13 (1930).

[9]*Book of Concord*, 37.

[10]Luther refers to the Indians in two well-known references which came to Hartenstein's attention in an article "Von der Reformation zur Mission") by Dean Langenfaß, Munich, in the festschrift for Gerhard von Zezschwitz (1825-1886). They read as follows: "The kingdom of God cannot be restricted but, just as I have been baptized here, so also another Christian in India is baptized. For they have the same Gospel...Therefore it will not be confined. Whoever teaches different, deceives the people." "Christianity is also there where Rome is not to be found: '*Numquid Christiani qui etiam nunc sub Turca, Persarum, Indorum, Scytharum regibus, Romae sunt subjecti*'."

But what about the condition of humanity as we find it in this world in light of this God? The answer is given in the second article—which for mission is of the greatest significance. It uses the following words: "Since the fall of Adam all human beings who are propagated according to nature are born with sin, that is, without fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence."[11] This article is the clearest and the simplest formulation of the word "paganism," among which we conduct our ministries.

According to this article, paganism is essentially paired with original sin. It results from humanity's final rejection of God. "Paganism and original sin are joined indissoluble just as Christianity is with regeneration."[12] The Confession's point is this: All those are rejected who "argue that human beings can be justified before God by their own powers of reason."[13] This is exactly the belief of paganism. Paganism, the world of religions, is nothing other than the grandiose attempt of humanity to connect (*re-ligio*) with God despite its fall. On its own, with the powers of its innate nature, reason, soul, and will, paganism attempts to be justified and to become one with God. Paganism is the sinister attempt of a human being trying to save himself through his own religion. This is further qualified in the *Augustana* by means of three expressions. It describes all heathens as those who are "without fear of God." All religions seek to find the way of the human soul to God on their own. Through spiritual practice and meditation, through passionate exercise and sacrifice, through pilgrimages and services in the temple, the heathen prepares himself to enter the world of God.[14] The heathen always stands before God as a fighter, yes, and as a robber. He does not fear the one who is the holy God and who does not offer any sinner an opportunity to penetrate His holiness and grasp his mystery, except through His own extended grace. The heathen, too, comes from God. He is God's handiwork. Therefore, he cannot be without God. And yet he desires to be without *the* God, who conceals Himself as the holy one before sinners, who lets them perish, who see Him, who is a terror to those who fall into

[11]*Book of Concord*, 37, 39.

[12]This quotation has been taken from an article by Ernst Strasser, a German *Probst* of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Hannover, who wrote an article "Das Wesen des Heidentums," *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift* (N.K.Z.) 2 (1929).

[13]*Book of Concord*, 39.

[14]Romain Rolland, *Jung Indien. Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1919 bis 1922* (Erlenbach-Zürich; München: Rotapfelverlag, 1924). Therein the section on "Das Leben des Rama Krishna," 48-51.

His hands. This ultimate fear of the holy and righteous God eludes paganism because of its thousand attempts to secure access into the world of God. We hear, furthermore, that the heathen is a human being "without trust in God." The common trait of all religions is an unwillingness to put blind trust in the invisible God. Therefore, they draw God into the visible world, erecting their own complete world with images and gods, to which they cling their hearts. It is the distinguishable mark of idolatry that one only believes in the visible, and visibility, in particular.[15] One elevates the human being to a god, creates a world of mediators, priests and heroes, anthropomorphic gods, to which one's heart clings. This dual act, the humanizing of God and the *apotheosis* of man, is paganism. Pagans are not willing to trust in the invisible God and, hence, believe themselves to be righteous before God on the basis of their own innate abilities. There, where one worships images and believes in anthropomorphic gods, pagans places themselves in the center of attention. God is robbed of His honor and it is given to human beings. The spirit of the immanent world and the idolization of creation replace the position of the humble trust in the holy God. That is paganism.

Finally, the *Augustana* describes the human being as one who is "with concupiscence." All religions seek life, salvation, power, and happiness. They are totally egocentric. God must serve man, which actually explains the meaning of all their thousands of sacrifices and offerings that the primitives bring to their gods.[16] Man seeks to win over God for himself through a host of religious works. This is the concupiscence of the unbroken, heathen heart.

Furthermore, the religions wish to see God—to celebrate Him. Therefore, this is always also the zenith of all heathen feasts, when the image of a god is taken from the shrine, and paraded through the mass of people. They want to see, longing to catch a glimpse of the invisible. As

[15]Søren Kierkegaard, *Einübung im Christentum* (Diederichs'sche Ausgabe), 130: "The distinguishable mark is paganism." [English translation: *Training in Christianity and Edifying discourse which accompanied it* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960)].

[16]The expression "primitive" was a widely used term during Hartenstein's time. One may consult, for example, Walter Freitag, "Zur Psychologie der Bekehrung bei Primitiven," in *Reden und Aufsätze*. Edited by Jan Hermelink and Hans Jochen Margull (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1961), I: 170-193. Certainly, such a term often carried cultural or racial biases. One may see here Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988). Here, however, it is used as a deliberate judgmental term based on comparative studies between Christianity with other religions.

a result, paganism resorts to speculation and the worst sensuous cults in pursuit of pleasure and contemplation clouded "with concupiscence." Where standing in front of the holy God does not break this concupiscence, the neighbor and the body and life of the neighbor will not be regarded as sacred. Let us consider how paganism has denigrated women. Women are treated merely as inferior creatures, who are the possession and commodity of their husbands, who live without any right and dignity.[17] No religion on earth gives the woman the dignity and redemption that Christ gives her. Polygamy among men and women is the goal of paganism. Zenana[18] and harem are those places where the woman must endure the curse of life. Fornication and promiscuity emanate from all the heathen religions, which have been tainted "with concupiscence."

Thus the *Augustana* illustrates, in unsurpassable simplicity and depth, the corruption and remoteness from God that transforms the essence of paganism. It interprets these frightening descriptions in the context of original sin. Paganism's self-righteousness and self-seeking attempts towards salvation are totally condemned with the harsh words of Article 20: *sine Deo sicut gentes,* "without God as are the heathen."[19] "The human being without God and His redemption is a distortion of that what defines human existence, the perpetual danger of lapsing into the demonic state."[20] It is most important that mission continually explores to identify and understand paganism so that the message of salvation is rightly brought to it.

II.

1. We are given a second insight from Articles 3 and 4 of the *Augsburg Confession*: "Only the mediator and his redemption must be preached." From where do the fathers of the confession draw this conviction? Does it not originate from the fact that they, suffering under their own deepest terror of the "*pavidae conscientiae*"[21] and shocked by the sinfulness of their own hearts, heard the desperate cry for salvation uttered by the entire world, by all who are human? The *Augustana* sees in all clarity the

[17]Strasser, "Das Wesen des Heidentums," 98-99.

[18]A custom in India, where women of the high caste system were kept secluded in a part of the house.

[19]*Augsburg Confession* (henceforth quoted as *AC*) 20: 24; *Book of Concord*, 47.

[20]Fendt, *Der Wille der Reformation im Augsburgischen Bekenntnis*, 84.

[21]*AC* 12: 4 and 20: 15, *Book of Concord*, 45, 55.

heathen world in one place and the world of salvation of the kingdom of Christ in another. Consequently, there follows in the third article the confession of the one mediator between God and humanity who has reconciled us with the Father, "a sacrifice not only for original sin but also for all other sins," who alone can shield and protect "against the devil and sin."[22]

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This is what the *Augustana* proclaims to the world. Only once, and therefore once and for all, God has revealed Himself in the Son. He has done everything for us, gives forgiveness and eternal life. In Him, the Father has begun His eternal kingdom, which He will bring to completion. The cross stands as the site of grace for the world. Resurrection was achieved to be the gate for the dying of all nations. He who ascended to heaven is the Lord over all the world to whom all authority has been given. We have a king. This confession of the third article announces mission. Mission is not intended to replace the heathen religion with a new one. Rather, God Himself must penetrate the world of the heathen. He Himself is present in Christ and wants to come through the proclamation of his messengers. From above He snatches the sinner out of the world of sin and death. He builds a new world, a new creation through the Holy Spirit. Mission is God's doing. "The case is yours, Lord Jesus Christ." He alone can unite and create anew in this world. God has brought the miraculous self-sacrifice in His Son and forgiven the world the sin that He had to bear. Mission seeks nothing but to make room, prepare the way, open the doors for the coming of God in Christ. It does not proclaim a new religion but a new world. It anticipates this miracle, wherever it humbly does its service. Jesus alone can instill the fear of God, the blind and blessed trust in God. He alone can remove the concupiscence in the human being through the Spirit from above.

2. For this reason the *Augustana* continues: How does the heathen become a man of God? How will the sinner be made righteous? Article 4 gives the answer. It does not speak of the death of the human being, it does not appeal to his good will or his innate reason. It knows that the sinner cannot extract himself from paganism. No, this miracle occurs "without distinction, out of grace, on account of Christ's sake through faith which God reckons as righteousness."[23] What do these words mean?

[22]*Book of Concord*, 38.
[23]*Book of Concord*, 39-40.

God in Christ begins totally anew with the world. He does not depend on our strength, but on Himself and His own doing. He remains the king who alone knows grace. Through the sending of His Son He has made Him for us "as wisdom and righteousness, as sanctification and redemption." Any selfjustification has passed. All that matters is the receiving, humble faith in Christ, who accepts us and allows what these words imply to become a reality: for us. This alone is how God saves the human being, by doing everything for us, by fulfilling all things, and expecting us to accept His offer.

This article on justification is also crucial for mission. The issue dealt with by the missionary is that faith may arise. But faith is something completely new, a miracle that God alone can bestow on the heathen, when He opens the heathen's eyes and ears for the word. Faith is that miracle by which human beings learn to look away from themselves, not to trust themselves, and to cling entirely to what God has done. God seeks to justify the heathen through Jesus Christ. As a result, mission always expects a total break of the heathen with his old world—a complete turn towards God—by the heathen humbling himself in the dust with all his religion and his wisdom before the One, who is his Lord. Mission knows what to demand and what to condemn. It is either-or: either believe in Jesus Christ or in oneself and one's own religion. This is what it always has to proclaim. It must be prepared to carry the cross of rejection, but also to experience the joy of victory, which Jesus gives those who believe. Christ and His justifying grace is the content of the mission's proclamation. It knows of none other.

III.

Let us, however, continue with our questions: How should missionary service be conducted? To this the *Augustana* answers with two important statements from the words on preaching and the church, which are inseparably connected in Articles 5, 7, and 8.

1. "If the heathens must praise God, then he must have become their God first; if they must believe then they should hear his word first, and so preachers must be sent to them, those who proclaim them the word of God (Luther)."[24] Article 5 of the *Augustana* refers us to this inner connection when it tells us, in all seriousness: "To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments.

[24]See Langenfaß, "Von der Reformation zur Mission."

Through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when He wills, in those who hear the gospel."[25] The proclamation of the word occurs not *privatim*, on the basis of one's own gifts or decision, but depends on the office of the church, which has been instituted by God. This is how Christianity has always understood it. The proclamation of the mighty message, which occurs between heaven and earth, is about creation and redemption and completion of the world and can only be carried out by those who have been especially assigned to such a task, who have totally committed themselves to God, and who are prepared to proclaim on behalf of the church of God. If the word of God is rightly preached, then—the *Augustana* tells us—it becomes the means, the vehicle, through which faith is created in its hearers. But the fact that this faith comes about rests in the authority of God alone, lies in His hands, where and when He gives his Spirit. The proclamation and its success are not in our hands. We do not have control over the word's ability to touch the heart. It is not in our might to have God Himself come. Thus, particularly in view of the preaching of the word, the full majesty of God is upheld, as well as the office and the word, its task of proclaiming and preaching. However, the place and time where and when the word is heard, are reserved for his majesty. To be gracious—we said above—is the manner in which God condescends Himself to the sinner. To be gracious—we say here—is the manner in which God creates faith where and when He wills. This is the nature of how mission must be done. The missionary is, therefore, merely the obedient messenger, the steward and witness, to call out what has been done by God. Herein lies the seriousness of mission. For the messenger is charged to proclaim the Lord and His word faithfully and in loyal servitude, not to pursue his own skills. He is *subordinate* to Him, who has given him the office. He is accountable to Him who is his Lord. But this also reveals the blessed side of the office. For what is more magnificent than to proclaim the message of salvation to the world?

Such a mission, however, merely carries out the commission of the church. Mission and the church belong together, as the *Augustana* tells us. It is not the single pious missionary who goes and wants to awaken individuals through his doing. The mission must safeguard herself against all individualism. The messenger is a member of the church, held accountable to it, and closely associated with it. He has the commission to summon new members into the church of God, the large and invisible

[25]*Book of Concord*, 40.

church. But mission and the Holy Spirit, too, belong together. It has not been placed into the hands of human beings that, when they preach to the heathen, these might come to faith. The "where and when it pleases God" remains standing particularly for the missionary. This humbles him, drives him daily to God, and brings him in closer relationship with the one, who alone remains the subject, the Lord and King of mission, the Holy Spirit.

2. Let us consider a second issue. Articles 7 and 8 of the *Augustana* confess, immediately after the office of preaching, that God has entrusted His word to the church. His intention is to call heathens into His church: "It is the one holy Church, which remains at all times, the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel."[26] Church! Wherever this word resonates, there the deepest curse of the world is uncovered and overcome the horrid solitude of human beings, the isolation and disintegration, the lack of fellowship in the world. The word of God is the word of love from which arises love for one another. Only there – where a human being recognizes his sin and is recipient of grace – there alone true fellowship emerges. The church is not a club, an association of converted people. It is the people of God transcending space and time, the great host of the blessed in heaven and on earth who are in fellowship with Christ. It is quite significant that the *Augustana* does not refer to the church as mere human beings. The church is no ordinary human business, but church is there where God has His word proclaimed and where there are people gathered to listen. Here holy people are born, not without sin, but people on whom God has placed His hand and taken into His service. Certainly, there remain "in this life many hypocrites and public sinners among the righteous."[27] The pure church does not exist on earth. It is reserved for eternity. This insight is the strongest barricade against all types of sectarianism, against any disintegration of the church. God alone can and will separate. This, too, is the best barricade against any false security of the church and humbles her daily, because it will always remain a church of sinners and its pious members will always be in need of daily repentance.

