

# ***Lutheran Mission Matters***



Volume XXIX, No. 1 (Issue 58) May 2021

# Mission and Christian Mercy: Pondering Their Relationship

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**Abstract:** Mission is a proclamatory, evangelistic activity that addresses the spiritual condition of a person. However, biblical data and theological anthropology inform us that such a person should be viewed wholistically, existing as an ensouled being. For that reason, mercy work and human care are complementary activities to mission proper, either preceding it, accompanying it, or following it. While mercy work is an ethical expression of the church, that is, a response of faith motivated by brotherly love for the neighbor and rooted in the parable of the Good Samaritan, it connects to Christology, to the one who Himself served in the world through both word *and* deed. His deeds and those of the apostles served as *signs* of their preaching of the kingdom that has come. The church looks at the deeds of Christ and the apostles as unique, and yet she performs her own deeds of mercy in the hope that the Lord may use them also as signs in support of her proclamation of His coming reign.

## I. A Tenuous Linkage

The activities of preaching the Gospel and showing compassion for the neighbor have been with the church since her inception. Both activities led a peaceful coexistence well into the twentieth century when their relationship became a contested issue causing their polarization.<sup>1</sup> Since then the linkage between mercy works<sup>2</sup> and mission has become one of debate. There are many reasons explaining that tenuous relationship. One is the rise of religious relativism or universalism within Christianity that not only questions the main thrust of Christian mission toward the salvation of people and the planting of churches, but undermines the purpose of all her ministries in this world. The recent debate among theologians over David Bentley Hart's *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Salvation*<sup>3</sup> demonstrates how fragile



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the status of the church's mission is in light of universalistic or religious pluralist claims within Christianity. Fortunately, victory is not at hand for the Christian universalist cause given the strength of the arguments from those who stood up against Hart for the traditional understanding of the church's role in this world through word and deed.<sup>4</sup>

A look into the recent history of missions reveals important stations where the linkage of proclamation and works of mercy became brittle. In his seminal contribution *Gospel, Church, and Kingdom*,<sup>5</sup> James Scherer points to the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, 1968, where the debate over the role of the church in the *missio Dei* towards the world led to the introduction of a mission paradigm that had "humanization" as its goal and that focused on relieving human tensions in the social, economic, or political realms.<sup>6</sup> Already then, many delegates thought that it compromised the central status of the church in God's mission and classical soteriology which is informed by a biblical eschatology that, in light of Christ's return, necessitates an urgent call for (missionary) proclamation.<sup>7</sup>

The late Lutheran missiologist Peter Beyerhaus (1929–2020) became a leading voice to correct this conciliar course of direction by affirming once again the proclamatory role of the church in the *missio Dei*. He did so in his tract *Missions: Which Way? Humanization or Redemption* (1971) and also, together with a group of missiologists, he formulated and signed *The Frankfurt Declaration* (1970), which was instrumental in providing the platform for the formation of the Evangelical Missionary Movement known as the *Lausanne Movement* in 1974.<sup>8</sup> Instead of tipping the scales entirely towards an evangelistic and eschatological approach—one which Evangelistic Missions such as the premillennial missions of the Puritans<sup>9</sup> and that of faith missionaries such as Karl Gützlaff and the China Inland Mission (1865) were known for pursuing—the *Frankfurt Declaration* affirmed the connection between proclamation and works of mercy: "*We see therein [i.e. development aid] an important accompaniment and authentication of mission. We also affirm the humanizing results of conversion as signs of the coming messianic peace.*"<sup>10</sup>

A similar approach was taken a decade later at the international consultation of the Lausanne Movement in Grand Rapids (1982) on *The Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility*. The participants of the Lausanne Movement accepted both the "call to world evangelization" and the "call to social responsibility." Using the three terms "consequence, bridge, and partner" to define the relationship of evangelism and social activity,<sup>11</sup> they concluded their deliberations with the following definition:

Evangelism and social responsibility, while distinct from one another, are integrally related in our proclamation of and obedience to the Gospel. The partnership is, in reality, a marriage. In practice, as in the public ministry of Jesus, the two are inseparable, at least in open societies. Rather than

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competing with each other, they mutually support and strengthen each other in an upward spiral of increased concern for both.<sup>12</sup>

To an extent that distinction is also kept in the statement of missions, *Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation and Empowerment* (2004), formulated by the Lutheran World Federation. It connects the proclamation through Word and Sacrament with diakonia while maintaining a distinction between the two:

Proclaiming and witnessing through diakonia are inseparable as participation in God's transforming, reconciling, and empowering mission in the world. Word without deed can be abstract and powerless, and deed without word can be mute and open for any interpretation.<sup>13</sup>

