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Perspectives on the missiological legacy of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation

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Abstract

Upon the occasion of the 500th anniversary Martin Luther's publication of his 95 theses, this composite article brings together five perspectives on the missiological legacy of the reformer and the subsequent Protestant Reformation. The blend of voices makes clear that Luther and the subsequent Protestant Reformation do not have a simple missiological legacy but rather various legacies: theological, ecclesiological, political, and practical; some of which co-exist, and even collide, in the

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same ecclesiastical community. The scandalous legacy of a splintered and splintering church remains. Yet, demonstrations of mutual recognition, reciprocal respect, and genuine fellowship can be found in certain missiological circles.

Keywords

Martin Luther, 500th anniversary, Protestant Reformation, missiological legacy, Lutheran perspective, Reformed perspective, Wesleyan perspective, Anabaptist perspective, Roman Catholic perspective

As most of *Missiology*'s readers are no doubt aware, numerous confessional communities are celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, marked by Martin Luther's publication of his 95 Theses on October 31, 1517. Very early this year (2017), I wondered how appropriate it would be to commemorate this event in the October issue of *Missiology: An International Review*. Given the diverse constituency of the American Society of Missiology (ASM), the journal's parent organization, I wondered if some would find it offensive. However, given the society's predilection to celebrate unity in the midst of its diversity, I quickly laid aside my doubts. I was still wondering, however, who might be best placed to write the article, when a respected colleague, who also received the ASM's 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award, Dana Robert, suggested that we publish an article that resembled a panel discussion. I thought it was a brilliant idea. So, what follows in this article is the compilation of responses to a single question: "What has been Martin Luther's and the subsequent Reformation's impact on your ecclesiastical community's missiology?"

Of course, not all ecclesiastical communities represented in the ASM see themselves as intimately tied to Luther's legacy. This article contains some of those perspectives. Also, given the large number of communities present in the ASM, only five were chosen for inclusion. (My community didn't make the cut.) As Luther started things in Wittenberg, a Lutheran pastor gets to start this composite article. Given the important role of the Roman Catholic Church as a catalyst for the schism Protestants call a reform, a Catholic author gets the last word in bringing a Roman Catholic missiological perspective. Between these two bookends, a Presbyterian minister and missiologist brings a Reformed perspective. Then a Methodist deacon presents a Wesleyan perspective, followed by a Mennonite's Anabaptist perspective.

Luther's Touchstone for Contextualization

Philip C. Huber

There is a certain irony that the ASM, through its journal *Missiology*, would celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the contributions of Luther for our present day understanding of mission, given, by now, the well-known critique of

Gustav Warneck (1901: 9) who is often credited as being the father of missiology. As the paradigm shift in mission thinking happened over the last half of the 20th century with *missio Dei* as the starting point for mission reflection and praxis (or perhaps a more desirable starting point would be *duplex missiones Dei*, Schroeder, 2004), there has been an “unearthing” of Luther’s witness and thought for helping us understand God’s mission in the world and how we are called to participate in it. That Luther has a contribution to make to our current missiological dialogue is well attested (Scherer, Kääriäinen, Öberg) and I know of no one who would continue to support Warneck’s assertion.

With that said, the focus of this brief discussion will concentrate on one aspect of Luther’s contribution to present day missiological reflection that has garnered little attention—his insights for contextualization of the gospel. Contextualization has as its goal to bring the gospel into the very fabric of culture. “It aims to emphasize the fact that evangelization, as a process of reliving the incarnation itself, demands the insertion of the Gospel within the very heart of a culture” (Arbuckle, 1990: 9). Contextualization of the gospel, properly done, brings life, reconciliation, forgiveness and transformation into culture rather than destruction, imperialism and captivity. Properly done, contextualization brings culture to its fullest divine intention. In his definitive work on the church and cultures, Luzbetak (1989: 78) outlines the process of contextualization:

Through the various processes of integration . . . the inculturated Gospel message becomes *generative* like culture itself. That is to say, the Gospel is sown in such a way as to be able to grow, expand, and develop. It gives the individual and the Christian community a capacity to express meaningfully faith values in ever-new local and indeed creative ways.

The call for making the gospel ever-new within the life of culture opens the possibility of unearthing another contribution of Luther to mission theology as it relates to the process of contextualization.

The reformation of Luther in so many ways reflects the process of contextualization as described above by Luzbetak. The gospel reform of Luther had deep and profound implications within the culture and life of people in sixteenth century Germany. Because the life of the church and life of society were so intertwined, reform and change in the church brought with it change in the culture as well. Luther’s critique of the sacramental system of the church not only changed the understanding of the sacraments, it also tore down what had become an oppressive system of tyranny in the lives of common people. When Luther critiqued the sacrament of penance and recaptured the essence of baptismal theology grounded in the gospel, he also freed the German people from an oppressive financial system. Without the sacrament of ordination there was no longer a hierarchy of human worth based on position or occupation in life.

The legacy of Luther for us in mission studies rests not in what he did but in understanding that which underlies and directed his contextualization of the gospel and reform of the church. In Luther, we do not find a scheme or plan for the doing of missions. But we do find the principle to guide our proclamation and contextualization, namely, the article of justification.

Justification by faith was for Luther the article upon which the church stands or falls. It was not one of many guidelines for the Christian church but *the* touchstone by which all speaking and acting was judged. The article of justification does not limit us to a particular content in contextualization but it rather stipulates what constitutes proper contextualization—namely that sins are forgiven, promises are given, and lives are lived in the new-found freedom of the gospel. The article of justification says that contextualization, if it is truly contextualization at all, will bring a dying of the old and a rising to new life in Christ (Forde, 1982: 95–96).

