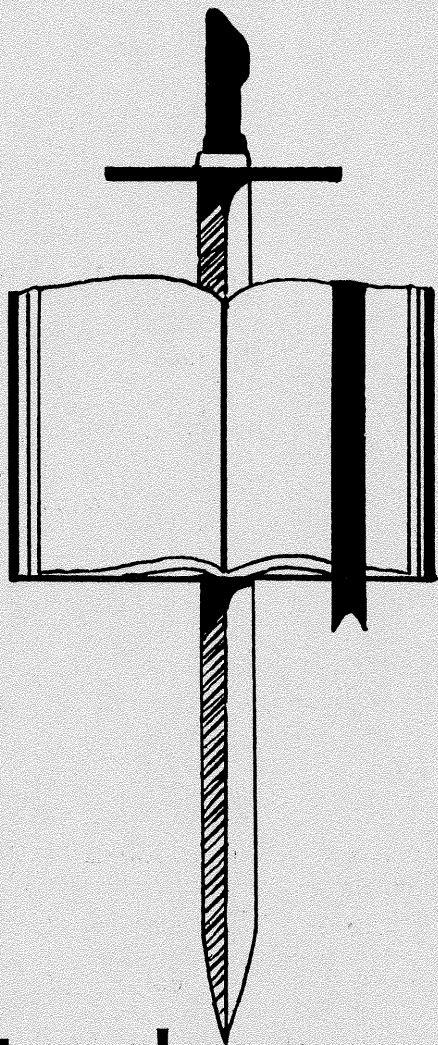


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FOREWORD

In this issue of the Quarterly we are pleased to share with our readers the 1989 annual Reformation lectures, delivered on November 1-2 in Mankato, Minnesota, and jointly sponsored by Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The lectures centered around the theme LUTHER, THE MISSIONARY. The lecturer was Dr. Eugene Bunkowske, Director of Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He also spent many years serving as a missionary in Nigeria and Liberia. In addition, he has done much work in Bible translation, having worked with the Lutheran Bible Translators and the United Bible Society.

The reactors were Professor David Valleskey, Professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, where he teaches in the area of missions and evangelism; and Pastor James Olsen, pastor of Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church, Cottage Grove, Wisconsin. He also spent several years as a missionary in Peru, South America. He is currently chairman of the ELS Board for Foreign Missions.

We trust that our readers will appreciate anew that Luther was indeed a great missionary and that we today are benefiting from his mission endeavors.

-- WWP

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CONFSSIONAL LUTHERANISM:
THE MOTHER OF VERNACULAR BIBLE TRANSLATION

Reformation Lecture No. I

The Historical Setting¹

1 From the time of the apostles to the time of Martin Luther, very much unlike our present secular age, the "religious nature" of basic reality was very much in focus.

2 For the apostles and early Christians this "religious nature" of reality was normed by the "Apostolic Doctrine" with an emphasis on "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all who are far off - for all whom the Lord your God will call." (Acts 2:38-39)

3 Already in those early days "the mystery of iniquity" was at work. Satan successfully scattered the seeds of pride and heresy in order to render Christ and the promise of full forgiveness of sins in Him of none effect.

4 At first the Church remained, for the most part, pure in faith and practice, firmly rooted in the "Apostolic Doctrine." The clergy did not claim ruling power because they clearly remembered that it belonged to Christ as Head and to all the saints as members.

5 Later, as Christianity was favorably recognized by the Roman Empire and as the churches grew in size, financial strength, influence, power, and

worldliness, they no longer saw themselves as the "communion of saints" with Christ as the head but as an earthly kingdom, in which the clergy became a hierarchy of rulers and the laity the ruled. Soon the influential clergy called themselves bishops, with the bishop of imperial Rome taking to himself the powers of a supreme ecclesiastical monarch.

6 As a result from century to century the bishops asserted more explicitly, urgently, impertinently, their right, as "vicars of Christ," to be the visible heads of all Christendom. Following the model of papal power in Rome, now biding their time, now forcing issues, now using "earth in defense of heaven," now "heaven itself to defend earthly possessions," consistently, relentlessly they strove to make the vision of earthly power a reality by converting the primacy of honor into the supremacy of secular power.

7 History was on the side of this march toward papal power. The Church in the East would not bow to papal Rome. With the rise of Islam it was forced either into total submission or into a peripheral position. In the West the Papacy of Rome played the power game with grand success. First it became more and more independent of control by the "Roman Empire" until, during the time of the fall of "Eternal Rome," it found a ready alliance with the Germanic migrations in the North and moved into the position of supreme power in what became known as the "Holy Roman Empire."

8 In this empire the "Bishop of Rome" as "the vicar of Christ" was the head of a gigantic hierarchal corporation, which he called the kingdom of God, outside of which there was no salvation. In this kingdom the Pope made and unmade, at will, laws and articles of faith. He conditioned participation in this kingdom upon the administration

of his sacraments by his priests. The Scriptures in the standard Latin translation (The Vulgate of Jerome), then one thousand years old, were judged to be dark and incomplete and so the Pope took it upon himself to interpret, supplement and at times totally pervert the Holy Scriptures on the basis of apocryphal legends, the teachings of tradition or his own fancy, saying in effect: "Search not the Scripture; I am the Lord your God: I am the way the truth and the life."

9 For his "infallible" ordinances he exacted unconditional obedience as the price of salvation. His hand was laid on men in their home, their education, their amusement and their business. He touched them in this life and in that to come, regulating the purgatorial sufferings and opening or closing the door of heaven itself. He taxed all Christendom with tithes and fees. Since in the papal kingdom all authority and administration on earth was derived from God by the Pope, all temporal rulers were of necessity, as no less a man than Augustine had taught in his City of God, subordinate to the Pope, and bound to do his bidding or lose their thrones. Active dissenters were not only excommunicated and driven out of reputable association with their fellow-men, but handed over to severe punishment, inflicted, at the Pope's insistence, by civil authorities.

10 With the rise of the papacy, the formal principle (principium cognoscendi), that is the course and norm of all doctrine and life, was threefold in the Western Church. It included in descending order of importance the following principles:

- A. The Decrees of the Pope.
- B. The Traditions of the Church.
- C. The Scriptures.

11 With this tripartite foundation the Western Church wandered further and further from the "Apostolic Doctrine" as revealed in Sacred Scripture, which had been its bedrock during the first several centuries after Christ.

12 By the time of Luther the Western Church taught a complex road to salvation which included Christ not primarily as Savior but as stern and angry judge. This complex road to salvation focused primarily on man's own effort capped by priestly meditation and manipulation. The law was used to show man his sinfulness, but also and especially it led him to think that within himself there was some power for good. He was not shown from the Gospel that the merits of Christ were sufficient for the forgiveness of all sins, and that a gracious God for Christ's sake forgives us all our sins. Instead, man was told that since faith is to be accounted as little more than outward confession of the creed, works were necessary for salvation, chiefly works and mainly such as the Church prescribed, such as: fidelity to the Pope, auricular (heard with the ear) confessions, mass, celibacy, monkery and invocation of Mary and of the saints.

13 With the flowering of the papacy, the most fundamental doctrine (material principle) of the Western Church was that salvation/justification before God could be obtained only through the Holy Church and that on the basis of good works.

14 Man was told that the priests could forgive his sins as long as there was sufficient merit accumulated on his behalf. This merit was understood to include any basic merit in man which was never sufficient, plus the initial contribution of merit from Christ which had to be augmented by offering Christ up again and again in the sacrificial mass, plus additional merit which could be

gained through doing penance, fasting, making pilgrimages, enduring flagellation and the like. The final supply of merit was gained for a consideration, normally financial, and was described as indulgences which were transferred to the sinner's account from the inexhaustible treasury of merit laid up by the saints and managed by the priests under papal authority through the Church.

15 In this situation man was, by design, made to tremble forever in doubt of the certainty of his salvation. In most cases he was delivered up to a greedy priesthood within the overall context of a greedy papacy to his own undoing. The more pious he was the more he was undone.

16 To enchant the victims of deceit the Pope spun out his system of salvation with attractive ceremonies and appealing melodies. But amid the pomp and pageantry of crowns and gowns, processions and genuflections, relics and rosaries, incense and candles and crucifixes, tinkling of bells and holy water, benedictions and consecrations, pater-nosters and Ave Marias -- ceremonies not utterly unlike the prayer-wheels and the rituals of the Dalai Lama -- where was the knowledge of the living God, or the loving all-sufficient Saviour from all sin?

17 Under Christian forms man was being offered for salvation the pagan creed of human works. The "mystery of iniquity" sat enthroned in God's temple. Rome gave its obedient children stones for bread. It fleeced the flock instead of feeding it. The house of God had become a den of thieves. At best the discipline of the Church helped to police unruly communities but it failed to effect their spiritual regeneration. In summation, we must conclude that the false doctrine that the Pope with all his worldly whims was the "vicar

of Christ" had led to the deformation of the Church.

Luther: A product of his times

18 Luther, like the other children of his age, grew up in a religious world, a world such as we have already mentioned above, in which the sacred was, for most people, as important as, if not more important than, the secular. That is the unconscious and primary world view of Luther's time, one in which the "religious or spiritual nature" of things was understood as central to ultimate reality.

19 Luther grew up in a pious home. His father, Hans, was a copper miner. History speaks of Luther's father as "pure of character and of good conduct." Luther's mother, Marguerite, was known for her modesty, her fear of God and her constant communion with God in prayer. A basic feature of the Luther home was strict discipline. This discipline was strongly reinforced with the image of Jesus as the "stern judge." Martin Luther was taught early that the fierce anger of Jesus "the stern judge" could be pacified and held back from destroying him only by his own good behavior and by the help of the saints whose meritorious powers were controlled by the Church and the Pope.

20 In 1488 even before his fifth birthday Luther was sent to school. School in those days, following the supernatural world view of that time, gave religious learning a prominent position. Luther soon learned the Ten Commandments, the Apostles Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, as well as Latin grammar, reading, and writing. His education continued through to a Bachelor of Arts degree at age nineteen, a Master of Arts

degree at twenty-one, and finally a Doctorate of Theology at twenty-nine years of age.

21 In 1505 at the age of twenty-one, while attending school in Erfurt, Luther became preoccupied with the prospect of death and with his own sinfulness. He often thought about becoming a monk in order to save his soul from his many sins and thus have a better chance to enter heaven.

22 After the summer vacation of 1505 as Luther was walking back to school in Erfurt from his parents' home he was caught in a severe thunderstorm. Lightning struck around him and he was hurled to the ground. In a moment it was all clear to Luther. He was about to die. There was the all-terrible God ready to punish him for his many sins. A messenger of God was standing ready to seize him by the hair and to throw him into the fires of Hell. In utter terror he cried out to his father Hans' saint, the Patroness of Miners, "Saint Anne, help me! I will become a monk!"

23 All at once the storm passed; Luther had survived. He hurried to Erfurt to fulfill his vows. He became an Augustinian monk, and with great determination he resolved to be a monk to the utmost, displaying not simple obedience but full poverty, chastity, and a complete dedication to mortification of his flesh, to fasting, prayers, and sacred readings. The more he tried, the worse it grew, since in honesty he knew he could not perfectly satisfy God at any point.

24 In 1510 Martin Luther had a chance to go to Rome on behalf of the Augustinian Order. He jumped at this chance and used it as an opportunity to search for the spiritual indulgences and merits which would bring him peace. Rome was a total disillusionment for Luther. The absolute ignorance,

foolishness, irresponsibility, and obscenity of the Italian priests offended him. He saw them rattling through masses at six times the speed with which he could say a mass. He was shocked to see Italian priests making jest of the sacred wine and bread. Again Luther came up short, experiencing feelings of total inadequacy and disgust not only with himself but also with the entire Church. Later Luther commented that he went to Rome with onions and came back with garlic.

Luther: Reformed by the Word of God

25 On his return from Rome Luther was transferred from Erfurt to Wittenberg. Under the kind direction of Staupitz, the Vicar of the Augustinian Order at Wittenberg, Luther was turned away from his own preoccupation with personal sin to the Scriptures and to teaching, preaching, and counseling. As he lectured on Psalms (1513), Romans (1515), and Galatians (1515-1517) the Spirit of God re-formed Luther.

26 A new view of God was revealed to Luther. He found that the all-terrible God is also the all-merciful. Wrath and love fused into one upon the cross. The light really came on for Luther when the Spirit of God revealed to him on the basis of Romans 3:28, "the just shall live by faith," that the justice of God in the Scripture stands for two things. One is God's demand for complete perfection, but the other is the perfect righteousness of God himself which, on the basis of God's undeserved grace and pure mercy, God graciously uses to justify his own demand for complete perfection. The key for Luther was that God does this through faith and not through works, and, further, that even this receiving hand of faith is a gift worked in our hearts by the Spirit of God through the Word of God.

27 In Luther's own words we read, "Night and day

I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that 'the just shall live by faith.' Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning and whereas before 'the justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. I ran through the Bible, insofar as I could remember the appropriate texts, and found similar thoughts everywhere, e.g., God's work is that which God works in us; God's strength is that by which God makes us strong; the wisdom of God is that with which he makes us wise. So now I praise the 'righteousness of God' with a love as strong as the hate which once had possessed me. It became to me a most glorious word. This text of Paul had truly been to me the gateway of paradise."²

Luther the missionary-reformer

28 Once the Word of God had become for Luther not a vehicle of death but the very breath of life, he could not keep quiet. His regular lectures at Wittenberg University from various portions of Scripture led him to a rock-hard certainty that the Scripture was the only source and norm of Christian faith and life and that going back to Scripture alone for the authoritative pattern of religious reality was being true to the doctrine and life of the ancient Church. What he learned from the Scripture he immediately shared with his students and colleagues in the University and the Church.

29 Two centuries before Luther's time preaching

was non-existent. By the time of Luther preaching orders had developed. Their habit was to read sermons written in Latin or tell stories of saints and share popular legends. In 1514, just prior to the time that God helped Luther to see the spiritual light of "justification by grace through faith," Luther became an assistant to the parish church in Wittenberg. He immediately became a preacher of a new type. He preached the Bible. He spoke not in Latin but in clear, easy-to-understand German. He took aim at the hearts of men by preaching against astrology, witchcraft, saint-worship, religious pilgrimages, indulgences, omens, signs and charms. He addressed the needs and sins of the people and never failed to hold high the cross and to preach the glory of God's grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. His model of preaching spread not only throughout Germany but also to many other countries, since one-third of the sixteen thousand theological students enrolled at the University of Wittenberg between 1520-1560 were from other countries.

