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A review of Hans Austnaberg's book examines typical sermons preached at churches in Madagascar within their social, political and historical context.

BOOK REVIEW

Improving Preaching by Listening to Listeners: Sunday Service Preaching in the Malagasy Lutheran Church by Hans Austnaberg

by Robert H. Bennett

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF MADAGASCAR has been the focus of many recent studies. What is so special about this church what makes it different from other church bodies? Why are so many people turning their attention to this Island? Until the last 10 years or so, very few people were aware of The Lutheran Church of Madagascar. For instance, the Lutherans in South Africa had no idea that just across the Mozambique Channel there were millions of Lutherans. It was not only the Lutherans of Africa that were unaware of the growth of the Lutheran Church in Madagascar. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod also seemed to be caught by surprise.

Historically, the Lutheran Church of Madagascar has been in fellowship with Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Both of these church bodies were not in fellowship with the LCMS. As a result of these fellowship issues, the LCMS understood little about the Malagasy Lutheran Church (Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy or FLM). Nevertheless, the liberalism found in both the ELCA and LWF had not penetrated the theology or practice of the FLM. As it turns out these people were not only Lutheran, but they were confessional and liturgical Lutherans. They had managed to avoid the influence of women's ordination, both their pastors and congregations continued to hold a high regard for the Holy Scripture and the teachings of Luther's Small Catechism.

The FLM continues to be a church body connected to the Word of God and the Sacraments of The Lord's Supper and Holy Baptism. During my PhD studies in

Madagascar, those I interviewed were constantly speaking in terms of the presence of Jesus attached to the Word and Sacraments. Moreover, *Luther's Small Catechism* was a foundational resource for the teaching of the Church. Nevertheless, one of the areas of study that was lacking in research was the content of the sermons. What were the people hearing proclaimed from the pulpits on any given Sunday in the congregations? Finally, there is a book that

answers this question, at least in part. Hans Austnaberg has done the church a great service by providing his book titled, *Improving Preaching by Listening to Listeners: Sunday Service Preaching in the Malagasy Lutheran Church*.

Austnaberg's divides his book into two parts. The first part of the book focuses on how listeners are hearing the sermons preached by their pastors. The second part of the book focuses on a homiletic discussion of ethos, logos and pathos. The island of Madagascar is a very difficult place to investigate due to logistical

and economic difficulties. Therefore, one of the benefits of this book is that it provides three examples of sermons preached in various churches throughout the highlands of Madagascar. To be sure, three sermons provide only an anecdotal understanding of the preaching life of the FLM. Nevertheless, these sermons are consistent with the sermons heard by other confessional Lutheran pastors who have visited churches on the island. Austnaberg uses these sermons to determine the answers to the following questions: How do the hearers perceive the message of the sermon? How do their responses match the intentions of the preachers? The research demonstrated that

The island of Madagascar is a very difficult place to investigate ... one of the benefits of this book is that it provides three examples of sermons preached in various churches throughout the highlands of Madagascar.

the pastors are very effective at communicating to their congregants. The author thoughtfully demonstrates this point throughout his book. However, some readers will find the listeners responses to be the greatest advantage of this book.

What did the listeners have to say? What did they believe the content of a truly Christian sermon should be? Were these sermons living up to their expectations? The author analyzes these questions through the matrix of ethos, logos and pathos. By ethos, the author refers to the character of the preacher. When referring to logos, he means the content of the sermon. Finally, when referring to pathos, the author refers to the ability of the ethos and logos to move or correct the hearer. To those who enjoy rhetorical studies this will be an interesting read. However, this book holds a greater treasure, namely, a glimpse into the psyche of the average person sitting in the pews of the FLM.

