An Evaluation of Current Missiology

By Ernst H. Wendland

This year a course was offered at the Summer Quarter of our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary entitled "Missiological Perspectives." Fifteen participants enrolled. When the enrollees were asked what prompted them to attend this particular course, they responded variously. Some replied that they were just plain curious. Some stated that the course happened to fit into the general area of Practical Theology, an area in which they were especially interested. Some frankly admitted that since the other courses scheduled in the same time-slot were already fully subscribed, they more or less of necessity took "the next best thing." And then there were also a few who said that they came because they were especially interested in mission work, although they really had no precise idea into which area of mission work this course would take them.

The topic that is to be discussed in this writing has the title "An Evaluation of Current Missiology." Since the term "missiology" is obviously relatively new and not too well known among our pastors, it may be well to devote a little time at first in becoming better acquainted with some basic thoughts concerning the term itself before we consider an evaluation of its current trends.

Missiology's Place in Theology

The word "missiology," as Johannes Verkuyl points out, is a "linguistic monstrosity." Etymologically it joins both Latin (missio) and Greek (logos) into one. "It is comforting to note," Verkuyl adds, "that such 'monsters' occur rather frequently." According to its roots the term means "the science of mission activity." Those who have made a special study of this science are called "missiologists."

We can approach this subject from the viewpoint of God and say that "missiology is the study of the activity of the Triune God throughout the world in behalf of the salvation of mankind," or we can approach it from the viewpoint of man and say, "Missiology is the study of the activity of the Church of Jesus Christ in carrying out its Lord's commission to disciple all nations." The second approach would seem to be the more practical of the two.

From this definition two things are clear. Missiology, first of all, has to do with mission work as a world-wide activity of the Church of Jesus Christ. Missiology, moreover, concerns itself with the theological basis upon which all church activity must rest. While it includes, of course, the practical methods employed by Christians in carrying out the mandate of their Lord, it looks first and foremost to the motives which prompt this activity as well as to the forces or theological trends which militate against the carrying out of this mandate. The consideration of a "theology of missions," in other words, is basic to the study of missiology. The practical aspects of mission work are a part of missiological study, of course, but only insofar as they are a reflection of its theological base.

It wasn't until comparatively recent times that a special consideration of mission principles and practice became a part of theological study. Prior to this time many regarded the missionary movement simply as a historical phenomenon. They took the biblical foundation of mission work pretty much for granted. As a result for a long time, as Johannes Verkuyl states, "missiology was accorded no place in the encyclopedia of theology. She was not even given standing room."

Toward the end of the 19th century a man by the name of Gustav Warneck included "Missionslehre" not only under the general study of church history, but also as something to be considered from the aspect of its biblical foundations as well as its methodology. Warneck, incidentally, was the first professor in Europe to receive an official appointment to the chair of missionary science. This occurred in 1896 at the University of Halle. Other European universities soon followed suit. A question arose as to how to relate missiology to the other theological disciplines. Where did it really fit? Under biblical studies? As a part of church history? Did it lie within the scope of practical theology? Since it really fits into all theological disciplines, it began to take its place within theological curricula as a separate study, but looking at it from various aspects. In the U. S. the first

theological seminary to place "the science of missions" into its curriculum was Union Theological Seminary, New York, in 1918. By 1940 there were very few seminaries which lacked a special "department of missions," and by 1966 there were at least 100 seminaries offering specialized courses in missions in theological, historical and practical areas of study.

Our own Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, as we know, has hesitated to follow this trend. It has not done so because it wishes to minimize the importance of mission work. It rather wants to underscore the principle that this first commission of the Lord to his Church be a part of all its theological teaching, that the history of missions is certainly a very important part of church history, and that the practical aspects of mission work are dealt with to the extent that curriculum allows. Last year a course in "Mission Perspectives" was included as an elective course in the Middler year, and a Mission Orientation Week was added for Seniors at the close of the school year. The former considered the theology of missions and world mission trends, and the latter treated the various practical aspects of home mission work.

Whether or not these curricular adjustments are enough to satisfy our missiological needs in an age of growing specialization is a moot question. This conference may want to devote some time to discussing it. Perhaps after we take a closer look at the various missiological trends blowing around in the world today we'll be in a better position to answer that question. It will also help us to look once more at our own missiological foundation in the light of these trends.

I
World Mission Trends in General

Perhaps no period in world history has experienced so many changes in missiological development as the 20th century. At the turn of this century a number of mission programs in India, Africa, and the Far East were beginning to establish footholds. Latin America was in the control of Roman Catholicism. Much of the work followed colonial patterns. Parent organizations established mission stations, working hand in hand with colonial administrators in the field of education, medicine, and even in governmental affairs, all presumably in aid of the preaching of the gospel. Much of the work was still pioneer work, with an appeal to the spirit of adventure and humanitarian undertakings. Enthusiasm for the work ran high.

Two world wars and the subsequent disintegration of colonial powers brought about a dramatic shift in this pattern. It was no longer possible for the great Western powers to maintain the status quo, both for political as well as for economic reasons. Nationals were becoming less tractable. Western civilization was losing its grip. A worldwide surge toward nationalism and independence became the tune of the day.

Soon after the mid-century mark the winds of change swept relentlessly over Africa and Asia, creating an entirely new situation for any kind of mission endeavors. One nationalistic movement after the other threw off the colonial yoke. The Roman Catholic Church also lost some of its influence in Latin American countries so that the door was opened to increased Protestant mission undertakings there.

Moreover, the 20th century saw great changes in theological emphases. While at the turn of the century most churches were still primarily interested in the "conversion of the heathen to Christianity," it wasn't long before serious questions arose within the church as to what Christianity's purpose really was. Humanistic liberalism, fundamentalism, ecumenicalism, the social gospel movement, political liberation movements, independent nativistic church movements arising within the mission fields themselves—each began to win adherents to its own peculiar thrust as to what the primary concern of the church ought to be.

These varying theological directions resulted in various trends in mission outlook. In fact, the entire theological position of 20th century churches is best reflected in their attitudes and policies relating to mission work. It is difficult to do justice to all the various directions by a process of categorization. At the risk of overgeneralization we shall consider the major trends from the following viewpoints:

A. The World Council of Churches
B. The Evangelicals

C. The Roman Catholics
D. The Independent Church Movement

Following this consideration it will then also be well to remind ourselves of our own theological heritage in the light of these trends, and what that should mean to us as far as our own responsibilities are concerned.

