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## The Beginnings of Jewish Missions in the LCMS

Jaron Melin

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, [jaronpmelin@protonmail.com](mailto:jaronpmelin@protonmail.com)

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Jaron is an STM-student at Concordia Seminary. He earned a bachelor's and a master's degree in Mathematics from Wichita State University, and he earned his MDiv in 2022 from Concordia Seminary. He and his wife Elizabeth are blessed with four children: Joanna, James, John, and a baby on the way. They live in Herington, KS, where Jaron serves as pastor of Our Redeemer, Immanuel, and St. John's Lutheran Churches.



## *The Beginnings of Jewish Missions in the LCMS*

Jaron Melin

Mission is the theological account of the relationship between the church and the world. Where are the Jews in this relationship? If the church and the Jews had a relationship status on Facebook, then it might say, “It’s complicated.” This may be true of any kind of missions, but this shows itself to be especially true in Lutheran history and in particular LCMS-history. I look at the histories as recorded by Meyer, Lieske, Cohen, Parviz, and others on the early history of Jewish Missions in the LCMS, and I reflect on the context and theology behind them using missiologists like Bosch, Newbigin, Bediako, Walther, and others. I consider how the LCMS formulates or operates with the relationship between the church and the world with respect to the Jewish people. In this snapshot, we see the Missouri Synod operating in the midst of paradigm-shifts in mission as it deals with medieval, Protestant, and early modern paradigms all coming to a head as they reach out to Jews with the gospel of Christ, who came for Jews and Greeks as well as Germans and English alike.

### **Jewish Missions before the LCMS**

Before I begin where Jewish missions in the LCMS starts, I look into some of the context going into it. In fact, we consider some of the context before the beginning of the LCMS. Luther’s concern for the Jews is of course mixed and highly controvertible. We have every positive attitude toward the Jews and the desire for their conversion from *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* (LW 45:199–299) as well as every negative attitude toward the Jews from *On the Jews and Their Lies* (LW 47:123–306). In his last sermon, Luther spoke these words three days before he died:

We want to act in a Christian way toward them and offer them first of all the Christian faith, that they might accept the Messiah, who, after all, is their kinsman and born of their flesh and blood and is the real seed of Abraham of which they boast... We still want to treat them with Christian

love and to pray for them, so that they might become converted and would receive the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, Luther did have some concern for the well-being of the Jews even close to the end of his life, seeing them as ethnically related to Jesus Christ through Abraham but also as a people in need of saving faith in Him. The church is rooted in the promises to Abraham, to whom Jews are biologically related, but the Jews are in the world by unbelief.

Although there were some Jews who converted during the Reformation and some of Luther's contemporaries like Melancthon, Osiander, and Sebastian Muenster defended or reached out to the Jews, Jewish missions in Lutheranism were very scarce in the 1600s and 1700s.<sup>2</sup> The major shift in Jewish missions takes place in the 1700s with the rise of Pietism. Philip Spener himself replants Lutheran interest in the Jews in the *Pia Desideria*, showing how impious living has been a terrible witness to the Jews:

They cannot believe it possible that we hold that Christ is true God because we do not obey His commands, or they conclude that Jesus must have been a wicked man when they judge him and his teachings by our lives. We cannot deny the offense which we have given these poor people has been a major cause of the past hardheadedness of the Jews and a major impediment to their conversion.<sup>3</sup>

From the 20th century, missiologist Lesslie Newbigin elaborates on the roles of word and deed together in the church's witness to the world.<sup>4</sup> Mission happens in both word and deed, in speaking and doing, and both are done with faith in God's promises through Christ by the Holy Spirit. Jesus demonstrates His lordship and openly shows His kingdom at work through the church. In short, Newbigin says, "The words explain the deeds, and the deeds validate the words."<sup>5</sup> Speaking God's Word and living it out need to be in alignment in missions, and Spener was pointing out how this had not been the case for the church in relation to the Jews. In other words, it is not the case that God has rejected the Jews so that there is no need to witness to them anymore as some might claim. Christians have contributed to the hardheadedness of Jews. We have been a stumbling block to the them by our impious living. Our conduct has been a bad witness for Christ.