It also distinguishes between salvation in Jesus Christ and the healing of illnesses. Though salvation and healing are related, Christians should not equate their salvation with an automatic cure from illnesses in this life.<sup>14</sup>

Without equivocating the theological distinctions between the *Frankfurt Declaration* (including the Lausanne Movement's Statement) and the Lutheran World Federation, one sees that both have in common an interest of wanting to avoid the two extremes where one activity dismisses the other. Instead, they have chosen a middle position that affirms both activities and gives each equal validity. We take note of important phrases: Mercy works "accompany" and "authenticate" missionary proclamation; they can even serve as "signs of the coming messianic peace." We learn that the two are "inseparable," like a "marriage" and that "word without deed" remains "abstract and powerless."

However, given that both proclamation and mercy works should be treated as inseparable, equal, and legitimate activities for Christian mission around the world, the question still lingers whether church bodies should not prioritize proclamation over mercy works or at least affirm it as *the* activity to which mercy works are then connected. For if mercy works are given a standing on their own apart from proclamation, such works of mercy might as well be handed over to a secular organization that is not specifically Christian. That question of rank and prioritization will be discussed later on.

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## II. Anthropological Considerations

Next to compromising the central role of the church in the *missio Dei*, there is a second factor that potentially weakens the linkage between the two which is the failure to take a close look at one's audience to whom mission is done. Who are the persons addressed in missions and in what condition do we find them? An important underlying question is an anthropological one, what it means to be fully human, and how does this understanding of full humanity shape one's philosophy of mission and salvation (σωτηρία). According to Charles Sherlock, many Christians have equated salvation of human beings with the "soul," "spirit," or other immaterial aspects of human life.<sup>15</sup> Thereby, he concludes, "the Christian hope has often been spiritualized, and the earthy hope of the resurrection of the body replaced by an amorphous wish about an immortal soul."<sup>16</sup> Thus, a correction from Scripture is needed here since it affirms that the body will also be redeemed (Rom 8:23) and our mortal bodies will receive immortality (2 Cor 5:4). Biblical anthropology shows an interest in the bodily existence and associates the soul with a human's bodily state, both here and in the time that is to come. In that sense, then, salvation is comprehensive or wholistic, never disembodied, even if it means that the body still lies waiting for the final relief from all earthly struggles.<sup>17</sup>

This applies also to the understanding of healing. To avoid both a platonic and dualistic definition which unduly separates body and soul, or a monism that merges body and soul, theologians speak today of an ensouled body, where both soul and body are interconnected and interact with one another, which can be proven from the cases of psychosomatic illnesses. According to Ray Anderson the fact that

a human being lives and moves, experiences good and ill, is healthy and sick, and in the end dies, is not a matter of mere body. . . . The only interest biblical anthropology has in the body is that it is an ensouled body. . . . When one is a whole person, one's whole self is healthy—body, soul, and spirit. While this remains an eschatological reality, it nonetheless gives us an orientation toward seeking health for ourselves and others during this present life.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the above discussion should influence a person's outlook on life and earthly existence. Christianity, including her missionaries, has repeatedly downplayed the value of the body and a person's createdness. Within Christianity, movements abounded that denied the body its rightful place and honor. Influenced by Gnosticism and then perpetuating that attitude with asceticism, a dualism was at work that views the body as a prison of the soul. The body is finite and limited and entraps the intellectual mind or soul or spirit. Asceticism, known to exist around individuals like the father of monasticism, Anthony of Egypt (251–356) and Martin of Tours (died 397), proposed an alternative lifestyle to that of society, which they thought to progress in evil and sinful behavior. Consequently, as records show, the bishop imposed a rigorous discipline on himself and his monk followers denying themselves food, drink,

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and comfortable clothing.<sup>19</sup> In the modern age, Protestant missionaries have not shied away from chastising their bodies through extreme rigor and discipline in their service to the Lord and the unbelieving world. According to a witness account, the famous modern missionary C. T. Studd (1860–1931), part of the Cambridge seven, who went first to China, then to India and finally to the Belgian Congo, Africa, was such an example, who in spite of multiple heart attacks, continued to put himself and his fellow workers under extreme pressure and discipline that caused unnecessary tension among them.<sup>20</sup>

The Reformers looked at anthropology differently and affirmed the createdness of human life, in that they, Luther in particular, placed the first article and the bodily life around family and vocation on the same level as the second and third articles. They encouraged the consumption of food and drink, the need for marriage, the creation of a family, and pursuing one’s vocation within society. All these mandates pertaining to bodily life came from the hands of the Creator, the same God who redeems and sanctifies. Creation and earthly life received a boost, it was structured into orders, and was elevated to the same level as redemption and leading a spiritual life. Their affirmation of a human’s createdness intentionally went against a life of self-denial and withdrawal that pursued practices such as fasting, almsgiving, and sexual abstinence.<sup>21</sup>