A. The World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC), the largest ecumenical federation of modern Protestantism, did not actually become an organized body until the year 1948. Its beginnings, however, go back to the turn of the 20th century, and then coincidentally with a missionary gathering. As Roy Suelflow expresses it: "The 1910 Edinburgh Mission Conference played the opening strain of this ecumenical symphony."

The Edinburgh Conference was an attempt under the leadership of an American YMCA leader by the name of John R. Mott to bring together every possible Protestant church organization in a massive cooperative effort to reach all countries still untouched by the gospel. "The evangelization of the world in our generation," was Edinburgh's stirring watchword. The thought behind Edinburgh's enthusiasts was that if all Protestant churches would put together a united front, the mission task could be better accomplished. Theologically Edinburgh was still quite conservative when compared with conferences of a similar nature today. Scripture still had some authority, and it was still assumed that Christianity was God's absolute revelation for the salvation of mankind.

Edinburgh's optimistic balloon was soon to be deflated by World War I. Euphoria gave way to uncertainty. In the light of a strife-torn, bloody world it could well be that the superiority of Western civilization was only presumed, and that the "heathen" were no longer as "benighted" as they were thought to be. In any case, it wasn't until 1928 that a "continuation committee" formed at Edinburgh was able to get together another massive missionary meeting at Jerusalem, this time under the auspices of a permanent ecumenical organization known as the International Missionary Council. At Jerusalem questions began to be raised as to whether or not non-Christian religions were really so bad. Couldn't they, too, be enlisted in the fight against materialism and secularism? Was it the mission of the church to extend its work only through biblical teaching? Couldn't this also be done through promoting social justice and bettering racial relationships? We see already a decided shift in theological emphasis.

Ten years later, in 1938, the International Missionary Council met at Tambaram, India. The big question at Tambaram concerned the attitude of Christians toward non-Christian religions. The controversial "Hocking Report" pleaded for peaceful co-existence. Others under the leadership of Hendrik Kraemer took sharp issue with this report, claiming that all non-Christian religions failed to bring man closer to God. The great debate over this issue ended in a draw. We see, however, the old process of error creeping in, attaining equal status, until it finally takes over!

Succeeding meetings witnessed the takeover. After the World Council of Churches came into being at Amsterdam in 1948 steps were taken to restructure the International Missionary Council as a committee of the WCC. This unfortunate "marriage," as Dr. Ralph Winter calls it, finally took place in 1961 when the IMC became the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC. More and more the liberal theology of modern Protestantism stifled any real concern for evangelism. The "Christian Presence" school of thought, which argued that the "spirit of Christ" could be found in other religions even though the Savior wasn't mentioned by name, gained in influence. Mission work, if we can call it such, was more a matter of "dialogue" with those of other faiths, chiefly to see how the gap between Christianity and other religions could best be bridged. The goal of "mission" as stated at Uppsala in 1968 was "to offer the world the new humanity in Christ." Mankind's physical and social needs became a "prime responsibility" for the Christian church. "Humanization" became the goal of mission, and "salvation" was regarded as "any liberating experience."

It is no wonder, then, that the most recent meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches at Melbourne in 1980 resulted in a mockery of everything that

true biblical Christianity stands for. The theme at Melbourne was the petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Your Kingdom Come." The "kingdom" which occupied Melbourne's discussions was primarily an earthly kingdom. "Sin" was defined as "oppression of the poor." To "evangelize" meant to make people aware that exploitation of the poor was sinful. The "coming of the kingdom" was thought to be accomplished when the values of justice, peace and love would become more realized in this life and when one could hope for "the ultimate humanization of life." In a lead article in *Christianity Today* Arthur Glasser summarized Melbourne's results with the statement: "Liberation (theology) is in; the unreached are out."

In the latest edition of the *Mission Handbook* we are told that there are about 55,000 missionaries from the U. S. serving overseas today. About one-tenth of these are associated with the National Council of Churches, the more liberal wing of the World Council of Churches. Although the number of U. S. missionaries serving overseas has increased by 18,000 over the past four years, the number of overseas men from the NCC shows a decided decrease over this same period of time. This shouldn't surprise us at all. If the goal of our Christian ministry is merely a matter of serving in social betterment programs, it would surely seem more advisable to enter the service of some governmental agency rather than the service of the church. Or as someone recently put it: "A world mission corps is about the same thing as a sanctified Peace Corps."

A summary evaluation of the World Council of Churches could be expressed as follows: This body has reached a point where one can see very little difference in purpose between a meeting such as held at Melbourne and a gathering of the United Nations Assembly in New York, except that the latter makes no pretense about meeting in the name of Jesus Christ.

B. The Evangelicals

One of the most difficult groups to categorize or define is a heterogeneous mixture of mission-minded people known as "The Evangelicals." Their roots lie in the "Evangelical Revival" in 18th century Europe under men such as John Wesley and Hans Hauge, and in a "Second Evangelical Awakening" which spread to 19th century America under men like Jonathan Edwards, Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins. In both Europe and America the Evangelical leaders were chiefly of the Reformed tradition.

At the time of the great Edinburgh Mission Conference in 1910 most Evangelicals were still very much involved in this one worldwide ecumenical undertaking. As this movement began to be taken over by theological liberals, conservative Evangelicals became increasingly restless and dissatisfied with the pronouncements of the International Missionary Councils. When the IMC was finally subsumed into the WCC in 1961, the time had come for the Evangelicals to seek their own forms of ecumenical mission expression.

An International Congress of Evangelicals met in Berlin in 1966 and again in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. Both assemblies gave positive endorsement to a continuation of aggressive evangelization and church planting. In contrast to the WCC's leanings toward social activism rather than upon soul-saving, the Evangelicals were particularly interested in reaching out to the three billion "unsaved" peoples of this world. Leading voices in these meetings were Billy Graham, Peter Beyerhaus of Germany and Oswald Hoffmann of the Lutheran Hour.

As a follow-up to the Lausanne Congress a Committee on World Evangelization was formulated, which met in Pattaya, Thailand, in 1980. The theme at Pattaya was "How Shall They Hear?" indicating the expressed concern at this conference for "the 16,750 people groups which lie beyond the reach of any existing church." Although the planners at Pattaya were primarily interested in furthering church growth strategies, a strong vocal minority from Latin America proposed a greater involvement in social work. Thus we see the issue of the church's "social responsibility" also making inroads in Evangelical circles.

