

# MISSION AS NOTA ECCLESIAE?: TESTING THE SCOPE OF AUGSBURG CONFESSION 7 AND 8

by Klaus Detlev Schulz

IN OUR DISCUSSION OF AC VII AND AC VIII, a few fundamental questions have to be answered if we bring systematics and missiology together, as I'm told to do. How do the two articles in the Augsburg Confession relate to missions? How does ecclesiology inform mission and how does mission inform ecclesiology? Is, as my title indicates, mission a sign of the church? Here we touch on a sensitive topic. In terms of becoming involved in mission both theologically and in practice, Lutheranism is a Johnny-come-lately. It took time to develop a missiology that would clarify issues related to foreign missions. Of course, as rightly pointed out, Luther's theology and Lutheran theology is a seed bed for missions,<sup>1</sup> yet the seed still had to sprout and bear fruit. Over the history of Lutheranism, voices came forward, of which many were formative figures to the LCMS, and gave important impulses for mission. In researching the questions above, it became evident to me that in Lutheranism there is a particular progression in the knowledge on missionary ecclesiology, and AC VII and VIII were directly drawn in and addressed in this process. Thus, in this presentation I'd like to walk with you through some stages reflecting that progression in chronological order, starting with a historic investigation, but then ending on a contemporary note relating to mission issues today. In all of this progression, AC VII and VIII stood, and still stand, steady as pillars saying what they have said for exactly 486 years, whereas

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the mission discussions orbited around these articles gradually illuminated their missiological potential.<sup>2</sup>

## I. Stage 1: Mission marginalized

The ecclesiology of the Augsburg Confession as defined in AC VII did not go unnoticed by mission scholars. For example, in an essay, *Theological Education in Missionary Perspective*, David Bosch takes a stab at the Protestant definitions of the church, of which AC VII was the first:

Another factor responsible for the present embarrassment in the field of mission is that the modern missionary enterprise was born and bred outside the church. The church — especially the Protestants — did not regard itself as called to mission. The Reformation definitions of the church were concerned with what

happened inside the church: on preaching, the Sacraments and discipline. The church was a place where something was being done (passive voice), and not a people who did something ... Consequently when the missionary flame was eventually kindled, it burned on the fringes of the institutional church, frequently meeting with passionate resistance from the official church. The well-known multiplication of missionary societies had a disastrous influence on the subsequent development of the study of mission as an academic discipline.

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Blöchle, "Die missionarische Dimension in der Theologie Luthers," in *Die Einheit der Kirche: Dimensionen ihrer Heiligkeit, Katholizität und Apostolizität* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977), 367. "Luther did not speak just on occasions and periodically to the questions about mission to the heathens. His entire theology is rather permeated by a 'missionary dimension.'"

<sup>2</sup> Now a missiological reading of the Lutheran Confessions is a common thing to do. It started with Franz Wiebe, "Missionsgedanken in den lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften," in *Lutherisches Missionsjahrbuch für das Jahr 1955*, ed. Walther Ruf (Neuendettelsau: Selbstverlag der Bayerischen Missionskonferenz, 1955), 15-71. For the latest attempt see, Tim Huffmann, "The Lutheran Confessions and Mission," *Trinity Seminary Review* 33 (Summer 2012): 19-37.

Is mission a sign of the church?  
The Rev. Dr. Klaus Detlev  
Schulz's presentation from the  
Concordia University Irvine  
Joint Professors' Conference  
explains.

When missiology was eventually granted a place in theological institutions, this was the result of pressure from missionary societies, or (particularly in the United States) from students, or in some instances even from a government. On the whole neither the churches nor the theological schools themselves welcomed the intruder. Mission was an appendix to the church; missiology would be no more than that in the theological curriculum. Traditionally theology was subdivided into biblical, systematic, historical and practical disciplines and it was not clear how and where missiology should fit in.<sup>3</sup>

I need to address this statement on a number of levels throughout my presentation. Two reactions immediately come to mind. First, it is true, as Bosch says, the definition of the Augsburg Confession speaks of a church as the congregation of saints “in which” or “among whom” the “Gospel is purely taught and the sacraments rightly administered.” This definition does in fact place the word in the midst of believers (the congregation of saints). At best it reflects a *missio ad intra*; the outside world; the *missio ad extra*, however, is left unmentioned. Thus, can mission be counted as part of Lutheran identity? Even in his *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), Luther does not include in the seven signs of the church the sharing of the gospel to the world outside, although his seventh sign of the church as bearing the cross could be implicitly understood as a consequence of its life and witness in and to the world.<sup>4</sup> But where is the sentness character and the church’s orientation towards the world explicitly mentioned in Lutheran ecclesiology?<sup>5</sup> If it comes to defining

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Lutheran identity then scholars are quick to argue, and perhaps rightfully so, that it is focused on its teaching identity, and not on mission identity, of instructing the doctrine through “the ministry of teaching the Gospel” through the *Lehramt* in the church, as AC V, 1 (Kolb-Wengert, 41), and our Article AC VII point out, and not through the office of a missionary to the world.

Second, it is also true, as Bosch points out, that there were stations in the history of Lutheranism where Lutheran theologians and leaders resisted — for right or wrong reasons — certain individuals’ efforts to respond to the Lord’s mandate of going to other nations. The famous hymnist Philip Nicolai (1556–1608) pub-

lished *De Regno Christi* in which he laid out a global ecclesiology that proved his and others’ interpretation of Romans 10:18 that through the work of the twelve apostles the gospel had already reached all parts of the world, and if non-Christians now existed in certain pockets, it was because they had shunned the gospel. The Lutheran Superintendent of Augsburg, Heinrich Ursinus (1608–1667), and the Protestant Council (*Corpus Evangelicorum*) at Regensburg dismissed Justinian von Welz’s (1621–1668) request for permission to go to Surinam because he and his “Jesus-Love-me” society

would bring to the people non-Lutheran principles such as asceticism and mysticism.<sup>6</sup>

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sacraments as something the gospel gives to the believers to make Christ’s presence known to all through the social reality of a Christian community as it lives with one another and with other non-believers among them. *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution*, eds. Richard Bliese and Craig van Gelder (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2005), 10

<sup>6</sup> The reasons for questioning Welz’s proposals were legitimate when one reads his first tract entitled *De Vita Solitaria* (1663), subtitled with *The Hermit Life According to God’s Word*. (Original title: *De Vita Solitaria, das ist / Von dem Einsidler Leben / Wie es nach Gottes Wort / und der Alten Heiligen Einsidler Leben anzustellen seye*.) Welz sought to revive a monastic holiness and evangelical asceticism for missionary purposes that were influenced by theologians such as Eusebius of Caesarea (260–339), Augustine of Hippo (354–430), the medieval mysticist, Thomas à Kempis (1379/80–1471), and Johann Arndt (1555–1621), the most influential Lutheran devotional writer and promoter of a mystical tradition within Lutheranism. James Scherer, *Justinian Welz: Essays by an Early Prophet of Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969), 15–17.

