

The Beginnings of Jewish Missions in the LCMS

Term-Paper for
HIS 952 History of the Theology of Mission
Dr. William Schumacher

Jaron P. Melin
2023-05-31

Abstract

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, 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.

One way of describing mission is that it is the theological account of the right relationship between the church and the world. So then, 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.

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 in his very last sermon which was 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.¹

So then, Luther did have some concern for the Jews, seeing them ethnically related to Jesus Christ through Abraham but not believers 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 Menlancthon, Osiander, and Sebastian Muenster defended or reached out to the Jews, Jewish missions in Lutheranism were very scarce in the 1600s and 1700s.² 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

1. Armas Holmio, *The Lutheran Reformation and the Jews* (Hancock: Finnish Lutheran Book Concern, 1949), Found in the original German in WA 51:195., 127.

2. Bruce J. Lieske, *Witnessing to Jewish People* (St. Louis, MO: LCMS World Mission / Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism, 1995), http://www.chaiivshalom.com/Chai_vShalom/Resources_files/Witnessing%20to%20Jewish%20People.pdf, 69–70.

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 hardheartedness of the Jews and a major impediment to their conversion.³

Newbigin from more recent times may find resonance with this as he describes the importance of the church's witness to the world of Christ's lordship by word and deed.⁴ The church's mission is of word and deed, to speak and to do, based on trusting in God's promises through Christ by the Holy Spirit. The church is Christ's community where His lordship is demonstrated, showing where His kingdom openly reigns. In short, Newbigin says, "The words explain the deeds, and the deeds validate the words."⁵ 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, we cannot say that "God has rejected the Jews, and so we don't need to witness to them." We ourselves have been a stumbling block to the Jews by our impious living. Our conduct has been a bad witness for Christ. Nevertheless, even through the church, which is full of saints and sinners simultaneously, God is the primary Actor in mission. Newbigin suggests that if we view mission first of all as *missio Dei*—that God's action of sending His Son into the world and of sending His Holy Spirit to dwell in the church—then we can keep the reality of God's mission as the center and the reality of missions as derivative.⁶ Keeping God's action in mission as center also helps us to avoid the two ditches of viewing missions in strict terms of evangelism—only winning individuals to conversion, focusing on numerical growth, and not caring about their worldly well-being—and of viewing missions as only doing God's will on earth—fixing problems of the world, seeking only justice and peace, and not caring about their spiritual well-being. Bosch points out how the theology of Luther and the Reformers

3. Philip Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 15.

4. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 128–140.

5. *ibid.*, 137.

6. *ibid.*, 135.

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.⁷

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."⁸ 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."⁹ In doing Jewish missions then, we should be aware of God's work as primary and our work as secondary. So then, 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."¹⁰ 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 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

7. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 249.

8. *ibid.*, 250.

9. *ibid.*, 250.

10. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 76.

power of the papacy and, on the other hand, to reform our church.”¹¹ 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. Jakob Jocz points out one such feature of this shift:

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.¹²

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. Since the church is institutional, then its mission must work through legitimate institutional channels. Bosch simply characterizes this model with Luke 14.23: “and compel them to come in.”¹³ In the paradigm of the Protestant Reformation, the legitimacy of the papacy is questioned and overruled, however, 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.”¹⁴ 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. So then, Bosch characterizes the efforts of Spener and his followers as the “Pietist Breakthrough”.¹⁵ For the Pietists, mission was the work of

11. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 78.

12. Jakob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ* (London: SPCK, 1962), 222.

13. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 241.

14. *ibid.*, 251.

15. *ibid.*, 257–261.

genuinely converted Christians to bring about 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 to pray and work 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. Furthermore, Pietism introduced the principle of “voluntarism” in mission.¹⁶ Becoming a believer had to be from making a genuine decision for Christ. Thus, Pietism broke from the coercive and institutional methods of the Medieval Roman Catholic paradigm as well as from the local jurisdiction of the Protestant paradigm. 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. Pietism also affected even the beginnings of the LCMS as followers of Martin Stephan believed that they were genuine Christians who were leaving an apostate state-church in order to plant a true church in America. We will see in a moment what paradigms were at play with the LCMS as it intentionally considered and reached out to Jews, but the influence of Pietism will certainly play a role.

