MISSION FROM THE CROSS

THE LUTHERAN THEOLOGY OF MISSION

KLAUS DETLEV SCHULZ
I dedicate this book to my father, Georg Schulz (1928–2004), who from 1955–93 patiently and faithfully served in South Africa as teacher at Enhlanhleni Theological Seminary and as bishop and missionary of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA). His ability to enunciate clearly and defend our Lutheran faith and mission has inspired me to come forward with a book that he should have written but never was able to write.
## CONTENTS

### Figures

vi

### Abbreviations and Acknowledgments

vii

### Preface

ix

### Part I: The Nature and Study of Mission Today

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: An Appraisal of Lutheran Mission</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Synonyms and Concepts of Mission</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Missiology as a Discipline and Setting Priorities</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: The Reformation</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Justification: The Organizing Principle of Mission</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part II: The Mission of the Triune God

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: The Trinitarian Structure of Mission</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: Creation and Preservation in God’s Mission</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8: The Foundation and Goal of God’s Mission</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9: The Dynamism of God’s Mission</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10: The Projection of God’s Mission</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part III: The Church, Her Task and Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11: Mission and the Word of God</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12: The Missionary Goal</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13: Building a New Community</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 14: Mission as Ethics</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 15: The Missionary Office</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 16: The Christian Witness in the Interreligious Context</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 17: Conclusion</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Map: The Spread of Lutheran Mission Work

302

### Indexes

305

### Bibliography

313
FIGURES

Fig. 1: Missiology as a Discipline 35

Fig. 2: Missiology’s Holistic Character 36

Fig. 3: The Relationship of Church, Mission Work, and Goal 223

Fig. 4: The Florescence of a Missionary and Contextual Church 237

Fig. 5: The Three Corners of the Triangle in which the Christian Stands 260

Fig. 6: The Continuation of the Apostolic Ministry in the Church 282
# Abbreviations and Acknowledgments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>Augsburg Confession (1530)</td>
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<td>Ap</td>
<td>Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWME</td>
<td>Commission on World Mission and Evangelism</td>
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<td>ELCA</td>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church in America</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ep</td>
<td>Epitome of the Formula of Concord</td>
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<td>FC</td>
<td>Formula of Concord (1577)</td>
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<td>LC</td>
<td>Large Catechism (1529)</td>
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<td>LCMS</td>
<td>The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod</td>
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<td>LWF</td>
<td>Lutheran World Federation</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>Smalcald Articles (1537)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Small Catechism (1529)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tr</td>
<td>Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td><em>D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe</em>. Weimar: Herman Böhlau, 1883–.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WCC</td>
<td>World Council of Churches</td>
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<td>WELS</td>
<td>Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS


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Quotations from Wilhelm Andersen, *Towards a Theology of Mission: A Study of the Encounter between the Missionary Enterprise and the Church and Its Theology* (London: SCM, 1955), used by permission.

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Quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this publication marked Tappert are from *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Theodore G. Tappert, published in 1959 by Fortress Press.
The great missiologist and ecumenist Walter Freytag (1899–1959) stated: “There is no Christian life, no life with Christ, without the missionary task.”¹ The search for a correct definition of that missionary task is challenging. From Martin Luther we are referenced to the first chief article of justification by faith in the person and work of Christ, together with the futility of human works under the Law.² This sinner/saint duality of futility and hope accompanies the missionary task, and its sole resolution rests on the theologia crucis (theology of the cross).

This truth has by no means remained obvious to the Church in the world. In the 1950s, Freytag famously assessed his concern over the waning interest for mission by stating: “Mission always had its problems, but now it has become a problem.”³ Today, mission deals with problems such as the drift toward humanitarian and worldly concerns to the exclusion and denial of eschatology and life eternal. Yet as a visible phenomenon and expression of Christianity, mission today has received a renewed strength and emphasis among Christians and churches of all denominations worldwide. We are now in a time of mission. A number of factors contribute to this: the waning of Christian populations in the West; the influx of immigrating, largely non-Christian people into the United States and Western Europe; and the resurgence of missionary zeal among non-Christian religions. All these factors have renewed and intensified the call for mission among Christians. This means that Lutheran congregations and church bodies also should heed their apostolic and missionary calling in the twenty-first century.

