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Lutheran Missiology

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Lecture One: Lutheran Missiology in the 16th and 17th Centuries

The Rev. Dr. K. Detlev Schulz
Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Indiana

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

I. Luther and the 16th Century

A. The criticsizers and their criticisms

Every historian knows that there is a certain historic contingency to theology no matter the period. In other words, no theologizing takes place apart from historic events and circumstances. The Reformation Era and the Age of Orthodoxy are certainly no exception to this rule; they were periods where faith and context coalesced giving rise to an understanding of missions that may be hailed as very uniquely its own. As we examine it we might consider it antiquated, particularly odd in its perception of world Christianity and the running of church affairs back home. Their point of view hardly resembles ours today. But what exactly were some of these historic and theological factors influencing the concept of missions? Ruth Tucker in a study on the history of missions describes the historical hurdles preventing a mission program as follows:

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

Furthermore, the Protestants did not have a ready-made missionary force like the Roman Catholic monastic orders.¹

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

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

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

B. The Eschatological Motif: Christ's Imminent Return

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

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

In terms of Luther's association with the return of Christ one may perhaps offer a few words of correction. Luther was extremely critical of the calculations of a close associate of his, Pastor Michael Stifel, who in a publication projected the exact date of Christ's return on the 19th October 1533 at 8.00 a.m. He thus turned down the request to write a foreword to this publication much according to the Augustine's irritated invective against his own contemporary calculators:

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

² *Ibid.*, 67.

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

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

⁵ Warneck, 15-16.

“To all those who make calculations ... ‘Relax your fingers and give them a rest.’”⁶ Ohm, as well, considers Luther’s doctrine of election and his eschatology as a reason for what he calls a “fatalistic-quietistic” attitude for missions. Luther would place everything in God’s hands to call His elect to salvation in His own way without summon to missions. Such an opinion, however, is really alarming to any Luther scholar for it imposes on Luther an alien doctrine of predestination that has more similarities with Calvin than with Luther. For the hallmark of the Lutheran doctrine of predestination is a conscious decision for the universal salvific will of God—against a restricted duality of the elect and condemned—that is extended to people all through the preaching of the Gospel.⁷ Elert calls this basis the impact of the Gospel (*evangelischer Ansatz*)⁸ on which Lutheran theologians wholly entrust themselves. It must be preached worldwide and as this is done sinners are called to faith through the hearing of the Gospel. And this Gospel makes no distinctions of the elect versus the damned in the context of history but addresses all equally with the words of their redemption in Christ.⁹

Certainly, Luther did at times open up his own personal dismay at the obduracy of the Jews and other heathens, such as the Turks, for rejecting the gospel, namely Christ, so severely as they had done;¹⁰ one often links these statements with his heightened sense for apocalyptic thoughts. But their hardening and obstinate stance towards Christ Luther attributed to man’s sinful nature and attitude, much less to God’s unpredictable hidden will in the history of mankind.¹¹ In this connection Luther’s harshness and choice of words, against the Jews especially, leaves much to be desired for and post-World War II scholars have been quick to jump the gun of falsely accusing him for sowing the seed of anti-Semitism.¹² As Luther aged and the end of the world approached, his opponents including the papacy, the enthusiasts and the Jews took on apocalyptic dimensions. They were seen to be under the wrath of God and used as the instruments of the devil to oppose the Word. Naturally, his harshness is not to be excused nor should it be emulated

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

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

⁸ Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*. Volume 1. Translated by Walter A. Hansen (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 385. ⁹ Bürkle, 44.

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

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

¹² His first tract in 1523: “*That Jesus Christ was a born Jew*” still reflects his conciliatory approach towards the Jews and hope of converting them. They should be given fair treatment rather than be dealt with like dogs as the opponents have done. Through kind instruction in Scripture many will be won over to Christ: “*I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from Holy Scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians ... They will only be frightened further away from it if their Judaism is so utterly rejected that nothing is allowed to remain.*” (LW 45, 200; see also his sermon on Matthew 4:1ff. held on February 14, 1524 in WA 15, 447, 11-22; Stolle 40). Luther hoped to Reform Judaism much as he hoped also to reform the church, and his suggestions for their fair treatment contributed much to them being tolerated in the territories. As the years passed his hopes for a reconciliation of Christian and Jews faded and with it also went his kindness and openness towards them. His letter “*Wider die Sabbather an einen guten Freund*” (WA 50, 309-337) in 1538 still reflects a moderate tone which soon turned to a bitter tirade in his last three tracts: “*Von den Juden und ihren Lügen*” (1543) (WA 53, 412-552) and “*Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi*” (1543) (WA 53, 573-648) and “*Von den letzten Worten Davids*” (1543) (WA 54, 16-100). His hope of their conversion had almost dissipated and their obstinate rejection of the word should be met with forceful measures from the government leading to their expulsion from the territory.

but it reflects a disappointment in his heart that is of a theological nature namely that the Jews continue to reject Christ and his word and have remained unwilling to reconcile with Christianity. And yet, despite such notions his overriding concerns for their salvation was not lost; his lifelong commitment to winning of the Jewish people to Christ was a missionary one, based on his discovery of the Gospel. He did not consider such mission at any time relieved, not even by an apocalyptic turn of the remnant to Christianity.¹³

