SEEDS OF MISSIOLOGY
IN THE GERMAN *ERWECKUNG* (1815–1848)

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The great century of missionary advance dawned with the departure of William Carey in 1793. Within a decade most major confessional groups in Britain had joined in the venture. The Americans followed suit during the early years of the nineteenth century.

The initial stages of missionary advance were marked by an ecumenical spirit, although this was more true of European churchmen than of their British and American counterparts. This ecumenical spirit was accompanied by the appearance of bold individualists, who could be contained neither by a church nor by a missionary society. Johannes Aargaard has documented this.[1] He regards the ecumenical period of missions on the continent of Europe as lasting from 1800 to 1830 and the period following that as characterized by confessional missionary activity. By the same token he considers the emphasis of continental missions in the early years (1800–1820) to be that of training for missions. After 1820 the emphasis shifted to sending missionaries.[2]

Although there were training institutions for missionaries, no formal theory of mission, or missiology, emerged for almost a century. Wilbert Shenk concludes that the first systematician of mission theory was Gustav Warneck. His *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* appeared in 1874, but his formal *Evangelische Missionslehre* was not published until 1892. Shenk referred to the emergence of a missiology in the writings of Henry Venn (the indigenous-church concept), Anthony Grant (high-church mission), Alexander Duff (education in mission) and C. G. Pfander (Muslim missions).[3] But no continental basis for missiology was discernible by Shenk until the period of 1880 to 1918. At that point the major spokesman was held to be Warneck.

It is my contention that seeds of a primitive missiology emerged early in the nineteenth century in Germany. This was necessitated by the vitality of the religious awakening known as the *Erweckung*. At first this missionary impulse was sporadic, ecumenical and individualistic. By Aargaard's milestone

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[1] J. Aargaard, *Mission, Konfession, Kirche* (Lund: Gleerup, 1967) 1.287.

[2] Ibid. 1.182–183.

[3] W. Shenk, "The Development of Mission Theory Since 1792" (unpublished lecture; New Haven, November 11, 1988).

year of 1830, however, it had taken on a confessional form. It is my purpose to set forth some of the impulses that led at a later date to the systematization of mission theory. There are three aspects that must be considered: the theory of mission, education for mission, and the organization of mission societies.

I. THE THEORY OF MISSION

The theory of mission emerged in the early nineteenth century on an occasional and sporadic basis. As it was needed a theory of mission was developed. Several broad strokes of a primitive missiology began to emerge.

The first aspect to be seen was an ecumenical spirit, which often has become the earmark of missionary activity throughout the modern era. Aargaard regards this cooperative mentality as a stage that blended into a confessional era of mission.

Apparently the early German mission leaders regarded ecumenism as part and parcel of missionary activity. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill discerned that the ecumenical movement had its roots in the mission movement. In other words missionary ecumenism preceded ecclesiological and sociological ecumenism. The primary expression of this rather utilitarian ecumenism was the *Christentumsgesellschaft* (Christian Society). Martin Schmidt regarded the *Christentumsgesellschaft* as the foremost pioneer of ecumenism in German-speaking Europe, and the Society was formed largely to advance the cause of foreign mission.[4]

Contemporary with the *Christentumsgesellschaft* was the spread of the Bible societies throughout German-speaking Europe. This movement was financed and led by the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS). Their agent Robert Pinkerton established branch societies throughout the individual kingdoms that comprised Germanic Europe. No unified German nation existed at that time.

One of the side effects of the BFBS work in German-speaking Europe was a practical ecumenism. Pinkerton reported:

> In Hanover, as in [St.] Petersburg, I saw the Lutheran, Calvinistic and Catholic clergy join hands to promote the good cause; and some of these persons assured me, after the meeting, that though they had been co-teachers of the same religion in this city for many years, yet they had never had an opportunity of speaking to each other before. How admirable the plan, which is capable of bringing together the long-divided parts of Christianity.[5]

Even the strongly evangelical French evangelist, Ami Bost, made mention of this ecumenical aspect of the *Réveil* in French- and German-speaking Europe. On behalf of the Continental (missionary) Society, Bost made con-

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[4] R. Rouse and S. Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954) 1.117–119.

[5] R. Pinkerton, *British and Foreign Bible Society: Eleventh Annual Report* (London, 1815), appendix, 7.

tact with Protestant and Catholic clergymen. Thus he helped to create an embryonic ecumenism.[6]

In his perceptive analysis of evangelical ecumenism Charles I. Foster noted the cooperation of Protestants and Catholics in the Bible and mission societies of the early nineteenth century. In many cases wealthy English evangelicals provided the money, while German Catholics and Protestants contributed manpower for mission.[7]

If the first contribution to a theory of mission was a utilitarian ecumenism, a working together in mission, the second contribution was predictably an opposite reaction. Early on there emerged a separatism that has influenced missionary activities for the past century. Usually separatism was founded upon a real or imagined theological basis. To the minority this was a cardinal doctrine of Christianity. To the larger majority it was a peripheral issue. A case in point was the inclusion of the Apocrypha in the Bibles that were circulated by the Bible societies.