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 Israelmission, established in 1822.¹⁷ 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

16. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 258–9.

17. Lieske, *Witnessing to Jewish People*, 71.

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. Other mission-societies developed in England and Scotland specifically for Jewish missions. For example, Alexander Duff, who had been the first missionary who was 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.¹⁸ Duff wanted the institute to address questions which arose from Christian encounters with other cultures. Among the various concerns of study was also the Jewish community itself. 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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰

Each individual was to be allowed to think and act as he saw best fit for himself. These two implications had their effects on Christians as well. Christians during the Enlightenment believed more than at any other time in the past that God’s cause and the future of the

18. Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 27.

19. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 271.

20. *ibid.*, 273.

world depended on them.²¹ Instead of having the orientation of looking backward 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 the steady progression of Christianity.²² 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.”²³ 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 become two separate things. Mission-societies do the sending rather than official offices of the church. They were self-organized, self-initiated, and voluntary. They have only as much connection to official church-structures as its members want to have. Mission-societies functioned as organizations rather than churches. This completely bypasses the limitations of church-structure and even of the state. Missionaries were agents of the mission-societies, not the churches. As such, they often cared less about having a confessional stance, caring more about individual conversion than about having doctrinal agreement. As mission-societies began to dominate in the 1800s, mission drops 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. We will see this paradigm come to a clash when the LCMS takes on its first Jewish missionary.

In 1847, the LCMS began as the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States.²⁴ In the face of the Definite Platform in 1855, Walther sought even more

21. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 341.

22. *ibid.*, 342.

23. *ibid.*, 342.

24. Carl S. Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 142–3.

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.²⁵ Beginning in 1855, Walther jump-started *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.²⁶ Chiliasm, known today more as millennialism or more specifically 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 the triumphal success will include the conversion of all the Jews.²⁷ One figure in particular who promoted this was Georg Schieferdecker.²⁸ Schieferdecker was a pastor in the Missouri Synod who initially kept chiliasm to himself but later publicly proclaimed it. Walther opposed this and 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.²⁹ 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

25. Meyer, *Moving Frontiers*, 248–253.

26. Carl S. Meyer, “Walther’s Letter from Zurich: A Defense of Missouri’s Unity and Confessionalism,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 32, no. 1 (1961): 642–655, <https://scholar.cs1.edu/ctm/vol32/iss1/65>.

27. Francis Monseth, “Millennialism in American Lutheranism in Light of Augsburg Confession, Article XVII,” (Doctor of Theology Dissertation), 1986, <https://scholar.cs1.edu/thd/137>, 32.n42.

28. August R. Suelflow, *Georg Albert Schieferdecker and his Relation to Chiliasm in the Iowa Synod* (Bachelor of Divinity Thesis: Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, 1946), <https://scholar.cs1.edu/bdiv/153>.

29. Carl F. W. Walther, *Editorials from “Lehre und Wehre”*, ed. August R. Suelflow, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 91 and 98.

Synod and the Buffalo Synod. Löhe believed that chiliasm was not church-dividing and that opponents could not satisfactorily offer exegetical proof against it.³⁰ 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 responds to this theological debate among the wider audience of the *Lehre und Wehre* in 1859 and 1860.³¹ Walther makes an exegetically extensive argument that Revelation 20 and Romans 11.25–27 does 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 opposes chiliasm as trying to turn Christ’s kingdom into an earthly kingdom. He thoroughly opposes the rampant optimism of the age which is due to the Enlightenment. Although he opposes chiliasm, Walther is not opposed to preaching the gospel 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.”³² However, he wants to do so on the basis of true doctrine, not on chiliasm, as well as for the genuine concern and spiritual well-being of the Jews, not for the sake of making Christ’s kingdom come by our own efforts.