Confessional Lutheranism: Back to Biblical Basics

30 Confessional Lutheranism was the natural outgrowth of Luther's powerful and straightforward act of personal confessing. It was the results of his dynamic and dramatic break with the entrenched medieval view of reality. It was Luther's uncompromising proclamation of the truth of God victoriously maintained and sustained in confrontation with the Church, the Pope, the Emperor, the accepted "world way" of thinking and the devil that set the stage for Confessional Lutheranism.

31 Luther's thoughts and confrontational assertions were discussed and publicly debated as theses (1517) long before they were crystallized

into a formal and systematic series of statements of basic belief. Even after the process of written formalization started with the presentation of the Augsburg Confession to Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg in 1520, it was 50 years before the complete Book of Concord was published in 1580.

32 What then is the relationship between these Lutheran Confessions and vernacular Bible translations? Now in order to get directly at that question, I would propose that out of the fiery setting which we have carefully placed in mind we consider specifically the Lutheran Confessional view of the formal and the material principles of true religion in direct contrast to the formal and material principles of the medieval Church with the Pope as its head.

33 We have already recognized that the Western Church under the Pope had, as its source and norm of all doctrine, a tripartite formal principle listed in descending order of importance:

- A. The Decrees of the Pope.
- B. The Traditions of the Church.
- C. The Scripture.

The Reformation began with Luther strongly questioning the first two parts of the Medieval Church's tripartite source and norm of all doctrine. The 95 Theses of 1517 are replete with questions about the extent of papal authority. Thesis 76 states, "We affirm, on the contrary, that papal indulgences cannot take away even the least of venial sins in regard to guilt." Many other of these 95 theses, including at least 5, 6, 20, 21, 33, 42, 45, 48, 49, 52, 75, 79, 82, 83, and 84, also question the Decrees of the Pope as being fit source and norm for doctrine.

34 The 95 Theses also question the tradition of

the Church as an acceptable source and norm of doctrine. Thesis 27 states, "They preach human doctrine who say that the soul flies out of purgatory as soon as the money thrown into the chest rattles." Many other of these 95 theses, including at least 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 43, 46, 47, 53, 54, 55, and 80, also question the traditions of the Church as a fitting source and norm of doctrine.

35 The 95 Theses also suggest that Luther saw as important, by way of a proper source and norm of doctrine, a proper formal principle. Thesis 53 reads, "They are enemies of Christ and of the Pope who, in order that indulgences may be preached, condemn the Word of God to utter silence in their churches." And, again, Thesis 54 reads, "Wrong is done to the Word of God when in a sermon as much time is spent on indulgences as on God's Word, or even more."

36 For Luther, the central and most important teaching, the material principle, of the Word of God was Gospel. Thesis 62 says, "The true treasure of the Church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God." And Thesis 68 underlines this material principle by saying, "Yet they (indulgences) are in reality in no degree to be compared with the grace of God and the piety of the cross."

37 When it comes to the Book of Concord, the formal principle, that is, the source and norm of all doctrine and life, is clearly identified as Scripture alone. What follows are some of the more important supporting quotations taken directly from various parts of the Lutheran Confessions:

1. In these last times of this transitory world, almighty God in His unmeasurable love, grace, and mercy toward mankind

has permitted the pure, unalloyed and unadulterated light of His Holy Gospel and of the Word that alone brings salvation to appear to our beloved fatherland, the German nation, and to light our way out of papistic superstition and darkness. Therefore a short confession was compiled out of the divine, prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures (Preface to the Book of Concord, p. 3, Tappert edition).

2. Nothing is taught in our churches concerning articles of faith that is contrary to the Holy Scripture (Augsburg Confession, Article about Matters in Dispute, p. 48, Tappert edition).
3. We have introduced nothing, either in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Holy Scripture....If anyone should consider that it (the Augsburg Confession) is lacking in some respect, we are ready to present further information on the basis of the divine Holy Scripture (Augsburg Confession, Conclusion, p. 96, Tappert edition).
4. The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel (Smalcald Articles, Part II, p. 295, Tappert edition).
5. He (the devil) cannot bear to hear God's Word. God's Word is not like some empty tale, such as the one about Dietrich of Bern, but as St. Paul says in Romans 1:16 it is, "the power of God," indeed the power of God which burns the devil and gives us immeasurable strength, comfort, and help (Large Catechism, Preface, p. 360, Tappert edition).

6. We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testament are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrine and teachers alike must be appraised and judged, as it is written in Psalm 119: 105, "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." And St. Paul says in Galatians 1:8, "Even if an angel from heaven should preach to you a Gospel contrary to that which we preach to you, let him be accursed." Therefore, other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times....In this way the distinction between the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament and all other writings is maintained, and Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule and norm according to which, as the only touchstone, all doctrine should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong. Other symbols and other writings are not judges like Holy Scripture, but merely are witnesses and expositions of the faith, setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood by contemporaries in the Church of God with reference to controverted articles and how contrary teachings were rejected and condemned (Formula of Concord (Epitome, pp. 464, 465, Tappert edition).

38 These quotations from the Lutheran Confessions make it abundantly clear that in contrast with the tripartite formal principle of the Medieval Papal Church, which included the decrees of the Pope, the tradition of the Church and the Scriptures, formal principle of the Lutheran Reformation, which is also its first distinctive principle, is Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura).

39 The second distinctive principle of the Christian faith, the material principle, as it is often referred to in Lutheran theology, is the Gospel. That is the good news that man is justified in the sight of God on the basis of the grace of God through faith.

40 The Book of Concord speaks clearly about this principle also. What follows are some of the more important supporting quotations taken directly from various parts of the Lutheran Confessions:

1. It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sins and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sins are forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us (Augsburg Confession, Article IV, p. 30, Tappert edition).
2. They (the papists) condemn us for teaching that men do not receive the forgiveness of sins because of their own merits, but freely for Christ's sake, by faith in Him. They condemn us both for denying that men receive the forgiveness of sins because of their

merits, and for affirming that men receive the forgiveness of sins by faith and by faith in Christ are justified. In this controversy the main doctrine of Christianity is involved (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV, p. 107, Tappert edition).

3. In the words of the Apology this article of justification by faith is "the chief article of the entire Christian doctrine," "without which no poor conscience can have any abiding comfort or rightly understand the riches of the grace of Christ." In the same vein, Dr. Luther declared: "Where this single article remains clear, 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 (Formula of Concord, Solid declaration, Article III, p. 540, Tappert edition).

4. The first and chief article is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). He alone is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "God has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Moreover, "all have sinned," and "they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, by his blood" (Romans 3:23-25).

Inasmuch as this must be believed and cannot be obtained or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that such faith alone justifies us, as

St. Paul says in Romans 3, "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Romans 3:28), and again, "that He (God) Himself is righteous and that He justifies him who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed. For as St. Peter says, "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "And with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

On this article rests all that we teach and practice against the Pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubt about it. Otherwise all is lost and the pope, the devil, and all our adversaries will gain the victory (Smalcald Articles, Part II, Article I, p. 292, Tappert edition).

41 These quotations from the Lutheran Confessions make it abundantly clear that, in contrast to the material principle of the Medieval Papal Church which taught that salvation/justification before God could be obtained only through the Holy Mother Church on the basis of works, the material principle of the Lutheran Reformation teaches that salvation/justification before God is received by grace alone (Sola Gratia) and by faith alone (Sola Fide).

Implications for Bible Translation

42 In the second and third century before Christ, the Old Testament Scriptures were translated into Greek. This translation, called the

Septuagint (LXX), was completed so that non-Hebrew and non-Aramaic speaking Jews who lived outside of Palestine could "come to know the truth and be saved." Between 40 A.D. and 100 A.D. God gave us the New Testament in the Greek language. During the three hundred years just after the "Apostolic Age" (100 A.D. - 400 A.D.) translations of Scripture were made in Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Gothic, and Latin. This was done so that the people who did not read Greek could "come to know the truth and be saved."

43 During these first four hundred years after Christ, the "Apostolic Doctrine" was strongly in place and thus the source and norm for Christian truth was the Old and New Testaments without the addition of the traditions of the Church or the non-inspired sayings of Church leaders. Thus it is clear that the Spirit inspired desire of the early Christians that all "come to know the truth," no matter what their native language, linked with the conviction that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments alone was "that truth," was the driving motivation for a good number of vernacular Bible translations.

44 Further it is extremely significant that from approximately 400 A.D. for one thousand years Bible translation was not an important activity of the Church. During this time the Latin Vulgate, translated by Jerome in 405 A.D., was the Bible of the entire Western Church even though there were many non-Latin speaking people in the Church. In fact, as the years went by, Latin became a "Church language" that not even the Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese peoples understood without learning it as a foreign language.

45 Why did Bible translation not receive a high priority during this period? The answer,

I believe, is that the formal basis for doctrine had changed. During this period the traditions of the Church and the decrees of the bishops and finally of the Pope far outshined Scripture as the source and norm of doctrine and so there was little concern for the Scriptures to be made available in the language that the ordinary priests and the people could understand.

46 Now, I hope, it all begins to make sense for you. In fact, the direct and almost automatic connection between Confessional Lutheranism and vernacular Bible translation can now be logically predicted.

47 Since it was the direct study of the Scriptures by Luther, especially the Psalms, Romans, and Galatians, that the Spirit of God used to give him a re-formed and vital life-giving view of true religion, it is natural that for him and also for Lutheran Confessionalism the Scriptures in the vernacular languages of the people should be of prime importance, not only as the source and norm of all religious thought and doctrine, but also as the natural vehicle for inculcating the true religion into the hearts and lives of others. Certainly it was the Word of God, and nothing else, that Luther confessed in his preaching and teaching.

48 Luther in his preface to the New Testament says it in his own words as follows, "This report and comforting message, these divine evangelical glad tidings, are also called a New Testament, because, as in a testament, by which a dying person disposes of his goods and orders them to be distributed among his appointed heirs after his death, Christ, prior to His death, has given command and direction to proclaim this Gospel throughout the world after His death,

therewith bestowing on believers, as their possession, all His goods, to wit, His life, by which He has swallowed up death, His righteousness, by which He has wiped out sin, and His salvation, by which He has defeated eternal damnation. . . A poor human being that is dead in sins and consigned to hell cannot be told anything more precious than this blessed, loving message concerning Christ." (See Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. 35, pp. 358f)

49 In order to communicate this "comforting message" clearly and well it was necessary for Luther to move the Biblical concepts out of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin language into the German tongue. At first he did this more or less automatically in his utterly Biblically based oral teaching and preaching. He tried it this way and that way until he got it right both in terms of easy-to-understand German and in terms of an accurate rendition of the original meaning.

50 Already in 1517, the year of Luther's memorable Wittenberg theses, he had begun to put some of his oral translations, particularly of the Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 103, 143), into writing. Between 1518 and the appearance of the German New Testament Luther continued the process of perfecting his translation process on key sections of Scripture. After he had worked each one of them out through oral presentation he wrote down his dynamic and easy-to-understand oral translation for others to read and understand. By 1521 he had done this with eleven key sections of Scripture.

51 In 1521, on his return to Wittenberg from the Diet of Worms, Luther was kidnapped by five armed riders who took him to the Wartburg Castle for safekeeping. This was necessary, since on June 15, 1520, he had been excommunicated by Pope Leo X, and on May 26, 1521, he was put under the

imperial ban by the Emperor Charles V. From May 4, 1521, to March 1, 1522, a period of ten months, Luther stayed in hiding at the Wartburg. In order to make the Word of God available to all the German people he wrote out the translation of the entire New Testament from the original Greek into an accurate and easy-to-understand German translation. The first edition of this New Testament consisted of five thousand copies printed in Wittenberg by Melchoir Lotter.

52 As the years went by, Luther, in the midst of a great deal of other work, continued with the translation of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament work a good number of his colleagues at the University were of noble assistance to him. In 1534 he completed the translation of the entire German Bible. His work of Bible translation united the various German dialects into one and gave German a universally accepted form which later became known as classic High-German. Luther's German translation immediately became the norm for all German Bible translation for the next four hundred years.

53 We have contended that Luther's high view of Scripture as the sole rule and norm of faith made his German Bible translation a natural. It is also my feeling that the understanding of "justification by grace through faith in Christ Jesus" played an important role in how Luther did his translation.

54 Luther and Confessional Lutheranism took great joy in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, in the fact that Jesus Christ took our place under the law, that He became all things for us so that He might fully redeem us. The principle is that Christ made all the adjustment in working out our redemption. He came all the way to us. In like

manner, as Luther got into the work of translation he felt it was absolutely necessary for the Scriptural message to take on the full skin of the people, that is, to be fully inscripturated in the vernacular just as Christ became fully incarnated in order to serve and to save us.

55 In order to get a taste of Luther's approach to Bible translation, we will turn to some of his quotations on that subject:

1. Translation is not an art that everyone can practice. It requires a right, pious, faithful, diligent, God-fearing, experienced practical heart (WA30, II, 640).
2. One may not ask the Latin language how to speak German....One must ask mothers in the home, children on the street, the common man at the market, and watch carefully how they speak. After that one may translate. Then those who read will understand you and know that you are speaking German with them (WA30, II, 637).
3. I endeavored to make Moses so German that no one would suspect he was a Jew (Open letter concerning translation).
4. In translation you cannot speak German with a Greek or Hebrew tongue (Open letter concerning translation).
5. Your reader must be able to read God's Word "as though it were written yesterday" (WA12, 444).

56 The result of Luther's work was that persons from all ranks of life could read the German Bible translated by Luther with full understanding and joy. Cochlaeus, one of Luther's bitterest

opponents, put it this way, "Even shoemakers and women become so absorbed in the study of Luther's German New Testament that they are able to carry on discussions with doctors of theology" (Four Hundred Years, Dau, p. 115).

57 The news of Luther and his views which put Scripture back in place as the basis for all true Christianity raced throughout Europe, especially to England. There, at Oxford University, another Church scholar came to believe that "it is impossible to establish the lay people in any church unless the Scriptures are plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue."³ He was William Tyndale. Using Luther's German translation as a model, Tyndale by 1524 had translated the New Testament into English. Since the English Church hierarchy would under no circumstances approve an English Bible, Tyndale packed his belongings and went to Wittenberg in order to spend an academic year learning from Luther and his colleague, Melanchthon.

