

EXTENSION OF THE MISSION ENDEAVOR¹

By Edgar Hoenecke

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. *Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations,*² baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:18–20)

These words of our risen Savior to His Church ordain that the worldwide missionary endeavor is to be her great purpose and function in this world to the end of time. Thus the inclusion of an essay on the Extension of the Mission Endeavor on the agenda of this Conclave of Lutheran Theologians, assembled to study the Doctrine of the Church, is very much in place. In fact, it is urgently imperative for us who have been called into our Lord’s service in the eleventh hour to heed His injunction, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). His promise and admonition refer to this universal activity of His Church as a fact and feature of the Last Times, “And *this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*” (Matt. 24:14). The Word of God which speaks prophetically of the Church of the Reformation states the purpose of the recovery of the Gospel to be its universal proclamation, “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and *to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people*” (Rev. 14:6).

A conference of faithful Bible theologians will therefore treat our topic not as an interesting, but less important, digression from the real importance, yea, as the very objective of its deliberations, that is, they will conscientiously study “whatsoever I have commanded you” so that we may all go out better equipped and more highly inspired to “make disciples of all nations.”

The study of the Word and doctrine is most important. The Lord said, “Search the scriptures!” (John 5:39), and through His apostle, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15). Thereby the Lord Himself called into being and endorsed the thorough theological, exegetical, and dogmatical studies for which we are here assembled. It is imperatively incumbent upon us to whom have been entrusted “the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2) and “the mystery of Christ” (Col. 4:3) in these latter, evil days that our understanding, exposition and proclamation of the Word, “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17) be filed and polished and kept as keen as expert exegetical honing can make them. This not merely as an end in itself, that we might know and discern the Truth intellectually, but that we might wield this only weapon of offense given to the Church mightily for the liberation of souls from ignorance, superstition, and spiritual tyranny.

That the faithful Lutheran Church is so earnestly preoccupied with a most thorough scrutiny of her doctrine in the light of the Word at this time is at once a most encouraging and sobering phenomenon. Is the Church possibly being tested and girded today by the Holy Spirit, during what may well be the last days of “the free world” for that time when “iniquity shall abound” (Matt. 24:12) and she must go “underground,” depending upon the faithful witness of the individual rather than upon her organized, united testimony?

The Word of our God is not a dead subject for academic debate; “for the word of God is quick (that is, alive and making alive) and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). The Gospel of Christ is “*the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*” (Rom. 1:16). And even though, as Premier Khrushchev recently threatened the

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² Italics in all of the Bible quotations are those of the author.

people of the United States, our grandchildren may one day have to live under a Communistic world power, they will still be under the promise and protection of the Lord, and the Word of God will be their only offensive weapon and hope to snatch souls as brands from the fire.

It follows, then, that our topic is not merely one of the subjects under consideration here, but that it is the very end-topic, the practical application to their God-given purpose of the Scriptural truths here expounded. It is important that the learned leaders of the Church recognize the full impact of this fact upon their deliberations. Otherwise the dispute over dogma may degenerate into the sterile activity of a debating society, and the Church would merit the slur that her meticulous definition of doctrine is a mere quibbling over phrases.

Let us consider our topic under prayer, the prayer that is in the heart of every lover of the Lord and His Word in these latter days,

“And let Thy Word have speedy course,
 Through ev’ry land be glorified,
 Till all the heathen know its force;
 And fill Thy churches far and wide.
 Oh, spread the conquest of Thy Word
 And let Thy Kingdom come, dear Lord. Amen.” (494)

Our topic is:

The Extension of the Church’s Mission Endeavor

Which we will consider under the following headings:

- I. Holy Scripture and History point the way.
- II. The Great Need for Extending our Mission Endeavor in our day.
- III. *The Adversaries and Obstacles in the way of this endeavor.*
- IV. *Practical Proposals to do the work more effectively.*

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I. Holy Scripture and History Point the Way.

There never has been a time since the Fall of man when the free gift of God’s grace in Christ has not been proclaimed through the Word of Reconciliation and appropriated to the sinner by faith in that Word. When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, enjoined His Church to “go into all the world” and to “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15), He gave expression to what had been the gracious, good will of God from the beginning. At no time in history has the Church ever accomplished the actual fulfillment of her assignment in complete, world-wide mission coverage; and we today are, due to the population explosion, farther from that goal than the Church has ever been. It will do us good in this study to let Holy Scripture and history point the way for extending our mission endeavor in these perilous, latter days.

The Old Testament

All the sacrifices, ceremonials, and revelations of the Old Testament days were but radiant foreshadowings of the Cross of Christ. The body, that is, the substance and object of all of them, was always the Christ who alone could and would make propitiation and atonement for the sin of the world (Col. 2:17).

The very first utterance of God to our fallen parents, even while He exposed the sinfulness and dire consequences of the Fall, proclaimed above all the first, sweet Gospel-Promise, inviting and imparting faith in the coming Redeemer, the “Seed” of the woman.

In Seth’s day worship and missionary activity went hand in hand, when “began men to call upon (that is, to proclaim) the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:26).

The promise given to Abraham extended worldwide, “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18).

Later, after God had singled out and exalted the Children of Israel as His people of the Covenant, the non-Jew was not excluded from the dispensation of grace, “And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and *the stranger* that is among you” (Deut 26:11).

During the time of the Judges when “the word of the Lord was precious (scarce)” in Israel, a heathen woman, Ruth, was brought into the fellowship of the saints and destined to become an ancestress of the Savior Himself according to the flesh.

Especially during the period of the glory of the United Kingdom the note of concern for bringing in the heathen is always evident, “Declare his glory among *the heathen*, his wonders among *all people*” (Ps. 96:3). The same motif of universality appears in the writings of the contemporary prophets. Jonah, the great foreign missionary prophet, is sent by the Holy Spirit with a word of warning and promise to the Assyrian metropolis, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it... And God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not” (Jonah 1:2; 3:10). The result was the spectacular conversion of a world center, “So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them” (Jonah 3:5).

Isaiah’s stirring eloquence inspires the Church to foreign missions even in our day, “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit *the Gentiles*, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited” (Isa. 54:2, 3). Who of us would fail to be thrilled by the brilliant vision of the New Testament Church and her world mission successes, foreseen by this seer of old, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee... And *the Gentiles* shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa. 60:1, 3). “For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and *the glory of the Gentiles* like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem” (Isa. 66:12, 13).

The spiritual leaders of Israel forgot or disobeyed the Lord’s injunction to proclaim His glory also among the heathen. Despite the chastening of the Exile and the many warnings of the prophets, dreams of social justice and earthly grandeur filled the hearts of the professional churchmen to such an extent that fidelity to the Word of God and simple piety became passé. Instead, worldliness, lust for influence and power, legalism in the guise of pietism and shallow ritualism, characterized the hierarchy.

The New Testament

When Jesus, their Messiah, actually appeared, a pitiful tragedy took place; His own people failed to recognize their Savior-God, long promised and faithfully described in their sacred literature, “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:10, 11). They reviled Him for extending His gracious call also to the Gentiles. The universality of His love was odious to them, and they found in it a very argument for their rejection of Him, “Now, when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner” (Luke 7:39).

Jesus always included all the world in His gracious outreach, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!” (Matt. 11:28).—“Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). The urgency of His love for even the despised enemies of the Jews is shown in the Gospel record, “And he must needs go through Samaria” (John 4:4), and He patiently ministers to the woman of Sychar, chiding her for her adultery and wooing her with His invitation of grace until He has won her. When through her word “many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him,” Jesus points to the people coming to the well to hear Him, and says, “Behold, I say unto you, Lift up our eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest” (John 4:35).

Thus Jesus exemplified the spirit of universal missions, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Himself, the servant of the Lord, “Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles” (Matt. 12:18). Ascending into heaven, He speaks plainly about the scope of the mission activity of His disciples, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and *unto the uttermost part of the earth*” (Acts 1:8).

The Apostles of our Lord spoke the same language. Peter had to be taught in a dramatic way that the Gospel is also intended for the heathen. “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but *in every nation* he that feareth him, and walketh in righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34, 35). Paul writes to the Christians at Rome, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to *everyone that believeth*; to the Jew first, and *also to the Greek*” (Rom. 1:16). At Rome Paul said, “Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent *unto the Gentiles*, and that they will hear it” (Acts 28:28).

The first world mission project of the Christian era was launched by a congregation of refugee believers at Antioch. In flight from persecution at this northernmost outpost of Syria, they “spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:20, 21). When the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch to look into the matter of these heathen conversions, they won him also for the cause of world missions with their God-pleasing zeal, and they were instructed by the Holy Ghost to send out the first world missionaries, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2).

Thus love for Christ and the souls purchased with His precious blood launched the greatest two-man world mission crusade in history and netted for the launchers the sobriquet which has become a title of matchless honor. *Christianoi*, or “Christ’s followers,” they were called in derision because they were so eager to imitate their Savior in their zeal for souls. Would that God gave us more of these “Christ’s followers” today! Would that we had more Pauls and Barnabases, Philips, Silases, Peters and young Timothys to heed the Lord’s call to carry His saving health to all nations before it is too late!

We learn several important lessons from the work of these first Christian missionaries:

1. They were people who were filled with the Holy Spirit, with love and zeal for Christ and the precious souls of men;
2. They were men, lacking the outer trappings of an impressive organization, or a social and educational background, or the security of the financial backing of a large constituency, who were happy to earn their own livelihood and to be privileged to preach Christ;
3. They were people who tended to the business of saving souls and of witnessing the Truth of God’s Word, nor did they permit anything to divert them from that witness, neither educational, social, political, or economic sidelines, nor unpopularity, nor persecution, nor confiscation, nor banishment, nor even death by torture;
4. These missionaries did not pamper and spoon-feed the young congregations with support from the home base with grants for chapels and schools, or a host of other things, but rather, very soon expected and gathered from them the fruits of faith in support of their own church and in alleviation of the need of others (Acts 14:23);

5. And the mission churches did not depend on the mother church to provide workers for them, but very soon enlisted consecrated young men from the field itself, and trained them to carry on the local program, and also to go out as missionaries. “Then came Paul to Derbe and Lystra; and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek; which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him.... And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:1–3, 5).