This also has crucial implications for missions. The *Augustana* delineates three aspects. Firstly: When mission is defined by the office of

[26]Article 7: 1, *Book of Concord*, 42.
[27]Article 8: 1, *Book of Concord*, 42.

proclamation and the church, then external pressures and mission politics have no effect. "The word must do it." The Reformation has taught us this anew. In the history of mission there have been numerous attempts to build bridges to the heathen. Those who have crossed them were in fact no Christians. Where God is at work, there we humans should not facilitate, persuade, or use force. Any connection between politics and mission, as the history of missions in China reveals, must be dismissed.[28] The *Augustana* unmistakably states "For secular authority deals with matters altogether different from the gospel," and "this is why one should not mix or confuse the two authorities."

Secondly: In view of the church, the mission should also pay attention to the natural orders and structures found in the heathen countries. They direct our attention to the fact that, though the creation of God has been destroyed, it has not been relinquished. Thus the *Augustana* admonishes us to "*conservare tamquam ordinationes Dei.*"[29] The cultural traits and structures from which the missionary comes are also corrupted and cannot be merely transferred. On the other hand, the primeval orders of the heathens, such as marriage and family, kinship and tribe, economic and judicial orders, still carry signs of God's creation. We should, therefore, be concerned that the Spirit of God also enters the forms of the tribes to which we go and renews and purifies them. To be sure, here we have to be aware of the danger of accommodation wherever one goes. But we should not ignore the natural orders, just as it was done also at the time when the first missionaries came to our country. This will protect us from a false sense of superiority, from seclusion, and it will open our eyes for the Spirit who builds the church and does not despise the natural orders.[30]

[28]Looking at the most recent developments in China, Hartenstein must be thinking of the violent movement, the "I Ho Ch'üan, which Europeans termed the Boxer Movement. On June 24, 1900, an imperial decree in Peking ordered the killing of all foreigners. Months of carnage ensued during which Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries were affected the most severely among the foreign population. Unfortunately, missionaries were the target of retribution because they had become the spearhead of Western penetration, often openly flaunted the privileges assured to them by treaties, and frequently disregarded Chinese feelings with regard to propriety and order. See Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Mission* (New York: Penguin Books, 1964), 286-288.

[29]"...keep as a true order of God," *AC* 16: 5; *Book of Concord*, 50.

[30]The mission period between the World Wars had two significant missionaries whose mission approach aligns itself to the above discussion on creation and "primordial structures" or "primeval links." 1) Bruno Gutmann (1876-1966), a Leipzig

Thirdly: The expression, "the assembly of believers," if correctly understood, protects the church from the false perception to expect a number of churches to live without sin. The young and the old Christianity remains a church of sinners under the cross. We clearly see the problem in the young churches. In the second and third generation they content themselves with a false sense of security ignorant of the fact that they, too, have to withdraw from paganism, as their fathers and mothers once did. It serves no purpose to reproof and critique, much less to encourage excommunications and divisions. Instead, it would be more appropriate for mission to share this problem with the young churches, to place itself also under this outgrowth of sin and then attempt to proclaim in solidarity with them the word of repentance for believers and of the Holy Spirit, who cleanses and sanctifies the church. The primary service of mission is proclamation to the heathen, but then there is the other: to the church. Neither should be neglected. Thereby the *Augustana*, if correctly understood, delineates for us important lines and paths for our mission practice.

IV.

We must allow ourselves to be told one last word by the *Augustana* with regard to the question: What ultimately do we have with the goal of our mission? We have always accused our mission—by America in particular today—of being too little focused on doing, of placing no emphasis on action, that it, because of its doctrine of justification, is rendered incapable for joyous action. Mission, we are told, allows the world and its people to remain complacent so that no new energies are set free for social and

missionary to the Chagga people in the Kilimanjaro area (now Tanzania), is noted for his ethnographic studies and his attempts at incorporating tribal "primeval links" into the community of Christ because the tribal order of creation had not, in his view, been affected by sin and should not be destroyed by modern civilization. See Ernst Jäschke, *Bruno Gutmann: His Life, His Thoughts, and his Work* (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev. Luth. Mission, 1985). 2) Christian Keysser (1877-1961), a German Lutheran missionary sent by Neuendettelsau Mission to Papua New Guinea where he, too, engaged in ethnographic and linguistic research, which offered guidance to culturally appropriate proclamation of the gospel as well as to the practice of tribal conversions instead of the individual. See Christian Keysser, *A People Reborn*, translated by Alfred Allin and John Kuder (William Carey Library, 1980). Unfortunately, in the denazification process, both missionaries were strongly criticized for their sense for national and cultural identity but their approaches continue to be advocated. [Leonardo Neitzel, "Mission Outreach and Households in the City of Fortaleza," Northeast Brazil (Doctor of Missiology dissertation, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, 2000)].

moral reform in the conditions of this world. The *Augustana* teaches us differently when we read Articles 6 and 20: "Concerning the New Obedience" and "Concerning Faith and Good Works."[31] Certainly, the *Augustana* takes the original sin seriously and understands that its curse passed over all of creation. Therefore the roots of our doing must lie deep, very deep. From faith alone, which receives the grace of God, will new obedience be born. But it must come forth. "Faith must bring forth good fruits." Yes, surely it is so: only the power of forgiveness truly sets free, free for the service of love. Only those who truly entrust themselves in grace are actually people of obedience. To be sure, we are not promoting here a specific action plan, no program, no new economic order; one thing though comes into being, and that is far superior: new obedience to the will of God, the fulfillment of His commandments. The *Augustana* majestically portrays the new obedience, how Christ drives the old man to obedience though he resists and complains. It shows how all the conditions in this world must be permeated with love, though love is so often suppressed and replaced instead by hardships and suffering.[32] Christ leads us. He will establish His kingdom. Therefore, He does not let His people become complacent. In praise and thanks to Him, in obedience to Him and through the power of the Holy Spirit they must do good works. "Such lofty and genuine works cannot be done without the help of Christ, as he himself says: 'Apart from me you can do nothing.'"[33] The *Augustana* testifies that one must do good works and it demonstrates how they can be done in the power of the word through which the Holy Spirit teaches. The *Augustana* places all Christians, as forgiven human beings, into marriage and family, vocation and nation. There love is performed, obedience is achieved, and fruits of the Spirit are brought forth. Obedience is greater than programs and it accomplishes the divine will far better than new orders for social transformation. There is nothing else the Lord expects from His people. He Himself plans to create a new heaven and a new earth.

A clear path has been mapped out for mission. Nothing is more dangerous for mission than to expect it to relieve this world from its thousands of problems, to restructure the social and moral needs, to solve the problems of industries, land possessions, and racial tensions. Scripture offers no social programs. Mission is unable "to transform the world into

[31] *Book of Concord*, 40, 52.

[32] *AC* 16: 3-7; *Book of Concord*, 48-51.

[33] *AC* 20: 38-39; *Book of Concord*, 56.

a kingdom of righteousness."[34] But this is what it can and must do: to recognize all the plights and show compassion and in its discipleship of Christ, be obedient, bring forth good fruits, let love be lived within the orders of this world, and while it lives under the selfish powers on earth, let God's word set what is right and what He demands from us. Mission must endure all setbacks and problems, wait for this eon to pass, and the Lord to bring in the new world.

2. And this is the final word: the *Augustana* is filled with the deep resonance of hope. The 3rd Article states that the Lord of the world will come again. He comes as the judge, repeats the 17th Article. He will raise the dead and give eternal life or damnation. The *Augustana* explicitly rejects the doctrine, "that before the resurrection of the dead saints the righteous people alone will possess a secular kingdom."[35] What does this mean? Christ brings a new world, we do not. It serves no purpose that we as pious people believe in progress, in transformation through our strength and action, in the creative powers of our programs and orders, as if we are able to bring something about in this world. Christ introduces the new world. He ushers in the last things through judgment and fulfillment, and then He will establish His kingdom, a new heaven and new earth.

This is the final word and the truth it conveys remains for missionary work. How will a handful of messengers among millions of people groups do their service, without the daily certainty that He, in whom they trust, is the Lord of the world, who comes to establish His kingdom? This is a message of victorious joy. With it we are prepared to serve and suffer. But it also humbles at the same time for it makes our work temporary, incomplete, and unfinished. Our churches abroad are only makeshift, built for a time, destined for their demolition when He comes. World change is reserved for the Lord alone. This message finally casts us into

[34]Hartenstein's criticism is leveled in part against Daniel Johnson Fleming, a professor of missions at Union Theological Seminary, New York, who was an ardent supporter of Christianizing the social order and world transformation through mission. One may consult Fleming's book, *Marks of a World Christian* (New York: Association Press, 1920), 152: "We ought to be able to go to the man most indifferent to the Church and say: 'Here is the big thing-why are you not in it? We are working for the disenfranchisement and ennoblement of every single human life, the perfecting of human society in all its myriad activities and relationships, the transformation of the kingdoms of this earth until they have become the kingdom of our God and his Christ, the Christianization of all life everywhere.'"

[35]Article17: 5; *Book of Concord*, 50.

restlessness and fear of the heart, so that we do not adopt a false sense of security and idleness. Like a flash of lightning in the night, the *Augustana* casts the word of the coming Lord into the church and daily reminds it and its mission of their toil and labor: "My keeper, has the night already passed?"

The *Augustana* is no ancient document. It is the confession of men who, believing in Christ, have put their lives at risk. It thus does not behoove us merely to celebrate or understand the *Augustana*, but actually to believe and confess with it the one to whom it points: Jesus Christ. We want to learn from it in order to do mission correctly and according to the Great Commission, as Luther has told us so beautifully in his ascension sermon of 1523: "One must proclaim the Gospel publicly in the best way possible so that it is called out to all creatures, and there remains no corner on earth which it will not reach till the final day."[36]

[36]*D. Martin Luthers Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 98 volumes (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger Edition, 1883 and following), 12: 556, 20-22. See Langenfaß, "Von der Reformation zur Mission," towards the end of his presentation. As a summary see Gerber, "Konfession und Mission" *Lutherisches Missionsjahrbuch* (1930).

Account-ability

David K. Weber

Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you. 1 Peter 3:15

We need to cultivate a theological dislike for the word, "accountability." Most likely, accountability, *mutatis mutandis,* is a necessary feature in the fallen world. Nevertheless, there is a dark side to the present usage of the word. This becomes evident as we consider the most disagreeable phrase, "What we need around here is more accountability!" Often spoken when things are not going well, accountability is frequently a disguise for something more sinister. The call for accountability is managerial doublespeak for "We have a problem, so who gets the blame?" All too often, those harping for accountability pretend to have the "best interests" of the congregation or organization in mind. In reality, occasions requiring accountability too easily become opportunities to control a situation or individual; usually burying the "best interest" of everyone under layers of regulations or intrusive pressures.

How did "accountability" fall in with such dark forces in the linguistic underworld? To answer this we need to look at the false modern assumptions that shape the way we understand "accountability." For reasons treated below, moderns have come to believe that every problem has a "managed solution." Hence the quest to manage conflicts, manage healthcare, manage money, or manage marriages. What we have failed to do is manage managers. Once we believe that every problem can be managed, we soon conclude that every problem ought to be managed. This assumption about managed solutions explains the contemporary belief that the root of all evil is not the love of money but the lack of money. Every social problem is only a problem because someone has yet to be paid to manage it. The problem is that the trust in managed solutions is based in an optimistic myth that has turned out to be a pernicious lie. Who says every problem is manageable? Where do we get this idea? The answer is, it comes from the belief that mankind is on an onward and upward progression guided by human reason and resources. But the myth is sinking towards death as our society faces incorrigible

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problems that are proving to be unmanageable.[1] What is more, it is becoming increasingly clear that in spite of our best management efforts (most likely because of our best management efforts) things still fall apart. We have not managed to manage.

A good manager gets results! Seek ye first technique and principles, and all these results will follow after you. Unruly problems only need the right rule. In one instance, a congregation, serving a class of people who have, for at least the last century, been cold to church membership, were told by the growth experts that the "traditional church" was the problem. The experts said, "If you keep doing what you're doing, you'll keep getting what you're getting! " The problem of dwindling membership in European churches could be solved if only "We'd get going and get growing." Help is only a cliché away. But what happens when accountable results do not follow? Obviously, someone's to blame. Someone has failed to employ the proper technique or rule. Without surprise, this rule-based view of problem management is legalistic. Why have we put up with it, especially in the church? Probably because legalistic accountability comes well disguised. Legalism is always initially flattering—complimenting our principles, rules, and techniques that produce such accountable, measurable, and obvious results. We are called to a church and the problems are revealed. The nearly explicit question is, "Can you market, manage, and manipulate; can you get results for the institution?" We are flattered that others look to us for results.

The parable of the Rich Fool tells the tale of self-flattery (Luke 12:16-21). The moral of the story is in the number of personal and possessive pronouns (I, my, me) used to describe the fool's success. Blessed with a bumper crop, the man industriously begins to manage his future. There is no thanksgiving, no sense of the mystery of success, no appreciation for the many things outside his control. The account of the fool's good fortune was self-centered, autobiographical, and short-sighted. He took

[1]Sociologist James Hunter documents the growing cultural divide most obvious in the abortion issue. He quotes the *New Republic*'s Andrew Sullivan, who so easily begins the flirtation with coercion all too common among the left in the twentieth century. He writes (*Before the Shooting Begins* [New York: The Free Press, 1994], 8): "The fracturing of our culture is too deep and too advanced to be resolved by anything but coercion; and coercion . . . is not a democratic option."

no account of the unmanageable in life. Things like death and baldness render the unmanageable undeniable. If every problem had a managed solution, every man would have an eternally full head of hair. Though we do not know if the rich man had a full head of hair, we can be quite sure he was full of self-esteem and full of hot air to boot until he "bought the farm." The parable is instructive because the foolish blow hard lurks in every heart. We want to be held accountable for success. But what do we do when we face the unmanageable and can give no account of it? What do we do when the seminars, conferences, and self-help books fail to manage and domesticate the power of sin, death, and the devil? We get depressed, talk about burn out, find someone to blame, or go back to school.