As mentioned before, the Evangelicals are difficult to evaluate. They comprise at least 20,000 of the 55,000 U. S. missionaries serving overseas, and their forces according to the *Mission Handbook* are increasing at a rate of ten percent per year. Their monetary contributions toward overseas work come to well over a billion dollars a year. Men like Donald McGavran, Peter Beyerhaus, C. Peter Wagner, Arthur Glasser and others have not hesitated to speak out strongly against the liberal views within modern Protestantism. In an era when many

churches have become thoroughly shot through with humanistic propaganda and anti-supernaturalistic philosophy, it is refreshing to know that there are still those who want to take the Bible seriously. Their use of terminology such as sin, repentance, conversion and salvation wants to be understood in a scriptural sense. To them mission work is a life-and-death matter. They urgently want to extend every effort toward making the most efficient use of time, talent and money to carry out what they earnestly believe to be the greatest task in the world. They regard the world as potentially ripe for the gospel and are always on the lookout for new "strategies" to gather in the harvest.

Lest we get carried away by all this and wonder why we don't join forces with the Evangelicals in a world-wide crusade, we want to remember that these people are true disciples of Reformed theology. Their evangelizing methods are closely allied with revivals and decision-theology. The "inner, personal" call to the public ministry is more important to them than the call through the church. Since to them the sacraments are only "signs or symbols" of God's grace, they receive very little emphasis as a vital part of their mission strategy. They also tend strongly towards millennialism. These are but a few of the chief differences which are apparent from their approach to doctrine as compared with our own.

Two outstanding missiological movements which have developed since 1950 deserve closer attention. They are: Church Growth and Theological Education by Extension

The Church Growth Movement

The Church Growth movement has within the past decade taken most mainstream churches by storm. To a great extent it is a reaction to a rather alarming decline in membership since the 1960s. In order to "strengthen the stakes" at home practically every major church body in the U. S. has engineered some type of "bold mission thrust" or massive "discipling campaign." In a certain sense the father of it all is Donald Anderson McGavran, of world mission background, founder of the School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth at the Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. His world mission strategies have done much to influence mission goals at home.

McGavran firmly believes that by a studied, scientific approach to growth methods there is no reason why the world's need for "fantastically multiplying churches" cannot be met. His thrust is in sharp contrast, of course, to the spirit prevailing in the World Council of Churches. According to McGavran the Lord of the church is not satisfied with "search theology," which proclaims the Word without regard for results. The Lord wants a "harvest theology." Numbers are important to him. This work can be done most effectively on a world level, McGavran asserts, through concentrating evangelism efforts on "homogeneous units" within "people movements," especially among such units which give promise of being "winnable peoples." This is in keeping with the Lord's Great Commission to "disciple the tribes," McGavran maintains. Moreover, we must aim for "measurable growth," he continues. A numerical approach is essential. This requires, of course, a careful analysis of growth factors and statistics. The Great Commission, McGavran believes, distinguishes between "discipling" and "perfecting." All too often the church expends too much effort on "perfecting" the few who have been won, he feels, rather than on "discipling" the many who still need to be won. In this connection fields of "low receptivity" should be occupied "lightly" and the church ought to concentrate on "the proletariat" which is proving to be increasingly responsive to the gospel.

One does not get too far into McGavran's writings without coming to an uneasy feeling that one is dealing with a supersalesman who in his enthusiasm is becoming guilty of overselling his product by bending the truth a bit here and there. The name of the game is numbers. One critic suggests that "church growth people assume you can make Christians the way you make cars and sausages." The missionary becomes a professional agent geared to the philosophy that success is the sine qua non of church work. The Bible does, of course, contain success stories. But it also records places, especially in the General Epistles, where scattered little groups are called upon to face the world's hostility without losing hope. One could point to places in Africa where missionaries waited years before winning the first convert. Today these same areas are witnessing the most rapid church growth in all the world. One wonders what might have happened if the early pioneers had not

been willing to bear the heat and burden of the day! Had they pursued church growth strategies, they would not have persisted as they did.

The most telling attacks against McGavran have been directed against his shoddy exegesis of the Great Commission. To interpret Christ's reference to "all nations" as to "separate races, tribes or castes" is contrary to all proper Greek usage as well as to Christ's clearly intended meaning to include every creature, regardless of race, tribe or caste. His distinction between "discipling" and "perfecting" as two separate stages in church growth violates Greek usage as well as the entire sense of Scripture as to what discipleship involves, namely, "teaching them to observe all things" whatsoever the Lord Jesus has commanded.

When evaluating McGavran and his followers one hesitates, of course, to come down on them too severely. We should be concerned about church growth. We should be imbued with a positive attitude toward mission work. We should keep accurate records, evaluate our progress as well as our mistakes, deploy our manpower wisely, in fact use every possible legitimate strategy within our means to communicate the precious gospel of Christ. At the same time we should guard against an overemphasis upon quantity rather than quality, especially since Scripture does not warrant this. In fact, our methodology must above all be in line with Scripture, expressing hermeneutical principles which will not in any way compromise the truth which the Lord has entrusted to us.

Sometimes we, too, can fall into the trap of thinking that strategy spells success, and that outward success is the ultimate achievement in kingdom work. But what is needed today—even as yesterday—is a corps of ministers of Christ who, constrained by a Spirit-wrought devotion to their Lord and an intense love for the souls purchased with his blood, are willing to beat the bushes and scour the byways faithfully, heralding the precious gospel of salvation with all zeal, not worried too much about spectacular results, but trusting that the Lord's Spirit of truth will surely accomplish his eternal purposes according to his gracious promises.

Theological Education By Extension

Less than ten years ago Theological Education by Extension (TEE) was the chief topic of conversation in world missionary circles. One supporter called it "the most exciting thing to hit the mission scene since the indigenous church policy." Ralph Winter, one of its first proponents, claimed it to be "a new way of developing (national) leadership that may literally save the church."

Much of this early enthusiasm has diminished. This is not to say that TEE is dead. It is rather experiencing a time of testing and more sober evaluation. The bottom line on TEE remains to be written.

TEE began nearly twenty years ago in Guatemala in connection with a Presbyterian worker-training program. It seems that the young graduates coming out of the seminary there failed to get the respect of the people, who were also reluctant to support them as full-time workers at the salary level which they expected. Many churches looked to local lay personnel in the community for church leadership. Thus many seminary graduates left the ministry, while local leaders with little theological training carried on the work of the Christian ministry in the local congregations.

James Emery and Ralph Winter devised a plan for providing theological training for these local leaders on an extension basis. The men were trained right at home. The teachers went to them. Lesson plans were worked out so that the student could study on a self-help basis, meeting with the instructor periodically for consultation. "It is the simple goal of enlisting and equipping for the ministry those who are suited for it," Ralph Winter declared.