There are surely many other lessons which we ought to glean from the activity of the Church during this, the Golden Age of World Missions. We might allude to just a few of them: The Apostles seem to have begun the work in strategic, urban centers, leaving the evangelization of the surrounding countryside to the newly founded church, thereby strengthening its members and training them early in active witnessing for their Savior, while they themselves were free to go on to new areas to repeat the process. We could also point out the fact that the Apostles are not reported to have set up any elaborate programs, rituals or offices for the newly founded churches, but left most of this development to the promptings of faith and love, and the direction of the Holy Spirit. We also see that the Apostles, while they soon left the new churches to go on to other fields, kept very close contact with the young churches either by personal visits or by letters. The epistles were in no sense letters that dealt only with the price of petrol or the missionary’s furlough, but were spiritually didactic, inspirational, hortatory and consoling expressions of the love and concern in the hearts of the Apostles. Finally, we might also point out for the benefit of missionaries in the field the lesson they may learn from the receptive and cooperative attitude of those who were thus instructed, admonished, and consoled.

We will now rather rapidly scan the missionary activity of the time between the days of the Apostles and our day.

The Post-apostolic Days to about 300

The scope and success of the missionary activity during the days of the Christian martyrs is nothing short of phenomenal. Under almost constant threat of persecution, confiscation, deportation and death by horrible, slow torture, these Christian men, women and children persisted in a quiet way to witness for their Savior, with the result that their irreproachable conduct and gentle, but unshakable fidelity won many of their persecutors for the faith. It is to their immortal credit that men like the pagan writer Celsus, less than 100 years after the martyrdom of most of the Apostles, was moved to write, “Weavers, cobblers, and fullers, the most illiterate persons, preached the irrational faith (of Christ) and knew how to commend it especially to women and children” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*). And the same is true of the remark made by Tertullian, “Every Christian laborer finds out God and manifests Him” (Ibid.).

Beside these simple folk who so effectively witnessed for their Savior in this most difficult age by their silent acceptance of all manner of suffering for their faith, this period also produced some of the most able apologists of the faith. Tertullian and Irenaeus fearlessly denounced heathen superstition, idolatry, and philosophy, while they confessed the Gospel of Christ. Justin Martyr, defending the Christian faith as the highest wisdom, sought eloquently to win especially the Jews for Christ, whom he showed to be the very fulfillment of their sacred Scriptures. Already in Justin, but then especially in writers like Clement of Alexandria, the weakness of this increasingly rational approach was evident in that they sought to harmonize the Christian Truth with the current philosophy, whereby invariably the simple proclamation of the Bible Truth was diminished.

The catechetical schools, which might be called the first Christian seminaries, were founded in these days to train men to proclaim and defend the Truth. At these and other centers of Christian learning the Bible was translated into the vernacular so that it was no longer necessary to be able to read Greek to know at first hand what the Bible said. These translations and other religious books were of high value in an age when books were few, and men to read and understand them fewer. Therefore the chief attack was usually directed against

the books in the possession of persons denounced for their faith. The destruction of such books obviously did untold damage to the cause of the Gospel.

Still, the propagation of the faith prevailed, and the blood of the Christian martyrs was the seed of the Church, as Tertullian said in his *Apologia*. As the fiery trial continued to distress and decimate the ranks of the believers in certain areas, Christian refugees, driven from home, carried the Gospel into many remote areas of the world, such as Egypt, Northern Africa, Spain, Southern France, Germany, Britain, Armenia, Persia, India, and others.

What a tribute to the faith and fidelity of these intrepid witnesses; what a testimony to their loyalty that at the end of this era the Emperor Constantine established Christianity as the state religion and that his nephew, Julian the Apostate, is said to have cried on his death bed, "*Tandem vicisti, Galilae!*"

Venturing to explain the reason for the establishment and extension of Christianity in this period despite the persecutions, Dr. T. R. Glover writes succinctly in his *Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, "The Christians simply out-thought, out-lived, and out-died the followers of all other faiths."

From Constantine to the Reformation

The extent of the missionary activity during the next 1200 years does not compare in any way with the phenomenal advances of the Christian faith during the Golden Age of the Christian Church. The number of Christians at the end of the third Christian century has been estimated at between five and ten million.

However, the very fact that the Church had "arrived," that she was not only tolerated, but elevated to the position of the state religion, that she had become a power to be reckoned with, this also spelled her doom as a truly spiritual agency for good. The entrenched religion rapidly developed into a secular force under the growing power of the Papacy. Political intrigue, armed might and open corruption on the part of the princes of the church became the order of the day.

Instead of using her influence in increased missionary activity, the organized church of Rome actually became an evil military force in the world. She developed the theory of the spiritual and secular supremacy of the Papacy during a relatively decent and enlightened world age, but under the reign of the "Holy Fathers" the world soon sank into appallingly evil and ungodly depths. There is no time or occasion here to recite in detail the chronicle of the worldly, military struggle of the popes for political power, of the wars and intrigues, the bribes and forgeries, the poisonings and debaucheries at the papal court until the loathsome nadir was reached in the infamous Borgias, whose very name has become a byword of all that is evil! Not even Roman Catholic historians can hide the fact that the Papacy "contracted a stain" when they record the life and reign of Pope Alexander who achieved beside the "Holy Father" another title more descriptive of his accomplishments, when during his lifetime he was called, "Monster of Iniquity." How could this evil caricature of Peter and the Apostles win souls from the tyranny of Satan for the faith and service of Jesus Christ?

It is always a sadly mistaken ambition when the Church of any age seeks to advance her cause through organization, recognition, and influence. Invariably concessions and compromises must be made in the process. The true virility of the Church in the faith and loyalty of the members to the Lord and His holy Word is sapped. Secularization and indifferentism take the place of faith and piety. And only an act of God like the great Reformation can again restore God-pleasing life and growth to the Church.

Neither the violence of Charlemagne in his attempt to convert the Saxons by military force, nor the false fervor of the masses in the great Crusades, nor yet the bloody fury of the "holy Inquisition" could do more than underscore the fact that the spirit of Christ had fled, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:55, 56).

There were a few outstanding missionaries in these early days, between 300 and 500, who labored faithfully among the people on the frontiers of the empire. Ulfilas, the missionary to the Goths, translated the Bible into the language of his people. St. Martin of Tours spread the Gospel with his bands of monks throughout France, although he also resorted to force in suppressing paganism. St. Patrick, independently of the Pope, dedicated his life as a missionary to the Irish, and St. Ninian his for the same cause among the British and

Scots. Other missionaries labored in Abyssinia, Arabia, and Persia. While the results of their activities were significant for certain frontier areas, at Rome and in the civilized lands the recognition of Christianity as the state religion brought about a merely nominal acceptance of the Christian faith by many people without significantly affecting their carnal pleasures.

The great migration of nations, the rise and threat of Islam, and the founding of the monastic orders in the church gave the following period a different complexion. This was the time from the Fall of Rome to the ascendancy of Charlemagne. Vast areas which had been christianized fell before the sword of Islam and many of the people reverted to paganism. Not until the decisive Battle of Tours did the Moslem threat of over a hundred years' duration end for the people of Europe.

During this time earnest and learned men, such as Columbanus, Augustine, Willebrord, and Boniface, organized mission teams of monks to bring the Gospel to such areas as England, Holland, and Germany. In the East such teams penetrated into China, India, and even Japan. Because this work sought to establish the church through political influence and addressed itself to the ruling classes, rather than to the common people, it did not endure.

In Europe the influence of the missionary monks toward the end of this period was so important that Charlemagne made use of them to achieve his political objectives, even to the point of equipping the monks with military and police powers to "convert" the pagan tribes and thus to consolidate the empire.

The Great Crusades which occurred between 1100 and 1300, ostensibly to wrest the sacred Bible sites from the infidels, were no missionary enterprises in any sense of the word. They failed, not so much because they did not actually succeed against the Moslems, but because they perverted the cause of the Gospel to a military and secular power play, entirely foreign to the spirit of Him who said, "all they that take the sword (in His defense) shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

The spirit of success for the church through regimented organization and discipline also pervaded the great missionary orders which were founded in the "enlightened" thirteenth century. The Order of St. Francis of Assisi, dedicated to the imitation of the life of Christ in its members, was perhaps the monastic order with the purest ideals, that is, preaching the love of God and accompanying this with an exercise of good works. Before the close of the century its humble missionary brothers had penetrated into literally every corner of the known world. The Dominicans were founded in the same decade, but they soon changed their tactics from preaching to persecution of heretics, winning history as the "Hounds of the Lord" (*Domini Canes*) during the days of the Spanish Inquisition.

Carried on the ships of the great merchants, such as those of the House of Polo in Venice, especially the Franciscan monks brought the Cross across all of Asia into the empire of the Khans during this period. They also engaged in vigorous missionary activity among the Moslems, while the Dominicans did significant work among the Jews, notably among those of England.

Although much had been done under most difficult circumstances by earnest, humble followers of Christ, immeasurably more was left undone at the close of the first 1500 years of the Christian era, although during the same period the church had achieved unprecedented secular power and prestige.