Nevertheless, even through the church, which is full of people who are saints and sinners at the same time, God is the primary Actor in mission. Newbigin suggests that we view mission as *missio Dei*—God's action of sending His Son into the world and of sending His Holy Spirit to dwell in the church. *Missio Dei* views God's action as central to mission and views the human efforts of missions as

derivative.<sup>6</sup> Viewing God’s mission as central to human missions helps to avoid two ditches: (1) viewing missions strictly in terms of evangelism—that it is all about winning souls to conversion, focusing on numerical growth, and not caring about their earthly well-being; (2) viewing missions as only doing God’s will on earth—that it is all about fixing worldly problems, seeking only justice and peace, and not caring about their spiritual well-being. Bosch points out how the theology of Luther and the Reformers had a theocentric and Christocentric emphasis for mission:

The starting point of the Reformers’ theology was not what people could or should do for the salvation of the world, but what God has already done in Christ. He visits the peoples of the earth with his light; he furthers his word so that it may “run” and “increase” till the last day dawns. The church was created by the *verbum externum* (God’s word from outside humanity) and to the church this word has been entrusted. One might even say that it is the gospel itself which “missionizes” and in this process enlists human beings.<sup>7</sup>

The emphasis on mission then is not being dependent on human efforts: “No preacher, no missionary, should ever dare to attribute to his or her own zeal what is, in fact, God’s own work.”<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Luther promoted neither passivity nor quietism but rather a faith which was living and active. If a person were to find himself in a place without Christians, “he would be under obligation to preach and teach the gospel to the erring pagans or non-Christians because of the duty of brotherly love, even if no human being had called him to do this.”<sup>9</sup> In doing Jewish missions, then, we should be aware of God’s work as primary and our work as secondary. Therefore, we should proclaim the gospel to the Jews, show that we care for them, and trust in God to do His work through the gospel.

Another note about Spener’s theology which will surface later in LCMS history is how he interprets Romans 11.25–26: “So if not all, at least a perceptibly large number of Jews, who have hitherto hardened their hearts will be converted to the Lord.”<sup>10</sup> How to consider the implications of “And in this way all Israel will be saved” is hairy and complicated, but we first see here some of the beginnings of reaching out to the Jews for the sake of fulfilling this passage before Christ’s Second Coming. It seems that Spener was unwilling to take “all” literally and showed some reservation, but later interpreters would not show such reservation. For the time being, Spener’s call to action was this: “It is incumbent on all of us to see to it that as much as possible is done, on the one hand, to convert the Jews and weaken the spiritual power of the papacy and, on the other hand, to reform our church.”<sup>11</sup> In this way, we see at least a taste of viewing the church’s mission as having a particular concern for converting Jews and not just the world in general.

One reason for mentioning Spener and Pietism within the history of the

LCMS is to mark that a great paradigm-shift in how Christians viewed mission had happened before the LCMS was even born. Consider first what came before Pietism. In characterizing the Medieval Roman Catholic paradigm of mission, Bosch shows how the church as a legitimate institution must do the sending, which in the Middle Ages meant extending the authority of the pope to new realms by establishing new bishops even before there were believers in the area. Even as monks and mendicant friars carried out missions to foreign lands by roaming the countryside and preaching, they had to work underneath the institutional authority of the bishop. Even the monks and friars had to be sent by proper ecclesiastical permission. Since the church is institutional, then its mission must work through legitimate institutional channels.

Bosch also characterizes this model with Luke 14.23: “and compel them to come in.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, coercion and force were more common in medieval times than in modern times. Bosch bases this argument on a few points: (1) Augustine argued that the Donatists should be forced back into the Catholic fold; (2) throughout the Middle Ages, many pagans and Jews were forced into conversion or at least into being baptized; (3) the mentality existed as late as the 1500s, where opponents of Las Casas challenged his gentle and non-coercive missionary approach, which explained that “compel” meant persuasion, not coercion; (4) in the 1500s and beyond, missions often took the form of European colonization of the non- Western world.<sup>13</sup> If there was no salvation outside the formal membership of the Roman Catholic Church, then it was eternally advantageous for outsiders to be made to join the Church. It is not necessarily the case that the whole church in the Middle Ages used coercive methods in missions (e.g. mendicant friars, Las Casas, etc.), but Bosch notes that this coercive aspect developed and grew prominent during the course of the Middle Ages just as Christendom and Constantinianism solidified. To characterize all of the Middle Ages as coercive in missions would be unfair, but it would be fair to say that coercion grew more prominent during this time-period. Between the Early Church before Constantine and the Middle Ages, a profound change did occur as the institutional church gained power in the civil realm and wanted to bring others into its jurisdiction. The point of Bosch’s use of paradigms is to note when fundamental shifts in approaches to mission were occurring, not necessarily to put a blanket characterization on the whole church in a certain time period. In the Medieval Roman Catholic paradigm, coercion was a significant development in the church’s approach to mission.

