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Is it a miracle that the Lutheran Church is even in existence today? This article takes a look at some of the more radical critics of Luther and Lutheranism.

REFORMATION IN NEW LANDS AND TONGUES

by Lawrence R. Rast, Jr.

Introduction

IT'S A MIRACLE THAT THERE IS A LUTHERAN CHURCH TODAY. In many ways, Lutheranism as a movement is an unlikely success story. It was born in an out of the way place, in a university that was still in its youth, led by an unlikely monk. But God uses out of the way places, youthfulness and unlikely, earthen vessels to accomplish His purposes. If we learn nothing else from the Reformation, it should be just how remarkably gracious God really is.

As we remember what God has done, we also repent over our failings (and we'll recount several of those in the next few minutes) and rejoice over the unfailing promises of the future, which, of course, are in God's hands.

Let us consider our topic, "Reformation in New Lands and Tongues."¹

Luther and emerging Lutheranism

"But now the whole of Germany is in full revolt; nine-tenths raise the war-cry, 'Luther,' while the watchword of the other tenth who are indifferent to Luther, is: 'Death to the Roman Curia.'"² Whether a full 90 percent of Germany was truly supportive of Luther is likely an exaggeration. Yet there is no reason to doubt that Aleander, the Papal

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Nuncio who wrote these words, doubted their veracity. As he related his experience to Cardinal De Medici in a letter from Worms dated Feb. 8, 1521, he repeatedly tried to underscore the extent to which Luther's views had permeated German life. Noting that "the Germans have lost all reverence and laugh at excommunications," he complained that "a shower of Lutheran writings in German and Latin comes out daily. There is even a press maintained here, where hitherto this art has been unknown. Nothing else is bought here except Luther's books even in the imperial court." Worst of all, perhaps, Aleander noted that "a little while ago at Augsburg they were selling Luther's picture with a halo; it as offered without the halo for sale here (in Worms), and all the copies were disposed of in a trice before I could get one." And finally, "If I sent all these shameful writings I should have to load a wagon."³

There is a sense in which, during the first years of the Reformation, especially from the 95 Theses to the Diet of Worms, Lutheranism extended itself in a remarkable fashion. Starting from Electoral Saxony, Lutheranism first reached Hesse. It then made its way into East Friesland as early as 1519. By 1520 Lutheran communities were in evidence in Treptow, Pommerania (this through the work of the great Johannes Bugenhagen). Breslau followed in 1522, along with Nuremberg under Pastors Besler, Pömer and Osiander, with Mecklenberg, Frankfurt am Main and Strassburg joining the movement in 1523. Amsdorf's work brought Magdeburg and Ulm in during 1524. In Bremen all the churches, with the exception of the cathedral, had Lutheran preachers by 1525. Bugenhagen continued his work in Hamburg and Brunswick in 1528. Anhalt and Westphalia followed in 1532,

¹ For a most helpful overview of the extension of Lutheranism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Klaus Detlev Schulz, "Lutheran Missiology in the 16th and 17th Centuries," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 43: 4–53. Also invaluable is Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009). See especially 302–303, "The Spread of Lutheran Mission Work," where Schulz notes that "Lutheran mission work spreads in three basic ways: (1) publications of Gospel literature; (2) missionaries sent by Lutheran rulers, churches, and mission societies; and (3) Lutheran congregations established by immigrants."

² Preserved Smith and Charles M. Jacobs, *Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1913), 455. A portion of the letter is also quoted in the fine new biography of the Elector Frederick the Wise. See Sam Wellman, *Frederick the Wise: Seen and Unseen Lives of Martin Luther's Protector* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 204.

³ Smith and Jacobs, *Luther's Correspondence*, 460.

and Württemberg in 1534.

