

# THE SPRINGFIELDER

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# The Church Overseas Speaks to the American Church

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*In its original form the following essay was presented to the Colorado District Pastors Conference of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, October 1966. With seventeen years of experience as missionary in New Guinea behind him, the author presently holds the John W. Behnken chair of Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.*

THE Colorado District Pastors Conference put the following question to author shortly after he had finished serving as missionary to New Guinea: "Our missionaries overseas and their overseas Christians sometimes see both doctrine and church practice from a different point of view. What counsel and advice, in your opinion, would they give to the American Church in general and to The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in particular that we might better fulfill our mission in life?"

In pondering the answer to this question, it was felt from the outset that it would mean a great deal more to the Church in America if, instead of one man's opinion, a consensus, or near consensus, could be offered. With this in view letters were sent to our extraterritorial missions requesting that either an individual or a committee speak its mind and heart in answer to the question. There were no replies from committees. But comments from 8 knowledgeable and experienced men in 8 different countries were gratefully received.<sup>1</sup> Two of the churchmen were nationals. Thus, with the addition of the opinion of the writer who was a missionary to New Guinea for 17 years, we have something like a consensus with which to operate.

In using the term "the Church overseas" in the following, we mean that part of the Christian Church outside the United States of America that is composed of our Missouri Synod missionaries and the people whom the Holy Spirit has brought to faith in Christ through their efforts. For practical purposes "the American Church" will have to be confined to The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod only. Aside from the fact that those overseas are less intimately acquainted with "the American Church in general," you will readily see that its inclusion would make this presentation too unwieldy and lengthy.

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1. These men were Rev. Norbert Becker of the Philippine Islands, Rev. S. H. Beckmann of Argentina, Dr. Won Yong Ji (via Rev. Paul Bartling who sent a mimeographed paper of his) of Korea, Rev. E. J. Keller of Guatemala, Rev. G. Kempff of Honduras, Rev. K. Mahler of Panama, Rev. L. Meinzen of India, and Prof. S. Yoshikawa of Japan. It must be noted that not all these men commented on every item here presented.

For one segment of the Church to speak to another about doctrine and church practice is a very serious matter. One does not speak to the other with regard to those things merely for the sake of saying and hearing something from a novel point of view. Nor is it only for spiritual exercise.

No, such counsel has as its ultimate goal service to the Lord God, as Professor Seigi Yoshikawa of Japan has reminded us: "It is by no means an easy task to perform, when we, as overseas churchmen, are given the precious opportunity to serve the Lord by speaking to the American Church heartily and sincerely." When it helps us to better fulfill God's mission of salvation, which is our mission in life (John 20:21), it is only then that our speaking serves to the highest end. We sincerely hope that the Holy Spirit will use what we say in His own way to actually accomplish that end.

It is, then, with the intent to edify the Body of Christ in America, and not merely to give vent to negative pet peeves and uncharitable gripes, that we speak. However edification, as you know, is reciprocal. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "encourage one another, and build one another up, just as you are doing."<sup>2</sup>

The Church overseas also needs edification, and indeed has been edified to a certain extent by her brothers in America. She has received some encouragement and exhortation in love through private conversations, addresses, preaching and the printed word. However, the Church abroad now awaits the counterpart of this paper in which the Church here will speak to it in love concerning the issues about which love compells it to speak.

As we speak concerning this or that subject, you will be quick to recognize the limitations that are involved. First, the Church overseas is not a homogeneous unit whose members hold to identical viewpoints and practices. Neither is the American Church. Secondly, what is said by a segment of the believers abroad may apply to only a portion of them in America, while not to others in different localities. Then, there is also a great amount of subjectivity involved in both the evaluation and interpretation of the situation, as well as in the counsel offered.

Furthermore, we must be reminded that the Church overseas is not perfect. It has fallen short of the high standards of Christ. It finds itself on the level where still sinful brother speaks to yet sinful brother. It cannot stand on the same platform with God and speak down to you. Its exhortation echoes back from the mountain of its own failures and foibles. It is open to the admonition, "physician heal yourself!" Thus, in many cases, it is only the difference of perspective or the difference in *degree* of practice that may allow the Church abroad to speak. Its own weaknesses and aberrations may also serve as points of reference around which edifying discussion may be built.