In the paradigm of the Protestant Reformation, a new shift occurred where the legitimacy of the papacy was questioned and overruled, yet the sense of needing a legitimate channel for doing missions was still there. Bosch points out, “The Reformers, on the other hand, could not conceive of a missionary outreach into countries in which there was no Protestant (Lutheran, Reformed, etc)

government.”<sup>14</sup> The importance of jurisdiction was still at play, but it rested rather on the shoulders of political government. The king has the authority to organize the church and work toward evangelizing. Instead of the universal authority and jurisdiction of the pope for missions, authority and jurisdiction became limited and localized to secular Christian rulers.

The next paradigm shift comes with Pietism in modern times. Bosch characterizes the efforts of Spener and his followers as the “Pietist Breakthrough”.<sup>15</sup> For the Pietists, mission was the work of genuinely converted Christians to bring about the conversion of others. This model of mission was bounded neither by institution nor by geography. The “inner church” was bounded by its personal experience of God. This core group was responsible for praying and working for the conversion of the unconverted, including their immediate surroundings of the community or even their own congregations, but this also extended in efforts toward unconverted people everywhere. This challenged the institutional aspect of the Medieval Roman Catholic paradigm as well as the localized aspect of the Protestant paradigm. Pietists believed that they did not need permission from institutional authorities in order to evangelize. Every Christian has the authority and the duty to share the gospel with non-Christians. Also, they believed that they were not limited by local government or jurisdiction. Any Christian could evangelize anywhere without permission from the church or the government. Christians could evangelize even in areas which were not ruled by Christian governments. They did not need colonization for evangelization.

Pietism also challenged the coercive aspect which developed in the Medieval Roman Catholic paradigm by emphasizing the principle of “voluntarism” in mission.<sup>16</sup> Jakob Jocz points out this feature as well in connection to Jewish missions: “But the great pioneer in this direction was Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705), who was the first to work out a detailed missionary plan of the Christian approach to the Jews. Its main significance was the renunciation of all forms of coercion.”<sup>17</sup> Pietists focused their efforts on helping others genuinely choose to become believers in Christ. Any genuine Christian could evangelize any non-Christian by means of prayer and persuasion. Spener exhibited this mindset also with respect to the Jews. Any genuine Christian had the obligation to seek the conversion of the Jews but could not force them to come to faith, for the Jew had to make a personally free decision to become a believer in Christ.



One more thing to note about the influence of Pietism is that it led to Jewish missions before the LCMS had even arrived on the scene or seriously considered Jewish missions on a synodical level. Francke set up the Institutum

Judaicum at Halle in 1728, and the first organized mission to the Jews in Europe was the Berlin Israel mission, established in 1822.<sup>18</sup> Franz Delitzsch gathered several Jewish missions into the *Evangelisch Lutherische Zentralverein fuer Mission unter Israel* in Leipzig in the year 1869, which became a seminary and training center for Jewish missionaries. The zeal for Jewish missions spread to Scandinavia as well. The Norwegian Jewish Mission was organized in 1844, which supported English and German missionary societies until 1890 then switched locations and worked until 1948–1949. Swedish, Danish, and Finnish mission-societies cropped up as well throughout the 1800s specifically to reach out to Jews. Other Jewish mission societies developed in England and Scotland as well. For example, Alexander Duff, who had been the first missionary commissioned by the Church of Scotland, later in 1866 urged the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland to create a new chair of “evangelistic theology” at New College.<sup>19</sup> Duff wanted the institute to address questions which arose from Christian encounters with other cultures. Among the various concerns of study was the Jewish community. In the United States, Norwegian Lutherans in Wisconsin helped to organize the Zion Society for Israel in 1878, which was intentionally inter-Lutheran. Many Christians in Europe and in America were caring about the conversion of Jews before the LCMS.