But Lutheranism was to spread into other lands. Lutheranism also began to extend itself beyond Germany: into Brandenburg Prussia, 1525; Sweden, 1527; Denmark and Norway, 1537; Iceland, 1551. In Livonia and Estonia it first appeared in 1520 and had come to dominate by 1539. By 1549 it was in Courland, Russia. It gained a footing in Transylvania in 1557; in Poland in 1573; in Hungary in 1606; in Bohemia and Moravia in 1609.⁴

And Lutheranism was to appear in other tongues. One of the key ways that Luther's teachings spread was through his prolific literary output, as well as that of his colleagues. Students from countries outside of Saxony (both German speaking and otherwise), who came to Wittenberg University to hear, and those who simply read the works of Luther and his coworkers determined to translate these works into their own languages. As Öberg captures it: "The fact that 5,000 foreign students studied the sermons and lectures of Luther and his colleagues in Wittenberg from 1520-1560 contributed to the expansion and consolidation of Lutheranism. The mission dimension that Luther had communicated went forth in this way to his contemporaries and their descendants."⁵ And we should number ourselves among those descendants.

In 1557 Primus Truber translated and published the Gospel of Matthew in the Slavic language of the Croats and Wends. Later he added other resources, including other parts of the New Testament, Luther's catechisms, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, Melancthon's Loci, the Württemberg Church Discipline, and a book of spiritual songs. These were all important tools for mission work. One of the more interesting instances of translation occurred when the Augsburg Confession in Greek was brought to Constantinople in 1559 and again in 1573.⁶

⁴ This and the previous paragraph are summarized from J. N. Lenker, *Lutherans in All Lands: The Wonderful Works of God*, 4th ed. (Milwaukee: Lutherans in All Lands Company, 1894), 19, 21.

⁵ Indemar Öberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study with Special Reference to Luther's Bible Exposition*, trans. Dean Apel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 494.

⁶ George Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople: The Correspondence between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982).

Implicit in the preceding is the importance of that most popular of Luther's texts — and as a result the one most translated — the Small Catechism. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Small Catechism appeared in various languages in the American Colonies and the United States. Succeeding Reorus Torkillus as pastor in the colony of New Sweden in 1643, Johann Campanius (1601–1683) intentionally engaged the Lenape Indians who lived in the area of New Sweden. Having first learned their language he eventually gained sufficient ability to preach to the Native Americans. In time he was able to transliterate their words, numbers and common phrases. He ultimately gained sufficient facility in their language to translate Luther's Small Catechism into Lenape, notable as one of the first attempts by a European to create a written document in the language of Native Americans.⁷

Two centuries later another Lutheran pastor would engage in a similar endeavor. Friedrich August Crämer, pastor of Saint Lorenz congregation in Frankenmuth, Michigan, began to translate the Small Catechism into the language of the Ojibwa Indians.⁸ His efforts were supplemented by those of missionary Edward Baierlein, who served the Bethany Indian mission for a number of years.⁹ Finally, Arthur Repp has tracked the innumerable editions of Luther's Small Catechism that have appeared in the English language in the American Colonies and United States. His *Luther's Catechism Comes to*

America illustrates the degree to which Luther's Small Catechism served as a means of joining isolated Lutherans together in confession, even while they remained isolated from one another geographically.¹⁰

⁷ See Nils Magnus Holmer, *John Campanius' Lutheran Catechism in the Delaware Language* (Uppsala: A.-b. Lundequistska bokhandeln, 1946); Israel Acrelius, *History of New Sweden; Or, The Settlement on the River Delaware* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1876).

⁸ Lawrence R. Rast, Jr., "Friedrich August Crämer: Faithful Servant in Christ's Church," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64 (January 2000): 51–53, online at <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/rastcramerservant.pdf>, accessed April 15, 2015.

⁹ Edward R. Baierlein and Harold W. Moll, *In the Wilderness with the Red Indians: German Missionary to the Michigan Indians 1847–1853* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Arthur C. Repp, *Luther's Catechism Comes to America: Theological Effects on the Issues of the Small Catechism Prepared in or for America Prior to 1850* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982).

