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Was Luther a Missionary?

Eugene W. Bunkowske

Gustav Warneck, in his Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time, with an Appendix concerning Roman Catholic Missions, contends that Luther was not a man of missions in our sense of the word. After all, Luther never founded a modern-day missionary society. Instead of accompanying Ferdinand Magellan, who was his contemporary, on a voyage to take the Gospel around the world Luther stayed at home and devoted himself, of all things, to the reformation of the church. However, reading around in Luther's works, especially his sermons and notes on the Psalms and in Werner Elert's The Structure of Lutheranism, as well as looking at Paul Peter's article on "Luther's Weltweiter Missionssinn" in the journal Lutherischer Rundblick leads one to believe that most modern scholars have badly misrepresented Luther on missions. Johannes von Walter (in my opinion) takes a more balanced view in his Die Geschichte des Christentums where he says: "It is only a legend that Luther failed to recognize the church's missionary duty at the time of the discoveries in America, Africa and the Orient."

Luther's Theology of Missions

For Luther a theologically correct view of the world meant that everything and every person should be in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. From Colossians 1:23 and Mark 16:15 he concludes that "the Gospel is not to be kept in a corner but should fill the whole globe"; from Psalm 117 that "the Gospel and Baptism must come to the whole world"; from Haggai 2:7 that "it will be a precious treasure for all nations." Luther says God wants to bless "not two or three nations but the whole world." Even though Luther cannot believe that non-Christians long for the Gospel, he does not doubt that they are in need of it. For him the very promise of blessing for the heathen "bears witness that all nations are under the curse and power of the devil." For Luther the words Welt (world) and Wort (word) are key concepts in his worldwide sense of missions. Wort is the vehicle by which the happy message is announced. Welt is the place and object of the message. According to Luther Noah traversed "the entire world and preached everywhere, giving instructions concerning the true worship of God."
Luther speaks of Abraham as "preaching publicly and building a public chapel or altar." Luther holds up Abraham as an example for instructing especially his servants and also the neighboring Canaanites concerning true religion. Abraham did not do this, according to Luther "in some corner—for fear of the threats or the violence of the heathen—but in a public place in order that by his own example and that of his people he might lead others to the knowledge of God and to true forms of worship." Luther goes on to say: "God even used hunger to drive Abraham to Egypt, so that he might enlighten some with a right understanding of God." Then Luther applied this statement to his own time by saying: "In such a miraculous way does God act on earth sending apostles and preachers to the nations in the twinkling of an eye before they can think of it; nor do those who are sent know whither they go." 

Paraphrasing Joseph's conversation with his brothers after they recognized him in Egypt, Luther says: "Now you have recognized God, and me too. And what I told you in your ears that same thing it is proper for you to preach from the housetops (Matthew 10:27). Proclaim such things to your father and to his entire retinue in the same way that Christ demanded His disciples in Mark 16:15 to go to all the world and preach the Gospel." Luther goes on to say that Joseph sent his brothers out saying, "Rush out to say what you have heard." Then Luther added the admonition for his listeners and also for us: "As soon as we have received God in His Son Jesus Christ, the immediate consequences should be: go out now, be not quiet, so that it will not be only you who become holy, but also the others around you who are sustained." 

Here Luther is speaking not only of evangelism and missions; he is also leading us to understand that the history of the people of God is as a whole the history of missions. Insofar as Israel's history is intimately tied up with the history of the Canaanites and Egyptians it is a worldwide history of missions. For Luther, in the words of P. T. Forsyth, "The entire course of history is an all-encompassing missionary movement." Luther also underscored the promise to Abraham that in him all the races of the world should be blessed (Genesis 12:3) when he said: "Here comes the right promise which we should write with golden letters, and glorify and praise in the languages of all lands. For this promise brings and offers eternal treasures." Luther adds: "But if, as the words clearly indicate, this promise is to be extended to all nations or families of the earth, who else, would we say has dispensed this blessing among all nations except the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ?"
The first part of Luther's systematic approach to missions is a description of the "kingdom." Wherever he does this the world-wide dimension of his sense of missions comes into view. According to his exegesis of Psalm 8, the kingdom of Christ is "in all lands, and yet in heaven...[It] is founded and regulated, namely, only through the Word and Faith, without sword and armour."\(^{19}\) According to Luther this kingdom is "not a temporal, transitory, earthly kingdom, ruled with laws and regulations, but a spiritual, heavenly and eternal kingdom that must be ruled without and above all laws, regulations and outward means."\(^{20}\) As such the kingdom, according to Luther, reminds us of the great missionary truth "that all the heathen should praise God and become God's people."\(^{21}\) Here we see the extent to which Luther's sense of missions (missionary consciousness) is drawn from his deep understanding of the "correct way of teaching." As Luther once said it when expounding Psalm 19:4:

The days and nights will declare the glory of God and the works of His hands in the languages of all people and in all lands...This was fulfilled as the apostles proclaimed the great deeds of God in many tongues and it continues to be fulfilled in the whole world, for the Gospel which was disseminated into various languages through the apostles continues to resound in those same tongues unto the ends of the world.\(^{22}\)

At the same time Luther also recognized together with the psalm writers that "In the wake of the preaching of the Word, Satan and so many smart people, so many holy and powerful men—in fact the whole world together with the gates of hell—would persecute the Word." Other obstacles, according to Luther, will be "the ingratitude of the people, contempt and weariness with the Word."\(^{23}\) Furthermore, according to Luther, it is so very hard for us "openly and without fear to praise the mercy of God freely...for it is boldness above boldness, strength above strength and courage above courage to dare to speak in public and to confess the name of the Lord." For Luther there are various motivations for closing our lips: "Sometimes the fear of danger, sometimes the hope of gain and often the advice of friends intervenes."\(^{24}\) For Luther it is therefore clear why the Psalmist in Psalm 51:15 says: "Lord, open Thou my lips, and grant that I may confidently cry out, teach and instruct others in what I have learned, namely, that Thou alone art praiseworthy and glorious forever, Thou who doest really justify the wicked." In this way Luther encourages us to continue in the work of missions, "So that we might learn how great a thing it is to dare to speak of what we have experienced."\(^{25}\) Although recognizing that not all would accept the wit-
ness, Luther says: “Still some from among the nobility, kings, princes and the wise of the world will join themselves to you and will accept the Word. God will have His tithe from the mass of kingdoms and peoples...God always converts a few through this doctrine of faith in spite of all reason and opinions.”

In order that this might happen Luther developed a lively correspondence with several hundred princes and nobles who ruled over the various political units of Europe.

The most important thing for Luther is that God will always supply a place in which the Word of God can be taught, and so Luther’s sense of missions knows no bounds. For the Lord, according to Luther, will have a kingdom not merely in the Jewish people, but also in the whole earth throughout the world. Christ will have His baptistry, His chancel, from which He teaches, and His apostles and teachers teach in cities and towns even if only one or two believe. So Christ’s name and the altar on which the Sacrament is celebrated remain. They will be extended in length as well as in breadth so that Christ and His name will be found in every extremity throughout the world.

On the basis of Psalm 68:11 Luther says: “The Lord will give the Word (Ausreden), so that there will be a great host of evangelists.” Luther continues: “this came to pass in the apostles and their successors throughout the world. God blessed the world with a host of these, dispatching them into all the world.” Luther further speaks of the apostles as “kings of these hosts...for they are the ones who converted the whole world. Each one in his particular sphere of action led his army to Christ.”

How can Luther say that apostles have “converted the whole world”? Did he mean to say that the apostles had personally converted people throughout the whole world? Some theologians have taken Scripture in that way. Some have even believed that in the apostolic age the Gospel was planted in the Americas. But this is not Luther’s view. In his interpretation of Mark 16:14-20 Luther says, “The apostles did not go to all the countries for no apostle came to us” (the Germans, that is). And since America had just been discovered during Luther’s time, he was well aware that, as he said it, “Many islands have been found even in our days where there are heathen to whom no one has preached.” Luther therefore poses a question: “How could these discoveries accord with Paul’s words in Romans 10:18 (quoted from Psalm 19), ‘your preaching has gone out to all the world,’ although it has not arrived in all the world?”

Luther's answer is found in his exegesis of this psalm. He says that “according to David’s word God’s grace will in the future be preached everywhere...; His kingdom will extend under all of heaven...; Christ
will reign and rule all the lands that will believe in Christ and that the holy Christian Church will be as broad as the world." Thus Luther is speaking of the future and not limiting the preaching concerning the grace of God to the apostolic era. Rather, Luther says, "The word of the Gospel which the apostles preached...has run abroad in the whole world and still runs." In his Ascension sermon Luther tells us how he wishes that this matter should be understood:

Their message has gone out to all lands even though it has not yet reached all the world. This going forth has begun and goes into motion even though it has not been completed or accomplished. Rather it will be preached out to an ever greater extent, in distance and breadth, until the last day. As soon as this message is preached and heard and proclaimed in all the world, then is the message complete and accomplished for all. Then will the last day come to pass.