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2. 1 Thess. 5:11. R.S.V. Quotations throughout the paper will be taken from the R.S.V.

If it were to give advice, then it would be on this account. It is a young Church, and less encumbered with tradition. In some areas of the world a fresh start with new approaches have characterized it from the beginning. It is small and not burdened with the disadvantages of size. Found in different cultures of wide variety, it has the advantage of a different standpoint, looking at every aspect through eyes conditioned by another environment. The psychology of its people is not the same. Under these circumstances the Holy Spirit has driven its theologians back to the New Testament for basic principles. He has forced them to bring out the old again to meet the new situation in ways that may be dissimilar to the manner in which they have been met in other cultures.

Although the Church abroad may have something to say to you because of its different environment, background and perspective, it must not be forgotten that it is indebted to you for much of what it possesses. Listening comes before speaking; learning before teaching; and being counseled before giving advice. Out of grace God used you to transmit sound Biblical teaching, which is the Lutheran heritage, to the Church overseas. You have sent it consecrated, gifted servants of Christ, both men and women. You have provided concerned, understanding and helpful men in this country to oversee policy and performance. You have furnished a large portion of the needed mission materiel. For the most part you did this willingly and joyfully in service to God. For these things it can only praise and thank God. It only regrets that human weakness and sin has hindered you from doing much much more of that type of thing. I am sure that the majority of the Church abroad would join missionary Norbert Becker of the Philippines in what he wrote:

Philippine missionaries and Christians of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines are extremely grateful to have the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as mother church. Probably without exception, they would not exchange their parent for any other. This is not said idly but is a growing conviction after having closely observed many other mission groups in action.

If a general observation were in place at this juncture, before discussing doctrine and practice in detail, it might be this. Non-western peoples have less of a tendency to compartmentalize their religious and secular life. Their religion pervades every aspect of their lives. Once they become Christian their total lives are implicated by their faith. This is a beautiful and God-pleasing thing to behold. Christians everywhere would do well to emulate that kind of Christian living. And they do not have to become non-westerners in order to do it. The Holy Spirit is able to create such totally involved lives here, and has done so.

As for doctrine, here also are a few thoughts in general. Christians young and old in the Church overseas would urge you to continue in the sound, Biblical, Lutheran teachings that you delivered

to them. Be on guard. Don't relax in the battle. Some of them sense a laxity, indifference and compromise in your easy, affluent "Christian" culture. In heathen environments *hosts* of hell in blackest night surround them continuously and oppressively. They must fight hard to keep what they have obtained by the grace of God. Yes, work at preserving the Truth of God, but do not can it so as to prevent it from reaching human minds and hearts.

Being young and of a different frame of mind, the Church abroad enjoys and employs the Word of God more as a whole. They are less prone to pulling out each string of Christian doctrine endlessly and in every direction. Like the Japanese who wrap their belongings in a square of cloth called *furoshiki*, many overseas Christians of necessity bundle their doctrine together more. The Church abroad is taxed to its limit dispensing wrap-ups of the whole of God's salvation in Christ to those who need more than an in-depth study of one word or aspect of Scripture. Perhaps there is a lesson in that for the Church here. When there are so many people close by and in the rest of the world who need to hear of the entire plan of salvation in the best and most relevant form possible, can time and energy be spent beyond reasonable need in atomizing and endless conflation of Scriptural doctrine? And what of the *waste* when men over-draw the picture and there ensue lengthy explanation, refutation and exhortation?

Circumstances abroad demand that in general Christians present their teachings in simple, direct, concrete form. This becomes necessary in order to reach the great mass of people who think and live that way. If doctrines are transmitted in a deep philosophical or intellectual framework, the average man will not be able to comprehend them nor will he take the time to listen. Overloaded technical terms are difficult to grasp and usually communicate very little. Is the need of the great majority of people in America radically different?