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At the same time, Lutheranism was not received well everywhere. Oliver Olson has chronicled the struggles of Lutherans in several of the European countries outside of Germany.¹¹ While there was not a large number of Lutheran martyrs, their presence is irrefutable. The first martyrs of the Lutheran confession were in Holland in 1523. But others were to follow.

Antonio Corvinus was born on Feb. 27, 1501.¹² Given his uncertain parentage (he may have been a bastard), it is not surprising to find that he entered the Cistercian monastery in Loccum, Lower Saxony, in 1519. Shortly thereafter he became a supporter of Luther and was driven out. He used the opportunity to study at Wittenberg under Luther and Melancthon, and later served pastorates in Goslar and Witzenhausen. He advised Philip of Hesse, drafted a church order and led the Reformation in northern areas of Germany.

In 1548 the Roman Catholic ruler Erich II (of Braunschweig-Calenberg-Göttingen) accepted the Augsburg Interim. Corvinus, along with other Lutheran pastors, protested vigorously against the Interim, which led to his arrest and jailing on Nov. 2, 1549. Happily for Corvinus, his conditions were relatively comfortable, perhaps defeating the purpose of trying to force his acceptance of the Interim. On Oct. 21, 1552, he was released. He re-entered active ministry in Hannover and died shortly thereafter April 11, 1553.

Baldo Lupetino was born into Venetian nobility, though his birthdate is uncertain (either 1492 or 1502). In the mid-1530s he entered a Franciscan monastery in Lower Labin. During Lent in 1541 he openly advocated Lutheran ideas, denying the freedom of the will and arguing that Christ had fully atoned for human sin. He also reportedly addressed the doctrine of predestination. He was arrested in December 1542 and tried in 1543, 1547 and 1556, where he was variously sentenced to life in

prison and death.¹³

Oliver Olson argues that “As long as the Smalcald League remained in power Venice was reluctant to offend the evangelical princes. But on the very day of the League’s defeat, April 24, 1547, Doge Francesco Dona opened his city to the Sant’ Uffizio and appointed three lay representatives of the Council of Ten, Nicola Tiepolo, Francesco Contarmi, and Antonio Venier, to cooperate with the clerical members, the Patriarch, the Father Inquisitor, and Della Casa as Sages on Heresy.”¹⁴

Following the last trial he was officially degraded and executed, likely during the night of Sept. 17–18, 1556. Olson describes the execution as follows:

At the dead hour of midnight the prisoner was taken from his cell and put into a gondola or Venetian boat, attended only, besides the sailors, by a single priest, to act as confessor. He was rowed out into the sea beyond the Two Castles, where another boat was waiting. A plank was then laid across the two gondolas, upon which the prisoner, having his body chained,

and a heavy stone affixed to his feet, was placed; and, on a signal given, the gondolas retiring from one another, he was precipitated into the deep.¹⁵

Tensions also ran high in Sweden and Denmark (for both religious and political reasons). With the support of Pope Leo X, Christian II of Denmark invaded Sweden in

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moved the Reformation
into other lands and
expressed its confession
in other tongues.

¹³ Luther himself wrote regarding Lupetino: “We have found out that your country Italy is the location of pious and honest men in sad trouble, the devotees of pure Christian faith. It is said that they are going through hard persecutions only because they embraced the Gospel and because they want to glorify it and spread it everywhere. Therefore we, who carefully try to follow the letter of the Holy Gospel and uphold it in all churches, are overwhelmed with deep and honest sympathy toward those God-loving men; because our Christian hearts understand the great suffering and bitter tears of those who suffer for the evangelical truth. As we have been notified that, by the order of the Roman Pope, among other men Baldo Lupetino has also been charged, a man with noteworthy virtues and profound knowledge, and that he is locked up in prison with his life in danger, we felt that it is our duty to intervene on his behalf and on the behalf of others.” D. *Martin Luthers Briefwechsel*, vol. 10, *Briefe 1542–1544*, Nr. 3884 (pp. 327–328); See also Mirko Breyer, “About the man from *Istria*, friar Baldo Lupetina (1502–1556),” *Istra* 14/2 (1976): 38. Available at http://www.flacius.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=110%3Alutherovopismo&catid=57%3Abaldo-lupetina&Itemid=64&lang=en, accessed April 15, 2015.