Justification by faith is the event whereby people are given meaning for life through the giving of the unconditional benefits of Jesus' death and resurrection in their lives apart from any human participation—including their own. It follows then that gospel mission, whatever form it takes, is present tense speech in the lives of people actually forgiving sins, not merely talking about forgiveness of sins. The article of justification insists that however we endeavor to insert the gospel into the very heart of culture, that it be done in such a way that people are opened to “the justification that faith apprehends rather than the justification that works apprehend” (Gritsch and Jenson, 1976: 43).

Luther's contextualization of the gospel removes the barriers, permitting the Word of God to do its deed. Repeatedly, the article of justification is the plumb line that guides his actions as he contextualizes the gospel and reforms the life of the church. Contextualization for Luther is the process that frees the gospel so that it can do what it does—justify the ungodly.

In his treatise, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther confronts the sacramental system found in the church of his day. In a strongly worded argument against his Roman opponents, Luther seeks to wrest the captivity of the gospel that had come from the misuse of the sacraments, and by which members of the church were controlled and oppressed from the cradle to the grave. In the treatise, Luther uses the article of justification as a “touchstone” for making sweeping reform in the sacramental system of the church. Foremost was his attack on the misuse of the “sacrament of the bread.”

The strongest of his attacks was against the misunderstanding of the mass as a sacrifice. Luther objected to the notion that the laity's access to the supper was governed by the power and ritual action of the priest and not by the promises of Christ. The validity of the sacrament could not be based on the actions of humans but must rest instead on the actions (death and resurrection) of Christ and his promises.

This has been the fate of the mass; it has been converted by the teaching of godless men into a good work. They themselves call it an *opus operatum*, and by it they presume themselves to be all-powerful with God . . . after inventing the lie that the mass is effective simply by virtue of the act having been performed. (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 47)

In part, this attack is prompted by the extent to which the mass was being abused in the lives of people, but also because the essence of the gospel was being compromised. Luther says, “Now the mass is part of the gospel; indeed, it is the sum and substance of it. For what is the whole gospel but the good tidings of the forgiveness of sins.” (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 64)

The insistence that Christ's promises be at the heart of the understanding of the Eucharist was not just a peripheral concern. The very essence of the gospel was at stake. To lose even one aspect of the gospel was to lose it all. Luther was clear about what was at stake for him, "For unless we firmly hold that the mass is the promise or testament of Christ, as the words clearly say, we shall lose the whole gospel and all its comfort" (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 51). "Until 1520, the Lord's Supper, in its medieval manifestation as the Mass, was a feast for the eyes and a ceremony for the dead" (Wengert, 2009: 131). The focus of the mass upon the ritual actions of the priest had gone so far as to have priests whisper the words of institution to themselves so that the congregation could not hear them. This was the greatest of offenses for Luther, for in keeping the people from hearing and making it a visual spectacle, they were being robbed of the very words that were given for forgiveness and strengthening of faith. The very encounter of the gospel was being withheld.

What we deplore in this captivity is that nowadays they take every precaution that no layman should hear these words of Christ, as if they were too sacred to be delivered to the common people. So mad are we priests that we arrogate to ourselves alone the so-called words of consecration, to be said secretly, yet in such a way that they do not profit even us, for we too fail to regard them as promises or as a treatment for the strengthening of the faith. (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 41)

Luther consistently critiques the sacramental system of the church from the vantage point of its ability to speak and be the gospel in the lives of people. The basis of the sacrament and access to it had to be gained, not through human merit or actions, but solely through faith—the event of God's promising. Reception of the sacrament had to be based on God's initiative, not ours. Luther continues, "If the mass is a promise, as has been said, then access to it is to be gained, not with any works, or powers, or merits of one's own, but by faith alone" (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 38). Through the article of justification Luther allows the gospel to become the touchstone by which change and conversion is brought in the life of the church. For Luther, the gospel is to be "set above all canons and collects devised by men, and that the gospel does not sanction the idea that the mass is a sacrifice, as has been shown" (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 54).

Luther's critique of the mass, through the article of justification, led him to assert that the basis of the sacrament rested solely on the justifying faith of the gospel given to the community through the promises of Christ. With this assertion came a dramatic shift in perspective. The laity were now essential to the celebration of the sacrament. The validity of the sacrament now rested in the promises of God spoken in and among the gathered community. The focus of the mass was not on an individual but the community of believers gathered. The gospel of God given in the mass was no longer held in the hands of a few. It was now placed in the hands of all. The cup was no longer reserved for a few with higher status, but given equally to all. Luther's example for contextualization meant that the gospel was not something that people "observed" others doing, but was now an event of God's promising that was "really present" in their participation in the life of faith.

Luther continues his treatise with a discussion on baptism. Here again we see the application of the article of justification for the renewal of the gospel within the context of his day. Baptism, like the mass, is evaluated and understood based on the divine promise:

Now, the first thing to be considered about baptism is the divine promise, which says: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” [Mark 16:16]. This promise must be set far above all the glitter of works, vows, religious orders, and whatever else man has introduced, for on it all our salvation depends. (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 58)

Luther saw baptism as a foundational sacrament within the life of faith. Luther objected that the church had reduced it to a preliminary role that was superseded by penance, ordination and extreme unction. Penance was given greater importance because of the sin it forgave subsequent to baptism. Ordination was a lifestyle and status through which eternal benefits were given, rendering the benefits of baptism as useless. For Luther, these were, at best, a return to that which was given in baptism.

Baptism then, signifies two things – death and resurrection, that is, full and complete justification. When the minister immerses the child in the water it signifies death, and when he draws it forth again it signifies life . . . We must therefore beware of those who have reduced the power of baptism to such small and slender dimensions that, while they say grace is indeed inpoured by it, they maintain that afterwards it is poured out again through sin. (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 67–69)

Luther is particularly vexed by those who claimed superior work and benefits to those who fulfil religious order vows.