Lutheran concerns over the neglect of the article of creation continued well into the twentieth century. As the title of his monograph, *The Flight from Creation*<sup>22</sup>, suggests, Gustav Wingren expressed concerns over Neo-orthodoxy’s denial of general revelation and natural law calling it “anthropological nihilism” that creates an “ethical vacuum.”<sup>23</sup> This resulted in the church’s mission losing ground over issues Christians have in common with non-Christians as they pertain to ordering and managing their daily, bodily life. On a sidenote, this unwarranted separation of body and soul has often influenced the Western approach to take a mechanized understanding of healing illnesses. In the latest edition of the *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, a number of authors point out, that in many cases, medical missions failed to be considerate of communities around the world who connected the cause for their physical illnesses to a spiritual imbalance, and thus would first seek out traditional healing methods. As a result, “in many African countries alternative health systems exist alongside hospitals and clinics, but unfortunately they are not generally recognized by national health policies.”<sup>24</sup>

We conclude that while all living life may be considered to be in possession of the breath

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of life, a soul, special to humans is the fact that they have an ensouled body and a *spirited* soul. This suggests that humans, unlike the rest of creation, have an awareness for God, a capacity for response-ability, which constitutes the center of their very being.<sup>25</sup> As Luther would say, “heaven . . . was not made for geese.”<sup>26</sup> That spirited soul is what validates the preaching activity while the physical constitution calls for works of mercy. Where one side of a human being is neglected for the other, mission would fail to serve its true purpose of serving, saving, and healing humans holistically.

### III. Being Not Only Church *for* Others but Also a Church *with* Them

Those involved in missions, either in the evangelistic activity or in providing human care, actually have something in common and that is to be there *for* others and serve them. Both approaches operate with the understanding that there are those who give and those who receive. In many instances, this is still how the West looks upon the rest of the world, and as today’s short-term volunteerism shows, often persists in the notion, or even creates the image, of victims that need outsiders to come to their help.<sup>27</sup> Africa in particular is looked upon in this way. The African missiologist Tite Tiénou made this point concerning his continent two decades ago:

Misery and despair, we are led to believe, are the chief characteristics of Africa. Is it any wonder that the continent’s inhabitants are perceived as helpless children or junior members of the human race and in constant need of benevolent care? . . . One wonders is Africa only good for promoting outsiders to hero status?<sup>28</sup>

These words still deserve our attention. Perhaps one important correction to accompany the missionary endeavors of preaching and doing mercy works comes from the retired missiologist Theo Sundermeier’s concept of *convivence*.<sup>29</sup> It suggests that those involved in (foreign) missions should not regard themselves solely as givers, doers, and helpers *for* others, but primarily as living together *with* others.<sup>30</sup> As Sundermeier unfolds his approach, he critically analyses the two traditional models of mission that solely focus on being *for* others, where the teachers and missionaries either preach (which he calls the Evangelical model) or provide human care (which he calls the Geneva model) *for* others. Both have in common that they regard themselves as the haves over the have-nots: “It had to do with condescension and power and demanded from recipients’ humility and gratitude.”<sup>31</sup> Sundermeier feels that both mission movements eventually reach a dead-end street. Instead, *convivence* overcomes that barrier and it lets people who are ready to convert to Jesus know that the representatives of Jesus take them seriously, that the evangelists listen to their stories, and that the helpers are ready to help them with the intention that they may learn to help themselves.

The ecclesiology Sundermeier proposes is not a one-sided approach, a “Church *for* people,” as Dietrich Bonhoeffer is known to have written, but a “Church *with* people.”<sup>32</sup> For “the experience of convivence . . . teaches that to help is a reciprocal event in which both sides always give and receive.”<sup>33</sup> *Convivence* encourages a mutuality between the missionary and the subject. Both learn from each other as they engage in conversation and in sharing life together.

But we should not throw out the baby with the bath water. Though Western colonialism and expansionism have shaped, and to a certain level still shape Christian mission, though history shows that missions has often fostered arrogance or paternalism, a church in mission as being *for* others still matters. Being there *for* others is a fundamental Christian attitude, and a biblically mandated one, that summons Christians to live a life unselfishly for others (Mt 25:31–46) and to engage in an evangelistic activity of calling people out for a life in Christ (Acts 1:8). That is what the church has been instructed to do in the time before the Lord’s return so that a church existing without mercy work and evangelistic activity to others would cease to exist.

