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THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

International Lutheran Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, October 6, 2011

by Timothy C. J. Quill

In The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and other Lutheran churches in North America, pastoral formation historically took place in residential seminaries.¹ This model was replicated on the foreign mission field where residential programs lasting up to four years took place on seminary campuses built and sustained by mission funding from America. The curriculum was similar to that used in American seminaries. Such mission seminaries include: India (Nagercoil), Nigeria (Obot Idim), Papua New Guinea, Ghana (Kaneshie, Accra), Brazil (Sao Leopoldo), the Philippines, South Korea, Hong Kong, etc. Scandinavian and German Lutherans followed the same approach in places such as Ethiopia (Mekane Yesus Seminary, Addis Ababa), Kenya (Matongo Lutheran Theological College, Sondu), Tanzania, South Africa (Lutheran Theological Seminary, Tshwane), Madagascar (six regional seminaries, i.e., Antsiribe), India, Indonesia, and so forth.

In recent years, the LCMS has been experimenting with new methods of pastoral formation such as Distance Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO) and more recently, the Specific Ministry Pastor Program (SMP). An article titled, “Lay Leadership Education in the LCMS Today” that appeared in *Issues in Christian Education* in 2004 describes twelve programs operated by districts of the LCMS that prepare lay leaders or licensed deacons for ministry—often explicitly referred to as “word and sacrament” ministry.² Similar paradigms have also been

¹ This is also true of Lutheran churches in Europe where theological studies take place primarily in the theology departments of the state universities.

² David S. Luecke, “Lay Leadership Education in the LCMS Today,” *Issues in Christian Education* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 6–11.

employed in international missions such as Meta-Church, Theological Education by Extension (TEE), lay leadership, Mission Training Centers (MTC), and theological education through the use of DVDs.

These leadership programs have been introduced into the mission field alongside or in place of the residential pastoral program. The rationale driving these changes includes: (1) The high cost of maintaining traditional residential seminaries in this day of shrinking financial resources, (2) The notion that curricula from Euro-American cultures should not be imposed from above but grow out of the needs of the local context, (3) The claim that educated African pastors do not want to go to isolated areas and are not welcome as part of the community, (4) The cultural expectations that highly educated clergy expect higher salaries,³ (5) The claim

³ Rev. Mark Rabe, LCMS missionary teaching in Otemo Evangelist School and Matongo Lutheran Theological College (seminary) in Kenya disagrees with the assertion that well-educated pastors won't or don't sacrifice. The average ELCK pastor's salary is \$36 per month, most of which is spent on transportation to their many congregations and preaching stations. Most pastors survive by growing their own crops and raising animals. Rabe's comments were made at a mission festival in Gresham, California, June 11, 2011. Missiologist Dr. Carl Rockrohr, who served as a missionary in Ghana 1993–98 and currently teaches at Lutheran Theological Seminary and the University of Pretoria, South Africa, posits that African pastors will return from America and go back to isolated villages and can be very faithful and effective pastors. A lot depends on the expectations of the national church body and the student before he begins his studies. Also, the pastor must be thoroughly mentored in his understanding of and commitment to the office of the holy ministry and mission of the church before he is selected to receive a higher education. Another factor to consider is that educated pastors are more apt to successfully return to a village in which the family has land, crops, and dwelling and is thus able to subsist on a limited income. Finally, it is the same in the United States. Some seminary candidates are willing to go anywhere. Most eventually end up as pastors in or near the districts from which they or their wives came. On the positive side, they understand the culture, whether it be in New York City, Iowa, California, or Alabama. Seminaries also play a

Mission, ministry and liturgy share a common owner. They all belong to God and through them he is active in creating and sustaining his church. Mission, ministry, and liturgy are inseparable. You cannot have one without the others. God has established no mission apart from the holy ministry. The ministry knows only the mission given to it by God.

that those who go off for higher education are not able to relate to their people when they return, (6) The claim that seminary education diminishes the evangelical zeal of the graduates, hinders rapid church growth, and fosters a maintenance mentality of the church, (7) The promotion of the “Everyone a Minister” movement.

It is not my intention to discourage participation or to diminish the positive contributions of the non-ordained laity in the witness, works of mercy, and life together in the church. This will be obvious when I address the topic of the royal priesthood. Rather, I wish to point out that (1) These movements or paradigms have often led to disunity and conflict in the church, (2) The divinely instituted office of the holy ministry is indispensable for any church whose ministry and mission is built on the means of grace—word and sacrament, and (3) It is my sincere intent to uplift, encourage and extol the royal priesthood as they serve the church and her mission in their God-ordained Christian vocation. It is my desire to encourage the dedicated Christian laity who fill vital positions such as “evangelist,” catechist, school teacher, deaconess, church musician, etc.

When I was in high school, while my father was teaching at the seminary in Obot Idim, I was free to explore the dense rainforests that surrounded the compound in southern Nigeria.

In the past two years I have been privileged on two occasions to teach at the Lutheran seminary in Accra, Ghana, as well as continuing education courses for pastors inland in Kumasi. On one of the trips I even managed to get away and wander through rainforests that were such an important part of my youth. For this reason I was immediately captivated by the analogy for theological education that appeared in an article titled, “Nurturing the Lutheran Church in Liberia’s Theological Ecosystem.”

The author, William Russell, describes bouncing “over narrow, washed out, dirt roads” through the rainforests on his way to teach at the Gbarnga School of Theology.

role in that they can shape a wider view for mission in students during their time on campus.

The seminary is located “in rural Bong County, some seventy miles inland, where the first Lutheran missionaries to the African continent concentrated their work.” Russell explains that his Liberian friends helped him to see how “Lutheran theological education in Liberia is like the rainforest.”

To the casual observer, the huge trees with canopies hundreds of feet in the air are the most prominent feature of the landscape. The giants are majestic, but statuesque. From the ground, not much seems to be going on up there. So one’s eye tracks downward to the lower level trees that provide nourishment (like bananas) and shelter (like palms) for those who live in the bush. From the road, the third level of the forest (the grasses, vines, and ivies) seems to flow like a river of green from those trees. Then we stopped and got out. As my friends led me into the forest, they helped me see what I would have missed from our comfortable four-wheeler: the rainforest floor was busy with life. Most of the creatures live on the ground, and the insects and microbes and bacteria that make the earth so fertile live in the ground. It is easy to miss all this action, but it is vital to the health of the whole. It is, after all, an ecosystem.⁴

Any attempt to organize a mission program, movement, or strategy must be consciously, intentionally, inseparably connected to the office of the holy ministry in which thoroughly trained pastors are properly called and ordained through the laying on of hands, word, and prayer.

The Liberians then explained the analogy. In Lutheran theological education, like the huge tree, the seminary is the most prominent feature in the theological landscape. The next level is the “clergy, with their theological degrees and ordination, who protect and nourish the life of Lutheranism in Liberia. As a group these pastors are intensely committed to theological growth,” which includes week long continuing education courses. The third level of theological education involves deaconate and lay evangelists who work under the oversight of ordained ministers. The fourth level takes place in homes, schools, and congregations. “Study groups, along with

⁴ William Russell, “Nurturing the Lutheran Church in Liberia’s Theological Ecosystem,” *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 17, no. 1 (Epiphany 2008): 69.

word-centered worship, directly touch the most lives in Liberian Lutheranism. ... In an ecosystem, all levels of life are vital to the whole.”⁵

What is true about the Lutheran ecclesial ecosystem in Liberia is also true in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, America, and the world over. The seminary is the heart and center of a healthy church, for it is the seminary that produces pastors who preach and administer sacraments and conduct liturgy. It is not only about pastors, but how *all the parts live together* in a healthy, growing, interconnected theological “ecosystem.”