The accountability that so effectively cultivates personal guilt or vocational doubt does so because it is rule based. It is all law and thus, legalistic. In Saint John's passion account, we see how this legalism goes beyond guilt and doubt. It also has great potential for manipulation. Legally pure and corrupt to the core, the Jewish leaders held themselves painstakingly accountable to the law, while manipulating the death of Jesus. They insisted that the crucifixion of Jesus was "in the best interest" of the nation. They proved their authenticity by meticulous observation of the law. Willing not to defile themselves so that they could observe the Passover, they refused to enter the praetorium. In truth, the only Passover they observed was to pass over the point and purpose of the Passover. Furthermore, their response to Pilate's inquiry, which found Jesus not guilty, was to assert a law that, if applied coherently, excluded both false messiahs and the true Messiah (John 19:7). The contrast is stunning—the boisterous and pretentious show of legalistic accountability, effectively used to mask the agenda of Christ's death. Accountability to regulations, at least in the passion of Jesus, was not value neutral.

The alternative to law-centered or result-centered accountability is, quite literally, account-ability. Account-ability is not primarily concerned with imputing blame or measuring results. For Saint Peter, account-ability is the ability to give an account of our Christian hope.[2] This is an account of how our beliefs, actions, and rules are knit together in a story that ends happily ever after. Account-ability aims to articulate; to make

[2]These thoughts on accountability were sparked by reading Gilbert Meilaender, *The Limits of Love* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State Press, 1987), 92 and following.

explicit how this fragmenting, fallen world may be rightly viewed as hopeful, in the light of the gospel. We must make more of the distinction in these two rival versions of accountability. They are as different as a grammar book is to a story. Both the grammar and story rely on words and grammatical relationships to make their points. But no one, save for a few sad souls, curls up with a grammar. Grammars are, from start to finish, about rules.[3] They have no plot, no inspiration, and no story.[4] Hence, accountability, centered in rules and results, loses sight of the whole story. The account is pointless and restless.

Why is law-based accountability restless? *Lex semper accusat*; the law always accuses! It is insatiable; always demanding more so that even rest becomes another thing "we must do." Without a story and plot, rules and actions become pointless. When called to account, rather than trying to convince others how our beliefs, actions, or rules fit into the story of salvation, we justify beliefs, actions, and rules with the pointless response, "It's in the regulations" or "We've always done it this way." Real account-ability seeks to articulate the Christian hope that this world gone awry is made aright in Christ. It cannot be an account centered in the works of the law, but in the story of salvation.

In a world bound to disintegration—ultimately pointless and consequently restless—how do we come to see this very same world as hopeful? This happens when our account of hopeless disintegration is seen in light of the gospel and placed into the greater story of salvation. The difference the story makes becomes clearer as we see how in the psalms, the very same law comes to be viewed in two contradictory ways. Scoffers, mockers, and "the wicked" viewed the law as an encumbrance, forbidding and disconnected from the real business of life. Hence, they refused to live by God's law because they lost sight of the plot of life; they

[3]Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, is the exception we ignore.

[4]Do not push the analogy too far. There is a story in the grammar that Nietzsche, to his credit, clearly understood. Alasdair MacIntyr writes (*Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1991], 98): "Nietzsche remarked . . . 'I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar.' What Nietzsche meant by 'belief in grammar' was belief that the structure of language somehow mirrors and presupposes belief in an order of things, in virtue of which one mode of conceptualizing reality can be more adequate to that reality than another . . . It was Nietzsche's insight that so long as reference to such a reality is still presupposed, belief in God is covertly present."

forgot what He had done, the wonders He had shown them (Psalm 78:11). Forgetting what God has done leads to the assumption that there is no God and to the conclusion that life has neither point nor plot. The law, once wrenched from its context in the story of God's wondrous intervention, becomes distorted into arbitrary and life-denying commands that need not be taken seriously: Why does the wicked man revile God? Why does he say to himself, "He won't call me to account"? (Psalm 10: 13). Without the story of God's salvation, the only account in town is the mocker's boring, narcissistic autobiography, "I Did It My Way."

To scoffers, the Psalmist's prayer, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law" (119:18), makes no sense. Contemporary philosophy calls this moral incommensurability. Nothing in the mocker's universe could measure how the Psalmist discovered the law to be an object of delight that revived the soul, instructed the heart, and was precious and sweet (Psalm 19). To the Psalmist, the law is a sign of a thematic and purposeful world that makes sense only within the greater narrative of God's loving kindness. The law is not pernicious but precious; it is soul restoring rather than life denying; it is purposeful rather than arbitrary. The law is a window into the world held together by God's promises and pictured in the orchestrated movements of the heavens and earth. The psalms do not achieve this sense of unity by ignoring the disintegrating power of human wickedness, the hazards of personal weakness, and the profound depths of despair and death. Rather these evils are subject to the greater account of God's unfailing love (Psalm 33). Hence, an account of the world-seen-aright is expressed in Psalms—praise, worship, and thanksgiving, rather than curses or mockery, are the proper responses to the versicles of God's salvation in Christ.

The nature of worship suggests a helpful distinction; our account-ability is much more liturgical than legalistic. By this we mean our account is first and foremost concerned with God's work already completed rather than on our works yet to be performed. Note how the shape of the liturgy is the story of salvation. Mankind's mournful cry for mercy (*Kyrie*) is turned into praise (*Gloria*) by the intervention of the Triune God (Creed) who has made us fit to live in His presence (*Sanctus*) by the sacrifice of Christ (*Agnus Dei*). The order of worship is neither arbitrary nor irrelevant to life. The liturgy expresses, as nothing else, the

complete trajectory of the story of salvation. It articulates the framework that supports our "ludicrous" account of the world as hope filled rather than abandoned. The liturgy declares to the world why we believe that Psalms, rather than curses, are the appropriate response to life in this world, lived in the promise of the gospel. Account-ability, being liturgical, is very wary of the legalistic emphasis on rules and results.

Furthermore, because account-ability is liturgical, expressing the story of God's salvation, it emphasizes the linguistic over the legalistic. In John's Revelation, the church is led through apocalyptic times by the Alpha and Omega. He is the Logos made flesh, who sustains His church with the arsenal of the alphabet (Revelation 1). Christ is the incarnate acrostic who orders all things, from A to Z, in a Psalm.[5] He sustains His church with the linguistic resources that include the letter of the law, the word of promise, and the story of salvation. The implications of this linguistic emphasis are immensely practical for a pastor's account of his labors and the church's understanding of her reason for existence. The world-seen-aright depends on the word-read-aright. The time spent in maintaining one's biblical languages or reading theology will always seem to many an inordinate waste of time. The practice is warranted because, like nothing else can, such reading cultivates the linguistic skills essential for account-ability; that we declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

Reading the word aright may be understood in three ways.[6] First, this kind of reading recognizes the narrative unity that runs through creation, fall, exodus, law, redemption, grace, and the end times. To the uninitiated reader (like the Ethiopian eunuch), the particulars of Scripture obscure the unity. Scripture appears to be disconnected; a compilation of legalistic prohibitions; tedious genealogy; a convulsive clash of genres, and troubling accounts of a capricious God intent on pointless bloodshed and gore. When read aright the fragments are tied together into the story of

[5]An acrostic Psalm begins each line or section with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The poetic practice takes on theological significance with John's identification of Jesus as the logos (Word) and the Alpha and Omega. Jesus brings together all the chaotic parts of this world into the story of salvation so that "our mouths might show forth Thy praise."

[6]Alisdair MacIntyre, in his treatment of theological change from Augustine to Aquinas, insightfully identifies these three characteristics of reading rightly. MacIntyre, *Rival Versions*, 88.

salvation. This mode of reading aright is analogous to the popular computer generated three-dimensional pictures. At first blush, the "pictures" seem to be no more than a confused combination of designs or disconnected figures. But, when seen correctly, the parts come together into an integrated and connected unity.

The account of hope reads Scripture as a single narrative of God's presence and promise in the world. While scholarly and devotional reading are crucial to this mode of reading, some current practices militate against seeing the overall arc and sweep of Scripture. Biblical scholarship is needed to engage the distinctions, questions, and problems that arise in the course of reading, in order to render a plausible account for the unity of Scripture.[7] But when scholars neglect the very difficult task of thinking out the liturgical, catechetical, and homiletical implications, scholarly inquiry tends to become piecemeal and compartmentalized. The whole gets lost in the fragments. Likewise, the devotional practice of thumbing through Scripture in search of the comforting quote of the day shrinks and fractures Scripture. Rather than embedding our problems into the continuous story of salvation, as is done in the Psalms, we embed Scripture fragments in our own narrow autobiography and hope they help solve the problem. Rather than surrounding our problems by the promise of Scripture, fragmented reading surrounds Scripture with a sea of problems.

The alternative to the piecemeal or fragmented reading is to read in a way that cultivates a view of the whole plot and purpose of Scripture. One way is to read within the liturgical calendar. There, the tension between the particular text, our particular context, and the movement of God's salvation is maintained week in and week out. This kind of reading does not bend to our problems or projects, but bends these things to God's acts of salvation. There our problems and projects find their proper place within the unified account of God working everything for good, even in a fragmenting world. This overlaps with the second mode of reading aright.

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[7]For an account of the problems and possibilities of biblical scholarship see Helmut Thielicke, *Modern Faith and Thought,* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990); and William C. Placher, Introduction to *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays,* by Hans Frei (New York:Oxford University Press, 1993), 7.

To read aright in this mode, is to discover ourselves inside the Scriptures. Augustine's *Confessions*, written as a conversation with God, is the paradigm example of this kind of reading. Reading Scripture in this way, we read not merely as spectators outside the narrative, but as characters, integrated into the unfolding plot of presence and promise. Though separated by centuries from the Exodus, Jews learn to say, "We came out of Egypt" or "We entered into the Promised land." Similarly, Saint Paul writes that we were buried with Christ through baptism and we were crucified with Him (Romans 6). Paul was not merely reading about Christ, but living in Christ.

In C. S. Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, at a very suspenseful moment, Lucy enters into a frightening house in order to read the mysterious book of spells. Finding the book she begins to read a spell entitled, "for the refreshment of the spirit." As Lucy begins to read, the spell becomes more like a story, so that soon "she had forgotten that she was reading at all. She was living in the story as if it were real."[8] To read aright, is to recognize that Scripture addresses us not as one outside the account, but as witnesses participating in this account. There is something serendipitous and gracelike in this mode of reading. It moves from faith to faith and so is in that category of things more "caught than taught." Children catch on to this way of reading Scripture when they see how their parents do not merely read the Bible, but live out their lives as called characters within the story. The same holds for a pastor and his congregation. While preaching and teaching, the congregation recognizes that the pastor is not merely giving instruction about Christ, but living in Christ. This mode of reading is evident when we realize that the order of worship expresses the deep order of life. Then we see the liturgy boldly asserting that the awesome, fearful symmetry of God's promise and presence are cast as a canopy over our fragmented lives. Then we find ourselves praying, not saying the liturgy. Though open to misunderstanding, we may think of this mode as less word and more sacrament. Our initiation comes not so much by teaching, but by tasting; "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8).[9] It is a gift of grace when we are freed to forget we are reading and are living in the story.

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[8]The Lewis illustration is taken from G. Meilaender's, *The Limits of Love*, 19.

[9]G. Meilaender describes this kind of reading as an experience of the myth that is "more like tasting than thinking, concrete rather than abstract." *The Limits of Love*, 21.

The third mode aims at right reading of secular or rival texts. This kind of reading brings Scripture to bear on the issues, questions, and problems raised by secular texts. Its aim is to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). The metaphor of Scripture as a lamp and a light is helpful (Psalm 119). In this mode of reading we are not staring into the light of God's word or studying the loveliness of this light. Our intention is not to go blind by staring at the light, but to have that light illumine our path. When we read in this way, we shine the light of God's word onto secular texts, in order to understand these texts in the light of the word. Peter Brown, in his *Augustine of Hippo,* documents Augustine's practice of detaching secular texts from their contexts in order to make them available for Christian purposes.[10] It could have been said by Augustine's pagan contemporaries that he read all the right books, but got all the wrong things out of them. Augustine read his Plato, but refused to read him on his knees. Augustine was a linguistic pirate, plundering the texts for whatever riches they possessed and pressing them into service within Scripture's narrative.

Augustine read his current events as he read secular texts. Writing as Alaric threatened the destruction of Roman civilization, Augustine, observes Meilaender, "... sought only to make sense of his world, to find in it what meaning he could, to praise it wherever possible—but not to let the Christian life be definitively shaped by it." In *The City of God,* Augustine read the shattering events of disintegration into Scripture's narrative of promise and presence. This mode of reading allowed him to cling "doggedly to a faith that ... the secular effort of mankind had not been wholly in vain." And unlike his secular contemporaries, who had no account for hope, Augustine, reading these events into the narrative of Christ's promise and presence, was preserved from the despairing cult of futility.[11]

This mode of reading is expressive of a confidence in Scripture to engage the problems and questions raised in secular texts and events. An example of this kind of confidence is Paul's engagement of the

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[10]Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo,* (Berkeley: University of California, 1969), especially chapter 23.

[11]Gilbert C. Meilaender, *Faith and Faithfulness* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991) 33. Meilaender quotes from Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 31.

philosophers of the Areopagus (Acts 17). By reading their authoritative texts, Paul challenged the Athenians to give an account of how the "otherness" of God ("To an unknown god," 23) squared with the nearness of God ("in him we live and move and have our being," 28). Placing the Athenian texts beside each other, Paul rendered his rivals account-disabled. Offering a way out of their incoherence, Paul rendered his account of the transcendence and immanence problem, by asserting the history and mystery of Christ's incarnation and resurrection. Luke records the marginal results of Paul's efforts purposefully. Paul's ability to give an account of the gospel was undiminished by the slight numerical success achieved. Though fraught with both rewards and dangers, Paul and Augustine illustrate how "textual relations" with secular literature serve Christian accountability.