In *The Spread of Christianity in the Moslem World* E. C. Moore sums up the activity of this age. In the first period, up to 300, there was great progress until the time of Constantine. Then came a relaxing of effort to the time when the great Irish and British missions were established in the sixth century. For about four hundred years after that there was a stir of missionary activity when central and northern Europe were Christianized. This was followed by a period of arrest when no great forward movements took place.

From the Reformation to Our Day

It was high time for a change in the church. And in view of the corruption and spiritual perversion in the highest ranks of the ruling hierarchy, it is surprising that the change was not attended by greater violence, when "that man of sin," "the son of perdition," was finally exposed in the blazing light of the Reformation.

With the full glory of the Gospel again revealed and established in the Church of the Reformation, it was to be expected that the return to simple faith and obedience to God's Word would also result in an energetic resumption of world-wide missionary activity, clearly commanded by the Lord. However, the Lutheran Church for almost two hundred years remained almost passive as far as missions were concerned.

It is true, the Lutherans had their hands full with their own affairs during the second half of the 16th century, and the *Thirty Years' War* in the first half of the 17th century afforded them little opportunity for thinking of carrying the Gospel to heathen lands. The Lutherans were also more removed from contact with the newly discovered and colonized areas of the earth than the maritime nations of Europe. Christian people of that era were so accustomed to thinking of the church and its enterprises as being supported by the state, that it did not occur to many of them that they themselves had any responsibility in the matter of winning the heathen for Christ. This activity had been carried on by the church through the monastic orders for centuries and the character of these "missionary" enterprises often filled the hearts of sincere thinking people with loathing rather than enthusiasm.

Still, there were individuals who thought about the matter and addressed themselves to the leaders of the Reformation and to the faculty of the University of Wittenberg. Thus Count Truchses asked, "Since faith comes alone from preaching, I would know how East and South and West shall be converted to the only saving faith since I see no one of the *Augsburg Confession* go forth thither" (G. Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions*, p. 27). The faculty replied that Jesus' command applied only to the Apostles and they had fulfilled it. The proclamation of the Gospel to the heathen was thought to be a one-time matter, so that the nations who had at that time rejected it therewith forfeited their right to be evangelized the second time.

From the writings of Luther it appears that he at least expressed a different view: "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. For man cannot praise God with idolatrous lips and an unbelieving heart. 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 before one has heard the Word, as Paul says, Romans 10:14: 'How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?' And one cannot receive the Holy Spirit but by 'the hearing of faith' (Gal. 3:2). If they are to hear His Word, preachers who proclaim the Word of God to them must be sent to them" (cf. *Weimarer Ausgabe* 31 I, 288). Also, "The very best of all works is that the heathen have been led from idolatry to the knowledge of God" (*Weimarer Ausgabe* 47, 466). There are many other similar quotations which show Luther's interest in heathen missions.

Reinhold Gareis, in *Geschichte der evangelischen Heidenmission* writes, page 7: *Die evangelische Kirche in der Zeit der Reformation hatte um ihre eigene Existenz zu ringen, und es fehlte ihr gänzlich die unmittelbare Berührung mit heidnischen Völkern; die Verhältnisse hinderten sie an der Erfüllung der Missionspflicht—aber nirgends wird dem Schmerz Ausdruck gegeben, dass eben die Verhältnisse sie hindern. Die Erkenntnis der Missionspflicht selbst fehlte. Natürlich haben die Reformatoren nicht daran gezweifelt, dass Gott sein Evangelium für alle Welt bestimmt habe, auch daran nicht, dass seine Kirche berufen sei, Gläubige aus allen Völkern der Erde zu sammeln. Aber sie haben gemeint, es lediglich Gott selbst überlassen zu müssen, auf welche Weise und wann er diesen Völkern sein Wort bringen wolle ("Warm und auf welche Weise Du trittst in ihre Kreise").*

Sie denken nicht an besondere Veranstaltungen ihrerseits zu diesem Zweck. Würde ein evangelischer Fürst Kolonialerwerbungen machen, so würde er als Landesherr verpflichtet sein, bei seinen neuen Untertanen falschen Gottesdienst abzustellen und rechten einzurichten. Im übrigen rechnen sie damit, dass durch den allgemeinen Weltverkehr die Kenntnis des Evangeliums auch zu den Heiden kommen werde.

Besondere Hindernisse für das Aufkommen des Gedankens einer besonderen Missionsverpflichtung bildeten folgende Lehrmeinungen der Reformatoren: In der lutherischen Kirche leitete man das Pastorenamt direkt aus dem Apostelamt ab, aber so, dass dabei das Ausserordentliche am Apostelamt abgestreift ist. Zu diesem Ausserordentlichen gehört ihnen der Amtsauftrag nicht an eine einzelne Gemeinde, sondern an die ganze Welt. Der Pastor hat bei den lutherischen Reformatoren nur den Amtsauftrag an eine einzelne schon bestehende Gemeinde.

Ein anderes Amt als das Pastorenamt kannte man nicht in der Kirche. In der reformierten Kirche kannte man zwar sieben Aemter: Apostel, Propheten, Evangelisten, Pastoren, Doktoren (Lehrer), Presbyter und Diakonen—aber ein Missionarsamt war nicht vorgesehen. Beide, lutherische und reformierte, erklären und beweisen ausdrücklich, dass die ordnungsmässige Sendung zu den Völkern auf die Apostel beschränkt gewesen ist—ja, sie behaupten, was uns völlig abenteuerlich erscheint, dass die Apostel tatsächlich schon persönlich oder durch ihre Schüler und Gehilfen der ganzen Welt das Evangelium gepredigt hätten. Die Entdeckung Amerikas hätte, so sollte man meinen, diese Idee kräftig widerlegen sollen, aber Beza z.B. scheut sich nicht, zu behaupten, dass sicherlich durch die Apostel doch wenigstens ein “Geruch” des Evangeliums bis nach Amerika gedrungen sein müsse.!

Ausserdem war es die allgemeine Anschauung der Kirche der Reformationszeit, dass der gesamte Weltlauf in 3 mal 2000 Jahre zerfalle und dass die dritten, mit Christus beginnenden 2000 Jahre, verkürzt würden, so dass schon um die Mitte des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts, etwa 1556, der jüngste Tag einfalle. Man darf sich also durch Stellen in den Büchern der Reformatoren, wo sie scheinbar die Missionsverpflichtung anerkennen, nicht irre machen lassen. Das Missionsgebiet ist ihnen stets die verheidnischte christliche Kirche. Auch in dem Lutherlied ist sie es:

*Es wolle Gott uns gnädig sein
Und Jesu Christi Heil und Stärk’
annt den Helden werden
Und sie zu Gott bekehren.”³*

Whatever might have been the reason for the lack of missionary activity on the part of the Lutherans for two hundred years, this much is certain, much valuable time and the initiative were lost to the Roman Catholic

3. Translation of Quotation from Reinhold Gareis: The evangelical church during the time of the Reformation was preoccupied with the struggle for its own existence, and it had no immediate contact with heathen peoples; circumstances thus prevented it from fulfilling its full mission obligation—however, nowhere does one find an expression of regret over the fact that circumstances did so prevent. This, because the very understanding of the mission obligation was lacking. Naturally, the reformers did not doubt that God had intended His Gospel for all the world, nor that His Church was charged with the task of gathering believers out of all the nations on earth. But they believed that they ought to leave in God’s hands the matter, as to how and when He willed to bring His Word to these nations: *Wann und auf welche Weise, Du trittst in ihre Kreise.*

They did not think it their duty to make special efforts on their part to effect this. It was thought that, if an evangelical prince were to make colonial conquests, then he would also, as ruler of the domain, be obligated to abolish false worship and to institute true religious practice. Furthermore, they counted upon the fact that universal commerce would also provide for the spread of the Gospel among the heathen.

The following doctrinal opinions also constituted special obstacles for any thought of a special missionary obligation on the part of the reformers: In the Lutheran Church the office of the holy ministry was taught to derive directly from the apostolic office, however, in such a way that the extraordinary features of the apostolic office were stripped from it. In the opinion of the reformers the office of the ministry to a single congregation did not belong to these extraordinary features, while that to all the world did. Among the Lutheran Reformers the pastor was thought to have a ministerial call only to a single, already existing congregation.

One did not know of any office in the church than that of the pastorate. In the Reformed Church one indeed knew of seven offices: that of the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor, the doctor (teacher), the presbyter, and the deacon—but there was no thought of the missionary office. Both, Lutheran and Reformed, declare and contend explicitly that the orderly commissioning of men for the heathen was limited to the apostles—yes, they claim, what appears entirely fantastic to us, that the apostles had actually either personally or through their disciples and helpers preached the Gospel to the whole world. One would think that the discovery of America would have refuted this idea forcefully, still, Beza, for instance, does not hesitate to claim that surely at least a scent of the Gospel must have penetrated to America through the witness of the Apostles!

Finally, it was the generally accepted opinion of the church at the time of the Reformation that the entire course of world history was to be divided into three times two thousand years, and that the third two thousand year period, beginning with Christ, would be shortened, so that the end of the world would occur already in the middle of the Sixteenth Century, or about the year 1556. Thus one dare not be misled by statements in the books of the reformers, where they apparently acknowledge the missionary obligation. For then the missionary sphere is always the Christian Church which has reverted to heathendom. This is the case also in Luther’s hymn as quoted above.

Church, which during the days of the Counter Reformation carried on the work of missions with redoubled energy. And still more deplorable is the fact that the Lutheran Church is still far from leading the Roman or Reformed churches in this activity in spite of better knowledge and an untold measure of temporal blessings from the Lord of the Church to enable her to do His solemn bidding!

The religious orders of the Roman Church, notably the *Society of Jesus*, founded during the days of the Reformation and pledged to undo its work by recouping the losses sustained and by extending the Papal rule into the newly discovered areas of the world, these, and not the Protestants, were the great missionaries of this period following the recovery of the pure Gospel of Christ.