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

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

This lengthy quote certainly portrays a gloomy and grim picture of the course of events in the world. But it reflects a reality that comes about with the rejection of the gospel, and in his time Luther considered that such a rejection against the gospel was taking place with greater intensity as it did in the past. Obviously, such sinful behavior would call upon God's imminent judgment with His patience wearing thin.¹⁵ It seems illogical, however, that this would instill in Luther a form of quietism. On the contrary, as the above quote demonstrates, Luther's reference to Romans supports a continual preaching of the gospel and with it came a sense of urgency so that "the fullness of the Gentiles may also enter into Heaven". In fact, the only means to curb the on-

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

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

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

slaught of Satan would be the preaching of God's word. It is the most powerful and only tool the church has at its disposal. Luther reminded the Pope of this who instead had resorted to brutal measures to address the marauding Turks:

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

It is unfortunate, however, that Luther's outspoken confidence in the Gospel was not matched with an unequivocal summon for action. But the historical reasons mentioned above would warrant such reticence and not the eschatological motif in Luther's life and theology. Luther clearly laid the proper foundation on which later Lutheran missions flourished once territories with heathen populations were accessible. The affirmation of the universal nature of the Gospel and the sending of missionaries soon becomes an important part of Lutheranism when doors were opened. But would Luther have endorsed such a sending if, as critics are saying, his view on the mission apostolate was so restrictive? We shall have to examine this position in some detail.

C. The missionary apostolate.

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

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

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

As a form of excuse to Warneck's indictment we are quick, as many have done before us, to point out the basic prevailing conditions then. We already mentioned how immersed the Reformers were in addressing issues at home, but an additional point in this discussion would have to be that the young congregations that emerged from the Reformation lacked the immediate perspec-

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

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

tive and reason for a missionary task. Still loyal to the *corpus Christianum* thinking, the onus of any ecclesial regulation which also includes foreign or overseas mission responsibility would have to lie on the territorial ruler or any other person or body of greater jurisdiction than that of the average believer.¹⁸ Entrusting ecclesial affairs to the government had indeed an inhibiting effect on missions. But territorial rulers soon took up missions where possibilities for it arose. One of these was for example the later beginnings of a mission activity under the territorial ruler of Sweden, King Gustavus Vasa who (1559) sent an individual by the name of Michael to bring the Gospel to the heathen Laplanders in Northern Scandinavia. Under the reign of King Gustavus Adolphus the Sweden mission was expanded in 1638 to its new colony “New Sweden” on the banks of the Delaware.¹⁹

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

What marked Luther’s contribution in this discussion around the apostolate is his concept of missions in association with the preaching office and the witnessing activity of the church. He promoted a view that understood the church to be constantly on the move and expanding through the work of the Holy Spirit as the Word is being witnessed in its vicinity and administered to it through Word and Sacrament. Luther saw no missionary concept divorced from the church but only tied to its ongoing life activity. Excerpts from his Large Catechism may attest to this: “The Holy Spirit continues his work without ceasing until the Last Day, and for this purpose he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work”.²¹ And just before he expands this thought:

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

¹⁸ Erasmus of Rotterdam “*Ecclesiastes sive de ratione concionandi*” already bemoaned *expressis verbis* in his tract the lack of enthusiasm for missions. Since Erasmus is still to be regarded part of the Roman camp, we agree that Warneck that he de dismissed as a good evangelical Protestant witness. For a long extract from the treatise of Erasmus, see Dr. George Smith’s Short history of Christian Missions, 5th ed., pp. 116-118.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁶ Stolle, 3.

Was not Germany converted eight hundred years after the Apostles, and have not islands and countries been recently found in which nothing of this grace has appeared in fifteen hundred years!²⁷

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

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

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

Here there rises a question on this passage: 'Go ye into all the world,' as to how it is to be understood and held fast, since verily the Apostles have not come into all the world, for no Apostle has come to us, and also many islands have been discovered in our day where the people are heathen and no one has preached to them: yet the scripture saith their voice has sounded forth into all lands [Luther refers to Romans 10: 18]. Answer; their preaching has gone out into all the world, though it has not yet come into all the world. That outgoing has been begun and gone on, though it has not yet been fulfilled and accomplished; but there will be further and wider preaching until the last day. When the Gospel has been preached, heard, published through the whole world, then the commission shall have been fulfilled, and then the last day will come.²⁹

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

The idea of many later theologians—that the church of the present time is no longer obligated to preach among the heathen, because of the apostles have already reached all among the heathen,

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

²⁸ Ibid.; Stolle, 64.