What does this debate have to do with Jewish missions? Is this debate only about doctrine? Parallel debates exist even 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.

30. Walther, *Editorials from “Lehre und Wehre”*, 77.

31. English forwards: Walther, *Editorials from “Lehre und Wehre”*, 49–101. German articles: Carl F. W. Walther, “Wird Röm. 11, 25. 26. 27. eine noch zu erwartende solenne Judenbekehrung gelehrt?,” *Lehre und Wehre* 5, no. 10 (October 1859): 307–310, <https://scholar.csl.edu/lehreundwehre/5>; Carl F. W. Walther, “Wird Röm. 11, 25. 26. 27. eine noch zu erwartende solenne Judenbekehrung gelehrt?,” *Lehre und Wehre* 5, no. 11 (November 1859): 321–331, <https://scholar.csl.edu/lehreundwehre/5>; Carl F. W. Walther, “Judenbekehrung und tausendjähriges Reich,” *Lehre und Wehre* 6, no. 2 (February 1860): 50–53, <https://scholar.csl.edu/lehreundwehre/6>.

32. Meyer, *Moving Frontiers*, 297.

Parviz points out how this is seen by Jews as self-serving.³³ Andrew Root makes a parallel argument in relation to youth-ministry.³⁴ 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 at all 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.”³⁵ 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?” This reflective question can help us to stop and assess whether our motivations are godly or worldly. Our motivations should be theologically driven. One role of proper doctrine in missions is to curb 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.³⁶

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 mis-

33. Parviz, “History of Jewish Missions in the LC—MS.”

34. Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007).

35. *ibid.*, 80.

36. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 505.

biological 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.³⁷

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.”³⁸ Theology is not an abstract system; it is telling and applying the Christian story of everything.³⁹ 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. Newman makes the case that the biblical paradigm of confessing is “an integral component of God’s mission effort to reach His beloved yet straying people” and that “the confessing church is a church engaged in the art of gathering.”⁴⁰ Being confessional helps us better to be missional. Walther was trying to gather the Lutheran churches around true doctrine, around God’s true story of how all things will actually end, so that they can 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 in mind. 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 place proper concern for the Jew.

In 1881, the Central Illinois District of the Missouri petitioned the Missouri Synod “to consider 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.”⁴¹ The Synod delegated the responsibility for Jewish missions to the Districts and gave its blessing

37. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 506.

38. Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 26.

39. Stanley Hauerwas, *Approaching the End: Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics, and Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 4.

40. Michael W. Newman, “The Confessing Church: An Act of Excluding or the Art of Gathering?” *Lutheran Mission Matters* 26, no. 1 (May 2018): 58–68.

41. F. Dean Lueking, *Mission in the Making* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 159. This is quoting from *Proceedings of the Eighteenth General Synod*, 78.

to “all efforts of interested individuals to sue any synodical means to publicize the matter.”⁴² 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.”⁴³ So then, the Missouri Synod had learned well from Walther concerning the relationship between the confessional and missional nature of the church. 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.⁴⁴ So then, the debates on chiliasm in 1859–1860 did in fact raise awareness for Jewish missions eventually.

Not to be overlooked though is the fact of immigration. From 1881 to 1910, over 1.5 million entered the USA.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷

The role of identity comes into play in Jewish missions. From the African context,

42. Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 159.

43. *ibid.*, 159. This is quoting from *Der Lutheraner*, XXXVII, 185–186.

44. *ibid.*, 159–160.

45. Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity Vol. IV The Great Century in Europe and the United States of America A.D. 1800–A.D. 1914* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), 292–4.

46. Parviz, “History of Jewish Missions in the LC—MS.”

47. Meyer, *Moving Frontiers*, 294–5.

Bediako gives some insight into the role of identity and culture with theology.⁴⁸ 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 has 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, Parviz says, “Though Jewish believers in the Messiah are Christians, they do not cease to be Jews.”⁴⁹ 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, and their German identity was important for them in remaining confessional. The prospect of German Jewish immigrants was right up their alley. Although they were not Lutheran, they were still German and 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.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ 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. The German identity is much less prominent today for German Jews, and the Jewish identity has become more prominent. Parviz makes the distinction between Rabbinic Jews and Biblical Jews in helping Jews to reorient their

48. Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books, 1992).