People with no Christian background in the midst of a vast sea of heathen need a thorough and sustained encounter with Christ through instruction. And they usually receive it. More time is allowed for Christ's teachings to take root in their lives and transform it. Taking everything into consideration, missionaries are still astounded at times to see how little pre-membership instruction is given to adults in America. Perhaps the weakness, ignorance, apathy, and error that they bump into more and more around the country is largely due to that. It seems that less should be taken for granted. More time and effort should be devoted to solid instruction, and more time allowed the Holy Spirit to create a strong positive Christian life.

Many in the Church here seem to take God less seriously than their brethren overseas. We have noticed the ease with which they leave Him out of consideration in what they do or say. With a flick of the mind they dispense with Him, like turning off the television set. They manipulate the doctrine of God as if it were

a child's argument. There is a waning of genuine respect and awe of God. He is made a lacky, or genie. He is cut down to size and pushed around. A pagan freed for the first time by a Power greater than the one who ruled him with an iron hand for evil will stand in awe and deep reverence of God. He will listen to Him. He will consult Him. He will seek His fellowship. More of this awareness of and dependence on God needs to be cultivated in the Church here, which, of course, is basic to the proper approach and understanding of all doctrine and practice.

With respect to the doctrine of creation that Christians here have believed Scripture to teach, viz., God created everything in six days as we know them, overseas Christians see no intrinsic need to question and reinterpret it differently. Their concept of and implicit trust in God are sufficient grounds for acceptance of the words of Scripture in their most natural sense.

Concerning the doctrine of Christ, Rev. Luther Meinzen makes this interesting observation:

America, don't talk so glibly about Christ as "Son of God." What do you mean? Muslims in India help us to think carefully about how we present this aspect of revelation. Do we mean "son" as the product of God the Father and Virgin Mary—the Muslim's concept of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity? (Do you blame them for attacking Christians if this is their understanding?) Yet I daresay that sub-consciously (many) Missouri Synod Lutherans have such an understanding of it, partly because of the neatly categorized way we have with presenting Christian doctrines in confirmation instruction with too often little regard to the Scriptural forms of presentation. We always tend to say just a little bit more than Scriptures do—"by way of clarification," of course, but by what justification. We don't like to allow for mysteries to remain mysteries and bow before them. We like to be scientists.

As for all the mysteries connected with the incarnation, communication of natures, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the westerner can learn from his non-western brother to approach and to teach them less from an intellectual point of view, and more as mysteries before which we bow.

Heathen in every land do not understand the serious consequences of sin. They look upon it as a legitimate and harmless activity, so long as their actions do not come into conflict with their traditions or they are not caught. When caught, it is mainly a matter of loss of face that is involved. Sin is not viewed as a crime committed against a true, living God of holiness and justice that alienates them from Him and incurs His wrath and punishment. There are parallels in the thinking of some of our Christian brethren here. Hence we see a need to speak more of sin as an act against God that alienates one from Him back into crushing and cursed bondage where there is no hope. Our preaching and teaching should be

characterized to a greater extent by a no-nonsense approach to sin. Also we see a need for *more* of such preaching and teaching. The paucity of its correct usage in sermons has been noticed by more than one furloughing missionary.

Concerning faith, the danger of intellectualism is ever present. Generally orientals are religious and tend to be less rationalistic. Nonetheless, it appears that the Japanese people are having their troubles. Professor Yoshikawa writes: "The Japanese are very well educated, generally speaking. They are highly intellectual people. Of course, this fact alone is not a bad thing. The damaging element is that they lack a sound, wholesome opinion concerning the limitations of intellectualism." The problem in America is the same. Intellectualism slips over into the realm of faith. Missionary Meinzen of India observes, "The American approach seems to be a bit more gnostic or too Aristotelian, or too scientific and intellectualistic when it seeks to understand the meaning of faith." He feels that faith is determined too much by the quantity of knowledge a person possesses.