You will find those who argue and decree that a work done in fulfillment of a vow ranks higher than one done without a vow . . . But God measures them by faith alone, and with him there is no difference among works, except insofar as there is a difference in faith. (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 75)

Any thought that individuals’ works could assist them in obtaining salvation was a denial of faith for Luther. The thought that religious orders or ordination gave a person superior works to other baptized Christians was a denial of “the priesthood of all believers” and the promise of God in baptism.

Besides, it is certain that none of them was saved through his vows and his “religious” life; they were saved through faith alone, by which all men are saved, and to which that showy subservience to vows is more diametrically opposed than anything else. (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 77)

Contextualization done through the article of justification in re-establishing the grace centeredness of the sacrament of baptism brought a renewed status for the life of the laity. Daily work was restored as God’s work. No longer was one person’s work held in higher esteem than another’s. Baptism restored as the foundational

sacrament brought an equity between Christians rooted in the promises of God given in the sacrament.

The superiority of clergy over the laity had been particularly oppressive in Luther's day. It has been said that the most feared person in daily life at the time of Luther was not the Pope, Charles V, or Frederick the Wise, but the local parish priest, because the priest, through the elaborate sacramental system of the church, held in his hands the bonds of hell and the gates of heaven through his inclusion and exclusion of the laity from the sacraments.

They have sought by this means to set up a seed bed of implacable discord, by which clergy and laymen should be separated from each other farther than heaven and earth, to the incredible injury of the grace of baptism and to the confusion of our fellowship in the gospel. Here, indeed, are the roots of that detestable tyranny of the clergy over the laity . . . Here Christian brotherhood has perished, here shepherds have been turned into wolves, servants into tyrants, churchmen into worse than worldlings. (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 36: 112)

Luther's transformation of the sacramental system brought profound implications in the life of Christian people. They had a renewed status in life. The tyranny of the sacramental system, especially the system of indulgences, had been removed. The gospel was restored to daily living. Salvation and the gospel could not be earned by status or by the works one did in life. The gospel, restored as first-person address, allowed the promises of God to be spoken unconditionally within the life of the community. Christian people could live for entirely new reasons.

In his treatise, "On the Freedom of a Christian," Luther explains the new life of Christians lived in the freedom of the gospel. He begins with the now famous paradoxical phrase, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 31: 344). By these statements, Luther meant that the Christian is totally free from any laws or requirements insofar as they relate to gaining salvation. There was nothing outward that produced Christian righteousness. This alone has been done through the holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ. On the other hand, now that one has heard the justifying Word of God and is totally free from saving oneself, it is precisely this freedom that leads the Christian to become servant to the neighbor. "A Christian was both free from the obligation to do good works in order to please God and still bound to do them" (Kittleson, 1986: 156).

A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all [people] on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself . . . Therefore he should be guided in all his works by this thought and contemplate this one thing alone, that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, considering nothing except the need and the advantage of his neighbor. (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 31: 364–365)

The Christian life is lived in response to the gift of salvation given in the great promises brought by God's Word. It was no longer a pilgrimage of requirements and

obligations which may or may not lead one to eternal life. Life is lived in joyful response rather than in fear of damnation.

Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully, with all my heart, and with an eager will do all things which I know are pleasing and acceptable to such a Father who has overwhelmed me with his inestimable riches? I will therefore give myself as a Christ, to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself, to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ. (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 31: 367)

For the justified Christian, life lived in response to the neighbor follows naturally in response to the gracious saving acts of God in one's life. We are freed to become little Christs to one another.

The Christian's life of works takes on radical new meaning. The Christian did good works knowing they could only be harmful if used in trying to gain salvation. Life's focus was moved from ego and the self-centeredness to the neighbor and the world. The Christian was freed from any works intent on saving oneself – for all that was needed had been freely given. Now the Christian could be directed to the neighbor to be the instrument of the Triune God's sending to the neighbor to speak unconditional grace into their lives and become a means for their justification. Our good works can do nothing to save ourselves, but they might be the instrument whereby God's Word would justify others. "So also, our works should be done, not that we may be justified by them, since, being justified beforehand by faith, we ought to do all things freely and joyfully for the sake of others" (Lehmann and Pelikan, 1955–1976, Vol 31: 368).

While in Luther we have no specific institutionalization or plan for mission, we see in his application of the article of justification by faith "a capacity to express meaningful faith values in ever-new local and indeed creative ways that are relevant to the time and place without compromising the essentials of the gospel" (Luzbetak, 1989: 78). It is fair to say that Luther would allow for our participation in God's mission to be done in *any* way so long as what is apprehended in the ears of the person is the unconditional, justifying faith of God. A gospel that is contextualized is one that liberates people from legal, ecclesial, and ritual regulations and transforms culture in life giving ways. Justification by faith does not provide a specific plan for doing mission: it provides a way of contextualizing it. Inculturation occurs when the church has re-presented justifying faith through a present tense gospel speaking that frees Christians for service to the world. The church is participating in God's mission when its speaking allows the kingdom of God to break into the context and culture of their world. "The missionary's task [is] to declare the gospel in such a manner that true religion [is] awakened as a response of faith, thanksgiving, and praise to God" (Scherer, 1987: 62).

Luther calls us to a missional ministry task of contextualization that finally stops confusing law and gospel—and worse, speaking law as if it were gospel. Specific insights, examples and proposals for the present-day missioning task must, unfortunately, wait for greater print space.

Calvin, Reformed Christianity, and Christian mission

J. Nelson Jennings

Among the various streams flowing out of the European Reformation, perhaps none conjures up the degree of visceral and contradictory reactions that the Reformed tradition does. Various understandings of the doctrine of predestination are often at the root of such reactions. There are similarly strong and conflicting images of the acknowledged founder of the Reformed movement, John Calvin (1509–1564). In specific relation to Christian mission, on the one hand Calvin and the ensuing Reformed tradition are viewed by some as cold-hearted, intellectually inflexible, and inherently adverse to mission involvement. Others, however, eagerly point out the vibrant missionary character of the Calvinist movement, both theologically and in actual history. Contrary to what critics might suggest, proponents see a warmth, humility, and passion for mission in Calvinism.