Out of these modest beginnings the TEE concept developed. Its primary objectives were to train more mature men for the ministry, men who could "learn by doing," not being uprooted from their cultural environment, and who could be expected more readily to serve the Lord without some type of subsidy program by the mission.

The whole idea makes good sense. We have adopted a similar type program in Central Africa, where many of our congregations are served by lay leaders, and where the program serves as an excellent screening

agency for determining which men would be good candidates for a more intensified training at a Bible institute or seminary.

Many TEE enthusiasts, however, are not satisfied with such a modest approach to the program. They argue that traditional patterns which bring men to an institution for in-residence training "make the churches dependent upon highly trained, professional pastors" who are "incapable of responding to the needs of the masses," and that they "perpetuate the image of education as the accumulation of information" rather than a "dynamic process of learning by doing." They want to do away with the "ghetto-like" residential seminary and rely on TEE programs entirely for the training of the ministry.

If a church is merely interested in training a ministry which can perform certain basic functions under pastoral supervision, these people may have a point. If, however, they are interested in training church leaders who can stand on their own feet theologically and confessionally in the midst of all the perversions of Christian truth so prevalent in the world today, they are way off base. This simply can't be done on an extension basis, no matter how loudly these idealists prate about the "superior quality" of TEE training methods. One has to live and work in a foreign field for a while in order to appreciate this.

If we are forced by emergency situations—such as we in our Synod are confronted with in Cameroon and Nigeria—to work on the basis of extension seminars, we do what we can and leave the results in the hands of the Lord. But we as a confessional Lutheran church must appreciate the fact that we are unique in a world of doctrinal indifference. Our goal in supporting theological training programs must be to train national leaders to stand independently and squarely on the Scriptures and to be able to defend the Lutheran Confessions as a true exposition of these truths of God's Word.

In the meantime we are thankful for the insights learned from others in the field of theological education on an extension basis, recognizing its limitations, yet adapting this program to serve our needs as best we can. These happen to lie in the area of giving training to local lay leaders who serve under pastoral supervision, testing the abilities of these leaders for the purpose of finding prospects for Bible institutes and seminaries, and also to offer an ongoing study program for those who have already been trained as evangelists and pastors.

C. The Roman Catholics

The work of the Roman Catholic Church in the area of world missions can hardly be classified as a trend. This church is an establishment answerable only to itself. By sheer power and institutional prestige this organization moves in. Apparently it has never heard about many aspects relating to the indigenous church policy. It pours in manpower and money and builds large churches, schools and hospitals wherever opportunities present themselves. Its growth in Africa especially in this past century has been phenomenal.

This was not always so. When Pope Clement XIV dissolved the Jesuit order in 1773, thousands of missionaries were withdrawn from many world fields. The order was reactivated in 1814 by Pius VII and has ever since been working hard to make up for lost time. Other orders have been formed to help along. Interesting in Africa, for example, is the work of the White Fathers, formed in 1868 under the leadership of Cardinal Lavigerie. The Fathers are secular priests, bound by oath to lifelong mission work. They specialize in learning the culture and the language of the people in order to assist the other orders in carrying on their ministries. Another important cultural consideration took place after Vatican II (1962–65), when it was decided that the mass could be celebrated in the vernacular languages instead of Latin.

There is one theological trend which is raising a lot of fuss all over the world these days and in which the Roman Catholic Church is involved perhaps more than any other. This trend, known as "liberation theology," deserves special attention.

The Theology of Liberation

Liberation theology is a strange mixture of political activism with a religious flavor. Someone described it as "a brand of Christianity which takes Che Guevara's admonition seriously." While from a conservatively

biblical standpoint one might be tempted to dismiss the movement as a theological absurdity, its involvement with the poor and its concern for the underprivileged of this world raise issues which are difficult to ignore. At least many churchmen seem to think so.

Throughout the world today, including North America, inequities among people because of economic, political and social factors raise searching questions. Why can a few rich landholders continue to exploit the poverty-stricken masses? Why can governments promoting apartheid policies continue to ignore basic human rights? Why do some races still hold a privileged status over others? Why are some of these inequities going on in so-called "Christian" societies? Should church leaders remain passive in such conditions, like the priest and the Levite passing by on the other side?

It is not enough, liberationists argue, for the church to offer palliatives to the poor and the oppressed through acts of charity in the form of hospitals and relief programs. The social gospel isn't the answer. The church must become actively engaged in helping to revolutionize society, getting rid of the oppressors and the causes of oppression. It must identify itself with the oppressed in their battle against misery.

Thus we have "Black Theology," often presented as another "Exodus experience," in which blacks refuse to accept conditions of slavery and are ready to strive for political justice as they travel to the promised land. They are joined in this cry for liberation by Chicanos, Asian Americans, native Indians, and Appalachian "poor whites." All want a God who is part of the "liberating action," liberationists say.

Intellectuals are getting into the act as well. In his book "The Secular City" Harvey Cox, for example, argues that the institutional church is too preoccupied with its own organizational structure and worried about its economic base to speak out boldly for revolutionary change. The "God-talk" of the establishment, in other words, has lost its relevance. Jesus Christ must come through social action. This kind of approach, of course, appeals to university students as well as to "hippies" and to "yuppies."

For the World Council of Churches there is the task of somehow keeping all these varying trends under one ecumenical umbrella. In its program to humanize and to politicize Christianity, the WCC as we have seen is heading more and more in the direction of liberation theology. Through its leadership it is advocating a revolutionary change in the world's unequal distribution of wealth. In advocating racial equality it has even gone so far as to give financial support to guerilla fighters who employ terrorist tactics in wars of liberation.

The church body most directly affected by the liberationist movement, however, is the Roman Catholic Church. This has come about simply by virtue of its dominating presence in Latin America, where the pre-conditions for liberation activities are so greatly in evidence. Among Latin America's 300 million inhabitants, for example, ten percent of the people own ninety percent of the land. Millions of the underprivileged live on an average income of thirty cents per day. Two-thirds of the people are undernourished, and fifty percent of the children die before the age of two. And all this goes on in countries where Roman Catholicism has for centuries played the dominant Christianizing role. How can such a powerful humanitarian institution remain passive when its people are being hopelessly exploited and oppressed?