<sup>3</sup> *Missiology. An International Review*, vol. X, no. 1 (January 1982): 17

<sup>4</sup> *Luther’s Works (LW)*, Vol. 41, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999, c1966), 164.

<sup>5</sup> The authors of the book *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution* recognize the deficit and thus connect word and sacrament to Christian community saying: “We do not believe that the connection of the presence of Christ in the Christian community is sufficiently captured in the phrase Word and Sacrament.” They therefore draw in Luther’s fifth form of the gospel, the “mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters” (SA III, 4) to word and

Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) defended the Lutheran faith against the Anglican Hadrian Saravia (1531–1613), who in his ecclesiological treatise (1590) “*De diversis ministrorum evangelii gradibus, sicut a Domino fuerunt institute*” (Concerning the different orders of the ministry of the Gospel, as they were instituted by the Lord), claimed that the episcopal office continued the full office of the apostles and the authority to go universal (*ite mundum universum*). Instead, Gerhard followed Nicolai’s geo-ecclesio arguments and also added that the office of the apostles was unique and only the preaching and teaching functions remained for the church to continue. But these functions, Gerhard said, were now tied to the congregations to which such preachers were called (ACTS 14:23). The mandate to go to the world was a unique privilege the apostles had and it could not be continued through the office of a bishop.<sup>7</sup>

In 1652, the Wittenberg faculty released a three-point statement against the scruples of an Austrian nobleman, von Wetzhausen, who had queried why the followers of the Augsburg Confession were staying put instead of going out to the world. First, the faculty repeated Gerhard’s parochial confinement of the preaching office, and second, it promoted a kind of universal theism, namely that according to Romans 1 and 2 and Acts 17:27, God left his footprints among all nations in the world so that no one can plead innocence. As punishment for their ignorance, God has removed all preaching of the gospel from them, and he is not to be blamed for not restituting what had been lost.<sup>8</sup> Third, the faculty closes by admonishing all rulers in the world to build churches and schools so that the preaching of the true Lutheran faith is furthered worldwide and their citizens are protected from Papist and Calvinistic errors.<sup>9</sup>

The fact is that the one church by faith exists and the *satis est* points out what it needs to survive.

As we look back on our own Lutheran heritage, we should note one important factor. In spite of the squabbles that were going on, the theologians above never denied the universal claim of the gospel. In fact, the Wittenberg faculty closes its statement with a prayer: “May God keep the light of His holy Gospel always burning among us and may among all nations an eternal church be gathered which in all eternity lauds and magnifies him,”<sup>10</sup> and Gerhard in his *Loci* marvels at how the gospel spreads its wings because of its universal claim, and offered ecumenical charity to Roman Catholic mission efforts in India and other parts of the world.<sup>11</sup>

The problem is that the leading sixteenth and seventeenth century theologians were not able or willing to back up the call with an ecclesiology (which includes the office of the preaching) that would support the run of the universal gospel. Tying the office of preaching down parochially and not allowing it to be commissioned and sent into the world as a missionary office should be seen as an overreaction against false opposition coming from two sides,<sup>12</sup> and that overreaction led them to temporarily misunderstand or falsely restrict AC V and AC VII to parochialism. And today, all the above may seem to us an oddity, as we are heeding to the universal call with an unrestricted and unimpeded mission paradigm.

<sup>7</sup> *Mission in Quellentexten*, ed. Werner Raupp (Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1990), 68–69.

<sup>8</sup> By contrast, the *Lumen Gentium* made preaching to them no longer a necessity either by pleading for their innocence: “Those also can attain everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God.” *Lumen Gentium* 16, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, trans. Joseph Callagher et al. (Chicago: Follet, 1966), 35.

<sup>9</sup> *Mission in Quellentexten*, 70–71.

<sup>10</sup> *Mission in Quellentexten*, 71.

<sup>11</sup> Nicolai displayed similar charity: “Even among the Roman Catholic and Jesuit missionaries the desire to save souls comes to the fore, and consequently what they preach is so close to the truth and the method they follow so evangelical that at home they would be called heretics... Everywhere there is still baptism, through which many thousands of children who die in their youth become heirs of eternal life.” Philip Nicolai, *Commentariorum de regno Christi, vaticiniis prophetis et apostolicis accommodatorum Libri duo* (Frankfurt: Johannes Spies, 1597). Wilhelm Loehe, *Three Books about the Church*, trans. James Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 93.

<sup>12</sup> In his essay, *Die Lutherische Kirche und ihre Mission*, Wilhelm Maurer correctly states that Lutheran Orthodoxy needs to be seen in its treatment of apostolate and mission in light of two opposing thoughts, 1) The Roman Catholic Church and its supporters that had arrogated to themselves the undiminished apostolate either in the form of monastic mission or in the episcopacy and 2) A mystic-enthusiasm of Welz and others infiltrating into the church that would question the accepted interpretation of Scripture and the well-structured church order. Wilhelm Maurer, “Die Lutherische Kirche und ihre Mission,” *Kirche und Geschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Band II, eds. Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls and Gerhard Müller (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 192.

## II. Stage 2: Universality, Mission and Ecclesiology

By the time the nineteenth century came around, we see a development in how neo-Lutheran theologians embraced a universal perspective that accepted the missionary office and an ecclesiology that serves that universal motive of the gospel. In the yet unsurpassed Lutheran ecclesiological treatment, *Three Books about the Church*, Wilhelm Löhe defines the church as a creation of God's word, and that the word then comes out of the midst of the church and reaches all people. First, he tackles the doctrine of predestination, which gets in the way of that universal perspective:

Opposed to this teaching is the doctrine of the universal grace of God which is taught by our church. It is God's will that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. [1 TIM. 2:4]. God is completely sincere about this. This is why Christ had to atone for our sins, and not only for our sins but for the sins of the entire world. The means by which we appropriate his atonement — Word and sacrament — must be made known to all men for the Lord says ... (LUKE 24:46, 47). This is why the call of the Word must come to all men. Thus the doctrine of the universal call of all ... is the inviolable doctrine of our fathers.<sup>13</sup>

Löhe reorients AC VII's focus towards within to one that now points to the outside world.