Luther visualized it thus: the continual issuing forth of the message was "throwing a stone into the water which makes waves, circles and streaks around itself, and the waves push each other further and further; one pushes the other, until they reach the shore." Or he compares the divine message with a human one: "The message of the emperor which has gone out from Nuremberg, or to Turkey, even though it has not yet gotten there; in the same way are we to understand the preaching of a the apostles as well." Luther encapsulates it all by saying, "And so it has come, is coming and will come to us too, who live at the end of earth; for we (the Germans) too live on the sea."

Luther and the Great Commission

Some scholars have attributed to Luther the opinion that the Great Commission was only for the apostles. Some based this idea on Luther's interpretation of Psalm 82:4 in which he cited Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creatures," but added, "since then, however, no one has had this general apostolic command." The context, however, shows that in this situation Luther was distinguishing between "public preaching" and "street-corner preaching." Luther wanted to call to the attention of the "street-corner preachers" that the call is holy and that the called preacher receives a clear-cut office. He is called by a defined community to carry out the ministry. With the apostles, from Luther's point of view, it was different because they were the pioneers who started the whole process that set the ongoing waves of missions into progress. Because of
this they had a general call to go "to all lands," to "foreign houses,"
and there to preach to all people.

But this point in no way changed for Luther the all-encompassing
validity of Christ's Great Commission. For Luther made only one
distinction between the call of the apostles and the call of their fol-
lowers. The call of the apostles was direct, the call of their disciples
mediated. Nevertheless, both were divine calls both as to their con-
tent and as to their power. Therefore, both the apostles and their fol-
lowers have the one call to preach Christ, or as Luther expressed it
in his interpretation of Psalm 45:14:

The Apostles teach about Christ. The Prophets teach about Him
too. The teachers, bishops, pastors and ministers who baptize,
who administer the Sacraments—all are led to Christ that they
may believe and serve in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, each one
in his own way... So if I am a teacher of the Gospel, I do the
same thing that Paul and Peter did.39

In fact, it has always been a common concept in Lutheranism that
all "legitimate ministers of the Gospel are true successors of the apos-
tles," not by virtue of their person, but by virtue of their being men
whom the Lord Jesus Christ has "sent out" as witnesses not only
in Jerusalem but also in all Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts
of the world.40

Luther did not think of missions as being primarily individualized
or privatized. He thought of missions as pertaining to the church;
that is, he thought in terms of Christendom as a whole as well as
of the world of nations. He thought of the people and the nations that
had not as yet heard the Gospel and so he saw the Gospel moving
from nation to nation, from \textit{ta ethne} to \textit{ta ethne}. Luther often spoke
of these groups of people as "heathen." Luther, like missionary
preachers of today, did not use that term in a negative sense but rath-
er he understood the word in the sense that Christ the Good Shep-
herd used it when he spoke about "the other sheep."41 Or Luther spoke
about those whose invitation to the great wedding came later and who
were brought from the highways.42 In conformity with the Scriptures
Luther takes the word "heathen" as referring primarily to non-Jews.
As a result, Luther can say that the Good News is meant for "us hea-
then" or that "accordingly the apostles came to the heathen." Yet in
the same connection Luther continues: "This has not yet been done.
The time is in progress, inasmuch as the servants are going into the
highways; the apostles made a beginning and are still calling us to-
gether."43

Luther was not satisfied to preach only to Christians. He said, "It
is necessary always to proceed to those to whom no preaching has
been done, in order that the number of Christians may be greater."\(^{44}\) He pointed out that this obligation rests on all Christians when he said: The Christians should also through the Word harvest much fruit among all the Gentiles and should convert and save many, and thus they shall devour around about them like a fire that is burning in the midst of dry wood or straw. The fire of the Holy Spirit, then, shall devour the Gentiles according to the flesh and prepare a place everywhere for the Gospel and the kingdom of Christ.\(^{45}\)

Particularly in Luther’s time this obligation to do missionary work confronted the prisoners of war among the Turks who, Luther said, by their Christian conduct should “adorn and praise the Gospel and the name of Christ” in Turkish surroundings. He said that by doing this the prisoners of war would “perhaps convert many.”\(^{46}\) According to Luther, indeed, every Christian in heathen surroundings, not only the prisoners of war, should be a missionary. A Christian in such circumstances “not only has the right and the power to teach God’s Word but has the duty to do so on pain of losing his soul and of God’s disfavor.” For Luther when the Christian is at “a place where there are no Christians he needs no other call than to be a Christian, called and anointed by God from within. Here it is his duty to preach and to teach the Gospel to erring heathen or non-Christians, because of the duty of brotherly love even though no man calls him to do so.”\(^{47}\) Lest, however, we suggest Luther is leaving the duty or obligation to do mission work completely dependent on chance, it will be good to listen to Luther at another time: “Now if all heathen are to praise God... they must know Him and believe in Him... If they are to believe, they must first hear His Word... If they are to hear His Word, then preachers must be sent to proclaim god’s Word to them.”\(^{48}\) In concluding this section it is fitting to note how highly Luther thought of missionary work among the heathen: “It is the best work of all when the heathen are led out of idolatry to the knowledge of God.”\(^{49}\)