²⁹ Stolle, 15. This text was preached on 25. May 1525 (WA 17 I, 257-8), and then again on 22. May 1533 (WA 37 I, 77-78). (One may also see a sermon on Matthew 22:9 held on 22.10.1525, the Sunday before Simon and Jude: "Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you can find". There he states with regard to the preaching of the Gospel: "*It is still not finished. This time period continues in which the servants go to the streets. The apostles began, and we call together to the present day. The tables will be full when the advent of the Last Day arrives and the Gospel is known to the whole world.*" (WA 17 I, 442, 31-443,9); Stolle, 17. Warneck 14

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

because the apostles have already reached all—is totally foreign to him, just as it is to Melancthon.³¹

Luther's perception of the ongoing preaching in all parts of the world through Christian churches apart from an explicit sending might not offer a satisfactory solution to a problem in view of the magnitude of the heathen populations discovered. Should he not have been more explicit in the sending part? Scholars contend that in addition to confining the apostles' ministry, his concept of heathendom did not exactly spur him on either. Warneck's further indictment of Luther is that he had confined his concept of heathendom to the German situation. Other unbelievers outside the church hardly factored into his theological discourse. Indeed, it would be partly true that the Reformation was in fact addressing a semi-pagan situation at home—within the boundaries of baptism one may say—where heathen elements had resurfaced and their intrusions into the Lutheran doctrine had to be extinguished. To be sure there is also an existential component in Luther where the term heathen was also applied to himself and all Christians. Both he and all Christians emerged as the nations (*ta ethne*) of which the Great Commission speaks.³² But beyond this tunnel vision one should also add that Luther embraced the unbaptized and unbelievers in faraway places. There are thus no indications that Luther's term "heathendom" (*Heidentum / ta ethne*) was only confined to the Christian nations emerging apart from the Jewish nation or the unchristian elements within the church back home. This is evident from what we stated above, and this wider scope would even come to the fore in his exposition on Psalm 117 that Warneck uses for his argument.

[T]here are among ourselves, Turks, Jews, heathens, non-Christians all too many, both with openly false doctrine and terribly scandalous life ... *Wherever* there are heathen—or a country or a city—there the Gospel will penetrate and will convert some to the kingdom of Christ'. The Gospel and baptism must come to the *whole world*, and preach to the whole creation ... Christ is preached as far as the heavens and the firmament extend.³³

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

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

D. Concluding remarks

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

a. In view of reforming the Christian church, the *Corpus Christianum*, the missionary promotion of the faith was a subsidiary concern or role to the above. Luther did not have in mind a mission organization or a mission society promoting missions if that's what we

³¹ Ibid., 387.

³² Warneck, 12.

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

³⁴ LC III, 54 (Book of Concord, 447).

are looking for. But mission is not an illegitimate child of such a theological endeavor; it rather is strongly embedded in the theology of the Reformation. Luther's theology is a valuable source (German: *Brunnenstube*), as one writer put it.³⁵

b. The theology of Luther and the Reformation offers crucial initial approaches and aspects for a theology of missions. They are not explained and applied in view of an explicit missionary task, but they are foundational (axiomatic) for the understanding of the historic dimension of the church and constitute a prerequisite for our missionary action. I will mention four aspects to underscore this point: The **first** is the affirmation of the universal dynamic of the Gospel.³⁶ In the discussion of the eschatological motif, we have shown that the core belief of the Reformation was that of the universal call of the Gospel that continues in time throughout the world. The confidence placed in the Gospel and its teleology is backed by a theocentric outlook, a trust in God who through His word seeks the lost sinner, at home and abroad. We may state it slightly different. It is central to Luther's soteriology that the doctrine of justification is given a mission motif, since it explains and becomes the event of salvation: Through faith and not one's doing. And its missionary dynamic lies therein that it should not be stingily appropriated to oneself but that it points to the salvation of all of humanity. It embodies a freedom from sin and a transformation for those who are in need of salvation and in desire of it. In this sense the doctrine of justification bears also a motive for missions.³⁷ The **second** point is that though Luther considers the extraordinary ministry of the apostles completed, he sees its continuation through the church with the ministry of preaching and the witness of the laity. Though Luther does not summon for an explicit sending, he presents us a missionary ecclesiology. Through the preaching and teaching of the "*rite vocatus*" ministry and the witnessing of believers the church is in an outward motion as movement. Part of the Lutheran Reformation had been to dismiss an ecclesiology that seeks its validation in its hierarchy and a transplantation of it in the mission field. Church is rather an organism that exists in the preaching and administering of the word, and as a fruit of that activity the church continues to grow and flourish. The **third** component is the expression of faith in given contexts. The Reformation ushered in a process that has become the rule for any missionary endeavor. Until then, worship was much committed and tied to the Latin mass worldwide. Luther's demand that one should "watch the mouth of the people" (German: "*dem Volke aufs Maul zu schauen*") was not just a plea for the preaching in the vernacular, but it paved the way of establishing a self-expression of a faith of a people and its theological legitimization. Hearers should believe and understand what is being said and preached in their own tongue. Any mission endeavor is thus confronted with questions of hermeneutic, the interpretation and communication of its faith to the unbaptized. The translation of both Testaments into the official Saxon language, the publication of German chorales and hymns, the liturgy of the German mass, the adamancy of proper education and catechetical instruction at schools and being a church of the neglected masses, these and many other projects of the Reformation directly benefit the mission of the church as well.³⁸

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

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

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

³⁸ Bürkle, 45-46.

II. The scope of *rite vocatus* in 17th Century Lutheran Orthodoxy: Is it Parochial or universal?

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

⁴¹ Maurer, 192.