These particular points of conflict must be addressed on their own terms.¹ Especially important for this brief discussion will be setting Calvin and the Reformed tradition in their concrete historical contexts, in order to clarify the mission character of the Reformed movement as a whole.

Negative views of the Reformed tradition in relation to Christian mission see the early Reformed leaders as preoccupied with the group's own survival and development, typical of other Protestant movements. Moreover, Calvinism's emphasis on God's predestined election of some to salvation and some to destruction is seen to cut the very life nerve of motivation to get the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people so they can believe. After all, if God has already decreed everyone's destinies, what is the point of appealing to people so they might believe? Critics see the God of Calvinism as saving people "selectively and arbitrarily, rather than universally" (Taylor, 2001: 161). Hence, God's elect have no reason or motivation for missions.

Those critics aware of the seventeenth-century Dutch theologian and missiologist Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) might dismiss him as an anomaly or as a typically static, Reformed systematician. Not surprisingly, insofar as there have been Reformed missionaries, haven't they been only a small fraction of the whole missionary force that has primarily been comprised of those who have gone to the ends of the earth with a burning love to appeal to lost sinners who have the free will to believe in Jesus Christ and thus be saved from a horrific eternity in hell to eternal life in heaven?

Those with a much more sanguine view of John Calvin and the Reformed tradition are ready with rebuttals to offset what are understood as critics' caricatures (see, for example, Schirrmacher, 2009). Theologically, Calvinists point first to God's grace and love that would bring anyone to salvation, despite everyone's sinful rebellion against him. Moreover, in Calvin's monumental *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536)—originally composed for ordinary French Christians and patterned after the Apostles Creed in four books (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Church)—predestination is not discussed until the end of the third book, after extensive teaching about God as Creator, Redeemer, and Applier of salvation (Calvin, 1936). In addition to these systematic theological matters, Calvinists point to the biblical-theological unfolding of God's merciful dealings with the human

race, culminating in Jesus Christ and this current age of grace during which all kinds of people can believe and be saved. Rather than a stingy and strict God of arbitrary election, Calvin and his Reformed successors see a gracious God who has worked mercifully in Jesus Christ to save a multitude of sinners from throughout the entire earth.

As for Christian mission, then, the promise that God will indeed bring a great host of people to trust in Jesus Christ gives motivation and assurance for issuing the call to all people to repent and believe. Calvin and the Reformed tradition point out as well that God has not only ordained the results but the means toward the elect's salvation. If the means of announcing, hearing, praying for, repenting, and believing did not take place, neither would the end result of human salvation occur. In short, there is theological motivation, encouragement, and assurance for mission outreach. Furthermore, despite what critics may suppose, advocates point out how the theocentric thrust of Reformed missiology has had a wide influence from Voetius, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), John Piper (1946–), Christopher Wright (1947–), and others (Ott et al., 2010).

As for what has taken place within actual mission history, proponents point out how Calvin and other Reformed believers have actively engaged in mission activity. As with other traditions' mission enterprises, Reformed activities have largely followed the contours of wider historical circumstances. Calvin himself trained refugee pastors in Geneva with a vision to sending them throughout France and beyond (Calhoun, 1979). Reformed churches developed throughout other parts of Europe, including in Hungary, Poland, Germany, England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland (Spalding and Stillwell, 2011). A mid-sixteenth-century expedition to Brazil included French Huguenots trained in Calvin's Geneva. (The most extensive discussion of Reformed missions in Latin America is Hegeman, 2002.) The early seventeenth-century beginnings of the British and the Dutch East India Companies facilitated Reformed chaplains and other Christians to travel along the coast of Africa and throughout Asia. With the increased migration of European peoples and accompanying growth of Protestant missions to North America in the 17th century, then throughout much of the world in the 19th century, Presbyterian and Reformed missionaries have dispersed worldwide from Reformed centers in Europe and North America. Many Reformed and Presbyterian churches have also been active in the ecumenical movement since the World Council of Churches' founding in 1948.

Reformed (and Presbyterian) missions and missionaries have not been immune from coalescing with political and economic forces, including in Indonesia, South Africa, North America, and elsewhere. Nor have Reformed missions proceeded in a steadily increasing and basically unchanged manner. Missionaries have in fact dramatically decreased from those Presbyterian and Reformed churches in Europe and North America whose memberships have dropped, and missionaries from Reformed and Presbyterian churches in South Korea do not embody all the same ideals and practices as did their Western predecessors. Even amid the shifting historical currents of the past half-millennium, Calvinism's influence in missions has been widespread. In its theology and actual mission practice, the Reformed tradition continues to demonstrate its inherent mission thrust as part of the worldwide Christian movement.

How the Reformations shaped Wesleyan missiology: A personal reflection

Benjamin L. Hartley

On a visit to Prague last summer my wife and I stayed at a small hotel that was close to the famous Bethlehem Chapel where Jan Hus had served in the early 15th century. I knew that the site was perhaps the earliest architectural link between a Reformation's tradition and my own Methodist ways. (Two centuries after Hus's reforming efforts, his followers joined the Moravian movement which influenced Methodist mission profoundly.) As we strolled Prague's labyrinthine streets by only occasionally consulting a map I realized that we had passed the Bethlehem Chapel—perhaps twice—unawares. We finally circled back to the church and admired the way it was basked in the yellow light of a cool summer evening. In reflecting on this experience, I see it as an apt story with which to begin an essay on the Reformation roots of Methodist missiology. The missiological emphases of the Methodist tradition have come from people and places in our history that contemporary Methodists often miss, just like I missed the Bethlehem Chapel after walking right by it.