The work of the Jesuits was so effective that, in America, for instance, the entire Mississippi Basin fell to Catholic France. Their interest, however, also extended to the American Indians among whom they won thousands of converts. Other missionaries of the same order penetrated far into the Orient, into India, China, and Japan. One of them, Father Xavier, came to Japan as early as 1550. After gaining a reported 600,000 Japanese for the Roman faith in a hundred years, the Jesuits were expelled because they were suspected of being agents for the subsequent conquest of the country. Japan was therefore closed to the Western world and Christian missions for 200 years. With the exception of the Moslem lands on the northern fringes of Africa, the Jesuits also carried on extensive mission enterprises on that continent as early as the latter part of the 16th century. Such missionary projects are being conducted by this highly disciplined order even to the present day.

The *Propaganda Office* of the Roman Church instructed the missionaries to observe the policy of "accommodation" by leaving the customs and even the religious forms of the people unchanged, but urging upon them the adoption of the Catholic rituals and obedience to the Roman hierarchy. This proved to be a serious mistake. Many of the so-called converts failed to grasp the meaning of the new faith, even if it had been explained to them, and a great many simply retained their old animistic superstition, which they embellished with the newly acquired symbols, rituals, and objects of worship.

The beginnings of heathen mission activities on the part of the Protestant churches were the undertakings of the societies for the Propagation of the Gospel during the latter half of the 17th century. Begun and chartered in England, they were active chiefly among the American Indians and the Negro slaves.

The first Lutheran heathen mission was that of a Swedish Lutheran, John Campanius, along the Delaware River in 1643. His work endured especially in his translation of Luther's Catechism into the Indian tongue, although he actually gained few converts.

The first Lutheran foreign heathen mission was begun by the Danish-Halle mission at Tranquebar and Serampore on the eastern coast of southern India in 1705, when the King of Denmark sent two of August Hermann Francke's students at the University of Halle to Tranquebar. Their names were Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau. The latter stayed only until 1711, but Ziegenbalg carried on despite ill health and died at his post of duty in 1719 after he had completed a truly prodigious amount of work. He translated the Catechism, the New Testament, and the first eight books of the Old Testament into Tamil, and established a comprehensive mission enterprise, including churches, schools, and a printing house.

Although the cause of foreign missions became so celebrated that Ziegenbalg was received at court both in Denmark and England, while on furlough, the church as such took no official part in its support, but left this to the various mission societies which were organized in the Christian countries. Because these societies usually did not observe confessional and denominational lines, this unionistic activity eventually led to the founding of the *International Missionary Alliance* in 1887, and this, in turn, gave strong impetus to the *World Council of Churches*.

Some of the most outstanding Protestant foreign missionary work within the past two centuries was inaugurated by the small Moravian Church, whose members found a place of refuge on the estate of Count Zinzendorf in Saxony and out of gratitude toward God dedicated themselves to the task of bringing Christ to the heathen. From 1732 to 1782 this small church sent missionaries to Greenland, Dutch Guiana, South Africa, Russia, the islands of India, Central America and other countries. On their 50th anniversary they were supporting 27 stations with 165 missionaries in far-flung places on the globe. Their achievement for Christ without fanfare and formidable numbers or organization is reminiscent of the first Christian missionary program

which was undertaken by a similar group of refugees at Antioch in Syria, who thereby became the agents of the Holy Spirit in calling and sponsoring the greatest missionary of them all, Paul the Apostle. In the light of these inspiring examples of two very small groups of believers, how do we whom the Lord has so signally endowed ever hope to justify our meager missionary activity on the plea that we do not have the men or the means to do better?

As a further inspiration mention is made here of the Baptist cobbler, William Carey, who was so deeply moved by the plight of the heathen and the lack of missionary enterprise in his church, that he volunteered to become a missionary himself. Under trying difficulties he began his work in India and continued in it for forty years with astonishing success because of his native linguistic ability. With exemplary self-denial he devoted all the earnings from his language work for the Indian government to the mission he was conducting. His activities extended into many fields besides preaching, chief of which was his Bible translation work. Before he died he had been instrumental in having the Scriptures translated into twenty-four of the spoken languages of India and his influence as a Christian missionary extended beyond India to Burma and Indonesia.

Only comparatively recently, that is, within the past one hundred years, have our American Lutheran church bodies actively taken over the conduct of foreign mission programs officially. The Missouri Synod helped to support the work of the *Leipzig Missionary Society* in India for years, but assumed support of her own mission in that country since 1895. Several other Lutheran synods in the United States began to support missions in Africa and India in the 1840's, but the great majority of the Lutheran foreign missions, sixty out of seventy-six, are products of the twentieth century. Only two of the 22 missions of the Missouri Synod, the work in India and Brazil, date back to the 1890s, and 18 of them were begun since 1936, when the synod was 90 years old! All of the three foreign missions of the Wisconsin Synod were begun also since 1936,⁴ and the same is true of the foreign work carried on by the other two synods of the Synodical Conference, for that is the year when the joint work in Nigeria was undertaken.

While the various branches of the Lutheran church in the United States are active today on all of the continents, the total of this activity is discouragingly small when compared with the work of other denominations, and especially when one contrasts them with the staggering totals of the souls still in need of the saving Gospel in our day.

To assess that need properly we proceed to the second part of this essay:

II. The Great Need for Extending Our Mission Endeavor

A. The Present Situation

It will be difficult to believe that, after 1900 years of Christian witnessing, the need for extending the mission endeavor is far greater than ever before! The proportion of Christians in the world is on the decline! In fact, there are 500,000,000 more pagans on earth than there were 25 years ago. The rate of this pagan increase is now 30,000,000 annually! Less than 30% of the world's people are classified as Christians!

This is true despite the fact that there are 130% more Roman Catholic missionaries, and 33% more Protestant missionaries than there were in 1925, and the Christian population is also increasing. How, then, can these statistics both be true? The answer lies in the population "explosion" which is going on all over the world.

Time Magazine reports in its issue of April 18, 1960, "The number of Christian missionaries in the world is at an all-time high—38,606 Protestant missionaries as compared with 29,188 in 1925; 51,000 Roman Catholic missionaries as compared with 22,477 in 1925. Yet, while the Christian population of the world is growing (845 million of the 2.8 billion people in the world), in proportion to the total population, it shows a slow decline!"

⁴ Our *Apache Mission* was the first heathen mission of the Wisconsin Synod begun October 4, 1893, when the missionaries Adaschek and Plocher were ordained. —Ed.

The statistics for all the Lutheran church bodies of North America as to foreign missions are not impressive; but it is encouraging to compare the figures for 1959 with those of 1956:

	1956	1959
Ordained, expatriate missionaries	529	553
Ordained national missionaries	687	907
National lay workers (not ordained)	12,301	10,288
Baptized members	719,096	966,989
Expenditure from Home Boards (annual)	\$5,242,184	\$8,387,185

(Figures published by the *Lutheran Foreign Mission Conference*)

H. C. Meyer in a soul-searching article in *The Minaret*, June, 1960, entitled *Rethinking our Mission Outreach*, writes:

“Recently there has been considerable publicity given the population explosion in the world. Unfortunately the heathen population of the world is growing faster than the Christian population. They are multiplying, while we are barely adding. Inspire of increased mission interest, increased mission offerings on the part of Christians everywhere, and marvelous success which practically all Christian denominations report, the gap between the Christian and non-Christian world is widening steadily. In 1929, 37% of the world’s population was classified as Christian. Today (1957) Christianity can claim only 32%. (And in 1959—less than 30%!) What we must remember is that the Christians who constitute 32% of the world population are not equally scattered on a one out of three basis throughout the world. Whereas in the United States it is one out of two, in India, with its half billion people, it is one out of thirty-three. Is it any wonder then that the Secretary of Missions of our Synod asked in his report to Synod at San Francisco last year: ‘Is our present vision and program adequate? What hope do we have to win a world in a time of population explosion?’

“Is it not time that we rethink what we are doing for the spread of the Gospel in heathen lands, as compared with what we are doing for the spread of the Gospel at home? When we think of the fantastic number of unreached heathen in the foreign fields, is it fair to use the limited funds we have available, for establishing and building new churches where we are strongly represented? Should preference in the use of mission dollars be given people who have conveniently and without much effort heard the Gospel for years, in order that they may continue to hear it in comfort and ease? Or should preference be given those people afar off who have never had the opportunity to hear the Gospel? Someone has said, ‘Why should anyone hear the Gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?’”

Can we conscientiously justify the widespread building of grand church and school structures with all the most modern improvements, often favorably vying with tax-supported institutions, in view of the growing, unanswered world need for missions, and in view also of the failure of many well-established churches to meet their fair obligations for the support of world missions?

Articles are appearing and more frequently, written by serious men, who demonstrate that at the present rate of growth, the day will come soon, when there will not be bread enough for the population of our globe:

“During the first 15 centuries of the Christian era, the sum of mankind increased from roughly 250 million to 450 million people, or an average growth of 135,000 persons each year. *That increase is now being accomplished each day!* And the increase of the next four years, it is estimated, will be as large as the growth during the fifteen centuries! More important is the fact that 4/5 of the present annual increment of 50 million people is occurring in the areas least able to cope with the consequences of large increases in population” (And, we might add, with the least representatives of the Christian faith!). [From *United Church Herald*, July 14, 1960, p. 4.]

Reading these dire predictions one is reminded, of course, of the Word of our Savior, “Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (John 6:27).

Much more serious than the impending shortage of bread is the alarming fact that at the present time we are not producing and training enough workers for the Kingdom to give the world’s millions of unconverted,

starving peoples the Bread and Water of Life before they rush headlong into eternal woe! Terrible is that famine and that thirst! “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord!” (Amos 8:11).