49. Kevin Parviz, “The Validity and Methodology of Jewish Evangelism,” *Missio Apostolica* 12, no. 2 (November 2004): 87–101, http://www.chaivshalom.com/Chai_vShalom/Resources_files/Missio%20Ap.%20Article.pdf.

50. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity Vol. IV The Great Century in Europe and the United States of America A.D. 1800–A.D. 1914*, 293.

51. Parviz, “History of Jewish Missions in the LC—MS.”

identity with respect to the biblical story.⁵² 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.⁵³ 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, who was in Constantinople.⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵ However, Landsmann was sent to Concordia Seminary in Springfield, IL, for further theological training in orthodox Lutheranism.⁵⁶ Landsmann was in his mid-40s and already had 17 or 18 years of missionary experience. Even though he went through two years of seminary, he was anxious to begin work.⁵⁷ 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 for Landsmann's missionary-work among the Jews in New York. He was never ordained by the Missouri Synod, and as soon as he had a convert, and he had to direct him to a local pastor to be integrated into a German-Lutheran congregation.⁵⁸ 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. Rabbi Nathaniel Friedmann was one example who had

52. Parviz, "The Validity and Methodology of Jewish Evangelism," 97.

53. Lieske, *Witnessing to Jewish People*, 73.

54. Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 163. Lueking and Lieske call him Samuel, but he is called Stephanus by Meyer, *Moving Frontiers*, 297.

55. Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 163.

56. *ibid.*, 164.

57. *ibid.*, 164-5.

58. Lieske, *Witnessing to Jewish People*, 73.

been an anti-missionary but converted through Landsmann's friendship.⁵⁹ Friedmann then served as a pastor for 45 years and even translated the Small Catechism into Yiddish.

The example of Landsmann shows that a paradigm-clash 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.⁶⁰

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. Either Landsmann needed to become a pastor or to 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.

Furthermore, the role of clergy and laity in missions was at play. 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

59. Parviz, "History of Jewish Missions in the LC—MS."

60. Meyer, *Moving Frontiers*, 299.

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.”⁶¹ 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.”⁶² 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 organic, less sacral ecclesiology of the whole people of God.⁶³

There is this tension between clericalism and congregationalism. Even Cohen in his description of Jewish missions in the LCMS has a heavier bent toward the “priesthood of all believers” than Lieske does.⁶⁴ However, Walther 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.⁶⁵ Christ is the authority, and He empowers both congregation and pastor.⁶⁶ God Himself has established the pastoral office. The office is

61. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 478.

62. *ibid.*, 480.

63. *ibid.*, 485.

64. Steve Cohen, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (St. Louis, MO: Apple of His Eye Mission Society, 2001), 103–118, <https://www.appleofhiseye.org/images/aohe/docs/aohe-beginning-from-jerusalem-2nd-ed.pdf>.

65. Carl F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 51–52 and 88.

66. *ibid.*, 199.

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.⁶⁷ The pastor is there to deliver the goods of Absolution. Furthermore, AC 5 shows the delivery and locatedness of AC 4. 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 as from Christ to church, to disciples, to pastors, and to Holy Absolution.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ Neither do disciples make themselves disciples, nor do pastors 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, comprising 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, who seeks to save the lost among the Jews as well as to the Greeks and even to the Germans along with the rest of the world.

67. Norman E. Nagel, "The Office of the Holy Ministry in the Confessions," *Concordia Journal* 14, no. 3 (July 1988): 283-299.

68. *ibid.*, 286.

69. *ibid.*, 287.