For years, the United Methodist denomination has been engaged in ecumenical dialogue but has sometimes overlooked those ecclesial bodies like the Pentecostals and the Moravians with which it is most closely related—especially missiologically (Dayton, 2009).² A recent (2016) formal ecumenical agreement between Moravians and United Methodists celebrated our common heritage and our ability to join hands once again around mission:

[The dialogue participants] met partly as strangers, but also as fellow Christians whose paths have run parallel. As we met and came to know each other, we found that we were friends who had returned to each other as family . . . We discovered that our traditions share a passion for music, living the Christian life, mutual tolerance for all people, pragmatic approaches for contextual mission, commitment to ministry by the laity, and yearning for the unity of the church. (Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships, 2016: Introduction, para 2)

To be sure, there were several reasons for Moravian / Methodist parting of ways in the 18th century and theological differences remain—in part stemming from Lutheran theological emphases of the Moravian tradition and the Anglican orientation in Methodism. The participants in the Moravian / United Methodist dialogue, however, decided to focus on mission far more than the traditional topics of ecumenical dialogue pertaining to church order or sacraments. Doing so proved to be delightfully fruitful. It is my hope that other ecumenical dialogues in the future will similarly pay more attention to missiological matters!

In this short essay, I want to draw attention to just two other dimensions of Reformation traditions that have been and continue to be important to Methodist missiology. One of the first things I learned about the Lutheran reformation in Germany from my seminary church history professor, Carter Lindberg, was that Martin Luther was very engaged in efforts to reform the way his society cared for the poor. I have been writing about the history of religiously-motivated social welfare efforts ever

since. In the Reformation period, new laws were put in place by Luther and his followers to ensure that the focus was on caring for the poor themselves in helpful ways rather than focusing on almsgiving as primarily a means for more wealthy persons to receive assurances that their alms for the poor would figure positively toward their salvation. Methodist missiology upholds a strong emphasis on the “preferential option for the poor.” Luther’s work is one source of inspiration in this regard (Dayton, 1991).

Luther’s work—as well as that of Calvin—in reforming a theology of social welfare and poor laws perhaps finds its most direct institutional expression in Methodism in the 19th century with the establishment of the office of deaconess in the Methodist Episcopal Church (Lindberg, 1993: 99–100; Olson, 1989). The establishment of this office around the world was in large part due to Methodist missionaries’ exposure to Lutheran deaconesses in Germany in the mid-19th century. Becoming a Methodist deaconess became a popular way Methodist women engaged in mission in the late 19th century and beyond. By 1920, over two dozen deaconess homes were established in the United States and around the world by Methodists to minister to the poor in word and deed (Hartley, 2002). Although the influence of the deaconess office in American Methodism declined after World War I, it remains a path of ministry for many United Methodist women in the United States and (especially) in the Philippines. Other Methodist denominations around the world have a similar story and have the Lutheran tradition to thank for this expression of Methodist missiology.

In conclusion, any discussion of the Reformations’ influence on Methodist missiology must include the ways the Reformations’ traditions—both Protestant and Catholic—brought renewed focus on the importance of sanctification in what one of Wesley’s sermons called “The Scripture Way of Salvation.” The relationship between justification and sanctification, of course, was not a new problem to which Wesley sought to respond in this published sermon in 1765, and one may certainly debate the extent to which his ideas about sanctification even drew from Protestant Reformation sources. It is a pervasive theme, after all, in the New Testament itself. The early Reformation debate over the “way of salvation” and the role of personal holiness therein is most prominently displayed in debates between Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt and Martin Luther (Sider, 1971). One can look to the reformation efforts of the Jesuits in the 16th century to find similar themes there; it is not by accident that John Wesley was sometimes labeled a Jesuit by his detractors! It was Wesley’s stress on the holy life that animated generations of Methodist mission leaders. Phoebe Palmer, John R. Mott, D. T. Niles, and E. Stanley Jones are just some of the more famous nineteenth and twentieth century figures who have shaped Methodist missiology. These persons were rooted in a longing for sanctification, which characterizes the holiness tradition and draws from earlier wells of theological insight from the Reformations and beyond.

In many contemporary branches of the Wesleyan movement—including my own United Methodist Church—one finds discussions of how best to live the holy life to be less common. New metaphors for thinking about growth in holiness are surely needed, but I think Wesley’s teaching on the importance of holiness remains a critical aspect of Methodist missiology. Richard Heitzenrater put it well: “When holiness is your goal you do evangelism differently” (Heitzenrater in Stone, 2007: 259).

An Anabaptist perspective

Stan Nussbaum

The impact of Luther and the reformers on Anabaptist missiology was ambiguous in the extreme. Current Anabaptists find themselves conflicted about whether or not to jump on the bandwagon of the 500-year celebration of Luther's 95 theses. On one hand, the sixteenth century Anabaptists built squarely on core ideas and affirmations of the reformers who preceded them or were contemporaries³. But on the other, they defined their building in explicit contrast to what the reformers were building. When two construction crews try to build two different buildings on the same foundation, there will be trouble, and there was, as we shall see.

In very broad strokes, we may say that *the Anabaptists tended to share the theology of the Reformers but disagree with their ecclesiology, and that led to vast differences in missiology*. In other words, Anabaptist missiology was built on Reformation theology and anti-Reformation (or "super-Reformation"?) ecclesiology.