The author rightfully recognized the necessity of providing his readers with the social, political, and historical context of Madagascar during the time of his research. Madagascar was enduring a time of immense political and economic difficulties brought on by a political coup which exaggerated the poverty and famine the island had already endured. What would the listeners desire to hear from their pastors? Would they be sermons that focused on the political and economic problems of the day, or would they desire sermons based on the biblical text of the lectionary? Interestingly, the hearers were only interested in sermons that provided a biblical understanding of the texts and the proclamation of Jesus Christ crucified and risen for sinners. What about sermons that spoke to the problems of the day? None of the respondents thought it important enough to mention when describing their desired sermonic content. What about the use of stories in sermons? The listeners said that they could understand the use of stories at times, but such stories should only emphasize the biblical text and were not considered necessary. The listeners overwhelmingly made the point that they were not in church to “encounter the world” but to “encounter God” through His Word and Sacraments. What were the listeners’ thoughts about the emotional sermonic responses? While emotions will always be found in the hearts of those who hear the Word of God and receive his gifts, emotional appeals were looked down upon by those in the pews.

Much of what Austnaberg’s research uncovered is different from what many modern listeners in American

pews might suppose. One of the most striking differences was what the listeners said about preaching in general. When asked about how individual sermons “moved them to change,” they responded that while occasionally a particular sermon might lead to a change in their lives, change was an ongoing process, “through listening to sermons over a period of time.”¹ Therefore, the respondents found an ongoing participation in worship to be responsible for changing the individuals heart rather than a single well-crafted sermon.

In Part 2 of the book, Austnaberg begins a homiletic discussion in which he analyzes the listeners’ perceived character of the pastors (ethos), the content of the sermons (logos), and the ability of the sermons to get a “response” from the hearers (pathos). Briefly stated, in regard to what the researcher termed ethos, he found that the clergy were held in high regard by the people. However, if a pastor’s lifestyle was in conflict with his sermonic content, he would lose credibility with the hearers. What was the main content of every sermon (logos)? The hearers were clear, if the sermon does not preach Christ crucified and risen each week, it was not understood to be a Christian sermon. In addition, the sermon should be systematic in nature while dealing with the historical context of the biblical stories. Finally, concerning pathos, change is not something that is manipulated by the words of men, but comes through ongoing hearing of the Word and reception of the Sacraments.

As the Lutheran Church in the Western world continues to learn more of this faithful witness of the Lutheran Church of Madagascar, it might question if such reports are true. Yes, they are. Moreover, the Malagasy Lutheran Church has much more to teach us about how Confessional Lutheranism can flourish in the animistic /spiritual context now found in the Western world.

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¹ Hans Austnaberg. *Improving Preaching by Listening to Listeners: Sunday Service Preaching in the Malagasy Lutheran Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 118.

BOOK REVIEW

Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary by Greg Finke

by Geoffrey L. Robinson

THE REV. GREG FINKE in his book entitled, “Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary,” asserts that Jesus is on a redemptive mission to bring people to salvation by messing with them. This messing with them is done outside of the Means of Grace. It is done where one finds the kingdom of God. Finke invites one to join Jesus on this redemptive mission by getting into relationships with people and watching for God to act. When you see God act there may be opportunity for you to speak about your faith. The book is a call to action without pressure. The key is to just join in relationships with your neighbors.

Finke in this book demonstrates a passion for serving Christ and reaching out to the lost and erring, which is to be commended and emulated. Finke gets it right when he demonstrates throughout the book that sharing the Word of God is a relational activity. In other words, one must be in relationship with people to share the Word. Further, Finke points out that the people of God need to go out into the world and engage other people in conversation, so that they might have the opportunity to share the Word of God with others.

I truly appreciate how Finke points out the universal grace of God, in that God desires all men to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. There is no one whom God doesn't want saved. That is fact. I also am appreciative of Finke's assessment that our United States culture has changed from what it was in the 1940s and 1950s. He rightly, in my opinion, assesses the situation correctly, in that society isn't as friendly toward Christianity as it once was in the U.S.