In this way there will be a beautiful reciprocity in which the laity support those in the holy ministry and in turn are built up and served by their pastors. Therefore, I will begin with the biblical and theological foundation for the office of the holy ministry as it relates to the mission and worship of the church. Second, I will examine issues (including challenges and opportunities) facing theological education in international missions in the twenty-first century.

God's Mission, Holy Ministry, and the Divine Service

It is common to find books and articles that deal specifically with the individual topics of missions, the holy ministry, and worship. In actual practice, however, you cannot talk about one of these individual topics without the conversation involving the other two. God's mission, holy ministry, and the divine service are inseparably connected. “Mission,” “ministry,” and “liturgy” share a mutual reciprocity.

In the phrase, “*God's mission, holy ministry and divine liturgy*,” “God's,” “holy,” and “divine” all say the same thing. They indicate that all three *belong* to God. The *mission* to save the world from sin is *God's mission*. The Father chose, authorized, and sent his Son to atone for the sins of the world. The Son was given all authority and therefore called and sent the apostles, who in turn ordained other men to make disciples of all nations.

Paul thus wrote to Titus, “This is why I left you in Crete, that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint/ordain⁶ elders in every town as I directed you” (TITUS 1:5).

The apostle Paul reminded Timothy of his ordination, “For this reason I remind you to *fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you* through the laying on of hands,

for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 TIM. 1:6–7). Any attempt to organize a mission program, movement, or strategy must be consciously, intentionally, inseparably connected to the office of the holy ministry in which thoroughly trained pastors are properly called and ordained through the laying on of hands, word, and prayer. And so Paul also instructed Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift, which was given you through prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you” (1 TIM. 4:14).

In his farewell address to the elders (pastors) in Ephesus, Paul said, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (bishops)” (ACTS 20:28).⁷ It is thus not surprising that Acts 20:28 and 1 Timothy 4:14 are included in the *Lutheran Agenda* “Rite of Ordination.”

It is called the *holy* ministry because it was established by God and belongs to God. The inseparable connection between God's mission and God's ministers is clearly articulated in Articles IV and V of the Augsburg Confession.⁸

Article IV on “Justification” states:

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sins and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith.⁹

Article V, “The Office of the Ministry,” explains how this faith is obtained.

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases in those who hear the Gospel. (AC V, 1–3 [Tappert, 31])

The ordinary, regular, ongoing place in which the gospel and sacraments are preached and administered is in the divine liturgy. The sacraments are not administered without the preaching of the gospel. Preaching the pure

⁵ Russell, “Liberia's Theological Ecosystem,” 69.

⁶ Καταστήσης (aor. subjunctive) of καθίστημι (to appoint, ordain).

⁷ Ἐπισκόπους.

⁸ Articles IV and V of the Augsburg Confession form one of the best mission statements ever produced.

⁹ AC IV, 1–2, Theodore Tappert ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1959), 30.

gospel proclaims no other Christ than he who rose bodily from the dead and is truly present with grace in his body and blood in the sacrament. Thus, Christian worship, or the divine liturgy, is nothing other than the liturgy of word and sacrament, namely the liturgy of the gospel. Where the gospel is preached and sacraments administered, the Holy Spirit works faith “when and where he pleases.” “When and where he pleases” is mission language. “When ... he pleases” eliminates synergistic, Baptist, manipulative mission strategies and revival worship. “Where” applies to wherever the gospel, catechesis, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper are going on, whether here in America or overseas.

Mission, ministry, and liturgy share a common owner. They all belong to God and through them he is active in creating and sustaining his church. Mission, ministry, and liturgy are inseparable. You cannot have one without the others. God has established no mission apart from the holy ministry. The ministry knows only the mission given to it by God. There is no ministry without the means of grace which take place where two or three are gathered in Jesus’ name to receive his gifts and respond in faith and thanksgiving. There is no true worship apart from God’s mission and the holy ministry. Mission and evangelism are not separate activities independent from the liturgy. Certainly, there are evangelism, catechetical, and devotional activities (e.g. daily office) that take place outside of the actual divine service. But these flow from and back into the place where Christ has promised to be present with his preached word and his life-giving body and blood. “There is no separation between liturgy and mission. ... [W]orship is mission.”¹⁰

Mission, ministry, and liturgy share an intimate reciprocity. A faulty theology of missions leads to a faulty understanding in the holy ministry and a faulty theology of worship. Faulty theology leads to faulty practices. Good missiological practice must understand and be shaped by this reciprocity, as must all theological education undertaken in international mission fields.

Royal Priesthood

I was once making a presentation about the importance of seminary education for missionary pastors. When I made reference to our Lord’s mandate to the apostles in Matthew 28 as foundational to the task of pastors,

¹⁰ Thomas H. Schattauer, “Liturgical Assembly as Locus of Mission,” in *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*, ed. Thomas H. Schattauer (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 3.

an agitated layperson insisted that Jesus was not only addressing those in the holy ministry but all believers. It is true that Jesus’ words are, indirectly or in general, addressed to the entire church, but I pointed out that in the text, Jesus’ mandate was directed to the apostles, not to all believers.¹¹

I pointed out that Jesus was sending the apostles to make disciples. How are disciples made? By baptizing and teaching. So I asked this woman, “Have you been baptizing people lately? Have you been conducting the liturgy and administering Holy Communion lately?” A proper interpretation of Matthew 28 does not diminish the royal priesthood nor does it falsely elevate the office of the holy ministry to some elitist hierarchy.

The proper reading of Matthew 28 does not preclude the importance of lay people witnessing to others in word and deed, and certainly they are to bring their children to be baptized. Lay people support God’s mission prayerfully and financially. They teach and live the faith in their homes. They support the mission when they bring their children to be baptized and when they encourage their sons to enter the holy ministry.

For an excellent treatment of the distinction between clergy and laity, see *The Christological Character of the Office of the Ministry and the Royal Priesthood* by Dr. Jobst Schöne.¹² Schöne writes:

The Lutherans love it. They love their “royal priesthood.” They are very proud of it. ... For some Lutherans it seems to be almost as important as or even more important than the doctrine of justification. I think we are right in loving this royal priesthood. We are right in estimating it highly. It is indeed a precious gift and an important doctrine. Nevertheless, the royal priesthood is not immune from misunderstanding and abuse.¹³

Schöne begins by demonstrating the great value, dignity, and significance of the royal priesthood. Priesthood and baptism go together. One becomes a royal priest through baptism. Thus it is something that is simply received. To be reborn in Holy Baptism is to be reborn royalty. “The priesthood is not constituted by our activity or ability to be active or serve. It is constituted exclusively

¹¹ Matthew 28:16, “Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.” The twelve minus Judas.

¹² Jobst Schöne, *The Christological Character of the Office of the Ministry and the Royal Priesthood* (Plymouth, MN: LOGIA Books, 1996).