⁴² Excerpts of the Latin text are published in: Werner Raupp (Ed.), *Mission in Quellentexten. Von der Reformation bis zur Weltmissionskonferenz 1910* (Erlangen: Verlag der Evang.-Luth. Mission and Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1990), 61-62; Gröbel, 71. The English text is taken from: *Classic Texts in Mission & Evangelization. A Reader’s Companion to David Bosch’s Transforming Mission*. Edited, with Introductions by Norman E. Thomas (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 41-43. For further references one may also see, L. B. Smith.

Welz, whose theology and ideas embraced mystic-enthusiasm, we could perhaps understand some of orthodoxy's anxiety and attempt to vanquish any extraordinary mission propositions and as a defense posit against them the ordered life of the congregation and the proper installation of an office to the local setting according to Augsburg Confession XIV. In all these cases Lutheran orthodoxy challenged the indiscriminate, yes, naïve rendering of the apostolic office to its time without any important distinctions. For this reason all propositions for missions became subject to a barrage of criticism from Lutheran orthodoxy that might perhaps at times seem to be overly allergic and sensitive.

Lutheran Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism (including Hadrian Saravia)

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

The contribution of Hadrian Savaria to the doctrine of the nature of the church and its mission. Dissertation (Edinburgh 1966); Though Saravia takes his treatise as an occasion to argue for missions—especially in a chapter entitled "*Mandatum omnibus gentibus praedicandi Evangelium, Apostolis in coelum receptis, etiam Ecclesiam obligat*" ("The command to preach the Gospel to all nations binds the Church, since the Apostles have been taken up into heaven: for this apostolic power is needed")—a close reading of it soon uncovers the real purpose and underlying motive; it is not so much to appeal for missions but to argue for an episcopal constitution—not an exclusively Roman one—understood as a continuation of the apostolicity for today, against the Calvinistic form. He demanded that in the episcopacy which goes back to the apostles and Jesus Christ, the church of Christ possesses an undiminished inheritance of the apostolic authority which she requires for her own upkeep and completion of the for-all-times-applicable (perpetual) Great Commission. In Baptist-like hermeneutic, though guided with different set of motives, Saravia indiscriminately applies the historic dominical mandates to his context, and he does this by raising four statements with which Johann Gerhard, Johann Fecht (1636-1716) and Johann Georg Neumann (1661-1709) especially take up issue. On the Reformed side it was Calvin's successor Theodor Beza (1516-1605). (Raupp, 61). Here are Saravia's main arguments 1) "*It matters not at all that the apostles are said to have had extraordinary power; for indeed by the same reason it would be possible to deny anyone the power of baptizing and of preaching the gospel. For if they were extraordinary things with the apostles, they were not able to leave them to posterity; and the same reasoning demands that neither were they able to leave the authority for preaching the gospel or for baptizing after their own time.*" 2) "*For the command of announcing the Gospel to unbelieving nations referred not only to the age of the apostles, but to all peoples which might exist until the end of the world. Indeed, Matthew in his last chapter where the Lord says there is given to him all power in heaven and on earth, and here orders that, going they should teach all nations, etc., says: 'I am with you even to the end of the world.'*" 3) "*If the apostolic authority had been temporary, a purely personal and peculiar gift, and not intended for their associates and helpers, they would be present for the Lord's work for which they were destined. Yet since they knew their ministry and those things for which they enjoyed authority rather to have been given to the church than to persons, they understood the making of companions in their apostolic power, whom they also understood as their successors*". 4) "*It is necessary, therefore to have many helpers and colleagues for the Lord's work. And if they are not able to perfect it themselves, what is begun is left to those following to complete. And if indeed with the apostles there were to have migrated to heaven the apostolic deputation, and especially the care of several churches, the bishops whom the apostles left as their successors would have judged the further propagation of the gospel in no way as referring to them, and the kingdom of Christ would never have grown to such an extent.*" 5) "*Has indeed the gospel after these fifteen hundred years come to every nation? ... From such reasoning do I then conclude that the mandate of this deputation for preaching the gospel retains its force and obligation in the church for as long as there are peoples who do not know the Lord... The church therefore possesses this designated authority through the keys, which the Lord gave not so much Peter and his colleagues as to the church. It can then do today what formerly in the right circumstances it was capable of, namely of committing to [those] suitable for the purpose the office of preaching the gospel with apostolic authority". *Classic Texts in Mission & World Christianity*, 42; Gröbel, 71.*

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

⁴⁴ Gröbel, 8; Heß 92.