One can readily see how the Roman Catholic Church has ended up in the middle of an embarrassing conflict within its own ranks. Its conservative, hard-line bishops want to preserve the institution at all costs, and they see the biggest support for this as coming from the wealthy landholders as well as from governments which have been on their side. Its liberal bishops, on the other hand, feel called upon to raise a prophetic voice against the evils of a capitalistic system which they feel is the leading cause of the dehumanization and enslavement of the masses. At times their voices seem to echo more of the teachings of Karl Marx than of Jesus Christ. Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian priest, has become liberation theology's most articulate voice, and the Maryknoll Missioners with their Orbis Press in New York are grinding out propaganda for the movement as fast as it can be printed.

Without going into the intricate thought processes of a Gutierrez, it should be quite clear from Scripture that the theology of liberation with its almost total emphasis upon the things of this world makes a mockery of the Christian's real spiritual assurance which rests in the Savior's promise of the forgiveness of sin and the hope of everlasting life. One critic, J.D. Gort, has called it a "kind of liberation which is undistinguishable from what is offered by the politician, philosopher, physician, social worker, psychiatrist and economist" and which leads

to “a new enslavement.” One would certainly hesitate to preach a “gospel of liberation” to a conscience troubled by sin or to a person who cries to God for help at the graveside of a loved one.

Our own Synod’s statement *This We Believe* says it well: “We reject … all attempts to interpret eschatological passages in the New Testament … symbolically, or see these eschatological events taking place not in the end of time, but concurrently with history.” As Christians our final goal is to be found in a new heaven and a new earth, to be consummated when the Lord Jesus comes again.

D. The Independent Church Movement

An unusual phenomenon known as the “independent church movement” has hit the mission scene. The movement is presently pretty well confined to the continent of Africa south of the Sahara. Actually it is not a part of mission agencies as such. The word “independent” indicates the freedom of these churches from foreign mission support or control. Yet it affects mission work to such an extent that it would be a sad neglect not to include it among present-day trends related to missiology.

David Barrett in his book *Schism and Renewal in Africa* estimates that about one-third of Africa’s thirty million Christians are members of these independent church bodies, many of which have split off from missions. There are nearly 6,000 such bodies. Some consist of but one congregation; others have as many as a half-million followers. Barrett claims that the above estimates are but “the tip of the iceberg.”

These churches claim to be Christian, although often the movement seems to be a syncretistic mixture of heathen traditional beliefs and Christian terms. Often such a church follows a local charismatic leader who claims to have prophetic and even messianic powers. Often the church begins as a result of a clash between the mission agency and a national worker. Such things as cultural and racial differences, political factors, and personality clashes are involved. Perhaps theological differences enter into the picture when poorly trained religious leaders want to introduce traditional beliefs or nativistic practices into the church.

Although references to the Bible are made in the teachings of independent churches, many of these are based on misinterpretations of what the Bible really teaches. Old and New Testament teachings are mixed indiscriminately. Law and gospel are not distinguished. Usually a certain place becomes a “holy place.” Church officers wear elaborate vestments with symbols indicating official rank in the church hierarchy. Drumming, dancing, clapping of hands and shouting form a part of the church ritual. “Sacred water” plays a prominent ceremonial role. Freedom from the powers of witchcraft is offered as the ultimate cure.

Evaluations of the independent church movements are varied. Some analysts see in them the only hope for a real “African Christianity.” Others feel that the dangers of syncretism are so great in these movements that the mixture is more pagan than Christian.

Closely related to this business of how “African” an African church ought to be is a consideration of the missiological movement known as “contextualization,” a term which has come into prominence within the past decade.

Contextualization

Contextualization, by definition, is the process whereby the message of the Word of God is related to the cultural context of the society to which it is proclaimed. When, for example, an American is doing mission work in Africa, he should be aware that he is working among people who think in different patterns, speak in a different language, and express themselves in other ways. People coming to Christ should not be made to feel that he is a “foreign” Christ. Neither should they worship in situations which reflect an entirely foreign culture. “The gospel in context,” as someone has expressed it succinctly, “brings Christ as both Savior and Brother.”

The concern for contextualization is nothing new. In past years the word “indigenization,” a more general term perhaps, was meant to include this concern. The word “indigenous” when applied to mission work, however, seems to have lost its appeal. Perhaps it still has too many overtones from the colonialistic era.

Perhaps the idea of "planting churches" smacks too much of the paternalism of a bygone age. In any case, contextualization is the "in-word" these days.

Proclaiming the gospel in context is certainly an important missiological concern, if understood correctly. We as Lutherans will want to remember the words of our Augsburg Confession (Article VII): "It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places." We will want to let other nations express their faith and joy in the Lord in ways which reflect their own identity. We will want to guard against giving the impression that our Western culture is of itself superior. We will avoid showing a domineering spirit when working in cross-cultural relationships.

At the same time we will not want to "contextualize" the gospel in the sense of making it more palatable. Where native custom and culture come into conflict with the teachings of Scripture, we'll not be afraid to proclaim the truth no matter how disturbing this might be to cultural sensitivities. There are certain African customs which definitely go contrary to Scripture. We mention particularly naming rites, use of protective charms, initiation ceremonies, polygamy, revering the spirits of the dead, and cleansing rites in connection with the burial of the dead. There are those contextualization enthusiasts who feel that somehow all these customs based upon heathen traditions ought to be "Christianized." In our opinion this is like having a "Lutheran" Boy Scout troop, or a "Christian order" of the Masonic lodge.

There are even those people who claim we must dispense with all confessional statements because they come out of foreign cultures. We don't believe that the Apostles' Creed, however, is any more or less expressive of American culture than it is of African. To deprive national churches of some of the important truths which historic Christianity has expressed in its confessional formulations is in our opinion considering them to be intellectually inferior as well as culturally insensitive.

Just to give one example: the "Watchtower Movement" (Jehovah's Witnesses) has had a greater impact on Africa than anywhere else in the world. Not to make full use of the Nicene Creed in places where Arianism has resurfaced in such a crass form would be a dereliction of Christian duty.

No theological statement is entirely culture-free. Our use of language places us within cultural limits. God's Spirit can work through any cultural context. May we ask his wisdom and strength in this delicate matter of transmitting his truth in the face of human limitations and cultural barriers!

II
Our Own Situation in the Light of These Trends

It is one thing to look with a somewhat baleful eye upon the current missiological trends of others and to criticize them because their goals and their methods in our evaluation fail to measure up to the truths of Scripture. It is quite another to look also at ourselves and to ask where we really fit into this missiological scheme of things.