¹³ Schöne, *Christological Character*, 10.

by what our Lord does.”¹⁴ On the basis of 1 Peter 2:9, “But you are a *chosen* race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Schöne writes, “we learn from these scripture passages what makes people into priests. God elects them.”¹⁵ “He who speaks of the royal priesthood speaks of holy baptism. Holy baptism is our consecration or sanctification as priests.”¹⁶

The priesthood of the believers does *not exist* in order to claim rights and to compete with the office of the holy ministry. Instead, it exists in being a priest, which means *to be what we are*. To understand this statement we could read through the entire First Letter of St. Peter. It is an extensive explanation of how a priest in the new people of God lives. Be what you are: a Christian. Be a priest in your family, in your marriage, in your daily life, or whatever the circumstances are in which you live—a priest, a Christian.

One of the basic functions of a priest is to offer. 1 Peter 2:5 speaks of *offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God*. Luther explains this as *offering thanks and praise in prayer and devotion*.

A priest is [also] called to *pray for others*—for their salvation and for the whole world so that none are lost but all come to recognize the truth.

The royal priesthood needs the support of the office of the holy ministry and vice versa. The two do not exclude each other.

God gives talents to his church in many ways. Not all of these gifts are restricted to men in the ministry. Pastors are to serve with the word and sacraments. A lot of other things and activities can just as well be done by lay people as members of the royal priesthood. Sometimes pastors think they have to do everything. That is wrong. They should restrict themselves to what their real task is: to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, to absolve, to help people in their faith, and instruct.

¹⁴ Schöne, *Christological Character*, 11.

¹⁵ Schöne, *Christological Character*, 12.

¹⁶ Schöne, *Christological Character*, 13.

Many other things can be better done by members of the royal priesthood.¹⁷

Issues Challenges and Opportunities for Theological Education in International Missions

If you were sent to a new mission field in which the Christian church had never existed, what would be the first book you translate? The Bible, catechism, or hymnbook (i.e., liturgy and hymnody)? The catechism is necessary for teaching the faith and preparing catechumens for Holy Baptism. Baptism then leads to the Lord’s Supper, which requires a liturgy. The liturgical text consists primarily of passages taken directly from the Bible. To translate the liturgy is to translate the Bible, to translate those parts used by the church for prayer, that is, for a divine conversation between God and his people. To translate the liturgical lectionary is to translate the Bible. When translating the Bible, what book would you begin with—a Gospel? If so, which one? Matthew? Mark? Luke? John? When mission reaches the point where mature and gifted Christian men have been identified as future pastors, it is hard to imagine a seminary curriculum that does not include the entire Bible as a primary textbook for the preparation of future preachers, not to mention the catechism, entire Book of Concord, and liturgy.

Lutheran Churches and Lutheran Missions Use the Lutheran Liturgy

Almost every time the word “liturgy” is used in connection with “missions,” someone raises the question of the relationship of liturgy and culture. Should Africans be forced to worship like white Europeans or Americans? The integration of the Christian faith and worship into another culture is a sophisticated and complex art which goes by such names as indigenization, enculturation, and contextualization. Time permits only a few comments, which I hope will stimulate further thought into what is a very intimidating yet exciting and important aspect of theological education in the mission field.

What does or should Lutheran worship look like in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Madagascar, India, Indonesia, New Guinea, Japan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Brazil, Argentina, and Haiti? What should worship look like in North America?

In recent years there has been a desire among some Africans for an authentic African theology and African

¹⁷ Schöne, *Christological Character*, 15–17.

worship. Rightly understood, this is a commendable goal. Its weakness lies in that it is in many ways too expansive. It is more helpful to ask for an Ethiopian theology, Kenyan theology, South African theology, or possibly a Zulu theology, Ibo theology, Hausa theology, or Bantu theology. If one seriously desires an authentic and catholic “African theology,” then it should include the African fathers of the early church. The church fathers did their theology from a serious exegesis of Holy Scriptures, as did the Lutheran fathers. The Nicene theology is as much an African theology as it is European. Any attempt to create an African theology or African worship independent from the experience of Christians who have gone before (e.g., the early church fathers and Lutheran fathers) is sectarian.

Lutheran missions should lead to Lutheran churches with Lutheran liturgies. Witness leads to catechesis (which goes on both outside the liturgy and in the liturgy with prayer and preaching). Catechesis leads to baptism which leads to the divine liturgy. The Lutheran liturgy makes people Lutheran and keeps them Lutheran.

Lutheran churches in the mission context do not start from scratch creating entirely new worship forms in the name of American Christianity, African Christianity, or Asian Christianity. What I have observed firsthand in Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, not to mention in India, Indonesia, and elsewhere) is that what is often passed off as indigenous African worship is actually an “Africanization” of American Protestant “revival worship.”¹⁸ What should Lutheran worship look like? What should American, African, Asian, European Lutheran worship look and sound like? First of all, it should be clear that it has been shaped by Lutheran theology—in short, the gospel. And it should clearly confess, proclaim, and extol Christ and the gospel.

The challenge for all those involved in mission work is to train indigenous pastors in both theology and prayer. This means planting the liturgy in the local language and culture. This is no small task. It requires the translation and composition of liturgical texts that are biblically faithful and theologically correct and clear. It requires

¹⁸ I am using the term “revival worship” rather broadly to include a variety of forms of worship that go by a host of designations such as, evangelical worship, contemporary worship, Pentecostal worship, Charismatic, Revivalist, blended, emerging worship, etc. The taxonomy is so extensive it is difficult to find one title to describe this current phenomenon. The historical roots of this worship are found in the Reformed and Armenian theology of the immigrants who came from Europe and established churches along the eastern seacoast of America and across the Allegheny Mountains in the isolated American frontier in the nineteenth century.

liturgical texts and hymnody that are linguistically sound, poetic, and beautiful. It requires thoughtful attention to music, rite, and ceremony.

So let me return to my earlier question. If you were sent to a new mission field in which the Christian church had never existed, what would be the first book you translate? The Bible, catechism, hymnbook? Whatever your answer, books never stand alone, they require teachers. Great time and energy is given to teaching the Bible and catechism, and rightly so. But people also need to be taught how Lutherans worship, and why they worship as they do. The instruction begins with the pastors, who are the stewards of the mysteries (sacraments), who are called to stand before the altar in the presence of God and lead the divine services. The manner in which the pastor conducts the liturgy is the primary and ongoing way in which he teaches the theology of worship. Seminary education must also emphasize the history, theology, and conduct of the liturgy. The liturgy must also be taught to church musicians as well as evangelists and lay leaders who lead the liturgy of the word in the absence of a pastor. If they are not taught to do it right, they will do it wrong—they will import practices from Pentecostals and other sects. Finally, the laity also needs to be taught. The entire endeavor must be given a major emphasis in the (1) seminary curriculum, (2) lay leadership programs such as TEE and MTC, and (3) catechetical curriculum. This is where missionaries can be very helpful to emerging churches throughout the world today.