Lutheranism’s interest in mission is on the upswing. In 2004, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Mission and Development published its most recent statement on mission entitled Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment, which replaces a publication from 1988 entitled Together in God’s Mission.⁴ For

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¹ Freytag, Reden und Aufsätze, 1:111.
² SA II 1 1–5 (Tappert, 292; Kolb-Wengert, 301).
³ Freytag, Reden und Aufsätze, 1:111.
⁴ See Bibliography for publication information.
a number of years, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Evangelism Task Force studied current issues and challenges of mission and evangelism. The result of these investigations led to the publication in 2005 of *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution.*\(^5\) The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) offered *We Believe—Therefore We Speak*, written by David Valleskey, a longtime professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.\(^6\) The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) has stepped forward with her own initiative in mission in the form of a movement called *Ablaze.* With it, the Missouri Synod hopes to invigorate her congregations and her partner churches for reaching the lost.\(^7\) Moreover, as we shall demonstrate in a later chapter on Luther and the Reformation, there is a recent surge in Luther research on the topic of mission, which also indicates a renaissance.

In order to respond to the Lord’s call, Christians, seminaries, and church bodies should be able to provide a compassionate yet informed response to the world concerning who Christ is and what they believe. However, as readers peruse literature on mission, they will come across proposals and models that seem to diverge from those connecting the Church to the triune God. What seems to be emphasized in too many approaches are mere cultural and social studies coupled with steps or programs clothed in innovative business-like vocabulary that promise numerical growth. Such literature, in addition to the wide range of mission activity through organizations, individuals, and denominations, contributes to a sense of bewilderment among the readers: “What is mission?”

This book intends to provide a particular informed outlook on mission by calling pastors, theologians, students, and all Christians back to basics, to our theological heritage understood particularly in light of the theology of the cross. It intends to further the missionary calling of the Church by engaging Scripture, the theological literature of worldwide Lutheranism, and contemporary discussions on the topic. In so doing, this book does not push for one particular structure or model of mission that declares all previous ones obsolete. Mission is volatile, always on the move and continuously in the process of restructuring. Our plea, however, is that the Church’s mission preserve some stability and continuity with the past and anticipate where the Lord will lead the Church in the future. As the Church engages her context and translates her mission into praxis, the theological

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\(^5\) Bliese and Van Gelder, *Evangelizing Church.*

\(^6\) Valleskey, *We Believe—Therefore We Speak.*

\(^7\) The *Ablaze* movement (see official website www.lcms.org) formulates its vision as follows: “Praying to the Lord of the harvest, LCMS World Mission, in collaboration with its North American and worldwide partners, will share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.”
component of her message may suffer as a result. Should there not be a theological framework or template for mission that provides stability?

*The Evangelizing Church* makes the following pertinent comment: “Lutherans have an incredible theological heritage upon which to draw, especially when viewed from a missional perspective.” Indeed, the argument of this study is that Lutheran theology and mission are not antithetical terms but that missionary potential springs from deep within Lutheran theological articulation. The central article of justification, for example, has for some time now received new attention in literature and in the ecumenical forum; its connection to and implication for mission, however, is rarely made.

Some might express their reservations in this endeavor (as we propose it) by requesting a perspective that is simply “biblical.” Certainly, we would claim to be nothing but “scriptural or biblical” in our outlook for a theology and practice of mission. However, as history shows, what was purported to be “biblical” at one time has turned out not to be so later. Mission must therefore consist in an ongoing conversation with Scripture and its theological heritage, the Lutheran Confessions in particular. Mission must return to Scripture and be willing to submit itself to God’s Word and to engage in historical and theological analysis of the past for the sake of mission in the future.

Within my study, I have reflected frequently on mission praxis, which I have accumulated over the years from my frequent travels as lecturer and teacher both overseas and in the United States. I also draw on a long experience in mission that includes my youth spent on a mission station in the hills of kwaZulu, South Africa, and my service as a missionary in Serowe, Botswana. As a professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, I have had the privilege of sharing my insights for a number of years now with students and colleagues on campus. All these stations in life have deepened my conviction that mission strategy and practice must be guided by a serious engagement with Scripture and theology.