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To conclude this section, we note that the relationship of proclamation and works of mercy find their mandate in Scripture and a properly understood theological anthropology underscores their validity, so that seen together in their proper relationship, they provide integrity to the mission enterprise *for* and *with* the people.

#### **IV. Itshelejuba: Making a Case for Medical Mission, and for Mercy Works in General**

Itshelejuba is a rural hospital in the region of Kwazulu Natal, South Africa. It takes its Zulu name after the boulders on which it is built “Stone of the Doves” (Itshe=stone and juba=doves). Over the years it has expanded to nine clinics and one Gateway Clinic in the Pongola River catchment area. On its website we read the following statement: “Itshelejuba hospital was discovered by German Missionaries. It started as a mission station for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people. The people could not understand that the Missionaries were preaching the gospel without meeting expectations of physical wellness.”<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Itshelejuba was started in 1932 by the Lutheran missionary Wilhelm Weber of the Hanoverian Lutheran Free Church Mission founded in 1892 (later known as the Bleckmar Mission, and today as the Lutheran Church Mission).<sup>35</sup> On his mission station, missionary Weber converted an old farmhouse as the first health facility. At that time, medical facilities were hard to



come by in the region and the practice of traditional medicine was rampant. In fact, so much did it control the local community's beliefs towards sickness and its removal that every patient who came to be treated at the hospital would have to endure reprisals from their clans and relatives. Winning the trust of the local community was a challenge for missionary Weber.

Over the years, German medical missionaries arrived such as Sister Ruth Bauseneik in 1953, who for fifteen years began to train local staff to become general nurses and midwives. On May 16, 1969, Dr. Kurt Bergter became the Medical Superintendent of Itshelejuba hospital. Before his coming he had served as medical missionary to India. Through the tireless efforts of all involved, the hospital expanded its general care to specialize in certain areas: a maternity ward was built in 1962 and in 1965 a TB ward was added to treat the widespread problem of tuberculosis. As with many medical projects, funding for medicine, equipment, and personnel came from a number of constituents such as the Transvaal Department of Health and the German Church Charity group called *Brot für die Welt*. Also, as with many human care facilities started and run by missionaries, Itshelejuba was taken over by the local government and placed under its supervision. Yet, while the treatment of physical illnesses increasingly became the main focus at Itshelejuba, the medical operation is to this day accompanied by daily devotions and the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This became the responsibility of the pastor of the neighboring Itshelejuba parish belonging to the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA). Pastor Sibiya, who retired from parish work in 1966, was replaced by Pastor Johannes Khumalo in 1971, and currently in 2021 the hospital community is served by Pastor Ronald Lushaba.

Arguments in favor of medical missions in Lutheran mission are well-established, but at this juncture taking them up again may serve to make a sufficient case for mercy works in general, including education and agricultural mission, to use two additional examples. For such a well-formulated and biblically based Lutheran approach one should turn to the essay "*Zur Begründung unserer Hospitalarbeit*," (Reasons for starting our Hospital Ministry) by Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (1910–1982), who was the mission director of the aforementioned Bleckmar Mission Society (now Lutheran Church Mission).<sup>36</sup> In his justification of medical missions at Itshelejuba, Hopf develops a number of principles that may serve as the answer to our yet unanswered question on the proper relationship between proclamation and mercy works.

As with many mission starts, medical work at Itshelejuba began without a prior planned strategy. It simply fell upon the missionaries who were left with no choice but to respond to the Zulu community's physical needs. These were so pressing and in demand of immediate attention that medical missions were simply done without further reflection and as an activity was simply placed under a broader definition of missions. However, to avoid confusion on the field, Hopf felt it necessary to develop

a reasoned approach to explain its connection to the proclamation of the Word and to the service of the missionaries who at that time were all commissioned to evangelistic missions, that is, to carry out the Lord's mandate of preaching, teaching, and baptizing.<sup>37</sup>

The first and immediate reason for medical mission lies in a Christian's love for the neighbor. Here the Christian takes Jesus Christ as his *example*.<sup>38</sup> With Christ both word and deed were inseparably connected. This can be seen in Scripture at various places. In the words of the apostle Peter to Cornelius, Jesus was "*preaching the good news of peace*" and "went about *doing good and healing* all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:36–38). And on the road to Emmaus, the two disciples shared with the Lord what they knew of Him: "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in *deed and word* before God and all people" (Lk 24:19; see also Acts 1:1).