And we Lutherans, we whose souls are satiated with the rich fare of the pure Word for, lo, these 450 years, what have we done and what are we doing to satisfy the hunger and to still the thirst of these hundreds of millions whom the Lord has laid before our door with His charge, “Give ye them to eat!” (Matt. 14:16)? Are our plans and provisions adequate to take care of the assignment He has given us? Are we willing to stand before Him and say we have neither the men nor the means to do more in foreign missions, when He who has commissioned us says, “I will be with you,” and when He asks us, “When I sent you ... lacked ye anything?” (Luke 22:35).

B. Our Responsibility

We are assembled here to study the Word of God concerning the Doctrine of the Church, into which God has graciously called us by faith and holy baptism. And it is right and proper and God-pleasing that we should do so.

But are we fully aware of the implications of such study? Are we going to be satisfied with a mere study, and no more? Will we shine and polish the jewels and treasures of our doctrinal hoard, remove the tarnish and blemish, and then store our wealth away in learned words and heavy tomes? Will we be like the miser who opens his treasure to gloat over his possession and then hides it from the eyes of men?

Of course not. Having the precious heritage of the sound doctrine, we must put it to work as a valuable talent we hold in trust for others to share and rejoice over with us. We will realize anew here with happy, thankful hearts how graciously the Lord has bethought Himself of us unworthy sinners, and we are going to study how to invest our talents so that through them and our witness the Holy Spirit may win many other souls for His kingdom. This is our solemn obligation, for the only way both to deserve this sacred trust and to preserve it for ourselves and our children is to give it away, to share it with as many others as possible. That is the spirit of Christ. “And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (Isa. 49:6).

C. The Imminence of World Catastrophe

The final consideration, which makes the need for extending our mission endeavor extremely urgent in our day, is the uncertainty of the future, fraught with the possibility of catastrophic demolition, poised over all of us as precariously as the sword of Damocles. Added to this is the apparent certainty that we are rapidly approaching the Day of Judgment.

All the world is an armed camp, from the perpetually frozen wastes of the North Pole to the steaming jungles along the Congo. Our intercontinental ballistic missiles are zeroed in on the population and manufacturing centers of our enemies, while theirs are aimed at our cities and centers of production and commerce. Jet planes on both sides of the curtain are on a 24-hour alert, their bomb bays loaded with more destructive power than was detonated by both sides in the entire First World War; mobile missile platforms, in the air, on the sea and under the sea, are flying incessant missions to intercept or to hurl back devastation at split-second notice, so rapidly and accurately that the human brain and nerve are inadequate to trigger them off effectually. Think of the cost of just one of these “missions” of destruction as compared with the total annual cost of our Gospel missions!

As children we loved to sing,

*Weisst du, wieviel Sternlein stehen
an dem blauen Himmelszelt?*

Today men have changed that number which seemed so unshakably fixed and constant, and they have put new planets at least temporarily in their courses around the earth and the remote sun, achievements which stagger the imagination and border, at least on the part of the atheistic scientists who boast that a society which has produced these marvels has no need of God, on defiance of the Almighty. Some of these satellites soon will be, and some already have been armed with devices of horribly sudden destructive power, poised to come screaming down to the earth at the wink of a radioed signal to hurl hundreds of thousands of human souls into eternity to face their Judge unshriven.

The horror of the present situation is too enormous to comprehend, its potential damage and suffering beggar description. The human mind has no point of reference by which to grasp it, so it rejects it, or lives in fatalistic fear and helplessness. Never, never before were the words of our Lord Jesus regarding the horrors of the last times as understandable as they are today, “*Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth*” (Luke 21:26).

And the learned men, and the brave men, and the statesmen of all the world are filled with *Ratlosigkeit!* The English “helplessness” does not express it quite as well. They see the horror which threatens to engulf us all, but Cassandra-like, they are helpless to avert it. They grasp for this expedient and that, sitting around the green-topped tables of diplomatic conferences, but no solution is found. 99% and more of the earth’s inhabitants would like to call a halt to the mad race, driving ever closer to the brink, but there is no stopping, no way back. The mad *Hexentanz* whirls on into the vortex of doom. Man’s insatiable quest for knowledge and power having unleashed the primordial force locked in the atom, a veritable Pandora’s box of calamity is being disgorged upon the hapless race of man who, like the sorcerer’s apprentice, finds himself powerless to banish the spirits whom he conjured up. One crisis after another, emergencies in ever more maddening succession and frequency prevent or abort reasonable approaches to a solution of the terrible enigma.

Ratlosigkeit! Indeed. But there is One who has counsel for the children of men, whose very name is called, “Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

And we know Him, and we know the way to Him. And we have His promise, sealed in His own blood, that when we speak His Word of peace, it shall accomplish that which He pleases and bring to the sinner the peace that passes understanding, the peace of sins forgiven, the peace of a blessed end and everlasting bliss with God through Christ. Here, in our hands and on our lips is the answer to the world’s fear and perplexity. The Lord has broken up the hard, stony soil of men’s hearts through His judgments; to us He has entrusted the pleasant task of sowing the Good Seed now while the time is opportune and the Day of Grace is fast drawing to its close!

Is there an urgent need for us to extend our mission endeavor today? Let us rather ask:

“Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The Lamp of Life deny?
Salvation, oh, Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim
Till earth’s remotest nation
Has learned Messiah’s name!” (495)

This is a most opportune time for us to redouble our mission effort; this is a time like that described by Paul at Ephesus, “For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (I Cor. 16:9). Alas, that is also the case in our day; the Lord has given us an open door, but there are many adversaries. These we will do well to consider carefully.

III. The Adversaries and Obstacles in the Way

A. Atheistic Communism

The adversary which leaps first to our minds is one of fairly recent origin, the world revolution known as Marxist Communism. Aside from its other declared objectives, Communism has been hostile to religion from the beginning. Karl Marx described religion as an opiate and as a counter-revolutionary force. In 1928 the Comintern declared, "One of the most important tasks of the cultural revolution, affecting the wide masses, is the task of systematically and unswervingly combating religion ... the opium of the people" (*Blueprint for World Conquest* as outlined by the Communist International. *Human Events*, 1946).

The hostile attitude and persecution of its own citizens for the sake of exterminating religion are well known. This hostile attitude is at the same time an almost completely effective means for checkmating the missionary strategy of the Christian Church in one-fourth of the populated area of the globe today!

The Iron and Bamboo curtains are not only impenetrable for us, but they have effectually sealed off the hundreds of millions of people contained within them from contact with the "free world" which still has the Gospel of Christ, unhampered by human ordinance or hindrance. Inside the Communist dictatorships two generations have now been "brainwashed" in a godless atmosphere. The alarming fact is that, despite the traces of religious life and experience still found in these countries, the totally irreligious life is quite generally and unquestioningly accepted as a matter of course.

This is aggravated by the fact that the Communist regimes have rolled up an impressive catalog of conquests and successes in the *Cold War*, engulfing one area after the other, and the further fact of the tremendous strides made by their scientists in the fields of theoretical and applied sciences. At the same time, especially in Russia, the standard of living has improved significantly with the result that consciences are dulled and the need for religion appears to be declining.

Even though the task will be a gigantic and most perplexing one, the Christian Church dare not write off as impossible the penetration of these vast areas with the Gospel. It is to the great shame of the Lutheran Church that we have been so remiss during the first hundred years of our history in America, years of blessing and opportunity, that we failed to be more active in establishing indigenous churches, especially in China, against this evil day. Without a doubt the Holy Spirit is still nurturing small groups of faithful believers behind the Bamboo Curtain who were called to faith through the agency of the few Lutheran China missionaries. We cannot give up before we earnestly make an attempt to carry the Gospel somehow also into the Communist countries, for we have our Lord's promise, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" the confession of His name.

This subject itself would be worthy of the joint study of a group like the one here assembled from all over the world.

The sad story of the progress of International Communism does not end here, however. We shall encounter this hostile force more and more harassingly in the areas of the world which are still open to our missionaries today. Do we not read the handwriting on the wall in Africa, Asia, in South and Central America? Eleven years ago a Belgian doctor helped us to find some "gasolina" for our mission safari wagon just west of Leopoldville in the Congo, and told us that Communist agents were already working among the Africans. This summer we have witnessed the proof of the success which they achieved. In 1957 we were alarmed at the demonstration of Communist strength in the May Day parade in Tokyo which blocked our passage from the city; this year the Reds succeeded in preventing our President from making a state visit to Japan! How long will we still be able to preach the Gospel in the free world of our day?

The attack of Communism is not confined to national fronts; its most telling damage is done insidiously from within. Intellectuals who crave the spice and excitement of this new ideology, religious leaders by the hundreds who are involved in "social Gospel" organizations, affiliated with and brain-trusted by Communist tie-ups, labor leaders who in their unscrupulous drive for power have admitted Communist agents into their ranks—all these are burrowing from within to sap our strength and to condition us for ultimate Communist control according to the "Blueprint for World Conquest."

Even ordinary citizens, while vociferously protesting their love for freedom and Christianity, have unwittingly, yet just as effectively given aid and comfort to this most vicious foe of their freedom by being so preoccupied with the job of making a living and of making this life more comfortable, safe and pleasurable, that they have as little interest and thought for their Church and their Savior, as though they were already living in a totally atheistic culture.

Hand in hand with this attitude goes the neglect of the means of Grace and of the Christian obligation both for the home church as also for the extension of the Church through missions. When this spirit prevails, Christian missions go begging.

B. Antichrist

In some, even Lutheran, circles it is considered not only old-fashioned, but in rather poor taste thus to designate the Pope of Rome. In fact, the new rapprochement with Rome is the fashion and order of the day in many Protestant circles.