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

There is, however, an important point we should make to the above. Nicolai also adds in his survey the important notion that there is no perfect tense to such a preaching of the Gospel; it continues all over the world to this very day.⁴⁶ Does that mean that Nicolai is willing to accept the work of the Roman Catholic mission? Though mistakes and heresies existed, orthodoxy on the whole displays an astounding ecumenical openness by recognizing the work of their opponents, the Roman Catholics.⁴⁷ Orthodoxy had access to reports on mission work in the East where the Jesuits assumed a strong presence with individuals such as Franz Xavier in East India and Japan and Mathew Ricci in China. From a report in 1564 given by a Jesuit missionary to Japan, Johannes Baptista Montius, orthodoxy could ascertain that the Jesuit missionaries were making proper Christians. They instructed heathens in the basic and fundamental Christian doctrines such as the Decalogue, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and baptism, and abstained from the erroneous doctrine on the primacy of the pope, purgatory, on indulgences and merits.⁴⁸ The faculty of Wittenberg in 1651 thus concluded that the Jesuits were not making a Papist "much less a Jesuit, but a Christian just as we are".⁴⁹ Such ecumenical mindedness was not out of the ordinary for Lutheranism nor was it a wholesale dismissal of its own particular doctrine of beliefs. But Lutheran orthodoxy stood firmly rooted in the tradition of the Augsburg Confession (Article VII) and thus considered the Lutheran church as part of the church catholic in all parts of the world where the Word was preached and the sacraments rightly administered. Nicolai's ecclesiology in "*De regno Christi*" is a clear testimony to this claim.

Still, the efforts of the Lutheran Churches themselves could not be left unsaid either. Though modest in comparison to the grand project of the Romans, it was necessary to reject Bellarmine's argument that the Lutheran church lacked the salutary Gospel and failed to promote it, and thus is sectarian. According to Nicolai, the Lutheran church really comprised the heart and spiritual center of the church catholic through her preaching of the unadulterated Gospel and the pure gift of forgiveness. Moreover, the Lutheran church has also been engaged in the practical missionary task of translating the Bible and publishing Lutheran literature in all parts of the world. Thereby it will positively influence other denominations and take a foothold in other lands apart from those that are already Lutheran. Examples of such an expansion is already evident in the fervent translation projects of the Psalms, the New Testament, and Luther's home postil by Primus Truber (†1586) into the Slovenian language; a project enthusiastically embraced also by the Lutheran Duke Christoph of Württemberg.⁵⁰

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

⁴⁷ One should add in view of foreign missions work, that foreign territories were still not available in the 17th century. Colonies and foreign lands remained in Spanish and Portuguese hands and in accordance with the *cuius regio, eius religio* agreed upon in the peace of Augsburg in 1555, Lutherans had no claim on them. In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church pursued missions actively and expansively. To avoid disarray and confusion within the ranks of its monastic orders as to who is to go where, Pope Gregory XV in 1622 passed the "*Congregatio de propaganda fide*," to streamline its mission. Gröbel, 10.

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

⁴⁹ Gröbel, 84-89.

⁵⁰ Heß, 159-162. Johann Gerhard seconds this opinion in his *Loci Theologici*, Volume II. Locus XXII. De Ecclesia. Caput IV. An sit ecclesia. "Ex vocatione per verbum perpetuo durante recte colligitur ecclesiae perpetua collectio et conservatio"; with references to countries such as Iceland, Greenland and Lapland where thousands of people have been converted from their ethnic idolatry to the true God through particular Lutheran churches, their rulers and bishops. Ibid., V: 528: "in quibus regionibus evangelii praedicatione multa hominum millia ab ethnica idolatria ad verum Deum sunt conversa". Gerhard demonstrates further that the Augsburg Confession was handed to Emperor Charles V in both German and

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

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

Johann Gerhard (1582-1637)

A few decades after Philip Nicolai's famous tract, "*De regno Christi*", Johann Gerhard responded with his position in his famous *Loci Theologici* written particularly against the Roman Jesuit and controversialist Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) the claims made by Hadrian Saravia. For our task we shall examine specifically the chapter "On the ministry of the church"⁵² and on "Election and Reprobation".⁵³

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

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

Latin and then immediately translated in Spanish, Italian, French, Belgian and English and sent to the Pope and other kings and lords. In addition, when the Augsburg Confession was read aloud representatives from all nations in the empire were attending as well. In this way the Augsburg Confession became known to Christians all over in the ecumenical world. *Ibid.*, V, 427.

⁵¹ Heß, 160-161. Though Nicolai's missiological influence was lost in the 30 years war (1618-1648), two hundred and fifty years later Wilhelm Löhe revived his missionary ecclesiology by citing major portions of "*De Regno Christi*" in his *Three books about the Church*. Translated and edited by James Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969). One may also note that in loyalty to the Reformation and orthodoxy Löhe refrained also from an explicit sending of a missionary, for he, too, knew of no such office. Instead, he posited a missionary ecclesiology in its movement, missions is part of the life of the church to which the preaching activity is bound. For this reason the sending of individuals was thus not a sending of missionaries but really a handing over of their service to already existing churches and Christian colonies in whose midst their services would continue. Christian Weber, *Missionstheologie bei Wilhelm Löhe: Aufbruch zur Kirche der Zukunft* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996), 295.

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

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

miracles and the undiminished (_____) authority to which is joined the privilege of infallibility.