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In the ministry of Jesus and His apostles, their deeds of healing served as *signs* that the messianic kingdom had come into the lives of the people (Mt 11:4–6; Lk 4:17–21). Deeds accompanied the preaching of His disciples (Mk 16:17) and functioned as signs that confirmed and underscored their preaching: "And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs" (Mk 16:20). Although the miracles of healing which Christ and the apostles performed were unique and served as signs of the coming kingdom, Christ remains the example who wants to work His mercy and holy love through His followers to those plagued by illnesses. Thus, Christ expressly gave His *command* to His followers to give a healing and helping hand for those in need. He did so in the parable of the Good Samaritan, who showed compassion (Lk 10:25–37), and Christ concludes with the instruction to His followers: "Go and do likewise" (v. 37). In the great judgment scene (Mt 25:31–46), the Lord also gave His followers the *promise* that those on His right who did likewise will be blessed and inherit eternal life.

The question that needs to be answered is this: May the services of Christ's followers, those after the death of Christ and His apostles such as providing clothing, feeding, healing, and visitation "to one of the least of these" (v. 46), also be treated as "signs" that support the preaching of the coming of Christ's gracious reign, similar to what the deeds of Christ and that of the apostles did?<sup>39</sup> According to Hopf, that question is more difficult to answer, yet he proceeds to do so.

In the letter of James, one gets a glimpse into the continuation of the healing ministry in the life of a congregation after the ascension of Christ and the death of His

apostles. There, the act of healing occurs through prayer for the sick and by anointing with oil in the name of the Lord (Jas 5:13–16). This means that though Christ’s ministry and that of the apostles is unique, the healing ministry continues, yet not on the same level as that of Christ and the apostles because “we live neither in the days of Christ’s earthly ministry nor in the time of his disciples who have received the power to heal immediately. We also do not live in the time of full manifestation of his kingdom.”<sup>40</sup> And yet, in spite of these distinctions and limitations, the church’s preaching and healing ministry in this interim period has to be rooted in the work of the apostles. Thus, the church sees the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments as a continuation of the apostles’ ministry by preaching their words, albeit by those who are not called to be apostles. The same can be said of the healing ministry. Though Christ and the apostles were uniquely authorized with the power to perform miracles of healing, the church continues the healing ministry of the apostles, even if she does not possess the powers of direct healing as the apostles did.<sup>41</sup>

In the end, the church pursues her healing ministry to those in need because of the mandate given in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Whether the Lord then uses the church’s deeds as “signs” confirming the preaching of the coming of Christ’s kingdom should be left to His own discretion. Since this is a time of believing and not seeing, the church may not know whether the Zulus on whom she performs her healing ministry will actually perceive her acts of mercy as a sign confirming the preaching of Christ’s kingdom. The missionaries must leave that to the decision of the Lord in the hope that like the acts of Christ, their deeds, too, might become signs or windows for people to see Christ’s love and mercy already at work here and now.<sup>42</sup> What the church is instructed to do is to confidently yet soberly conduct her medical mission. For in doing so, the church will avoid the temptation to use her works of mercy as a trap or a means to lure others into converting to Christianity. She simply does so because she has been called to serve. She achieves her goal in medical missions when she is able to help and serve, and connect that service to the proclamation of the Word. Everything else should be left to the Lord.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, in answer to the question of defining the relationship of mercy works to the preaching of the Word, the answer Hopf gives comes from his interpretation of the functions and the deeds performed by Christ and the apostles. Thus, he concludes that “connected to the establishment of diaconic service, we have the establishment of the missionary service proper.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, without merging the two activities, Hopf prioritizes preaching just as Scripture does with the signs of healing in Christ’s and the apostles’ ministry. Works of mercy, such as medical missions, are connected or aligned (*Zuordnung*) and subordinate (*Unterordnung*) to the ministry of preaching.<sup>45</sup> The linkage becomes one of both/and with medical missions specifically serving the church’s proclamation.