Liberalism and Secularism

Another serious challenge for Lutheran missions comes from the powerful influence of the liberal German and Scandinavian Lutheran state churches. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) churches in Europe are perplexed that churches around the world find the theology of the LCMS and other confessional Lutheran churches appealing. In an attempt to understand this phenomenon, they resort to some very fanciful explanations and caricatures. For example, we turn to the powerful Lutheran church in Germany. In his address to the Evangelical Commission for Middle and Eastern Europe, which met in Brandenburg, Germany, in April 2002, Bishop Stefan Reder¹⁹ put forth this thesis: “The Theology of the LCMS

¹⁹ Former *Stellvertreter des Erzbischof* Georg Kretschmar (ELKRAS). On Reder's address and its implications for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania, see Timothy Quill, “Lithuanian Aspirations and LWF Ambitions,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (October

comes, to a large extent, in answer to the present day needs of the people of the former Soviet Union, because it has a ‘Soviet’ Character.”²⁰ The address notes that under the Soviet system, values and ideals were clearly designated—what was good and evil, true and false, was clearly defined. Even if all citizens did not agree with the alleged Soviet identity, it was the point of orientation. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the state was no longer able to sufficiently offer a national identity. Therefore, many are turning to religious and spiritual movements to shape their self-identity. Religions that offer complete and predetermined answers in what is good and right and wrong remain more appealing to those coming out of the Soviet world. Bishop Reder then posits:

Here lies the unmistakable strength of the LCMS theology. It asserts clear and unambiguous answers and corresponds therefore in a certain fashion to the Soviet ideology. An independently thinking people was out of the question in the Soviet time. The Soviet government did the thinking for the people The people rarely learned to think for themselves Here lies the strength of the LCMS theology. Here one doesn't need to think. Here is offered a complete system with a full claim to truth, which one can adopt for himself The Soviet Union ideology had the proclivity for explaining all the fundamental things on the basis of the indisputable authorities and writings: Marx, Lenin and so forth... . The LCMS does this in the same way, in that it subscribes itself uncritically to Luther and the Lutheran Confessions and looks at these as a completely infallible foundation.²¹

2004): 361–64.

²⁰ “These: Die Theologie der LCMS kommt in großem Masse den gegenwärtigen Bedürfnissen der Menschen in der ehemaligen Sowjetunion entgegen, weil sie ‚sowjetischen‘ Charakter hat.“

²¹ “Hier liegt die eindeutige Stärke der LCMS Theologie. Sie gibt klare und eindeutige Antworten vor—und entspricht daher in gewisser Weise der sowjetischen Ideologie. Eigenständiges Denken der Menschen war in sowjetischer Zeit nicht gefragt. Die Sowjetregierung hat für die Menschen gedacht....Die Menschen haben selten gelernt, selbständig zu denken. ... Darin liegt die Stärke der LCMS-Theologie. Hier braucht man nicht zu denken. Hier wird ein Komplettsystem mit einem umfassenden Wahrheitsanspruch präsentiert, worauf man sich einlassen kann. ... Die sowjetische Ideologie hatte die Neigung, all grundlegenden Dinge auf unstrittige Autoritäten und deren Schriften zurückzuführen: Marx, Lenin usw. Die LCMS tut dies in gleicher Weise, indem sie sich unkritisch auf Luther und die lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften bezieht und diese als völlig unfehlbare Grundlagen ansieht.“

The Lutherans in Russia and the former Soviet Union are worthy of more respect. The patronizing rhetoric expressed in the Brandenburg address is more reflective of the verbal nominalism of past Soviet propaganda than of the present day Lutherans in Russia, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Baltic countries, who are quite capable of thinking for themselves. When they choose a theological course instead of a sociological-based ideology, they are labeled as narrow-minded and fundamentalists.

Despite hemorrhaging membership losses in the liberal churches of Western Europe and Scandinavia,²² the leadership of the established Lutheran churches continues to force their agenda on churches that have no desire for it. In Latvia, Archbishop Janis Vanags has expressed a common sentiment found among these churches: “For churches that have lived under persecution, liberalism has nothing to offer because it has nothing to die for.” The struggling emerging Lutherans often find strings attached to the financial help they are offered from their brothers in the west. Individual pastors and congregations are courted and tempted with financial rewards to change their doctrine and practice.

In the wake of the Church of Sweden’s approval of homosexual marriage and the ordination of non-celibate pastors, all seven bishops from the three Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) met in Tallinn, Estonia, on November 3–4, 2009, to discuss the problem this presents to Lutheran unity. In a signed “Message from the Meeting of the Baltic Lutheran Bishops,” the following courageous and faithful confession is included:

At the present time a common witness of churches is vitally important, therefore we express our deepest concern about modern tendencies that weaken the fellowship among Christians and cause divisions in and among churches. The recent decisions made by some member churches of the Lu-

²² Recent statistics released by the Lutheran World Information in Geneva report that the number of Lutherans worldwide has climbed to sixty-six million. “The highest regional growth (9.3 percent) was recorded among churches in Africa, where an additional 1,115,141 Lutherans were registered, pushing the number of Lutherans on the continent up from 11,953,068 in 2001 to 13,068,209 by the end of 2003.” “Total number of Lutherans worldwide climbs to nearly 66 million,” Lutheran World Information, *Religioscope*, February 17, 2004, accessed October 1, 2017, <https://english.religion.info/2004/02/17/total-number-of-lutherans-worldwide-climbs-to-nearly-66-million/>. During the same period, Lutheran churches in Europe continue their dismal decline in membership—down a staggering 640,000. Lutheran churches in North America lost 84,179 members.

theran World Federation to approve of religious matrimony for couples of the same gender and to equate such conjugal life with marriage or to ordain non celibate homosexual persons for pastoral or Episcopal office epitomize these tendencies that are tearing apart fellowship among Christians. We affirm that marriage is the conjugal life between a man and a woman and that a homosexual activity is incompatible with the discipleship of Christ. We believe that in following the modern trends, churches are departing from the apostolic doctrine of human sexuality and marriage. We see the Lutheran community and ecumenical efforts endangered by such decisions and actions because they lead to a situation where the Lutheran churches, members of the Lutheran World Federation are not able to fully recognize each others ecclesiastical offices, to exchange the ministries and to participate together in preaching the Word and celebrating the sacraments.

We call upon our Lutheran sisters and brothers to unity and co-operation based on the foundation of Holy Scripture and loyalty to the Lutheran confessions. Contemporary challenges demand a firm stand based upon timeless truths and values. The common understanding of the Gospel by churches is a treasure we cannot afford to lose and it needs to be passed on to the current and future generations. Our mission is to be faithful in that which we have received, God's mercy.²³

Lutherans in Africa are also experiencing LWF arrogance and oppression. In Kenya the battle to retain a Lutheran identity is being waged on two main fronts. In addition to American "evangelicalism," they are being pressured by the dry rot of theological liberalism, particularly from Europe and Scandinavia. In his opening address to the Fourth International Confessional Lutheran Conference at Matongo Seminary in Kenya, Bishop Walter Obare pointedly reacted to the liberal theological pressures from some Lutheran churches in Europe and America. Bishop Obare explains:

We are grateful for the beneficial work of various Bible schools and enter of the past and present. Simultaneously, it is, however, of extreme importance to acknowledge the urgent need for higher confessional theological education in Africa. *We also need more missionaries of significant theological caliber. The time of theological amateurs is over in the global missions if we are going to prevail.* Unless this can be achieved, the future field of theology as a whole, will be seriously handicapped, since the foundation of all true theology, the Sacred Bible, will still be found in the Babylonian Captivity of liberal critical German, Scandinavian, English and American theologies with their limited and yet strict philosophical presuppositions and categories.²⁴

Lutheran missions must vigorously establish and support both partner and non-partner Lutheran churches around the world, and where possible, protect them from liberal intolerance. This will involve sending professors to teach at Lutheran seminaries of Lutheran churches that are not in fellowship with the LCMS. Missionaries must therefore be knowledgeable of and sensitive to the ramifications to church relations. In today's world, mission work and church relations overlap. Thus the Board for International Missions, regional directors, and missionaries must work very closely with the president of Synod and the office/director of church relations.