58 The first edition of three thousand English New Testaments was published in 1526. Because they could not be published in England they were published in Worms, Germany, a development made possible because of Tyndale's close relationship with Luther. These New Testaments were smuggled to England in sacks of wheat. The Church authorities in England did everything they could to stop the people from getting these New Testaments. When almost the entire first edition was destroyed, it looked as though they had succeeded. However, Tyndale's English New Testament continued to come off the press faster than the authorities could destroy them. In the next period some additional fifteen thousand copies were printed in Worms. Meanwhile, Tyndale continued with Old Testament translation. When he had finished about one-half

of the Old Testament he was betrayed and imprisoned in Belgium. After a year and a half in prison Tyndale was strangled and his body burned at the stake. His last words were a prayer, "Lord open Thou the King of England's eyes."⁴

59 In 1515 under the careful work of Coverdale the first complete English Bible was published. Soon after this Tyndale's prayer was answered. During the reign of Henry VIII the English Church authorities reversed their judgment on the Bible, and the second edition of the entire Bible was printed with the King's permission. By 1519 the English Church authorities stated that every church was to set up a Bible of the largest size so that the common people could read it or have someone read it to them.

Conclusion

60 The thesis of this paper is that there is a direct connection between Confessional Lutheranism and Bible translation. We have seen that during the Middle Ages with a formal principle that emphasized the decrees of the Pope and the traditions of the Church there was little Bible translation, but that with the reformation which put Scripture alone in its rightful place the Word of God became important and Bible translation developed as a natural outgrowth of the formal principle of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions.

61 This stone of Bible translation which had been cast into the pool of religious life has continued to move out in ever-expanding circles into the vernacular languages of the world, including English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, the languages of the Scandinavian countries and the numerous languages of Africa, Asia, and the Americas, until at the end of 1988 there are some 1,849 languages

of the world into which at least a portion of the Holy Scriptures has been translated. Three hundred and one of these languages have full Bibles. Six hundred and thirty-six additional languages have a New Testament and 914 additional languages have some portion of Scripture.

62 If we have agreed that Scriptural Confessional Lutheranism is the mother of vernacular Bible translation, then we in 1989 who are especially interested and committed to worldwide outreach for Christ with the Gospel of "justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ" will continue to give Bible translation a very high priority in our list of things to get done in missions.

63 Personally I see Bible translation as a most basic, if not the most basic, foundation stone for all Christ-centered and Biblically based mission efforts.

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1. A number of key concepts in this first section have been gleaned from pages 1-10 of Four Hundred Years, by Professor W.H.T. Dau, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1917.
 2. Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand, pp. 49-50.
 3. American Bible Society, How our Bible Came to Us, p. 18.
 4. F. F. Bruce, The English Bible, p. 52.

LUTHER THE MISSIONARY?

Reformation Lecture No. II

Introduction

1 The greatest of all missionaries was our Lord Jesus Christ. He came specifically to "seek and to save the lost." When we think again about missionaries, our mind probably turns to the apostles, especially to Peter and Paul. Next we may think of men like Patrick, Boniface, Spener, and Franke. Then as we get closer to our own time we may turn to names like Carey, Taylor, Slessor, and Livingston. But what about Martin Luther? Was he or was he not a missionary?

2 A good number of books have been written saying that Luther was not a missionary. Gustav Warneck, in his Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time, with an Appendix Concerning Roman Catholic Missions, contends that Luther was not a man of missions in our sense of the word.¹ Ferdinand Magellan was Luther's contemporary, yet Luther never accompanied him on a voyage to take the Gospel around the world. Rather, history makes it clear that Martin Luther stayed at home and devoted himself, of all things, to the reformation of the church. Certainly it goes without saying that Luther never founded a modern-day missionary society. And yet, I want us to take a look at Dr. Martin Luther and to ask honestly how God used him and to reevaluate this whole era with a view to recognizing that Luther was indeed a great missionary.

Luther's Formation

3 What was formative in Luther's life? What was the sociological skin in which Luther grew up?

4 To get at this question, I would suggest that we need to think of the word formation -- not just recognizing the label but very much keeping in mind the content or concept to which that label points. Formation in English basically has to do with what's happening to you right here. You are being formed into ever more mature human beings at this school. Your world view is being stretched and formed as you go through the classes. Then there is physical formation.

5 Everyone of us grows up in a certain context, in a certain skin, we might say, in a certain situation in this world. If you grow up in Africa today, in a tribal area, you will grow up in a context in which spiritual things are very important and central. If you grow up in the United States or Europe you will grow up in a context in which the physical and the material, the non-spiritual, are very much the central focus and starting point for all other considerations. So formation is a given even when we are not conscious of it.

6 Then two other words: re-formation and de-formation. Before there can be re-formation there has to be de-formation. See what I mean? First de-formation (taking apart what has already been formed) and then re-formation. And that is what happened to Martin Luther.

7 Luther's world-view package was filled up from his birth, formed, that is, in the life-way of his parents, his church, and his world. He grew

up in the same kind of world that had, more or less, existed ever since the time of Christ. A very spiritual world, a very religious kind of world for most of the people.

8 During the time of the Greeks, especially during the classical period of the Greeks, there was a kind of de-formation of this spiritual world view. During that period an agnostic, non-spiritual approach to reality became popular among some of the people. But it did not catch the imagination of all the people. In fact, most people in the Graeco-Roman period still perceived of the world as filled with supernatural powers. So, by and large, Martin Luther grew up with a supernatural (spiritual) view of reality very much in place. I'm not saying it was a Christ-centered world view, but I'm saying it was a world view in which religious and spiritual things were very, very important to everyday existence.

9 Now we want to talk a little bit more about this formation before we talk about the de-formation that had to take place and then the re-formation that followed. Luther's father was a copper miner. He is said to have been "pure in character and conduct." His mother was a lady of prayer. She was known for her modesty and for her fear of God. Luther was brought up in a strict home. Already by the age of five he was sent away to school. He learned the ten commandments, the creed, the Lord's Prayer, and particularly he learned, immediately, the Latin language. At Luther's time the Latin language was the only way you could ever become anything at all, at least in the intellectual sense.

10 The key thing, however, in this whole business is that Luther had in the midst of his view of reality an idea of God, particularly of Christ,

that was a little bit different from your and my idea of Christ today. Let me ask you just at this moment when I say the word Jesus, what do you think about? It is probably the idea of a loving and forgiving savior. Do you know what the word Jesus meant to Martin Luther? What word could I put on the board for Luther's formation in terms of Jesus? The central term in Luther's original understanding or formation of Jesus would be judge.

11 For Martin Luther Jesus was a judge sitting on top of the rainbow. There was a sword coming out of his ear--the sword of judgment, the sword with which Jesus could and normally would cut people down. In Luther's picture of Jesus as judge there was also the idea of death in which Satan and the evil angels pulled the people out of their graves by their hair to carry them into hell.

12 Luther also believed in a very narrow stairway controlled by the Mother Church that hopefully would make a way of escape for some few people from hell and purgatory. Purgatory was for Luther an in-between state before your feet really got burned in hell. Purgatory gave you time in which to work out an escape from hell by getting on the narrow stairway to heaven. It is very important for us to realize that Luther's view of reality, especially in connection with the idea of Jesus, was. That was Luther's unconscious but exceedingly real formation. That is what everyone around him believed. That was their formation. That is what Luther grew up hearing. He imbibed it. There wasn't any question about it. It was just like the skin that he wore, like the clothes that he wore in winter time. He just accepted that view of reality. Hell was stoked. Purgatory was an intermediate place, not bad enough for you to go

into hell and not good enough for you to go into heaven. And indulgences were there to relax the pressure and get you onto the narrow stairway that led away from the fires of hell.

13 Now to put it into proper perspective, think for a moment about income tax time. In Luther's day, the popular handbook of the day was not "How to Avoid Income Tax" or the IRS as we put it here in America, but "How to Escape from Hell." This distinction is pretty important, isn't it? We don't think much about hell and hardly ever hear about purgatory. We spend little time thinking about how to escape from hell. Rather, we, in America, are often preoccupied with the idea of how to escape as much as possible from income tax. These are entirely different world views, two totally different ways of understanding reality. The point here is that we are dealing with two entirely different basic formations.

14 So in the midst of Luther's basic formation he saw Jesus as a judge. It got so bad, in fact, that he was preoccupied with the idea of death and with the idea that when he died Satan and his henchmen would be there ready to take him by the hair the pull him into hell. All of this was heightened for Luther during a tremendous thunderstorm which occurred when he was walking back to school. He was knocked to the ground by lightning. At once Luther's mind turned to death, to his father and then automatically to his father's patron saint. And so he prayed, "Saint Anne, save me and I will become a monk." As we know, Luther did survive this storm and he immediately did become a monk.

15 For Luther, the whole idea was "How do I deal with Jesus as a stern judge? How do I get right with this stern judge through the Mother

Church?" So he got into the monastery. He flagellated himself. He was not one hundred percent monk but one hundred and fifty percent monk in order to save himself. But it didn't help. He still continued to have much guilt.

De-formation and Re-formation

16 Now there was a man by the name of Staupitz.

And here I want to divert for a moment. God often works through people. God worked in my wife's life through a woman, Mary Slessor of Calabar. Missionary Mary was a model for my wife, Bernice, of what vital reality is all about. In my life it was my father and some others, particularly professors at the Seminary. For Luther the man was Dr. Staupitz, who was the head of the Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg. Staupitz was a man who understood Luther, somehow, probably under the direction of the Spirit of God. Staupitz thought, "That man doesn't need to beat himself more. This man needs some productive work to do." And so Staupitz said to Luther, "We're going to put you into teaching at this new university here in Wittenberg." Wittenberg University started in 1502. Luther was already lecturing there before it was ten years old. It was an absolutely new university and during Luther's time it became one of the most popular universities in Europe, basically because of Luther's lectures. And Staupitz also thought, "What this man needs is to get out and work with people. He needs to counsel people. He needs to teach in the university. He needs to teach Scripture."

17 Luther started by teaching the Psalms. He taught Romans. He taught Galatians. And there he was forced to wrestle with Scripture, which for Luther was very unpleasant because there in the Scriptures he always ran across the phrase, "the

justice of God." And that phrase brought the picture of Jesus sitting up there on the judgment seat demanding perfect righteousness from all people and especially from Martin Luther. This was especially a problem for Luther because he was so honest with himself. And he knew that he daily sinned and deserved nothing but punishment and so for him the Scriptures were terrible. They made him know his sins, know his sins, know his sins.

18 But as he prepared for his classes, the Spirit of God worked through the Word of God. As Luther wrestled with "the justice of God" in the book of Romans, he started to realize that this justice is not only the perfect righteousness that God demands from every single human being but something else as well. Here we can see de-formation at work.

19 The breakthrough for Martin Luther started with Romans 3:28 "The just shall live by faith." At first it didn't make sense to him. He thought, "The just shall live by works. The just shall live by many indulgences. The just shall live by doing things according to the way that the Mother Church and the priest say." But here Paul said, "The just shall live by faith." It didn't make sense. Finally, the more he read and meditated on this Scripture the more the Spirit of God enlightened his mind and caused the much needed de-formation.

20 De-formation had to take place first. Luther had to understand that "the justice or righteousness of God" not only means God's demand for perfect living on the part of human beings but it also, and in many cases primarily, refers to God's own righteousness which he (God), in fact, used to pay for all the unrighteousness of all human beings for all time. It is an undeserved righteousness which is received simply by recognizing

that Jesus Christ has paid for all those sins on the cross and that He was raised again to prove that the payment for all our sins was complete. With that breakthrough there was re-formation for Luther.

21 The point is that Luther was "transformed by the renewing of his mind." He was re-formed by the Spirit of God. That is, the Spirit of God gave him the insight to see that it was not by works but by grace through trusting and accepting faith that he received what his Lord Jesus Christ had done for him on Calvary's cross. It is then that Luther said, "Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that 'the just shall live by his faith.' Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Therefore I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the 'justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in great love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven."²

22 Once re-formed internally, the dynamic Luther reacted externally. He could not keep this Good News just to himself. Immediately he became a witness, a confessor. He had to share this news with other people. In a word, he became an active missionary.

Reaction: Missionary Material³

23 I want to take a moment or two to give you a flavor of what it really meant for Martin Luther, for the re-formed one to become an active re-former. He needed to master the basics of the

Bible for himself, not only in memorized form but in meaningful content, as a basis for Christian witness and confession. Soon he was writing down in easy-to-understand German the meaning of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, etc., first for himself and then as a help for others. Out of that grew the Small and Large Catechisms which, by the way, were translated into dozens of languages and used almost immediately as a basic evangelism and Christian nurture tool not only in Germany but throughout Europe and in the days after Luther's death in many countries in every continent of the world.

24 With the Catechism, the jewel of the common school, as it was called, Luther introduced for the first time a thorough instruction in church and school in which, according to his words, "The heathen who want to be Christians are taught and guided in what they should believe, know, do, and leave undone according to the Christian faith." Certainly, as missionary writings, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms are paramount and remain effective tools in mission outreach right up to this moment.

25 Now to get a hands-on feel for what this really meant to Luther let us look for a moment at the meanings of the First and Second Articles. First, the Second Article. Listen closely as you see what this article meant to Luther.

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity and also true man, born of the virgin, Mary, is my Lord. (What that must have meant to Luther to read that!) Who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, from death and from the power of the devil. Not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood, and with

his innocent suffering and death in order that I may be his own (Just think of what it is to be in the child Luther's shoes with the idea of Jesus as the judge and now to sit with the re-formed Luther and see Jesus clearly in the Scriptures as the Savior.) and live under Him in His kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness even as He has risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. (For the re-formed Martin Luther the idea of serving His Savior eternally was built solidly on the idea of being a dynamic Christian witness for Jesus, of working for Jesus because Jesus had saved him.) This is most certainly true."

27 I have chosen several of these key Catechism sections to show just what the re-formation that was happening to Luther was really all about and how joyous that was for him so that he had to share it with one and all. For Westerners and especially for Americans I want to go back to the First Article, because I believe that this is the Article that we overlook most of all. Listen to what Luther said about God the Father, our Creator and Preserver.

"I believe that God made me and all creatures." (What happens when a man and a woman in the Western world have a baby today? Nowadays we say, "That's our choice. We are creating a child for our own good pleasure." Not for Luther. He saw himself as being involved with God in the act of God's creation.)

"I believe that God made me and all creatures. That he has given me my body and soul, eyes and ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and that He still preserves them."

(What a powerful witness for the importance of the Creator God! Not something that has been evolved out of the ground or the ocean but something created by the Maker of heaven and earth.)

"In addition God gives me clothes and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle and all my goods; that He daily and richly provides me with all that I need to support this body and life; that He defends me from all danger, guards and protects me from all evil. And all this out of pure fatherly and divine goodness."

(You see the idea of grace coming through here. Not the judging God but a loving God.)

"Divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in me for all which I owe it to Him to thank, praise Him, serve Him, and obey Him."

(That was it for Luther.)

"Thank Him, praise Him, serve Him, and obey Him."

(That's what life in this world was all about for Martin Luther.)

"And again, this is most certainly true."