Theological agreement

- **A pure church.** Anabaptists could not agree more with Luther's passionate opposition to the selling of indulgences, the practice that triggered the 95 Theses and is their main subject. God wants a pure church and sincere devotion from church members, not financial manipulation of the laity by church fundraisers who preach that donations will manipulate God himself!
- **A God of grace.** Furthermore, God is essentially a God of grace, eager to justify and liberate people, not a God of judgment who only calms down if humans donate enough money and do enough of the right things. Like Lutherans, Anabaptists never came to baptism thinking it was a reward. It was a gift from the God of grace.
- **The Bible.** God has graciously provided his Word for his people, and it is crucial for Christian identity and purity. The church should promote rather than restrict church members' access to the Bible. Luther's translation of scripture created the climate in which Anabaptist ideas could grow.
- **A church with gracious people.** "Christians should be taught that one who gives to the poor, or lends to the needy, does a better action than if he purchases indulgences" (Thesis 43 of the 95). Anabaptists concurred that service to the poor is an important part of Christian life and witness. With no buildings to fund, the sixteenth century Anabaptists were well positioned to practice what Luther preached on this point.
- **A legitimization.** If the church establishment is impure, interfering with the flow of grace, restricting access to the Word, and more concerned about funding its buildings than helping the poor, God may remove its authority. He may take his vineyard from the wicked tenants and give it to others who will honor him (Matt. 21:33–46). The authority of the Bible exceeds the authority of the church establishment, including the pope.

Table 1. Ecclesiological disagreements between Luther and Anabaptists.

Luther	Anabaptist
How do we get a pure church of genuine believers not manipulators?	
A pure church can be developed even if people are baptized into it as infants. The preached Word can nurture them in the faith.	The pure church can only be developed if baptism depends on personal faith. Faith is spiritual life. Without that, nurture is as futile as nurturing a stillborn.
Grace	
The church can bestow grace by baptism.	The church cannot guarantee that baptism bestows grace. Baptism is meaningless unless the one baptized has a prior experience of grace.
Who decides what the Bible means?	
The trained theologians who lead the church	Ordinary pastors and members, all of whom are “priests”
How do we prioritize the poor over church building projects?	
We prioritize both.	We do without buildings.
Who will legitimize a new church establishment, a change of “dynasty” from the papacy?	
The king/prince/ruler of a territory will legitimize a church for his territory, just as he legitimizes many other things there.	The Bible as interpreted by Christians who live it will legitimize the Church. The true church does not seek or need any endorsement from political rulers, since such links will inevitably compromise its purity. The church also is global, not confined to any one ruler’s domain, and it is comprised of believers only. Christian discipleship is not coterminous with citizenship.

Ecclesiological disagreement

The Anabaptists passionately agreed with Luther on all the above points but passionately disagreed with him on the extent of their implications for the church (Table 1).

Missiological Outcome

If, as the Reformers have it, each “church” must be authorized by a ruler whose authority is over a given territory, then the legitimacy of that church outside that territory is in serious doubt, and so is its mission. In the Anabaptist view, mission was not restricted to any particular territory because mission was grounded in scripture, not in a “church” legitimization by a particular ruler.

For the mainline reformers, the mission of a church was to show the world what happens when a territory is “Christian,” that is, governed in a Christian way by the territorial church working hand in hand with the territorial political leader(s). This is

an example of what Bosch referred to as “centripetal mission,” the Old Testament model of creating a perfect and attractive example of life under God’s rule, drawing all the nations to it (Bosch, 1991: 19).

Anabaptist mission was to demonstrate the rule of God on earth not by creating a model society in a model territory but rather by creating a model “people of God,” a body, family, or movement without ethnic, geographic, or political commonalities to hold it together. This “people of God” would attract the world to God’s glory not by succeeding in building a model society with political backing but by “failing” to take and apply worldly power. In other words, the church would redeem the world by voluntarily sacrificing itself, and, following the way of Christ, it would forgive its way to vindication and victory. (The sacrificial, kingdom-based missiology of Anabaptists is masterfully sketched in chapter one of Wilbert Shenk’s 1999 work, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*.)

Essentially an “apostolate of the laity,” Anabaptist evangelists fanned out across Europe following the Martyrs’ Synod in 1527 and continued evangelizing until late in the 16th century (see Kasdorf, 1984; Schäufele, 1984). The priesthood of all believers implied the apostolate of all believers. When the church is the “priest” of the world, every lay person has a share in the mission and every territory is fair game.

The reformers thought the Anabaptist non-territorial model of the kingdom was naïvely optimistic, and the Anabaptists thought the same of the reformers’ territorial model. They pointed out correctly that the reformers’ way of building the model society would require massive amounts of negotiation, resources, and emotional energy as the church and the political rulers tried to stay on the same page.

Among the thorny issues the reformers had to work out was the appropriate use of force. Thankfully they agreed it could not be used for “mission” (crusades). However, they did justify its use to keep a territory “Christian.” Citizens who got out of step with the government or the church were spoiling what the church-state alliance was trying to perfect.

And this was the Anabaptist predicament—theologically in step with the reformers at many core points but ecclesiological and missiologically out of step. If the Anabaptists were right about the church and its mission, all the main reformers misconceived their main project of creating a Christian territory. The reformers understood this threat all too clearly, and they could not tolerate it. Neither could the Roman Catholics.

Over the next half century, an estimated 5000 Anabaptists were executed for their faith and witness. That trauma put martyrdom and endurance into the core of Anabaptist mission thinking, and it made Mennonites the only global denominational family named for an underground preacher. The endurance theme so prominent in the New Testament was the lived experience of Anabaptists in the 16th century. In this sense, the Protestant Reformation was not a launching pad for Anabaptist missiology. It was a crucible where that missiology was refined.

That refining fire reinforced the Anabaptist theory that mission would always be done from a position of vulnerability instead of a position of power or even a position of legality. The theory said that because the church is foreign to the world, God’s people are always a pilgrim people, a “foreign” witness even when the church members are in their native territories.

And now, 500 years on, we can see that Anabaptist “vulnerable” missiology was better suited for the 21st century than the 19th and 20th.⁴ Always out of sync with colonialism in mission, it is now in sync with post-colonial mission, where many missionaries do not come from powerful countries or have powerful churches backing them, and missiologists do not theorize about creating Christian territories.