Coming now to the Word of God, the Church overseas observes this same intellectual tendency. Scripture is increasingly becoming more of an intellectual gymnasium. People workout on its doctrines, and all they leave with is that "good tired feeling." But our workout is in vain unless we come away from wrestling with God's Word with that which only He can give—forgiveness, eternal life and spiritual resiliency. The Church abroad would caution you against fruitless shifting of dumbbells, as it were, and urges you to continue to handle the Bible as the Book of life. Missionary Becker points out that the Bible is likely to be handled in this manner when it is employed more as the tool of the Church's mission. Here is what he says:

The Church here likes to look upon the Bible as the Book of life rather than a book of doctrinal statements. This outlook is probably common wherever the Church is very much occupied with the saving Gospel to outsiders and with training believers for their spiritual ministry to one another and to the community.

In addition, Missionary Kempff feels that the Church here relies too much on the words of men for its understanding of God's Word. He has this to say:

The big need, and for me the grand message that the field would have to the sending Church in the U.S. is: Get back into the Scriptures! . . . Learn to read Scriptures without the glasses of "pure doctrine," and find out what It says to you in this day and in your place. Then follow through on the insights the Spirit has brought to you.

Encounter with Islam and the Muslim's insistence upon the superior quality of the revelation of his Koran over the Bible oc-

casions counsel from abroad to be on guard against Fundamentalism's mechanical inspiration. The orthodox Muslim believes that the Koran was written before the foundations of the world, and was given little by little to a single human author, Mohammed, through the angel Gabriel. It is said that "no more inflexible doctrine of inspiration is found in any religion."<sup>3</sup> The warning against this rigid doctrine of inspiration, however, occasions counsel also against Liberalism's extreme opposite of no inspiration or its fatally watered down, humanistic concept.

Finally, we would have this to say about the Word of God, particularly with respect to the Gospel. Deeds of love for the physical and social welfare of our fellowman that we do on the mission fields and here are indeed required by Scripture in our full approach to him. (1 John 3:17, 18.) Perhaps in the past this has not received proper attention by the Church here. Yet, we observe that so much emphasis is being given it nowadays that it is in danger of obscuring the performance of the greatest deed of love, the actual communication of the Good News of what God has done in Christ to rescue humankind from eternal disaster. That Message, whether spoken or written, whether signed or pictured, must be conveyed to the receptor before he can be saved eternally.<sup>4</sup> Deeds of love alone are not enough. The Church here has a sacred duty to continue to relay the specially revealed mystery of the Gospel accompanied with Her deeds of love.

That the incorporation of the person into the Body of Christ, not into a club or a denomination, should be emphasized more is the import of the counsel contained in these two statements from the Church overseas with respect to Baptism:

The sacraments are means of grace instituted by Christ to use in the Church. He did not institute them for a given denomination. To convert them into "denominational sacraments," i.e. to say, he became a Lutheran by baptism, for example, is an abuse. (E. J. Keller)

Baptism in its "incorporating" dimension needs emphasis. Pointing out more forcefully the implications of the incorporation into the Body of Christ that takes place at Baptism, the birth-death business of Romans 6 and its consequent power to motivate to Christian life is missing in so much of the literature and preaching, it seems to me. The Hindu understands this from the negative point of view more clearly, I think, than we do from the positive. Few will take exception to a Hindu going to church, even if he goes all his life. But they draw the line at baptism. With that, the man is out of the Hindu community because he is *in* something else. Only it happens

3. Charles S. Braden, *The World's Religions*, pp. 224-5.

4. In this connection, Dr. Eugene Nida in his book, *Message and Mission*, (p. 224) contends that in the Bible verbal symbols, as labels for concepts, have priority over visual symbols in the communicating of truth.



that he is in *someone* else, not just a different club. (L. Meinzen)

Could the Church here receive encouragement from the fact that in some sections of the Church overseas, at least in New Guinea, the Lord's Supper is held in very high regard? Few of those brethren fail to attend when the Lord's Supper is offered. Unabashedly they come when the Lord invites. Unconcerned that they might be called "holier-than-thou," they rarely miss. Unrelentingly they have attended year after year.