28 What a tremendous re-formation. Sometimes I think we also need to get back to basics, to look back at these so-called simple things in our Catechism. That is what Luther preached. That is what he taught to his students in the University at Wittenberg.

29 It is also important to note here that there were 16,000 students who studied at Wittenberg during Luther's time and for the first years after Luther's death, a period of 40 years from 1520-1560.

Just think of it, 16,000 students! The interesting thing about it is that 5,000 of these students were not from Germany. They came from the surrounding countries. Many of these countries were very much mission fields. Many of these students, such as Tyndale of England, Agricola from Finland, and Palladius from Denmark went back to carry the Good News to their own people and to do the work of Bible translation and Christian literature production in the languages of their own people.

The point is that students were coming from all over the European countries to study at Wittenberg under Luther and to get his model of missions. Just as my wife got the model of missions from Mary Slessor and my father was my model for missions, those students got the model there from Martin Luther of what it meant to be a Christian who understood the grace of God, to be free, even free to stand against the non-Scriptural teachings of a church, to stand against the emperor even when he was put under the ban by the emperor, to be excommunicated by the pope, yet free to continue to speak, to preach, to write, to continue to translate, because Luther knew that this was what his life was all about. He had no fear because he knew that if he died he would go to Christ, which, as St. Paul said, "is far better."

30 In order to get the Word out Luther also prepared books of prayer and sermons which were regularly read by emergency preachers in various churches and which were used as devotional books in many Christian homes. Then there are also Luther's many pamphlets which went out to families in cities and rural areas. They were eagerly read by young and old alike. They were also taken abroad by missionaries, especially by the students who came to study at Wittenberg during Luther's time. These pamphlets also were translated into the languages of many lands.

Reaction: Missionary Methods

31 Luther knew that the Word of God needed to be internalized. It needed to be memorized. He felt that everyone should memorize the basics of the Bible (Small Catechism). This meant home training. Luther saw this basic education as the work of the parents. He expected the father to take the lead and together with the mother to bring the children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by teaching them the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and on through at least the chief parts of the Bible. This attitude of Luther is made very plain in the Small Catechism, where on the first page before each of the major articles you read, "The head of the house should teach this in a simple way to his household."

32 Not only did Luther prepare the Small Catechism (often called the little Bible) as an evangelistic tool, but he also went further. He was a pedagogue. He knew a simple and direct method for teaching was needed, so he saw to the preparation of 40" x 24" posters or placards which were fixed on the wall in the homes and schools. These posters contained The Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, Luther's Morning and Evening Prayers, etc. These large posters and placards of the essentials of the Bible were utilized especially for memorization. It was expected that all household members should be able to recite these Chief Parts of the Christian faith at a very early age.

33 Now things have changed a lot. When I was young, my parents had me memorize one Scripture verse every day and one complete hymn every week. I learned how to do that quite easily at a very early age. That was the time of World War II. During the uncertainty of those days I thought

a good deal about what my parents were doing and I believe that they knew that some day I would be in a concentration camp, with no Bible, and that the only Word of God that I would have would be the one in my mind. Later on I was required to memorize the entire Catechism during confirmation instruction. The practice of memorizing the Catechism was standard in Lutheranism until very recent times. As I look back on the practice from the vantage point of today, I realize how good it was and still is.

34 We believe that the Spirit of God works through the Word of God. Unfortunately, for many people who have not memorized much of the Word of God the Spirit of God can't work very readily. Only when you are reading it--or when it is already in your mind or in your computer hardware--do you always have it available. Then the Spirit of God can wake you up in the middle of the night and begin to work through the Word of God in your mind. God often does that in my case, not only at night but also during the daytime. And so I want to encourage you in the memorizing of God's Word. Luther was very strong on that.

Reaction: Missionary Preaching and Teaching

35 Luther was a missionary in his preaching, a totally new style of preaching. For a long time during the middle ages there wasn't any preaching at all in the Western church. Approximately two centuries before Luther preaching was reinstated in the Western church. This preaching was all done in Latin. It was mainly about the lives of the saints and the legends of the church.

36 Now you can imagine that Martin Luther could not continue with that system of preaching. He had been re-formed. It happened on the basis

of the Scriptures. So for him, his preaching had to contain several important components. It had to be

1. Directly based on Scripture;
2. Delivered, not in Latin, but in easy-to-understand German for his German-speaking audience;
3. Developed to communicate directly with the mind and heart;
4. Addressed to the needs of the people by dealing directly with subjects such as astrology, witchcraft, saint worship, religious pilgrimages, omens, signs, and charms.

37 Luther's preaching made an impact on people's emotions. It called one and all to become involved in the dynamic activity of living with Christ--not just a mental receiving of the propositions about God but a life together with God in reaching out to others. Luther's preaching was strictly textual. He was an expository preacher. His sermons paid little attention to outward form. Sometimes he did not follow his notes. Luther's preaching was dynamic because he always felt he had a divine message to deliver.

38 Preaching opened up for Luther in Wittenberg at about the same time that he came to understand justification by faith. Normally Luther preached four times every Sunday and three times during the week. This was just on the side, we must remember, because his major work was teaching at the University and writing. He had to preach, however, because he just couldn't do otherwise. It kept bubbling up and over in him. You see, he had been re-formed. He had to re-act. It was a beautiful back-and-forth process. He got new

insights while preparing his lectures for the University, and then through his preaching he shared them with all the people. In most cases there was not enough time for Luther to say all of what he felt God had given him to say. He preached to the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Luther always held high the cross of Jesus Christ, but not a dead Christ. For him the cross included also the fact that this Jesus had risen and now lives and that now he (Luther) and every true believer live a dynamic life with God in Christ. Certainly for Luther preaching was Biblical and missionary.

Reaction: Education as Missionary Outreach
and Nurture⁴

39 Luther was also an educator with a mission. As an educator he became the father of popular education for all. Up until his time the Jews had provided education for their own children. The Orientals had provided education mostly for people in the highest castes, thus providing them a superior advantage. The Greeks and Romans educated for loyalty to the state.

40 Luther believed that all people, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female were entitled to a Christian education. Luther urged the state officials as well as the church officials to provide for everyone's education. Luther contended that Christian schools were absolutely necessary for the welfare of the state since religious training was the foundation of all education and instruction and the "source of all Christian virtues and civic righteousness." Luther said, "Religion, true religion founded on the Scriptures alone is not only of supreme benefit to every individual, it is also the means of welding together society, a safeguard of morals

and the most powerful incentive to perform one's duty. It is the foundation of the church and the state." Over and over again Luther said, "See to it, in the first place, that your children are instructed in spiritual things. Give them first to God, and then let them learn their secular duties." Again Luther said, "Above all, in schools of whatever description, the chief and most common lesson should be the Scriptures. Where the Holy Scriptures do not rule I advise no one to send his child. Everything must perish where God's Word is not studied increasingly."

41 Luther was also ahead of his time in the matter of education for girls. He said, "Would to God that each town had also a girls' school in which girls might be taught the Gospel."

Reaction: Missionary Writings

42 Luther was concerned about the eternal destiny not only of the Germans. This is demonstrated by the 3,000 preserved letters which he wrote to people all over the globe and in his 350 published works. He wrote to high and low, to the common man and the rulers, to the housewife and the emperor. Consistently his writings were in defense of the Scripture as the only source and norm of true knowledge about God and in the cause of getting that Word of God into the minds and lives of people so that the Spirit of God could perform His own unique converting work as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies.

43 Luther urged, as we have already said, that electors, mayors and city officials together with the clerics get on with wholesome Christian education for the sake of individual, community, church, and state. In his published works he sought to bring about the conversion of Jews,

Muslims and people from the "many islands which have been found even in our day where there are heathen to whom no one has preached." (North and South America and other parts as he called them in his own age of exploration and discovery.) Luther said, "It is the best work of all when the heathen are led out of idolatry to the knowledge of God."

44 For further detailed documentation of the missionary nature of Luther's published writings see my article "Luther the Missionary" in the book God's Mission in Action.⁵

Reaction: Hymnody as Mission

45 Martin Luther was a man who understood priorities. He understood what was central to any purpose and what was peripheral. He seemed to get immediately at the practical heart of every matter. For Luther the continual issuing forth of God's message (mission) was like "throwing a stone into the water which makes waves, circles, and streaks around itself, and the waves push each other further and further; one pushes the other until they reach the shore."⁶ Luther dropped the Gospel message into the lake of this world in a most effective way through his hymns.

46 Luther loved music. He played the lute. He loved to put the Word of God to music. He did not put it into the music of Israel or Egypt or Italy. He put it into the music of the Germans when communicating Christ to the Germans. He knew that the music of the Germans was the perfect vehicle to take the Gospel content to the German heart and so he used it freely and with vigor and joy.

47 In his hymns Luther encouraged people to worship

God in a totally new way. He compelled them to worship not only in passive form but in mental content. This kind of active participation was unthinkable prior to the Reformation. In fact, it must be said that it was Luther's unique re-formation and his expressing that personal transformation in music that put the communal song next to the church choir and thereby "broke the preponderance of the standard liturgy" in a foreign tongue. This mission heart of Luther clearly shines out in his hymn entitled "May God Embrace Us With His Grace," where we sing, "Let Jesus' healing power be revealed in richest measure, converting every nation" and "May people everywhere be won to love and praise you (Jesus) truly."

48 Luther's 35 hymns were the models. Then Luther encouraged his co-workers to write and adapt hymns, and soon a host of hymn writers sprang up. Soon four different printing presses were publishing edition after edition. By the end of Luther's life no less than 47 collections had appeared. The result was a flowering of indigenous Christian hymnody in the hearts and minds of the people and in the workshops of many authors (high and low) until our time. Truly a rich missionary stream of hymnody has flowed from the example of Luther into the home, the school, and the church throughout the centuries. There opened up with Luther's re-formation an inexhaustible spiritual well which is still flowing. Luther's hymns proved to be a force with which emperors, bishops, and all the powers of darkness grappled in vain. There is truth in the assertion that Luther made more converts by his hymns than by his preaching.

49 "Luther's hymnological work opened the way for the great music and hymns, including the

mission hymns that we hold so dear today. Truly Luther in a real sense is the father of the vernacular Christian hymnody which now exists around the world."⁷ Again, we see a man in mission, a man re-formed and used by God to carry out the spiritual work of re-forming many others, worldwide.

Reaction: Bible Translation as Mission

50 Once Jesus was no longer primarily the judge for Luther but the loving and forgiving savior, Luther, now already very much a missionary, felt compelled to communicate this "comforting message" clearly and accurately. He was a man driven toward mission communication. First he had to clearly understand this wonderful Word as fully as possible. Next it was necessary for him to move these Biblical concepts out of the Greek, out of the Hebrew. He knew the Greek well. He didn't know the Hebrew all that well. But he had to move that meaning, those Biblical concepts out of those languages over into the German language. He had to do that when he was teaching his students the Psalms, Romans, and Galatians.

51 Because of the type of preaching he did he was doing oral translation all the time, right on the spot, as he preached and taught the Bible. This was necessary since he preached and taught in the German language. He had to move those Scriptural concepts over into the German language accurately and particularly in a way that the people could easily understand. So already in 1517 and even before that he was doing oral translation. He was perfecting his oral translation in his preaching and in his teaching.

52 By 1521 he had taken the time to write down eleven sections that he had translated orally.

That is, Luther was moving the meaning of the original that he had captured so naturally in his class teaching and in his congregational preaching and teaching.

53 About that time God intervened so that between May 4, 1521, and March 1, 1522, (ten months) while in hiding at the Wartburg castle Luther had time to write out the translation of the entire New Testament from the original Greek into an accurate and easy-to-understand-and-read German translation. By 1534, with the help of his colleagues at the University of Wittenberg, Luther had completed the translation of the entire Bible in what later became known as classic high-German.

54 For Luther accurate and easy-to-understand-and-read Bible translation in the language of the person to whom you are trying to communicate the Good News was basic to Scriptural mission work. You have to have the Good News content first before you can communicate it. You have to have it in a form that the people can easily and quickly hear for full understanding. If this is not in place there is little likelihood that the Holy Spirit will be able to carry out His conversion and edifying work of regeneration and sanctification. Thus, for Luther, and I would say for every truly Scriptural missiologist, an accurate and up-to-date translation is foundational to all Biblical mission communication.

55 One interesting thing about Luther and his German translation is that it was never done. He continued to revise it. It was never set in concrete. Luther recognized that language changes. He knew that people's ways of using terms changed over time and he wanted the German translation to be up to date at all times. He realized also that

his first work had not been accurate in every point and so he kept on till his death revising his translation and making it even more accurate according to the Greek and to the Hebrew--also more communicative, that is, easy for the average person to understand. It is said that Luther made 95 revisions of his translation.

56 In the case of vernacular Bible translation, Luther was not satisfied when the German work was in progress or even when it was completed. Rather, he immediately, in the case of hymn-writing, became the Barnabas who encouraged that translation work be started in as many other languages as possible.

57 It was Luther who encouraged Tyndale to do the work of Bible translation in English. When things were difficult in England, Luther invited Tyndale to Wittenberg, and he and Melancthon did much to help Tyndale get an accurate and easy-to-understand version of the New Testament out in English by 1526. Since, because of the Church of England's pressure, the publishing of this English New Testament could not be done in England, Luther made arrangements for the publishing to be done in Worms and for the New Testament to be smuggled into England in sacks of wheat. By 1529 English church authorities had dropped their opposition to the Bible in English and it was made available to the common people to read in every church.

58 Another case is that of the translation of the Bible into Finnish. Michael Agricola came down from Finland to study at Wittenberg. He was one of the 5,000 non-Germans who studied under Luther and his colleagues between 1520 and 1560. After Luther became acquainted with Agricola and saw his ability, he wrote a letter to the King of

Sweden, who at that time was sovereign of Sweden and Finland. Luther recommended that the King commission Agricola to do a translation of the sacred Scriptures into the Finnish language. The King of Sweden accepted the recommendation and the work began. Agricola used Luther's method and the new German translation as a model for his own translation work in Finnish. The first New Testament in the Finnish language was completed by Agricola and published in 1548. The first entire Bible in Finnish was published in 1642.⁸

59 Here again we see that Dr. Martin Luther has played a most basic and foundational role in missions by doing and encouraging others to do vernacular Bible translations. This encouragement was not only effective in his own time but has also been very formative throughout the world until today.