## **V. Corporate, Direct, and Intentional**

The above reasoning assumes that the act of proclamation and works of mercy are part of the church's ministry to the world and both are pursued intentionally and corporately by the church organizing them. In other words, as much as both the witness of God's Word and demonstrations of love for the neighbor oblige every individual Christian in his vocation, the church cannot ignore that she too has a corporate interest to play her part in God's mission. This argument was made in a CTCR statement from February 1999, entitled: "*Faith Active in Love: Human Care in the Church's Life*" by distinguishing three levels how the church pursues the works of mercy. First, every Christian responds through his vocation with works of love. This service is individual (vocational), unintentional, and indirect. "The terms 'indirect and unintended' indicate that love flows from faith in the Gospel apart from any specific or organized plan or 'intention' on the church's part, while at the same time suggesting that the church serves society 'indirectly' by helping individuals who are in need."<sup>46</sup> Second, the church also intentionally proclaims and encourages that vocational service in her sermons. This level is still indirect but now encouraged intentionally to influence the members. While the first level looks at the spontaneous response of a Christian's faith through good works, as Luther would,<sup>47</sup> the argument for affirming this level is based on the fact that good works ought to be taught and encouraged because God has commanded them.<sup>48</sup> The third level, and of value to us, is the church's interest in engaging mercy works as a community in an intentional and direct way. The reference to examples of such communal concerns in Scripture is in Acts 6:1–7, where the apostles select deacons to relieve them from the task of helping the Hellenist widows so that they could devote themselves to their main task of preaching. However, unlike the preaching activity which the church pursues and addresses specifically through the pastoral ministry, the document allows for a latitude in the church organizing and strategizing her works of mercy: "There is no prescribed manner in which the church must organize today. The structures employed for the work of human care thus differ from the office of the pastoral ministry."<sup>49</sup> The final question, how the works of mercy relate to the preaching activity of the pastoral ministry, is not further specified in the document.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Responses to human need often arise simply because that is the right thing for missionaries to do. That applies to every Christian who empathizes with the neighbor's plight and unselfishly seeks to alleviate it. To display such "brotherly love," a Christian "does not wait until he is given a command or letter from a prince or bishop," Luther observed.<sup>50</sup> As the Christian's faith is sustained and nourished by the Spirit through Word and Sacrament, its fruits become audible and visible to others through word and deed. However, both these acts are also taken up corporately and with

intentionality by the church. Since the church focuses on her mission of proclaiming the Word of God and calling people from darkness into light, she has clarified the relationship of that mission to her acts of mercy. It is a both/and with the acts of mercy supporting her proclamation. In recent decades, the relationship between mercy works and missions has become tenuous and in need of clarification. We have seen that the biblical data and theological anthropology encourage both activities without confusing one with the other. As the church locates her mandate for mercy works in the parable of the Good Samaritan, she also sees both activities rooted in the work of Christ and the apostles, albeit as a continuation that has to make concessions. To those who are on the receiving end, such acts of mercy can become “signs” of the coming kingdom. However, since the church conducts her mission in the age of believing and not seeing (Jn 20:30), she entrusts both operations to the Lord, and lets Him work through them as He sees fit.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> “There was no serious polarization of spiritual and social concerns in missions until the 20<sup>th</sup> century,” Winston Crawley, *Global Missions. A Story to Tell: An Interpretation of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions* (Nashville: Broadman, 1985), 281; Jeffrey Palmer, “Human Needs Ministries,” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry (Nashville: B & H, 2015), Chapter 31, 445.

<sup>2</sup> Alternative terms are manifold: human care, social responsibility, works of love or piety, even means of grace. The latter term, especially, is prone to create interdenominational confusion since Lutherans associate with the *means of grace* God’s delivery system to the world in Word and Sacraments. Instead, the Wesleyan interpretation of works of mercy follows John Wesley’s definition “of outward signs, words or actions ordained by God,” and is thus willing to call Christian works of love the “means of grace,” understanding that through their works of love they participate in God’s gracious acts of love and ensure their continuation in the world. See David Martin Whitworth, *Missio Dei and the Means of Grace. A Theology of Participation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019), 101.

<sup>3</sup> David Bentley Hart, *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Salvation* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> In his blog Michael McClymond’s makes a compelling case against Hart’s universalistic thesis, “David Bentley Hart’s Lonely, Last Stand for Christian Universalism. A Review of ‘That All Shall Be Saved’” (October 2, 2019) <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/shall-saved-universal-christian-universalism-david-bentley-hart/>. The latest edition of

Lutheran Forum 54, no. 2 (Summer 2020) is in part devoted to a rebuttal of Hart's universalistic thesis.

<sup>5</sup> James Scherer, *Gospel, Church and Kingdom. Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Scherer, *Gospel, Church and Kingdom*, 119–121.

<sup>7</sup> Scherer, *Gospel, Church and Kingdom*, 114–121.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Beyerhaus, missiologist at Tübingen University, expressed his concerns in *Humanisierung—die einzige Hoffnung der Welt* (Humanization—the only hope for the world?) and together with significant missiologists at that time drafted the document called *The Frankfurt Declaration*. Peter Beyerhaus, *Missions: Which Way? Humanization or Redemption*, trans. Margaret Clarkson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 107–120.

<sup>9</sup> Michael W. Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 148.

<sup>10</sup> Beyerhaus, *Missions: Which Way?*, 120.

<sup>11</sup> “First, social activity is a *consequence* of evangelism. . . . Secondly, social activity can be a *bridge* to evangelism. . . . Thirdly, social activity . . . also accompanies it as its *partner*.” Scherer, *Gospel, Church and Kingdom*, 184.

<sup>12</sup> International Consultation of the Relationship Between Evangelism and Social Responsibility (CRESR) at Grand Rapids, June 19–25, 1982. *New Directions in Mission & Evangelization I. Basic Statements 1974–1991*, ed. James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 279, 280.