¹⁴ Olson, “Baldo Lupetino: Venetian Martyr,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 7 (Spring 1993): 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹ See, for example, Oliver K. Olson, “The Rise and Fall of the Antwerp Martinists,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 1 (1987): 105–111.

¹² Nanne van der Zijpp, “Corvinus, Antonius (1501–1553),” *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/corvinus_antonius_1501_1553, accessed August 4, 2013. I used the examples of Corvinus and Lupetino also in my paper, “A Confessional, Dogmatic View of Martyrdom and the Cross,” which appeared in the *Journal of Lutheran Mission* 2 (September 2014): 36–49.

1519. He succeeded in taking Stockholm in September 1520, and on November 8-9 1520, executed more than eighty Swedish nobles for heresy, the so-called Stockholm Bloodbath. Further executions followed, spreading in both Sweden and Finland. The bloodbath outraged the Swedes and acted as a catalyst for resisting the Danes. By 1522 Gustav I Vasa was able, with the help of the peasants of the Dalarna region and the Hanseatic League, to drive the Danes out of Sweden. Vasa's reign extended from 1523 to 1560, and during his time he was able to secure the translation into Swedish of the *Biblia Thet är All then Helgha Scrifft på Swensko*, in 1540–1541, commonly known as the Gustav Vasa Bible.¹⁶

Even as Lutheranism spread into other lands and was translated into other tongues, in its German homeland it would struggle mightily.

Lutheranism after Luther

The theological and political chaos that followed Luther's death on Feb. 18, 1546, is a story likely well known to us all. The Great Reformer harbored misgivings about the future of the evangelical movement preceding his death; he feared that shortly after his death dissension would overtake the evangelical party with disastrous effects. He was correct — both theologically and politically. In June 1546, roughly four months following Luther's death, Charles V entered into his German War against the Smalcaldic League and soundly defeated the league at the battle of Mühlberg on the Elbe, April 24, 1547.¹⁷ Following his victory at Mühlberg, Charles convened what has come to be known as the "Armored Diet" at Augsburg (due to the presence of Charles' army). Charles, elated with his victory over the German princes, promised that he would "teach the Ger-

It is only through
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faith when and where it
pleases Him.

mans Spanish" — that would have been a new tongue for Lutherans. The Diet produced the document known as the "Augsburg Interim," written by Julius Pflug, Michael Helling and the Lutheran Johann Agricola, which was pronounced by the emperor May 15, 1548. The purpose of this document was both theological and political in orientation; it sought to regulate outwardly and temporally the affairs of the Church until the Council of Trent would finally settle the religious controversy precipitated by the evangelicals. It reintroduced many of the abolished Roman Catholic practices such as the jurisdiction of bishops, transubstantiation and the seven sacraments. These

emphases led to the characterization that the document was a first step back towards the fully returning the Reformation churches to the Roman Catholic fold.

Following the proclamation of the Interim, Charles V went forth with his army and began to subjugate southern Germany to the Interim. The army was followed by priests who reconsecrated the cathedrals

of the South to the Roman Catholic Church. Cities such as Strassburg, Ulm and Constance were subjected to the Interim and political power was transferred from Protestant families to those loyal to Charles' Habsburg agenda.