There are, however, a number of things that make me hesitant to give a wholehearted recommendation of this book:

A key point made throughout is that Jesus is acting upon people outside the Means of Grace. The terminol-

ogy used by Finke is that Jesus is “messing with,” you or other people. This idea of Jesus working outside the Means of Grace pervades the book. Finke states,

“However, Jesus is saying that if, wherever we are, we will open our eyes and look at the people around us, we can know that the Spirit of God has already been at work in their lives long before we arrived on the scene. So, Jesus says, count on it and look for it. God's already been at work in their lives. They may not understand it. They probably don't know it is him. But God has brought many of them to a point where they are ‘ripe’ to encounter his good news. Jesus simply wants us to open our eyes and look for these people.”¹

And here is another statement that implies Jesus is working on people outside of the Means of Grace to draw them to Himself:

“Here's the mission lesson: If people are not ready, it is almost impossible to pick them. But once they are ready, they'll come looking for you. ... Jesus is in charge of ripening people. Our job is to watch for people who are ripe.”²

Further, Finke uses the kingdom of God in a new and novel way in his book, at least for Lutherans. Wherever God is present and active is where one can find the kingdom of God. Finke defines the kingdom of God in this way:

“A working definition for us could be: The kingdom of God is the redemptive presence and activity of God in human lives. To say it simply, the kingdom of God is God himself. Wherever God is present and active, his kingdom is present and active. So, in the beginning when God created the physical universe, and people particularly, we were

Although Finke's book rightly encourages the engagement of one's neighbors in a relational manner, the book is fraught with faulty theology.

¹ Greg Finke, “*Joining Jesus on His Mission: How to Be an Everyday Missionary*” (Tenth Power Publishing, January 26, 2014), 31.

² *Ibid.*, 33.

created to live with God and be in a loving relationship with God (Genesis 1–2). ... He put into play a plan to redeem and restore the created universe, and people particularly, to himself — or, as the New Testament would say it, to his kingdom. This plan of redemption and restoration is the mission of God.³

This is more akin to a Reformed understanding of the kingdom of God than a Lutheran understanding, which distinguishes between the kingdoms of Power, Grace and Glory. Lutherans do assert that the kingdom of power finds God actively ruling over His creation; they do not assert that this kingdom of power is the same as the kingdom of grace through which God operates to call people into saving faith. In Finke's book, there is no strong, clear and consistent theme of God coming to people through the Word and the Sacraments and calling them into the kingdom of Glory through these Means of Grace. In my judgment, Finke is wrong in how he understands the kingdom of God and redemption in particular. Finke writes:

“What does the kingdom of God look like when it is present and active in the life of someone living *without* the good news of the kingdom? When someone doesn't yet know, or understand or believe the kingdom has come and redemption is theirs? What does the kingdom look like when it is still ripening someone *toward* redemption? It will usually look like human need. It will look like where love, hope or redemption are *needed*. We can look around and ask ourselves, “Where can grace be applied? Where can a little love and truth make a difference?” For those living *within* the kingdom, love is the evidence of the redemption the kingdom has brought. For those living *without* the kingdom, human need is the evidence that the kingdom is near and working toward *bringing* redemption.”⁴

The problem with this definition is that there is no clear proclamation that the kingdom of grace comes

The objective justification of mankind is not a process; it is an accomplished fact. It is not something that is ongoing. Subjective justification occurs when an individual is called into saving faith by the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel. It is not accomplished by Jesus messing with someone.

where there is the Word of God and the Sacraments. Human need cannot be the evidence that the kingdom of God is near and bringing salvation. There is human need throughout the world. In many cases, this human need is where there is no opportunity for the proclamation of the Word to occur. This is due to the fact that there are places in the world where there are no appreciable amount of Christians. If the kingdom of grace comes through the Means of Grace, then it must be centered in the Word of God. Therefore, it is incorrect to say, “For those living without the kingdom, human need is the evidence that the kingdom is near and working toward bringing redemption.”