The Roman Church is now, as she always has been, the great enemy of the free Gospel of Jesus Christ and as such a real obstacle and adversary for our mission endeavor to win the world away from the futile attempt to achieve righteousness by the Law rather than to accept the righteousness of God, imputed to us by the merits of Jesus Christ.

In late years the trend of the Papacy, rather than toward the Biblical *sola Scriptura, sola Gratia, sola Fide*, has been away from this firm foundation of Christ and the apostles. One doctrine after another has been promulgated by the Pope, on his own authority, denying and contradicting the clear Word of Scripture. While Protestant churches have watered down and soft-pedaled doctrine in the interest of false union, and have by that very process conveniently begun to emasculate themselves for the prospective unilateral rapprochement with Rome, the Pope has intensified emphasis on traditional dogma and reasserted that the *sine qua non* of eternal salvation is obedience to his dicta.

Even though Rome today appears to be the greatest spiritual force athwart the advance of atheistic Communism, a careful study will reveal that we are confronted with two tyrannies, one open and brutally antagonistic to freedom, and the other, far more subtly, and therefore far more dangerously, enslaving conscience and robbing the blind follower of eternal freedom.

Let us never underestimate the power and purpose of Rome. She has weathered so many storms and tides in history, yet she endures. Movements like the Reformation have shaken her to the very foundation, but she recovered, today ruling the thoughts and lives of more people than ever.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* writes in the article on *Papacy*, —Pope Sixtus V in 1588 “built the foundations of that wonderful and silent engine of universal government by which Rome rules the Catholics of every land.” And this rule is the rule of Antichrist, and let us never forget it nor let ourselves be beguiled into imagining that the situation will change this side of Doomsday! “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that as god he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (I Thess. 2:3, 4).

By what standard do we complacently consider entire areas of the world as not in need of our Gospel missions, because they are under the care of the Roman Church? Transferring their idolatry from Buddhist and Shinto shrines in Japan to those of Mary and the saints—is that conversion to Christianity? Superstitiously putting their faith in Catholic charms and amulets in place of their old tribal jujus—is this bringing the freedom of Christ to the natives of Africa? Let us disabuse our minds of the illusion that we can relax our efforts in foreign missions, or count that area Christian where the agents of Rome and her policy of “accommodation” are active. Shall we apply a different criterion for the need of a Lutheran Church in a foreign land than we do in our own country?

C. Mohammedanism

This movement which once threatened to overrun all of Europe, is on the march again in an aggressive missionary crusade, especially in Africa. Its agents, like their scimitar-swinging forebears of old, are sweeping down that continent with a fund of tens of millions of dollars behind them.

The recent surge and spread of Islam are apparent to one who revisits Africa after a lapse of a decade, and one asks for an explanation of this phenomenon.

The fact is that Mohammedanism is riding on the rising tide of nationalism which has engulfed all of Africa, heralding its faith as the only truly indigenous African national religion. Its tenets are so adaptable to the primitive, polygamous culture, so tolerant of animistic superstition, and so expressive of the need for demonstrable performance and ritual on the part of the devotee, that it is winning ready acceptance among those who are striving frantically to outlaw everything foreign and reminiscent of colonialism and are raucously raising the battle cry of "Africa for the Africans." Mohammedanism, they say, unites Africans also in religion, while Christianity, represented by so many diverse groups, is being accused of having delivered the African people into the hands of their exploiters for centuries.

The inroads of Islam, especially in Nigeria, Ghana, and the other countries above the Equator, are making the task of our missionaries doubly difficult, since they must win the African not only from his native superstition, but from the acquired and often patriotically oriented Mohammedan error as well.

D. False Ecumenism

Another formidable enemy of the Church in the extension of her missionary effort in our day is false ecumenism, as it has developed in the religious world. This is not to say that an ecumenical movement in the spirit of Christ and on the basis of Holy Scripture is out of place. On the contrary, when Christian people of the same faith and confession find one another, they have the duty to unite in one, concerted effort for the sake of the Truth. The true believer in Christ will always be happy to confess his faith and to discuss it with others with a view to such ecumenical unity on the basis of the Truth, "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15).

Nor is this to say that there are no Christians in the present, false ecumenical movement. The fact is, that, although a man may jeopardize his faith and seriously place the sincerity of his confession of Christ into question by Scripturally improper associations, he may be a true, even though misguided, Christian. On the other hand, the fact that there are true Christians in a given movement, does not make such a movement God-pleasing, if its public declarations and associations do not comply with and give expression to the Truth of Holy Scripture.

In view of the fact that the present ecumenical movement was inspired and promoted by unsound interdenominational associations of missionary agencies, we cannot expect that anything but confusion and opposition of her Christ- (and its salvation-by-grace) centered position is to be found in this world movement. Permit a brief quotation from the essay of Prof. George Lillegard, presenting a statement of the *American Council of Christian Churches*, organized to counteract the radical *Federal Council of Churches*:

"The projection of the proposed *World Council of Churches* has given ample evidence that those who believe in an infallible, inerrant Bible and the whole counsel of God revealed therein cannot be a party to that body. Its use in its leadership of prominent Christ-rejecting and Bible-contradicting ministers, its championship of the inclusivist church displaying complete doctrinal indifferentism, with believers and unbelievers partaking of the Communion, its union with Greek Orthodox churches with their idolatrous mass, superstitions and intercessions to the Virgin and the saints, its open invitation to the Roman Catholic Church to join, and its deceptive use of traditional Christian phrases while denying the historical meaning thereof—all combine to project an organization which will be expressive of apostasy and filled with abomination. The untold harm which such a body will do in misleading the nations, in opposing the pure Gospel, *in closing doors to faithful missions*, and in inviting socialism and political intrigue with the State can hardly be overstated."

The practical, adverse effect of this has already been felt in at least one of our world mission areas. When our Lutheran Church in Rhodesia, only a few months ago, found it impossible to join with the other denominations active in that country in a plan for allocating areas, or to yield to their insistence of cooperation in the work, we soon experienced difficulty in securing consideration and approval for a projected expansion of our work in that area from the authorities. Thus, the world federation of so-called Christian churches must also be listed as adversaries and obstacles to be overcome by us in preaching the pure Word in our world mission enterprises.

E. The Millennialists

Other church groups which are presenting serious hindrances to the extension of our mission endeavor are the *Jehovah's Witnesses* and the *Mormons*.

In several of our world fields we have made the experience that these groups do not confine their overbearing missionary zeal to the heathen populations, but try especially to proselytize among the young Christians who are still too poorly indoctrinated to defend themselves against their tactics of glibly quoting Bible texts, misinterpreted and torn out of context. They are proving to be very difficult and elusive to deal with in our foreign fields, yet do an untold amount of damage.

The fanatical zeal with which especially the *Mormons* are operating through self-supported teams of lay workers in foreign fields is truly remarkable. Its members, the men after 21 years of age, and the women after 26, are expected to assume a mission assignment somewhere in the world. The Mormon apostles permit them to express a preference as to where they would like to go, but they are required to finance their own trip and mission of two or three years personally, leaving their families in the care of others who may have performed their mission previously. The fact that they, like the *Russellites*, respect no confessional commitment on the part of their poorly instructed prospects, frequently brings confusion and havoc into a new Christian community, and eventually, as in Africa, gives rise to a rejection and discrediting of the Christian religion itself. In Africa the ultimate result of this type of proselytizing is to drive the illiterate people either into the ranks of Islam, or into open cynicism and hatred of everything European.

F. Indifferentism

As serious as are the above-mentioned adversaries, there are attitudes within the Christian Church and her members which, because of their insidious nature, prove even more effective in counteracting the God-pleasing extension of our mission endeavor. One could give these attitudes various names, yet they all spring out of the same basic sin of Indifferentism. Beginning with the spirit of indifference to what God has said in His holy Word, as in the original sin in the Garden of Eden, indifferentism spawns monstrous progeny. Two of these products of indifferentism, unionism and secularism, form a vicious circle, difficult to isolate, or to combat unless by a return to the simple obedience to the Word, "It is written."

This spirit of indifferentism quite naturally has affected the interest of the church in true missionary activity for the sake of carrying out the command of the Lord and of winning souls for Christ and for life everlasting. Instead, the church is interested in producing results and demonstrable progress, an activism foreign to the seeking and saving attitude of Christ prevails. Imposing organizations and establishments take the place in missions of the humble, peripatetic activity of the apostles, preoccupied with the wooing of souls for Christ. The mission activity is merely a reflection of the secularization of the church at the home base.

The church has arrived. No longer small and poor, no longer merely tolerated, but popularly encouraged and assisted, as long as it goes along with the Masonic spirit of tolerance and fraternalism and soft-pedals the hell-fire and brimstone, salvation-by-the-blood-of-the-Lamb religion of a former, less sophisticated day. It is allowed to be heard and to raise its organized voice in world affairs; it pontificates on the burning issues of the day, whether these be social, economic or political. In certain areas it considers its duty the endorsement of and open propaganda for political candidates. It is a power to be reckoned with.

The church has become well organized. It vies with national and international institutions in its smoothly functioning bureaucracy, a bureau for this and for that, for publicity, public relations, social service, lobbying in the legislative halls of the states and the nation.

The church has become rich. Phenomenal, indeed, is the fast pace at which new churches and schools, on the elementary and secondary and college levels, are being built, vying with tax-supported institutions in modern construction and equipment. Matching the buildings, the staff of many modern churches reflect the state of affluence. Many ministers and teachers are well paid, social security or a good pension plan take care of their declining years with the result that many retire to a comfortable existence at the age of sixty-five. Directors of music, and in some cases, even choirs are hired to insure professionally acceptable performances for the Sunday morning audiences.