The title chosen for this study, *Mission from the Cross*, specifically addresses the scene in John 20:19–23 where the risen Lord appears before His disciples and commissions them with the task to offer forgiveness or retain sins. Mission is built on a *theologia crucis*, that is, it affirms the cross as the pivotal point of reference from which flows and to which returns the preaching of the Gospel. While appearing in His resurrected body, the Lord returns to the cross by showing the wounds in His hands and side, which were incurred at His crucifixion. From this unspoken reference to the context of His death and victory on the cross, Christ extends the merits

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8 Bliese and Van Gelder, *Evangelizing Church*, 1.
of the cross to a broken world by commissioning His disciples. *Mission from the Cross* emphasizes this connection between the cross and the movement of the Gospel into the world.

I am particularly thankful to my colleague John G. Nordling, who offered his valuable time to read the manuscript and to make so many helpful suggestions. I also wish to express my sincere thanks to students and graduate assistants who accepted the task of reading some of what I had written and also had the courage to critique their teacher. And, finally, I am indebted to the staff of Concordia Publishing House, particularly Charles Schaum, who has been very encouraging throughout the process of publishing this book.

Klaus Detlev Schulz
Fort Wayne, Indiana
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PART I

THE NATURE AND STUDY OF MISSION TODAY
CHAPTER ONE

AN APPRAISAL OF LUTHERAN MISSION

BRINGING MISSION HOME

Formerly it was easy for Lutherans of North American and European backgrounds to live apart from those of other ethnicities and beliefs. That has changed, resulting in diminishing geographic distance between Christian communities and those of different cultures and beliefs. It has become fashionable to speak of the close proximity of the mission field. Mission takes place at “home,” not only faraway in places called “abroad.” The slogan “mission in six continents” coined already at the 1963 World Mission Conference in Mexico City reflects this reality for all countries, including those in the West.¹ In particular, the rising numbers of economic and political immigrants into countries such as the United States, Canada, Germany, Norway, and Sweden have made mission an important task. There was a time when the West was a stronghold of Christianity. That has changed. Today we need to take into account that paganism and Christianity coexist, often in close proximity. Recent statistics show that the greatest growth for Lutheranism in 2005 occurred on the continent of Africa, which has a current population of more than fifteen million Lutherans. By comparison, Lutheran denominations in North America saw an overall decrease of 1.16 percent to about 8,154,631 members, a decrease caused not only by a loss of membership through secularization and transfer to other denominations but also by a dwindling birthrate among those who are Lutheran.²

The decline and shift of Christianity is occurring in all Western countries. Today only 45 percent of Caucasian Europeans claim to be Christians, whereas one hundred years ago, it was still 80 percent. Over the next twenty-five years, the Caucasian portion of global Christianity will decline even further, as Philip Jenkins predicts in his book *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*.³ This means that mission opportunities

¹ Müller et al., *Dictionary of Mission*, 506.
² The statistics were released February 14, 2006, on the LWF Web site: www.lutheranworld.org.
³ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 89–90.
abound not only in North America but also in the West overall. The mission task becomes even more pertinent as one looks at the current immigration of non-Christian people from central and eastern Asia. As a result, the ratio of non-Christians to Christians will increase even further and adult baptisms could become commonplace again.

Since Western Europe and North America have become mission fields in ways unlike those of times past, denominations in the West face the dilemma of where to concentrate their efforts. Should mission continue predominantly as an enterprise that sends people from one country to another, or should it focus on reaching the lost at home? Here is where questions of economics and priority of needs can intersect the mission task. Those who ask such questions do not intend to undermine the missionary enterprise overseas, but they would prefer to place a greater emphasis on mission in their own country. Germany is an example of this transition. The states of the former East Germany have a population that is almost 70 percent non-Christian. Since German reunification in 1991, church bodies and their mission societies have called missionaries to serve in their home country, especially in cities where there is a large concentration of non-Christians. Similar mission efforts take place all over the United States to bring the Church to areas where suburban sprawl continues and where foreign non-Christian communities settle. The harvest is waiting, as Donald Moorman points out: “Now, many new strangers have appeared on our doorstep, and we have the opportunity to take them in, minister to them and welcome them to the Family of God and the grand American mosaic.” Indeed, most congregations have begun to notice the challenge of mission in their own particular context.