Comments received from overseas on the subject of the Church were bountiful. To begin with, one of the main concerns was a growing institutionalism in Synod, both on the synodical and congregational levels. Fear was expressed that more and more time and energy are being spent in keeping an organization going. Pre-occupation with the mechanics of organization, the endless round of meetings, the multitudinous programs, all are increasingly evident. Power play and politics are a blight. Stress on doing big things with a big organization is misplaced, forgetting what *God* can do with an army of dedicated men the size of Gideon's. There is confusion as to where authority lies and how much. One man abroad wrote this: "Seems to me that in the U.S. the Church, and Missouri Synod in particular, has become so enamored of its institution, its so-called 'phenomenal' outward growth and expansion, and the big things it is going to do, that the Gospel is partially . . . vitiated." (G. Kempff)

The short-sighted, inward-looking attitudes of institutionalism engender self-preservation and extension of the organization itself. This in turn endangers the performance of its mission. Hence the concern.

The Church abroad seems to perform its mission with a lot less organizational superstructure, fuss and bother. Nevertheless it has its institutionalistic tendencies and weaknesses also. But perhaps since it is young and smaller, they are less apparent at present.

Mere comparison will get us nowhere, of course. A shift of emphasis is what is needed. What this may be is brought out in this statement from overseas:

There appears to be too much organization consciousness; too little awareness of the Church's being an organism, the Body of Christ. One hardly recognizes the tone of Ephesians 4 and 5 and 1 Corinthians 12 in the average speech of clergy and laity. Jarring expressions such as "*my church*"; "*here's one of my fine laymen*"; "*my congregation*"; "*our great Missouri Synod*" do not seem to be fitting. (L. Meinzen)

Proper emphasis on the Church as a living organism of people with Christ as the Head, with His power surging through each part, will go a long way toward the effectual checking of institutionalism.

At the same time would it not be possible to simplify the organization of some congregations and re-gear and re-equip them to help Christians fulfill their top assignment in life?

Closely connected to this matter of institutionalism is that of church buildings. Missionary Mahler writes:

This probably is getting close to the heart of what this one particular missionary would like to say to his Church at home: for pity's sake, look around you and see what critical times you are passing through. See yourself in the vanguard of a time of testing; quit making believe that you are 'building the kingdom of God' by pouring all the wealth of Croesus into the construction of buildings . . . Look more deeply and more seriously into the claims of discipleship . . .

Often U.S. Church members approach the furloughing missionary in apologetic tones and ask, "What do you think of this big, beautiful church plant?" Others in that same congregation will come right out in opposition to having such an elaborate plant when missionaries go begging for housing and needed equipment. Still others have a good word for it, defend it, and tell of how God has used their facilities to extend His Kingdom here and abroad. This and related questions concerning expensive church accommodations and furnishings with high-cost upkeep are those that frequently bother not a few church members, pastors and missionaries. Many congregations are deeply in debt, some perhaps unwisely so, which prevents them from employing their blessings to carry out God's mission as they should. What counsel do we have to offer in this instance?

Opinion differs, of course. We would say that if an attractive, adequately built church plant and school serve to enhance the application of the Word of God to men's lives in the community *and in the world*, then we should be grateful to God for them.

On the other hand, He deplores it and is not pleased when they hinder in any way an *ever-expanding, worldwide ministry* of the Word for which He holds each Christian responsible. In other words, if congregations can perform their Gospel service to mankind everywhere *on an increasing scale* and still build and furnish as they do, so let it be. The point is that everything must serve toward a much greater and wider Gospel effort.

Concerning the general type of church architecture, Missionary Meinzen made this suggestion as he was discussing the doctrine of the last things:

The apparent lack of emphasis on this (eschatological) aspect of Christian life may explain much of the undue stress on the material—massive church buildings costing millions . . . Some modern architecture that stresses the "tabernacle" idea of a pilgrim people is coming closer to the mark, I think, than structures (physical or organizational) that are "built for eternity."

Missionary Mahler has touched upon something else in the Church here that detracts considerably from the effectual fulfillment of her purpose. He describes it thus:

Of course, any consideration of wasted effort would have to include the spectacle of the vicious and bitter in-fighting that has characterized our group in the last decades. It seems to sap spiritual vigor and take away the spirit of pulling together that is increasingly essential as we move into an age that more and more thinks we are irrelevant, insincere and outmoded, anyway.