Islam

We are living in a time of shrinking economic capacity which will diminish the ability of Christian churches in the west, including the LCMS, to carry out vigorous mission work around the world. At the same time Islam has increasing wealth at its disposal and is using it to project its power around the world. Last January I was visiting with Bishop Obare. Over coffee we talked about the various challenges facing the church in Africa: neo-Pentecostalism, Western liberalism, poverty, etc. Then Bishop Obare added, "What I am the most worried about is Islam." Muslims are in the minority in Kenya but they are gaining political influence. They also bring in a lot of money in order to build mosques. In many places they offer congregations money for their churches, an

²³ Signed by Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia Archbishop of Riga Janis Vanags, Bishop of Daugavpils Einars Alpe, and Bishop of Liepaja Pavils Bruvers; Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis; Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Archbishop Andres Pöder, Archbishop emeritus Kuna Pajula, and Bishop Einar Sonne.

²⁴ Walter Obare Omwanza, "The Bible Under Attack," in *The Three Witnesses*, ed. Dean Apel and Reijo Arkkila, MLTC Monograph Series 2; Papers from the Fourth International Confessional Lutheran Conference, Matongo, Kenya, Feb. 16-19, 2004 (Kisumu, Kenya: National Printing Press, 2004), 11.

amount they find hard to refuse, and then they tear down the buildings.

Relapse into Paganism

The temptation to relapse into paganism, whether through the complete renunciation of the Christian faith or by a partial selective return to syncretistic rites and lifestyle, is an ongoing problem that requires vigilant preaching, catechesis, and pastoral care. It can be seen by the attraction of voodoo in Haiti, juju in West Africa, fertility festivals in Madagascar, and polygamy and libations in general. Of course, this phenomenon is also growing in Europe and America as people are dabbling with pagan religions and spirituality both within and outside the church.

Pastoral Formation

Pastors must be prepared to meet the above challenges and numerous others on a daily basis. The training of pastors is an intense, costly, time-consuming enterprise. There are no short cuts. Whenever short cuts are taken, it is more costly to the church in the end. Many Protestant denominations and mission organizations have adopted mission models or strategies built on training leaders with minimal theological education. In many cases, lay leadership models are emphasized over the traditional approach of building church and mission on theologically trained, ordained ministers. One expert in pastoral care who is recognized worldwide offers prudent insight for those who aspire to the office of the holy ministry:

No one ventures to teach any art unless he learned it after deep thought. With rashness, then, would the pastoral office be undertaken by the unfit, seeing that the government [care] of souls is the art of arts! For who does not realize that the wounds of the mind are more hidden than the internal wounds of the body? Yet, although those who have no knowledge of the powers of drugs shrink from giving themselves out as physicians of the flesh, people who are utterly ignorant of spiritual precepts are often not afraid of professing themselves to be physicians of the heart... They crave to appear as teachers and covet ascendancy over others, and, as the Truth [Jesus] attests: "They seek the first salutations in the market place, the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in the synagogues."²⁵

²⁵ Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care* [Regula Pastoralis] trans. Henry Davis (New York: Newman, 1950), 21–22.

These words were written in AD 590 by St. Gregory the Great in the opening chapter of his *Regula Pastoralis* (*Pastoral Care*). Gregory returned to this theme again in chapter three where he admonishes men who are unfit to preach yet who are impelled by impatience and hastiness to the office. "They should not presume to preach before they [are] competent to do so."²⁶ They are like

young birds who attempt to fly upward before their wings are fully developed; they fall down from where they tried to soar. They are like a new building in which the frame has not been sufficiently strengthened and heavy timbers are placed on it, the result is not a dwelling but a ruin. They are like a woman who gives birth to offspring not fully developed; they are filling not a home but a sepulcher.²⁷

I think we get the point. But actually doing something about it, namely, recruiting, educating, and shaping men for the holy ministry in America and in the foreign mission fields requires steadfast commitment on the part of our congregations, seminaries, mission societies, and church mission boards.

If Lutheran seminaries, Lutheran missions, and Lutheran theological education are going to retain the name "Lutheran" with integrity, they do well to retain those ideals to which Martin Luther and the theologians at Wittenberg were utterly committed. Luther addressed the necessity of competent pastors for mission work over four hundred years ago. In his treatise *Receiving Both Kinds in the Sacrament* Luther observed,

The gospel naturally ought to be preached throughout the whole world, and why is it not? Certainly it is not the fault of the gospel, for it is right and true, profitable and blessed. No, the trouble is that there are not enough people who are qualified to do it. And if a person doesn't have the qualifications it is better to keep silent than to preach; otherwise the preaching will be false and harmful.²⁸

This was not some shoot-from-the-hip, uninformed opinion of an ivory tower academician cloistered away in an ivory tower. What does Luther mean by "people who are qualified"? An examination of the radical revision of

²⁶ Gregory, *Pastoral Care*, 180.

²⁷ Gregory, *Pastoral Care*, 180.

²⁸ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann, and Christopher Boyd Brown, 75 vols. (Philadelphia and St. Louis: Fortress and Concordia Publishing House, 1955–), 35: 298–99.

the curriculum at the University of Wittenberg demonstrates the rigorous commitment to the study of theology: Holy Scriptures (including Latin, Greek, and Hebrew), the classics, rhetoric, liberal arts, etc., were prerequisite to producing preachers. The reason the theological faculty at Wittenberg stressed the sacred languages (Greek, Hebrew, and Latin) is because they were convinced the original languages were “the keys to unlock the Scriptures and the Church fathers.”²⁹ For Phillip Melancthon, who worked with Luther to transform the way pastors were trained, “the study of languages was not in itself sufficient, but only a tool toward a goal. He, therefore, combed the Classics for those materials which might be useful to [1] train future ministers and [2] help develop a well-informed Christian laity.”³⁰

What Luther and the faculty understood as “people who are qualified” to preach also included the issue of personal character. “An eloquent speaker presupposed a good and noble character. Thus, a ministerial student who lacked prudence and wisdom was not properly prepared to preach.”³¹

Even for the highly gifted candidates who went on to doctoral studies, the ultimate goal of theological education was the preaching of the gospel and the spiritual formation of the student. This is articulated in the practice of *Formatus*. Prior to receiving the doctorate degree, the candidate was required to go through a rigorous public disputation known as the *Formatus*. On this occasion,

[The] candidate was solemnly enjoined to approach this degree in all seriousness with the same reverence with which he would approach an altar, for with the granting of this degree he would be entrusted with the explanation and interpretation of divine doctrines. No one improperly taught, or adhering to beliefs contrary to the pure doctrine of the Church, should even be permitted to apply. Nor would those without proper moral character be considered. Only those should be admitted to all degrees who were modest and chaste. If married, they should be respectable husbands, for marriage was ordained wonderfully and ineffably by the plan of God.³²

In many Lutheran churches today, the idea of *approaching the altar with reverence* has been replaced with *liturgical frivolity*, and the serious study of theology dispensed with as not practical for the needs of modern man (or is that post-modern?).

Rev. Alexey Streltsov, Rector of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk, Siberia, echoes Luther’s concerns. He recently explained, that because of the vast distances in Siberia and the isolation of mission congregations, it is important to have ordained pastors who are thoroughly trained in Lutheran doctrine and practice, otherwise serious problems develop. Streltsov’s comment demonstrates common sense and also reflects the traditional practice of the Lutheran church going back to the time of Luther and the reformers in the sixteenth century. Lutheran churches have historically demanded well-educated pastors.