Statistically, of course, we don't rate very high. We mentioned the total number of U. S. missionaries as being around 55,000. Our own number comes to about 50. We said that total U. S. contributions for world missions exceed one billion dollars annually. Our own synodical budget for this purpose comes to about two million dollars per year. Executive Secretary Theodore Sauer of our Board for World Missions reckons that about three to four cents out of every dollar contributed by the people of our Synod for church purposes goes toward the support of world missions. On the basis of numbers alone the balance of power would be about the same as the 135,000 Midianites as compared with Gideon's 300 faithful Israelites.

The Lord of the church, however, has never told us to look to numbers alone as our source of strength. Neither does he want us to consider humanly devised strategies and methods as the most important features of our world mission program. We are a viable force on the world mission scene to the extent that we are committed to the truths of Scripture, as George Vicedom expresses it, "that the whole purpose of the Bible is the rescue of mankind," and as G. Christian Weiss adds to this that "the primary mission of the church of Jesus Christ is the evangelization of the world."

Significantly Weiss applies this truth in the following words: “That which actually makes Christian men and women become genuine missionaries is their arrival at certain unshakable convictions from the Bible regarding God’s world plan and their Christian responsibility toward the world according to that plan.” Some of us may regard this statement as a self-evident truism as far as we ourselves are concerned. Would that this were so! Our own synodical history says otherwise. We know what a battle it was some years ago to get our leadership to see that we as a Synod did have a responsibility over against those in this world who had not as yet heard the gospel’s clear voice. We also wonder if we even today really appreciate the rich heritage of truth which God has entrusted into our hands, appreciate it with the conviction that this heritage must be shared throughout the world.

Mission work is first and foremost theological. For the only sound missionary motive we must go back to the Bible. A re-searching of the Scriptures from the missionary viewpoint—which is after all the Lord’s own viewpoint—is the place where all true missiology must begin.

If, in other words, we seem to be lacking at times in missionary zeal, the place to recharge our spiritual batteries is through an objective restudy of the Scriptures as God would have us see them. There is not enough time, of course, to review the Scriptures thoroughly from this standpoint in the scope of this paper. We can, however, indicate a few chief points of emphasis which deserve a closer look.

A. Our Scriptural Heritage

The Bible is God’s salvation history, the revelation of his earnest purpose for the salvation of all mankind. All of the Bible is God’s salvation history, both the Old and the New Testaments. The God “who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tm 2:4) did not begin to have that earnest desire at some later point in time. The purpose of his will in Christ was there from before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). It was the Savior himself who, beginning with Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms—in other words the entire Old Testament Scriptures—opened the minds of his first disciples. He wanted them to see “what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Lk 24:27). And for what great purpose? So that “repentance and remission of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem” (Lk 24:47).

Yes, in ALL the Scriptures! The missiological import of the Old Testament has often been relegated to a secondary position. Most present-day Old Testament scholars, of course, are so taken up with the historical-critical method of Bible interpretation that they can hardly be expected to take the Old Testament Scriptures seriously. If the Genesis narratives, for example, are merely based on sagas coming out of a primitive period in Israel’s history, what other purpose can they serve than to teach us something about the “evolution” of religion?

Thank God, this negative criticism of the Bible doesn’t happen to be one of our hangups! But do we have others, perhaps? Do we take a sort of dichotomous view of Scripture, as though the God of Moses had a different purpose in mind for mankind than the God of Paul? True, we are dealing here with two covenants, the Old and the New, with a time of prophecy and a time of fulfillment. But are we not inclined to be rather hesitant in referring to God’s dealings with humanity during the Old Testament period, as though God was so exclusive and particularistic during this time that he concerned himself with one nation and with very little else?

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (He 13:8). The God who spoke to the patriarchs is the same God who spoke by his Son (He 1:1, 2). And the Savior who died for all was the Savior in the beginning of time (Jn 1:1). Perhaps none of us questions that God’s universal plan of salvation for the salvation of all mankind was already there from the beginning. But do we appreciate how strikingly God bore witness to this universal plan in the Old Testament?

It was this writer’s privilege to hear an excellent presentation last year on The Mission Mandate of Isaiah by the Rev. Edgar Hoenecke. We need more scriptural studies of this kind, studies which remind us of God’s universal concern for all people in all ages of history, and how he also bore witness to the fact at all times. We sometimes forget, for example, that the first eleven chapters of Genesis deal with a time period of world history which is more than equal to the time period covered by all the rest of the Old Testament, and that

during this primordial age God was dealing directly with humanity in general rather than through the mediation of one particular nation. The call of Abraham occurred in 2100 B.C. Many conservative biblical chronologists are agreed that the number of years from Adam to Abraham could very well have exceeded the 2100 figure.

As God's chosen people Israel developed into a mighty nation and became his covenant people, we see how he placed this people strategically in the midst of the Fertile Crescent and in the very center of the world powers of the ancient world. And for what purpose? The preamble to the Sinaitic law code contains not only the theme of the entire Pentateuch, but also God's great purpose for his people throughout the Old Testament dispensation: "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"(Ex 19:6).

Israel as God's holy people would be his priesthood before all the nations of this world! In their specially chosen position, as a people set apart, they would be God's own witness, his testimony among the nations of this world, that there was one true God, a God of power, of justice, and above all of salvation. At the height of its power, under David and Solomon, the kingdom of Israel attained an earthly glory second to none. Its temple, the center of its worship, was open to the stranger and foreigner, as Solomon declares in his temple prayer, "so that all the people of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other" (1 Kgs 8:43). Israel's hymnal, the Psalter, contained 175 references relating to "the nations of this world." Israel's prophets, particularly Isaiah, reminded the people repeatedly of their chief service under God as his priests, namely to bear testimony to the nations round about them concerning the glorious name of their Savior-God (cf. Is 12:4–6; 40:1–5; 43:5–6; 10–12; 21; 45:22; 46:10; 48:10; 54:1–3; 66:7–8). Missiologists may differentiate between Israel's priestly function in the Old Testament as "centripetal" over against our priestly responsibility in New Testament times as being "centrifugal." God's purpose is the same. His people serve as the mediators in either case.

Israel's failure to measure up to this priestly calling is the great tragedy of Old Testament history. God's disciplinary measures were severe. They had to be. We see how under the divided kingdom Israel lost sight of its witnessing purpose completely. The book of Jonah expresses this so clearly. Jonah has often been referred to as "the unwilling missionary." He is more than that. His very life is representative of Israel's total unwillingness to be concerned about the nations round about them. When God calls Jonah to preach to the Ninevites, Jonah runs away. Why? Because he's afraid he'll fail? Not at all. He was afraid that he would be successful! As the rest of the Israelites, he did not want to share God's blessings: "I know that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity" (Jn 4:2). When his preaching does bring the people of Nineveh to repentance and the city is spared, Jonah sits under the shade of a vine and pouts. Using this vine as an object lesson, also a worm which chews the vine so that it withers, God says to Jonah: "You are concerned about this vine, though you had nothing to do with growing it … should not I be concerned about this great city with all its people?"