Thus, once that universal call was established, the issue of sending preachers became a possibility, especially since mission societies like Hermannsburg, Neuendettelsau, and Leipzig had started to emerge who were willing to step to the plate, regardless of territorial churches' support or not. The first item to deal with was the question of whether the missionary's office came directly out of the word and sacrament ministry mentioned in AC V and AC VII or whether the church was obliged to send and commission individuals simply because the civil authorities demanded it?<sup>14</sup> In answer to that question it became

<sup>13</sup> Loehe, *Three Books about the Church*, 82.

<sup>14</sup> An example of this would have been the response of August Herman Franke's Halle Mission to the Danish ruler's behest to provide preachers for the Danish colony, Tranquebar.

clear that the parochial setting of the ministry, as argued in the seventeenth century, could not hold its sway for long. When the territorial church first refused to ordain his mission candidates, Ludwig Harms, the founder of the Hermannsburg Mission Society, did so himself. In his *History of the Hanoverian Mission*, Georg Haccius comments on that event: "After the ordination Harms seconded and sent the missionaries onto the mission field. Thus, they were duly and lawfully called and ordained and could therefore on the foundation of article fourteen of the Augsburg Confession move out confidently and joyfully."<sup>15</sup> Similar moves to advance the mission office were done earlier with the Leipzig Mission Society. Adolf von Harless (1806–1879), a professor at Erlangen, and a member of the Leipzig Mission Society's board (*Missionskollegium*), offered his own thoughts on the subject of our discussion:

Mission is the church expressing and witnessing God's salvific intentions to the world through the preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments.

As far as their (missionaries') status is concerned, it would be difficult to dismiss the fact that it bears all marks of a proper, Christian and apostolic call. They are placed in the call of the Lord to the Apostles: Go ye to the world. They did not go on their own accord, but have been found fit for their office and have been placed into it by those who in the Evangelical Lutheran Church have the right to do so. The church is the community of believers, that keep themselves to the pure Word and Sacrament and such

a community has sent them out with a loyal pledge to their confession.

And Harless concludes: "We cannot find anything amiss here that would prevent us from considering them *rite vocatus* in the sense of the 14. Article of the Augsburg Confession."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Georg Haccius, *Hannoversche Missionsgeschichte*, Vol II (Hermannsburg: Verlag der Missionshandlung, 1910), 217. The territorial church did come around and on 19 October 1857, duly examined and ordained twelve mission candidates in Hanover as recorded by Harms himself in the *Hermannsbürger Missionsblatt* (HMB), no. 10 (October 1857): 150–155.

<sup>16</sup> Johannes Aagaard, *Mission, Konfession, Kirche*, Volume II (Gleerups, Denmark: Clemenstrykkeriet, 1967), 719. In contrast, the Director of Leipzig, Karl Graul, proposed that the church, which would emerge from the missionaries' work, should take over responsibility and not the home church, including ordination and salary. *Ibid.*, 718.

According to Wilhelm Maurer, the identification of the office of pastoral ministry and missionary as the same office was something new in the Lutheran church. The nineteenth century neo-Lutherans broke open the territorial and parochial confinement of pastoral ministry and congregationalism that persisted in the church orders since the time of the Reformation. By having eliminated monastic orders, Lutheranism had lost a strong arm that worked mission to the world. Now they have reached a point where pastoral ministry includes a worldwide, universal perspective and a mission obligation. Both pastoral office and that of the missionary are identical. Their tasks and duties were the same because they both were under the mission obligation which goes out from the congregation and reaches out into the wide world of nations. And both are tied to the ministry of word and sacraments, proclaiming the one gospel and administering the sacraments that were instituted by Christ.<sup>17</sup>

Peter Brunner helps to summarize the issue: Jesus' mission mandate

shows, that the missionary sent to the nations of this world embodies the pastoral office (*ministerium verbi*) and expresses the Lord's command most closely ... This form of the pastoral office, which dwells among us as shepherd of the congregation, must be understood fundamentally and practically as that of a missionary. The pastor is the missionary, who has remained put at that place, where heathens were gathered to be disciples of Jesus. If we understand the pastor as the missionary "standing still," then it might be fairly obvious, why the pastoral office belongs to the Church by divine law (*de iure divino*). The pastor is obligated to also be a missionary to those people, who are not yet part of the Church through gospel and baptism. Similarly his pastoral service is established like that of the missionary's by the sending and the founding command of Christ.<sup>18</sup>

The texts spoken at ordination clearly indicate that pastoral ministry does not exclude the idea of sentness

<sup>17</sup> Georg Schulz, *The Lutheran Understanding of the Pastoral Office in Missions*, unpublished article, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Brunner, "Vom Amt des Bischofs," in *Pro Ecclesia* 1 (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1960), 235-292.

and the outward look. Thus, we can conclude that the missionary and the pastoral office both have their source in the *ministerium ecclesiasticum*. Geographical locality is not the matter because there is only one frontier or borderline: that of unbelief and belief, which runs, in fact, right through the church as AC VIII indicates by placing hypocrites among the *vere credentes*.<sup>19</sup> Given this reality, all preaching is to a degree evangelistic in focus.

### III. Stage 3: Church and Mission Societies

Upon reading AC VII we notice one further omission yet of great ecclesiological importance and still of relevance, namely the question of who bears the responsibility for sending in response to the universal call. AC VII does not answer that question directly. It speaks to the church as the congregation of saints. The emergence of mission societies, however, necessitates an ecclesiological clarification as to whether the mission societies or the church bear the responsibility for mission. In answer to this

question Lutherans gravitated towards the church as the true agent of God's sending. We turn to the founding father of the LCMS, C.F.W. Walther, who in a sermon looked back to Germany, praising the work of mission societies, yet pushing beyond to a missionary ecclesiology:

Nevertheless, the mission societies that had arisen and were a sign of the newly awakened Christian life were also at the same time a sign that the situation in the church as a whole

was not what it ought to be. For where the situation is as it should be, it should not be necessary to form small mission societies in the church, but the whole church must itself be a great mission society. The Lord has established it to be exactly this.<sup>20</sup>

We notice that Walther is cautiously positive about the societies' contribution, since he places the missionary

Imbued by the Spirit of God's mission, the church's orientation towards the world is one that is not of choice. God defines her that way.