The minority status of the Church abroad might serve as a reminder that, though you may seem big and powerful, you are still a minority in the world and need all the loyalty and pulling together that you can muster. The forces lined up against you are fearfully formidable. You need to count your blessings. There are so many! You have need for a more positive, brotherly understanding and selfless love that is bred by the love of Christ. You need to strive for the lost with prayer and the power of God, the Gospel, and not with one another.

This also applies to Christians outside our own Missouri Synod. Missionary Becker has expressed the counsel of the overseas Church particularly well. We are going to quote him at length:

Our second comment pertains to the church as a visible organization or denomination. Traditionally there has been an emphasis on getting people into the synod, which is, of course, not all bad. But in a foreign country where a church body does not have hopes of becoming more than a small minority in the foreseeable future, we are brought to the realization that perhaps the major role of the Lutheran Church is not to build itself up numerically but to bring the Word of God to bear upon and to serve many outside of its own membership. There are Christian groups of all stripes who are not clear on the Scriptural teaching of Law and Gospel. Not all, of course, welcome our help but a surprising number do. If this is true on a mission field, could it not also apply to the home church? Should not the home church be more conscious of its duty to minister to ALL Christians rather than those only within the synod, and then make more effort to carry out that ministry, even at the expense of growing numerically? When a member of another Christian church is attracted to our church for some unknown reason, should we not first consider counselling him to think about letting his light shine where he is, if he can do so with a clear conscience, rather than snatching him up quickly and thus gaining another soul for synod? Circumstances will, of course, dictate what our counsel should be. Our point here is that we must more and more recognize

that there are Christians outside of our organization and that we have a duty toward them.

Quite naturally, the concept of the Church as Christ's Instrument of mission is of the deepest concern to those abroad. It is painfully obvious that so many of the cells of the Body of Christ contribute absolutely nothing, not even prayer, when it comes to building up the other cell or moving out with the Gospel. Other cells toss in a few prayers and pennies. Still others are vitally involved. You know the story. The over-all effort of the Missouri Synod to get the Gospel to people extra-U.S.A. leaves very much to be desired.<sup>5</sup> Her sins of omission are disturbingly serious! One of the correspondents had this to say:

Much of the preaching that one hears in the U.S. makes it sound as though the church is functioning as sort of a spiritual drugstore, at which each individual comes to get a prescription for his personal problems. Where is the New Testament spirit of things that makes the Gospel a call to "life in community" and to action in a perverse world? (K. Mahler)

Although the Church abroad is certainly not doing all the evangelistic work of which it is capable, *certain* sections of it are setting a fine example of what can and must be done. In those sections, by the grace of God, most of the cells are vibrant. They have been taught from the beginning to commit themselves to God as willing instruments through which He would carry out His mission of eternal redemption. By the leading of the Holy Spirit they have followed the natural roads of personal relationship and have spoken to their families and other relatives about Christ. They passed on what they had freely received. What Christ meant to them the man farther away also needed, and, God willing, he was going to have.

If you ask what is needed, we would answer that more than anything the Church here should delve into what God has said in the Bible about His mission of the Gospel and seek to project the implications into every phase of its life. The Detroit Mission Affirmations that have been furnished with Scripture passages are excellent to use as guidelines. God still works through His Word. As many in the Church as come face to face with God in that Word that many will come away in mission, or *more* in mission, for Him.

This next problem and the counsel for its solution are suggested by Missionary Mahler who writes:

We seem to see in the U.S. church a lamentable waste of resources, while mission budgets must be cut . . . Everywhere the clergy speak in hushed tones about the growing difficulty in getting people to support missions and other programs of Synod. The call to commitment and discipleship that is the

5. She is near the bottom in comparison with all other Protestant groups.

Gospel of Jesus Christ is what is needed. This call is harder and harder to sound in this 20th century, but for mission anywhere it's the only thing.