The rules-results accountability also proposes a way of reading Scripture. The Bible is read for its principles for living or techniques of institutional prosperity. Rather than an account of God's promises, Scripture is read for its lawlike predictability. Scripture is thought to have its counterpart principles not unlike the law of physics, "What goes up must come down." To read the Bible in this way leads us to believe the expert who says, "If only you do x, y, and z, it will happen to you what happened to me." This is untrue. If growth principles and technique were so predictable, numerical growth would be assured. But this is not the case. This reveals the problem with reading Scripture as a means of growth. It implicitly denies Scripture as a means of grace. Grace is not so tidy as to lend itself to lawlike predictability. Personal promises are vastly different from impersonal principles. We confess that God is trustworthy; we do not confess He is predictable. This surely is the message of the cross.

No one (except, perhaps, the thief), understood the point of our Lord's death. The cross was accounted as a tragedy, a misfortune, or a fitting defeat. Jesus was ridiculed for having failed to achieve His Messianic goal. In retrospect, and only in retrospect, did the ambiguity of Christ's death resolve into the clarity of the resurrection. This ambiguity and mystery of grace must inform the way we think about church growth and our mission. We cannot forget that the church rightly celebrated the results of Peter's preaching with the conversion of 3,000 souls (Acts 2:41). We remember that Paul was not shy about giving an account of his hard work (1 Corinthians 15:10). There is ambiguity with how the church is to

approach her mission faithfully. Hence, we must find ways to pursue together, in as frank and earnest a way as we can muster, to assess critically how the gospel shapes our methods and mission. In this spirit, I offer this argument.

There is a problem with the current emphasis on busyness, activism, dynamism, goal orientation, organizational aggressiveness, financial growth, and membership growth. It does not make a keen enough distinction between institutional well being and confessional well being. It is possible to gain the whole world and lose the soul of our confession. The emphasis on activism too easily forgets that the key "activity" of the church is linguistic and liturgical, centered in the day called "rest." If we speak of activity it is the activity of the word and sacrament conforming our reading and seeing to God's promise and presence. Of course, no one is explicitly denying the importance of word and sacrament. But there is a sneaking suspicion that a church, first and foremost concerned with the linguistic, liturgical "activity," is in a "maintenance mode" or is "dying of good taste." Statistical results are more impressive than hearing the promise.

Eugene Peterson identifies this suspicion underlying contemporary views of worship. He writes, "I'm convinced that pastors don't give two cents about worship .... And there's a reason for it. True worship doesn't make anything happen. It is a losing of control, a weaning from manipulative language and entertainment .... Pastors sense that if they really practice worship they are going to empty out the sanctuary pretty fast."[12] If the liturgical emphasis empties out the churches, why not use the emotive language and techniques of entertainment? Why not pursue the way of proven managerial manipulation or moralistic activism if it can keep the church viable?[13] The short answer is, these things undermine our account-ability. The short answer is more divisive than persuasive. The case needs to be argued that the emphasis on technique

[12]Eugene Peterson, interviewed in *The Wittenburg Door*, November/December 1991.

[13]There is not space to summarize adequately Alisdair MacIntyre's critique of the ethical theory of Emotivism, except to note that MacIntyre persuasively spells out the intimate connection between Emotivism and social manipulation. Insofar as forms of Emotivism are present in the church, unseemly manipulation may also be assumed to be present. One may see MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 23 and following.

and indiscriminate use of emotive language are products of a view of the world that mostly rejected orthodox Christianity. I contend that our contemporary managerial and moralistic practices are more nearly related to the Enlightenment than to the gospel.[14]

Fueled by the devastating religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thinkers in the eighteenth century concluded that religion had done enough "good" for the world. Modernism asserted that the terrestrial agenda would be set on the course of progress through the exercise of enlightened reason. Central characters in this ever-upward march were a certain kind of moralist and the bureaucratic manager. Theirs was the task to discover the rational structures of the reasonable world and determine the universal rules to order society. The key to modernism was the belief that laws or rules would render life predictable and manageable.

The moralist most representative of modernism was German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant believed that moral behavior would conform to rational rules (categorical imperatives). Because these rules were discovered by reason, rational and autonomous beings would recognize the rules as binding and pleasing, and would freely choose these imperatives as their own.[15] The key rational understanding of these moral rules was the principle, "We can because we ought." If we conclude that we ought to do something, it means that we possess the resources to see it through. There can be no rule or duty that cannot be accomplished by a rational human being. This trust in the human ability to manage holds even with Kant's view of radical evil; that people were inclined toward evil.[16] With this nearly biblical understanding of evil, Kant did not arrive at anything like grace. Grace was irrational because it assumed rules that could not be humanly fulfilled. Rather, Kant saw the problem of evil overcome by a rational ordering of rules. What Copernicus did for astronomy in discovering the

[14]While the following is much more an assertion than an argument, the assertions are grounded in an application of Alisdair MacIntyre's critique of the Enlightenment in *After Virtue*.

[15]MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 44.

[16]Radical evil, Kant believed, was a philosophic conclusion that he arrived at through the rigors of reason rather than by religious revelation. Much more likely, argues MacIntyre, is that all of Kant's practical morality, inclusive of his view of evil, was smuggled in from his Lutheran childhood in Königsberg.

rules by which the location of stars and planets could be predicted. What Newton did for physics in discovering the laws of time and motion to predict the movement of objects, Kant intended to do for human behavior. Kant was not reticent in expressing his admiration for the starry heavens and the moral law—both stars and heavens were law-centered and predictable. For Kant, rational principles yielding reasonable imperatives would render the precarious human situation predictable.[17]

Joining the moralist, the bureaucratic manager was to "cure" the problem created by the Enlightenment's ideal individual, the "unencumbered self." The unencumbered self was a law unto himself (autonomous); fully free to fashion his own rules however he wished. As Dostoyevsky recognized, in such a society, God becomes irrelevant and everything becomes permissible. According to the late Arthur Leff, this realization of a world without God produced "an exhilarated vertigo, a simultaneous combination of an exultant 'We're free of God' and a despairing 'Oh God, we're free.'"[18] The problem with unencumbered selves, or "godletts" as Leff calls them, was to find ways to get along happily in the pantheon. With each "godlett" and "goddesslett" being a divine law unto him or her self, the potential for social disorder was staggering. The task of ordering the chaos of individualism into a society fell to the value-free, bureaucratic manager.

The manager, armed with information and social scientific technique and theory, would allocate resources, organize space, and pass regulations to order society. Unlike the Kantians, managerial rules did not reflect theoretic principles, but hard-nosed practicality. They would organize and manage society so the greatest number of "godletts" could enjoy the greatest liberty. The story has turned out rather differently. The story has turned out not to be a story, but a catalogue of disintegration.

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[17]MacIntyre summarizes Kant's view of the categorical imperative, writing (*After Virtue*, 45): "It is of the essence of reason that it lays down principles which are universal, categorical and internally consistent." A more specific version of the imperative is Kant's reworking of the golden rule (*After Virtue*, 46): "Always act so as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of others, as an end, and not as a means." *After Virtue*, 46. From our present cultural perspective so influenced by nihilism and relativism, Kant's hope of a "rational" rule-based morality is naive at best.

[18]Arthur Allen Leff, "Unspeakable Ethics, Unnatural Law," *Duke Law Journal* number 6 (1979): 1232-1233.

The bureaucratic order turned out to be a zero-sum game. The more scarce the resources and space (real or imagined), the more abundant the bureaucratic regulation. Those who wished to control a thing created a crisis with one hand and offered their managerial services with the other. Without surprise the resources always seemed to get allocated in ways that produced more managerial bureaucracy and promoted a secularist agenda.

The American system of government-run education demonstrates the manipulative power of bureaucracy operating under the cover of objectivity and reason. The debate and defeat of the *Rainbow Curriculum* in New York City's schools, illustrates the unmasking of the myth of value-neutrality of the "managed" society.[19] Presented as a reflection of the cultural mosaic that is New York City, the curriculum was, in fact, reflective of the aggressive leftist and gay social agenda of the political and educational bureaucracy. While claiming to promote the virtue of tolerance, the religious values of the many, many parents who opposed the curriculum were treated with condescension and contempt. Opponents of the curriculum, an opposition that was itself diverse and multifaceted, were characterized as a single block of religious bigots governed by irrational phobias. The curriculum was defeated. This defeat was a single episode in the precipitous unraveling of the trust in the secular, managed society. In the exclusion or absence of the Gardener, the Enlightenment's method to manage the garden has failed.

Paul's letter to the Galatians casts light on this failure. As Paul argues against the Galatian moralists, he exposes the problem with rules-based accountability. Admittedly the distinctions between rules and the theological understanding of the law are considered here in an imprecise way. Also, what the Galatian moralists meant by law and what Kantian moralists meant by rules are, in significant ways, different. Both, however, are rule-governed and fall under Paul's judgment; all who rely on works of the law are under a curse (Galatians 3:10).

For Paul, rules are coherent only in the wider account of God's intervention into human history, especially in Christ's incarnation. Thus,

[19]For a very interesting and surprisingly enjoyable read about the whole multiculturalist agenda, see Richard Bernstein, *Dictatorship of Virtue* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994).

Paul argues that dietary rules and circumcision, abstracted from the incarnation and the revelation of the gospel, are not only incoherent, they were pernicious means to manipulate the behavior of others (Galatians 2:4). The Galatian context offers an instance where the two modes of accountability are operative and at odds. The Galatian version of accountability aimed to measure Gentile converts by Jewish dietary and circumcision rules. Paul argues that these laws were arbitrary and incoherent, not only to Gentile sensibilities, but to the truth of the gospel. Their aim was not liberty, but manipulative control. Paul's account implicitly understands that such accountability to rules would lead either to hapless hypocrisy or hopeless despair. Hence, the moralists must be put to the question, "How do rules of diet and circumcision fit into the account of the gospel?" Paul then presses the account to absurdity to show its incoherence. In essence he argues, "If removal of the foreskin achieved x degree of moral purity, why not finish the job and go for total purity *qua* total emasculation" (5:12). As the moralists could not "read" their rules into the gospel narrative nor could they "read" Paul's liberty or the Gentiles out of the gospel, Paul demonstrated that they had become readers of a different narrative (1:6). The accountability that Paul called for was not first and foremost about rules, but about sinners' righteousness in Jesus Christ. This broad account so arranged and ordered rules, beliefs, and actions into a narrative or systematic unity that Paul could speak intelligibly of such difficult tensions as between law and liberty and the freedom that bears each other's burdens.

Not long ago, most everyone believed the Enlightenment story of the inspiring vision of a garden without God. It was progress governed on its course by human reason, science, and technology. This once-inspiring vision has dissipated into the comfortable skepticism and tenured nihilism of the academic and media elite, and now possesses all the inspiration of the motor vehicle department. The fact that we are now said to be in the postmodern period attests to the failure of modernism's secular story. Postmoderns do not believe in a different story of the human race, but in the belief that this is no story. We are all caught in a bad novel where episodes make no sense and characters arbitrarily come and go. The plight of the world without the author and finisher of salvation, is to be account-disabled. The postmodern world truly cannot give an account of its core beliefs, rules, or reasons for action. In education, secularism is unable to account for the books that constitute its core canon because there are no core beliefs. In morality, rules granting

easy abortion and divorce are acclaimed "achievements" of an enlightened society. Truth to tell, such so-called achievements clearly reflect what happens when "godletts," who have no story but their thin, boring autobiographies, are unable to give an account for why they should defend things so basic as keeping promises or guarding life.

What ought not be forgotten is, that in the nineteenth century, when the Enlightenment vision was still plausible, every major Christian denomination bellied up to the rationalist's bar hoping to be considered "reasonable." The result was a distortion of the Christian account into an echo of secular philosophy. Today we are facing a variation on this temptation. The present fondness for moralistic principles, the extolling of measurable success and bureaucratic church growth smack of the Enlightenment myth of progress through managed solutions. If this is a correct reading of our situation, it would be strange indeed, were this vision of secular progress to find appeal in the church, just as it is being exposed as unaccount-able to the post-modern world.

The failure of modernism as a coherent account of life was played out in the closing months before Jean Paul Sartre's death. For most of his life, Sartre was a militant atheist, who did much purposefully to subvert the account of life as purposeful.[20] Yet, nearing his death in 1980, he said, "I do not feel that I am the product of chance, a speck of dust in the universe, but someone who was expected, prepared, prefigured. In short, a being whom only a Creator could put here; and this idea of a creating hand refers to God." We should not make too much of Sartre's admission. Neither should we make too little of it. For Sartre to repudiate (perhaps even repent of), his life and his writings, he needed the language he had formerly ridiculed. "What language shall I borrow" goes the passion hymn of Bernard of Clairvaux. What a wonderful thought. Borrowed language allowed Sartre to understand his death very differently from how he understood his life. The thought of borrowed language compliments the psalm prayer, "Oh Lord open thou my lips that my mouth may show forth thy praise." Our account-ability depends on grace not only for its content, but for the ability to proclaim as well. Luther's last written words sum it up; "We are beggars, and that's the truth." Death forces even literary giants to recognize that we are linguistic

[20]See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 214-215 on MacIntyre's discussion of Sartre's denial of the possibility of a human narrative.

beggars unaccountable – or is it account-disabled? Because death renders our most sincere words clumsy and cliché, we borrow from greeting cards or "say it with flowers." Better by far is the rite of Christian burial to keep us account-able.

From the back of the sanctuary the borrowed language begins. Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Words borrowed from Paul; borrowed from the rite of baptism. The processional Psalm, borrowed from David, is chanted as the casket is brought forward, slowly embedding the grief into the Psalmist's confidence. The simplicity of the intoned chant and the antiquity of the Psalm move the processional forward to a point as the body is placed beside the baptismal font. Death gloats in Herbert's poem, "Alas poor mortal, void of story . . . "[21] No story, no plot and no point. The unpretentious ceremony is an account that cuts through the cacophonous accusations of hell that life has no point. We return to the font where once we received the new life.