<sup>13</sup> *Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation and Empowerment. An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission*. Published by The Lutheran World Federation Department for Mission and Development (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2004), 38.

<sup>14</sup> “Salvation as the eschatological promise that one day God will be all in all remains in constant tension with the harsh reality of life and its longing for healing. Healing encompasses questions pertaining to health and sickness, and medical, psychiatric, emotional, and spiritual treatment and cure. For Christians of all denominations, healing is a basic theological theme, as it plays a significant role in spiritual life. The existence of disease and the fact that not every sick person among Christians receives healing raise questions about the relation of healing to salvation in Jesus Christ.” *Mission in Context*, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 213.

<sup>16</sup> Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity*, 214.

<sup>17</sup> Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity*, 213.

<sup>18</sup> Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human. Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 213–214.

<sup>19</sup> Sulpicius Severus (AD 363–425), a contemporary Christian writer who helped Martin of Tours's rise to fame, observes of the bishop and his followers: “Rarely did any one of them go beyond the cell, unless when they assembled at the place of prayer. They all took their food together, after the hour of fasting was past. No one used wine, except when illness compelled them to do so. Most of them were clothed in garments of camels' hair. Any dress approaching to softness was there deemed criminal, and this must be thought the more remarkable, because many among them were such as are deemed of noble rank.” Sulpicius Severus, “On the Life of St. Martin” (Chapter 10), in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 11, Second Series (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 9.

<sup>20</sup> Norman Grubb, *C. T. Studd: Cricketer and Pioneer* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2008, reprint of original from 1933), 188–197.

<sup>21</sup> AC 20.19–22 (Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000), 55; Ap. 27.46 (Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 285); Ap. 27.54–56 (Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 286).

<sup>22</sup> “The modern negation of the belief in creation has Karl Barth as its spiritual father: all others are secondary and have grown up in his shadow.” Gustaf Wingren, *The Flight from Creation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), 20.

<sup>23</sup> “Quite a different matter is the Barthian thesis that man without Christ lacks knowledge of the good. By taking that view, one starts in anthropological nihilism, in an ethical vacuum.” Wingren, Gustaf Wingren, *The Flight from Creation*, 73.

<sup>24</sup> Lovemore Togarasei, Lesego Gabaitiri et al., “Christian Medical Mission from the Perspective of Batswana Faith Healers,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 45, no. 2 (April 2021): 145–156. Therein p. 146.

<sup>25</sup> The Formula of Concord speaks of a capacity, though passive, in humans which contrasts them from other creaturely life. FC SD 2.23.60, 71 (Kolb and Wengert, 548, 555, 557). This reference is meant to highlight the uniqueness of human life over other life forms and to indicate that God does not coerce anyone to conversion as if man were a robot or a stone. See also Ray Sherman Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 38.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Luther, “The Bondage of the Will (1525),” in *Career of the Reformer III*, ed. Philip S. Watson, trans. Philip S. Watson and Benjamin Drewery, Vol. 33, *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), AE 33:67.

<sup>27</sup> Michelle Staton, “7 Reasons Why Your Two Week Trip To Haiti Doesn’t Matter: Calling Bull on ‘Service Trips’ and Voluntourism,” *The Almost Doctor’s Channel*, December 15, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20151218082718/http://almost.thedoctorschannel.com/14323-2/>.

<sup>28</sup> Tite Tiénou, “The Training of Missiologists for an African Context,” in *Missiological Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen, Edgar J. Elliston (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 93–100.

<sup>29</sup> Theo Sundermeier is a German missiologist, b. 1935, a former missionary teacher at the Lutheran seminary in Umpumulo, South Africa, before he became the leading missiologist in Germany at the University of Heidelberg.

<sup>30</sup> Sundermeier notes three important functions for convivence today, of sharing a life with others: to help each other, to learn from one another, and to celebrate/feast together (in German: *miteinander leben: einander helfen, voneinander lernen, miteinander feiern*). See Theo Sundermeier, “Theology of Mission,” in *Dictionary of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 429–451; Michael Kisskalt, “Mission as convivence—life sharing and mutual learning in mission: inspirations from German missiology,” *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 11, no. 2 (January 2011): 6–8.

<sup>31</sup> Sundermeier, “Theology of Mission,” 449.

<sup>32</sup> “The Church is the Church only when it exists for others . . . not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell men of every calling what it means to live for Christ, to exist for others.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (NY: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 1953, 1997), 282. See Theo Sundermeier, “Der Kirchenbegriff von Dietrich Bonhoeffer—Eine missiologische Perspektive. Mission und Religion in der Theologie Bonhoeffers,” *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, 42. Jahrgang (4/2016), 349.