But sad to say, hand in hand with all this “progress” walks a spirit foreign to the Church once “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20).

It is the spirit of growing indifference on the part of the individual member, the local congregation and the larger church body toward “the things which belong to thy peace” (Luke 19:42). With death and destruction terribly imminent, there is yet little real concern about the things of the spirit and of the life to come. Christians are hardly distinguishable in their conversation and life from unbelievers. Instead of concern for the pure Word and doctrine and its faithful proclamation, laymen often decry and defy their pastors, who as a matter of traditional habit, are still pledged to loyalty to the Word of God, and ask them to “ease up” on doctrine and to “join up” with forward-looking movements which are finally “putting the church on the map.”

And the pastors and teachers, the watchmen on the walls of Zion, how much are they affected by the spirit of the times? How much are they careful and troubled about the many things extraneous to their real calling, the things of social, recreational, community service matters, instead of being shepherds of the flock of Christ and preachers and teachers of the full counsel of God unto salvation? How much of their activity today is mere business, and how little of it the “Father’s business”?

And our churches and synods, how deeply are we moved by the plight of the heathen, rushing headlong into eternal doom without the Gospel; how much of the spirit of Christ is in our hearts as we plan our budgets for this or that improvement and embellishment? “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). While the eleventh hour has already struck, how much time are we frittering away in our churches and synods with activities and services which lie way out on the periphery of our responsibility and duty as a church, while the burning, central issues are neglected and our church bodies are slipping into indifferentism, secularism, and unionism? This is one of the most destructive, enervating trends in the church today. This is the spirit that kills the mission initiative and prevents the answer to our daily prayer, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.”

Recently our churches have witnessed a movement, called, “Preaching, Teaching, Reaching,” which was designed to rouse our people and their leaders to greater awareness of their stewardship of the Gospel, of their spiritual gifts and material means. The effort seems to have met with more than sporadic success in increased church and communion attendance and in greater concern for witnessing for Christ at home and abroad. It is to be hoped that it will result in a sustained spiritual activity, primarily, to a return to the importance of the study of God’s holy Word and obedience thereto, as in the days of our fathers, also to a stripping off of the extra baggage we are carrying today in our churches in social activities, and an earnest assumption of the tremendous task of carrying the pure Word to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people before it is too late!

IV. Practical Proposals to Do the Work More Effectively

A. Arousing the Church to the Task

It is not a matter of indifferent importance to extend our mission endeavor today. *Our Lord depends on us to do it faithfully.* “This gospel of the kingdom *shall be preached* in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14).

Upon this activity on our part the Lord has made to depend the eternal weal or woe of our fellow human beings, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?” (Rom. 10:13–15).

“Away then, you blood-bought Christians, away from incessant preoccupation with transient things, your moil and your toil to make this life more attractive, safe and untroubled; away to your posts as footsoldiers in the ranks of the Lord Jesus;—

“Away, you leaders and churches, away from the labor and concern for embellishing your physical plants, your social services; away to prayer and the earnest study of the Word of Life, and a real, a worthy effort to bring in the harvest of souls for the Lord Jesus!

“Remember, the task is hardly begun, and we are losing the advantage every day. Today 94% of all ordained Christian preachers serve the 9% of the world’s population which speaks English and which is (at least statistically) already converted to or within easy reach of the Gospel. 96% of all the money spent for the world’s Christian work at home and abroad is expended among this 9% of the world’s population. And, yet, over ½ of the world’s people today have never even heard the name of Jesus!” (From *Christ for the World*, Glendale, Cal., March, 1959.)

The words of Professor August Pieper are as applicable today as when he read them to the Wisconsin Synod convention forty-two years ago:

Unsre bisherige Mission war eine erbärmliche, kleinliche Stümperei, Pfsucherei ohne Feuer und Kraft. Jede Synodalversammlung ist es, als fragten wir uns, Wollen wir eigentlich, oder wollen wir eigentlich nicht? Ein halbes Herz, ein halbes Werk, ein halbes Resultat! Wir haben gearbeitet als träumten wir. Maria ist über dem Sitzen zu des Herrn Füßen eine müssige Träumerin geworden. Sie hat sich das blosses Hören angewöhnt, ihr Ohr ist stumpf, ihr Herz ist gleichgültig, ihre Hände und Füße sind schwer, faul geworden.... Auf, auf, Maria, reibe dir den Schlaf aus den Augen, schüttle dir die Müdigkeit aus den Gliedern, es ist Zeit an die Arbeit zu gehen! Siehst du nicht, wie es sich draussen vor deiner offenen Tür um dein ganzes Haus herum drängt und schiebt von einer unabsehbaren Volksmenge, die auch etwas hören will von dem Herrlichen, das dein Herr Jesus dir ins Herz gegossen hat? Siehst du nicht die Millionen von Kindern, die da warten, dass du sie auf den Schoss nimmst und ihnen in der christlichen Gemeindeschule wieder erzählst, was dich so entzückt und selig gemacht hat? Ach, siehst du denn nicht die blitzenden Augen tausender braunköpfiger Jünglinge und die verlangenden Augen tausender blondlockiger Jungfrauen, die, von deinem strahlenden Antlitz bezaubert, so gerne dein Gnadenevangelium gründlich kennen lernen und sich auch dann in dessen Dienst stellen möchten in Kirche und Schule, um dasselbe weit hinein in die Menge zu schreien, die dein Haus umdrängt? ... Und es ist Zeit! Noch scheint die Sonne, noch steht der Tag. Aber es will Abend werden, und der Tag hat sich geneigt. Nur das eine grosse Ding steht dieser Erkenntnis und der Ausführung dieser Aufgabe im Wege: das irdische Interesse jedes Einzelnen unter uns, nämlich die Interessen des persönlichen Ehrgeizes—der Bequemlichkeit—des Geizes—des irdischen Fleischessinnes” (Synodalbericht, Wisconsin Synod, 1919, p. 58).

B. Developing Effective Methods for Doing the Work

This essay will not attempt to go into the subject of methods in detail, but, rather, to indicate and discuss them in a general way.

Indigenous Church

All the Christian church bodies active in foreign missions have now adopted the indigenous church policy in one form or another in their programs. Quoting from H. A. Mayer’s *Building an Indigenous Church*:

“It is now almost universally admitted that we cannot hope to evangelize the world by sending out missionaries only from the mother church. —And, even if it were possible to train and to send out enough missionaries, adequate funds to support them in the field could not be raised without bankrupting the church in the attempt. But more important than these considerations is the fact that we can never hope to build a strong church in the mission field unless we teach the church to stand on its own feet.”

Under “Mission Policies” the *Handbook of the Board for World Missions* of the Wisconsin Synod has this to say: “The mission fields will achieve the full measure of joy only when they support a part, or even all of the work in their midst and may, in turn, help to carry the saving Gospel to others. The Church has been exhorted by the Lord ever to expand and extend her missionary activity (Isa. 54:1–4); yet she may be prevented from so doing unless the mission fields gradually achieve self-support, both as to men and means.”

This involves, T. Stanley Soltau in *Missions at the Crossroads* writes, that the national church early become “self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating” (p. 20).

Thus St. Paul seems to have done in his mission activity, “confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And, when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, *they commended them to the Lord*, on whom they believed. And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia” (Acts 14:22–24).

It is evident that Paul never even dreamed of sending financial support to any of these missions for the preaching of the Word; he received none for himself, but, although he had “the power,” he earned his own bread with his hands (I Cor. 9), and very soon encouraged the new Christians to send a collection for the relief of the poor at Jerusalem (I Cor. 16:1–3).

That the churches thus founded were also expected to begin soon to carry the Gospel to others is not only quite clear, as in Acts 13:49, “And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all that region” (That is, from the center, Antioch, where Paul had begun in Pisidia). It is also reported in the case of the Thessalonian congregation by Paul, “For *from you sounded out the word of the Lord* not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad, *so that we need not to speak anything*” (I Thess. 1:8).

This indigenous church program of St. Paul may appear to have been deficient in thorough indoctrination of the new Christians before Paul saw fit to leave them and to move on to a new area. However, we may not overlook the fact that St. Paul worked apparently far more closely with his catechumens under the direction of the Holy Spirit than we may do today. “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not” (Acts 16:6, 7). “And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them” (vs. 10).

On the other hand, we dare not overlook the further fact that St. Paul was dealing, in general, not with heathen people only, but among them also with Jews who had the Old Testament, and with it a very thorough training in the Law and the Prophets, the Word of God, which had all the elements and clear statements of the Gospel in it in prospect and promise, even though much of it had become distorted and obscured by a legalistic interpretation and fleshly understanding of the promises. Also, it must be remembered that St. Paul kept contact with his congregations through return visits whenever he could and through formal epistles devoted almost exclusively to doctrinal exposition. We dare not be influenced, therefore, to do slipshod and superficial work in our foreign missions in the interest of evangelizing the whole world more speedily.

The Thorough Training of Missionaries and National Workers

The most careful selection of qualified men suited for the work in foreign fields is a most important premise for success. While we believe firmly in the divinity of the call, we believe just as firmly that the Lord

expects His Church to bestow this sacred vocation only upon those who meet the qualifications set up by the Holy Spirit (I Tim. 3:1–3).

The Lord has given to His Church many members with varying gifts for the specific purpose or service (*diakonia*) for which the Lord would use them. “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy ... or ministry ... or he that teaches ... or he that exhorteth ... he that giveth ... he that ruleth ... he that sheweth mercy” (Rom. 12:5–8).

Speaking of the gifts given to the Church St. Paul concludes, “But covet earnestly the best gifts” (I Cor. 12:31). The Church is not to select blindly in calling men into various fields of labor, but is to make the selection circumspectly “for the edifying of the body of Christ ... which is the Head ... from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:12–16).