The Enlightenment failed because it had no *telos* to tell us. It could not tell us the point of a life once the myth of progress vanished. But how does the gospel account of "cross cross, suffering suffering" fare any better? How are we able to give an account of hope? One word tells it all: *Tetelestai!* "It is finished." The cross tells us the *telos*. The cross tells us that the point of this story is sacrifice; Christ dying that we might live. So, the cross offers us a treasure, a thesaurus of cross words. Words that can speak of sacrifice together with life. Indeed these are words of eternal life. But, there is a general dissatisfaction in the church with the stock of words, preserved and passed on to us, from which we are free to borrow

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[21] A DIALOGUE-ANTHEM, George Herbert

Christian:	Alas, poor Death, where is thy glory?
	Where is thy famous force, thy ancient sting?
Death:	Alas poor mortal, void of story,
	Go spell and read how I have killed the King.
Christian:	Poor death! and who was hurt thereby?
	Thy curse being laid on Him, makes thee accurst.
Death:	Let losers talk: yet thou shalt die;
	These arras shall crush thee.
Christian:	Spare not, do thy worst.
	I shall be one day better than before,
	Thou so much worse, that thou shalt be no more

and believe. Why is the creed reworked or deleted from worship? Why is the Western eucharist liturgy considered a liability to growth? Hymns are disparaged for their lack of warmth and feel. Maybe, by playing down how we feel, these words train us to see what is real. Maybe they are cautious about the manipulative use of emotion so that when we need them most, they can be trusted.

One word of eternal life, lavishly spread throughout the funeral rite, is "forever." Over and over the repetition of "forever" brilliantly rejects death as the end of the story. It may be that we only appreciate the vocabulary of "forever" when confronted by our mortality. Walker Percy asks, "How can it be that only with death and dying does the sharp quick sense of life return?"[22] Instead of teaching us how to live, replete with rules and principles, cross words train us to die, so to cultivate in us a "sharp quick sense of life." This is why cross-centered words are not self-centered or rule-centered. These things are irrelevant in being accountable when facing death. Our account of hope reaches its height as the body is lowered into the depths, "Dust to dust . . ." Are we giving into despair? Does our account get high-centered on the problem of our humanity? We are "humus," rotting dirt! But then, from the beginning of this account, we are told what happens to dirt in God's presence, hearing His promise.

When Jesus was called to account for His "subversive" activity, He said, "I have spoken openly . . . I have said nothing secretly." The guard who struck Jesus recognized that the High Priest would find the answer inadequate. "Is that how you answer the high priest?" he asks. The answer is, "yes." That is how our Lord gave account and that is how we are to give account. Certainly, bureaucratic accountability will always be with us and is probably modestly important. To paraphrase P. G. Wodehouse, "If you'd stack all the forms and reports one on top of another, they'd reach part way to heaven." Who can say more? But, when we are called to account for our pastoral labors or account for the "good" the church is doing in the world, our account, first and foremost will point to those linguistic and liturgical transactions; teachings and sacraments; secret to no one. Our account-ability is chiefly that we have faithfully labored at becoming listeners and readers of God's word and have labored to teach others to do the same. That we have through

[22]Walker Percy, *The Second Coming* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1999) 146.

prayer, struggle, and meditation been diligently attentive to the broad narrative of Scripture; that our reading of Scripture has not become impersonal or professional; that we have struggled with current literature and events so that we might make every thought captive to Christ. All that we might see the world rightly and give an account to others that they may do the same. God help us to be account-able.

Homiletical Studies

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY, SERIES C

Isaiah 6:1-8

What Would Move Us to Tell the Good News about Jesus?

The account of God's call to Isaiah is highly sensory: visual (an overwhelming sight of the Lord and His seraphim), auditory (the exclamation of the angels—which even caused the doorposts of the temple to shake—and the voice of the Lord Himself), tactile (the trembling of the temple), olfactory (the smell of smoke), even gustatory (as the hot coal touches Isaiah's tongue). This would suggest a sermon that also engages more than the intellect, a dramatic and emotional message that seeks to replicate Isaiah's vision. The goal is that our hearers, too, will answer, "Here am I, send me!"

Introduction: In the year that King Uzziah died, the prophet Isaiah saw a vision. I mean, a vision—angels, earthquake, the Lord Himself; smoke, fire, a voice that could bring down the house. A vision! By the time Isaiah had seen, heard, felt, smelled, tasted all that the Lord had for him to experience that day, the prophet was ready to do whatever God wanted him to do. And what God wanted him to do was go and tell people what God wanted them to hear—above all else, the news of a coming Messiah. Short of such a vision—or maybe *not* short of such a vision—what would move us to tell the good news about Jesus?

I. Perhaps realizing that our plight in sin is as desperate as Isaiah's.

   A. Maybe we would realize our plight if we, too, experienced the trauma of losing our leader (1a).

      1. Uzziah's death after 52 years on the throne rocked Judah's security and stability.

      2. We pray in these days for our new president, but throughout our generation, failures of national leaders—and our acceptance of their failures—have rocked the image of a nation under God.

   B. Maybe we would realize our plight if we, too, saw the Lord Himself on His throne, exalted above us (1).

      1. Picture Isaiah's vision: in Solomon's temple, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, a soaring structure

reaching forty-five feet straight up, the almighty Lord of hosts towering above, His train filling the sanctuary.

2. When Christ returns, we will see Him, not in His humiliation as we are accustomed, but on His throne as judge (Revelation 1:7).

C. Maybe we would realize our plight if we, too, saw how even the seraphim view the Almighty (2).

1. The highest of the angels use two of their wings to veil their eyes from God's glory (*LW* 278:3, *TLH* 341:3).

2. How would we fall down before Him?!!

D. Maybe we would realize our plight if we, too, witnessed the full holiness of the Lord (3).

1. "Holy, holy, holy," the seraph cried of the Trinity.

2. Do we really envision God as holy, or only as love?

E. Maybe we would realize our plight if God shook our sanctuary, too, and filled it with smoke (4).

1. The thunderous cry! The shock! The smell of smoke!

2. Illustration: The Sylmar, California earthquake in 1969—one of the "big ones"—struck just before dawn. One teenage girl, staggering out into the street, voiced what many reportedly wondered: "Dad, is this the end of the world?" Our existence is that fragile, always just one instant from total destruction.

3. The end will come, and, when it does, we dare not stand before God unprepared in our sins.

All of this certainly drove Isaiah to realize his desperate sinfulness: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts" (5). This was a first step in moving Isaiah to tell the news of the Messiah. What more is necessary to move us to tell the good news about Jesus?

II. Perhaps realizing that our forgiveness is as cleansing as Isaiah's.

A. Isaiah was assured—visibly, tangibly—that he was cleansed of his sins. (6-7)

1. The hot coal touching his lips, the declaration of forgiveness spoken by no less than God's own messenger, a heavenly seraph!

2. What an absolution!

B. But have we not heard, seen, felt, tasted, smelled our cleansing from sin just as certainly?

1. When God's messenger, taking water, pouring it over our heads, once said, "I baptize you in name of the Holy, Holy, Holy."

2. When the same messenger of God, standing before the high altar, announces: "I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. . . . Your iniquity is taken away, your sin is purged."

3. And if that is not enough, when God's messenger really does take something from the altar, touches your lips with it, and says, "Take eat, take drink, this is the body and blood the Lord of hosts, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

C. Isaiah's vision moved him to say, "Here am I, send me!" (8)

D. Does our "vision" move us to tell the good news about Jesus?

Conclusion: The Lord speaks today and asks who will go and tell a world, just as desperate in sin as we, about its only Savior. Are we as aware of our sinful plight as Isaiah was? Do we realize that we have been cleansed of those sins as tangibly, as certainly, as Isaiah was? If we are, if we do, then when God asks, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" we will have an answer.

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THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT, SERIES C

Jeremiah 26:8-15

Tell the Good News No Matter What

The text reminds us that one who speaks God's word can get into trouble for doing so. The goal of the sermon is that hearers tell the good news. The problem is that we are afraid. The means to the goal is point to Christ and what He has done for us. How can we not speak of Him?

Introduction: The sermon text might not strike us as a typical "evangelism" text, but it can help us face up to our fears. Often, fear keeps us from telling the good news about Jesus. There is no question that speaking God's word *can* get one into trouble – big trouble. So it was with our Lord Himself, as with the prophets before Him. We will see Jeremiah undergoing a trial for his life which, in many ways, resembles Jesus' trial, and be encouraged to tell the good news:

I. In spite of all fightings without and fears within (see verses 8-11).

A. The world attacks us for speaking of law and gospel. Such talk:

1. Exposes as helpless the world's alleged sources of security, like Jeremiah did when he told people the temple's mere presence wouldn't save them.

2. Strikes the unbeliever as insulting or irrelevant (note that as Jeremiah's opponents quoted him in verse 9, they did not mention the merciful dimension of his message found in verse 3; they found it irrelevant).

B. We ought not be silenced.

1. Sometimes it does not take something as big as a death threat to shut us up. It is hard to tell the good news even in our own families.

2. Why are we so ashamed? This is critically important! See Matthew 10:32-33.

II. With confidence in the Lord Who made us His (see verses 12-15).

A. He gives us cause for confidence.

1. He saves us.

a. Jeremiah faced his fears as one assured of his destiny. So can we.

b. Recall how much Jesus loved Peter who denied Him (Luke 22:54-62) or Jerusalem which had murdered the prophets (Luke 13:34).

c. Jesus' death was the most extreme case of shedding "innocent blood." The cross stands as the testimonial to and result of His saving love.

d. The empty tomb means we have good news for everyone—even ourselves.

2. He sends us.

a. We are not prophets like Jeremiah. Most of us are not called preachers (pastors), either. But we do have the privilege of taking the word of God to our neighbors wherever we can in our Christian lives.

b. *Illustration*: In Philipians 3:20 Paul wrote to people at the Roman military colony of Philippi. Though they were far from home, they were citizens of Rome, and they got their status, security, and confidence from that fact as they lived *as Romans* in the world. Paul told them that their real home (πολίτευμα) was heaven, and they could draw their strength from this reality while they held their heads high as God's people in the world. So it is with us; our identity as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation is a *gift* from God which moves us to tell the good news.

B. We are not silenced.

1. The more we are in the word, the more naturally we give forth God's message, and do so with fidelity (as Jeremiah did, verses 18-19).

2. By the power of the word, we become not merely more like the man Jeremiah, but more like the One into Whom we are baptized—Christ, our Lord, Who made the good confession (1 Timothy 6:13) as part of His saving work for us.

Conclusion: The most natural thing for people in the word is to tell the good news. Start with the people with whom you are most consistently in the word, like your family. Speak the word to one another, even if all you do at first is to repeat the Scriptures, catechism, and hymns. Listen to the good news you speak, and recall that it is good news of forgiveness for you too! You will be amazed at what happens next.

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THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER, SERIES C

John 20:19-23

Three Things Most Needful

Introduction: John 20:19-23 records the very first meeting of the "Tell the Good News About Jesus" society. It began as a pretty chaotic meeting, marked by fear (the doors were locked), guilt (they were all deserters), doubt (could they really believe the rumors, the sightings?), and confusion (what to do with the rest of their lives now?). But when Jesus arrived at the meeting, He brought the three things His followers needed most—three P's: peace, purpose, and power.

I. The Three Things Most Needful

A. His followers needed peace of mind, heart, and soul. They needed to know that everything really was okay with their Lord and that everything was okay between them and their Lord. They needed to know that peace that passes understanding, peace that can exist amid fearful circumstances. Jesus now stands before them and not once, but twice offers them that first great "P"—"peace": "Peace be with you" (verses 19, 21), the blessed assurance that everything is okay.

B. His followers also needed a renewed sense of purpose. They needed to know whether to try to get out of Jerusalem, whether to head back to boats and nets and tax collector's office, whether to go back to life the way it was three years before, should that even be possible now. Jesus stands before them and provides the second great "P"—"purpose": "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (verse 21). Life would never be the same

again. Their lives would have a great purpose. They would be partners in His mission by telling the good news about Jesus.

C. His followers, a small band of common people called to be partners in mission in a dangerous and contrary world, would need to be able to do great things. Jesus stands before them and gives them the third great "P"—"power." Breathing on them, He said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (verses 22-23). They would have the power of the Holy Spirit within them and the external power of the means of grace, the office of the keys, to affect the hardest substance on earth, unrepentant human hearts.

II. Still the Three Things Most Needful

A. We, Jesus' followers today, still harbor much fear, guilt, and doubt. We often feel overwhelmed, and we know we have been deserters also. We need peace of mind, heart, and soul just as much as did Jesus' early followers. We need to know that in spite of everything, everything is okay. And Jesus is with us today in word and sacrament, offering the first great "P" of our Christian lives, "peace." He offers it more than twice when we meet, after this sermon ("The peace of God which passes understanding..."), after we receive His body and blood ("Depart in peace") and more. It is His word to us throughout the service and as we reenter the mission field of our daily lives (...and give you peace"). Everything is okay, thanks be to Him.

B. We are also in constant need of a renewed sense of purpose, for the songs of our age affect us also. Lines from popular songs of yesteryear, "What's It All About, Alfie?" and "Is That All There Is, My Friend?" capture so much of the confusion and emptiness of our times. Like waterbugs on a pond, we see people today dart from one interest to another, only to try something else again to effect a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. We don't need to join the chorus or the hectic life on the pond. Jesus provides the second "P" of our lives, the "purpose" of partnership with Him, of being the sent ones to provide to this world the only thing that finally matters.

C. We go about our business with His assurance of the third great "P," "power," in our lives. Through word and sacraments, true spiritual power enters our lives as surely as if Jesus Himself breathed on us and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." He equips us with powerful tools, means of His grace, to assure forgiveness of sins to all who repent, asking of us not results but the faithful telling of the good news through law-and-gospel preaching and teaching, the faithful administration of the sacraments through His church, and our own faith-full sharing of the gospel with others.