<sup>19</sup> "Although the church is, properly speaking, the assembly of saints and those who truly believe, nevertheless, because in this life many hypocrites and evil people are mixed in with them, a person may use the sacraments even when they are administered by evil people" (AC VIII, 2 [TBC, 43]).

<sup>20</sup> C. F.W. Walther, "The Mission Society Established by God—Is. 43:21" in C.F.W. Walther, *The Word of His Grace: Occasional and Festival Sermons* (Lake Mills: Graphic Publishing Company, 1978), 19.

obligation on the church as a whole. Further down in the sermon he answers his own rhetorical question,

who is it then, to whom the responsibility to preach the Gospel among all the people on earth has been committed after the death of the apostles? ... Is it true, then, that the work of converting is the responsibility of the public servants of the church alone? No, it is not... The true mission society that has been instituted by God Himself is nothing else than the Christian church itself, that is the totality of all those who believe in Jesus Christ ... This means that Christ was not content just to give faith as an invisible thing to those who belong to his church, but he also gathers them by the visible sign of Holy Baptism into outward visible congregations.<sup>21</sup>

Walther follows an ecclesiology that places all Christians, the *congregatio sanctorum*, as God's mission society, joined by the love for the spiritual needs of their neighbors, by enfolding outsiders through baptism into the body of Christ. Walther does not leave the church invisible but obliges the visible church, the *coetus baptizorum* to respond: "According to God's Word," Walther says, "the church has been baptized into one body. This means that Christ was not just content to give faith as an invisible thing to those who belong to His church, but he also gathers them by the visible sign of Holy Baptism into outward visible congregations."<sup>22</sup>

We have here an ecclesiological definition of mission that was a concern pushed by many Lutherans in the nineteenth century — formative figures — around the identity of the LCMS. Lutheran mission, though pursued at first by mission societies and pious believers, ultimately became an ecclesial concern. The first Lutheran to be vocal on this issue was a Hanoverian pastor who had frequented with Wyneken and who had become influential on Lutheran ecclesiology and mission through his tract, *Die Mission und die Kirche* (The Mission and the Church), written in 1841. A few quotations from that tract must suffice to explain his point: "Mission, I now claim, must have an ecclesial character. It must proceed from the church and abide in the church. It must be nothing other than the church itself in its mission activity" (27). "Therefore the church as the community, as the organic body of the Lord, has the command for mission" (28).

<sup>21</sup> Walther, "Mission Society," 20.

<sup>22</sup> Walther, "Mission Society," 20.

"But the relationship is mutual. Mission also cannot go without the church. From the church it has the right of existence, for the Lord did not want a church and mission, but a church engaged in mission" (28).

In the nineteenth century, steps were taken to form a closer organizational union between mission and the church. We see this also in the LCMS where the Office of International Mission (OIM) and Office of National Mission (ONM) are organized and structured within the LCMS, and the LCMS assumes in its bylaws the role of sending overseas, which many would declare antiquated and in need of overhaul. And yet, the underlying fact remains: mission is not the possession of a few committed Christians more pious than others, who on the basis of a second level decision band together, but rather it belongs to the church, the baptized body of believers. To find an ecclesial way of expressing that obligation is characteristic of the Lutheran church and mission.

#### IV. Stage 4: The Confession, Church and Mission

By connecting mission to the church, a further issue had to be clarified, which was the question of to whom were those who went and preached accountable in their proclamation and witness? Since they can't leave unattached to the church, AC VII became instrumental in answering that question and it shaped the identity of Lutheran confessional mission. That became evident in the justification of Lutherans creating their own mission societies built on an ecclesiology which argued that the Evangelical Lutheran church represents the true church visibly because it administers the sacraments according to the Lutheran Confessions. Non-denominational, parachurch organizations like Basel, or faith based missions like the CIM (China Inland Mission) of Hudson Taylor,<sup>23</sup> or Moravian missions, could no longer receive Lutheran support. Lutheran mission was distinctly different than the above. It defined mission objectively in confession and spirituality, and the call to serve was mediated through the church and not based on the internal, personalized call and accountability to the Lord alone as we see with Hudson Taylor. Moreover the signs, especially baptism, were elevated consciously to a mission sacrament and the church is raised as the "spiritual mother of all those who will be saved."<sup>24</sup>

So when Wilhelm Löhe embraced the universal call

<sup>23</sup> Klaus Wetzel, "Die Stellung Hudson Taylors im Kontext der Missionsgeschichte," *Evangelikale Missiologie* (1/15): 9–23.

<sup>24</sup> Walther, "Mission Society," 21.

of the gospel — including the sacraments — for North America, he remarked, “Christ had to atone for our sins, and not only for our sins but for the sins of the entire world. The means by which we appropriate his atonement — Word and sacrament — must be known to all men.”<sup>25</sup> Mission was understood as *nota ecclesiae*, as a bearer of the signs of the church to the world, the pure preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments, and through these acts the world and all nations would be blessed. Especially the adverbs “pure” and “right” instructed Lutheran mission to align its proclamation and teaching in accordance with the Lutheran Confessions.

Johann Gottfried Scheibel would be the first Lutheran picking this motive for the mission in Dresden associated with “old Lutheran” pastor Johann Georg Wermelskirch (1803–1872) — the society later to be relocated to Leipzig. In 1835, Scheibel pleaded:

Now, as much as one mentions this fact, we can no longer ignore the confessional differences, for missionaries are preachers, receive the ordination, which is a churchly-confessional act, teach on the Lord’s Supper, distribute the sacrament, and this is either understood Catholic, or Reformed, or Lutheran. According to the Lutheran Confessions, you cannot have a Lutheran-Reformed Lord Supper ...<sup>26</sup>

The motive for mission became the interest to bring the word and the sacrament to the world the Lutheran way. Whereas other societies were driven by a strong eschatological focus of bringing in the end and doing mission to the glory and honor of God, the Lutheran mission expanded the universal church by enfolding people through baptism into the Lutheran church.