Although the book of Jonah ends with a question, the answer is clear: the compassion of the Lord embraces all nations; the purpose of his people is to bear witness to that compassion. And that is God's clear Old Testament purpose throughout.

What the Old Testament declares by prophecy, the New Testament proclaims in fulfillment. Although many conservative Christians may fail to appreciate fully the missiological import of the Old Testament, few will dispute that from beginning to end the New Testament is a book of mission. The problem does not lie in the Bible's clear testimony. It lies more in man's failure to appreciate fully the implications of the fact that God's saving grace is universal, and that the Savior's mission command is his first command to his church.

Each of the four Gospels comes to a stirring climax in Christ's death and resurrection for the salvation of all humanity, and immediately follows this up with the Savior's Great Commission. In Matthew we have the Lord's own authority behind his commission, a beautiful summary of the mission method itself ("make disciples … baptizing … teaching …") as well as of the mission's all-inclusive goal: "all nations" (cf. 28:18–20) … Mark stresses the commission's central thrust ("preach the gospel"), once more its universality ("every creature"), and adds a sense of urgency (the "either-or" statement) at the close (cf. 16:15, 16) … In Luke we are reminded of the commission's scriptural foundation ("he opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures"), its objective truth ("the Christ will suffer and rise"), and again its universal scope ("to all nations,

beginning at Jerusalem") (cf. 24:45–49) … In John the spiritual nature of the work of those sent by Christ is emphasized ("Receive the Holy Spirit …") as well as the power which their ministry will exercise (the power of the Keys) (cf. Jn 20:21, 22). Even this cursory treatment of the Lord's commission on the basis of his mission in this world should remind us of the truth of a statement made by Hendrik Kraemer: "A church without a mission is a galvanized corpse."

The book of Acts, of course, is a continuation of the story of the Christ of the Gospels, and how the Word of the Lord spread through the then-known world in spite of tensions and conflicts. It closes significantly with the words of Paul, the great missionary-apostle, to the Jews in Rome: "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen" (Ac 28:28). One commentator has called the book of Acts "the Authorized Missionary Manual of the Lord Par Excellence." Another says. "The dominant note of the Book of Acts is the missionary cause."

About one-third of the New Testament appears in the form of Paul's 13 Epistles. Their theological significance needs no further elucidation here. Their missionary applications are self-evident from the very situations out of which they were written. One can imagine how much encouragement a missionary working in a foreign field can receive from these letters of "a missionary's missionary."

The other Epistles of the New Testament (Hebrews, James, Peter, John, Jude) are written largely to young Christian congregations which felt themselves isolated and scattered in an unfriendly world. At first one might wonder about their missiological significance. It is there, of course. Mission work is not merely a matter of church growth, of winning converts, but also of keeping them faithful to a way of life completely different from their former traditions, and under enormous pressures to revert to the former way of life. In these circumstances the superiority of Christ's priesthood must be emphasized (Hebrews), the living fruits of faith must be apparent (James), the Christian hope must be kept alive when under stress of persecution (Peter), the sole Saviorhood of Christ must be staunchly defended against anti-Christian teaching (John), and one must learn especially "to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude).

The book of Revelation, finally, reaches out to the consummation of God's eternal missionary purpose, when "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever" (Re 11:15). By means of apocalyptic literature and in symbolic pictures John presents the story of the Church of Jesus Christ from the first century of Christendom to the end of time and into eternity, when those gathered about the throne of the Lamb can sing his eternal praises:

> "You are worthy to take the scroll
> and to open its seals,
> because you were slain,
> and with your blood you purchased
> men for God from every tribe and
> language and people and nation.
> You have made them to be a kingdom
> and priests to serve our God,
> and they will reign on the earth."
> (Re 5:9, 10)

As we try to imagine this universal throng before God's everlasting throne, and as we hear the promise of him who says "Yes, I am coming soon!" our response can only be that of John: "Amen, Come, Lord Jesus" (Re 22:20). Then our voices can join with those who will come "from the ends of the earth," as well as with our loved ones, as we all can cry out in a loud voice:

> "Salvation belongs to our God,
> who sits on the throne,
> and to the Lamb."

(Re 7:10)

As we bring this missiological review of Scripture to a close, we see how from beginning to end the God of the Bible directs his work at the whole of mankind. The God of Genesis is the God of Revelation. The God who revealed himself to Israel, and who dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ, is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Re 1:8). The primordial history of Genesis points to the eschaton of Revelation. Perhaps you have heard nothing new in this resume. Perhaps on the other hand it has helped to strengthen us again in the missiological emphasis expressed by Georg F. Vicedom: "Only when we have grasped the fact that the whole purpose of the Bible is the rescue of mankind and therefore mission work, only then do theological thought and every type of church work receive their proper direction."

B. Our Doctrinal Heritage

From Scripture flows doctrine. We in our Synod are justifiably proud of "pure doctrine." This, too, is a Lutheran heritage, a sacred trust. Do we stop to consider what this should mean to us from a missiological standpoint?

To us the Bible in everything it says is the inerrant Word of God, the infallible guide for everything we believe and do. On the basis of this doctrine the missionary works with authority, the authority which comes from God himself. Without this kind of authority the missionary might just as well stay at home.

To us there is only one true God, the Triune God. Whoever does not worship this God worships a false god. We do not try to find a "Christian Presence" where none exists, or "dialogue" with infidels to seek a common ground of faith. This doctrine is also basic to our whole approach to mission work.

To us sin is serious, especially the fact that all people are born in sin. Sin separates forever from a holy God. To us the gospel centered in Christ, the Savior from sin, is good news. It is that because we know that God sent his Son to take away the sin of the world, that in Christ's death and resurrection God reconciled the world unto himself. We who by grace alone have come to faith in this gift of salvation should feel compelled to share this good news with others, happy that we can proclaim an unconditioned gospel. There are no strings attached to it. We as Lutherans part company with the many well-meaning Evangelicals who emphasize the believer's "response" to a point where man's decision receives more emphasis than God's declaration. Do we really treasure what a joy it is to be able to declare unconditionally where the sinner's hope of justification rests?