Conclusion: Left to our own whims and fancies, we might like some other "P's" from Jesus. "Prosperity," for one, is always nice. "Pleasure" also quickly comes to mind. But Jesus brings via our text, when we stop to think about it, the three that finally make the difference for this life and the life to come. "Have peace," He says. "Have purpose." "Have power."

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THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, SERIES C

John 17:20-26, Acts 16:6-10, Revelation 22:12-17, 20

Jesus Brings Salvation to the World Through You, His Disciples

All three readings appointed for this Sunday fit well between the Ascension of our Lord (celebrated on the preceding Thursday) and the Feast of Pentecost one week away. The gospel and second lesson make reference to Christ's Ascension, and all three highlight that Jesus' salvation is brought to the world through the message of the gospel proclaimed by His church.

The gospel, John 17:20-26, is the final section of Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. Earlier in the prayer Jesus speaks of His departure from the world (verses 11, 13) and for the protection of His disciples (verses 9-19). While earlier Jesus said, "I am not praying for the world," now He prays, "for those who will believe in Me through their [the apostles'] message" (verse 20). Jesus sends His life to the world through the message of the apostles.

The first lesson, Acts 16:6-10, recounts the Holy Spirit's interruption and redirection of Paul's missionary journey. The Spirit's change to

Paul's plans, while possibly disquieting to the apostle, brought Christ's salvation to Europe!

In the second lesson, Revelation 22:12-17, 20, the ascended Christ proclaims, "Behold, I am coming soon!" When He returns He will give those washed in His sacrifice entrance to the tree of life. The church responds to Christ's promise, with the joyful shout "Come!" This "Come!" is both a cry to Jesus and an invitation to world "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." (verse 17)

Introduction: Our Lord Jesus Christ ascended triumphantly. After living a perfect life in our stead, crushing Satan's head at His crucifixion, and conquering death at His resurrection, Jesus has opened the way to the Father for all who trust in Him. But now what? We might imagine the angels asking our ascended Lord, "So what happens now? Can we go and bring Your saving work to the ends of the earth? Or are you going to visibly appear before all people and speak in a thundering voice to bring them to repentance?" No, that's not our Lord's plan. In our Savior's prayer on the night of His betrayal He reveals His plan to bring salvation to the world: "My prayer is not for them [my disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You" (John 17:20,21). Jesus brings salvation to the world through you, His disciples.

I. Jesus prays that through the word of the Apostles we would be one with the Triune God.

   A. Faith comes through the word of the Apostles, the eyewitnesses of Jesus.

      1. They wrote the eyewitness testimony of Jesus' saving work for us sinners.

      2. Through their word written in Holy Scripture and proclaimed to us by pastors, teachers, parents, and neighbors, God works faith. (Romans 10:17)

   B. By faith in Christ, we are in a living relationship with the Triune God.

      1. Earlier on the same night, Jesus told His frightened, confused disciples, "I am the Vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5 and following). We're not just next to God, or

friends with God. Branches and vine are intimately connected.

2. Because we are one with God what happens to us, happens to Him. What blessed comfort!

   a. The ascended Lord's word to Saul, who was persecuting Christians: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *Me?*" (Acts 9:4).

   b. Jesus' pronouncement on Judgment Day: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me" (Matthew 25:40).

3. Because we are one with God, what is His is ours. (verse 22, 24)

   a. verse 22: Now, Jesus has given us His place as sons of God. As God's children, everything that belongs to God is ours. Just as all forgiveness; peace; love; victory over death, sin, and hell; and the eternal riches of heaven belong to Christ Jesus, so they are ours in Him.

   b. verse 24: Forever, we will see His eternal glory. Now, we hear of and believe in Jesus' ascension and rule over heaven and earth—then, we will see it all. Since this is our future, we need not worry about earthly rewards, riches or reactions: all heaven is ours. All that is God's is ours through Christ Jesus' saving work.

II. Jesus prays that His followers, in this unity of faith, would confess to the whole world the saving love of God in the sending of Jesus Christ.

A. Our Lord's plan is an unbroken chain of faithful confessors—the Father's word to Jesus, Jesus to the apostles, the apostles to the church, and through us to all the world. (verses 20-21, 25-26)

B. It is tragic when those who claim to be Christ's church deny Jesus' saving work by:

   1. denying or belittling His word and sacraments.

   2. using something other than Christ's word and sacraments to try to get the world to believe.

C. You have the blessed joy to confess to a dying world the life Jesus has won for all.

In the second lesson , Revelation 22, Jesus proclaims who He is and how all who are washed in His sacrifice will have life forever. The Holy Spirit and the church cannot help but urge all sinners to receive this gift as they cry out, "Come!" Whoever hears this word is to say it to our dying world too: "And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."

As you receive Jesus in His word and body and blood, you are one with Him and the Father, and His word not only saves you, but brings His life through you to others. Thanks be to God, in Jesus' Name. Amen

David Fleming
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Theological Observer

Dominus Iesus and Why I Like It

Response to the papal encyclical *Dominus Iesus* has been generally negative, chiefly because the Roman bishop has again set forth the dogma that outside of the church there is no salvation. The statement would be true enough, if he had not defined the church as those who recognize him as her divinely appointed head. Overlooked is that the document does not absolutely exclude other Christians and even non-Christians from salvation. What is taken away with the right hand is returned by the left hand, a slightly revised version of the biblical mandate that one hand should not know what the other is doing. Rome makes special allowance for the Orthodox family of churches who "by apostolic succession and a valid eucharist are true particular churches." This raises the question of why Rome recognizes the apostolic succession of the Orthodox churches, but not that of the Anglican communion and some Lutheran churches. What did the Orthodox bishops do in consecrating her bishops that Anglican and Lutheran bishops failed to do? Since most Lutherans do not lay claim to apostolic succession and since those who do not make this divisive of church fellowship (at least until the ELCA alliance with the Episcopal Church), we might ask why the Orthodox and not Lutherans are given the privilege of offering their sheep "a valid eucharist." The wording offers two possibilities: Lutherans offer an invalid eucharist (whatever that might be) or they offer no eucharist at all. Lutheran baptism appears to Rome to be valid, but not our ministry and eucharist. We Lutherans can hardly be upset by Rome's halfway covenant approach towards us, since we take the same approach to the Reformed. Their baptism is valid, but not their eucharist, which is in our (but not the ELCA's) eyes no eucharist all. So perhaps we have answered our own question to Rome about "an invalid eucharist" or we have no answer to either question. The Reformed have said that bread and wine are not Christ's body and blood and we have agreed with them that these do not constitute a sacrament. They also say that the water in their baptism does not regenerate, but against their own testimony, we insist that the water in their rite does regenerate and hence is a baptism. Lutherans have a higher view of the Reformed baptism than they themselves do. Who can fail to recognize the discrepancy? Perhaps the most shattering for Lutherans is that Rome makes no allowance for the our identifying the sacramental bread and wine with Christ's body and blood and we are lumped together with the Reformed in having "an invalid eucharist." The historic Lutheran-Reformed controversy does not even register on Rome's radar screen. In fact, we are treated with the same generosity extended to Baptists, which for any Lutheran must be an unkind cut. Putting aside hurt feelings, *Dominus Iesus* should be seen for what it is—Rome struggling to be Rome.

Beginning with Vatican II, Rome has made huge concessions, not only extending ecumenical hands to a wide gambit of Protestant denominations, (Episcopalians, Lutherans, Reformed, Baptists, Pentecostals) but to Jews, Moslems, other religions, and non-religionists. All are entitled to salvation not as

non-Catholics, but Catholics who do not realize that they are really Catholics. This concept lingers between the absurd and weird and, drawn to its natural conclusion, is destructive of the entire Catholic system. However, because no good work goes unrewarded, even those outside the church receive credits for theirs. (It is akin to having time served before trial used to reduce the length of imprisonment.) Beyond that, she has released her clergy from their vows and the theological departments of her universities are manned by non-Catholics. Even her own clerics are among the most radical biblical scholars who have long since discarded the virgin birth and the resurrection. In the midst of it all Mary is still *semper virgo,* belief in her assumption is required, and her aid can be summoned upon request. Francis Pieper would call this a "felicitous inconsistency," but he was not a Roman Catholic. Still he enunciated a universal principle.

With *Dominus Deus* Rome was trying to put on the brakes to slow down the momentum, but even the pope can hardly believe that he will stop it. As slighted as some Lutherans felt by the reassertion of the traditional doctrine of papal supremacy, Rome was chiefly concerned with staking out the claim of historical Christianity as the only truth in an environment where Christian truth is regarded as equal with other truth claims or truth claims of any type are dismissed. Buzz words for this are postmodern relativism, post-Enlightenment, postliberalism. Add some of your own. Our own scholars and theologians have pointed to the inherently anti-Christian culture in which the church delivers her message and have asked us to join in the crusade against postmodernism. I, for one, am not convinced that our age is really any different from the philosophical cynicism which was taking hold of the Greco-Roman world of the apostolic and post-apostolic ages—after all, it was a well placed ancient Roman who once said "What is truth?" Cynicism is a Greek derived word and philosophical idea and not a twenty-first century one. Even if some of us have difficulty in recognizing the postmodern enemy, we are committed to waging war against him (it). Send us in the right direction and we will do battle. Both modern and postmodern man does not like to hear what kind of wretch he is in God's eyes. That is called law. Though my contacts are not as widespread as others, I have yet to meet an honest to goodness postmodern creature who was intellectually or socially any different from someone I met forty years ago. Chalk that up to innate insensitivities.

If postmodernism is the enemy, a point which can be conceded without any hesitancy, then we should recognize in the Roman pope we have an ally whose scribes have described with literary perfection the old evil foe, now in the new guise of postmodernism. *Dominus Iesus* should be available from some web-site, so extensive quotation can be happily avoided, but here are a few gems from the papal amanuenses. First, they subscribe to the Nicene Creed, which is something which the United Church of Christ (UCC) does not do. For reminders, this did not deter the ELCA from entering into fellowship with the UCC. Secondly, Rome condemns a religious pluralism which denies the absolute uniqueness of the inspired Scriptures, the incarnation, and other Christian truths. (No mainline

churches will go this far.) Responsible for this relativism is "the eclecticism of those who, in theological research, uncritically absorb ideas from a variety of philosophical and theological contexts without regard for consistency, systematic connection or compatibility with Christian truth." Here the pope is addressing his own priests, but these words are adequate ammunition to be fired at most engaged in the enterprise of biblical criticism. The concluding condemnation of that sentence may present a difficulty for Lutherans: "finally, the tendency to read and to interpret sacred Scriptures outside the tradition and magisterium of the church." Try this emendation: "outside the Lutheran Confessions and our tradition," and we can say hurray. "As a remedy for this relativistic mentality, which is becoming ever more common, it is necessary above all to assert the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ." Three paragraphs restate in several ways that Jesus Christ is the only and full revelation of God and Himself the ultimate truth, claims which apply to no other religion or philosophical system. For those still suspicious of Rome's intent, the document states in no uncertain terms that only the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments can be designated "inspired texts" and that these books "'firmly, faithfully, and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures."

From Lutheran history we would want to raise our traditional critiques in regard to canon and ask for a more expansive doctrine of inerrancy, but our critique should not cloud over these fine statements and the purpose of *Dominus Deus* in Rome's providing a head-on assault on postmodernism within its own walls. Non-Catholic critiques of the document have generally failed to recognize that to exist as "Rome," the pope must claim an exclusivity which she rightfully finds threatened by her own overly productive ecumenical relations with Protestants and Orthodox. A majority of American bishops and priests may have not so secretly conceded the principle of exclusivity. Rome is bleeding. Apart from trying to secure her own survival, the real problem addressed by *Dominus Deus* is postmodern relativism. Old-fashioned Enlightenment rationalism posited an orderly world governed by natural laws which were reflected in how we human beings dealt with one another. Gravity explained why apples fell down and not up and families were held together by indissoluble marriages. The old world was predictable, or at least some thought so. In response to our current scientific and social disintegration, John Paul II has made it clear that there is such a thing as truth and that Jesus Christ and the Scriptures qualify as the best and exclusive exemplars of that truth. Identifying truth is revolutionary at a time when documents uniting Lutheran churches with others have conceded that the truth can not be identified – or at least each one can identify it as he or she sees fits or he or she does not have to identify it all. After all we do not want to put God in boxes of our own making.

David P. Scaer

Book Reviews

What is Mission? Theological Exploration. By J. Andrew Kirk. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2000. 302 pages. $ 20.00

The author, J. Andrew Kirk, does what the title of his book indicates: he explores and seeks to find an answer to the question: what is mission? Already in the introductory pages he reveals his line of thought and the missionary movement he represents in acknowledging the great opus, *Transforming Mission*, of the ecumenical missiologist, David Bosch. But the author plans to go beyond a mere repristination of arid issues. He rather hopes to offer new "eye openers" that are, he believes, acutely missing in missiological discussions. In chapters eight through ten this new material is described in great detail right down to solutions and suggestions being offered as how one may overcome violence and build peace, how one could care for the environment and build genuine ecclesial partnership in the mission of God. Depending on his own theological (and political) vantage point, the reader may either regard such issues peripheral or, if he shares the same conviction as the author, may integrate them into his own mission agenda. More important for mission, one could argue, are the preceding chapters in which the author begins to lay important missiological foundations: He defines theology and then uncovers its intrinsic missionary character before he proceeds to his own definition of the theology of mission. In the chapters that follow, the author offers insights that are, theologically speaking, surprisingly conservative. In his discourse on hermeneutics he argues for the supremacy of the biblical text and firmly believes that not all readings of the biblical text are *prima facie* arbitrary: Serious semantics will safeguard one from the pervasive postmodern solipsism (the belief that we can only be certain about our own existence and ideas). And yet, the author argues, one should adopt in one's theological investigation the stance of open enquiry and respond – within a permitted framework – to the issues and challenges of the context as the Protestant ideal *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* (the church reformed and always reforming) suggests. The author then proceeds to base the mission of the church in the heart of the triune God, known as the *missio Dei*. Therein the church is the center and agent of salvation and not as contextual theologies claim without any bearing. Mission is also not one activity of the church among others but *the* activity. In addition, mission no longer occurs merely overseas or in another culture but it is to be located there where the missionary line separates belief from unbelief.