Luther the Missionary in Action

The above citations from Luther’s writings have shown us what a broad understanding the Reformer had of the propagation of the Gospel in all the world. It remains now to show that he went on to translate this sense of missions into action and that his contribution to world missions is far from negligible. Luther himself spoke of this missionary activity of his when someone objected that he, although only a preacher in Wittenberg, was teaching in all the world through his books, and
that he therefore was not staying within the bounds prescribed by his congregational call. To this Luther retorted that "as a Doctor of Holy Scripture...I began, at the command of pope and emperor, to do what such a doctor is sworn to do, expounding the Scriptures for all the world and teaching everybody."\(^5\) In this passage it comes into sharp focus how Luther and his contemporaries regarded their writings as a means of worldwide missions. Luther speaks of his task of writing as "a divine office and work" even though many "do not see how necessary and useful" (his writings) "are to the world."\(^5\) In short Luther's writing activity is to be seen as part of his worldwide missionary activity.

This point is especially helpful for some of us who think particularly of the worldwide influence of Luther's translation of the Bible. For his activity as an author comes to a peak in his work as exegete (Hermeneut). Thanks to Luther's translation of the German Bible, the Apostle Paul's longing pointed out in 2 Thessalonians 3:1, "that the word of the Lord might spread quickly and become known in its splendor," became a reality not only in Germany but also in the diaspora, when Bible translations into all the European languages were made with reference to Luther's German translation. As one who has worked with Bible translation in Africa for several decades I can say that the ever spreading circles of the influence of Luther's Bible translation, in which content took precedence over form—cannot be too strongly emphasized. In truth Martin Luther is the father of Bible translations in the vernacular languages throughout the world. At the time of the Reformation only 33 languages of the world had any part of Scripture written in them. By 1982 some portion of the Scripture was available in 1,763 languages; 279 languages had full Bibles, 551 additional languages had New Testaments, and 933 additional languages had a portion of Scripture.\(^5\)

Any honest look at Luther must take a clear-eyed view of the tremendous influence of his writings, including 350 published works and 3,000 letters to people all over the globe.\(^5\) As missionary writings his Large and Small Catechism are paramount and remain effective tools in missions even today. With the Catechism, "the jewel of the common school," as it was called, Luther introduced for the first time a means of thorough instruction in church and school by which, according to his words, "the heathen who want to be Christians are taught and guided in what they should believe, know, do and leave undone according to the Christian faith."\(^5\) In this connection it is noteworthy that the Small Catechism was first published not in book form but in 40-by-24 inch posters or placards which were fixed on
the walls in the homes and schools. These posters contained Luther’s Morning and Evening Prayers, the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, etc. The missionary dimension of the Small Catechism is shown in the fact that it was very quickly translated into Low German, Latin, Dutch, Frisian, Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, Wendish, and Prussian. In many of these languages it was the first book ever published. The catechism was used in Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Netherlands, Belgium, England, France, and even Spain and Italy.55

In addition, one has to mention Luther’s church and home postils (books of prayer and sermons) which were read by emergency preachers in various churches and were also read as devotional books in countless Christian homes.56 With these two works Luther restored the office of preaching to its rightful place in public worship and in the communion liturgy. One can hardly overlook the missionary impact of this step on the church for the subsequent centuries, both at home and abroad. Johannes von Walter in his Geschichte des Christentums noted that passages from Luther’s sermons and home devotions encouraged countless Christians even down to his own day.57

In the third place, Luther’s many pamphlets should be mentioned. As writings for instruction and edification they constituted a new tool for missionary outreach. They were distributed by many colporteurs and missionaries (A. G. Dickens calls such people “missionaries” repeatedly).58 These pamphlets went out to families and cities and countrysides and they were read by young and old. They were also taken abroad by missionaries including the many students who came from other countries to study at Wittenberg. These pamphlets were translated into the languages of many other lands.59