This issue emerged among the branch societies of the BFBS in 1824. Strict, Scottish adherents of the Bible societies insisted that no Bibles contain the apocryphal books. This was seen to be an unwarranted compromise with Catholicism, one the good sons and daughters of the Scottish Church could not tolerate.

Consequently the Edinburgh Bible Society (EBS) distanced itself from the London-based BFBS. The Scottish society charged its representatives with the task of convincing German believers of the sinfulness of including the Apocrypha in the Bible. One of the most zealous representatives of the EBS was Johann Gerhard Oncken. Incidentally, he formed the German Baptist Church in 1834 and became increasingly separatist from every other Protestant group. In 1832 Oncken's branch of separatism became obvious. He reported to the delight of the EBS that many university professors were willing to "enter warmly into the views of your society, regarding the duty and obligation of separating the word of God from all connexion with the Apocrypha."[8] In point of fact such cooperation was often won by infusions of money from British societies. They had the best supporters they could buy. Oncken waxed eloquent in his defense of the EBS viewpoint: "Do not forget, my brethren, that all the Societies in Germany continue to circulate the Apocryphal books. Do not suffer yourself to be blinded by the name given to these corrupt Institutions,—that of Bible societies."[9]

The concept of theological separatism also infected the religious body in America. Bearing in mind that mission was emerging at the same time in America, one is not surprised that the same sort of issue developed. In Amer-

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[6] A. Bost, *Mémoires pouvant servir a l'histoire du réveil religieux des églises protestantes de la Suisse et de la France* (Paris: C. Meyrueis, 1854–55) 1.198.

[7] C. I. Foster, *Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1960) 103.

[8] J. G. Oncken, *Edinburgh Bible Society: Twenty-third Report* (Edinburgh, 1832) 15.

[9] *Edinburgh Bible Society: Twenty-ninth Report* (Edinburgh, 1838) 23–25, 42.

ica the lines of cleavage were often denominational. Perhaps the most celebrated instance of separatism occurred when Adoniram Judson left the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). His point of departure was the issue of baptism by immersion. When he underwent baptism upon arrival in India, he left the ABCFM to become identified with the American Baptist mission.

It was precisely the same issue of baptism that created another schism in mission. In 1836 the American and Foreign Bible Society (AFBS) was formed as a splinter group from the American Bible Society (ABS). The cause of the schism was again doctrinal. The AFBS was a Baptist society that insisted that the Greek verb *baptizō* always be translated with the words "to immerse."[10] It surprises no one that Oncken was the first German agent of the AFBS. He demonstrated that *taufen* in the German Bible was a correct translation of *baptizō*. Soon he was collecting a retainer from the AFBS.[11]

Thus theological distinctiveness became a second aspect of mission theory to emerge in the early years of German missionary activity. Besides ecumenism and the counterbalancing separatism, there was the encouraging development of lay involvement in mission. This is the third major theoretical development in early mission theory.

The seedbed of lay mission was the so-called *inner Mission* as formed by Johann Hinrich Wichern at his *Rauhes Haus* in Hamburg. Wichern used laypeople to carry on the main ministries at Hamburg. They taught in the Bible schools, a German version of the Sunday school that emphasized general education. Laypeople also undertook the visitation work of the parish, and this led to the home-visitation movement that was popularized by Thomas Chalmers in Scotland. Laypeople also engaged in social work. Wichern saw this to be an extension of the Reformation doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers.[12]

The same concept of lay ministries found expression in the emerging nonconformist churches in Germany. Oncken employed laymen as preachers in the Baptist churches of Germany and Denmark. The same could be said of Christoph Gottlieb Mueller's Wesleyan Methodist churches and George Mueller's Open Brethren assemblies in Germany.

Whereas Wichern rooted his use of laypeople in the Reformation doctrine of universal priesthood, the Baptists and Methodists used laymen because of the unavailability of theological education to nonconformists.

In Berlin the former Catholic priest Johannes Evangelista Gossner formed a missionary society in 1836. He stated as his aim the sending out of craftsmen to the foreign mission fields. Within a year these theologically untrained craftsmen were dispatched to the mission field.[13]

[10] W. P. Strickland, *History of the American Bible Society: From Its Organization to the Present Time* (New York, 1850) 149–150.

[11] J. G. Oncken, *American and Foreign Bible Society: First Annual Report* (New York, 1838) 8.

[12] J. H. Wichern, *Die inner Mission der deutschen evangelischen Kirche* (Hamburg: Agentur des Rauhen Hauses, 1849) 17.

[13] H. R. Flachsmeier, *Geschichte der evangelischen Weltmission* (Giessen: Brunnen, 1963) 283.

As indicated above, these tentative forays into the field of mission theory were very much the product of necessity. Only later could one see them as the foundation for a patterned approach to mission.

<div align="center">II. EDUCATION FOR MISSION</div>

A second aspect of mission strategy in nineteenth-century German-speaking Europe was education for mission. Many took a hand in this, but the grandfather of them all was probably Johannes Jaenicke, the Moravian pastor of Berlin's Bethlehem Church. Jaenicke's brother, Joseph Daniel, had served with the Danish-Halle Mission in India where he died in 1800, a victim of the climate. His death inspired Johannes to found the first missionary training school in Berlin.