Meanwhile, Moritz of Saxony, who had betrayed Ernestine Saxony and usurped the electoral authority to himself by making a treaty with Charles V to the effect that Moritz would fight with the emperor in return for the guarantee of territory and the title of elector, helped the emperor in his efforts to subjugate Elector John Frederick by invading his land while he was away in the Smalcald War. But Moritz was uncomfortable with the provisions of the Interim and sought a Saxon solution that would enable him to gain the support of his evangelical subjects and at the same time keep the emperor from invading Saxony.¹⁸

The Augsburg Interim and its successor, the Leipzig Interim, failed. In time Moritz betrayed Charles V, finally leading to a tenuous peace, which was declared on Sept. 25, 1555. However, while the Religious Peace of Augsburg brought the battles to an end, its solution would have

¹⁶ For an excellent treatment of Lutheranism in Scandinavia, see Eric Lund, "Nordic and Baltic Lutheranism," in Robert Kolb, ed. *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture 1550–1675* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 411–454.

¹⁷ This war has generally come to be called the "Smalcald War." Let the reader keep in mind the purposes of Charles V in pursuing this tact. He was not simply a power hungry despot, but felt he was serving God and the Church by trying to restore political and religious unity to the Holy Roman Empire. For treatments of the Smalcald League see Thomas A. Brady, Jr., "Phases and Strategies of the Schmalkaldic League: A Perspective after 450 Years," *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 74 (1983), 162–181; Theodore Hoyer, "The Rise and Fall of the Schmalkaldic League: The Treaty of Passau, 1552," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 23 (1952), 401–17 and "The Religious Peace of Augsburg," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 26 (1955), 820–30.

¹⁸ The fear that motivated Moritz toward this end should not be underestimated; he expected the emperor to invade Saxony at any time and subject it to the same treatment that southern Germany had experienced.

ramifications for the mission of the Church. The commonly-known principle, *cuius regio eius religio* (“whose realm, his religion”) would become the operative principle for allowing the competing Lutheran and Roman Catholic states of the Holy Roman Empire to peacefully (if not happily) coexist (the Reformed would be included after the Peace of Westphalia [1648], but not the Anabaptists). But the price of peace for religious extension was captured in paragraph 23:

§ 23. [Prohibition of Religious Coercion] No estate shall induce another’s subjects to accept his religion and abandon the other’s, nor shall he take those subjects under his protection or in any way defend them in such actions. This rule, however, is not intended to apply to the obligations of those who have long been subject to their lord’s rule, which shall remain undiminished.¹⁹

In time, the linking of the Church with the State under the authority of the prince, would prove to impact of the extension of Lutheranism.²⁰

Lutheran orthodoxy — saying “no” to mission?

One doesn’t have to look hard to find criticisms of the lack of mission perspective. For example, James Scherer, in a section titled “Lutheran Orthodoxy: Saying No to Mission,” writes: “Luther’s biblically based conviction about the proclamation of the Gospel to the whole creation and his confidence in the ultimate triumph of God’s kingdom gave way to dogmatic hairsplitting and ecclesiastical retrenchment.”²¹ Lyle Vander Werff, in describing the challenge to the Orthodox Lutherans to recognize the continuing validity of Matt. 28:19, described their response as follows: “In true orthodox fashion, they rejected his [Erhardt Truchsess’s] challenge.”²²

Two assessments have been particularly dominant. In the late nineteenth century, Gustav Warneck wrote, in his long and influential article in the *New Schaff-Herzog* encyclopedia, that among the Orthodox Lutherans

“the missionary idea was lacking because the comprehension of a continuous missionary duty of the Church was limited among the Reformers and their successors by a narrow-minded dogmatism combined with a lack of historical sense.”²³ Further, in his extremely influential *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions*, he states: “We miss in the Reformers not only missionary action, but even the idea of missions, in the sense in which we understand them today Luther did not think of proper missions to the heathen, i.e. of a regular sending of messengers of the Gospel to non-Christian nations, with the view of Christianizing them ... Luther’s mission sphere was, if we may so say, the paganized Christian church.”²⁴

More recently, David Bosch has argued that Lutheran Orthodoxy led to “pessimism and passivity in mission.”