The sainted Dr. Jonas Kalvanas, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania until his sudden death in 2003, worked valiantly to reestablish a well-educated ministerium following the fall of the Soviet Union. He sent young men to study in Klaipeda, Lithuania, and at Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS) in Fort Wayne, IN. Bishop Kalvanas also worked with CTS to organize theological seminars for his pastors in Lithuania and in Fort Wayne. During a meeting in Klaipeda with representatives from the LCMS to discuss fellowship between the two churches in May 2000, Bishop Kalvanas explained, “We need well-trained pastors who are strongly grounded in the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions. This is very important for our small church.”

The training of pastors is a rigorous academic and intellectual process. However, making pastors into good theologians involves more than mastering facts and doctrinal formulations. This was clearly understood by those who established our synod’s seminary in Fort Wayne in the nineteenth century. In 1850, seminary president Wilhelm Sihler gave a timeless address at the dedication of the Wolter Dorm titled “On Preparation to Be a Minister of Christ.” The address had two parts. Under Part I, “What are the necessary requirements for an upright minister of the holy Church?” Sihler first notes that he must hold to the saving doctrine that the Orthodox church has believed, confessed, and taught from the beginning. Then he adds, “He must not merely have a sound and well-ground-

²⁹ Ernest G. Schwiebert, “The Reformation and Theological Education at Wittenberg,” *The Springfielder* 28, no. 3 (1964): 21.

³⁰ Schwiebert, “Theological Education,” 31.

³¹ Schwiebert, “Theological Education,” 31.

³² Schwiebert, “Theological Education,” 30.

ed knowledge of this salvific doctrine. As God grants, he shall also have experienced it himself.” Unless the inexperienced minister himself begins to live and move personally in the important article of justification, he is merely a doctrine machine [Lehr-Maschine], an orthodox watch mechanism, a lifeless and loveless clanging cymbal, and a ringing shell. He is like a wooden figure pointing in the right directions, but which cannot go that way himself. Thus the faith of the Church proceeds from his mouth, but his heart is far from it.³³

In Part II, “What is the right preparation in order to become a capable minister of the holy Church?” Sihler explains, “The goal is not to obtain a mere knowledge of all kinds of individual facts; [but] rather, as God grants, to obtain ever more deeply a comprehensive knowledge of the divine truth. Through the challenges of their studies, they come to a living understanding of the divine truth.”

According to Sihler, the reading and study should produce a *joyous earnestness* in the seminarian that is manifest especially with others and in public. On the other hand they must avoid the “evil danger of carrying about a forced spiritual countenance for show, like the Pietists and Methodists On the other hand, however, it is certainly an evil condition when joyousness is not supported by a deeper seriousness, such that there results a silly comicality, a cockiness of the flesh, a worldly disposition and all kinds of loose and unspiritual talk.”³⁴

Ultimately, God (not the seminary and its faculty) makes pastors. Martin Luther gave much theological, pedagogical, and practical thought into what it takes to make a true pastor-theologian. Australian scholar Dr. John Kleinig describes the nature of Luther’s contribution to theological education in “*Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes a Theologian?*”³⁵ His excellent article is worthy of generous quotation.

Luther distinguished his own practice of spirituality [*Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio*] from the tradition of spiritual foundation that he experienced as a monk. This tradition followed a well-timed, ancient

pattern of meditation and prayer. Its goal was ‘contemplation,’ the experience of ecstasy, bliss, rapture, and illumination through union with the glorified Lord Jesus. To reach this goal, one ascended in three stages, as on a ladder, the ladder of devotion, from earth to heaven, from the humanity of Jesus to His divinity. This ascent began with reading out loud to himself a passage from the scriptures to quicken the affections; it proceeded to heartfelt prayer, and culminated in mental meditation of heavenly things, as one waited for the experience of contemplation, the infusion of heavenly graces, the bestowal of spiritual illumination.³⁶

Luther discovered that a man only becomes a theologian through a process of prayer (*oratio*), meditation (*meditatio*), and temptation (*tentatio*). Unlike the medieval practice of contemplation, where one ascends a ladder from earthly to heavenly spiritual experience, Luther’s practice always stayed grounded on earth.

We have no need to climb up by ourselves into heaven. The Triune God has come down to earth for us. God has become incarnate for us, available to us externally in our senses, embodied for us embodied creatures in the ministry of the word . . . The sacred Scriptures not only teach us about eternal life; they actually give us eternal life as they teach us.³⁷

Since the real teacher of the Holy Scriptures is the Holy Spirit, the process begins with a humble and earnest prayer that through the Son, the Holy Spirit would enlighten you by and give you the proper understanding of the word. This is followed by a serious, rigorous, humble study of Holy Scriptures. This then led to *tentatio*. *Tentatio* for Luther was not the devil’s temptation to sin, but “*Anfechtung*.” This is not mystical contemplative experience but real life experience. “This is the touchstone that teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right and true, how sweet and lovely, how powerful and comforting God’s word is, wisdom above all wisdom.”³⁸ This *Anfechtung* is an attack on the person of the pastor. For Luther this happens in the public domain.

³³ Wilhelm Sihler, “On Preparation to Be a Minister of Christ At the Dedication of the Wolter House, August 1850” in *At Home in the House of My Fathers: Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod’s Great Era of Unity and Growth*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison (Fort Wayne, IN: Lutheran Legacy, 2009), 812–13.

³⁴ Sihler, “Preparation,” 815.

³⁵ John Kleinig, “*Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes a Theologian?*” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2002): 255–67.

³⁶ Kleinig, “*Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio*,” 257–58.

³⁷ Kleinig, “*Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio*,” 259.

³⁸ LW 34: 286–87.

It involves public antagonism and opposition to those who are pastors or about to become pastors. It is an attack upon the ministry of the word....As long as any pastor, or student of theology, operates by his own power, with his own intellect and human ideas, the devil lets him be. But as soon as he meditates on God's word and so draws on the power of the Holy Spirit, the devil attacks him by stirring up misunderstanding, contradiction, and persecution. The attack is mounted by him through the enemies of the gospel in the church and in the world.³⁹

Such attacks cause the theologian to return to prayer and meditation, that is, to humble reliance on the Holy Spirit and on his holy word. Thus seminary pastoral training involves not only rigorous academic study, it also involves a life of liturgy and prayer. The curriculum must not separate pastoral theology from academic theology, systematic theology from liturgical theology, private spirituality from corporate worship, subjective spiritual experience from objective revelation, the private life of the pastor from his public role.⁴⁰

Bishop Walter Obare's twenty-first century *Notruf* (emergency call or distress call)⁴¹ identifies an "urgent need for higher confessional theological education in Africa" which requires thoroughly trained pastors, theologians, and missionaries, or as he put it, "The time of theological amateurs is over in the global missions if we are going to prevail." The seminaries of the LCMS are well-positioned and resourced along with other sister seminaries in the world to answer this *Notruf*. I can speak confidently for CTS in Fort Wayne that our professors have had extensive long- and short-term experience teaching internationally. They are constantly in demand from our partner Lutheran churches around the world. But they lack where our long-term, full-time missionaries excel. Long-term missionaries are on the ground day in and day out, year in and year out, and thus possess a

depth of knowledge, experience, and wisdom. We must forge a close working relationship between our seminaries and the missionaries in the field.