What about the mission agenda of the church? "The Christian community needs a standard by which to measure its own performance – a standard which is able to call in question its own policies, programmes and practices" (39). For the Christian church, following in the way of Jesus Christ (discipleship) becomes *the* test of missionary faithfulness. To establish the way of Christ, the author traces the earthly ministry of Christ, from which he derives certain principles for the mission of the church, such as following Christ through witness, the pursuit of justice, compassion, and nonviolence. The reader cannot fail to notice the strong

ethical thrust in the author's proposal. What remains of the gift bestowed through the mission of God such as the forgiveness of sins, a new life in Christ, and life eternal? The author's strong stress on the *exemplum Christi* ideal makes even the task of evangelization, which to the author is not synonymous with mission, a call to adopt the mind of Christ, and to follow principles for a holistic inner-worldly mission agenda. In the remaining chapters the author broaches the question of culture and defines common cultural terms. He then presents his own ecclesiology, which also includes a critical perspective on a common subject in mission theory: Church Growth. In a postscript the author tentatively attempts to predict future trends and challenges that will in some way or other affect an ecclesiocentric interpretation of mission.

Because of the author's strong amenability to the ecumenical paradigm of missions, the value of the book will depend on the reader's discretion. Nonetheless, with all the issues touched this book will provide a worthwhile read for every student in mission.

Klaus Detlev Schulz

***Preaching Christ Today: The Gospel and Scientific Thinking.* By Thomas F. Torrance. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994. 79 Pages. Paper. $5.99.**

Moving theologians from debunked to current science could well help scientists – and today's world – appreciate timeless theology. This, essentially, is the thesis which Thomas Torrance, retired professor of dogmatics at Edinburgh, presented in the two lectures which comprise the present short volume.

Though the title might imply so, this is not a book about preaching. It is, nevertheless, Torrance's call for a renewal of Christ-centered, theological preaching in a scientific age, and it offers the preacher encouragement to do that.

The barrier to such preaching, Torrance argues, is dualism, most recently raised by what, in Enlightenment thinking, has passed as scientific method. Much contemporary theology has been shaped by Bultmann's sharp distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, and Bultmann's distinction derives, Torrance says, from science: Isaac Newton's dualism between "absolute mathematical time" and "relative apparent time" (5). However, in this century, Newton has been disproved by Einstein's theories of relativity which showed the fallacy of such radical separation. The result in the scientific community has been a much more open-ended understanding of reality. In other words, what had been seen as "scientific" method is now understood as false, because it superimposed laws or limitations upon nature (7). Proper scientific method now understands the need to examine any field according to its own distinctive nature (8, 45). In dealing with God, that would require allowing for His transcendence beyond imposed limits (47). Ironically, then, Torrance maintains, scientists are open to, even looking for, the singular event of Christ (25, 64-65), but biblical scholars fail to

offer Him because they are "still stuck in old Enlightenment, pre-Einsteinian ways of thinking," which, following Bultmann's *Geschichte*, rejects so much of what Scripture records as history (42).

The early church, Torrance points out, faced a strikingly similar challenge and responded to Greek and Roman dualism with the Nicene Creed. Torrance pleads that today's preacher, too, would proclaim the biblical answers to dualism: the incarnation, which unites God with man and yet does not separate Jesus from God, and the atonement of the cross, which reconciles God with the world.

Preachers who fear these truths may be scientifically naive need this book. Others, who simply desire another useful insight for instructing adults, may benefit, too.

Carl C. Fickenscher II

***Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World.* By Robert E. Webber. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.**

What is happening to the church today? Some churches capitulate to our pluralistic society while others promote a 1950's brand of American Protestantism. The empty pews and empty hearts in these churches bespeak a question that the Bride of Christ has always faced: how can the church maintain her doctrinal integrity and yet effectively present the faith to today's world? Robert Webber seeks to answer that question in his book, *Ancient-Future Faith.*

Webber, an Episcopalian, was raised in the Fundamentalist and American Evangelical traditions, but educated in Lutheran seminaries. He does not want to reinvent the Christian faith, but "to carry forward what the church has affirmed from it's beginning" (17). *Ancient-Future Faith* is intended to be a primer on the basics of the faith, an explanation of what is happening in the church today, and a self-portrait of an individual Christian who has found the relevancy of the doctrine and practice of the early church.

The author begins with the person and work of Christ and then proceeds to the church's worship, spirituality, and mission. He concludes with an appendix about authority in the church. In each of the chapters, Webber explains how Evangelical churches usually present the faith to today's world, usually in paradigms borrowed from the Enlightenment: reason that apprehends facts in the Bible, individual faith over the community, and verbal communication. He contends that the postmodern individual is more interested in mystery, the symbolical language of the liturgy, and living in a community of faith. Since we are in a postmodern world that is similar to the world during the first centuries of the church, he argues that the church should break away from the individualistic, verbose paradigms of the Enlightenment and adapt the christocentric, mystical, and liturgical approach of the early church. Throughout the book, Webber includes many helpful diagrams that show how the formulations and emphases of the faith have indeed changed throughout the history of the church.

While Lutherans will agree with many of the author's premises, one may question some of them. Is the average postmodern person really that naturally interested in the communion of saints or even biblical spirituality? Will such a strong emphasis on Christ as *Christus Victor* obscure the theology of the cross? Are the differences between denominations that trivial as to be overlooked in the quest for catholicity? The appendix, which is on the topic of authority in the church, leaves unanswered many questions about the role of tradition in churches of the Reformation.

Ancient-Future Faith is well organized and easy to read. The book is theological, historical, practical, and contemplative. In fact, *Ancient-Future Faith* is not only well worth reading, it is a clarion call to the church to return to her roots: a faith that is primarily a mystery. This mystery is the person of Christ and His continued action in the worship and mission of His body, the church.

John Paul Salay
Concordia Theological Seminary

***Out of the Saltshaker & into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life*, 2nd Edition. By Rebecca Manley Pippert. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1999. Paper. 288 pages. $11.99.**

First published in 1979, Pippert's book returns in a revised and expanded second edition. By her own admission, this is more a rewrite than a revision, largely due to twenty years of further studies and experiences, as well as the increase of New Age spirituality and postmodern thought.

The book has several things with which to commend itself. The advice on developing conversational skills is helpful, as are the suggestions for discussion with victims of higher criticism and postmodernism. Also useful are Pippert's three chapters in which she discusses apologetics, witnessing to others through philosophical arguments, historical fact, Bible stories, and personal accounts. Rather than push people to confront strangers, she acknowledges that different people communicate in different ways, and applauds those who witness within their vocation.

Pippert is well read, with quotations from Luther, Chesterton, Stott and C. S. Lewis. She maintains that the gospel saves; emotionalism and legalism do not. Evangelism is not to be divorced from the content of the Christian faith, and worship must involve faithful preaching of the word and the presence of God. So-called "lifestyle evangelism" is appropriate, but not a means of grace; and while she advocates the use of personal stories in witnessing, she emphasizes that such stories must remain Christ-centered. Further, she notes that "traditions," of which Christians may be embarrassed, might be exactly that for which the unbelieving neighbor is starving.

The book has one considerable drawback, one that unfortunately permeates the entire text: It is written from an "American Protestant perspective" (9), and

Pippert is faithful to that doctrine. Decision theology governs evangelism, while sacramental theology is not to be found. At times, the consequence is poignant: Pippert relates the tender story of visiting and witnessing to her Alzheimer's-stricken father. On a day when he is lucid, he confesses his sinfulness and faith in Christ, but it is not enough; before he relapses, the daughter still must lead him through a prayer of commitment for him to "close the deal" (194) and be saved. One aches to declare to him that he already is.

Protestant theology virtually negates the usefulness of the book, obscuring the Evangel before evangelism begins. A pastor who attempts to use it with parishioners must confront passages like, "The mystery and paradox of conversion is also seen in the fact that God does all, yet he chooses to save us in and through human decision and obedience" (186). Synergism is veiled in a guise of divine monergism.

Pippert's enthusiasm is appealing, and her stories lead one to give thanks for the felicitous inconsistency and the effectiveness of the word. However, the book suffers a flaw common to many evangelism texts: In speaking *about* the Gospel, it rarely actually proclaims the gospel itself, but instead dwells in law, method, and suggestion. For those seeking to learn about evangelism, they would be better served by books that clearly proclaim the gospel, for example Senkbeil's *Dying to Live* or Veith's *The Spirituality of the Cross*. Such texts evangelize the reader as they read, that their cup of grace might be filled to overflowing for those around them.

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***Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult: How to Interest People Who Aren't Interested.* By Nick Pollard. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997. Paper. 178 pages.**

The title and subtitle are "grabbers." They point in the direction that author Pollard (an evangelist living in Great Britain) would like to take readers, but neither really encapsulates his thrust. Pollard certainly does not oppose hard work in the cause of speaking the gospel. He reports that much time in his evangelistic conversations becomes occupied with various beliefs cherished by his conversation partners. Thus, he ends up discussing not Jesus but Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Madonna, Stephen Hawking, and others.

The basic approach featured in the first half of the book is what Pollard calls "positive deconstruction." He wants to lead people to see the weaknesses of their "worldviews" and to raise doubts about idolatrous beliefs they have embraced. To this end, he encourages Christians to ask unbelievers well-placed questions and employ coherence, correspondence, and pragmatic tests of truth on alternatives to the gospel. He is confident that Christianity will pass the same

tests, provided that it is appropriately understood (for example, people comprehend in what sense the gospel "works").

Pollard's work, in effect, extends and applies Francis Schaeffer's "take the roof off" apologetic, which challenged people to live and work consistently with the presuppositions of unbelief. Such a tack can be useful in a postmodern world where people lack confidence that they should even try to claim that anything is true for anyone beside themselves. (Chapter five exemplifies positive deconstruction by setting it loose on relativism.) It addresses contemporary, affluent Western culture's basic disinclinations to think clearly and to examine the absolute.

Potential down sides come mainly in the form of confusing God's two realms of governance. Helping people to think straight is important, but it is not telling them the good news about Jesus. Pollard acknowledges that his immediate aim often consists not in taking people closer to Jesus but in moving them a bit further away from their current world views (71). However necessary scrutiny of world views may be, though, this book does not make it clear that the gospel is a message fundamentally unlike the law.

Perhaps Pollard's most startling sentence concerns the cross, which he says people find so offensive that they will even leave in the middle of a presentation. "That is why, in most missions, I won't even mention the story of the cross, and certainly not attempt to teach about it, until several days into the week" (117)! Against this stands the apostolic determination to know nothing save Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). Pollard allows that he could lead off by talking about Jesus seeking and saving the lost, saving the world, even giving His life as a ransom (116-117), but such willingness on his part does not help much. How can one treat these themes without touching the cross? Perhaps a "gospel" in principle detachable from Christ's actual atonement would turn out not essentially to differ from what one can find in the kingdom of power.

There are other problems with what is made of the way of salvation in the book's more miscellaneous second half. For example, Pollard asks how he might prove to people that his daughter exists. Beyond objective data (birth certificate, for example) and personal experience, he says: "come over to my house and meet" her. Pollard perceptively adds that people "will be confident of the truth of the gospel only as God opens their eyes and enables them to respond to him." But he does not mention that the only way they can "meet God" is through the means of grace that God Himself has provided (159-160). Nor, finally, does this illustration distinguish between knowing that God exists and being confident of the truth of the gospel.

Pollard realizes that some people conclude that the message of Jesus is true, yet they do not want to be Christians out of a desire to keep their lives as they are (163). Unfortunately, he assumes that it lies within these and other sinners to take the step of faith (159, 168). People dead in sin need nothing short of the miracle

that God works through the gospel, not just "interest." Still, as Pollard reminds us, interest sets the stage for the gospel to come into our conversations. His insightful and affable approach can help us start talking with others, even if we need to look elsewhere for help after the discussion is underway.

Ken Schurb
Saint Louis, Missouri

***Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations.* By Walter C. Kaiser Jr. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000. 101 pages. Paper.**

In this short volume, evangelical scholar Walter C. Kaiser Jr. advances the thesis that the Old Testament Israelites were divinely commissioned to engage in active missionary work among the Gentiles, that they might make known the "Man of Promise who was to come," (9). Israel's mission was not "*centripetal* (inward-moving, and therefore the people of that time were said to play a passive role in witnessing and spreading the good news)" but "*centrifugal* (outward-moving, and therefore the Old Testament believers were active in sharing their faith)" (9). Having identified the Old Testament "Great Commission" as Genesis 12:3 ("all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you [Abraham]"), Kaiser argues that the "Bible begins with the theme of missions in Genesis and maintains that driving passion" through Revelation (7).

The book is divided into six brief chapters. The first two chapters explain God's plan and purpose for missions in the Old Testament. Two key arguments are found in these chapters. First, Israel's call to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:4-6) placed her in a "mediatorial role" are she related to the pagan peoples around her (23). Second, the psalms are "'one of the greatest missionary books in the world,'" (29). Many of the songs of Israel encourage the worshippers of YHWH to speak of the salvific deeds of their God among the idolaters of the nations, that they might turn in faith to the promised Messiah. In the remaining chapters, Kaiser highlights individual Gentile believers in the Old Testament, Isaiah's vision of the Messiah and Israel as a light to the Gentiles, and the ministry of various prophets to the nations. In the final chapter, he demonstrates how the apostle Paul argued for the legitimacy of his mission to the Gentiles on the basis of Old Testament texts.

Kaiser is to be commended for highlighting the often-overlooked place of Gentiles in the divine economy of salvation in the Old Testament. The prophetic ministry of Jonah alone is testimony to God's concern for the conversion of the Gentiles. Numerous other prophets echoed Jonah in calling the nations and their leaders to repentance, and the Scriptures provide several examples of individuals who heeded their cry and became the spiritual sons of Abraham.