At a recent series of lectures on The Significance of the Reformation for our Ministry Today Professor Armin Schuetze summed this all up as follows: "How can we possibly believe the true doctrine of original sin—that all men are conceived and born in sin and that this damns—without concern for the masses of humanity and for each individual on the way to death? Or are we more concerned about seeing people die in a burning building? We believe the truth about Christ, that his atonement is for all men, that God will have all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. That is part of our sound doctrine. But can we truly believe that and not be concerned that all men may get to hear what God has most surely prepared for them too? Can we have the truth without concern about the many people who don't yet know it? If having the truth does not lead to sharing the truth, one wonders whether the truth is really known." Well said, Professor Schuetze!

To us the Means of Grace, the gospel in Word and Sacrament, are the only means through which immortal souls are brought to faith and to salvation. To us they are not mere signs or symbols, but the vehicles and channels whereby the Holy Spirit "offers and assures his grace to man" (cf. A. C. Art. XIII; Apology Art. XII and XIII). This whole use of the Means of Grace has become such a *modus operandi* in our Lutheran church that we are inclined to take it for granted. Think of the power that we have for building the Church of God, a power which others fail to use fully and properly because their reason puts a human qualification upon the very means which the Holy Spirit uses to build his church.

One could mention other doctrines which we believe, teach and confess as Lutherans—our clear position in the universal priesthood of all believers, our clear distinction between church and state, our teachings

concerning the last things. We have on the basis of our doctrinal position authority from God, confidence in God, ambassadorial rights from God, power from God, single-mindedness of purpose in God's work, and a clear and certain objective which leads to God's eternal presence.

If any church has a theology which should from beginning to end stress the importance of world mission it is our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Our Lutheran emphasis upon sola gratia, sola scriptura, and sola fide is in itself a powerful missio Dei.

Our Unique Character as a Lutheran Mission

It should have become apparent throughout this presentation that the doctrinal-confessional position of our WELS gives us a unique character among world mission agencies today. We say this not because we like to be different. We are what we are, and we regret it very much that many more of the 55,000 U. S. world missionaries don't see things as we do.

This unique character, of course, also reflects itself in everything that has to do with our way of carrying on our mission as a church—the care which we exercise in guarding the truth of that gospel treasure which the Lord of the Church has entrusted to us; our use of the Means of Grace in our work, a use which occupies a central place in our activity; the thoroughness with which we instruct our confirmands; our care of the souls whom the Lord has placed under our responsibility; our approach to and carrying out of theological education at our worker training institutions; our goals toward which we are striving.

The "Underlying Principles" and "Primary Objectives" of our Synod's Board for World Missions, adopted by the 1965 convention of the Synod, clearly enunciate in a concise way the sum and substance of what has been presented in this paper. The "Principles" point to the scriptural foundations of world mission work, to our responsibility on the basis of these foundations, and to the urgency of this work. The "Objectives" remind us of important considerations which should guide us in the practical implementation of these principles. These principles and objectives are well thought out. It would be useful for all of us, including those preparing for the ministry, to review these carefully from time to time. They become increasingly important in view of the many false missiological trends which have surfaced within the past decades.

While our Synod's mission objectives take into consideration the factors required in "planting indigenous churches rather than long-dependent missions," they do not make of this "an inflexible prescribed code." Programs are indicated in these objectives, such as the necessity of working in the language and cultural context of the mission field as well as the need to establish worker training schools to produce a national ministry, which stress above all sound work, careful work, thorough work whereby methods do not take precedence above principles.

Our goal is to plant churches, in other words, which can also stand with us doctrinally and confessionally. At one of our World Seminary Conferences Pastor Richard Lauersdorf expressed it this way: "If we want to build indigenous churches as Scripture outlines, we must plant churches that will be not only self-governing, self-supporting and sell propagating, but also self-disciplining. We must plant churches which know God's Word and which follow that Word in practice, churches which can detect and correct departures from that Word."

As we have progressed in our world mission experience several points have developed out of our doctrinal-confessional position which reflect this unique emphasis in practical ways:

1. One of the most important features of our world mission program has been to train national workers who can stand on their own feet theologically.

That this is an expensive business goes without saying. It takes missionary manpower and involves the building up and support of training schools. Others churches have gone in the direction of TEE or have tried to conduct their theological training program as a part-time adjunct to secular training schools. We are convinced,

however, that the only way to build a church which is confessionally sound is through the training of a ministry which will remain firm in a time which is characterized by "itching ears" and religious "myths" (2 Tm 4:3–4).

2. An important related feature of our world mission program has been the emphasis on developing and printing literature—tools which truly convey the truth of the gospel as we confess it.

No operation can function without tools. By "tools" we mean, of course, instruction materials which accurately and effectively communicate the gospel in the language of the people among whom we are working. This requires missionaries who are linguistically trained, and developing and printing literature on all levels of church work. We have learned—sometimes the hard way—that we cannot rely on the work which has been done by others in this field and expect to do our work properly. A WELS mission without a good publications program is simply not fulfilling its purpose.

3. Our type of program by its very nature stresses a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to mission work.

One hesitates to pit quality over against quantity as far as goals concerned. We are what we are. If the quality of our product places greater responsibilities upon us than many church-growth enthusiasts seem to feel necessary, that is something we must answer for. If our doctrinal-confessional convictions give us a unique character in this respect, that's the way it will have to be.

We have the promise that the Lord will bless the faithful use of his Word, and that he will do this abundantly. In some cases the beginnings have been slow. But if our work is being done thoroughly and solidly according to our Lord's command, we need not be worried about immediate results and impressive statistics. We are sure that the results will follow according to the Lord's own promise.

Scripture strengthens us in following that course from beginning to end.

Conclusion

Missiology's Place in the WELS

What has been presented in this paper is a summary of what a basic course in the theology of missions would offer at our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Other aspects of mission work, especially in the fields of mission history and mission methodology, could well serve as supplementary adjuncts to this basic course.

Whether or not there is a place for such a course in the regular curriculum is still under consideration. Some may feel that the theological material is adequately covered in other courses and needs no specialized treatment. Others may prefer that a course in missions should deal more with the practical aspects—what to pack and what to leave behind how to adjust to new surroundings, how to cope with culture shock, how to get along with nationals, how to learn another language, what to do on furloughs, etc.

The writer is convinced that the theological emphasis is of the essence and that it does deserve specialized treatment. He still goes along with G. Christian Weiss whose statement has been quoted before: "That which actually makes Christian men and women become genuine missionaries is their arrival at certain unshakable convictions from the Bible regarding God's world plan and their Christian responsibility toward the world according to that plan."

Sixteen years in Africa have served to underscore this statement many times.