Training the first generation of Lutheran pastors in the art of pastoral care (*Seelsorger*, i.e., the cure of souls) in a culture where the Christian church does not exist is particularly challenging. Pastoral care cannot be learned from class lectures and books alone. Spiritual care is learned by observing experienced pastors in action and in the school of experience. Most LCMS seminarians grew up in Lutheran congregations (or at least Christian congregations). Many were raised in Lutheran parsonages and teacherages. In the mission fields, many seminarians are recent converts who have never even met a seasoned, indigenous Lutheran pastor. Of course, this is nothing really new. The early church faced the same problems. St. Paul was speaking from firsthand experience when he said, "A pastor must be apt to teach," and "Don't lay on hands too quickly."

We are constantly hearing about how the center of gravity of worldwide Christianity has moved to the global South. "Christianity as a world religion has been changing. More than 20 percent of all Christians now live in Sub-Saharan Africa; Christianity in that region grew an amazing seventy-fold during the twentieth century, to almost 500 million adherents."⁴² The influence of the global South has already been felt in the Anglican Communion and LWF churches as seen above in the section on "Liberalism and Secularism." In view of this presentation, the question needs to be asked, what impact will this have on the missionary enterprise in general and theological education in particular? Dr. Klaus Detlev Schulz has observed that the job description of missionaries today

have little in common with the classic pioneer model of mission that was employed throughout most of the eighteenth century to the better part of the twentieth century. Missionaries at that time went to remote regions to preach and baptize and with the task of establishing churches where none existed. Today missionaries are only indirectly involved in those tasks since the major part of their work concentrates on teaching and training indigenous leadership. Missionaries today are more likely to be

³⁹ Kleinig, "Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio," 264.

⁴⁰ Kleinig, "Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio," 258.

⁴¹ *Notruf* is in reference to Friedrich C. D. Wyneken's 1844 tract titled, "Die Not der deutschen Lutheraner in Nord-Amerika" ("The Distress of the German Lutherans in North America"), in which he describes the deplorable spiritual conditions of the Germans on the American frontier and the need for Lutheran pastors. Wilhelm Loehe and others answered the call by sending *Nothelfer* (emergency helpers) or *Sendlinge*. See Carl S. Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the LCMS* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 91–97.

⁴² Daniel Aleshire, "The Future Has Arrived: Changing Theological Education in a Changed World?" Paper presented at the OCI Institute for Excellence, May 2011, 3.

teachers or facilitators who enable local indigenous leaders to assume the task of church planting.⁴³

As Dean of International Studies at CTS, Fort Wayne, I have observed firsthand the shift in emphasis of the missionary role from church planter to seminary professor/theological educators. However, this does not eliminate missionary pastors from being directly involved in word and sacrament congregational and evangelistic work. Where feasible, foreign missionaries should regularly serve in local congregations. Proficiency in the local language is a priority. Given the shortage of ordained pastors in many areas, missionaries can be of great help in celebrating the Lord's Supper as well as preaching. Today and in the future, there will be a demand for missionaries who have done graduate work beyond the MDiv (namely, STM and PhD) who are good teachers, and who have had parish experience.

There is a great need to train qualified indigenous faculty to take the Lutheran churches of the global South into the next generation. This means sending qualified students for graduate work at the finest, confessional seminaries in the world to ensure that they receive a sound theological education in addition to masters and PhD degrees. Attention must also be given to building up indigenous seminaries so they are able to meet the national standards for registration and accreditation.

The need for theological educators is not limited to the younger missions in the so-called global South. Missionaries who are qualified to teach on the seminary level are also needed in places like Europe, Russia, and Central Asia. The Lutheran seminaries in Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan are young and still developing indigenous faculty. The Lutheran churches in Lithuania and Latvia still rely on short- and long-term professors from Europe and America. The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church is also in need of qualified professors to both strengthen the confessional identity of the church and meet the academic standards required by the government. Dr. Vieko Vihuri explains:

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, (the theological faculty at the University of Tartu) was reopened. At the beginning of the 1990s, a private theological academy was founded in Tartu by a Lutheran pastor who represents the more low-church

and pietistic theology. In Tallinn, the Theological Institute of Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church continues its work. It was founded after World War II to train Lutheran pastors, and was the only place in Estonia where theology was taught throughout the Soviet period. The theology that is taught in the University and the Theological Institute is moderately liberal. The historical-critical method is widely used in the study of the Scriptures. The systematic theology is focused on modern Protestant theology. The most influential foreign Protestant theologians for Estonian theological thinking during the past decades include Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Paul Tillich. Most Estonian Lutheran theologians are more open to German theology than Anglo-American or Scandinavian theology.

There are some striking examples of liberal theologians within our church as well. The professor of church history at the Theological Institute has recently written a book in which he states that Jesus began his ministry after the death of his wife and that his real father was a Jewish priest or rabbi, for the name of the angel Gabriel who visited Mary means “the man of God,” and that is exactly why twelve-year old-Jesus was hoping to find his father in the temple. One may ask how such a man can teach theology at the Theological Institute owned by the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church. The answer is that the Theological Institute desperately needs academically qualified tutors in order to meet the criteria required by the state. Expressing such views then is considered as a matter of academic freedom.⁴⁴

Maintaining Quality Residential Seminaries is a Costly Endeavor

Building the campus is the easiest part of establishing a residential seminary. It is more difficult to provide ongoing support for maintenance, utilities, salaries for professors and staff, and tuition and living expenses for students—many of whom are married with families. It often takes generations for new churches in developing countries to take full financial ownership.

⁴³ Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 9.

⁴⁴ Vieko Vihuri, “The Present State of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2008): 268.

Bringing Men and Women to Study in America and Europe is a Costly Endeavor

Faculty development requires the brightest and best being brought to Fort Wayne and St. Louis for graduate work. It costs approximately \$30,000–\$35,000 per year for a single student. In the past, the CRISP program provided numerous scholarships, but has been unable to provide new scholarships in recent years. LCMS President Matthew Harrison is dedicated to raising new funds and is working with both seminaries and the Joint Seminary Fund to make this a reality. Short-term visiting professors from America and Europe will continue to play an important role overseas, but it is not enough in every case. Many foreign seminaries are still pleading for long-term missionary professors.

Establishing of Seminary Libraries

Building a good theological library is essential to creating a good seminary. “It has been said that an academic institution may well be judged by the size and quality of its library.”⁴⁵ In Wittenberg, Latin was the common language of instruction. But it was the Lutheran faculty who saw the need to build up the holdings of Hebrew and Greek grammars, dictionaries, biblical tools, and the classics. As such, the library, housed in the town castle, was “renovated to accommodate students and faculty, and equipped with the most modern furniture consisting of bookracks, tables, and chairs. The library was also given special attention in the 1526 reorganization, but did not reach its full fruition until the founding of the first Lutheran University in the middle thirties.”⁴⁶ This was a project that took over twenty years and had been initiated in 1514 when “Frederick the Wise had established the library and wisely provided for its growth and usefulness.”⁴⁷

In the mission field, good libraries have been built by competent missionary boards and societies. This has taken a great investment of time and money. Where English is the language of instruction, and this is the case in many places, the task is easier. Where instruction is only in the indigenous language, the challenges are magnified, particularly where the local language lacks a sophisticated scientific or theological capacity. Even where English is used, students often need courses in theological English if they are to use English texts. I have seen relatively good

libraries in places like Kenya, South Africa, India, Hong Kong, and Novosibirsk, Russia. I have also seen what was once a good library that fell into disorder following the departure of missionaries in the 1970s and 80s.