60 In concluding this section, let me quote from my article "Luther, the Missionary" in God's Mission in Action, with an update on the translation figures. "Thanks to Luther's translation of the German Bible, the Apostle Paul's longing, as pointed out in II Thessalonians 3:1, 'That the Word of the Lord might spread quickly and become known in its splendor,' became a reality not only in Germany but also throughout Europe where Bible translation was made with reference to Luther's German translation. As one who worked with Bible translation in Africa for several decades, I would say that it is impossible to overstate the positive influence of Luther's activity in Bible translation and particularly his method of Bible translation, in which content took precedence over form. At the time of the Reformation, only 33 languages of the world had any part of Scripture. Today some portion of Scripture is available in 1,884 languages;

301 languages have full Bibles, 638 additional languages have New Testaments, and 914 additional languages have a portion of Scripture."⁹

Conclusion

61 Now what can we say about all this? Was Luther a missionary or was he not? I believe we must conclude that Warneck in his Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time, with an Appendix Concerning Roman Catholic Missions got it wrong. He and many others since his time have failed to see the real missiological significance of Dr. Martin Luther. In my opinion, Luther is not only a missionary but he is the doyen of modern missiology and mission strategy with his overwhelming emphasis on the foundations of Biblical mission and with his pace-setting understanding of the normal flow of Good News communication through the vernacular vehicles and channels of each set of people and their own unique life and ways of communicating naturally.

62 Soli Deo Gloria!

Appendix A: Summary Thesis

63 The following theses are at least a preliminary summary of my findings on Luther the Missionary in numbered outline.

1. God used Luther to re-establish the original basis for Biblical mission by reawakening the church to a Scripture-centered and therefore also to a gracious Triune God-centered foundation for mission.

2. Luther re-introduced a Scriptural Christ-centered easy-to-understand Gospel communication in the everyday language of the people. His preaching and teaching were aimed at the heart as well as the head and dealt with the needs of the people in terms of both law and Gospel.
3. Luther saw Bible translation in the vernacular as basic to mission. He did it for the German-speaking people and set a pattern that made him the father of vernacular Bible translation world-wide.
4. Luther brought mission theory and practice, theology and application together. He not only spoke about what should be done in the areas of prayer, Scripture communication, Scripture memorization, indigenous witnessing, preaching, teaching, hymnology, writing and translation but he also modeled it in his life and work.
5. Luther rediscovered and effectively utilized the natural and normal flow of Good News communication within the framework of his own language and culture group and very astutely encouraged people in other linguistic and cultural groups (i.e., Tyndale, Agricola, Palladius, and many others) to use in their own circumstances the communication model that God had revealed to him.
6. Luther was not afraid to put his life on the line for what he believed. He was ready to surrender all in order that others might hear the Good News of the God who "seeks to save" the lost of Jesus Christ.

ENDNOTES

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LUTHERAN MISSIONARIES TODAY?

Reformation Lecture No. III

INTRODUCTION

1 In Christian perspective every generation of people and every people group in each particular time or era has a formation. That formation (sociological situation) is a mixture of Scriptural reality and worldly reality placed in the context of a particular cultural skin that reinforces both the Scriptural reality and the opposing or at times overlapping but not totally congruent worldly reality.

2 That, however, is only half the picture or rather, we could say, a passive, snapshot-like view of total reality. The moving picture view adds the ever present third dimension of on-going change to which formation is always subject. This total view of reality includes ever changing language labels and usage with the associated underlying reshaping of individual concepts and concepts in pattern. It also includes our ever changing life ways and their associated meaning in the overall pattern of a given society. These changes are what, over time, create sub-cultures and finally entirely separate cultures. It also creates the rise and the decline and destruction of countries and empires.

3 Into this turbulent and ever moving formation comes de-formation and re-formation. De-formation, as in the breakdown and repair of an automobile, is the process of taking something apart, of dismantling an existing situation so

that it can be re-formed, that is, put together in a new way with new parts. Ideally this repair will bring about a more perfect function or result, a getting back to the original formation of how God intended and intends man to be.

4 In the midst of this mix of formation, de-formation, and re-formation, God continues to be very active. He is the Creator God. He is the communicating God. He is the just, loving, compassionate, redeeming, seeking, and saving God. He created not only the very special communication system that humans enjoy in relation to God but also, at least, the substructure in the human being that makes patterned existence and socio-cultural context mandatory as part of what it is to be created in the image of God.¹

5 Our God is not far away but near. He is very much involved in the daily on-going processes of formation, de-formation, and re-formation. It is His good pleasure that in the midst of these processes His Spirit be given free reign to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify on the basis of the heard Word. The desired results from God's perspective is that the humans that He so loves be "not conformed to this world" and its realities but that they be re-formed by the renewing of their minds.² Yes, re-formed and thereby led to re-act by pouring out their lives as a living sacrifice in missionary worship service, and witness like Dr. Martin Luther so Scripturally and naturally did.

6 The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the de-formations in our own time that stand in the way of hearing the Good News. It is our hope that such knowledge will lead to enlightened Christian witness on your and my part, witness which in turn will be useful to the Spirit of God

in ushering in the kind of re-formation (repair and correction of an existing structural fault) that by God's powerful grace will lead to a spiritually renewed mind and heart and quite naturally to personal witness, outreach, and missions on the part of new and reclaimed members of the body of Christ.

7 My approach will be to take you to West Africa to relate how worldly de-formations which are outside of Scriptural reality pose large barriers to hearing our Good News witness with understanding. On the basis of these unbelievable but easy-to-understand examples, I would like to come back to the very believable but possibly more difficult-to-accept and understand examples of communication barriers from our own life here in North America. Barriers which I believe, at least for some, pose equally large obstacles to hearing the Good News witness with understanding.

8 In both cases we must understand that it is the "heard with understanding" Word of God through which the Spirit of God works faith in people's hearts.³ It is our duty not to proclaim in Russian to English speakers nor to take monotheism for granted when attempting Gospel communication with polytheists. Rather, it is our duty to identify the barriers that keep people from hearing with understanding and further to build the communication bridges which will make possible hearing for full understanding.

TRADITIONAL WEST AFRICAN FORMATION⁴

9 What does it mean to work for re-formation in Africa today? How does a Lutheran Missionary help people hear the Gospel for full understanding in that situation?

10 In 1960 my wife and I started work among the Efik-speaking people in Nigeria. My first assignment was to be responsible for a district of 25 churches and 20 parochial schools. Each Sunday it was a different church with a full service including preaching through an interpreter, administering the Lord's Supper and baptism, conducting confirmation and often also weddings and burials. Imagine doing that after having been in a country for just four weeks. In addition to that you do not speak the language and you have to do everything through an interpreter.

11 I, for one, like to be able to understand what people are saying. Maybe I have always been a bit of a communicator and so that was one of the most frustrating things I have ever experienced -- to work through the interpreter. Imagine what it meant to me on a day down in Ekeya when a man came to me who spoke English. What a joy to speak the Gospel directly to that man in English. I asked him, "Can you read English?" He said, "Yes!" I knew that I had a New Testament in my car. I got it. I gave him the New Testament and said, "This is the power of God unto salvation! Use it!" The man took the New Testament and we parted. It had been a long day already with six hours of service.

12 It was twenty-five Sundays later that I got back to Ekeya. The first thing that I could think of was, "I wonder about that man to whom I gave that English New Testament." As I went through the service, I saw him sitting out there and I was very happy. When the service was over, I could not wait for him to shake my hand at the back of the church. I wanted to talk to him about the New Testament. As he approached me, I saw that he had the New Testament with him, and I said to him, "I see you have the New Testament; was it helpful to you?" "Oh," he said, "It was very,

very helpful. You told me it was the power of God unto salvation." Then I took the New Testament from him and I looked at it. Immediately I saw that the cover was gone, Matthew was gone, and even part of Mark was gone. I said, "You really have used your New Testament, haven't you?" He said, "Yes, just like you told me. You see, I am a trader. I travel almost every day in my work of buying and selling. Each time I get into a transport vehicle I prepare for a safe journey by tearing out one page from this New Testament and putting it down on the seat before I sit down on top of it. Truly, just as you said, I was perfectly protected at all times. This book is powerful and I am counting on you to provide me with another one when this one is used up."

13 What a shock to me! That is not what I had said! My eyes filled with tears because I realized that he had heard with different ears, that he had a different formation, a different set of presuppositions, a different set of lenses through which he perceived everything that I had said and done. It was at that moment that I learned that the word Animism meant the belief that spiritual power is real. But most especially that extraordinary spiritual power is always mediated by a physical object such as a tree, rock, river, mountain or a New Testament as a physical entity. It is not the power of a living God who loves and promises and saves in Christ but a passive yet powerful component of a physical page.

14 This experience taught me that not everyone sees reality in the same way that I do. Not everyone has the same formation, or should I say de-formation, as I do. It helped me realize that people do not always perceive or understand what I intend for them to perceive and understand when

I speak or act. They give different meaning to my words and actions than the meaning that I have so carefully hoped to associate with those words and actions.

15 Not long after that I was given a second chance.

I was asked to go to Ogoja to build a hospital. I remember thinking, "This time I will do better!" I determined only to hire men who could speak "pigeon English" so that I could communicate the Good News to them without the help of an interpreter. Sorry, but that is the way I came to think of all interpreters. And communicate the Good News we did. It was the first thing on the agenda each morning for at least one hour. We faithfully did the Bible study each day and within about four months every single one of the workers had received Christ as His Savior. Bernice and I rejoiced in seeing them "saved."

16 After about a year, the first building at the hospital had been completed. At that time we had run out of money so we had to close down the building operation. This meant that the men had to go home. As I thought about it, I felt for the men, but at the same time I saw it as a tremendous opportunity for them to witness to their families. In order to prepare for this, we spent the last several months before we closed down the building operation working through the book of Acts in order to teach these men about reaching out to others and witnessing.

17 After the workmen went home, I went down to Obot Idim, our mission headquarters, for some time to attend meetings. About two weeks later I returned and immediately went to visit the men to see what God had done through their witness. In my typical American style, I was expecting "instant mashed potatoes." The first man that I visited

was Odo. Odo and his family were very cordial. Odo was still unmarried and so he lived in his father's compound together with the rest of his extended family. When I had a chance to get up and look around I checked to see about the family shrine. It was my hope that it would have been dismantled and destroyed. I wondered what Odo had said and done. Maybe he had neglected to witness. Instead of asking a lot of questions, I recognized that it had been a short time and that being dependent on his father he might not have been in a very good position to make his points of witness stick. I went home with a heavy heart and the determination to see how some of the other men had done.

18 Next I decided to visit Odama, since I knew that he was a somewhat older man (about 30) with more respect and on the verge of getting married. I recalled that he had been saving the money which he had earned at the medical center with the idea of putting it together with the money which his father would provide to pay the dowry for a wife. When I got to Odama's father's compound, I was informed that Odama no longer lived there but that he had married and had set up his own compound nearby. I immediately surmised that here would be the ideal situation since Odama could now set up his own separate life and obviously he and his new bride would be model Christians. With this in mind, we walked out of the father's compound toward Odama's newly-built home. As I approached the house I could not believe my eyes. There right in front of the newly-built house was also a newly-built pagan shrine and altar. I thought, "How can this be?" I said, "Odama, what have you done? Why do you have that shrine in front of your house?"

19 Odama said, "Ada, I have no choice. If I do

not build this shrine, my new wife will never have children and the yams that I plant will not grow. Christianity is all right at the medical center, on the land that the Yala gods released (after many sacrifices) to you for the white-man's god, but out here among the Yala people in Yala there are different spiritual powers. If I don't put up a shrine for them and make the sacrifices that they require, I will die."

20 Again I was brought up short. With tears in my heart, if not in my eyes, I realized that the Yala people hear with different ears and see with different eyes. They have a different formation which I cannot overlook or pretend does not exist. All at once I understood the point. I knew the words. I could give the right definitions at the seminary but here things were different. It hit me when Odama kept saying, "We gave the land to you, that's where your God is. This is the land of our gods." All at once I understood polytheism: many gods, each connected with a certain land area, each controlling his own space. How different it is here in North America with monotheism in place. This is true even of the atheists and the agnostics in North America. Although the atheist or the agnostic would reject the idea of a personal God or gods yet, if for the sake of discussion, you postulate the idea of God and ask, "How many gods are there?" The answer from the atheist would be, "One!" His underlying basis for understanding reality is monotheistic. For the traditional African, it is just the opposite. He has polytheism as a basic part of his formation from his mother's breast. How then do we break through with clear Gospel communication when the basic presuppositions and assumptions about reality are so different?

21 But does a man ever get a third chance? I knew

if it ever came I would have to move into a rented home which was in Yala land and not "set apart" by the surveyor's lines and pillars. It would have to be like Mount Carmel, where the conditions would be equal and the Gospel communication would be done in a context where Odama and the rest of the Yala people would see that it could also work for them in their own land. Yes, a situation in which the context and conditions under which I and my family lived and worked were no different -- or at least as similar as possible -- from those of the people to whom we wished to communicate Christ.

22 God was good to us. The third chance came in 1967 as we moved into a Yala home on Yala land in Olpoma, the capital city of the one hundred thousand strong Yala people. Okpoma was the residence of Chief Ogipwole who was, at that time, the paramount chief of all the Yala people. Okpoma was a town of sacrifice. We soon learned that, from the Yala point of view, every activity and action and especially sickness, death, planting, harvest, pregnancy, childbearing, marriage, burial, etc., was connected with different spiritual powers, different gods. Each situation and god required sacrifice if there was to be peace, harmony, success, and progress. It soon became apparent that twenty-five percent to forty percent of people's meager wealth, about \$100-\$150 per capita income a year, was spent on a multitude of fortune tellers, sacrifices, images, shrines, altars, charms, etc.

WEST AFRICA DE-FORMATION AND RE-FORMATION

23 Animism, polytheism, sacrifice: These three were key parts of a basic de-formation (structural faults) that stood in the way of communicating Christ for understanding. Identifying these

barriers was important but how would the Spirit of God break through? What kind of a witness approach would God use for His good and gracious purpose of carrying objective redemption through to personal salvation in West Africa? Who would be the first to hear with understanding and how would that happen?

24 Bernice and I had tried many approaches. We had spoken to many people in English. Finally, after a good number of additional difficult experiences and after the hospital was built, Bernice, our four children, and I found ourselves (as I just mentioned above) moving to Okpoma. This move was made because we had finally accepted that we needed somehow to communicate to the Yala in a way that they could understand. We now knew that to communicate for hearing it would have to be done from the inside of their own language and culture.

25 Okpoma was in central Yala. We moved into a rented house so as not to set ourselves aside on "white man's land." We recognized that the first step was to learn, to become insiders, by living with the people as they lived and by using language - their language - as they used it in their everyday life and work. We accepted that a major task was to reduce the Yala language to writing to do Bible translation and literacy work in that language.