The creation of many mission societies happened during the era of the Enlightenment. This has at least two implications for our investigation. First, the belief in progress filled the West with an intractable confidence for the future.<sup>20</sup> They were convinced that they could and indeed would remake the world in their own image. Second, the individual was emancipated and autonomous. Bosch shows the contrast between the Enlightenment and the Middle Ages concerning the individual:

In the Middle Ages community took priority over the individual, although, as I have argued earlier, the emphasis on the individual was discernible in Western theology at least since the time of Augustine. In Augustine and Luther the individual was, however, never emancipated and autonomous but was regarded, first and foremost, as standing in a relationship to God and the church. Now individuals became important and interesting in and to themselves.<sup>21</sup>

Each individual was allowed to think and act as he saw fit. These two implications had their effects on Christians as well. Instead of having the orientation of looking into the past for guidance like the Renaissance and Protestant orthodoxy did, the orientation of the Enlightenment looked forward, and this influenced churches to view God as their benevolent Creator, humans as capable of moral improvement, and the kingdom of God as the crown of Christianity’s steady progression.<sup>22</sup> The

idea of progress began in the 1600s and reached its peak in the 1800s. In short, Bosch says, “Protestant missions could not escape its optimism and its orientation toward the future.”<sup>23</sup> In fact, Protestant circles had grown enthusiastic about the prospect of the decline of the papacy and the large-scale conversion of Jews. Such views of the future would later become debates on eschatology and what role the Jews would have in the midst of that. With respect to the autonomous individual, church and mission became two separate things. Mission societies did the sending rather than official offices of the church. They were self-organized, self-initiated, and voluntary. They had only as much connection to official church structures as its members wanted to have. Mission societies functioned as organizations rather than churches. This completely bypassed the limitations of church structure and even those of the state. Missionaries were agents of the mission societies, not the churches. As such, they often cared less about having a confessional stance, emphasizing individual conversion over doctrinal agreement. As mission societies began to dominate in the 1800s, mission dropped off as a feature of the church. Missions were outsourced to voluntary mission societies. Doing mission was no longer integral to being church. The church was an institution, and mission was its own institution separate from the church which functioned differently.

Even before the LCMS was formed, major paradigm shifts had occurred in the Christian world. When the LCMS was formed, influences from Pietism and the Enlightenment were already in the missional mindset of the Western church. Even German Lutherans had been affected by these to some extent. However, they were holding onto other paradigms as well. The missional paradigms which Bosch explains do not have to be restricted to their timeframes but could exist at any point in history. In fact, multiple paradigms could exist within a single church or even a single individual. What we see in the early history of Jewish missions in the LCMS is a clash of paradigms. We see some clashing of paradigms as Walther and the LCMS deal with the Chiliastic Controversy and as the LCMS takes on its first Jewish Missionary.

### **The Chiliastic Controversy in the LCMS**

In 1847, the LCMS began as the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States.<sup>24</sup> In the face of the Definite Platform in 1855, Walther sought even more to promote Lutheran confessionalism, which led to a call to have free conferences between Lutheran church bodies which subscribed to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession for the purposes of being united.<sup>25</sup> Beginning in 1855, Walther jumpstarted *Lehre und Wehre* as an editorial for pastors, complementing *Der Lutheraner* which was intended for the broader audience of the laity. The editorial staff of *Lehre und Wehre* regarded doctrinal agreement with the basic confession of the Lutheran church as a necessary condition as it published the call for the free



conferences. Four of these free conferences convened between 1856 and 1859. A fifth one was planned for 1860, but it did not happen.