The call to commitment and discipleship of Christ applies equally as well to each ordained pastor of Synod. We have a reason for saying this. Listen to this missionary:

One returns to the field after a furlough with many fond memories of what is going on in the church, of the apparently growing interest in missions, the way in which men of vision are tackling gigantic problems with prophetic courage and faith, despite vicious attacks by the "enemy within the gates." At the same time, I, for one, came away from the States with a feeling of unhappiness at conditions in many churches, the quality and attitudes of many ministries and ministers, and the shamefully disastrous effect that movements such as "Lutheran News" are having on church unity and mission. One is filled with a heavy heart. (L. Meitzen)

This man and others of us also have noticed a change in the character of many pastors in Synod. Laymen have detected the same condition and have bitterly deplored it. Briefly, it is the increase of worldly attitudes and cold professionalism of the clergy. These attitudes manifest themselves in various ways when it comes to matters of housing, salary, call to another congregation, personal and congregational work, sermons, housecalls, and the like. Paul often called upon his readers to imitate him as he was an imitator of Christ. (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7, Philippians 3:17) Ought not we all be able to say the same thing to those under our care?

We shall let various men of the Church overseas speak our mind concerning the *role* of both the pastor and the laity:

From the brief experience of the Philippine Church, it appears that the home church might make better use of her pastors. This is easy for us to say, because we have been forced into the position where we are! Could pastors not spread themselves out farther and accomplish more for the Kingdom by devoting more time to training lay leaders rather than performing most of the pastoral functions themselves? Is this not what is implied in Ephesians 4:11, 12? Not that a pastor should retreat into his office and become merely a bishop; certainly he must maintain contact with many people. But it seems there could be a better balance, whereby the pastor spends a good share of his time as a spiritual coach to those gifted to minister in the church. In our church this system has had the double effect of permitting the pastor to serve larger areas and of permitting more laymen to carry out their ministry more fully. To us, therefore, it seems like poor stewardship for a pastor to be called to and serve only one

small congregation in those areas where mission opportunities are limited and Lutheran churches are less than an hour's drive apart. We, of course, see this chiefly from the viewpoint of what might be done if some pastors could be released to preach the Gospel in pagan lands. (N. Becker)

There is the duplication of ministries, the troubling number of parish situations in which a "professional" seems to spend all his time firing an engine that doesn't go anywhere, the squandering of time and energy on programs whose value is not seriously questioned, but ought to be. (K. Mahler)

Is this one of the key concepts of the reformation which is mouthed more consistently than practiced? . . . Are not vast resources lying untapped while all the while we cry "600 vacancies?" This is the other side of the coin of "sacerdotalism." Where the clergy understands the implications of the priesthood of believers, they find their proper stance as servants; where that is not the case, God's kings and priests become "my good laymen at St. John's." (L. Meinzen)

From the beginning certain sections of the Church abroad have tried consistently to carry out these principles. Some have not. Others have been working at changing attitudes and putting the principles to practice. In fairness it must be said that these things have been done also in the USA. Our advice is that you move into high gear with the actual practice of your preaching about the rights and duties of the believers, so that your mission in life may be accomplished more fully and more quickly before the night comes.

As the Church overseas counsels for more New Testament usage of all of Christ's royal priests, she also advises pastors to team together, or team with professional laymen, to equip the saints.

We are going to bring up the next point by beginning with this quotation: "And concerning the presentation of the sermon we should also be aware of the danger of too much stereotyped, monotonous, dogmatic, rational type of presentation, reflecting the patterns of thought and language of old, but quite irrelevant to the present situation of our neighbors." (S. Yoshikawa) Would you believe that the above quotation was written by a Japanese professor? Has he been brainwashed? Or is he putting his finger on something about which we all must be reminded constantly?