Pessimism and passivity had a yet deeper cause: the dark view of history in Lutheran orthodoxy. Nicolai expected the parousia to take place around the year 1670. The urgency of the imminent end of the world still acted as a motivation for mission in his case. In the course of the seventeenth century this would change. The situation in the church became so lamentable, particularly in the eyes of Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714), that the focus was no longer on the conviction that Christ and his reign would be triumphant, but on the fearful question whether Christ, when he returned, would find any faith on earth. This question destroyed all possibility of joyfully witnessing to Christ.²⁵

As the preceding quotes show, some lay the fault for this at the feet of Luther himself; others condemn the Lutheran Orthodox. In respect to the latter, they identify the worst expressions of this lack of mission mindedness with the following. First, there is Philip Nicolai’s *De Regno Christi* (On the Kingdom of Christ), which “demonstrated that every region [of the world] had encountered the preaching of the Gospel by way of the apostles.”²⁶

¹⁹ “The Religious Peace of Augsburg,” September 25, 1555, online at http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Doc.67-ENG-ReligPeace1555_en.pdf, accessed April 15, 2015.

²⁰ For an exploration of the roots of this thinking in Luther, see Lewis W. Spitz, “Luther’s Ecclesiology and His Concept of the Prince as *Notbischof*,” *Church History* 22 (June 1953): 113–141.

²¹ James A. Scherer, *Gospel, Church, & Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 66. See also James A. Scherer, *Mission and Unity in Lutheranism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 13–16.

²² Lyle L. Vander Werff, *Christian Mission to Muslims: The Record* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977), 19.

²³ Gustav Warneck, “Missions to the Heathen,” *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, 404.

²⁴ Gustav Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time, with an Appendix concerning Roman Catholic Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1906, original German edition published in 1881), 9–10. See also Wolfgang Gröbel, *Die Stellung der lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands zur Mission im 17. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: O. Schmidt, 1895), 6, 15–16, 27, 30.

²⁵ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 251.

²⁶ Philipp Nicolai, *Commentarii de regno Christi, vaticiniis propheticiis et apostolicis accommodate* (Francofurti ad Moenum, 1597). Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 263.

Second, Gerhard reproduced Nicolai and then furthered it by developing theological implications of the work in *Loci Theologici*. Finally, and perhaps most notoriously, was the *gutachten*, or opinion, of the theology faculty of the University of Wittenberg, publicized on April 24, 1652. “This response,” says Schulz, “was submitted as an answer to the queries (scruples) of an Austrian, Reichsgraf Ehrhardt von Wetzhausen from Vienna, who wanted to know how the Orient, Meridian, and Occident could be converted to the salutary faith ‘when he sees no one of the Augsburg Confession go there to preach and to save as much as 100,000 people from damnation.’”²⁷

Several responses to the critiques of the Orthodox Lutherans suggest themselves. First, it has to be recognized that there is some legitimacy to the critiques, as Schulz rightly notes.²⁸ Beyond that, however, many of those who criticized the Orthodox Lutherans seem to have simply taken Warneck’s critique at face value, and Warneck’s critique does suffer from being rather anachronistic, blaming the Orthodox Lutherans for not understanding mission in the manner of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, we need not be threatened by such critiques. The Church’s execution of the mission entrusted to it will always be limited in its application, given the human and fallible people who carry it out. Nevertheless, God is gracious and accomplishes His purposes despite our weaknesses.

Rather, even as we remember this day, we also repent and rejoice. For if the Orthodox Lutherans were as opposed to mission as more radical interpreters claim, it is unlikely that any of us would be gathered here today. Without the extension of the Lutheran confession into other lands and tongues, if it was limited simply to Germany, this would be, at the very least, a significantly smaller gathering this week. Yet here we are, gathered together from the ends of the earth and representing some forty Lutheran church bodies spread throughout the world. A more considered perspective is offered by Öberg, who writes: “Against Warneck and Elert, we must assert that the mission work led and supported by the state and the state church is true and genuine mission.”²⁹ As the litany of expansion shared earlier in this paper shows, many Lutherans were eager to share the Gospel as rediscovered by the Wittenberg Reformation. One exam-

ple of this is the Lutheran experience in Hungary. David P. Daniel’s marvelous treatment, “Lutheranism in the Kingdom of Hungary,” traces in some detail the twists and turns of the reforming movements in Hungary as Lutheranism struggled to germinate, take root, and blossom. It was never an easy matter.³⁰