In his desire to demonstrate what he calls centrifugal mission, however, Kaiser fails to emphasize that the ultimate goal of such mission was not simply for the Israelites "to share their faith," but to incorporate the Gentiles into the covenant

life and sacrificial liturgy of God's chosen people. They were not only to know the one true God, but to receive His circumcision and to consume His Passover lamb. By his one-sided approach, Kaiser can easily give the wrong impression. OT or NT mission which does not flow from and lead back to the divine liturgy of the church is not *missio Dei.*

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***Mission at the Dawn of the 21st Century: A Vision for the Church.* Edited by Paul Varo Martinson. Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 1999. 400 pages. Paper. $14.95.**

In June of 1998, the Congress on the World Mission of the Church was held under the auspices of Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota. It drew together some of the most prominent figures in missiological thinking today, including the likes of Roger Hedlund, Alan Neely, Rene Padilla, Lamin Sanneh, James Scherer, Andrew Walls, and J. Dudley Woodbury, among several others. It was an ecumenical and international gathering, with at least seventeen major denominations represented and some twenty-two nationalities. Although the theological perspective of the organizers of the event is decidedly conciliarist and liberal, it is interesting to note, according to the preface of this book, the two issues that shaped the purpose of the congress. The first was the reality that there are still vast numbers of people around the world who have not heard the gospel, or who have not heard it "fully." The second concern was the responsibility of North American Christians in light of that reality. This book contains twenty-nine major papers and presentations of the congress, organized into three parts: Four general papers, twenty-one colloquia papers, and four closing plenary presentations. The colloquia section is divided according to six geographical areas (Africa, China, former Soviet Union, India, Latin America, North America), and five topical concerns (Theology, Service, Structures, Education, and Information Technology). For each geographical or topical area, two studies are offered, one detailing the current status of the world area or topic under study, and the second offering a vision for the future. An accompanying volume, *The Proceedings of the Congress on the World Mission of the Church, St. Paul 1998,* is also available from the same publisher.

Of particular interest to this reviewer was the article by Rene Padilla, "The Future of Christianity in Latin America: Missiological Perspectives and Challenges." Padilla examines the explosion of popular religiosity in Latin America on the basis of two competing forces that impact the culture, society, and religious scene in the region today. One is the "closed, traditional" system (Roman Catholic Church), and the other is the rise of modern "technocracy." The traditional system, which came as a result of the imposition of Christianity

in the region through the power of the sword, and which strives to maintain its privileged place in civil society, is now faced with an increasingly pervasive "technocracy," which is becoming the dominant force. Technocracy is characterized by an "openness to change in every dimension of life," and its vulnerability to the assaults of mass media. The result is that, try as it might to go back to the old days of Roman Catholic hegemony in Latin America, "Latin America has become a shopping mall of religious options" (166). While the old Christendom model is passing away, in which the Roman Catholic Church enjoyed special privileges (including tremendous political power), Padilla warns that the younger protestant and evangelical churches must avoid what he calls the "Constantinian temptation," the temptation to seek those same kinds of privileges and worldly power, a temptation, he says, that is very real. His argument is that the Christian church in Latin America must totally discard the premises of Christendom, with its dependency on the power of this world and the love of power, in favor of seeking its identity on the basis of "the Kingdom of God and the power of love" (176). As he puts it: "Either Christendom or the church" (175).

Padilla's thought-provoking article is accompanied, and one could even say contrasted, by the article of Rafael Malpica, program director for Latin America of the ELCA's Division of Global Mission. Malpica focuses on the evils of the "neo-liberal economic model" in Latin America, and advocates greater responsibility on the part of Christians to change "the way we use the market and its products" (152). He criticizes the political systems that are being established throughout the region (many based on democratic principles), as being wholly inadequate. Indeed, he makes the sweeping generalization: "The political climate is . . . deteriorating" (158). In contrast to Lamin Sanneh, who postulates that Christianity has done much to preserve the cultures to which it has been brought, Malpica seems to blame Christian missions for the devastation of indigenous cultures.

The two articles on Latin America are merely an example of the variety of positions and perspectives on world mission found in this collection of essays. Interestingly, the presenters who came from outside of the United States often were more ready to unequivocally admit to the fundamental truth and exclusivity of Christianity over against the pluralist and relativistic value system that pervades North American culture today. While most readers of this journal would have a difficult time accepting much of what the various missiologists presented, it is worthwhile reading for anyone interested in contemporary issues in missions as seen from the ecumenical perspective, especially given the relatively modest price.

Douglas L. Rutt

Beside Still Waters: Searching for Meaning in an Age of Doubt. **By Gregg Easterbrook. New York: William Morrow, 1998, 381 pages, $25.00 (Canada $34.00).**

The cover and title are beautiful and the subtitle is tantalizing. Easterbrook is an editor for *The Atlantic Monthly* magazine and is frequently published by other heavy weights *The New York Times, The New Republic, The New Yorker).* He reads widely and writes well.

Credit Easterbrook for genuinely wanting to offer some defense for faith in the age of doubt. He affirms the value of "spirituality" in a world where many believe nothing beyond the material and no longer see any ultimate meaning for life. He spots the erosion in purpose that has wormed its way ever more effectively into the Western world via existentialism. He pointedly contrasts its results with the Marxist charge that Christianity is an opiate: "If faith sedates some of its adherents against the world, existentialism can represent a complete anesthesia" (57). There is some recognition that "spirituality" has been a significant force for positive social change in American history at least since the Abolitionist Movement.

Easterbrook is also worth reading on the issue of science and religion. He is fully supportive of the work of science, but also sees limits to what it can offer regarding the meaning of human life. He points out the inconsistency of the modern world in the way it treats scientific theory: "today's rational, skeptical scientists believe a range of things that can sound notably less plausible than a sacred tree in a perfect Garden" (61).

Don't assume from such positives, however, that *Beside Still Waters* is a brief for orthodox faith. On balance the book is far more critical than favorable toward what Christianity has to offer. (He takes only occasional swipes at other religions.) Easterbrook wants to have his faith and beat it, too, so he attacks an "All-or-Nothing" approach to the question of spirituality. While he fights skepticism's assessment regarding faith, he even more vigorously beats up on "traditionalism" (he usually means Christianity) for demanding adherence to the "All" of Christian dogma.

Easterbrook's assaults on traditionalism are not new. In effect he offers "Process Theology Lite" introducing Charles Hartshorne *(Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes)* to Karen Armstrong *(A History of God).* Theodicy asks: If God is both good and all-powerful, why does he/she/it allow pain and suffering? Thanks to Hartshorne, Easterbrook answers: *God isn't almighty, he's just doing the best he can.*

That's not all. Easterbrook *a la* Armstrong pounds on the other half of the theodicy question—that God is good. God was not good at all until He started to see the light in the second half of the Old Testament. Luckily, God's own

"spiritual journey" finally led Him to repent of His sins, stop punishing (or getting angry), and start being nice.

So here we are: while God has more power than you or I do and is almost as good as Easterbrook is, God is not powerful or wise enough to do much good for anyone other than teach us enlightenment via His own journey to the truth. The culmination of that journey is when God sacrifices His own son because of God's own sin. Belief in God and Christ and even the cross has been salvaged.

As Easterbrook hammers Christian doctrine he makes use of innumerable questionable "facts" such as his assertion that the Bible knows nothing of original sin (119) or of salvation by grace (267); that it moves from portraying a demanding God of wrath toward an embrace of "nonstructured notions of faith" (262); that Jesus opposed all particular doctrines and urged only "virtue and faith" (277); that Christ eschews any obligation toward God and affirms only our need to be loved (311-312) and so forth. The whopper of all these examples, however, is his claim that the Bible does not affirm God's omnipotence. In all these arguments Easterbrook is either being disingenuous or ignorant. His marshalling of evidence is laughable. For instance, references to "almighty" for God don't count because they are flattery. Passages that affirm that with God "nothing if impossible" are ignored. References to God's omnipotence *(pantokrator)* in 2 Corinthians can be nuanced away and the same claim in Revelation can be ignored.

This is indicative of Easterbrook the theologian: he acknowledges traditional Christian truths about God only when they are stated in the specific words he demands and endorse the (single) truth he wants to affirm. If, in spite of all that, he find the exact wording to refute his argument, he can always ignore it.

Easterbrook the historian is not a lot better. His caricatured religious history makes the events of the Old Testament and Christian history from Nicea to the nineteenth century perfect evidence to reject faith as an evil. The only conundrum is how, if Biblical faith led to so much unrelentingly miserable conduct, it could all turn nice beginning with the Abolitionist Movement. Then again, Easterbrook's God does pretty much the same thing.

The tendency to play fast and loose with evidence is even there in his documentation. Easterbrook loves to pontificate without sources. For instance, he inaccurately describes Anselm's ontological argument but doesn't give a source for his twist (106). This is not for lack of endnotes. With forty-four pages of endnotes, it is interesting to note that he spends more time speaking parenthetically that citing and never gives page numbers in the works cited.

The underlying fault of this book is one which is prevalent not only in cultured despisers of Christianity, but within the church itself: an inability to take seriously the wrath of God as an aspect of His character and, therefore, His love. "Who would fashion a god or cast an image that can do no

good?"-Isaiah 44:10. Easterbrook's god can do no good: his "Maker" is anemic and, even worse, does not care enough about people to mind that we fail to worship our Maker and so to see the true worth of our lives and the lives of those around us.

Easterbrook claims to be planted firmly in the middle of two extremes, advocating spirituality and a meaning for life against the skeptics and undogmatic belief in "faith" against traditionalists. In the end, however, his feeble spirituality offers only his insistence that people *should* believe their lives have meaning without any real reason to do so.

Having said that, there is good reason for a pastor to get this book (try a library). It shows the vacuity of "spirituality" when it is separated from content. It reveals the need for the church to deal openly and emphatically with the wrath of God and the whole of Christian truth.

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***Handbook for William: A Carolingian Woman's Counsel for Her Son.* By Dhouda. Translated with an introduction by Carol Neel. Washington, District of Columbia: Catholic University of America Press, 1991, 1999. 163 Pages.**

This translation first appeared in 1991. Neel has supplied an afterword to update current textual scholarship and additional studies on the years since the first edition. The book itself is a ninth-century mother's handbook of instruction to her eldest son. In the introduction, Neel provides a fine historical survey to place the writing in context.

Dhuoda was a Frankish noblewoman and demonstrates a deep piety in this writing to her son. Indeed, it is a piety that focuses on morality, but it also reveals a deep faith grounded in the Psalms. Trained in the palace schools, she knew her psalter well. The handbook is filled with a constant stream of biblical imagery. She begins with a confession of the Trinity and instructs her son to ponder this mystery. She teaches him to pray and tells him to make the sign of the cross while gazing upon the crucifix over his bed. At the end of her writing she returns to this theme as she gives advice on the praying of specific psalms in connections with certain trials and needs.

Having addressed the primary questions of salvation, Dhouda instructs her son about his role in society and sets it in the context of the history of David's household. There is a lengthy instruction regarding obedience to his father and to his ruler.

The book provides a valuable insight into the piety of the medieval wife and mother. However, it is also a reminder of the importance of grounding our

members in the knowledge of the biblical history, not as an unrelated example of the past, but so that they might see themselves and their lives in view of that history.

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Perspectives on War in the Bible. **By John A. Wood. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998.**

John A. Wood, professor of religion at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, attempts in this volume to document, systematize, and analyze the various (and often contradictory) perspectives on war that he hears voiced in the Old and New Testaments. The presuppositions of the author, which are confessed in the Introduction, indicate that, for Wood, the Scriptures contain not only God's word, but also "human viewpoints incompatible with the overwhelming picture of Yahweh that shines through its pages" (5). The "human viewpoints" against which Wood most vehemently protests are those that claim divine sanction for the exhaustive slaughter of the enemies of God (as, for example, in the Apocalypse of Saint John [91-96]).

Wood traces the biblical development of three primary perspectives on war: the Holy War, pacifism, and the "just war." Under Holy War, he distinguishes those conflicts in which Israel actively engages the enemy, those in which Israel passively observes Yahweh battling on her behalf, wars that are vengeful and total, and wars that are redemptive and inclusive. Since, as Wood confesses, he is "strongly attracted to the power and beauty of the pacifistic tradition" (7), it comes as no surprise to hear him assert at the beginning of the chapter on pacifism that "a strong pacifistic orientation . . . thrived throughout Israelite history" (104). The evidence he presents to support this assertion, however, contradicts his argument. For example, Wood states that Abraham reveals a penchant for pacifism in his refusal to fight with his nephew, Lot, over land (Genesis 13:5-17; but compare Genesis 14:1-16!). Furthermore, "the people of Israel initially reject Moses as leader because he has killed an Egyptian guard (Exodus 2:11-15), indicating that a violent leader is unacceptable" (107). Examples of such tendentious exegesis abound in this chapter. The third perspective on war, the "just war," suggests that some of Israel's conflicts were waged not as a result of a direct mandate from God, but "on the basis of a universal sense of justice" (140). After his analysis of these three perspectives on war, Wood concludes that "great diversities of opinion [about war] existed simultaneously throughout most of the biblical period" (5). Because Wood himself is avowedly ambivalent about war, the "biblical ambivalence" he discovers is of some comfort to him (7).

An understanding and embrace of the doctrine of the two kingdoms would have obviated much of Wood's hand wringing over seemingly contradictory views on war in the biblical record. With this hermeneutical guide missing,

however, the reader is left only with question marks, dead ends, and bitter ambiguity about what God would have us think of war.

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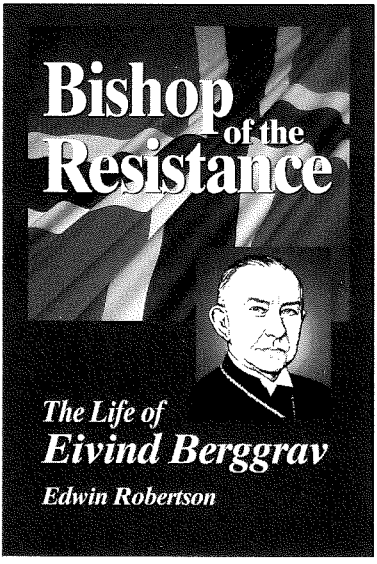

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