26 One of the first people that we met in Okpoma was Chief Ogiwole. He had been chief for forty-seven years. He was very kind to us and arranged for us to have a place to stay right in the center of the city among some of the most respected families. I immediately saw Chief Ogiwole as a key person from whom to learn about the inside of the Yala "way of life" and also as someone for whom I should pray on a daily basis.

It was my prayer that God, in His own time and way, would help him hear the Good News with understanding, so that the Spirit of God would lead him to believe and call upon the Name of the Lord for salvation in Jesus Christ.

27 From the start the chief and I became good friends. We spent time together and from the very beginning I tried my best to share my faith with him. It was frustrating because he never seemed to understand what I was talking about. He always seemed to be preoccupied with so many "more important" things.

28 Almost daily Chief Ogipwole would go to the court, which was approximately a mile from his palace. In order to reach the court, Chief Ogipwole would pass our house and we would share a friendly morning greeting with him. The people were always waiting for him as he approached the court. They knew that if they treated him well they would get the judgments that they wanted. This meant that often before the court session started he would be well-lubricated and easily prompted to make the desired judgments. After the court session was over the chief would normally find his way home in a kind of erratic fashion. He normally stopped at our home. He would come in and say, "Nobe! (Greetings) Ada! (Respected One)." Then he would promptly sit down and fall asleep. After an hour or two he would wake up and go home.

30 My wife and I had a disagreement about this situation. I remember Bernice saying, "Gene, how can this be a good witness. The chief comes every day; he is drunk every time. What kind of a witness is this anyway?" So we had a little difference of opinion about Chief Ogipwole. I insisted that we should be hospitable to the chief

and Bernice yielded.

31 Time passed and one day the chief came to me and said, "I was known as a very wise chief when I was young. Now it is different. I know that people are laughing at me behind my back. What should I do?" I thought for a moment and then said to him almost immediately, without really considering it, "Chief, you and I need to make a covenant with each other, a bargain that we will no longer drink any kaikai." Kaikai is the most alcoholic drink in Yala. You can use it for lighting a fire. Then I repeated, "I think we should make a bargain not to touch kaikai at all." The chief agreed and said, "I will try!" This single action changed things for Chief Ogipwole in a tremendous way. Now when he went to the court he was clear-minded. He had forty-plus years of experience behind him, and once again he gave correct and just judgments.

32 He continued to stop by each day. One day instead of sitting down where I was working with Ferdinand Oji on Bible translation, he went around and sat in our living room. My wife, Bernice, did something that was normally never done. She went in and talked directly to the chief before he had a chance to greet me or I had a chance to greet him. All at once she burst into my study. She took the little brass cross off my desk, and the next thing Mr. Oji and I knew was that she was speaking to Chief Ogipwole and saying, "You know there is a God that made all the world and all the people in it. He took His own Son and He put Him on the crossed-stick (that's the word we use for the cross of Christ in Yala) and He sacrificed Him there so that we never, ever, will have to sacrifice again."

33 About that time Ferdinand and I realized what

Bernice was doing. As she concluded her brief witness by saying, "The Son of God was put in the ground but after three days God raised Him back to life again," Ferdinand and I joined them in the sitting room. I read from the Scripture that Ferdinand and I had just been translating and we spoke more about the meaning of the Gospel. When we finished, the chief said not a word. He just got up and went home. As far as I knew, nothing at all had changed, and nothing had happened.

34 Life continued to proceed quite normally at Okpoma. Sometime later the chief took the unlikely step of appointing me as one of his counselors (a very responsible position among the Yala people). About three weeks later, Chief Ogipwole came to me and said, "You are my counselor, aren't you?" I said, "Yes!" He said, "I am going out to install a new sub-chief in eastern Yala. Will you come with me?" I agreed and we went.

35 There we were sitting under the trees. Around us were about 5,000 people, including the district officer, government officials, and many visitors from the neighboring tribes. There were many speakers, the last of which was Chief Ogipwole. He spoke last because he was the oldest and most respected of all the chiefs in that area. He got up and said, "You all know that I am going to give the genealogy of this young man whom we want to make chief today. You heard about that earlier today. How very, very important it is that this man comes from the right family. But, contrary to your expectations, I am not going to go through the genealogy again today. The elders have already carefully checked his family tree and we all know that we would not be here today if the man we are about to crown as a sub-chief were not from the right family. I am not going to repeat the genealogy because I have something that is

even more important to say."

36 This was the chief's speech: "The new sub-chief will not build all of the big shrines in front of his palace that I did when I became a chief. He must know, as I now do know, that there is only one God that made all the world and all the people in it. That God is the Creator of all the nations, not only of the Yala, but also of the Kukelies, the Bokis, and even of the people of the United States where this my counselor comes from. This new sub-chief and all of you people must realize that this God loves us and that He has sent His Son into this world. You must also realize that this great God sacrificed His only Son on the crossed-stick so that we would never have to sacrifice again. After God's Son died, He was put in the ground."

37 What a joy it was for me to hear these words. You can be sure that I was listening and that I had tears in my eyes.

38 Then the chief went on and said, "This Son of God was put in the ground and after seven days (I was about ready to say, 'Chief, three days' but I guess the Lord put a cork in my mouth) He came out of the ground and came back to life." The chief then said, "When I go hunting, I'm going to go and be with the Son of God who died for me and rose again. Those shrines or sacrifices are not needed now because God has done it all for us in His Son."

39 The reason the chief spoke about going hunting is that it is believed that a Yala chief never dies but that he goes hunting and just never returns.

40 And there it was! There was the explosion for the opening of the Gospel among the Yala people.

The re-formation had taken place by the activity of the Spirit of God in the mind and heart of one man. Polytheism (the concept of many localized gods) had been rejected for the idea of one Creator God who made all of the universe and all of its people (monotheism). The animistic idea of spiritual power being localized in physical objects had by the activity of the Spirit of God on the basis of the heard Word of God given away to the concept of the "God who was everywhere present." The consuming passion of the hungry gods who always needed to be fed with more and more sacrifices had by the enlightenment of the Spirit of God given way to the joy of knowing the God of justice and mercy who loved humankind enough to pay the total cost of sin for all people in the once-for-all-times sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

41 Truly the communication barriers had come down and on the basis of the heard Word the ever ready Spirit of God rushed into the human heart and mind with the Good News of life in Christ. Sacrifice, which initially was a major obstacle, now in the crucified, resurrected and ascended person of the Son of God, became the bridge or link point back to a loving Creator God. Ogipwole the prime minister of Satan who had kept the Yala people in the powerful grip of animism, polytheism and unending sacrifices had now become God's powerful Spirit-driven hand to open the door before the Yala people to eternal life and joy in Christ.

42 That was in 1972. We had been among the Yala people for eleven years by that time. We had talked and talked. We had witnessed and witnessed, but the Yala people had not heard with understanding. We had not recognized the human barriers to communication. We never did consciously recognize them, but God in His grace led us around them.

He got us out of Yahe were we were building the hospital and into Okpoma. He opened our minds to learn from the Yala people themselves where they were and how to build bridges around and over the communication barriers of animism, polytheism, and sacrifice in such a way that the beautiful Good News of love in Christ could be communicated in words and actions which made hearing for understanding a possibility.

43 The point that I want to make here is that it comes in God's time and not according to our timetable. We may expect results in six months or in six days but it may rather be eleven or twelve years. The point is that in Yala it took time but it was worth it. At times we were tempted to leave but God still had work for us to do, so we learned the language, translated the Scriptures and witnessed through word and deed, and in God's good time the time of harvest came. Our joy is that the harvest is still going on today in Yala and in Africa with 22,000 new converts every day, 150,000 a week, 8,000,000 every year in what was once called the "Dark Continent."

TRADITIONAL NORTH AMERICAN FORMATION

44 Now we shift the scene to the northern hemisphere. What does it mean to work for re-formation in North America? How does a Lutheran witness help people hear the Gospel for full understanding in the typical North American situation?

45 In 1982 my wife and I returned to North America with our two sons after a 22-year missionary assignment in Africa. Our two daughters came back somewhat earlier since they were already in college. Talk about the Rip Van Winkle effect! What happened? Into what kind of "black hole" did the

world we were born in disappear? How does one witness for Christ in such a changed situation? What are the barriers for Gospel communication here in North America? How does one go about building communication bridges so that the Good News of Jesus Christ can actually penetrate and get a hearing with the multitude of lost souls that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death in North America--yes, at times in "Christian homes" and "Christian churches."

46 Early on in our readjustment to North America,

I found myself on a plane headed from Chicago to Los Angeles, a four-hour flight. After an hour of delightful conversation with a man next to me, I suddenly sat bolt upright with the realization that I had never mentioned Christ to him. Why? He was dressed in a suit and tie just as I was, a fellow American with what seemed to be a very similar lifestyle and value system. I had just taken for granted that he, too, was a Christian.

47 After witnessing to the man, I fell silent and slowly began to turn it all over in mind. Why hadn't I talked to him about Christ right away? Why? Because he was an American! In 1960 when we were about to go to Africa, I had "revved" myself up for missionary witness with the thought that Africans were different. And especially I thought that the big difference was that while Americans are Christians, Africans are all pagans and in need of Jesus Christ. No wonder that I was so ready to witness in Africa.

48 So there is the number one barrier, the mistaken idea that there is no need to witness to Americans since America is a Christian continent or, to say it another way, "There are no non-Christians in America." The strange thing is that I was

operating as if this slogan were true even though I consciously knew that only 49.7 percent of the U. S. population are church members,⁷ and that 25 percent of the U. S. population believe in reincarnation with a vast majority questioning at least many of the details in connection with the Creator God of Genesis 1-3 in favor of an evolutionary idea of beginnings.

49 What a relief to have gotten that out of the way! Now to the task at hand. But it was not such an easy task because no matter how I brought up the Gospel of Jesus Christ, people either did not want to hear, claimed that they had already heard it or just plainly didn't seem to understand what I was talking about.

50 Why? What?

51 The next insight that occurred to me was that if a person is to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, his or her communication channel has to be open. Open communication channels: that is what we need. But how do we get the channels open? What are the barriers that stand in the way of hearing?

52 God began to answer my question about barriers through an experience at one of our Christian colleges. I had been asked to give a series of lectures on missions. The date was January 1983. On the second day of the lecture series the president of the university had a special luncheon for all of the international students at which I was asked to speak. After the lunch was over, an Igbo man from Nigeria by the name of Chinedu (God is always with me) Emeka stayed behind. He waited until everyone was gone before he spoke.

53 Chinedu began by saying, "Dr. Bunkowske, you

have been in Africa 22 years. Surely you understand my people and you will be able to help me." I assured him that I would do my best. After we settled in two chairs, Chinedu continued by saying, "My question is about Christianity. I am confused as to what it really is! You see, my father was a powerful priest for the traditional Igbo gods. About fifteen years ago he and I became Christians. We understood it as a change in loyalty, that is, we had always known that spiritual matters are at the very center and heart of all life and reality. For my father and me, receiving Christ and becoming Christians was taking our belief in Jujus witchcraft and charms out of the center of our life and putting the Triune God (Father-Son-Holy Spirit) in the center of our life. For us it was giving our complete loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. But now I have been here at the university for five months and I am confused. As I talk to my fellow students, it looks like my father and I got it all wrong! It seems that Christianity is not a matter of changing loyalties but rather that it is a matter of changing paradigms, of changing basic models of reality!"

54 At that point I broke in and said, "Chinedu, what do you mean? What do you mean by talking about changing paradigms instead of loyalties." Chinedu said, "What I mean is that here at the university Christianity is not about who you give your loyalty to but what the center of your life really is." Again I said, "Chinedu, what do you mean?" He said, "I mean that the model of Christianity in focus here at the university does not have a spiritual heart or center. Rather spiritual or supernatural things are like a helium balloon way off on the outside of life that is held lightly in a student's hand and only pulled back into the center of life in times of utter crisis. The working center of true Christianity here at the university is: SPECL."

55 At that point I was totally confused and said, "Spec1, Chinedu, what do you mean by specl?" He said, "I mean that, at least as I see it and please correct me if I am wrong, the working center of American Christianity is specl. The most important thing for everyone is SUCCESS. In order to get success there must be PROGRESS and the key that opens the way to progress is EDUCATION to the highest possible level. For success to be real it must be visible and that is done through acquiring material things, through a houseful of COLLECTIBLES and also through LEISURE time activities and the places and things that go with that."

56 At this point Chinedu turned to me with a pleasing voice and said, "Dr. Bunkowske, did I get it wrong? Is true Christianity a change of paradigm rather than a change of loyalty?"

57 What could I say? Once again with tears of sadness in my heart for my own people in North America I had to say, "Chinedu, you got it right. Christianity is loyalty to Christ. Christianity is putting the Creator God first and recognizing that spiritual things are the very heart and center of life. You got it right! Don't be confused and misled!"

58 Chinedu had taught me that another great barrier to Gospel communication in North America is the basic belief that supernatural-spiritual matters are peripheral for most everyone and that for many they are unreal-unnecessary-irrelevant and at best have a very low priority.

59 The next breakthrough in barrier identification came on the plane between Chicago and Ft. Wayne. I was seated next to a mature woman. She must have been in her 80s. Our conversation opened with the

fact that I had been a missionary in Africa for twenty-two years who was now carrying out my missionary activities as a professor at Concordia Theological Seminary at Fort Wayne. She responded exuberantly by saying, "I'm a Christian, too!" Then she went on to share with me the story of David and Goliath followed by a number of additional Old Testament Bible stories. Without even taking a breath, she introduced the idea of Jesus being born of a virgin, his life of love and kindness and his death and resurrection. After a good ten minutes of listening, I was convinced that she was, indeed, a Christian who looked only to Jesus Christ for her salvation.

60 When it was my turn to talk I wanted to introduce the concept of Christian witness so I enquired about her reason for going to Ft. Wayne. The conversation opened up perfectly as her son and daughter-in-law and their three children immediately became the focus of our conversation. It soon became apparent that she considered them Christians but that they rarely, if ever, went to church or Sunday School because their lives were absolutely full of work, school and leisure time activities.

61 Now it was my turn to speak. How could I move the conversation to witness? I thought of heaven. I thought of her age and mine and I said, "I am over 50 years old and soon you and I will be in heaven!" Immediately the woman cut in with, "Oh! no! Science has disproved all of that! When I die I go to the ground!"

62 I was thunderstruck. How could it be? She knew so much about the Bible and God and Christ and yet she had rejected the Creator God. When it came right down to it, Darwin and his religion of evolution had her ultimate loyalty.