And Löhe, who believed that mission was the “one church of God in her motion, the actualization of the one universal, catholic church,” — a truly ecumenical stance — nonetheless hailed the visible Evangelical Lutheran Church as the center of all denominations, for she is in possession of the true word of God as expressed in the Lutheran Confessions. As he would say: “If the Lutheran Church has the pure Word and sacrament in a

pure confession, it obviously has the highest treasures of the church unperverted.”<sup>27</sup> To illustrate the point of the supremacy of the Lutheran Confessions, Löhe uses a metaphor of “a king drinking pure water from a spring when he could also have quenched his thirst with impure water from a buried cistern.”<sup>28</sup>

The interest in promoting an ecclesial-confessional identity for mission was also promoted by Ludwig Petri, who asked the following questions in his treatise *Mission and the Church* (1841):

It is obviously neither loving nor wise nor just for mature, European Christianity to withhold from the heathen world the profit that it has earned through the most painful experiences, in the hottest battles, among the greatest dangers, and with the bitterest losses, so that they may earn the profits themselves along the same dangerous, perhaps even more ruinous path... Shall we transmit dogma to the heathen so vaguely that they and Christianity with them must once again endure all the controversies in which we have bled: the Arian, Pelagian, Sacramentarian and others likewise? That appears to me equally foolish and unjust. If in our doctrine we have the truth and the correct understanding of the Scriptures, then we owe it to the heathen. If we have something good in our ecclesial nature, e.g. in our divine services or in our principle concerning the relative freedom of ceremony and structure, why should we withhold it from them? In any case there will remain so many battles for the heathen that we might well spare them the avoidable ones as much as we can ... No missionary who is commissioned by us can, as it were, simply learn the Scriptures by heart and speak in his own words without any exegesis, interpretation, and particular rendering. (8, 22–11, 11)

And so we see that a stage has been reached where the church and mission are fused consciously in promoting the faith. Lutheran confessional mission was born and its identity was based on AC VII, and it became important to declare one’s own ecclesial and mission identity in contrast to other particular churches and mission activities. These intentions reached their apex in 1892, when at the founding of the Bleckmar Mission (now Lutheran Church

<sup>25</sup> Loehe, *Three Books about the Church*, 82.

<sup>26</sup> Volker Stolle, *Wer seine Hand an den Plug legt: Die missionarische Wirksamkeit der selbständigen evangelisch-lutherischen Kirchen in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert* (Gross Oesingen: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung: Heinrich Harms / Oberurseler Hefte, 1992), 94.

<sup>27</sup> Loehe, *Three Books about the Church*, 113.

<sup>28</sup> Loehe, *Three Books about the Church*, 104.

Mission), two principles were approved at the synod of the Hanoverian Free Church in 1899: “The Lutheran church can pursue only Lutheran mission, 2. Lutheran mission can only be pursued by a Lutheran church.” In 1953, in view of partner churches emerging on the field, a third statement was added by its executive director, Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf: “Lutheran mission work must lead to a Lutheran Church.”<sup>29</sup>

This third statement took into consideration not the issue of what occurred back home, but was directed towards the church that resulted from the preaching of the word. The confessional element as goal became important at that juncture. Whereas the English churches were all pursuing the three self-principles, the Lutheran missionaries followed more the goals of pursuing a pure confession to the degree that collaboration with just any mission was no longer acceptable. And yet, the ecumenical character would remain in focus in that Lutheran mission furthers the one church, the *una sancta*, through its own preaching and teaching.<sup>30</sup> The LCMS stands in this tradition since its first missionaries, Theodor Naether (1866–1904) and Franz Mohn (1867–1925), were influenced by Walther’s confessional stance on the verbal inspiration of Scripture and its infallibility as Scripture and the Confessions teach it, and decided to take a stance against an emerging, rationalistic understanding of Scripture.<sup>31</sup>

## V. Stage 5: Affirming the Copernican turn: Ecclesiology and the *missio Dei*

One important contemporary missiological principle that now stands unshakable is the Copernican turn which was defined at Willingen in 1952. Then in the report paper on the conference the following statement authored by Leslie Newbigin was released:

<sup>29</sup> The first two were written by Heinrich (Wilhelm) Gerhold (1838–1899). Volker Stolle, “Das Missionsverständnis bei der konfessionell-lutherischen Missionswirksamkeit im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert,” *Kirchenmission nach lutherischem Verständnis* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 1993), 124–148, therein 142–143. For a discussion of these three principles, see Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf, “Lutherische Kirche treibt Lutherische Mission,” in *Lutherische Kirche treibt Lutherische Mission. Festschrift zum 75 jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (Bleckmar: Mission Evangelisch=Lutherischer Freikirchen, 1967), 13–47.

<sup>30</sup> For this reason, Lutheran missions extends an ecumenical charity by not discounting the fact that as much as errors are evident in the missions of other denominations, the possibility of them creating faith though their preaching still exists.

<sup>31</sup> Stolle, *Wer seine Hand an den Pflug legt*, 85. Naether and Mohn would be sent back to India by the LCMS in 1894 and 1896 respectively.

Mission has its source in the Triune God. Out of the depth of his love to us, the Father has sent forth his own beloved son to reconcile all things to himself that we and all men might through the Holy Spirit be made one in Him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God.<sup>32</sup>

This development of placing mission in the hands of God as the starting point and not the church might sound not that trenchant. However, looking at history, mission until World War II was largely associated with what the church desired, and in their pursuit of missions, many goals were formulated that had little to do with what God actually wanted. In his book *Mission of God*, Georg Vicedom puts it best:

There is the danger that the church itself may become the point of departure, the purpose, the subject of the mission. This is not, however, in accord with Scripture, since it is always the Triune God who acts, who makes His believers members of His kingdom. Even the church is only an instrument in the hands of God. The church herself is the only outcome of the activity of God. The Conference of Willingen accepted the concept *missio Dei* to describe this fact.<sup>33</sup>

Mission is anchored in the ontology of God, which bears itself out in functionality: God is what he does, he sends his Son. Born out of the inner-Trinitarian movements of the early church fathers, the *missio Dei* concept builds on the outward economic Trinity that God’s purpose in mission is to send his Son to redeem his created world through the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>34</sup> As a term, it

<sup>32</sup> In the sectional “The missionary calling of the Church,” *International Review of Missions*, 41 (1952): 562. See also *Classic Texts in Mission & World Christianity*, ed. Norman E. Thomas (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 103–104.

<sup>33</sup> Georg Vicedom, *The Mission of God* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 4–5.