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

a) The proper authority of the apostles (*potestas apostolis propria*) is lacking in the church today. This unique authority, which included the commission to preach in all parts of the world and plant churches (*mandatum praedicandi evangelium in toto terrarum orbe ac ubique fundandi ecclesias*), is bound to the apostles alone. And Scripture shows (Mark 16:15; Romans 10:18; Colossians 1:6-23) that they have accomplished their task; in most parts of the world the Gospel has been preached.⁵⁶

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

In all of this we should however not forget to make a certain correction to a possible misinterpretation of the above. What Gerhard and all of the orthodox theologians also testified to, was

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

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

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

⁵⁷ Ibid., 146.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 146. A) The church does not possess the absolute gift of infallibility (*Infallibilitatis absolutae*). The teachings of the apostles were directly God-breathed (Greek: *theopneustos*; 2 Tim. 3: 16) and true in and of themselves (Greek: *autopistos*) and must therefore be afforded the same authority as the teachings of the prophets in the OT (*ac parem omnino cum doctrina prophetarum in V.T. obtinet auctoritatem*); B) The ability to perform miracles (*thaumaturgia miraculosa*) has passed with apostles as well. The apostles had received a special authority to perform miracles (Mt. 10: 1; Mark 16: 16). Included in this authority is also the ability to speak in tongues (Acts 2: 3). Therefore the special authority to perform miracles, the gift of languages and other extraordinary gifts of the Spirit no longer apply to the church. ("Jam vero donum miraculorum, donum linguarum et peculiaria illa Spiritus sancti charismata hodie non amplius vigent in ecclesia.")

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

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

It is true that the apostles were the last group of three to whom God gave His gospel to the world in its unrestricted form. Through Adam and the Protoevangel (Genesis 3:15), after the flood through the covenant of Noah (Genesis 9:9-11) and through the preaching of the apostles (Acts 17:30; Colossians 1:16). The reason why this universal gift of salvation is no longer amongst all people, is because past generations have rejected the preaching and have thus robbed not only themselves but also all of posterity of the salutary doctrine of justification. They have inexcusably brought damnation on themselves.⁶³ For this reason the sins of the parents and not the mercy of God are responsible for posterity's lack in the true knowledge of God.⁶⁴ But for Gerhard the fact that God once gave the Gospel to the world proves that God has no intentions to predestine a limited few. And so, the Gospel has a missionary dimension of wanting to embrace all of humanity for their salvation.⁶⁵ This universal call of the Gospel remains undiminished for it is a power to strengthen the church and have it gathered.⁶⁶ In fact, the church is taken up into it this universal gathering of the Gospel. More precisely, the instrumental cause through which this is done is the ministry of the church embracing the preaching and the administration of the sacraments.⁶⁷

Gerhard's affirmation of the continual universal call of the Gospel outlasting the historic apostolic office⁶⁸ raises the important question, what most suitable form of a ministry would then in his mind support such a preaching of the universal gospel? Here one senses the orthodoxy's predicament. We previously heard that Gerhard, as all of the orthodoxy, was reluctant to endorse a missionary and transient ministry divorced from its ecclesial setting. Only the pastoral office exists as the continued form of the apostolic ministry. That was evident from scriptural texts (Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5) and underscored by the sixth canon of the Council of Chalcedon which states explicitly that no one ought to be ordained absolutely but only to a specific church.⁶⁹ There

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

⁶¹ Ibid., 58.

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

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

⁶⁴ Ibid., 75: "Parentum ergo peccata, non Dei justitiam et misericordiam accusent".

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

⁶⁶ As Gerhard would say in his section on the church. Ibid., V, 279. Locus XXII. De Ecclesia. Caput IV. An sit ecclesia. "Ex vocatione per verbum perpetuo durante recte colligitur ecclesiae perpetua collectio et conservatio"; Stolle 23.

⁶⁷ Ibid., V: 281: "De Causa Efficiente, Principali et Instrumentali Ecclesiae": Therein he states: "Causa instrumentalis, qua Deus in collectione ecclesiae utitur, est ministerium ecclesiasticum complectens praedicationem verbi et administrationem sacramentum". He erroneously believes that Gerhard had lost the dynamic component still very much part of Nicolai's "De regno Christi", p. 16, footnote 2.

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

⁶⁹ Ibid., Locus XIII: De Ministerio Ecclesiastico, Caput III. De causa efficiente ministerii ecclesiastici. Sectio II. Quotuplex sit vocatio ad ministerium, 49: "[A] vocatione apostolica, quae potestatem docendi inter omnes gentes continet, distinctum est officium reliquorum ecclesiae doctorum,

is thus in the mission of the church no place for vagabonds, transient individuals who feel themselves called immediately, perhaps via an internal call as the Anabaptists and enthusiasts would or in the form of the Roman Catholic orders sent to regions where there is no church.⁷⁰ And yet one wonders why Lutheran orthodoxy did not exploit the full potential of their position. For would they not have been open to the sending of pastors to a specific ecclesial context and local setting in faraway places? Indeed, nothing seems to speak against such a concept of sending a ministry of preaching the word that could build on the foundation of the apostles not in its transient form but rather wherever churches have been planted. There they could continue to build on the preaching of the apostles and recover what has been lost to heathendom.⁷¹ Gerhard actually likens the cooperation between apostles and the preachers of the church to that of building a house. The former have laid the foundation of the house already but the latter may continue to build on that foundation.⁷² For this task the church has the power to call and the promise of Christ's continual presence.⁷³ Such a ministry though parochial could assume a universal dimension by being transferred to young Christian churches throughout the world. Thereby Lutheran orthodoxy would actively contribute to the call to preach the Gospel that resounds undiminished today as it did in the time of the apostles.⁷⁴

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

qui ad certas ecclesias vocantur nec habent absolutam potestatem docendi ubique in omnibus ecclesiis... inde in concilio Chalcedon. Can. 6. Statutum fuit, neminem absolute ordinari debere nisi ad certam et specialem ecclesiam".