Anabaptist missiology is, however, seriously out of sync with a different trend in mission, the trend to regard all good work as “kingdom work.”⁵ This view blurs the line between church and world, pretends the two can be allies in God’s great transcending project of making the world better. There is no need to put Christ in the center, and hardly a need to mention him. That increasingly common view among Christians in mission is the reformers’ “Christian territory” model elevated from territorial to global scope. It is a church-state or church-society alliance, going against the ecclesiological heart of Anabaptist missiology.

The Anabaptist view is that God’s missionary people will neither conquer the world nor transform it through alliance with its rulers to promote good causes. Those things are not our mission, and they need not be since we, the meek, are going to inherit the world. We can instead concentrate on our assignment of sacrificial, loving witness to Jesus the Messiah, achieved with only the power of the Spirit.

We are more than happy to celebrate with anyone who can celebrate this sacrificial, loving witness, or anyone who put it into motion in the first place. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Catholicism, the Reformation, and the mission of the Church

William R. Burrows

How did and does the Reformation, begun in 1517, affect the Catholic Church’s sense of mission? The short answer is, not much for three hundred years, then more in the next one hundred fifty years as Catholics and Protestants feuded, and a lot in the last fifty—and largely positive, as Catholics began reading books by missiologists like David Bosch.

I was recently reminded how much had changed when I recalled a story told me in 1972 by a veteran German SVD missionary, John Tschauer, not long after I arrived in Papua New Guinea. In 1938, he was the pastor of a parish on Karkar Island, near Madang, off the coast of the then Territory of New Guinea, an area that had been reserved for Catholics by the German colonial government in the 1890s. It seems that a plantation on the north side of Karkar needed more labor than could be provided by the Catholic areas surrounding Madang, so managers recruited workers from the Lutheran area surrounding Lae. The Lutherans opened a church to take care of their people on Karkar. Catholics near the Lutheran station found it easier to go there than to make a long trek to the Catholic church, and Tschauer noticed a gradual decrease in attendance. One Sunday he got on his horse, rode to the Lutheran church, entered it on horseback and pointed to “his” Catholics, and told them to get out, all the while cracking a whip.

This incident was extreme to be sure, but it is illustrative of largely negative relations between Protestants and Catholics in mission before the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). In other words, Catholics felt they needed to hinder Protestant missionaries in order to bring non-Christians into our church, the only one, they believed, that was legitimate and had *all* the means to gain salvation.

When I heard the story, I was, of course, horrified, but soon thereafter found myself part of a friendly gathering of teachers from Lutheran, Anglican, and United Church seminaries paid for by the World Council of Churches' Fund for Theological Education. Times had changed, and when I sat in the back of the room as students from these same seminaries talked, I realized that their Lutheran, Anglican, Catholic, and United Church identities were not so much the source of division as an enrichment as they shared perspectives. My confrere Patrick Murphy, SVD, was in charge of ecumenical relations for the Catholic bishops. He never tired of telling the Catholic missionary community that we needed to approach people in other churches as integral parts of a "universal church imperfectly united," and he told Protestants that this was a distillation of Vatican II's declaration on ecumenism.

The Catholic Church's first missions in the early modern era were carried on by Portuguese priests on the west coast of Africa in the mid-1400s. As the 16th century dawned, a new chapter was begun as Jesuits joined Franciscans and Dominicans in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. They competed with each other in the almost three hundred years before Protestants appeared as vigorously as they opposed Protestants. What is too little appreciated is that the Catholic renewal that is symbolized by the Jesuits' (founded in 1534) entrance into world mission is made clear in the work of Jesuit historian, John O'Malley. O'Malley makes the point that the Jesuits were not founded to oppose the Protestant reformations but had antecedents in reform movements such as were undertaken in Spain by the Franciscan Cardinal Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros (1436–1537). Ximénez sought to catechize the faithful and purge corruption from the clergy and—less admirably—used the Inquisition to root out heresy. The reforms of the Council of Trent (1545–1563) were spurred on by the Reformation, it is true, but for the most part they took their inspiration from tracks laid down in Catholic traditions. Till the end of the Thirty Years War, O'Malley shows, in a review of archival material, popes and the Catholic world in general seem to have thought that the Reformation divisions would not endure. They were, of course, wrong.

I knowingly oversimplify when I judge that Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 ("On Ecclesiastical Power") and the Schmalkaldic articles of 1538 summarize Reformation principles on the exercise of authority that, together with the three "*solas*" of the Protestant movement (*sola fide*, *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*), represent the deepest reasons for the splintering of Christendom. Indeed, many Protestant bodies have made peace with Catholics on our teaching on the three "*solas*."

Augsburg article 28 and the Schmalkaldic Articles of 1538 ("Treatise on Power and Primacy of the Pope"), express principles that undergird formal separation among Catholics and Protestants to this day. And this is true whether the Protestants be those grouped under the umbrella of the World Council of Churches or the so-called Independents (many Baptists, Anabaptists, Pentecostals, and "Non-Denominationals"). The consequences for world mission are, in my opinion, catastrophic.

Pope John Paul II recognized that the papacy—in its present form—is a stumbling block to unity in article 88 of his encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint* (“That they be one”), where he wrote:

The Catholic Church’s conviction that in the ministry of the Bishop of Rome she has preserved, in fidelity to the Apostolic Tradition and the faith of the Fathers, the visible sign and guarantor of unity, constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians, whose memory is marked by certain painful recollections.