Along with good libraries, the challenge for international theological education in mission countries requires adequate textbooks for students and for pastors to take with them when they enter the parish. The paucity of books in the personal libraries of many pastors who must write sermons each Sunday and teach catechism and Bible class is enough to make one weep. During the reorganization of the University of Wittenberg between 1533 and 1536, the *Statutes of 1533* began “by asserting that young clergymen should be taught ‘the pure teaching of the Gospel’ for which the Augsburg Confession was to be the norm.”⁴⁸ In some mission fields missionaries have not even bothered to translate the Small Catechism, let alone the Book of Concord.

Establishing an excellent library and seminary campus is of course not enough in and of itself. Books can remain unread and disintegrate on the shelves. Brick and mortar crumble. Seminary libraries must be places filled with living students inspired by faithful, qualified, stimulating professors. Prague and Europe are filled with magnificent churches that took generations to build but are now visited primarily by tourists who marvel more at the beautiful architecture. I recall one evening entering the impressive Sacra Coeur in Paris. The gawking visitors wandered in with tourist maps and cameras in hand. Then the organ quietly began to play and a priest entered the chancel and began to chant Vespers. Suddenly the entire building was transformed from cold architectural stone to what it was meant to be—a place of worship. So it is with seminaries, when professors teach and students are abuzz with theological questions and conversation and all gather daily in the campus chapel to sing and pray. Living seminaries require not only professors who are passionate about the gospel, but also students in whom the faith has been instilled in pious homes and by faithful pastors who have nurtured them from font, pulpit, and altar.

Continuing Education

In many mission fields, “necessity” has led to pastors with inadequate theological education being prematurely ordained. As a result, there is a crucial need for continuing education. There is a great desire among most

⁴⁵ Schwiebert, “Theological Education,” 26.

⁴⁶ Schwiebert, “Theological Education,” 27.

⁴⁷ Schwiebert, “Theological Education,” 27.

⁴⁸ Schwiebert, “Theological Education,” 29.

indigenous pastors for ongoing education. This is best organized through the local seminary, e.g., Pastor Gordon Gyampo Kumi in Ghana. LCMS missionaries can provide programs but should work in affiliation with the partner church (bishop/president and seminary). For example, plans are underway to bring the Mission Training Centers (MTC) initiated by LCMS missionaries under the direction of the ELCK Seminary in Matongo. Other entities that can offer occasional assistance in this area include LCMS seminaries and organizations such as the Confessional Lutheran Education Foundation (CLEF), the Luther Academy, and Lutheran Heritage Foundation, especially in connection with the distribution of its theological literature.

Conclusion

No one can predict how a particular mission will fare in the future. What will be the fate of a young church if western missionaries and resources are suspended due to lack of funds, government persecution, or for other reasons? One thing missionaries can and must do is to thoroughly teach the faith, beginning with pastors, evangelists, and on down to the youth and children. Strong seminaries will produce strong pastors who will produce a strong laity through faithful preaching, catechesis, and liturgy. So permit me to return to the metaphor of the large trees in the African rainforest. The rainforests encountered by the first missionaries have been replaced by urban sprawl. One still comes upon majestic trees in West Africa that have managed to survive deforestation. Despite the financial temptation, some one or some people, at great financial cost, chose to preserve this beautiful tree.

With limited resources it may be prudent to explore the idea of “hub seminaries.” In many places, students are willing to attend Lutheran seminaries in other countries in their part of the world if it provides them a better education—and in some cases opportunities to earn a degree from an accredited institution. This is already happening on every continent.

President Harrison has been very clear that Lutheran missions must lead to Lutheran churches and this requires Lutheran pastors who are thoroughly trained in and committed to Lutheran doctrine and practice. As we have seen, this involves a variety of complex issues and is filled with many problems and challenges. It is also filled with many opportunities. These are difficult and exciting times to be involved in international missions work. We are not called to be successful but faithful.

Theological education involves more than simply imparting theological and biblical knowledge. It imparts theological understanding, which is inseparable from doxology. It must take doctrine very seriously, but “doctrine is not a theoretical abstraction but it is rather embodied in the concrete practices of the church: liturgy, preaching, pastoral care, catechesis, and mission [it offers] an understanding of Christian faith which is Christ-centered and biblically based, confessionally Lutheran and evangelically active.”⁴⁹

In the introduction to this paper I stated that in recent years, the LCMS has been experimenting with new methods of pastoral formation in America and that similar paradigms have also been employed in international missions. It is not my desire to criticize all pastoral training models other than the traditional full-bodied residential seminary system. In many places, particularly in the southern hemisphere, Lutheran churches are growing at such a phenomenal rate that it is simply impossible to provide enough adequately trained pastors. In Ghana, Uganda, and Kenya, missionaries helped the churches develop a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) approach that consists of about eighteen intensive courses in which the students come to a central place for a week of study with an instructor. From what I was told recently by a missionary who helped develop the curriculum, the purpose of the program is not to prepare “lay pastors” (which is an oxymoron), but to prepare leaders who will go on to ordination after more complete study.

In South America, Lutherans have been able to introduce a program of distance education. This approach is also under discussion by the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk, Russia. In both cases, this is not seen as a replacement for residential study, but as a supplement to or as a pre-seminary program. There is no intention to replace face-to-face theological education with professors.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya trains her pastors at a traditional residential seminary—Matongo Lutheran Theological Seminary. It also has two evangelist residential schools to train evangelists. Even between the three institutions, it is not able to keep up with the demand for pastors and evangelists by the rapidly growing number of congregations. The distance separating these congregations, along with costs of transportation,

⁴⁹ John T. Pless, “A Curriculum from and For the Church,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (2006): 86.

means that many parishes must go for Sundays on end without a visit from a trained and ordained pastor. Thus, worship and spiritual care falls to untrained local laymen. Thus, Mission Training Centers have been developed to give these dedicated men at least some, if not extremely limited, theological education by coming together for short intensive classes. Again, the MTCs are seen as an emergency situation until enough pastors can be properly trained and ordained.

This is hardly the first time the church has been faced with such challenges. From its inception, the Lutheran church has put value on the necessity of a highly trained pastorate. The laity themselves has demanded such of their church. “Wittenberg graduates were in demand in the cities of Lutheran Lands.”⁵⁰

*In the smaller parishes and villages, pulpits had been filled in the early days of the Reformation by *Notprediger*, a pious and sincere but poorly-trained emergency preacher, who was placed in charge of a congregation following the Church Visitations, in the belief that he would serve the congregation better than the unqualified Catholic Priest. By the late thirties the *Notprediger* began to disappear and by the early forties regularly ordained clergymen trained at Wittenberg were taking their places. It was not until the new theological training instituted at the University of Wittenberg had produced the necessary qualified clergymen that the Reformation was brought to full fruition in Lutheran Lands throughout Germany.*⁵¹

Distance learning employing the latest technology is here today, both in America and the world over. Alternative forms of theological education leading to the ordination of Lutheran pastors are as old as the sixteenth century. True emergency situations should not become the norm. If so the church will suffer. The faithful will suffer.

The formation of such qualified preachers requires years, not weeks, in which future pastors learn, along with fellow seminarians, in face-to-face contact with their professors. Ernest Schwiebert points out that

The key to [Luther’s] great success, where others before him had tried and failed, lay in the training of the clergymen who sat at his feet and those of

*his fellow professors and were taught how to interpret the Scriptures in the light of the Bible and the Apostolic Age.*⁵²

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⁵⁰ Schwiebert, “Theological Education,” 32.

⁵¹ Schwiebert, “Theological Education,” 32.

⁵² Schwiebert, “Theological Education,” 32.