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

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

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

⁷³ Ibid., 56 and 147.

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

⁷⁵ Ibid., V, 282: "Circa primum membrum notandum est, quod vocatio sit universalis respectu Dei mandantis, ut evangelium annuntietur omnibus hominibus, ac volentis, ut illud ab omnibus audiatur, et oblata in eo beneficia vera fide ab omnibus recipiantur; fiat autem particularis culpa hominum, primo quatenus quidam Epicuræo contentu verbum aspernantur, quidam etiam ministros eius persequuntur et violenter a se repellunt; deinde quatenus culpa majorum amissum verbum non semper in omnibus ubique locis actu praedicatur..."

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

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

Wittenberg Faculty Statement (1652)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁸⁰ Gröbel, 85; Stolle, 27.

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

⁸² Gröbel, 87.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 87.

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

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

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

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

Justinian (von) Welz (1621-1668)⁸⁵

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

In 1663 Welz published his first tract entitled “*De Vita Solitaria*” subtitled with the “*Hermit Life according to God’s Word*”.⁸⁶ Although this tract relates less to the missionary task itself, it reflects Welz’s missionary ideals in as much as they represent a quest to revive monastic holiness for missionary purposes. It reflects his source of influence: theologians such as Eusebius of Caesarea (260-339), Augustine of Hippo (354-430), but then also the medieval mysticist, Thomas á Kempis (1379/80-1471) and Johann Arndt (1555-1621), the most influential Lutheran devotional writer and promoter of a mystical tradition within Lutheranism. Welz encourages an

⁸⁴ Ibid., 87-88.

⁸⁵ Read: James Scherer, *Justinian Welz: Essays by an Early Prophet of Mission*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 7-46. Raupp, 82-92; Gröbel, 33-67, 134-139.

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

evangelical asceticism that shuns all trivial amusement and popular habits of food and dress for a life that rather seeks to dedicate itself in both will and spirit to God, like Elijah and John the Baptist.⁸⁷ There was a sense of urgency in his plea that reveals a strong eschatological motive. For wherever one has contact with men of this world one should witness to them of the impending judgment and of being mere strangers and pilgrims in this world. The elements of approaching death, the last judgment, pain and suffering should also exhort one to pursue spiritual discipline. But Welz had no intention to establish a new sect. He rather hoped to “counteract lukewarmness among nominal Christians, to arouse the slumbering, and to lead the erring from the path of destruction to the narrow path of salvation”.⁸⁸

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

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

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

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

Welz seriously questions the integrity of the prayers in the church when one asks for the erring to be led to the truth but has no action to match that request. This would also finally silence

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

⁸⁸ Scherer, 15.

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

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

⁹¹ “The Corpus Evangelicorum was a loose assembly of state counsellors [sic] representing the interests of some thirty-nine Protestant kingdoms and territories within the Holy Roman Empire.” Scherer, 17.

⁹² Scherer 59.

the papist's reproaches against the Lutherans "for calling ourselves true-believing and good Christians, and yet not once attempting to propagare our religion in distant lands".⁹³ He then sets forth a detailed proposal towards the establishment of his society and he also includes, almost as a form of concession, the ordination of such emissaries.⁹⁴ Of course, his proposal for a society should not be construed as something entirely new. Rather, he seeks "to renew the ancient and honorable enterprise of propagating the gospel through a society", more specifically the promulgation of the evangelical faith of the Augsburg Confession.⁹⁵ For this reason the society should become an instrument of an organized church that pious promoters from all spheres of society support.⁹⁶ Unlike his opponents, Welz would even concede to a second preaching built on those already done in the past, "for what can the miserable heathen do about the fact that their ancestors despised the preached word and thrust it away from themselves?"⁹⁷

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

⁹³ Scherer, 61-62.

⁹⁴ Scherer, 72.

⁹⁵ Scherer, 76 and 57.

⁹⁶ Scherer, 63-64.

⁹⁷ Scherer, 76; Stolle, 29-30.

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

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

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

¹⁰¹ This became evident from the rules he set down for joining his society. Those who wish to join "must also have learned true Christianity from God's Word, from Luther, from Thomas Kempis' first two books on the *Imitation of Christ*; from Johann Arndt's *True Christianity*, from Joachim Luetkemann's *Foretaste of Divine Goodness*, from Heinrich Mueller's *Heavenly Love-Kiss*, or from my simple writing called *The Hermit life*." Scherer, 84. The works of Arndt, Luetkemann and Mueller all stress in some form or another the mystical union between Christ and the believer; evidence of a movement that claims spiritual renewal within the Lutheran orthodoxy.