Then, too, Luther’s hymns cannot be overlooked. In these hymns he invites people to worship in a totally new way. He propels them to take part in the worship service in a manner unthinkable prior to the Reformation. Among these hymns we find “May God Embrace us with His Grace,” in which we find these phrases: “Let Jesus’ healing power be revealed in richest measure, converting every nation.” “May people everywhere be won to love and praise You truly.”60 The last verse in “Dear Christians, One and All” reminds us of Christ’s Great Commission in Matthew 28:20, “Teach them to observe everything that I have taught you.” The last verse of this hymn reads: “What I on earth have done and taught guide all your life and teaching; so shall the kingdom’s work be wrought and honored in your preaching.” In this verse “you” (du) stands for “every Christian.”61
it must be said that it was Luther's Reformation that put the communal song next to the church choir and thereby broke the preponderance of the standardized liturgy in a foreign language. The result was that a rich stream of hymnody flowed into the home, the school, and the church—into the life and hearts of the people. Luther opened the way for the great hymns, including missions hymns, in the vernacular that we hold so dear today. Truly Luther in a real sense is the father of the vernacular Christian hymnody which now exists around the world.62

Luther's missionary activity did not exhaust itself with his effectiveness as an author. His sermons and speeches also had a great missionary impact. For his sermons were echoed by numerous preachers who sat at the foot of his pulpit and attended his classes. No fewer than 16,000 theological students enrolled at the University of Wittenberg between 1520 and 1560. Like no other university, this one trained missionaries for home and overseas services. The enrollment list at Wittenberg shows that one-third of the students came from other lands.63 This means that no fewer than 5,000 students who had learned from Luther's sermons and lectures and from Luther's successors went out to spread Luther's deep desire that all should be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ even to the very ends of the earth. What Luther said about preaching in the quotation already mentioned, that it is like a stone thrown into the water which creates many circles around it, thus became a reality. For Luther preaching was always a message taken from place to place just as Isaiah likened the word of the Gospel to a stream in Isaiah 35:6. On the basis of this passage Luther said: "Thus the prophet points out through this simile that the Word will be preached richly and will be disseminated further and further and that from the Church—that is, in a certain place—many others will be drawn to the Word."64

Luther's confidence in the "endless dynamic of the Gospel" and in the "corresponding movement of the church" likewise directed his eyes toward the non-Christian people with whom he came in contact. In this respect we should not think immediately of overseas people. For Luther the hearers were the Jews of Germany and also the Turks of the Balkans. Luther naturally had personal feelings about the first of those groups. The way that he felt about the conversion of the Jews at the beginning of his public activity is witnessed by his energetic sense of missions; his confidence in the Gospel as the power of holiness roused in him the hope that "if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from Holy Scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians and turn again to the faith
of their fathers, the prophets and patriarchs." Luther even gives advice on how to lead a Jew "who is not tainted or obdurate" to Christ. And in a writing to the esteemed Jesel, a Jew of Rossheim, "my good friend," Luther informs the Jews about a "booklet" that he would like to write "if God gives me time and room." On this booklet Luther pinned the hope that "he might win over some of the descendants of the holy patriarchs and prophets and that he may lead them to the Messiah promised to them." He closed this writing with the assurance that he "wished the Jews all the best...for the sake of the crucified Jew, whom no one is to take away from me." This even in 1537, when this letter was written, Luther still sought to bring about the conversion of the Jews even though he had long before experienced how they had misunderstood his neighborly love and how they had made use of his "benevolence" for their "impenitence." In another place Luther said, "We have a high regard for the Jewish people and yet they are so arrogant and proud." All of this proves again that Luther craved to bring about a conversion of the Jews and that he actually took measure to this end.

Luther also turned his sights continually back to the warlike Turks who had constantly threatened the existence of Germany. At first he turned against them in his polemical works On the War Against the Turks, An Army Sermon Against the Turks, and An Exhortation to Pray Against the Turks. However, it is noteworthy that Luther did not preach a crusade against the Turks. For Luther the sword does not serve Christ's kingdom but only the transitory kingdoms of the left in which the sword is used to create compulsory law and order. In his writings Luther does not omit thoughts on missionary activities among the Muslims who were threatening the empire. These thoughts have already been shared in the previous discussion on Luther and the Great Commission. Luther's attitude was a seed that soon began to sprout. Primus Truber (1506-1586) and Baron Ungnad von Sonegg (1493-1564) reached out from Wurttemberg to establish missions not only to the southern Slavs but also to the Turks. In 1559 the successful Slovenian translation of Stephan led a team of spiritual and secular experts to say, among other things, that through it, "we hope, the right Christian religion and the true saving Gospel will be promoted throughout Turkey, that the heart and disposition of the Turks will be renewed to the holy faith...and that in time our Savior Jesus Christ will be made known throughout Turkey." The matter did not stop with the written report of 1559, for in 1561 Baron Ungnad issued a call for help to the German princes "in order that thus the pure doctrine of the divine Word may also be brought into Turkey."
Elector August of Saxony, Count Christopher of Wurttemberg, and others responded in a noteworthy manner to this call and to the calls of book-printer Ambrosius Frohlich of Vienna and of the preacher Blohwic. Count Ludwig of Wurttemberg sent the master valedictorian of his class from Knittlingen to Morocco in 1583, so that he could learn Arabic and become familiar with Islam. In such a manner Ludwig hoped that "our saving religion might be propagated among these barbarian peoples."74 The Scandinavian princes also followed Luther's good example. King Gustavus Vasa (1496-1560) started mission work among the Laplanders and translated the New Testament into that language.75 According to Elert, however, it was only during the nineteenth century that the "definite breakthrough"76 of Luther's missionary orientation came into full fruition in the part of Christendom that was named for him. This is all the more reason for us, who are contemporary Lutherans and especially committed to the theological position that Luther held, to make Luther's sense of missions our own in imitation of some of the great nineteenth-century missionaries.