<sup>34</sup> Karl Barth’s presentation in 1932 entitled, “Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart,” addressed to pastors at a conference in Brandenburg, reminds the audience: “Must not the most faithful, the most convinced missionary think seriously about the fact that the concept ‘*missio*’ in the ancient church was a term from the doctrine of the Trinity, the designation of the divine self-sending, the sending of the Son and of the Holy Spirit into the world?” Karl Barth, “Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart,” *Theologische Fragen und Antworten* (Zollikon: Theologischer Verlag Zuerich, 1957), 100–126, therein p.115. In this presentation, Karl Barth does not mention the *missio Dei*. It is not he but the conference at Willingen in 1952 and Karl Hartenstein to whom the *missio Dei* concept must be attributed. Hans Wiher, “*Missio Dei* (Teil 2)”, in *evangelische missiologie* 2/15, 92.

must first be understood as a *genitivus auctoris*, or subjective genitive, namely that the Trinitarian God is the one who sends, more precisely, that the Father sends, but who himself cannot be sent, and then also as an attribute genitive by which God is seen also as the sent one in his Son. Vicedom says:

God sends His Son; Father and Son send the Holy Ghost. Here God makes Himself not only the One sent, but at the same time the Content of the sending, without dissolving through this Trinity of revelation the equality of essence of the divine Persons.<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, over the years the term *missio Dei* has been discussed and promoted by numerous faith traditions, and as a result its use has become more a bane than a boon. For this reason, some call it a “shopping cart” or a “Trojan horse.”<sup>36</sup> In contrast to ecumenical interpretations, where the agenda is set by the world and the church is marginalized in God’s mission, we would have to think church centric, namely that God’s mission takes the church as his instrument, and that salvation history comes through the proclamation of the church distinct from God’s direct dealings in the world (i.e., *Heilsgeschichte versus Weltgeschichte*). The positive side of the term *missio Dei* is that it thinks of the church and mission as coming from the Triune God, and that the church is assuming a central place in the divine activity towards the world. AC VII is incredibly helpful here in that, by mentioning the signs and that the Holy Spirit is working through them, it explains how soteriology works in contrast to alternative proposals like social gospel or liberation theology, or the fast emerging Renewalism. By taking up the church in the mission of God, the church is also in her being missiologically understood. She does not adopt mission or considers it accomplished through programs in the church. She should fundamentally understand her existence in God’s mission to the world and thus be oriented towards the world and transform her existence in God’s mission into functionality according to the sequence: “The church is, the church does what it is. The church organizes what it does.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 8.

<sup>36</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 392.

<sup>37</sup> Craig van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2011), 64. For a discussion on ontology and functionality, see John G. Flett, *The Witness of God* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010), 292.

To elevate this consciousness for a missionary ecclesiology that avoids the dichotomy of ecclesiology and missions, the term *missional* has been coined. One of the key insights offered by Darrell Guder in his *Missional Church* is that, “the ecclesiocentric understanding of mission has been replaced during this century by a profoundly theocentric reconceptualization of Christian mission. We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God’s initiative.”<sup>38</sup>

Lutheranism has yet to respond to this use of the term “missional.” Novel terms generally raise skepticism among theologians over their value. Certainly the framework proposed would have to be welcomed, and yet the lack of a Lutheran contribution to that term justifies concerns over its interpretation. The term *missional* as currently understood in missiological circles does not embrace an ecclesiology as defined in AC VII. It therefore remains unclear how the mission of the Holy Spirit works since no means are mentioned. In fact in the recent upgrade of the book *Missional Church* (1998), the *Missional Church in Perspective* (2011), the authors admit that they have only made modest investigation into what the sacraments and ordination would mean for the term “missional church.”<sup>39</sup> As of now, the concept promotes an enthusiasm with no clear description of God’s delivery system and no ministry in its support. For that reason, unless modified, the term “missional” has little to offer in terms of structuring Lutheran mission.<sup>40</sup>

When we apply the *missio Dei* to AC VII and VIII, these two articles presuppose that the Holy Spirit has done his work of gathering a worshipping community around his means, the signs. It should be said that the article on the church does not stand isolated from its preceding articles. According to Wilhelm Maurer, Articles I-VIII represent a sequence in a salvation history scheme. For the activity of God’s gathering work preceding the coming about of the church, we would point to the articles AC III and IV, the objective work of Christ’s death for the sinful world and brought to the community through

<sup>38</sup> *Missional Church*, ed. Darrell Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 4.

<sup>39</sup> Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 61.

<sup>40</sup> I have pointed this out in *Mission from the Cross* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 299. I also refer here to an unpublished presentation by Ken Schurb, *The Church in Luther’s Large Catechism: Missional?* at a conference in Missouri where he makes initial investigation into the concept and draws similar conclusions as I do.

the work of the spirit in AC V. This is indicated by Luther in the Large Catechism:

Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death, and resurrection, etc. But if the work remained hidden so that no one knew of it, it would have been all in vain, all lost. In order that this treasure might not remain buried but be put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to be published and proclaimed, in which he has given the Holy Spirit to offer and apply to us this treasure, this redemption. [LC II, 38 [TBC, 436]]

The church should understand herself in the mission of God and not at the beginning or the endpoint. Full ecclesial mission is only accomplished when the church recognizes her missionary nature and position in the mission of God as having been gathered and now sent, and when mission is understood churchly.<sup>41</sup> This is the Copernican turn that Lutheranism accepted in 1980 at the Luther Academy at Ratzeburg where the term “*missio Dei*” was vetted by Lutheran scholars and published under a book entitled *Lutheran Contributions to the missio Dei*.<sup>42</sup>

The theological implications of this Copernican shift are apparent for missiology as a theological discipline and as a hermeneutic principle. Just as God’s act of sending his Son is not a secondary act, so too the church cannot make mission her secondary act. Theology can no longer marginalize missiology, otherwise it is bad theology. The sad fact is this: that since the introduction of a fourfold discipline during the Enlightenment, theology always suffers from a fragmentation with no unifying telos. That unifying *telos* or framework of theology is now seen to be mission. Thus, as Stan Nussbaum puts it: “Missiologists are not asking for a bigger slice of the pie, it is a total restructuring of theology as a discipline.”<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the Trinitarian missiological approach is more encompassing than looking at fragments of theology to explain missions.<sup>44</sup> Christopher Wright demonstrates this hermeneutical perspective from Scripture:

The writings that now comprise our Bible are themselves the product of and witness to the ultimate

mission of God...Mission is not just one of a list of things that the Bible happens to talk about, only a bit more urgently than some. Mission is ... ”what it’s all about.”<sup>45</sup>

Missiology no longer is satisfied with a proof text method where a few nuggets here or there validate mission. Rather, it reads the Bible missiologically and understands the church missiologically. And Wright takes the Trinitarian focus one step further and sees in Christ not only the Lord and Savior but also the one sent by God and who sends his church. Thus, according to Wright, Christocentric theology must also be missional. Unfortunately, Wright’s hermeneutic is wide and sweeping: important distinctions between God’s *missio generalis* and *specialis* are not made. What is the difference between the First Article or the cultural mandate and the mission mandate to proclaim the gospel, to which again AC VII points? How important is it exegetically and biblically that in the Gospels God desires his word preached, heard, and then received through baptism? Mission is a kerygmatic sacramental act and stations in Scripture should be identified as God’s true mission where that happens.