Although no singular cause can be determined for the end of these free conferences, one possible tension which probably contributed to this was the Chiliastic Controversy of the late 1850s and early 1860s.<sup>26</sup> Chiliasm, known today as millennialism and more specifically as post-millennialism, promoted at this time that based on Revelation 20 and Romans 11.26–29, the world would successively become better and better, and that its triumphal success would include the conversion of all the Jews.<sup>27</sup> One figure in particular who promoted this was Georg Schieferdecker.<sup>28</sup> Schieferdecker was a pastor in the Missouri Synod who initially kept his chiliasm to himself but later publicly proclaimed it. Walther opposed this because he considered it to be church-dividing, and the Missouri Synod agreed. As a result, the Missouri Synod at convention in 1857 unanimously confirmed the resolution which condemns chiliasm in every form as well as anyone who openly teaches and propagates such teaching.<sup>29</sup> So then, Schieferdecker left the Missouri Synod and joined the Iowa Synod instead, which strained relations between the Missouri Synod and the Iowa Synod as well as relations with Wilhelm Löhe, who had hoped that the Iowa Synod would be a mediator between the Missouri Synod and the Buffalo Synod. Löhe believed that chiliasm was not church-dividing and that its opponents could not satisfactorily offer exegetical proof against it.<sup>30</sup> Ehlers also chided the Missouri Synod, believing that neither the Scriptures, the Creeds, nor the Confessions speak clearly against chiliasm. Neither Ehlers nor Löhe believe that chiliasm comes into conflict with any “genuine” article of faith.

Walther responded to this theological debate among the wider audience of the *Lehre und Wehre* in 1859 and 1860.<sup>31</sup> Walther makes an exegetically extensive argument that Revelation 20 and Romans 11.25–27 do not point toward the way in which Christ’s future kingdom shall come, and he makes a confessional argument that chiliasm does indeed go against a fundamental article of faith, namely AC XVII concerning the return of Christ for judgment. He further argues that the Lutheran church throughout its history has dealt with chiliasm appropriately in this way. Walther thoroughly opposed chiliasm as trying to turn Christ’s kingdom into an earthly kingdom. He also thoroughly opposed the rampant optimism of the age which was due to the Enlightenment. Although he opposed chiliasm, Walther was not opposed to preaching to Jews. In fact, he had a compelling urgency to see his church begin mission work among the “children of Abraham according to the flesh.”<sup>32</sup> However, he wanted to do so on the basis of true doctrine, not on chiliasm, as well as for the genuine concern and spiritual wellbeing of the Jews, not for the sake of making Christ’s kingdom come by our own efforts.

### Jewish Missions of the LCMS in the Late 1800s

In 1881, the Central Illinois District of the Missouri petitioned the Missouri Synod “to con-sider its responsibility for establishing a synodical means for enlisting and coordinating the interest and obligation of every Christian to bear witness to his Jewish fellowmen.”<sup>33</sup> The Synod delegated the responsibility for Jewish missions to the Districts and gave its blessing to “all efforts of interested individuals to [make use of] any synodical means to publicize the matter.”<sup>34</sup> In the same year of 1881, *Der Lutheraner* published the appeal in six installments. The central motive given was the confessional nature of the Lutheran church: “We have this heritage of our fathers in our Confessions. The Lord has entrusted this talent to us in order that we might enrich and serve others.”<sup>35</sup> Other reasons were given as well: the example of Jesus and the apostles, the presence of 230,000 Jews in the USA in major eastern cities, the predominant use of the German language among American Jews, how many Jews were converting, the receptivity of Reformed Jews as opposed to Orthodox Jews, the shaky position of chiliasm which other Protestant Jewish mission societies adopted, the availability of Hebrew New Testaments, and the suitability of Luther’s writings for tracts on Jewish missions.<sup>36</sup>

So then, the debates on chiliasm in 1859–1860 did in fact raise awareness for Jewish missions eventually. Not to be overlooked is the fact of immigration. From 1881 to 1910, over 1.5 million Jews entered the USA.<sup>37</sup> More than two-thirds were Russians, and between one-fifth and one-sixth were from Austria-Hungary. From 1818 to 1914, Jewish population in America grew from 300,000 to 3,000,000. The Russian Jews were fleeing from persecution, and the German Jews were seeking work, and the era of Reconstruction gave them that opportunity.<sup>38</sup> Seeing that most Jewish immigrants were Russian, it is interesting to note that the



Missouri Synod made particular attention to the German Jews. In this way, cultural and confessional concerns overlapped.<sup>39</sup>