Endnotes

1. Gustave Warneck, Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time, with an Appendix concerning Roman Catholic Missions (New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1906, original German edition published in 1881), pp. 9-10: "We miss in the Reformers not only missionary action, but even the idea of missions, in the sense in which we understand them today...Luther did not think of proper missions to the heathen, i.e. of a regular sending of messengers of the Gospel to non-Christian nations, with the view of Christianizing them...Luther's mission sphere was, if we may so say, the paganized Christian church." To put Warneck's quotation into perspective we must recognize that he wrote it in 1881 which was right in the midst of the high tide of Protestant liberalism in Great Britian (1870-1914). He was polemicizing against three authors of his time who very much believed that Luther had a sense of missions. They were Albert Ostertag, Uebersichtliche Geschichte der protestantischen Missionen von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart (Stuttgart, 1858); Gustav Leopold Plitt, Kurze Geschichte der lutherischen Mission (Erlangen, 1871), and Christian Andreas Herman Kalkar, Geschichte der christlichen Mission unter den Heiden (Gutersloh, 1879). The first two authors were German and Kalkar was Danish. The fact that only Warneck has been translated into English puts many present day readers at a definite disadvantage when studying this period.


8. Luther, “Praelectiones in prophetas minors (1524-1526),” WA, XIII: 525, line 4 ff.: ‘Venier: Per evangelium proferetur desiderabile, dignitas, forma, species, quae debeat omnes gentes, ‘ein kostlicher schatz,’ qui sit invulgandus inter omnes gentes, non quasi desiderium omnium gentium, quia ignorant Christum, sed commendat hunc thesaurum inestimabilem et iuncundissimum, qui est Christus per verbum praedicatus vel res quaedam iucundissima invulganda inter omnes gentes, quia vult proheta signifcare regnum aliud institutum, quid sit dilatandum in omnes gentes.” LW, XVIII:382, reproduces a similar, but somewhat less mission-oriented Luther commentary on Haggai 2:7.

10. LW, XVIII:382, on Haggai 2:7 (1525): "... A treasure that had to be published through the Gospel... of which the Gentiles were so unaware that they were unable to desire it." For the original Latin consult WA, XIII:541, lines 14-17.


14. LW, II:333 (on Genesis 13:4). For the German see Walch-St. Louis I:839, and for the original Latin consult WA, XLII:500, lines 14-17.

15. Luther, "Auslegungen uber das erste Buch Mosis (1523-1524)," Walch-St. Louis, III:234 (on Genesis 12:10-16): "So handelt Gott wunderlich auf Erden, schickt Apostel und Prediger zu den Leuten, ehe sie sich's versehen, oder eines daran gedenkt; auch die geschickt werden, wissen selbst nicht, wie sie hinkommen." For the original Latin look in WA, XIV:228.

16. LW, VIII:46 (on Genesis 45:9-11). For the German see Walch-St. Louis, II:1711-1712, and for the original Latin consult WA, XLIV:612, lines 36-37.


18. LW, II:260. For the German see Walch-St. Louis, I:747-748, and for original Latin consult WA, XLII:447.

19. LW, XII:98. For the original German see Walch-St. Louis, V:192, or WA, XLV:207.

20. Luther, "Psalm 117 (1530)," LW, XIV:14. For the original German see Walch-St. Louis, V:144, or WA, XXXI, Part 1:233-234.

21. LW, XIV:18. For the original German see Walch-St. Louis, V:149, or WA, XXXI, Part 1:236-237.


23. Luther, "Commentary on Psalm 45 (1532)," LW, XII:219-220. For the German see Walch-St. Louis, V:368-269, and for the original Latin consult WA, XL, Part 2:501-502.

24. Luther, Commentary on Psalm 51 (1538)," LW, XII:393. For the German see Walch-St. Louis, V:595, and for the original Latin see WA, XL, Part 2: lines 17-26.