Another concern is that Finke implies in this book that Jesus Christ hasn't completed redemption for all mankind. Finke says:

“Think of it this way: every person you see around you has a length of life. You can imagine it like a timeline. They are born. They live their days. They die. And then there is eternity. Jesus intersects every person's timeline at various points during their life in order to begin a process of redemption and restoration to the kingdom of his Father.”⁵

And again Finke states:

“Jesus is on a mission. He is on a grand adventure to redeem and restore human lives to the kingdom of his Father. This is nothing new. Ever since he broke out of the tomb on Easter Sunday, Jesus has been on the loose, pursuing his redemptive mission, messing with people, ripening people, preparing people to be drawn back to the Father he loves. It's what he does.”⁶

And Finke further writes:

“From now on, Jesus said, redemption is on the loose. The full restoration of all things is in motion. The Spirit of God is on the move in the created world and will not be turned back until all things are made new.”⁷

³ Ibid, 75.

⁴ Finke, 86.

⁵ Ibid, 29.

⁶ Finke, 27.

⁷ Ibid, 80.

And again, Finke asserts:

“When Jesus arrived here, he unleashed the promised season of world redemption. It is happening now. Wherever God is redemptively present and active his kingdom is at work. We can seek it, recognize it and join with it.”⁸

The objective justification of mankind is not a process; it is an accomplished fact. It is not something that is ongoing. Subjective justification occurs when an individual is called into saving faith by the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel. It is not accomplished by Jesus messing with someone. The biblical teaching of the total depravity of man is compromised with this notion of Jesus preparing people and ripening them to accept Him as their Savior apart from the Means of Grace. The notion of ripening implies that there is some inherent good in a person that just needs some ripening to the point that one will respond to the Gospel’s call.

A final concern that I have with Finke’s book is that he seems to promote a determinism which isn’t Lutheran or scriptural. Finke claims in his book:

“Recently, I read that 30 percent of Americans know *none* of their neighbors. However, while that is the norm throughout the U.S., it wasn’t going to be an option for the Finke family. Why? Because we knew we were called to be neighborhood missionaries. Acts 17:26 says, ‘and God determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.’ Proverbs 16:9 says, ‘In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.’ We believe that, too.

So while there were all kinds of factors that played into our deciding to live in this specific home in this specific neighborhood in this specific part of the city, in the end we believed it was the Lord who had determined the exact place where we would now live. And for what purpose had he chosen this exact place? His purpose, of course: to redeem and restore all people, including people in our new neighborhood.”⁹

Finke exhibits faulty exegesis in making his point: Acts 17:26 is talking about humankind, not each individual. And using Finke’s logic, one must assume since God directs each man’s steps that God directs, robbery, rape, child abuse and so forth. Of course this isn’t true, since

God isn’t the author of evil.

Another example of determinism in the book is this excerpt:

“Imagine a person is 100 steps away from the moment on their timeline when they step into believing and receiving Jesus. If they are 100 steps away from their moment, they are not ready for the ‘Jesus step’ just yet (the step when they believe and receive Jesus). However, while they may not be ready for the ‘Jesus step’, they probably are ready for the “next-step” on the journey *toward* Jesus. And we need to remember the ‘next-step’ on their journey is as important as the final step on their journey to Jesus. The last step into Jesus’ arms can’t happen without all those ‘next-steps’ happening first.”¹⁰

God doesn’t determine everything that man does, like picking out a house and so forth. Man does have freedom of choice in the things not spiritual. A subtle determinism, I believe, pervades the whole of the book. This is evidenced by Finke’s working premise that a person’s salvation is on a timeline, (sort of dispensation-like) and that Jesus is messing with them outside of the Means of Grace.

The early church grew in large part because the Christians lived lives of service to their neighbors. Dr. Alvin J. Schmidt points this out in his wonderful book, *Under the Influence*, where he shows that the reason the Christian church grew in such large measure was due to the fact that Christians were different in their actions. They started hospitals, orphanages, geriatric centers and the like. They served their neighbors above themselves, and this enabled them to share the hope that was within themselves: “But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

There was no ripening process that I can see in my study of Christian history in the early centuries of the Church in the way that Greg Finke describes it. Rather, there was a radical difference between Christians and the rest of the world in the way that they lived, as they treated one another and served their neighbor and God above themselves.