63 It was all so clear to me at that moment on the plane. The man who makes Fords has the right, yes, the duty to say how Fords should run. He sets the norms and standards for Ford. If God made mankind then He sets the standards and has the right, yes the duty, to norm our moral and ethical behavior. He tells us what is sin and what is not sin. If there is no Creator God then there are no norms or standards. There is no one to whom mankind is accountable. If there are no norms or standards, then who is to say what sin is or whether it even exists? Problems, mistakes, errors, but not sin. If there is no sin, then why do we need a Savior?

64 No doubt about it, another great barrier to Gospel communication is the basic notion that there is no Creator God.

65 This no Creator God belief, for many, is based on a slippery piece of misinformation. This piece of misinformation is that creation is religion and that evolution is science. The fact is that evolution is a belief about the past and that creation is also belief about the past. Thus the evolution-creation debate is really a debate between the science of one religion and the science of another religion. It is also important for Christians to note that evolution is a religion without revelation while Christianity is a religion with revelation. Jesus says in John 5:47, "If you do not believe the writings of Moses (Gen. 1-12 - God the Creator - are the key parts of the writings of Moses), how will you believe in Me (Jesus Christ)?"

66 A key question for the world today is: Are you living in an evolutionary world or are you living in a world separated from its Creator God? These two views of reality are in strict

opposition to each other. If you reject the latter you have lost the first article of the Apostles' Creed. Once you have lost the first article of the Creed, is there a need for the second article? If there is no Creator God, no sin, no life after death, is there a need for a Savior?

67 It is also useful to realize that what one does is normally consistent with what one believes. The confusion, conflict, family breakdown, child abuse, etc., that we experience in the western world today are not a result of animal ancestry but a result of sin and separation. Our problem is a rejection of God as creator. Having rejected the God who created us we quite naturally also reject God's redemption in Christ. I Corinthians 1:18 says, "The message about Christ's death on the cross is nonsense to those who are lost. But for us who are being saved, it is God's power." To reject the Creator God is to be lost.

68 Another breakthrough in barrier identification came during a quiet conversation with a woman who is the mother of two small children. She got on the plane in Dallas hoping for a separate seat for herself and her five-month old son, Matthew. It was not to be. And I was the one assigned to the other one of the two seats on our side of the aisle.

69 I identified myself to this lady as a missionary with twenty-two years of service in Africa. She immediately responded by saying, "You must be glad to be back in the good old U.S.A. after all those years in a hardship area." My response startled her. I said, "It wasn't all that bad! In fact, many things are better in Africa than they are in America." She said, "What kind of things?"

70 By this time I had her dear little Matthew on my lap and quite naturally said, "Why the way people in Africa love children. The way everyone wants to have children and see children as a great gift from God. The way they care for children and sacrifice themselves for children." I went on to add, "I find the situation here in North America quite different and at times disgusting, with many people not even wanting to have children." The woman immediately argued with me and said that it wasn't so, that North Americans love children and care for them better than any other people in the world.

71 The conversation drifted to other things and after about an hour the mother of Matthew came back to the topic of children. She said, "You are right when you spoke about our attitude in North America toward children." She then shocked me by saying, "I was one of the worst. I made my husband promise that we would never have children. I was so selfish. I just wanted my own career. Joel was an accident four years ago. It changed my life. I don't know what I would do without Joel and Matthew now. I just love being at home with them. My career can wait, maybe forever."

72 With that openness, I felt moved to share the Gospel with her. I went straight to the Second Article, to Christ. When I mentioned Jesus she folded her arms, and as I talked on I could sense a real tension developing. I stopped and said, "This is stressful for you isn't it?" "Yes," she said, "To me Jesus has always been a judge. I have known from youth that He looks down on me and has no time for me. Most Christians are like that, too. I can never be as good as they think they are, so why try?"

73 The more I pursued it the more it became clear that my lady friend did not see the earth as God's creation but thought of Christianity, and religion in general, only in terms of ethics and morality. In this pattern of thinking, which is very prevalent among western people, there is a strong predisposition to hear the Law when the purest Gospel is being shared. We are at once reminded of Martin Luther, whose world view led him to be totally predisposed to understand Christ as a judge, to hear the Second Article of our creed as Law.

74 The point here is that another great barrier to Gospel communication for the Lutheran missionary today is the western predisposition to hear the Gospel that we proclaim but to understand that Gospel as Law. The problem for the conscientious witness today in the west is that if the Good News of Jesus Christ is understand as Law, one has nowhere to go. There is no Gospel left to present if the Gospel has been understood as Law.

75 The medicine for this situation is to present the Law in terms of the First Article, and when it has had its full effect in bringing the sinner to his knees then and only then will the Good News of God's love in Christ be sweet and be understood as the loving, giving, and forgiving heart of God.

NORTH AMERICAN DE-FORMATION AND RE-FORMATION

76 Non-Spiritual orientation, no Creator God, "America - A Christian Continent" (No non-Christians in America): These three are at least some of the key components of the basic de-formation in North America that stands in the way of communicating Christ for understanding.

Identifying these barriers is important as a first step. The next is to identify more fully additional barriers such as a move back from the sacred monotheism that used to be taken for granted in the West to a type of secular polytheism which is normally spoken of as pluralism in the literature of our day.

77 Then comes the important process of re-formation. This process, for many in the West, just like for our friend, Oga Ipwole of Okpoma, Yala, depends almost entirely upon a spirit of God-inspired paradigm shift. This shift, however, takes place on the basis of the heard Word of God which you and I are called upon to communicate for full understanding.

78 For Oga Ipwole, it was a shift away from polytheism to monotheism, from animism to Christianity, from sacrifice as a work of man to sacrifice as a work of God in Christ.

79 For people in the West, it is to move beyond intellectual and propositional knowledge to a Spirit of God inspired paradigm shift away from a non-spiritual orientation to a spiritual/supernatural orientation, from evolutionary or quasi-evolutionary beliefs to belief in the Creator God, from "America as a Christian Continent" to Americans as sinners who need a savior.

CONCLUSION

80 Chinedu Emaka calls on all of us in the West to realize that we as a total people group need a basic paradigm shift in our worldview orientation. We need to put the spiritual/supernatural back in its scriptural place. He also reminds us that when the spiritual center is in place it is still very possible to be idolatrous. The right loyalty is also key. It is not just any belief that will do,

but belief in the Christ, the Messiah of God.

81 As Lutheran missionaries today, we know that it is the Spirit of God who calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies.

82 As Lutheran missionaries today, it is our privilege to be God's communicators who consciously recognize the barriers in our culture situation and search daily for the bridges which will make it possible for lost North Americans to hear the Word of God, yes the full skandalon of the Gospel, with full understanding. This is essential since it is the heard Word of God that the Spirit of God uses to create faith in the human mind and heart. And it is on the basis of that Spirit-inspired faith that people call on the Name of the Lord and are saved.¹⁰

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1. Genesis 2:28-25 and Genesis 1:26-28.
 2. Romans 12:2.
 3. Romans 10:13-17.
 4. Bunkowske and French, God's Communicators in Mission, Ft. Wayne, Great Commission Resource Library, 1988, pp. 72-76.
 5. Bunkowske and French, God's Communicators in Mission, Ft. Wayne, Great Commission Resource Library, 1988, pp. 67-72.
 6. Hebrews 10:10

7. "U.S. News and World Report, " October 11, 1982.
8. John 14:6 and Acts 4:12.
9. Martin Luther, Luther's Small Catechism, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1943, p. 123.
10. Romans 10:8-17.

-- Eugene W. Bunkowske
Fort Wayne, Indiana
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Reactor's Response to Reformation Lectures
Luther, the Missionary - Pastor James Olsen

I. That Missions to the Heathen are to Occur

The term missions defines the activity of bringing the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ to people everywhere, the obligation of the church collectively, and of its members individually, Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46-48; Jn. 20:21; Ac. 1:8; Ps. 56; Ps. 117; Ps. 19:4; Ro. 10:14; Gal. 3:2; Ze. 2:11. We cannot all individually support a missionary without the assistance of others, yet all Christians are to be involved with supporting the advance of the Gospel to people everywhere, as Luther says, "If they are to hear the word, then preachers must be sent to them."¹ Luther worked with all the above-mentioned missions texts of scripture, and our definition of missions finds affirmation in his commentary on Psalm 117:

We are faced with the fact that God sent his apostles and disciples to all the heathen, had the Gospel preached, gave his Holy Spirit, redeemed them from sin, death and the devil, purified their hearts through faith and thus accepted them as children and heirs and as his own people....And there are enough other verses in scripture which declare that God's word should go to the heathen where they are. Thus, for instance Psalm 19:4: 'Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.'²

Thus Luther confesses his belief that God in his word, the holy scriptures, teaches that missions to the heathen are to occur. In keeping

with this, preachers must be sent to them who shall preach God's word. Luther confesses missions. The reason is that he finds the bringing of the Gospel to all people, including all the heathen, a mission of God which is taught in the Holy Scriptures. God does the sending. His word is impelling.

II. That Hearts are Moved by the Power of the Word

The importance of missions for theology is inherent in the nature of missions. For we as Luther's heirs understand missions to be God's work. The missions imperative is no less efficacious today than when it was given first in the Old Testament to the Psalmists and the Prophets and later when given to the Apostles in the New Testament, Is. 42:6; Ps. 19:1; Ro. 10:17. We can never minimize that the obligatory power of missions comes from the power of the Gospel itself. The word of God works missions, creates them, brings them the preachers, moves the Gospel to them and having done that, it also converts the heart of the unregenerate and saves him. Thus Luther does not find cause for believing the mission command was made only to the twelve apostles.

The Gospel and Baptism must come to the whole world, as they have indeed come and every day must come again, (author's underlining).

Thus, He has said, (Mark 16:15): 'Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation'; and (Psalm 19:1): 'The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. That is, Christ is preached as far as the heavens and the firmament extend. Wherever one finds the Gospel Baptism and the Sacrament, there is His church, and in that place there certainly are living saints.'³

Acceptance by the heart of the missions command, and the promise attached thereto is worked by the word, as Romans 10:17 attests, for if saving faith is first thought of as trust in the redeeming work of Christ then, it is to be sure, also faith in that which the same Redeemer teaches. The very Christ, the Anointed of God to be the world's Savior, has himself said we are to move, bring, teach, and preach his Gospel to every creature, that he will be with us in doing this, and that his word will not return to him empty, as though it could work but bring no effects, Ro. 1:16-17; Is. 55:10. But if this is made clear by him in his word then, it is also true he has clearly delineated how it is the heathen must be taught.

III. That the Means by which Missions are Created and Nurtured are the Word and Sacraments.

Luther, commenting on Psalm 117, writes:

Now if all heathen are to praise God, this assures that He has become their God. If He is to be their God, then they must know Him, believe in Him, and give up all idolatry. One cannot praise God with an idolatrous mouth or an unbelieving heart. And if they are to believe, they must first hear His Word and thereby receive the Holy Spirit, who through faith purifies and enlightens their hearts. One cannot come to faith, as St. Paul has said (Rom. 10:14): 'How are they to believe in Him of Whom they have never heard?' and Gal. 3:2): 'You have received the Spirit through the proclamation of faith.' If they are to hear His Word then preachers must be sent to them.⁴

In treating Mark 16:15 and Psalm 19:1, Luther explains that these texts teach that Christ is to

be preached as far as the firmament and the heavens extend. He immediately adds to this thought the following one, namely, that wherever the Gospel and the Sacraments are found, there in that place, exists God's church.⁵ The importance and place of preaching is therefore emphasized by Luther so far as missions are concerned. Commenting on Psalm 110, verse 6, Luther comments:

He will judge; that is, He (God) will rule and govern through His word or office of preaching and through the Holy Spirit for the purpose of rebuking sin and bringing men to righteousness, to help, to bestow grace upon poor sinners, and to damn all others who refuse Him....This is the way in which He intends, through His Word to convert heathen from their sins to His obedience and His salvation, and He will do this wherever the heathen may be.⁶

IV. That the Content of the Preaching be the Gospel

Luther wants the missionary message of the church to be so compelling that people cannot resist it, but are so drawn to it by its sweetness that they come gladly and receive its comfort and strength. Christ is the center of the Gospel message; he should be pictured as the Good Shepherd. In a Gospel sermon for the second Sunday after Easter, Luther said:

We should preach Christ as one who will reject nobody, however weak he may be, but will gladly receive and comfort and strengthen everybody....Then hearts will turn to him of their own accord, and need not be forced and driven. The Gospel graciously invites and makes men willing, so that they desire to go, and do go, to him with all confidence....When I see that God deals

with me graciously, he wins my heart,
so that I am constrained to fly to him;
consequently, my heart is filled with
happiness and joy.⁷

In his great missionary hymn, Luther set forth
a paraphrase of Psalm 67, written in 1523:

Would that the Lord would grant us grace,
With blessings rich provide us
And with clear shining let His face
To life eternal guide us;
That we His gracious work may know,
And what is His good pleasure,
And also to the heathen show
Christ's riches without measure
And unto God convert them.⁸

That Christ's riches be set before the heathen
meant the God-Man, Son of God and Son of Mary,
should be the content of the missionary message,
as another of Luther's hymns also shows us. We
learn what Luther believed should be taught to
the unbelieving:

Come the heathen's healing Light,
Humbly known a maiden's Child,
Fill with wonder all the earth
God should grant it such a birth,
Not of flesh, nor of man's blood
Was incarnated the Word of God.
By the Holy Ghost above
Blossomed forth the Virgin's womb.⁹

Enough cannot be said in this brief presenta-
tion about Luther's emphasis on the Bible's doc-
trine of justification by grace through faith.
We must view Luther as a great missiologist for
his re-discovery of the Gospel. Luther views
God's justifying act as a declaratory matter, a
judicial act as consisting of the non-imputation

of sin and guilt and the imputation of Christ's righteousness. God is moved to justify us by grace, on account of the redeeming, mediating work of Christ Jesus. The work of God's Son consisted in earning a perfect obedience by keeping the Law of God (passive and active obedience). Christ's righteousness is given us in the Gospel and Sacraments. Since we possess justification only by faith, all human merit is excluded. Luther finds basis for this teaching in such passages of Scripture as Ge. 15:6; Ha. 2:4; Ro. 3-5; Ga. 2-3; Ph. 3:9; Ac. 13:39, 16:31, etc. Luther's view is everywhere taken over into the Lutheran Confessions, (Augsburg Confession Art. 4; Apology, Art. 4; Smalcald Articles 1,2,3,13; Epitome, Art. 3; Solid Declaration, Art. 3; Small and Large Catechisms, Art. 2-3). Let further comment on this all-important matter consist only in the following quotation from Luther:

He (St. Paul) says: They are all sinners making no boast of God; but they must be justified without merit (of their own) through faith in Christ, who has merited this for us by his blood, and has become for us a mercy-seat by God. God forgives all former sins to demonstrate that we are helped only by his righteousness, which he grants in faith, and which was revealed at that time through the gospel and was witnessed to beforehand by the law and the prophets.¹⁰

It is this teaching of the Gospel which makes Christians out of the unbelieving, and the more clearly to set forth the prominence of justifying grace. Luther becomes quite explicit on what does not make Christian out of them.