Individuals also played key roles in extending Lutheranism into other lands and translating it into other tongues. The Gustav Vasa Bible mentioned above was largely a product of the efforts of Laurentius Andrae, Olaus Petri and Laurentius Petri. But perhaps no single person embodies the sense of the title assigned to me more than Peter Heyling. He truly established Lutheranism in other lands and other tongues.³¹

Born into a wealthy family in Lübeck, Germany (his father was a goldsmith) in 1607–1608, Heyling studied law and theology in Paris under the Dutch jurist, historian and theologian, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) from 1628–1632. Grotius engendered in him a desire “to rejuvenate the ancient Churches of the Orient and infuse them with ‘new evangelical life.’” (21). Travels in Italy and France were followed by Heyling’s arrival in Egypt in 1633. His destination was the monastery of Saint Makarios, where he intended both to learn Arabic and to read in its extensive manuscript collection. He later added Syriac to his languages and used both tongues to introduce Lutheran teachings to the Copts and Syrians.

After a period spent in Jerusalem, he received a letter of introduction from the Coptic Patriarch to the Emperor of Ethiopia and, in the late 1634 or early 1635, arrived in Gonder. There he practiced medicine and quickly became an influential minister, teacher and doctor at the court of King Fasilides (1632–1667). He used his influence to reform the Church, particularly by teaching the clergy Greek and Hebrew and instructing them in the finer points of theology. He began to translate the New Testament into Amharic, the common language of the people (the formal, liturgical language was Ge’ez). The extent of his translation work is not certain, but when Gorgorios visited Gonder in 1647, the Gospel of John was not only available in Amharic, but in great demand.

Accounts of Heyling’s last years leave uncertain

²⁷ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 266.

²⁸ Schulz, “Lutheran Missiology,” 35–37.

²⁹ Öberg, *Luther and World Mission*, 500.

³⁰ David P. Daniel, “Lutheranism in the Kingdom of Hungary,” in Robert Kolb, ed. *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture 1550–1675* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 455–507.

³¹ This section is summarized from Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus*, *Studia missionalia Upsaliensia*, 32 (Stockholm: EFS-förl, 1978), 20–22.

whether he was expelled from Gonder or departed with the blessings of the Emperor. What is clear, however, is that while passing through Suakin after having left Ethiopia, the Turkish pasha confronted Heyling and demanded that he deny Christ and convert to Islam. Heyling refused and the pasha beheaded him.

Arén's assessment of Heyling is quite striking.

Heyling's influence must have been considerable. His teaching is said to have been a leaven which compelled the Ethiopian Church to issue a doctrinal statement in Amamrinya (Amharic) to vindicate her own position in face of Lutheran views Felix Rosen a German botanist who visited Gonder in 1905, observed that Heyling was venerated "almost like a saint" There is apparently a direct line from Peter Heyling to the founders of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.³²

Conclusion

It's a miracle that there is a Lutheran Church today. I mean that both facetiously and seriously. Facetiously, in that, if one were to take the remarks of some of the more radical critics of Luther and Lutheranism as cited above, there should not be a Lutheran Church at all — and we would all be thankful for that given the horrible missiology to which they supposedly held.

However, I mean it seriously, because there is a rich missiology that has moved the Reformation into other lands and expressed its confession in other tongues. For it is only through the proclamation of the Gospel that God miraculously works faith when and where it pleases Him. Indeed, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him," as Luther says in his explanation to the Third Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism. "But," as he continues, "the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all

the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life."

"This," my friends, "is most certainly true."³³

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³² Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers*, 21.

³³ <http://bookofconcord.org/smallcatechism.php#creed>, accessed April 15, 2015.