**The Unfinished Task Abroad**

The call for mission in the home country and that of placing it predominantly in local congregations has not diminished the overall need and support for overseas mission. This is apparent from the statistical overview that David Barrett and Todd Johnson provide in *World Christian Trends AD 30–AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus.* Therein they explain how Christianity will fare in the next fifty years. In AD 2000, the number of the unevangelized in the world actually had not changed much from 1976. And for the next fifty years, Christianity will remain a steady 33 to 34 percent of the world’s population. If Barrett’s prognosis is true, Christianity obviously will not make a larger impact than it already

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does. At the same time, however, Christians cannot accept the status quo; they must intensify the missionary task.6

To underscore the enormity of mission, literature frequently refers to the 10/40 window. This window depicts the regions between 10 and 40 degrees latitude north of the equator that contain not only the world’s greatest population but also the major world religions: Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Within these regions especially, missiologists have identified a multitude of unreached people groups. In fact, 57 percent of the world’s population—three billion souls—are completely without Christ. Of this percentage, about 1.6 billion people continue to lead an isolated existence without the Bible and the Christian faith presented in the native language.7 If Barrett and Johnson’s statistics are true, then we ought to inquire into the reasons why the Christianity segment of the population in the twentieth century has not exceeded 34 percent and why some sectors of the world’s population have no Christian presence.

First, according to Barrett, churches rarely deploy missionaries to areas where heavily non-Christian populations exist. He observes that “nine out of ten missionaries are sent out to work among peoples already contacted by the Christian message, and in some cases already heavily Christian.”8 The result is that Christian mission concentrates more than 95 percent of its efforts in countries where local Christians could take on missionary tasks themselves. What is the solution? Barrett argues that church bodies and their societies should deploy missionaries proportionally to the non-Christian and unevangelized populations in certain countries he identifies as World C. Then the number of missionaries present in World C would increase even as the number would decrease elsewhere. But even if churches were to change their strategy as Barrett suggests, two other factors—the human care issues and the worldwide resistance to Christianity—continue to significantly curb Christianity’s growth beyond 34 percent worldwide and would make the deployment of missionaries into unreached regions difficult.

The second factor that curbs Christianity’s growth and demands its resources is the social problems of this world among Christians and non-Christians alike. As a result, missionaries who are active in well-Christianized regions such as central and southern Africa will continue to reach not just the spiritually lost but also those in need of physical care. The twenty-first century, like the twentieth century, has incredible social problems among Christian and non-Christian populations alike. War, AIDS,
environmental disasters, water shortages, child labor, and urban problems and other calamities continue to plague the world’s population.

The third and final reason why Christianity has not grown beyond the level of 34 percent of the world population is because of non-Christian opposition to Christianity. The *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* starkly depicts the various forms of resistance:

Current estimates are that roughly 150,000 Christians are martyred each year, down from a peak of 330,000 prior to the demise of communist world powers. Some project that the numbers will increase to 600,000 by A.D. 2025, given current trends in human rights abuses and growth of militant religious systems. Those inflicting contemporary Christian martyrdom include political regimes with counter-Christian agendas (e.g. official atheistic powers, such as China and the former Soviet Union); sociopolitical regimes enforcing religious restrictions (e.g. Egypt, Sudan); ethnic tribal regimes bent on eliminating minorities (e.g. Sudan, Rwanda, and Burundi); and religious regimes (e.g. Muslim countries in which Sharia is the official legal system).

### Mission and Optimism

As we look at these three factors that seem to curb Christian mission, it becomes difficult to share the expansionary optimism of those who have and continue to envision total world evangelization. Christianity has voiced its optimism in this regard on repeated occasions. In 1910, at the time of the first World Mission Conference in Edinburgh, dignitaries and representatives made the visionary slogan of “evangelization of the world in this generation” their own, as many other conferences and revival meetings had done in preceding decades. Many Evangelical groups conceived of mission in unrealistically optimistic terms. Mission became a watchword for “scintillating missionary optimism,” an enthusiasm and belief in an unhindered and rapid Christian expansion and transformation of the world. Some of that optimism may have been the result of progressivism in the Romantic period before the Great War. Today, this optimism has surfaced again. In the late 1980s many denominations and movements prepared for global evangelization in the forthcoming decade (the 1990s), which they declared

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9 Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, 602. Sri Lanka, for example, has banned baptisms of Buddhists. Christian pastors performing Holy Baptism are subject to reprisals from the government and neighboring Buddhist communities.