In conclusion, I appreciate Finke’s efforts to encourage the engagement of people and in particular one’s

⁸ Ibid, 82.

⁹ Finke, 136–137.

¹⁰ Ibid, 34.

neighbors in a relational manner. I am thankful for his emphasis on the Universal Grace that God teaches in His Holy Word. However, I cannot endorse this book, due to the lack of emphasis of the Holy Spirit working through the Means of Grace to call people into saving faith, and due to the many theological concerns that I have explained in this review.

The Rev. Geoffrey Robinson is mission executive for the LCMS Indiana District, Fort Wayne, Ind.

BOOK REVIEW

Protestant Missionaries to the Middle East: Ambassadors of Christ or Culture?

by Albert B. Collver III

The Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver III
unpacks Peter Pikkert's 2008
book on mission work in the
Middle East.

Introduction

GEORGE SANTAYANA'S STATEMENT about history, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," is also true of Christian missions. Peter Pikkert, a South African Baptist minister and expert in the Arabic and Turkish languages, wrote a masterful description of Christian mission¹ to the Muslim in Turkey. He describes Christian mission work in Turkey to Muslims over the past 150 years and offers suggestions on how to approach mission work to the Muslim, based on history and his experience.

In the forward, Pikkert reflects on 25 years of living in the Middle East and offers a critique of Protestant missionaries who have been working there in some fashion since the 1820s. Pikkert's comments have as much to do with the changes in the mission endeavor as they do with mission to Muslims. The trends he notes are trans-denominational and even apply to Lutherans. First, Pikkert notes that Protestants fail to teach the history of missions. Missionaries often come to a place *De Novo* without recognizing that, with few exceptions, other missionaries preceded their arrival. Next, Pikkert notes two significant trends in Protestant missions: (1) The lowering of academic qualifications for missionaries ("dumbing down" in Pikkert's words) and (2) "While the number of career missionaries has decreased dramatically over the years, the number of 'short termers' going overseas has grown in leaps and bounds. This led to an erosion of the sense of cultural depth and understanding missionaries were

at one time in a position to accrue." Pikkert claims that these factors — in particular a lack of understanding and knowledge of missionary history in the Middle East — constitute one of the " 'civilizational clashes' between missionary and Muslim."²

Pikkert reflects on some of the theories as to why Christianity has not been more successful in reaching Muslims, ranging from Reformation theology, which saw Islam as an anti-Christ of the last times, to Enlightenment philosophy, which taught the doctrine of individualism as if it were a tenant of Christianity. Pikkert identified the Enlightenment and Western Imperialism as significant contributors to the culture clash

between the West and Islam. The other significant factors identified by Pikkert are internal to Islam — the

loss of submission and the loss of Muslim identity — which he also cites as factors related to the clash of ideas.

Next, Pikkert reviews some of the history of Christian mission in Turkey, particularly the so-called "Great Experiment" to reach the minority Orthodox Christians through education and medical missions. A part of this mission strategy employed by Protestant missionaries in the Ottoman Empire was to reach the Muslim majority by revitalizing the ancient Orthodox Churches.³ One of the challenges with this strategy is that the ancient Orthodox churches tended to regard Protestants as heretics. Another

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¹ Peter Pikkert. *Protestant Missionaries to the Middle East: Ambassadors of Christ or Culture?* (Hamilton, Ontario: World Evangelism Canada, 2008).

² Pikkert, 6. between the West and Islam. The other significant factors identified by Pikkert are internal to Islam — the loss of submission and the loss of Muslim identity — which he also cites as factors related to the clash of ideas.