The role of identity comes into play in Jewish missions. From the African context, Bediako gives some insight into the role of identity and culture with theology.<sup>40</sup> Theology develops from discerning what it means to be Christian, from discerning Christian identity, which also deals with culture. Ethnocentrism often came along with Western missionary efforts to Africans, which still bears the devastating effects of colonialism today. We cannot be culturally impartial in passing down the Christian faith. In short, Bediako contended that there is continuity of African identity before and after Christian conversion. Similarly, Pastor Kevin Parviz, executive director of Lutheran in Jewish Evangelism, says, "Though Jewish believers in the Messiah are Christians, they do not cease to be Jews."<sup>41</sup> The same could be said for the German Jews of the 1800s. On one hand, the Missouri Synod did not adopt the medieval paradigm of coercion but rather followed the example of Spener and the Pietists, seeking to convince rather than coerce. On the other hand, the Missouri Synod still reasoned its theology in German. Their Lutheran Confessions were still in German, and it was difficult to separate their theology from their German identity. Reaching out to non-Germans had its challenges, but reaching out to German Jewish immigrants had some familiarity to it. Although these immigrants were not Lutheran, they were still German, and the Missouri Synod could relate with them on that level. Many of the Jews tended to drop their old customs and to lose their connection with the synagogue.<sup>42</sup> This may be due to the fact that humanism had heavily influenced Germany, leaving German Jews to find their German roots to be more central to their identity than their Jewish roots.<sup>43</sup> Although the Missouri Synod did not make Jews renounce their Jewishness like the Roman Catholics did in the Spanish Inquisition, they appealed more to their German identity than their Jewish identity. It is only in more recent decades that the question of inculturation has become more prominent in Messianic Judaism and even in the LCMS in reaching out to Jews. Also, the rise in Zionism and the establishment of the modern state of Israel has brought about a renewal of interest in claiming Jewish identity. Parviz makes the distinction between Rabbinic Jews and Biblical Jews in helping Jews to reorient their identity with respect to the biblical story.<sup>44</sup> Whether it is German identity or Jewish identity, it must be placed within the context of God's story to be renewed in Christian identity. So then, cultural identity was not obliterated but rather found new meaning in the Christian story in the early Jewish missions of the LCMS.

In 1884, the Missouri Synod established the Commission for Jewish Mission.<sup>45</sup> This was made possible with the arrival of Daniel Landsmann. Landsmann was born an Orthodox Jew in Russia. While residing in Jerusalem in 1863, Landsmann became a Christian. He then worked as a Protestant missionary

to the Jews in Constantinople for the Scottish Society for Jewish Missions. Walther's son-in-law Samuel Keyl was an emigrant missionary in New York, and he had correspondence with Swedish Pastor Sward in Constantinople.<sup>46</sup> As the word went out in 1881 that the Missouri Synod needed a Jewish missionary, Landsmann came to America that same year, expecting to find an assignment waiting for him.<sup>47</sup> However, Landsmann was sent to Concordia Seminary in Springfield, Illinois for further theological training in orthodox Lutheranism.<sup>48</sup> Even though he went through two years of seminary, he was anxious to begin work.<sup>49</sup> Landsmann was in his mid-40s and already had 17 or 18 years of missionary experience. He was not young, and he had a lot of experience in Jewish missions already. He did not want to wait much longer to go back into the mission field. In 1883, the pastoral conference in New York City resolved to take him as an "evangelist," and three pastors and their congregations pledged their support to Landsmann's missionary work among the Jews in New York. Since he was never ordained as a pastor in the Missouri Synod, he had to direct new converts to local pastors so that the converts would be integrated into German-Lutheran congregations.<sup>50</sup> Landsmann could not plant new churches. Landsmann worked to evangelize Jews in New York for 13 years, and a total of 37 Jews came to faith in Christ and were baptized in the Lutheran church. One notable example was Rabbi Nathaniel Friedmann. He used to be an anti-missionary<sup>51</sup> until he himself converted through Landsmann's missionary work.<sup>52</sup> Friedmann then served as a pastor for 45 years and even translated the Small Catechism into Yiddish. The example of Landsmann showed that a paradigm clash had occurred. Landsmann fully expected to have an assignment in America, but he had to jump through some unexpected hoops. Initially, he was expected to become a pastor, and even when they allowed him to work without being ordained, he had to work in close connection to pastors and congregations. In his previous work, he was under the auspices of a mission society. The paradigm of a mission society as we have seen was independent of a church institution. In coming to the Missouri Synod, he saw that church and mission were not as separable as mission societies had made them out to be. Walther had given a strong response to mission societies in 1876:

But, beloved, the mission societies that had arisen as a sign of the newly awakened Christian life, were also a sign that the whole church was not what it should be. For where things are as they should be, there is no need for small mission societies to be organized within the church, for the whole church must itself be a great mission society...The Christian church itself is the proper mission society founded by God Himself.<sup>53</sup>

Although the Missouri Synod did not have the medieval paradigm of coercion in the sense of relinquishing Jewish identity, it still exhibited the need to work

through legitimate channels within the church. Landsmann could not be a lone missionary doing his own thing. He needed to have some legitimate connection with the church. Landsmann either needed to become a pastor or be in close connection to pastors and congregations. In the paradigm of the mission society, the individual preceded the church, but for the Missouri Synod, the church preceded the individual. However, the Missouri Synod's emphasis for the church was more on the local congregation than it was for the overarching institution. The overarching institution of the synod would only hold together if the pastors and congregations shared the same confession of faith by subscribing to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

## Conclusions

### Objectifying Jews in Jewish Missions

Just as debates raged in the Chiliastic Controversy over the role of Jews in the coming of Christ's kingdom, parallel debates exist today among Evangelicals whether we should evangelize the Jews in order to convert all of the Israel so that Christ's kingdom may come on earth. Parviz points out how this is seen by Jews as self-serving.<sup>54</sup> Andrew Root makes a parallel argument in relation to youth ministry.<sup>55</sup> One pervasive problem within youth ministry is that we often engage with youth for the sake of influencing them into a relationship with Jesus. This is a problem because having an ulterior motive for our relationships with youth actually subverts the very relationship which we are trying to form. It is as if to say we care about having a relationship with them only if it might lead them to Jesus. If the youth shows no interest in Jesus, then the friendship is in jeopardy, which calls into question whether the friendship was actually genuine in the first place. Root poignantly says, "Christ calls me into self-giving, suffering for the adolescent, with no pretense or agenda."<sup>56</sup> Root offers a reflective question which could be helpful in our missional practices: "Is the practice constructed more from this theological confession or from our conflicts within culture?" Good doctrine curbs us from serving ourselves. The same is true for Jewish missions. We cannot approach Jews with our own agenda. It has to be God's agenda. Mission is theocentric, and the church is responsible for the world. Bosch points out how mission cannot be defined only in terms of the church even though the church is missional by its very nature:

Mission goes beyond the church. [...] It is *missio Dei*. It is trinitarian. [...] So mission concerns the world also beyond the boundaries of the church. It is the world God loves and for the sake of which the Christian community is called to be salt and light.<sup>57</sup>

He goes on to show how theology must have a missional character:

The crucial question, then, is not simply or only or largely what church is or what mission is; it is also what theology is and is about. We are in need of a missiological agenda for theology rather than just a theological agenda for mission; for theology rightly understood, has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*. So mission should be “the theme of all theology.” [...] For theology it is a matter of life and death that it should be in direct contact with mission and the missionary enterprise.<sup>58</sup>

Hauerwas stresses again and again how “narratives are necessary to our understanding of those aspects of our existence which admit of no further explanation—i.e., God, the world, and the self.”<sup>59</sup> Theology is not an abstract system; it is telling and applying the Christian story of everything.<sup>60</sup> Theology is reflecting God’s story for the world today. Therefore, Walther’s confessional stance against chiliasm is not doing theology for its own sake. Lutheran theologian Michael Newman makes the case that the biblical paradigm of confessing the faith is integral to God’s mission of reaching His beloved yet straying people and that the confessing church is engaged in gathering more people as it confesses its faith.<sup>61</sup> Being confessional helps us to be missional. Walther was trying to gather the Lutheran churches around true doctrine, around God’s true story of how all things will end, so that they could be a better witness to the world. Doctrine is not for doctrine’s own sake. Instead of reaching out to the Jews in order to make Christ’s kingdom come on earth for our sake, we can reach out to the Jews for their own welfare before God. Missiology helps theology to not be self-focused but rather to be centered on God and focused on the world, those who do not know Christ as their Lord and Savior. Being confessional helps us to have proper concern for the Jew.