10 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 336–37. Stephen Neill claims that this hope for world evangelization was not an idle dream but relied on realistic logistics. The thought of world evangelization was based on a formidable army, a “striking force of 45,000 missionaries and ten times that number of national workers,” as well as on the potential of Christian churches and their national workers multiplying exponentially within a few years; see Neill, *History of Christian Missions*, 333–34. Sweeney, *American Evangelical Story*, 92–103.
to be the decade of evangelism. Denominations and movements of every kind—whether Protestant, Evangelical, Ecumenical, Roman Catholic, or Pentecostal/Charismatic—launched global plans and made solemn pledges to complete Christ’s commission on earth in that decade. But as Barrett points out, the results of such campaigns were disappointing. The envisaged ten-year period of unstoppable expansion of Christianity did not materialize. Despite an overall increase in expenditure during that period (topping more than $70 billion), Christianity made no substantial progress.\textsuperscript{11}

Christianity should be realistic in terms of goals and obstacles in mission work. Here we would do well to limit our understanding and wisdom in light of God’s purpose and intentions: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths” (Prov. 3:5–6). All the obstacles to mission—stark opposition, financial constraints, theological confusion about the actual nature of mission, etc.—gnaw at the confidence placed in our efforts. Although missionaries have access to improved technology and medicine to check many of the hazards that plagued foreign mission decades ago, other factors challenge mission. The gap between Western economic wealth and poverty in other countries is widening and creating obstacles for missionaries and their perceived identity and purpose. Additionally, the surge of new diseases and crime make mission today a precarious and daunting task.

One thing needs to be stated as we look at the growth/decline and distribution of Christian populations. It is impossible to follow Barrett’s advice of relocating missionary personnel to specific non-Christian countries. Careful consideration reveals that no country is exempt from receiving missionaries. The so-called “plum targets”—that is, countries with a higher concentration of Christian populations—might not be that plum after all. In fact, the post-Christian context in the West makes the situation extremely difficult for any missionary endeavor. Congregations and denominations may be more attracted to the so-called unreached areas of the world than to Western countries where the gospel has been preached previously. Yet the configuration of Christian populations in the world is extremely volatile and not static; it may diminish or move on from one area to another, like a thundercloud shifts after it has dropped rain over a certain area. Christian mission is always on the move. Luther already knew this. He describes the Gospel’s course in terms that invite us to be cautiously optimistic:

The movement of the Gospel is now among us, but our ungratefulness and scorning of the divine Word, pettiness, and decadence make it so

\textsuperscript{11} Barrett and Johnson, \textit{World Christian Trends}, xiii–xiv.
that it will not remain for long. There shall then follow after it a large rabble, and great wars will come later. In Africa, the Gospel was very powerfully present, but the liars corrupted it, and after it the Vandals and the wars came. It went likewise also in Egypt: first lying and then murder. It will also go exactly the same way in the German land. The pious preachers will first be taken away, and false prophets, enthusiasts, and demagogues will step into my place and that of other preachers and divide the church and tear it apart.12

The Shift in the Missionary Task

Issues pertaining to the shift in populations all over the world and how that shift impacts Christianity gives rise to the important discussion about the missionary task itself as it embraces issues of implementation. Let me briefly shed some light on this discussion. In the section above, I observed that mission remains an indispensable task in the life of the Church wherever she exists, both at home and abroad. Scripture speaks of a commission to loose from sin that will remain with the Church till the end of time: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). None other than the Lord Himself placed on His disciples and His Church the mandate for the proclamation and Baptism of “all nations” (see Matt. 28:18–20). For us today the question is not whether mission should be done; rather, it is how and by whom. The implementation and strategic execution of mission is indeed an interesting topic of discussion, and the following chapters engage that subject. Ideally speaking, we would expect this much: All Christians are involved in mission after having received the good news of their reconciliation with God through Christ. They have the desire of sharing that wonderful news with others without selfishly protecting and withholding it from people who live estranged from God. Mission is the measure of the Church’s health. According to Newbigin, mission tests our faith, inasmuch as it inquires about “our readiness to share it with all peoples.”13