This applies in a very special way to the foreign mission fields. In 1843 Ann Judson, wife of Adoniram Judson, the great pioneer missionary to Burma, wrote: “In encouraging young men to come out as missionaries, do use the greatest caution. One strong-headed, conscientiously obstinate man would ruin us. Humble, quiet, persevering men; men of decent, accomplishment and some natural aptitude to acquire a language; men of amiable, yielding temper, willing to take the last place, to be least of all, and servant of all; men who enjoy much closet religion, who live near to God, and are willing to suffer all things for Christ’s sake without being proud of it ... these are the men we need!” (H. C. Nitz, *Northwestern Lutheran*, Aug. 14, 1960, p. 263).

Unusual gifts are required for work in foreign fields, primarily, because of the temptations arising from isolation and from the desire to prove oneself successful to the home church. Just as there was a young disciple, John, among the Twelve, and as Paul chose young Timothy as his companion, we need the enthusiasm, the physical stamina and the fresh undisillusioned approach of the young men in the world fields. But just as Jesus chose also a Simon Peter, so it behooves us not to overlook the importance of experienced, matured, proven and established older men in these same fields. It is high time that the Church discontinue the practice of placing only young recruits into the front lines of her mission campaigns. Here is the place for veterans, successful, mature, experienced, proven and tested men who do not feel the need for approval, but who have learned how to wait for the Holy Spirit’s blessing upon their faithful witnessing. Much of our work would actually grow more rapidly into a proper, indigenous church, if we exercised the caution of being more deliberate and thorough in our choice of the men whom we send out to do the work.

During April of this year a revealing incident took place in our Nigeria mission. I was attending a service conducted in a small bush chapel by Professor Hein. After the service the pastor invited me to say a few words to the congregation. As I made my way between the people to the mud altar, I heard whispering and giggling which finally broke into laughter. Sensing that something about myself had caused it, I asked Pastor Hein to tell me. He said, the people are saying they are so happy to be able to hear an old man with white hair speak to them.—The same thing occurred at Lumano in Rhodesia when the twenty-one headmen requested me through the interpreter to send them more old men as missionaries.

Thorough Training

The training of prospective missionaries must go beyond the preparation of pastors and teachers for the work at home. For these latter, the training period will actually go on through the congregation and frequent contact with other, older brethren in conference and otherwise. But for the foreign missionary there is often no congregation or conference. And too often all the workers on the field are young men who themselves feel the need for counsel. The mistakes made in a foreign field initially are also of much graver consequence for the entire future of the mission. It is most difficult, for instance, to overcome the lack of proper, early training in a mission which has been mistrained to expect everything from the mother church at home.

This training of missionary prospects ought to begin long before the men leave for the mission field. The seminaries ought to have thorough courses, practically oriented for such training. Before leaving for the field the missionary and his wife ought to be carefully coached in the many things that are to be expected, those that are to be avoided in a given field and those that are especially to be acquired for more effective work, also for acceptance by the nationals in the area of their assignment. If possible, a beginning ought to be made in learning about the customs and the language of the area, something about the economy, the history, the culture, the government, and the religion.

And this training ought to continue when the man reaches the field. In most of the fields it will be possible to give the new man an opportunity to work as an observer and companion to an experienced man. Time ought to be allowed for a most desirable overlapping of tours of duty so that the new man may be properly introduced to his work and to his people.

Generally speaking, it is most essential for a missionary to learn to master the vernacular spoken in his field. Even with this accomplishment, he will be considered a foreigner, but it will certainly help him to offset and to overcome this obstacle and, above all, it will give him control over the wording of his Gospel message, as it is transmitted into another tongue.

This is most essential. The missionary cannot delegate this task to nationals who are not indoctrinated in Christian teaching, or he will live in constant uncertainty and with a bad conscience over the fact that he does not know accurately how his words, and the Word of God, are being transmitted to a people who have no knowledge of theological terminology and concepts. Usually the native interpreter has only a meager understanding of English and little or no theological training, and too often no equivalent in his vernacular to express the thought he has been told in English. My experience taught me that he has only a foggy notion of what is meant, unless one laboriously and concretely illustrates the point one tries to convey to him. Then he is further hampered by his own preconceived, false ideas of religion, stemming from his heathen background, with the result that, when he is called upon to explain a statement more fully to his hearers, he will involuntarily reach into his previous understanding for clarification and, almost inevitably, distortion of the point. He will also be tempted, if he is a willing helper who will try to ingratiate the missionary with the hearers, to supply his own, often entirely incorrect, explanatory commentary or phrasing of a statement which appears impossible or unacceptable to him or the people.

It can be done. The vernacular can be acquired with a little wholesome study and contact with the people beyond the merely professional conversation on Sunday morning or in formal classes. Uneducated, illiterate nationals do it, and children do it constantly. A houseboy served us at Johannesburg, who spoke English, very good German, French, Portuguese, plus three native dialects!

The thorough training, however, must extend without fail also to the nationals who are selected as helpers, interpreters, and future leaders of the national church. Even though this may delay entering into an area with a full impact at once, we dare not take the chance of committing the sacred Word, our most precious commodity, into the hands and mouths of pagan translators, interpreters, and sermon boys. Even though we must wait, the men who are sent out, even to read a sermon or to teach a Sunday school class, must be confirmed, proven Christians. St. Paul says to Timothy, "And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:2, 3).

Planning the Work

The areas of the support of the work by the national church, her early participation in the active preaching and teaching ministry, her early inclusion in the administrative deliberations of the staff, her enlistment in a program of propagating the work into other, contiguous areas, her participation in the preparation of a comprehensive Christian literature including the Bible and Catechism and hymnal, all these must be carefully planned and executed according to plan.

Here the wise Christian missionary organizer, carefully avoiding the error of the Roman Catholic missionaries in their policy of “accommodation,” will remember that, while the message of the Holy Scripture must be transmitted most meticulously and conscientiously, the outward forms, such as the offices, functions, organization, places and styles of edifices and interior appointments, garbs, rituals, hymn tunes and other things of only traditional and indifferent importance, are adaptable to the culture and the preference of the national church. Many a mission has remained a foreign enterprise and never gained acceptance by the nationals because the missionaries insisted on transplanting and imposing certain traditional, cultural, and ceremonial patterns which were unrealistic in the area in which they worked.

While the home board must accord the missionary staff in the field sufficient latitude for comfortable operation of the mission, the board together with the staff ought to have a clear understanding of the basic policies that are to apply and are to be followed, and the plans concerted upon between them ought to be carried out unchanged, unless they are changed by mutual consent. The relationship of the missionary staff in the field to the home board is that of Christian brethren who have voluntarily placed themselves under the jurisdiction of an officially constituted council of other brethren who are responsible to the home church for their administration of a foreign field belonging to that church. Insistence upon autonomy of action by the staff in the field is improper and disorderly, since the enterprise is not theirs but that of the whole body which has sent them.

Good planning will also keep the involvement of the parent body from becoming too prolonged and will reckon with the transference of the field to the new national church as soon as possible. It is obvious that, even though the Lord has given us a rich measure of material blessings which we have not exploited, and willing men and women to go out into foreign fields, we shall not be able to complete the evangelization of the world before Judgment Day, if we keep our mission teams too long in a certain field. We must carefully plan to avoid becoming too firmly entrenched in our expatriate administration and personnel.

To that end we ought to rethink our present policy of establishing or accepting the managership of schools in foreign lands, if these schools include the education of children in secular subjects and the preparation of detailed school reports to the government. While the schools may have gained access to fields and to the people in certain areas, and while they may be one means of reaching the parents and of training the future generation in Christian Truth, they have the tendency also to involve us too much and too long in an area and in activities that are only remotely involved with and implied in our Lord’s Commission to make disciples of all nations by preaching the Gospel to every creature and “teaching them to observe all things *whatsoever I have commanded you*” (Matt. 28:20).

Our plans for expansion of the work of missions must make provision in some way for us to move more freely and speedily into other areas of the unevangelized world. We must gird ourselves for the battle for souls on many more fronts than the ones on which we are now engaged. To that end we have the solemn obligation to retain the fellowship established on sound confessional foundations by our fathers, as long as it is consonant with the Truth, and then to pool our forces to a far greater degree than heretofore to accomplish our mission for Christ. Our responsibility to keep pure and undiminished the priceless heritage of the pure doctrine reaches heavily into our foreign fields where a departure from that firm foundation and a rupture of once firmly and confessionally united bodies will wreak indescribable havoc with souls not as yet well grounded in the Gospel. But, “if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (I Cor. 14:8).

Our Lutheran Church will have to be aroused to assume increasingly greater financial responsibility to discharge our full duty as faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ! Our synods will have to do more careful planning of their programs, at home and abroad, with greater consideration for one another and the large obligation we have to evangelize the world to avoid overlapping and duplication and unnecessary expenditure of the men and the means at our disposal. And, in a still greater degree, this must be done through a more fervent and concerted use of the tremendous power which the Lord of the Church has given us in prayer. Jesus Himself made use of this opportunity in His state of humiliation, to commune with His heavenly Father. And the subject of one of His most wonderful prayers was *for the success of our missionary efforts in His name*:

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

“And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word:

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:17–21).

Sadly we admit, much of our laxity, much of our half-heartedness, much of our meager success are due to that which the Spirit points out when He says, “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2). Let us take the Lord at His Word and pray the blessings of Him who has sent us upon the work we are so helpless to accomplish without Him: “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest!” (Matt. 9:37, 38).

“Lord, let our earnest prayer be heard,
The prayer Thy Son hath bid us pray;
For, lo, Thy children’s hearts are stirred
In ev’ry land in this our day
To cry with fervent soul to Thee:
Oh, help us, Lord! So let it be. Amen.”