<sup>33</sup> Sundermeier, “Theology of Mission,” 449.

<sup>34</sup> “History of Itshelejuba hospital,” Kwazulu-Natal Province Department of Health Republic of South Africa, <http://www.kznhealth.gov.za/itshelejuba/history.htm>.

<sup>35</sup> For further details on the beginning of the society, see Klaus Detlev Schulz, “Nineteenth Century Lutheran Missions,” *Logia* 29, no. 4 (Reformation 2020): 62–63.

<sup>36</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf, “Zur Begründung unserer Hospitalarbeit,” in *Lutherische Kirche treibt lutherische Mission. Festschrift zum 75 jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (Bleckmar: Mission Evangelisch=Lutherischer Freikirchen, 1967), 143–149.

<sup>37</sup> Hopf, “Zur Begründung unserer Hospitalarbeit,” 143.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Luther in “Two Kinds of Righteousness,” 1519 (AE 31:297–306): “Just as he himself did all things for us, not seeking his own good but ours only—and in this he was most obedient to God the Father—so he desires that we should set the same example for our neighbors” (300). For a discussion on the connection of Christology to the moral righteousness and works of mercy in missions, see Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 126–128; 258–259.

<sup>39</sup> Hopf, “Zur Begründung unserer Hospitalarbeit,” 144.

<sup>40</sup> Hopf, “Zur Begründung unserer Hospitalarbeit,” 145.

<sup>41</sup> Hopf, “Zur Begründung unserer Hospitalarbeit,” 146: “Wie nun unsere Predigt heute einerseits apostolisches Zeugnis ist und doch andererseits nur das Wort derer ist, die nicht selbst Apostel sind, so ist unser helfendes und heilendes Handeln einerseits, wo und wann Gott will, ‘Zeichen’ der Königsherrschaft Christi zur Bekräftigung unserer Predigt und doch andererseits nur der Dienst derer, die nicht selbst die Gabe der Krankenheilung besitzen.”

<sup>42</sup> See here agreement with Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 252.

<sup>43</sup> Hopf, “Zur Begründung unserer Hospitalarbeit,” 146.

<sup>44</sup> Hopf, “Zur Begründung unserer Hospitalarbeit,” 144: “Wir können es auch so ausdrücken: neben die diakonische Begründung unseres Dienstes tritt, mit ihr unlöslich sich verbinding, die eigentlich missionarische.”

<sup>45</sup> Hopf, “Zur Begründung unserer Hospitalarbeit,” 149: “Sind . . . wir bereit zur Zuordnung und Unterordnung unserer Arbeit unter das Amt der Verkündigung.” This distinction and alignment of both works of the church finds contemporary agreement: “Evangelism is an indispensable dimension of the mission of the church; it is essential and cannot be replaced by deeds or presence of by any other aspect of the church’s mission.” Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 237–238. Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission. Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 146: “In light of scripture’s clear and repeated teaching on the eternal consequences of one’s spiritual state—forgiveness and eternal life versus judgment and eternal condemnation—we must maintain that the spiritual and the temporal needs of people cannot be placed on an equal plane.” Ott and Strauss, “The task of missions should address the most diverse of human needs, but the ministry of spiritual redemption and transformation remains uniquely central in both method and spirit,” 147.

<sup>46</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), *Faith Active in Love: Human Care in the Church’s Life* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1999), 15.

<sup>47</sup> One may see here Luther’s *Preface to St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*: “O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them” (AE 35:370). “Faith, however, is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, John 1[:12–



13]. It kills the Old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit” (AE 35:370). “For through faith a man becomes free from sin and comes to take pleasure in God’s commandments” (AE 35:371). *The Freedom of the Christian*: “This is a truly Christian life. Here faith is truly active through love [Gal. 5:6], that is, it finds expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward; and for himself he is satisfied with the fullness and wealth of his faith” (AE 31:365).

<sup>48</sup> Ap 4. 189 (Kolb and Wengert, 150): “good works are to be done because God requires them. . . . Thus good works ought to follow faith as thanksgiving toward God. . . . so that faith is exercised in them, grows, and is shown to others.” FC Ep. 4.18 (Kolb and Wengert, 499): “it is no less necessary to admonish the people to Christian discipline and good works and to remind them how necessary it is that they practice good works as a demonstration of their faith and their gratitude to God than it is to admonish them that works not be mingled with the article on justification.”

<sup>49</sup> CTCR, *Faith Active in Love*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> “In such a case a Christian looks with brotherly love at the need of the poor and perishing souls and does not wait until he is given a command or letter from a prince or bishop.” Martin Luther, “That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture,” (1523), AE 39:310.