Putting mission work into practice is more organized and transitory than that ideal suggests. It is more organized because the focus and logistics of mission have become more specific than they were in the past. It is more transitory because missionaries expect to hand over their task to local people far more intentionally than in the past. True, there is still a resemblance to Protestant mission as it began two hundred years ago when William Carey (1761–1834) cried out in *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use*

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12 Sermon on Matthew 24:8ff. (1539) in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 82.
Means for the Conversion of the Heathens (1792) for a renewed commitment to apostolic mission. Just as in the past, missionaries today are also called, trained, and sent to specific areas. But their job description and sphere of duty have little in common with the classic pioneer model of mission that was employed throughout most of the eighteenth century to the better part of the twentieth century. Missionaries at that time went to remote regions to preach and baptize and with the task of establishing churches where none existed. Today missionaries are only indirectly involved in those tasks since the major part of their work concentrates on teaching and training indigenous leadership. Missionaries today are more likely to be teachers or facilitators who enable local indigenous leaders to assume the task of church planting.

Representatives in mission should carefully consult Scripture for the validity of a shift in strategy. “Old-fashioned” ideals of what missionaries once did are perhaps not that outdated after all. It seems as if the Great Commission texts point out a method that should remain with the Church for all times. They encourage the sending of individuals authorized to make disciples through Baptism and instruction (Matthew 28) and of imparting the forgiveness of sins through preaching and absolution (John 20).

What, then, explains this shift of mission strategies and roles in recent years? One logical explanation lies in today’s attempts to correct the failures of past mission practices. As stated, traditionally missionaries preached, baptized, and planted churches. In this capacity, they generally also held leadership positions in the young emerging churches, but unfortunately, in many cases, they did so for far too long, thus curbing the process of building indigenous churches and leadership. Missionaries of the 1990s will recall Tom Steffen’s Passing the Baton: Church Planting That Empowers. The author makes the important point that missionaries should work themselves out of a position from the outset. The byword chosen to describe the negative phenomenon of missionary dominance is “paternalism.” Ever since Protestant mission started three centuries ago, paternalistic attitudes have strained relations between young churches and foreign missionaries. In extreme cases, some churches, such as those in Japan, even declared a moratorium on mission, a stop to foreign missionary presence. Christians wanted to assess their national situation apart from foreign intervention so as to emerge with a renewed and better sense for a mission of their own.

Another factor explaining the shift to a new paradigm is that mission has become an inclusive affair for all Christians. In the past, Christians

14 See Bibliography for publication information.
15 See Bibliography for publication information.
16 In many countries, governments took forceful measures to expel missionaries; see Neill, History of Christian Missions, 422–33.
primarily fulfilled their missionary obligation by supporting foreign mission through tithing and donations. In the years after 1847, when the LCMS was founded, congregations supported German mission societies across the Atlantic, such as those located in Leipzig, Hermannsburg, or Neuendettelsau. They did this by staging annual mission festivals at which members heard through sermons and presentations about the life and work of career missionaries in faraway countries such as India, and members affirmed their support for missionaries by funding these societies. Christians understood mission as a foreign enterprise that engaged specially trained experts for overseas duties without having to engage in that missionary activity themselves. David Bosch explains the common perception of the Great Commission:

After all, the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19) explicitly says: “Go ye therefore . . .” The locality, not the task, decided whether someone was a missionary or not; he is a missionary if he is commissioned by the Church in one locality to go and work elsewhere. The greater the distance between these two places, the clearer it is that he is a missionary.17

That picture has largely changed. The statement “involvement leads to commitment” captures this overall shift. Many Christians want to become shareholders of the Church’s mission, and they criticize it if they find no personal place in it. Apart from fasting and prayer in Acts 13:1–3, one wonders how much of a role the individual members of the congregation actually played in the mission of Barnabas and Paul. Today, the answer is simple. While the sending of specially trained individuals still goes on, numerous volunteers have also stepped in for service at home and abroad. The world has become a global village not only in terms of technology but also in terms of accessibility through travel. Christians have easy access to funds, and many wealthy congregations have stepped forward to offer their members the opportunity for mission and service overseas. The whole “sentness” character of mission has thus given way to a more inclusive model in which every Christian congregation and its members serves as agents in organized mission, rather than just a few individuals.