In sections before the oft-quoted article 88, John Paul listed agreements between Catholics and Protestants. The list is impressive. Progress has been made. But he also goes on in paragraphs after 88 to argue for Roman primacy, albeit in ways that stress the scriptural ideals of communion. I find the *principles* the pope enunciates persuasive, and they are part of the reason I remain not just catholic but *Roman* Catholic. What I am not convinced of is that the *exercise* of the Petrine office as it is now structured is wise, even when Peter’s chair is occupied by a man like Pope Francis. These structures are in fact a contextualization of Imperial Roman cultural notions of power, law, and jurisdiction, and both Schmalkald and Augsburg 28 make many valid points against them.

How do we get around the Imperial Roman notions of papal and episcopal power to a serious dialogue over what each side should learn from the other? I ask this because it is clear to me that—even if Roman curial bureaucracy is little attractive to non-Catholics—it is equally clear that after five centuries of splitting and mutual recriminations, the notion that *sola scriptura* can bring about church unity is also self-evident.

I hope I have enough credibility among my Protestant missiological friends to recommend that ideas enunciated in scripture (for example, Matthew 16:18; John 21:15–19)—as interpreted by Catholicism to indicate that there is some sort of Petrine primacy—deserve a hearing. (And yes, I do know exegetes squabble over those texts.) My reason for saying what I have is that after five hundred years we are in a position to realize that the “*solas*” of the Reformation are not sufficient to slow down the splintering of the church. This splintering has a disastrous effect on mission in both the United States and world-wide.

My friend Robert Hunt recently asked a question that bears directly upon this issue:

Sometime I’d love to discuss ecclesiology with you. Here in Singapore it is remarkable the extent to which the Catholic church is the social center for the vast population of not just Filipina, but also Indonesian, Vietnamese, Indian, Burmese, and even Thai maid/guest workers. How does the church manage an enduring sense of identity, something that Protestants seem completely incapable of doing over any long period of time? While containing significant divisions of opinion?

My response rests on agreement that the besetting sin of Western Christianity is *logorrhea* – excessive and often incoherent talkativeness or wordiness. When you make the center of worship the sermon, a host of dangers rush in. Chief among them

is the violent disagreement of experts over the message on the part of men and women who rise in the professoriate because of their critical intellectual capacities instead of their wisdom and love. Equally corrosive is the practice of choosing leaders by democratic vote-counting or corralling a majority of a board, if they do not have a vital *sensus ecclesiae* (a living sense of the church) and pastoral abilities to nurture unity in Christ. The same is true for settling doctrinal and moral questions.

I am not sure what follows is a complete answer to Robert Hunt's question, but I do believe that a part of the answer is a sacramental form of worship in which the Spirit's action on ordinary elements like bread and wine is paramount. And part of that sacramental symbolism is a sense of unity in Christ symbolized in something deeper than bureaucratized leadership.

I'm not sure that leadership cadres in *all* ecclesial bodies, including my own, are willing to subordinate self- and institutional interests to explore how the entire Christian movement can achieve mutual recognition and spiritual communion, because real communion will require real change to achieve union among different sorts of ecclesial polities. But I am sure that such a *metanoia* needs to occur and that true *metanoia* will have institutional consequences if an imperfectly united church is to be the Body of Christ with a unified mission.

Conclusion

We have seen, not surprisingly, that Luther and the subsequent Protestant Reformation does not have a simple missiological legacy but rather various legacies: theological, ecclesiological, political, and practical; some of which co-exist in the same ecclesiastical community. Allow me to illustrate.

This past January, I attended a national gathering of my denomination's ministerial association. Its theme was (of course) the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Several of the plenary speakers spoke at length on our theological inheritance from Luther, especially the three "*solas*." Interestingly, no mention was made of how our forefathers followed Luther's lead in splitting off from their mother church, ironically, the Scandinavian Lutheran Churches. Further, our predecessors defected, ostensibly, for reasons similar to those of Luther: the perceived ethical and doctrinal shortcomings of an established national church. In reaction, they embraced a hardline congregational church polity.

A phrase from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians comes to mind, "Some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry" (Phil. 1:15). "Missionary rivalry" among ecclesiastical confessions is undoubtedly one aspect of the legacy of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation. However I refuse to believe such rivalry is its most enduring legacy, though I agree with Bill Burrows that, after five centuries of splintering, achieving institutional union among different sorts of ecclesial polities would be monumentally difficult. Many "independents" would argue such a union is not even desirable because compromised autonomy would inevitably result in contaminated piety and adulterated doctrinal purity. At the same time, organizations like the ASM demonstrate that mutual recognition, reciprocal respect, and genuine fellowship happen in missiological circles.

“As iron sharpens iron” (Prov. 27:17), we challenge one another to think more deeply about missional engagement. Further, we “spur one another on to love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:24) as we variously “do mission” both collaboratively and through our own ecclesial communities.

This article made evident real differences between various communities. At the same time, the article’s very existence points to a Spirit of mutual trust, respect, and communion who allows us to agree and disagree amicably, because we serve the same Lord and seek to edify the Church which is His Body.

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Notes

1. A helpful overview of arguments about the Reformed tradition’s involvement in Christian mission is Kenneth J. Stewart, “Calvinism and Missions: The Contested Relationship Revisited” *Themelios* 34.1 (2009): 63-78. Available online at http://s3.amazonaws.com/tgc-documents/journal-issues/34.1/Themelios_34.1.pdf#page=65. This and all links accessed July 6, 2017.
2. As an essay commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformations it is beyond the scope of this essay to comment further on Methodist-Pentecostal relations.
3. Anabaptism typically dates its origin to 1525, eight years after Luther’s theses. Lutherans are invited to celebrate our 500th with us in 2025, though perhaps they will be as conflicted as we are this year.
4. See www.vulnerablemission.org for the “Alliance for Vulnerable Mission.” It is not an exclusively Anabaptist effort, but it overlaps strongly with this particular aspect of Anabaptist missiology.
5. This trend is decried and critiqued in McKnight’s 2014 *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church*.

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