We are told: 'Praise the Lord, all you heathen.' Be heathen, remain heathen,

Establish ecclesiastical orders, set up rules and codes, make laws and secular governments. Be chaste, marry and devise whatever outward doings and forms you please. But take care that you do not think it possible to become Christians or be saved by such means. Do not imagine for a moment that such things are Christianity or of its essence...'¹¹

V. That the Mission Task is not Acculturation

Lest barriers be erected hindering the Gospel's advance, missionaries at home and abroad need to know the necessity for identifying customs, traditions and ways of doing things which will not come between the hearer and the word of God and get in the way. There is a learning task involved any time a missionary must leave the familiar environs of home, to a degree within our own borders, to a greater degree, generally speaking, outside our borders. Luther recognized the linguistic barrier for a people who could not read the Bible and personally translated the entire Bible, a truly great missions act. But in addition, Luther recognized that missionaries often do well to leave their mother tongue, customs, traditions, business practices, external regulations and the like at home when they go out to minister:

The kingdom of Christ is not a temporal, transitory, earthly kingdom, ruled with laws and regulations, but a spiritual, heavenly and eternal kingdom that must be ruled without and above all laws, regulations and outward means. He (the Lord) tells the heathen to remain heathen; he does not ask them to run away from their countries or cities to go to Jerusalem. He does not demand that they give up or

abandon their secular laws, customs and habits to become Jews....¹²

Paul also let the heathen retain their laws and customs if they but believed in Christ and held faith alone essential to salvation, even without their laws and customs, as he says in 1 Cor. 7:19: 'For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God'; or again, (Rom. 3:20): 'For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law.'¹³

The heathen may remain where they are, culturally and linguistically as they are. Missiologists do well who take a page from Luther on this point. Needless insistence on acculturation in countless numbers of cases on the mission field in many countries has harmed the Gospel's cause. Luther writing on Zephaniah 2:11 said:

The prophet Zephaniah prophesies that the heathen will remain heathen and still become God's people. He says: 'Yes, He will famish all the gods of the earth, and to Him shall bow down each in its place, all the islands of the heathen.' And there are many similar passages.¹⁴

In conclusion, we may say that Luther is tied to missions primarily by the Bible's teaching of the justification of the sinner by grace, through faith for Christ's sake, and, by the missions commands of scripture. He finds his authority for missions to be in the holy scriptures, God's inerrant word. We do not find in Luther any lack of interest in the Gospel's advance to the unbelieving. His commentary, sermons, and hymns show love and respect for the missions task. His concern for the lost breathes out of his writings.

What Luther has said on the subject of missions is powerful because it is entirely scriptural, and it leaves us the more determined and inspired to be about the work of missions, whether we speak of missions at home or abroad! We thank God for Luther, the missiologist!

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Endnotes

1. Luther's Works, American Ed., Vol. 14:9.
2. Ibid., 9-10.
3. Ibid., 13.
4. Ibid., 9.
5. Ibid., 13.
6. Luther's Works, American Ed., Vol. 13:342.
7. Luther's Works, Lenker Ed., Vol. XII:20,
quoted in Kerr, A Compend of Luther's
Theology, 157.
8. Luther's Works, American Ed., Vol. 53:232.
9. Ibid., 233.
10. Luther's Works, American Ed., Vol. 35:373.
11. Luther's Works, American Ed., Vol. 14:24.
12. Ibid., 14.
13. Ibid., 17.
14. Ibid., 10.

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Reactor's Response to Reformation Lectures
Luther, the Missionary - Pastor David Valleskey

First of all, a heartfelt word of thanks to Dr. Bunkowske for this inspiring series of lectures on Luther the Missionary. A major thesis of Dr. Bunkowske's opening essay was that there is, as he put it, a "direct and almost automatic connection between Confessional Lutheranism and vernacular Bible translation." He nicely demonstrated how the formal principle of the Reformation, Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura) as the source and norm of all doctrine and life, and the material principle, justification by grace alone (Sola Gratia) through faith alone (Sola Fide), are also the principles that propelled the Lutheran Church to be a missionary church.

There is a close correlation between the two. When the formal principle of a church's theology is no longer Scripture alone and when the material principle is no longer justification by grace alone through faith alone, it should come as no surprise that there will be little interest in putting the Bible into the language of the people and in getting its message out into the world. This can be seen from those 1000 years between Jerome and the Reformation during which time salvation by grace alone through faith alone was not the church's message. During those years, as Dr. Bunkowske brought out, there was little interest in Bible translation. Who wants to labor at putting the Bible into language people can understand when the feeling is that the Bible has nothing important to say!

Conversely, when Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide reign supreme, then the church has the highest possible motivation for spreading the

message far and wide in language people can understand. Hence, Luther's fervent desire to translate the Scriptures so the Germans could understand them and the desire of others like Tyndale to put the Scriptures into the heart language of their own people.

I might mention one other key doctrine Luther restored to the Church, which cannot but have a deep effect on mission work, personal mission work in particular. I am thinking of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Again and again in his writings Luther refers to this doctrine and its implications for the Christian. Among those implications is the fact that every Christian, not just the priest, can proclaim the Word of God to others. He writes:

Peter (in 1 Peter 2:9-10) names the people and the congregation very clearly, and he calls them all together a royal priesthood and commands them to preach the deeds of God who has called them....Thereby the Holy Spirit teaches us that ointments, consecrations, tonsures, chasubles, albs, chalices, masses, sermons, etc., do not make priests or give power. Rather, priesthood and power have to be there first, brought from baptism and common to all Christians through the faith which builds them upon Christ the true high priest.¹

And again:

No one can deny that every Christian possesses the word of God and is taught and anointed by God to be priest....But if it is true that they have God's Word and are anointed by him, then it is their duty to confess, to teach, and to spread (his Word).²

Without a doubt a key application of the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers is that all Christians--each and every one--have been given the commission to bring the Word to those who do not yet know Jesus. Since many areas in the world are closed to formally called missionaries, one way to get the message to these areas is to vigorously practice the doctrine of the universal priesthood--to encourage businessmen, students, teachers, etc., who visit these countries to share their faith when they have the opportunity. We can also offer them training in this vital work.

Church Growth Movement leader, S. Peter Wagner, makes the claim in one of his books that "Luther's sound theology was not sound missiology."³ Dr. Bunkowske has demonstrated well that just the opposite is true. Though Luther himself was not actively involved in mission work as we know it today, the Lord used him to do the work that had to be done before the Church could once again be a missionary church. He uncovered the foundation, hidden for so many generations, of Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide. He put that message into the language of the people. And thus the Church was again ready and eager to go into all the world with the Gospel.

Dr. Bunkowske in his second lecture observed that Luther's worldview was decidedly different from ours. This serves as a reminder of the need for us today to seek to understand the worldview of the people we desire to evangelize. If we are dealing with a person who seldom thinks about God, who may not deny God's existence, but who does question the relevance of God to his life (as is true of many in our nation), we will need to approach him differently than we do a person whose primary question, like Luther's, is, "How can I escape the wrath of an angry God?"

The essayist emphasized the fact that the Re-Formed Luther was the Luther who had come to understand that the "righteousness of God" means above all the righteousness that God credits to us by virtue of Jesus' perfect righteousness and substitutionary death. The Re-Formed Luther, the essayist writes, then REACTED externally. He could not keep this Good News to himself. Immediately he became a witness, a confessor. He had to share this news with other people. In a word, he became an active missionary." The essay then went on to demonstrate the missionary impact of Luther's catechisms, pamphlets, letters, hymns, and his biblical, from the heart to the heart sermons; the impact of his translation of the Bible into the language of the people; and the impact of the students and others who came to Wittenberg and left with the message of the Reformation which they then brought to others.

Undoubtedly all of these did have a considerable missionary impact. Yet there are those who question whether Luther himself was mission-minded. The essayist quotes Gustav Warneck as one such skeptic. There are others. The esteemed church historian, Kenneth Scott Latourette, for example, writes:

The New Testament command to 'preach the gospel to every creature' Luther held had been binding only upon the original Apostles, and he maintained that the proclamation of the Christian message throughout the earth as a preliminary prophesied by the New Testament to the end of the age had long before been accomplished.⁴

In a more recent book, Henry Boer argues for the same point:

In the conception of the Reformers and of the majority of seventeenth-century

theologians the Great Commission was binding only on the apostles. When they died Christ's command died with them. It does not extend to the Church which the apostles founded....The Church has no mandate to preach the gospel and found churches in distant parts.⁵

Boer reaches this conclusion from statements such as the following from Luther's writings:

That the apostles entered strange houses and preached was because they had a command and were for this purpose appointed, called and sent, namely that they should preach everywhere, as Christ has said, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' After that, however, no one again received such a general apostolic command, but every bishop or pastor has his own particular parish.⁶

Unfortunately both Latourette and Boer and others of their persuasion fail to take into account the context of these words of Luther. He was emphasizing the sanctity of the call as a protest against the Anabaptist's practice of entering "strange homes," i.e., homes of people who were already under the care of another shepherd, and trying to win them over to the camp of the Anabaptists.⁷ Luther was not arguing against sending properly called people into the world mission field.

In an Ascension Day sermon Luther makes it clear that he realized that the missionary task of going and preaching the Gospel to every creature was far from completed:

Their (i.e., the apostles') preaching has gone forth to all the world, although it

has not yet come into all the world. This going forth has begun and has gone out, although it has not yet been accomplished and completed, but the preaching will be heard ever farther and wider until the Last Day. When this sermon has been preached and heard and proclaimed in all the world, then the message is accomplished and everywhere carried out. Then the Last Day will also take place.⁸

Luther's personal zeal for mission work can be seen from the concern he had for the conversion of both the Turks and the Jews. Regarding the Turks he writes, "I do hope that our Gospel, now shining forth with a light so great, will before Judgment Day make an attack also on that abominable prophet Mohammed. May our Lord Jesus Christ do this soon."⁹ Luther also desired fervently to bring the Gospel to the Jews. He was convinced, as he put it, that "many Jews would be converted if they but heard our sermons and the exposition of the Old Testament."¹⁰

Certainly the Luther who wrote the following saw mission work wherever in the world there are unbelievers not only as permissible but as indispensable. He says:

If all the heathen are to praise God, he must first have been made their God. If he is to be their God, they must know him and believe on him and let go of all idolatry....If they are to believe, they must first hear his Word and thus receive the Holy Spirit, who purifies and enlightens their heart by faith. For one cannot come to faith or receive the Holy Spirit before one has heard the Word....You have received the Spirit by the preaching of faith. If they are to hear his Word, preachers who

proclaim the Word of God to them must be sent to them.¹¹

In his third lecture Dr. Bunkowske, by relating some personal experiences both in Nigeria and in the United States, pointed us to various barriers to communicating the gospel. He made it clear that while cross-cultural differences present one set of communication barriers, e.g., the animism, polytheism, and sacrificial system of the Yalas in Nigeria, there are other just as formidable, perhaps even more formidable, barriers that must be hurdled when seeking to communicate the gospel to those here in the United States, e.g., the way people center their lives on the material rather than the spiritual; or, the misconception that everyone in the United States is a Christian; or, people's denial of a Creator God to whom they are personally accountable.

Other such barriers can be identified. There are barriers that keep us from saying anything at all. One such barrier is our failure to truly appreciate the treasure we have in the gospel. A second barrier: Universalistic tendencies, succumbing to the spirit of our times and saying, "Maybe, just maybe, God does have a way after all of saving those who have never heard of Jesus." A third barrier: Peoples' fear of "messing things up." Rather than do that, they say nothing. A fourth barrier is a failure to understand and appreciate the doctrine of the universal priesthood, with the resultant misconception that evangelizing is something for pastors only.

There are also barriers we may inadvertently set up by the way we speak or act, e.g., the use of incomprehensible theological terminology in our witnessing, with the result that people don't understand what we say; or an overly confrontation

approach (In general, people need to know how much we care before they will care how much we know); or, "majoring on minors," that is, arguing about peripheral issues rather than, like Philip with the eunuch of Ethiopia, simply telling the good news about Jesus.

Training in principles of communication, developing listening skills, etc., can help us to recognize and overcome some of these barriers. But above all we need three things, all of which God has already given us. First, we need to continue to grow in appreciation of what a treasure we have in salvation by God's grace through faith.

Secondly, we need love for the lost sinner who will spend eternity in hell if he doesn't hear the message. That love we are able to display; for God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given to us.

Thirdly, we need to use the means by which God himself will demolish the devil's stronghold --law and gospel. That, too, we have been given. May the Lord continue to impel us to use these precious Means of Grace and may He enable us to bring them to people in the clearest possible way, from heart to heart, as did Luther the Missionary.

ENDNOTES

1. AE, Vol. 39, pp. 236,237.
2. AE, Vol. 39, p. 309.

3. Wagner, C. Peter. Leading Your Church to Growth (Ventura: Regal Books, 1984), p. 154.
4. Latourette, Kenneth Scott. A History of the Expansion of Christianity, Vol. 3 (New York: Harper, 1929), p. 25.
5. Boer, Henry R. Pentecost and Missions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), p. 18.
6. Luther's Works, EA, Vol. 12, p. 193.
7. We call the attention of those interested in exploring this matter further to an excellent five-part series on Luther and missions by Paul Peters that appeared in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly from October 1968 through October 1971. Peters taught Reformation history at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary from 1939 until his retirement in 1966. The articles are entitled: "World-Wide Mission, the Work of the Triune God" (Oct. 1968); "Luther's Practical Mission-Mindedness" (April 1969); "The Fruits of Luther's Mission-Mindedness" (Jan. 1970, Oct. 1970, Jan. 1971); "The Fruits of Luther's Mission-Mindedness Among Indigenous Americans" (Oct. 1971). CF especially "Luther's Practical Mission-Mindedness." Another helpful article, entitled "Were the Reformers Mission-Minded?" by Thomas Coates can be found in the Concordia Theological Monthly (Oct. 1969), pp. 601-611.
8. SL XI, 951 (quoted in Peters, "Luther's Practical Mission-Mindedness," op cit)
9. SL, XIV, 305 (quoted in Coates, op cit., p. 602)
10. SL XII, 1574 (quoted in Peters, "Luther's Practical Mission-Mindedness," op cit., p. 121.
11. SL V, 1139 (quoted in Plass, What Luther Says (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), Vol. 3, No. 3009.