³ Pikkert, 28.

factor was that the Orthodox churches had existed for centuries as a minority alongside the Muslim majority. Evangelism to Muslims was not part of the détente that existed for centuries. In some cases, the Protestant work among the Orthodox tribes led to catastrophic results and even genocide.

Another strategy employed by Protestant missionaries involved education. As early as 1824, the Presbyterians attempted to spread “Christian knowledge” by starting a school “for the education of Syrian females.”⁴ Ironically, the missionaries were more progressive about women’s rights than even Western Enlightenment society. This resulted in conflict not only among Muslims but also with mission societies back at home. Pikkert noted that Christian missionaries found the condition of Muslim women more appalling than other Western observers. An assumption of Western missionaries was that Christianity was healthy for civilization. The missionary endeavor was as much about civilizing the heathen as it was about spreading the Gospel. Pikkert notes, “Both theological liberals (social gospellers) and conservatives (fundamentalists) shared the assumption that Christianity was essential for a healthy civilization. Although at home the rift between conservatives and liberals would grow ever larger, on the mission field both were committed to the propagation of Western culture.”⁵ Sin became identified as ignorance. Reformed Post-Millennialism transformed itself into social gospel, making heaven on earth, that is, the benefits of Western culture and society. According to Pikkert, the propagation of Western culture rather than the Gospel of Jesus is the most significant factor in the lack of success of Christian mission in the Middle East.

Pikkert also reflected on education, a pillar of Protestant mission work. He notes in Istanbul, “The number of those educated in the mission schools was significant, totaling well over 100,000 students.”⁶ However, this Christian education did not lead to a single congregation being started. As a mission strategy, the education of Muslim

children did not lead to the formation of Christian congregations. He describes reaching Muslims via education as the “seeker sensitive” enterprise with the seeker being Christian minorities seeking to better their lives.⁷ The failed strategy in Turkey in the 19th century should provide a cautionary note for similar strategies being employed today.

Another factor in the failure of Protestant mission to the Muslims was the Muslim response to Protestant Christian propaganda literature, which often was liberal and promoted the superiority of Western civilization over Islamic culture.

One of the exceptions to the “Great Experiment” of the late 19th and early 20th centuries noted by Pikkert was that of the mission efforts of the Lutherans. The Lutherans deliberately tried to reach the Muslim majority. The Lutheran Orient Mission Society (LOMS), known today as Lutheran Mideast Development, decided in 1910 to reach the Kurdish people in present-day Iraq. The first LOMS missionaries arrived in Kurdistan on Sept. 6, 1911. The LOMS sent L. O. Fossom, a pastor; Dr. Ed Edman, a physician; and two nurses. Between 1911 and 1916, the LOMS

missionaries established a Kurdish Lutheran congregation. Fossom began his work by “producing a Kurdish grammar and translating into Kurdish the four Gospels, Luther’s Small Catechism, a hymnbook containing 100 hymns, and a Lutheran liturgy.”⁸ Later in the book, Pikkert will refer to this Lutheran model, particularly the establishment of a congregation and holding to a liturgical order, as necessary for successful work among Muslims. The model followed by Fossom and advocated by Pikkert is quite similar to the current strategy of the Missouri Synod: “Lutheran mission leads to Lutheran congregations.” Unfortunately, World War I brought an end to Lutheran mission work in Kurdistan. Shortly after World War I in 1920, Fossom died, preventing the work from resuming after the war. Pikkert notes that the Protestant missionaries had negligible effect on Muslim populations and established no permanent congregations.⁹

Another factor in the failure of Protestant mission to the Muslims was the Muslim response to Protestant Christian propaganda literature, which often was liberal and promoted the superiority of Western civilization over

⁴ Ibid, 29.

⁵ Pikkert, 30.

⁶ Ibid, 55.

⁷ Ibid, 57.

⁸ Pikkert, 70.

⁹ Ibid, 89.