28. LW, XII:297. For the German see Walch-St. Louis, V:468, and the original Latin is found in WA, XL, Part 2:606, lines 19-27.

29. Luther, Walch-St. Louis, V:667, translated Psalm 68:12 (sic): “Gott wird geben das Ausreden, dass der Evangelisten wird sein eine grosse Heerschaft.” See also WA, VIII:12, lines 27-28. In his Bible, on the other hand, Luther translated: “Der Herr gibt das Wort mit grossen Scharen Evangelisten.”

30. Luther, “Commentary on Psalm 68 (1521),” LW, XIII:12. For the original German see Walch-St. Louis, V:667, or WA, VIII:13, lines 9 and 10.


32. Luther, “Ascension Day Sermon on Mark 16:14-20 (1522),” Walch-St. Louis, XI:950-951: “All hier begibt sich eine frage uber diesen Spruch: Gehet hin in alle Welt; wie dieser Spruch zu verstehenist, und zu halten, sintemal die Apostel je nicht in alle Welt kommen sind? Denn es ist kein Apostel her zu uns kommen; auch sind viel Inseln erfunden worden noch zu unsern Zeiten, die da Heiden sind, und niemand hat ihnen gepredigt.”

33. Luther, “Commentary on Psalm 19 (1531),” LW, XII:141. For the original WA, XXXI, Part 1:582, or Walch-St. Louis, V:1335.

34. Luther, “Commentary on Psalm 110 (1539),” LW, XIII:269. For the original German see Walch-St. Louis, V:969.


37. Walch-St. Louis, XI:95: “Also ist es auch jetzund zu uns kommen, die wir liegen am Ende der Welt; denn wir liegen hart am Meer.” See also WA, X, lines 1-16.

38. Luther, “Commentary on Psalm 82 (1530),” LW, XIII:64. For the original German see WA, XXXI, Part 1:211, or Walch-St. Louis, V:721: “Aber darnach hat niemand mehr solchen gemeinen Apostolischen befelth.”


41. Luther, “Sermon on John 10, for the Sunday after Easter (1523),” W4 XII: line 2 ff.: “So sagt er nun hie ‘Ich hab noch andere schaff, die nicht aus diszem schaffstal sind, die muss ich auch hertzu bringen,’ da sagt er, das den heyden auch sol das Evangelion predigt werden, das sie auch an Christum glawden, das aus Juden und Heyden eyn Christliche gemeyn werde; das hat er darnach durch die Apostel than, die den Heyden predigten und bekereten sie zu dem glawben.”


44. Luther, “Sermon on the Second Book of Moses—Allegory of the Twelfth Chapter (1525),” W4, XVI:215, line 7-10 and 216, lines 1-2: “‘Vicinos’ i.e. quod Christus non solum debe ‘treiben’ inter Judeos, sed et gentes. Paulus (Rom. 15:9 ff.): Christus ut semper latius divulgatur Christus Ro. ut multi adducantur in hanc domum, donec totus mundus. Credo non defuisse, qui non ederent agnum, sed hic semper desunt, oportet semper progradi ad eos quibus non pradedicatum, ut plures fint. Est agnito Christi, ut verbum dei ‘zunimbt.’”

45. Luther, “Lectures on Zechariah (1527),” LW, XX:326. For the original German consult W4, XXXIII:645, lines 30-35: “Die Christen auch dazu viel frucht durchs wort unter allen Heiden schaffen, viel beneren und selig machen, also das sie unig sich fressen sollen als ein fewr, das mitten ym durren holtz odder stro brennet, also sol das fewr des heiligen geists die Heiden nach dem fleisch verzerren und dem Evangelio und reich Christi allenthalben rawn nachnen.”

47. Luther, “That a Christian Assembly or Congregation has the Right and Power to Judge all Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture (1523),” LW, XXXIX:310. For the original German see W4, XI:412, lines 11-13, 16-20. “das keyn Christen sind, da darff er keyns anders beruffs denn das er eyn Christen ist unnwendig von gott beruffen und gesalbet. Do ist er schuldig den yrrenden heyden odder unchristen tzu predigen und tzu eren das Evangelion aus pflicht brudertlicher liebe, ob yhn schon keyn mensch datzu berufft.”


49. Luther, “Sermons on Matthew 23 (1537-1540),” W4, XLVII:466, lines 5-6: “Also ist es das allerbeste werck, das die Heiden aus der Abgottere zu Gottes erkendtmess sind gefuhret worden.”

50. Luther, “Commentary on Psalms 82,” LW, XIII:66. For the original German consult W4, XXXI, Part 1:212, or Walch-St. Louis, V:723.