## VI. Stage 6: Struggling with Contemporary Challenges

If one follows Dana Robert’s report published in *Missiology* on the history of the American Society of Missiology (ASM) — founded on 8-11 June 1973 — one will note the troubling past missions had in North America.<sup>46</sup> By the early 1970s, the collapse of mission’s legitimacy was imminent. The fall of colonialism and the Vietnam War played havoc on missions. Nationalist movements in many countries blamed missionaries for being complicit with Western occupation and they bid them to go home. The criticism of missionaries resulted in students losing interest in what they deemed a colonial enterprise; mission studies at denominational seminaries were aborted or replaced with other courses, and at the universities the secularization of religious studies marginalized missions and evangelism. The Second Vatican Council’s (1962–65) concessions to other religions caused many Roman Catholic missionaries to leave the field or the church. And the only professional society for mission studies

<sup>41</sup> Stolle, *Wer seine Hand an den Pflug legt*, 103.

<sup>42</sup> *Lutherische Beiträge zur Missio Dei* (Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1982).

<sup>43</sup> Stan Nussbaum, “A future for missiology as queen of theology?” *Missiology. An international review* 42, no. 1 (January 2014): 57–66.

<sup>44</sup> Ross Langmead, “What is Missiology?” *Missiology. An international review* 42, no. 1 (January 2014): 67.

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downer’s Grove: IVP, 2006), 22.

<sup>46</sup> I’m paraphrasing here Dana Robert, “Forty years of the American Society of Missiology: retrospect and prospect,” *Missiology. An international review* 42, no. 1 (January 2014): 6–25.

that remained was the seminary-based Association of Professors of Missions, which had dwindled in numbers to just a few.<sup>47</sup> Thanks to the endeavors of ASM, mission survived both in practice and as a subject in theological education. But its survival was built around three controversial themes on which there was dissent, even within the Association: collaboration and convergence (i.e., ecumenicity), church growth, and contextualization.

These three themes still captivate missiological discussions today. AC VII speaks to these three subjects, and we can be thankful for the reference to *satis est*: First, AC VII professes an ecumenicity based on the *una sancta*, which transgresses denominational lines. AC's point is not so much to argue for visible unity, but rather to point out that unity should not be associated with one visible church, the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, the Augsburg Confession sought to redefine the true unity with the gospel of justification by faith. Thus, in spite of all the visible disunity of the church visible, the Confessors could argue that the true unity of the church still persists by faith alone, and it is not an article of sight but of faith. However, though this one church they call the *una sancta* exists by faith alone, it needs the visible signs of the church, the pure preaching of the gospel, and the right administration of the sacraments in order to be created and to survive. In contrast, ecumenical relations today wish to see a greater visible unity, thinking that this is what the AC pleads for.<sup>48</sup>

The LCMS's reason for existing and its identity is shaped by AC VII, for the reference to the *pure* preaching of the gospel and the *right* administration of the sacraments define her relationship with other visible churches. In other words, not denying that the true unity of the church is by faith and that it exists across denominational lines, the quest of visible church bodies coming together is guided by that very sentence on the pure preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments. In case anyone has his doubts about what "pure preaching of the gospel" means, the LCMS has always

drawn in FC SD X, 31 ("as long as these churches are otherwise united in teaching and in all the articles of the faith")<sup>49</sup> as an important commentary. By that we see that the Confessors are not gospel minimalists<sup>50</sup> but rather, the gospel of justification, though truly the queen in shaping our identity, stands in a long line of other doctrines that are to be upheld. If we were, for example, neatly defining the gospel but then to ignore a properly understood ministry or predestination, then the gospel would not be preached and it loses its relevance. What alternatives to this approach do we currently have? Should we take the approach of American Evangelicalism, whose basis for unity is mostly subjectivism, a personal experience with Christ, and an indwelling of his Spirit, a conversion and a display of personal holiness expressed at revivals? Or should we go with an Evangelical Confessionalism, as we see it in the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches, which makes as its only basis for unity the doctrine of justification by grace that has been so altered that it hardly represents what the Confessions teach, and allows it to coexist with a lot of doctrines that actually contradict it?

The fact is that the one church by faith exists and the *satis est* points out what it needs to survive. However, to demand visible unity with one another, the teaching of the gospel and all its articles become relevant, and this validates why the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the LCMS's identification with it, exists. This explains the longstanding rule for Lutherans in North America that Lutheran pulpits and altars are for Lutheran pastors only; more specifically as a *communio in sacris* rule which applies to missions also.

Second, in terms of Church Growth, AC VII speaks on the work of the Holy Spirit who through his means gives faith where and when he pleases. No mention is made of human programs and social sciences as the means contributing to quantitative growth of the church. The Augsburg Confession, including AC VII and VIII, have made their primary focus the word of God, and not

<sup>47</sup> Robert, "Forty years," 7.

<sup>48</sup> On 30 October to 8 November 2013, the World Council of Churches Assembly met in Busan and passed a unity statement calling for greater commitment to the visible unity of the church. The statement says: "In faithfulness to this our common calling, we will seek together the full visible unity of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church when we shall express our unity around the one Table of the Lord." In that case the marks of the church draw the lines, and everything that does not belong to them, such as practices and traditions, belongs to the other side of the line. They are human traditions and do not belong to the unity of the church.

<sup>49</sup> "For this reason the churches are not to condemn one another because of differences in ceremonies when in Christian freedom one has fewer or more than the other, as long as these churches are otherwise united in teaching and in all the articles of the faith as well as in the proper use of the holy sacraments" (SD X, 31 [TBC 640]).

