

# Confessional Missions

or,

*“How I learned to trust the Holy Spirit  
to build Christ's holy, apostolic, and Catholic Church”*

A Confessional Lutheran Reflection on Missions

by

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## What is Confessional?

Preface to the Book of Concord, Second paragraph: Jakob Andraea & Martin Chemnitz

In these last days of this transitory world the Almighty God, out of immeasurable love, grace, and mercy for the human race, has allowed the light of his holy gospel and his Word that alone grants salvation to appear and shine forth purely, unalloyed and unadulterated out of the superstitious, papistic darkness for the German nation, our beloved fatherland. As a result, a short confession was assembled out of the divine, apostolic, and prophetic Scripture.

## What is Missional?

**Matthew 28:18-20** *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

**Luke 24:46-47** *“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”*

## Eugene Peterson

*“Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity.”* ©1987, Eerdmans

“American pastors are abandoning their posts, left and right, and at an alarming rate. They are not leaving their churches and getting other jobs. Congregations still pay their salaries. Their names remain on the church stationery and they continue to appear in pulpits on Sundays. But they are abandoning their posts, their calling. They have gone whoring after other gods. What they do with their time under the guise of pastoral ministry hasn't the remotest connection with what the church's pastors have done for most of twenty centuries...

“The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers, and the shops they keep are churches. They are preoccupied with shopkeeper's concerns—how to keep the customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods so that the customers will lay out more money.

“Some of them are very good shopkeepers. They attract lots of customers, pull in great sums of money, develop splendid reputations. Yet it is still shopkeeping; religious shopkeeping, to be sure, but shopkeeping all the same...

“The biblical fact is that there are no successful churches. There are, instead, communities of sinners, gathered before God week after week in towns and villages all over the world. The Holy Spirit gathers them and does his work in them. In these communities of sinners, one of the sinners is called pastor and given a

designated responsibility in the community. The pastor's responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God. It is this responsibility that is being abandoned in spades.”

## Truly Confessional and Mission Oriented

**Acts 2:42-47** *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”*

**Romans 10:14-15** *“How then will they call on him in whom they have believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?”*

## Small & Large Catechism (Intro)

*(Opening paragraph of Preface to Large Catechism)* It is not for trivial reasons that we constantly treat the catechism and exhort and implore others to do the same, for we see that unfortunately many preachers and pastors are very negligent in doing so and thus despise both their office and this teaching. Some do it out of their great learnedness, while others do so out of pure laziness and concern for their bellies.

*(Paragraph 9, Preface to Large Catechism)* Therefore, I beg such lazy bellies and presumptuous saints, for God's sake, to let themselves be convinced and believe that they are not really and truly such learned and exalted doctors as they think. I implore them not ever to imagine that they have learned these parts of the catechism perfectly, or that they know them sufficiently, even though they think they know them ever so well. Even if their knowledge of the catechism were perfect (although that is impossible in this life), yet it is highly profitable and fruitful to read it daily and to make it the subject of meditation and conversation. In such reading, conversation, and meditation the Holy Spirit is present and bestows ever new and greater light and devotion, so that it tastes better and better and is digested.

## Apostles' Creed

*(SC, AC Third Article's meaning – CPH)* I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit

has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the one true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

*(LC, AC Third Article, paragraph 38-39)* Neither you nor I could ever know anything about Christ, or believe in him and receive him as Lord, unless these were offered to us and bestowed on our hearts through the preaching of the gospel by the Holy Spirit. The work is finished and completed; Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death, and resurrection, etc. But if the work remained hidden so that no one knew of it, it would have been in vain, all lost. In order that this treasure might not remain buried but be put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to be published and proclaimed, in which he has given the Holy Spirit to offer and apply to us this treasure, this redemption. Therefore being made holy is nothing else than bringing us to the Lord Christ to receive this blessing, to which we could not have come by ourselves.

*(LC, AC Third Article, paragraph 54-55)* Further we believe that in this Christian community we have the forgiveness of sins, which takes place through the sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire gospel. This encompasses everything that is to be preached about the sacraments and, in short, the entire gospel and all the official responsibilities of the Christian community. Forgiveness is constantly needed, for although God's grace has been acquired by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God's Word in the unity of the Christian Church, yet we are never without sin because we carry our flesh around our neck...

Therefore everything in this Christian community is so ordered that everyone may obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and signs appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live on earth. Although we have sin, the Holy Spirit sees to it that it does not harm us because we are a part of this Christian community. Here the full forgiveness of sins, both in that God forgives us and that we forgive, bear with, and aid one another.

## **Augsburg Confession IV:**

Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we

receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St Paul says in Romans 3[:21-26] and 4[:5]. (*German Edition, Kolb-Wengert, 38 & 40*)

## **Augsburg Confession V:**

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ's merit, when we so believe.

Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that we obtain the Holy Spirit without the external word of the gospel through our own preparation, thoughts, and works. (*German Edition, Kolb-Wengert, 40*)

## **Augsburg Confession VII:**

It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church. It is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.

For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian church that there the gospel is preached harmoniously according to a pure understanding and the sacraments are administered in conformity with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that uniform ceremonies, instituted by human beings, be observed everywhere. As Paul says in Ephesians 4[:4-5]: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (*German Edition, Kolb-Wengert, 42*)

## **Was Ist Das?**

**John 15:18-19** "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as one of its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

## **Hermann Sasse**

From "The Lonely Way," Vol I (pages 463-4) "*The Presence of Christ and the Future of the Church*" — A general essay from 1938.

"Whether the church is present or not does not depend on the good or evil will of people, but only of [Christ's] will. If [God] in his limitless mercy wills that his Gospel be preached also in the future among our people, and that generations of our

people yet unborn should hear the saving message of the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ, then it will most certainly happen. No one knows how it happens... How is it that this understanding of the church, which depends not on people, but only upon Christ, has perished throughout broad stretches of Evangelical Christianity? Once at the beginning of the second century a great church father said, "Where Christ is, there is the church."

"How is it that this truth, which Luther still believed so firmly and which gave him so firm and peaceful a heart in the midst of all the struggles over the church, has been forgotten? We speak a good game about how the existence of the church depends alone on Jesus Christ being with us always until the end of the world. But we live and act as though the church were built upon bishops and synods, Councils of Brethren and professors of theology, pastors and congregations, and not solely "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, where Jesus Christ is the cornerstone" [Eph 2:20]. And because we have much too high a regard for our own thought and doing, our faith and our speaking, nothing comes of our nervous fastidiousness, our anxiety and grief over the future, and our self-inflicted and increasing pain brought on by ecclesiastical busyness. We do not note that with this we only pay our tribute to the world, which condemns itself to destruction in anxiety and grief because it knows nothing of the great "Fear not!" of the NT. Nor can it know anything of it. We do not mean that the Word of God is in any way sluggish. Luther was not slothful, and neither were the apostles, though they knew that of themselves they could not have maintained the church. Quite to the contrary! The experience of the history of the church teaches that generally in the church there is the most fervent and blessed labor where people really understand that "with might of ours can naught be done, Soon were our loss effected." We do not see a foreboding sign for our ecclesiastical life in the fact that in the church today we work seriously and hard, harder than in previous times—indeed we have the negligence of entire generations to make up for! We see it rather in the fact that we, more often than not, do this work as though Jesus Christ were not really present in his church. That is the secret disbelief which has more deeply and adversely affected the Lutheran Church than any external influences of older or newer paganism."

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