In an age when great stress is placed on this-worldly things and the improvement of this life, our eschatological viewpoint is not very popular. No one is against the improvement of this life. However, a good balance needs to be maintained by giving due consideration to both the passing nature of this world and of the life to come. When Christ comes this *eschaton* will end; and then—eternal glory with God in body and soul together. But meanwhile the world will become progressively more evil. Love for the Father does not abide in those who love the world and in unbelief they

are condemned while living in it. (1 Jn. 2:15f., Jn. 3:18) All men finally will not be saved as the universalist imagines. The teachings of universalism surround the Missouri Synod. On your guard against a certain neo-universalism! Put forth Scriptural teaching on the last things with a positive determination.

We are amazed at the amount of vituperation against the Christian Day School that we have been hearing lately in the Church here. It is strange to hear this coming more and more from pastors. In comparison we hear very little of it in the Church overseas. Christian Day Schools are still an invaluable means of equipping Christians for life, and for being in mission to those without life. If you want to help to fulfill your mission in life *better* and if you want leaders for that mission of God, then keep your Christian Day Schools. Amalgamate them and accommodate them according to the circumstances, if you will. Improve them, but by all means do not give them up. Will you be found surrendering your schools while other Christians are beginning to seek them?

In conclusion, then, we would like to say that it has been a distinct privilege for the Church overseas to speak to you concerning things close to the heart of Christians. We hope that you have sensed the love with which we have expressed our concerns and offered our counsel. We also hope that you will not only have listened patiently, but will have resolved that by the Spirit's power you will either continue steadfast in the good that you now believe and practice, or endeavor to improve the situation. Too many are sitting in the grandstand and judge's box these days, and too few are in the arena. As in our introduction, the Church overseas extends to you again the sincere invitation to respond in kind to this attempt at edification of Christ's Body. This means that you will have to take the time to become more cognizant of its special burdens and be more willing to help with them. Population-wise, taking into consideration the great multitudes who have no chance at Christ, the burdens of the church overseas are vastly greater than yours. The church overseas needs your helping hand and counsel.

Finally, if we were to reduce to the kernels the counsel that we have proffered that you may better fulfill your mission in life, they would be these: Let God be God! Let His Word not be man's toy, but His very own revealed Word! Let the Holy Spirit reign supreme in your hearts to guide and empower your mission. And be the instrument of God's mission of salvation that you are!

# Divine Madness: A Facet of the Theology of Evangelism

GERHARD AHO

*In an original extended essay, the author developed his subject around the three ideas that the theology of evangelism has to do with a revolutionary message, a radical method, and a divine madness. The last forms the basis of the present article.*

UPON St. Paul's return to Jerusalem at the conclusion of his third missionary journey, some of the Jews stirred up the citizens against him. A mob was about to kill him, when a cohort of Roman soldiers stationed at the Antonia, near the temple, came to his rescue. The Roman tribune in Jerusalem, learning that Paul was a Roman citizen, decided that the charges the Jews had made against Paul should be investigated by Antonius Felix, Roman procurator of Judea. Felix heard Paul out and saw that he had done nothing deserving death. But Felix was an opportunist. Wanting to please the Jews, he did not set Paul free but kept him under a kind of house arrest for over two years. Felix' successor as procurator, Portius Festus, thought the Jews could best be kept under control if he delivered Paul to them to be tried. But Paul knew that he would not get a fair trial and he appealed to Caesar (Acts 25).

At this time, Herod Agrippa II, who ruled parts of Palestine, came to welcome Festus to Judea. Festus told him about Paul. Agrippa was intrigued and said he would like to hear testimony from Paul himself. So the following day Paul was brought into the hall where, with great pomp, Agrippa and Bernice, together with Festus and all the prominent men of the city had gathered. What a defense Paul made! He related his manner of life from youth, his persecution of Christians, his conversion, his preaching. Whereupon Festus cried out with a loud voice: "Paul, you are mad; your great learning is turning you mad." But Paul answered, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth" (Acts 26:24-25). Then, appealing to Agrippa's knowledge of the Jewish religion, Paul said: "The King knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." Agrippa, taken aback, exclaimed: "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!" Replied Paul: "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all that hear me this day might become as I am—except for these chains" (Acts 26:29).

Paul was not mad in the way Festus thought; his was another kind of madness. In Paul, the message and the method were coupled with a divine madness. And here was the secret of Paul's