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

¹⁰³ Scherer, 82.

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

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

Johann Heinrich Ursinus (1608-1667)

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

¹⁰⁴ Scherer, 83. Welz obviously made a concession to the Lutheran orthodoxy. With such a plea he also raised an important element that was part the 19th century Lutheran Confessional Missions with Ludwig Harms and Wilhelm Löhe. One may see Johannes Aagaard, *Mission, Konfession, Kirche*. Volume I and II (Denmark, Gleerups, 1967), pp. 142-181. 526-723; Stolle, 32

¹⁰⁵ Some of the distinguished supporters amongst the orthodoxy were Johann Ernst Gerhard (1621-1668), the son of Johann Gerhard, Johann Konrad Dannhauer (1603-1666), and Michael Havemann (†1652). Gröbel, 45..

¹⁰⁶ Embittered by so much opposition Welz turned to Holland and had himself ordained as the apostle of the heathen, and in 1666 sailed to the Dutch colony Surinam and Essequibo in the Dutch Guyana, a northern region of South America, to those lost sheep among greater heathendom. There after perhaps two years he found his death by being torn to pieces by wild animals at the river Serena. His thoughts found no direct support apart from his immediate associates Breckling, Heinrich Ammersbach and Christian Gerber—though they soon materialized one generation later in the English and German mission societies. Gröbel, 52. One may note that across the Atlantic Ocean in New England the Puritan missionary and apostle to the Indians, John Eliot (1604-1690), had already the bible translated and published in the Mohican language

¹⁰⁷ "das Werk nicht praktizierlich sei", Gröbel, 48; Scherer, 18. Though dismayed and discouraged Welz was not able to remain silent for long and published his response to the decision at Regensburg: "*A Repeated Loyal and Earnest Reminder and Admonition to Undertake the Conversion of Unbelieving Peoples*". English text found in Scherer, 91-96. Original title: "Widerholte Treuhertzige und Ernsthafte Erinnerung und Vermahnung die Bekehrung ungläubiger Völcker vorzunehmen. Allen Evangelischen Obrigkeiten / Geistlichen / und Jesusliebenden Herten überschicket von Justiniano. In Amsterdam / Gedruckt bey Christoff Gunraden. Anno 1664". The site of its publication was Amsterdam since its censors in Germany would not pass it. Groessel, 48. In this tract he does not withhold with his own disappointment over such a hypocritical verdict as calling his work "impracticable" when the biblical mandate in Matthew 28: 19 is still so clear for today. Scherer, 96 and 93. Surely, they would have to be held accountable before the seat of God for their defiant objection. Obviously Welz recognized that those present had found no clear theological reason to reject his proposals. Obviously, his actual proposals for a Jesus-love-me Society would benefit both Germany internally through the proper established of education centers, just as much as it would benefit the converts in foreign countries, a combination of both inner and outward missions, of social and spiritual work combined. One may see here section three "An Unprejudiced Proposal for Setting Up a Missionary Society," in his tract "*A Christian and Sincere Admonition*," Scherer, 62-68; Groessel, 52-61; Stolle, 31-32..

¹⁰⁸ Gichtel later became the editor of the works of the German mystic Jakob Boehme. Though trained for a legal career he renounced it for a full time dedication for the missionary cause. Scherer, 17; Gröbel, 46-47.

¹⁰⁹ Text Scherer, 97-108; Original text: "*Wohlgemeinte, treuhertzige und ernsthafte Erinnerung an Justinianum*", Gröbel, 89.

¹¹⁰ Scherer, 100.

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

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

Conclusion

The Lutheran church of the 16th and 17th century struggled to safeguard its own existence from criticisms coming from both outside and within. It also lacked any contact and immediate access to heathen nations. The hindrances to carrying out its missionary task were therefore largely historical and circumstantial. Unfortunately, we find no comments of regret being made over such hindrances. Explicit statements or words of encouragement to pursue a missionary task are also absent. As I tried to demonstrate, the orthodoxy certainly did not deny that universal and salvific will of God and that he had entrusted the church with the Gospel for the entire world. They were even willing to make concessions to the mission work of the Jesuits so that an ecclesiology was presented that described God gathering believers into his church throughout the world through His word and sacrament. But they left mission to God and entrusted Him with the mighty task to decide when and in which way the Gospel should be brought to the nations. The Lutheran theologians did not pursue a sending of individuals mission project themselves. Even if such a project was to be initiated and carried through, the onus lay very much on the shoulders of the territorial government. But how could they as official regents of the church call ministers of the church to regions that were not theirs? Surely that would be a political violation of all peace accords with the Roman Catholic Church and its lords.

¹¹¹ Scherer, 101.

¹¹² Scherer, 102. It is true that Welz had been less explicit on these points. He withheld his information out of fear for an onslaught from the Romans.

¹¹³ Scherer, 102.

¹¹⁴ Scherer, 105.

¹¹⁵ Scherer, 103.

¹¹⁶ Scherer, 106: "...those whom God in Christ has chosen according to the election of grace will remain and God will save them (Romans 11:2-5)."

¹¹⁷ Gröbel, 90.

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

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

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

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