One wonders, however, whether the focus on “inner” mission and the inclusive approach will not eventually deplete the number of long-term career missionaries deployed overseas. Unlike a century ago, churches exist in almost all parts of the world and to a large measure could take on the task of mission in their area themselves. Dare we thus ask this provocative question: Why not radically abort foreign mission and let the indigenous churches concentrate on reaching out to their neighbors?

17 Bosch, Witness to the World, 46. One may see also Gensichen, Living Mission, 38.
The answer is, again, simple. We cannot abandon foreign mission because of the enormity of the task. Also, partner churches often find themselves with severely limited resources. They need the financial and personnel support of larger, wealthier church bodies. When one factors in the so-called “unreached” regions of the world, it should be apparent that foreign mission must continue as a strategic deployment of trained individuals over a longer period.

In recent years, church bodies in the West are recruiting foreign missionaries in new ways to limit costs. The LCMS, for example, may choose to deploy a missionary from a Brazilian partner church into Portuguese-speaking regions in Angola or to support a missionary from Argentina who works in Chile. This new triangular arrangement is partly a result of the sad reality that many countries harbor anti-American sentiments, which renders the sending of American missionaries a dangerous enterprise. Unless missionaries from the United States who wish to serve overseas entertain the prospect of martyrdom, the triangular strategy seems to be a better option and comes with a far smaller human price tag.

What Is Mission?

This chapter has engaged various facets of the complex situation that arises when Christians struggling in the sinner/saint dichotomy engage the missionary task. They cannot do it merely of their own will. They need to avoid attaching to this task false notions of identity, economy, motivation, culture, and requirements for salvation or the lack thereof. Yet, after sifting through these issues, the question emerges: What should we identify as the core concern of mission and who qualifies as a missionary? This question addresses a contemporary concern that best remains unanswered. Thus the Church finds herself in a position where “everything goes,” missionally speaking, and perhaps that is how it should be. Missiologist Andrew Kirk attempted to identify the nature of mission in his book entitled What Is Mission? Theological Explorations. However, within Protestantism, it would be hard to find a common consensus on the basic theological principles and definition of mission. Some associate themselves with classical soteriology, that is, the traditional call to faith and conversion, whereas others project mission as humanitarian service. But as the Christian population dwindles in the
West, it seems as if church leaders are again revisiting the core activity of mission. I suggest an operating definition of mission’s core concern made by the missiologist Walter Freytag many years ago: “In the biblical sense nothing can be called mission that is not geared toward conversion and baptism.” This statement, I believe, should not discriminate against other activities from being part of the Church’s mission, but it serves as a guiding principle and constant reminder of what the Church should keep in sight as she serves as an instrument in God’s mission. The Church may not lose her focus on the crucified Lord who stood before His disciples and who still offers redemption to the world through the means that dispense forgiveness. Through these means, He creates His people and leads them on to serve in His mission—mission from the cross.

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1989), “Come, Holy Spirit” (Canberra, 1991), in which basic tenets such as the nature of the Gospel, peace, sharing the faith with people of other faiths in a plural context, Christ’s substitution, the nature of sin and the unity of the Church are either changed or abandoned. One may see Scherer and Bevans, *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization*, 1:27–35, 65–72, 73–81, 84–88. Thus since the mid-1960s the theological legacy of Karl Hartenstein (1894–1952), Georg Vicedom (1903–74), or Walter Freytag (1899–1959) in the Ecumenical movement gradually waned. During their lifetimes, these men managed to direct and unite the Evangelical and Ecumenical interests shared also by many Lutherans of their time; see Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*, 199, and Van Engen, *Mission on the Way*, 150–53. In the 1960s, when the shift became evident, a few voices expressed concern. One of these was the Lutheran evangelical missiologist of Tübingen, Peter Beyerhaus. He perceptively diagnosed the events around the 1968 WCC assembly in Uppsala and the 1973 World Missionary Conference at Bangkok as those that had clearly shaken Christianity’s foundation; see Beyerhaus, *Shaken Foundations* and *Missions—Which Way?*