53. Peters, p. 171.

54. Luther, “The German Mass and Order of Service (1526),” LW, LIII:64. For the original German see Walch-St. Louis, X:230: “Catechismus aber heisst ein Unterricht, damit man die Heiden, so Christen werden wollen, lehrt und weiset, was sie glauben, thun, lassen und wissen sollen im Christentum.”


56. For an explanation of Luther’s sermons and postils see John W. Doberstein, “Introduction to Volume 51,” LW, LI:XI-XXI, especially XIV-XV. Volumes XI and XII of Walch-St. Louis contain the Gospel and Epistle portions of Luther’s Kirchenpostille.

unzahligen Protestanten ans Gemut greifen.”

58. A. G. Dickens, Martin Luther and the Reformation (Mystic, Connecticut: Lawrence Verry, 1967), p. 75: “In no country was the soil of the Reformation irrigated through princely channels alone. To many communities the new religious notions were brought, with or without governmental consent, by missionaries and booksellers... The early missionary history of Lutheranism should not be unduly obscured by the personal story of Luther; ever inspired from Wittenberg, it remains in its own right an achievement worthy to be ranked alongside the miracles of propaganda later wrought by the Society of Jesus.”


60. The Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Lutheran Worship (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), Hymn 288, stanzas 1 and 3. For a different translation see LW, LIII:234. The German is in WA, XXXV:418-419: “Das wir erkennen seynwerck und was yhm liebt auff erden, und Jesus Christus heyl und streck bekand den heyden werden und sie zu Gott bekeren....Es dancke Gott und lobe dich/das volck yhn guten thaten./Das land bringt frucht und bessert sich.,/deyn wort ist wol gerat- ten./Uns segen vater und der son,/uns segen Gott der heylig’ geyst,/dem alle welt dis ehre thun,/fur yhm sich furchte aller meyst./Nu sprech von hertzen Amen.”

61. Lutheran Worship, Hymn 353, stanza 10. For a different translation see LW, LIII:220. For the original German see WA, XXXV:425: “Was ich gethan hab und gelert./Das solttua thun und leren./Damit das reych Gotts werf gemert/Zu lob und seynen ehren.”

62. On the impact of Luther’s hymns see the bibliography found in Ulrich S. Leypold, “Introduction to Volumnze 53,” LW, LIII:xx.


64. Luther, “Kurze Auslegung uber dem Propheten Jesaia (1527-1534),” Walch-St. Louis, VI:427: “Daher zeigt der Prophet durch dies Bild an [Isaiah 35:6]:”Watersshall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert,” RSV], dass das Wort reichlich gepredigt, und immer weiter und weiter ausgesbreitet werden wird, und aus der Kirche, die an Einem Orte ist, viele andere das Wort schöpfen werden.” The American Edition’s version of Luther’s “Lectures on Isaiah,” LW, XVI and XVII, is based on a different manuscript of these lectures which does not contain the aforementioned passage. See LW, XVI:x, 302-303.

65. Luther, “That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew (1523),” LW, XLV:200.


zu eurem verheissenen Messia bringen."

68. Walch-St. Louis, XX:1829: "Ich um des gekreuzigten Juden willen, den mir niemand nehmen soll, euch Juden allen gerne das Beste thun wollte."

69. Walch-St. Louis, XX:1829: "...ausgenommen, dass ihr meiner Gunst nicht zu eurer Verstockung gebrauchen sollt."

70. Luther, "Tischredenoder Colloquia" (published in 1566), Walch-St. Louis, XXII:1584: "Wir haben das Volk (die Juden) lieb. sprach D. M. Luther, und sie sind doch so hoffahrtig und stolz." I could not find this reference in LW, LIV.

71. The first two of these works are in W4, XXX, Part 2:81-197. An English version of On the War Against the Turk is in LW, XLVI:155-205.

72. Quoted in Elert, Morphologie, 1:344: "Damit hoffentlich die rechte christliche Religion und das wahre heilsame Evangelium durch die ganze Turkei gefordert, der Turken Herz und Gemut zum heiligen Glauben erneuert...und unser Heiland Jesus Christus mit der Zeit in der Turkei ausgebreitet werden." For the English see Elert, Structure, 1:394.

73. Quoted in Elert, Morphologie, 1:344: "Damit die reine Lehre des gotlichen Wortes dadurch auch in die Turkei gebracht werde." See also Elert, Structure, 1:399.

74. Quoted in Elert, Morphologie 1:348: "...unsere seligmachende Religion unter diese barbarische Volker fortgepflanzt mochte werden." See also Elert, Structure, 1:399.

75. Elert, Morphologie, 1:347, or Elert, Structure, 1:397.