Islamic culture. Islamic scholars took note of higher criticism that tore through Protestant Christianity. Islamic scholars would promote the unity of the Koran in contrast to biblical textual criticism that called into question the words of the Jesus, the prophets and the apostles. Muslims could point out to each other that the Christians do not even agree what the text of the Bible is, unlike the text of the Koran on which all Muslims agree. Besides demonstrating the devastating effect of higher criticism on the Christian faith, this should serve as a cautionary tale on how certain scholarly activities in biblical criticism, including textual criticism, are not helpful to the missionary endeavor. In essence, any scholarly, or so-called scholarly, activity that causes doubt about the words of Jesus and the Gospel is not helpful to the missionary endeavor.

Pikkert not only describes the 19th- and 20th-century history of Protestant mission in Turkey but also that of the early 21st century. He notes that in 2005 some 1,300 missionaries from 50 organizations and 20 countries were working in Turkey. Despite these efforts, Pikkert estimates there are only 2,500 to 3,000 Protestant Christians in Turkey.¹⁰ He also notes that despite some positive trends, “the number of missionaries who are theologically, linguistically and culturally properly equipped to share their faith with the Muslim majority ... remains pathetically small.”¹¹

Pikkert notes that while there are individual converts to Christianity, “Individual converts do not make a local church.”¹² Pikkert argues against the impulse that sharing the Gospel in and of itself without intentionally starting a church is enough. He notes that house churches inevitably fail in a Muslim context, once the founding missionary departs. However, when there is an intentional effort to create a worshipping community as a church, it can and does survive the service of a particular missionary (“The house church movement has not taken off in the Middle East ... They are more comfortable worshipping in a place designated for such a purpose than a house.”)¹³ He also notes that services must be in the indigenous language. Services in English do not allow for an indigenous church to form. Again, the model for successful mission among

the Muslims is to conduct a liturgical service in the language of the people and form congregations. This is a rather remarkable insight from a Baptist, since neither of these recommendations are part of the Baptist tradition. His model is compatible with the Missouri Synod’s emphasis that Lutheran mission leads to Lutheran congregations.

Missouri Synod’s emphasis that Lutheran mission leads to Lutheran congregations.

Finally, Pikkert offers recommendations for a way forward after reviewing the history, mission strategies and techniques of Protestant missions from 1800–2005. Pikkert writes, “Both an over-emphasis on mission as *Missio Dei*, as well as an over-commitment to saving the world in a social and/or political sense, undermine the role of the fledgling national church in missions . . . I have concluded that the primary focus of the missionary community in the Middle East, in particular, must be the establishment of a loving, accepting community of Muslim background Christians...”¹⁴ In other words, Pikkert says a church must be planted. He says that the mission enterprise must be “church centered.” Pikkert cites a survey stating why Muslims convert to Christianity. The top two reasons given: (1) A Christian lifestyle and witness and (2) Desire to experience forgiveness.¹⁵ Pikkert also notes Islamic worship is formalistic. Because of this “some Muslims enjoy this warmth of fellowship within the framework of the liturgical aspect of church life.”¹⁶ In contrast to a contextualized theology, which might lose the truths of the Bible, Pikkert proposes a “Church-centered New Testament Spirituality Model” for reaching out to Muslims.¹⁷

In summary, Pikkert presents a fascinating description of the Protestant mission effort to the Muslims (from 1800–2005), highlighting many aspects of failure while presenting a model that is not only compatible with Lutheran theology (planting churches), but one for which the Lutheran church might be the best equipped to undertake. When one considers the Finnish Lutheran mission work in Turkey, the Istanbul Lutheran Church, we see that they follow this model — planting a congregation, holding liturgical worship in Turkish, and providing

¹⁰ Pikkert, 241

¹¹ Ibid, 243

¹² Pikkert, 244

¹³ Ibid, 273

¹⁴ Pikkert, 252

¹⁵ Ibid, 253

¹⁶ Ibid, 263.

¹⁷ Ibid, 266

Christian community to Muslims who they come in contact with in their daily lives. Pikkert's book is well worth the read for anyone interested in learning about mission work to Muslims.

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