References

- Bediako, Kwame. *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa*. Oxford, UK: Regnum Books, 1992.
- Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.
- Cohen, Steve. *Beginning from Jerusalem*. 103–118. St. Louis, MO: Apple of His Eye Mission Society, 2001. <https://www.appleofhiseye.org/images/aohe/docs/aohe-beginning-from-jerusalem-2nd-ed.pdf>.
- Hauerwas, Stanley. *Approaching the End: Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics, and Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013.
- . *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.
- Holmio, Armas. *The Lutheran Reformation and the Jews*. Hancock: Finnish Lutheran Book Concern, 1949. Found in the original German in WA 51:195.
- Jocz, Jakob. *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*. London: SPCK, 1962.
- Latourette, Kenneth S. *A History of the Expansion of Christianity Vol. IV The Great Century in Europe and the United States of America A.D. 1800–A.D. 1914*. 292–4. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.
- Lieske, Bruce J. *Witnessing to Jewish People*. St. Louis, MO: LCMS World Mission / Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism, 1995. http://www.chaivshalom.com/Chai_vShalom/Resources_files/Witnessing%20to%20Jewish%20People.pdf.
- Lueking, F. Dean. *Mission in the Making*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1964.
- Meyer, Carl S., ed. *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986.
- . “Walther’s Letter from Zurich: A Defense of Missouri’s Unity and Confessionalism.” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 32, no. 1 (1961): 642–655. <https://scholar.cs1.edu/ctm/vol32/iss1/65>.
- Monseth, Francis. “Millennialism in American Lutheranism in Light of Augsburg Confession, Article XVII.” (Doctor of Theology Dissertation), 1986. <https://scholar.cs1.edu/thd/137>.
- Nagel, Norman E. “The Office of the Holy Ministry in the Confessions.” *Concordia Journal* 14, no. 3 (July 1988): 283–299.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Newman, Michael W. “The Confessing Church: An Act of Excluding or the Art of Gathering?” *Lutheran Mission Matters* 26, no. 1 (May 2018): 58–68.

- Parviz, Kevin. "History of Jewish Missions in the LC—MS." 2021. http://www.chaivshalom.com/Chai_vShalom/Resources_files/History%20of%20Jewish%20Missions,%20LC--MS%2010%3A27%3A21.pdf. Kevin Parviz gave the original presentation at Concordia Historical Institute on 2016-03-10 (<https://concordiahistoricalinstitute.org/rev-kevin-parviz-at-chi/>). I personally interviewed with Pastor Parviz on 2023-05-19 in order to fill in the details of his presentation and to ask further questions.
- . "The Validity and Methodology of Jewish Evangelism." *Missio Apostolica* 12, no. 2 (November 2004): 87–101. http://www.chaivshalom.com/Chai_vShalom/Resources_files/Missio%20Ap.%20Article.pdf.
- Root, Andrew. *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007.
- Spener, Philip. *Pia Desideria*. Translated by Theodore Tappert. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964.
- Suelflow, August R. *Georg Albert Schieferdecker and his Relation to Chiliasm in the Iowa Synod*. Bachelor of Divinity Thesis: Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, 1946. <https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv/153>.
- Walls, Andrew F. *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Walther, Carl F. W. *Church and Ministry*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1987.
- . *Editorials from "Lehre und Wehre"*. Edited by August R. Suelflow. Translated by Herbert J. A. Bouman. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1981.
- . "Judenbekehrung und tausendjähriges Reich." *Lehre und Wehre* 6, no. 2 (February 1860): 50–53. <https://scholar.csl.edu/lehreundwehre/6>.
- . "Wird Röm. 11, 25. 26. 27. eine noch zu erwartende solenne Judenbekehrung gelehrt?" *Lehre und Wehre* 5, no. 10 (October 1859): 307–310. <https://scholar.csl.edu/lehreundwehre/5>.
- . "Wird Röm. 11, 25. 26. 27. eine noch zu erwartende solenne Judenbekehrung gelehrt?" *Lehre und Wehre* 5, no. 11 (November 1859): 321–331. <https://scholar.csl.edu/lehreundwehre/5>.