### **The Roles of Clergy and Laity in Jewish Missions**

Should a missionary be a pastor or not? With the rise of mission societies, anyone could be a missionary to anyone without any consideration to ordained ministry. Some church bodies in the world have been started by Pietistic laity in fact. Bosch points out that the general movement “away from ministry as the monopoly of ordained men to ministry as the responsibility of the whole people of God, ordained as well as non-ordained, is one of the most dramatic shifts taking place in the church today.”<sup>62</sup> Although he commends Luther for promoting the “priesthood of all believers,” he also believes that Luther “reverted to the inherited paradigm” in response to Anabaptists and Catholics when they assaulted the Lutherans concerning church and theology: “In the end, he still had the clergyman at the center of his church, endowed with considerable authority.”<sup>63</sup> Bosch promotes mission as ministry

by the whole people of God:

Some form of ordained ministry is indeed essential and constitutive, not as guarantor of the validity of the church's claim to be the dispenser of God's grace, but, at most, as guardian, to help keep the community faithful to the teaching and practice of apostolic Christianity. The clergy do not do this alone and off their own bat, so to speak, but together with the whole people of God, for all have received the Holy Spirit, who guides the church in all truth. The priesthood of the ordained ministry is to enable, not to remove, the priesthood of the whole church. The clergy are not prior to or independent of or over against the church; rather, with the rest of God's people, they are the church, sent into the world. In order to flesh out this vision, then, we need a more organized, less sacral ecclesiology of the whole people of God.<sup>64</sup>

Bosch's comments bring out a tension between clericalism and congregationalism. He is trying to balance the roles of pastors and congregations, the ordained priests and the priesthood of all believers, yet he criticizes Luther for favoring pastors with authority. Cohen in his description of Jewish missions in the LCMS also has a heavier bent toward the "priesthood of all believers" than Lieske does.<sup>65</sup> Lutherans might argue that it is not the person of the pastor who is central but the office of the ministry of the Word. The Word is central to the church, and the Word works through means. In the office of the ministry, pastors are the means by which the Word is proclaimed just as water is the medium for Baptism. The church is a creature of the Word, and God makes sure that the church keeps hearing the Word by providing pastors. Pastors are not merely guardians, and they are not guarantors either. Only the Word validates the church as the location of where God's grace is given. Pastors are the means of grace for the proclamation of the Word just as much as bread and wine are for Holy Communion.

Walther also addressed this tension in many places, most notably in *Church and Ministry*. In Walther's view, the congregation has the keys immediately from God, and the pastor has the authority from God mediately, having the call from Christ through the congregation.<sup>66</sup> God Himself has established the pastoral office. The office is not merely there for human, pragmatic reasons. Believers need to hear the voice of their Shepherd through the pastoral ministry.

In commenting on the Small Catechism, Norman Nagel points to the fact that both church and ministry come from Christ.<sup>67</sup> The pastor is there to deliver the goods of Absolution. Furthermore, AC V shows the delivery and locatedness of AC IV. The congregation has the command to choose a pastor, and the pastor has the command from Christ to preach and deliver the goods. These are complementary

and should not be pitted against each other. Forgiveness only happens in the church, and the pastor makes it happen. Nagel shows the progression from Christ to church, to disciples, to pastors, and to Holy Absolution.<sup>68</sup> The locatedness helps us to not doubt our forgiveness in Christ. No part of the church may be excised or isolated as dominant; all are from the Lord.<sup>69</sup> Disciples do not make themselves disciples, and pastors do not make themselves pastors. Even with the royal priesthood, we cherish the gift of pastors. Church and ministry are two nostrils, and we need them both. Therefore, clergy and laity are both necessary and complementary for mission. Even if a layperson witnesses to others of Christ, he is not without a pastor to care for his soul, and new converts need shepherds to care for their souls as well. The example of Landsmann shows that no Christian works alone in missions. The church, comprised of clergy and laity, participates in God's mission together. Even Registered Service Organizations today like Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism and Apple of His Eye Mission Society operate as church, clergy and laity. They are anchored in the life of local congregations in the proclamation of the gospel and bound together by a common confession of faith. The church works together to participate in God's mission. God seeks to save the lost among the Jews, the Greeks, the Germans, and the rest of the world.



## Endnotes

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## Melin: The Beginnings of Jewish Missions in the LCMS

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