<sup>50</sup> Leif Grane sees AC VII's "teaching of the Gospel" in a minimalistic way: "The AC could very well be characterized as preconfessionalistic, since it in no way envisions nor encompasses the idea of a confession as a line of demarcation of one denomination from another." *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 97.

the church, as it is represented in Roman Catholicism's hierarchical system and her traditions. It is the *viva vox evangelii* that serves and remains as the foundational principle of the true church of Christ (AC VIII). The Reformation defines the church as the *creatura verbi* and therefore makes the church of all time and in all places a fruit of the living, proclaimed word of God and the means of grace. That is why, with Martin Luther, Walther can call the church the "mother" where salvation is found and not outside of it.<sup>51</sup> The missiological lesson we take from this is that the Reformation and the Confessions motivate us not to seek the *growth* of the church, but the *proclamation of the gospel* from which the church comes about and lives. Growth and expansion of the church over all parts of the world are only consequences of this missionary motive of proclaiming the gospel.

Third, on contextualization, AC VII's *satis est* also serves as an important qualifier in that it is enough for the true unity of Christianity around the world to be in agreement on the pure preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments, and not on rites and ceremonies. This means that it provides an opening for local communities to express their practice in ways different to ours.<sup>52</sup> However, AC VII takes a universal or catholic perspective for all churches around the world to agree on what is their common purpose, which is not to jeopardize the pure preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments with local theologies and syncretism.<sup>53</sup> From AC VII's point of view, unity was found in faith and in the consent of the gospel (*consentire de doctrina evangelii*) and not in human traditions that the Roman Catholic Church was enforcing on every worshipping community. Today that argument for *satis est* pushes for the freedom and autonomy of congregations in ceremonies and worship that may endanger any

form of unity in worship. If we follow the context of AC then we are cautioned not to think that way. The introduction of Lutheran agendas was an immediate project the Reformation began, and Melancthon argued that once the rites, whether universal or local, are established as not necessary for salvation, they are nonetheless kept for the sake of tranquility and peace in the church (Ap VII, 33-34).<sup>54</sup> By being incorporated into the adiaphora of the church, like the vestments and the dishes for Holy Communion, liturgy and music became indifferent matters. Whether theology and practice can be seen as so divorced from one another is a huge question to which a liturgical missiology could provide guidance with principles from Luther's love for music and the theology of the Reformation. It is as urgent a matter as it ever has been.<sup>55</sup>

It might be true what Andrew Walls says: that we will never meet universal Christianity in itself, but always in local expressions, and that means in a historically, culturally conditioned form.<sup>56</sup> However, AC VII and AC VIII offer a universal perspective on what the church needs for her survival and that is the pure preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments, and in contrast to pluralism as relativism, we assume that one interpretation of this gospel exists and one interpretation for the sacraments also. Here AC VII and VIII provide the metanarrative, one that curbs the creation of local theologies and a radical contextualization of the gospel that holds a church and her theology captive to the cultural context. AC VII's reference to the "teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments" calls for a meta-theology, and the Creeds and the Confessions serve that meta-theology against attempts to localize and syncretize the gospel. This may be what Paul Hiebert suggests with his concept of critical contextualization.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Grane, *The Augsburg Confession*, 96.

<sup>55</sup> Claudio Seifert, *Towards a "Liturgical Missiology": Perspectives on Music in Lutheran Mission Work in South Africa*, submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Theology in the subject of Missiology at the University of South Africa (October 2003), 6.

<sup>56</sup> Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of the Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 235.

<sup>57</sup> Critical contextualization sees "cultures as both good and evil, not simply as neutral vehicles for understanding the world. No culture is absolute or privileged. We are all relativized by the gospel." Thus, Paul Hiebert points out: "On the global scale this calls for both local and global theologies. Local churches have the right to interpret and apply the gospel in their contexts, but they also have a responsibility to join the larger church community around the world to seek to overcome both the limited perspectives each brings and the biases each has that might distort the Gospel." Paul Hiebert, "The Gospel in Human Contexts: Changing Perceptions of Contextualization," in

<sup>51</sup> "He [the Holy Spirit] has a unique community in the world, which is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God, which the Holy Spirit reveals and proclaims ..." (LC II, 42 [TBC 436]).

<sup>52</sup> Discussions around contextualization are rare in the LCMS, though in great need if the gospel is to find its place in North America's ethnicities. A laudable attempt to bring contextual issues to our attention recently came from Larry Vogel's study, "America's Changing Demographic Landscape," *Journal of Lutheran Mission* 2, no.3 (June 2015): 10-28.

<sup>53</sup> The allowance for freedom in rites and ceremonies does seem to place the *ius liturgicum* in congregations, if one goes with current LCMS practice. However, it is evident that such freedom was left to territorial churches: "... our churches teach ..." and not to local churches belonging to that territory. This explains the strong push for uniform agendas from the outset of the Reformation.

## Conclusion

Given what has been said, the underlying argument is that mission is a *nota ecclesiae*, a sign of the church that has its roots in AC VII and VIII in the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. All that was needed is a shift in scope that embraces a focus towards the world. Mission is the church expressing and witnessing God's salvific intentions to the world through the preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments. Thus, imbued by the Spirit of God's mission, the church's orientation towards the world is one that is not of choice. God defines her that way. If mission is treated as a *nota ecclesiae*, then AC VII and VIII will remain missiologically valuable and important anchors in addressing questions as these six stages demonstrate. But then affirming a missionary ecclesiology, we will also have to make adjustments in the way we teach missions in the curriculum and how it is practiced in the life of the synod and congregations. Moreover, when mission is the life of the church, then she is obliged to step forward and address current issues and challenges as a church and not surrender or outsource much of her missionary life to individual interest groups.

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*Missionshift. Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, eds. David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 82-102, therein p. 93 and 94. Paul Hiebert, who takes a cultural perspective, nonetheless praises the value of creeds: "One method often overlooked by Protestants are catechisms. Like the early church creed, these are brief theological summaries that can be readily memorized and recalled. Today many Protestants have smorgasbord theologies, and lack a simple, coherent understanding of the gospel (Bibby 1987). Confessions and catechisms not only provide a comprehensive view of Christian faith, but they also preserve that faith over time. Churches that recite them, even after the members have lost a vital, living faith, can experience revival later as the younger generation raised in the church grasp these truths." Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999), 253.