Jaenicke was financed in his effort by Baron von Schirnding, the German representative of the London Missionary Society (LMS). By 1801, however, von Schirnding had gone bankrupt, and King Frederick William III became the patron of Jaenicke's missionary training school.[14] The curriculum of Jaenicke's school was long on Biblical studies and short on cultural orientation. The program of studies included Biblical languages, English (required in most colonial areas), Latin and homiletics. It was the conviction of Jaenicke that missionaries should teach the Bible. The form of Bible teaching, however, begged the question of contextualization, which was not yet addressed.[15]

Most of Jaenicke's graduates served with either the Church Missionary Society (CMS) or the LMS. They were ordained by the Lutheran Church in Germany and served under either the Anglicans or the Congregationalists overseas. One of the first Jaenicke men was Peter Hartwig, who served with the CMS in West Africa. He was later dismissed because he became involved in the slave trade.[16] A second Jaenicke graduate was T. E. Rhenius, who served with the CMS in India. Soon he had collected five thousand catechumens and opened a seminary. He was dismissed when he refused to baptize the illegitimate son of an English officer.[17]

According to Christoph Gottlieb Blumhardt, founder of the Basel missionary seminary, Jaenicke's program was "the private concern of a pious man."[18] To perfect the educational model Blumhardt founded a missionary training school at Basel in 1816. It was the training arm of the Basel Mission, which had come into existence in 1815. Blumhardt firmly believed in an evangelical ecumenism: "Our work should appear as a work of faith and

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[14] M. Schlunk, *Die Weltmission des Christentums* (Hamburg: Agentur des Rauhen Hauses, 1925) 123–124.

[15] Flachsmeier, *Geschichte* 210–211.

[16] E. Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men, Its Work* (London: Church Missionary Society) 1.87–88.

[17] S. Neill, *Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964) 272–273.

[18] W. Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission* (Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1916) 1.49.

not belong to any one Protestant Confession, however excellent it might be, but to the kingdom of God."[19]

Like Jaenicke's school the Basel institute was dependent on foreign funds, and thus it drew support from both the CMS and the LMS. The CMS sent Basel graduates to the bishop of Copenhagen for ordination before assigning them to serve with the Danish-Halle Mission at Tranquebar.[20] The most notable Basel graduate to serve with the CMS was Samuel Gobat. In 1830 he entered Ethiopia on behalf of the CMS, and in 1846 he was consecrated as Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem.[21]

At Basel the curricular emphasis fell on languages. The theory was this: If they can speak the languages of the world, they would be able to do missionary work throughout the world. Predictably the students learned mainly the colonial languages such as English and French. From 1845 women were trained for missionary services, and this was a major step forward.[22]

The relationship between the CMS and the Basel seminary began to break down as early as 1827. It was a theological issue that became the fly in the ointment. The CMS sent two directors, Edward Bickersteth and Dandeson Coates, to investigate the charge that some of the professors at Basel were teaching universalism. In all probability they were teaching just that.[23]

As the ecumenical era drew to a close in about 1830, several smaller, confessional training institutions were established. Karl Graul set one up at Dresden, Richter established a school in the Rhineland, and Loehe founded the Neuendettelsau school.[24]

As has been noted, the curriculum of these early missionary training schools was simple and very western. The major emphases fell upon the study of the Scriptures and the learning of known, European languages.

As yet there was no attempt to provide linguistic tools to learn unwritten languages. Nor was there any effort to come to grips with the culture of the receiving peoples. Neither was any effort made to contextualize the message, for it was assumed that all peoples think the same. Even survival techniques of hygiene and health were ignored, and as a result many missionaries achieved martyrdom before they achieved any sort of success.

These missionary training schools were not comparable with the seminaries of our day. But they did set down some important and germinal premises. They assumed that training for mission was essential. They also began to see the necessity of relating linguistically to the receiving peoples. In Germany it was necessary to learn French or English, since few people spoke German. This requirement for missionaries endured until very recent times.

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[19] Flachsmeier, *Geschichte* 286.

[20] Schlatter, *Geschichte* 1.62.

[21] Ibid. 1.72.

[22] Ibid. 1.153, 191.

[23] T. R. Birks, *Memoir of Rev. Edward Bickersteth, Late Rector of Watton* (London: Macmillan, 1852) 1.402.

[24] Flachsmeier, *Geschichte* 285–287, 291–293.

The concept of training for mission had been born, but it would need almost a century to grow into maturity. Even now an effort continues to make mission education more fitting for the world in which we live, and this process will never cease.

III. THE ORGANIZATION OF MISSION SOCIETIES

If the Germans produced an elementary theory of mission and embryonic educational programs for mission, they really shone in the field of mission organization. One might expect the revived missionary interest to restore the fortunes of such existing missionary agencies as the Danish-Halle Mission and the Moravian Church. This was, however, not the case. Instead a whole new class of mission agencies came into being, and many of them had connections to British and American agencies.[25]

The pattern for German mission agencies had its roots in the benevolence of the British. In 1799 Johann August Urlsperger visited the German Lutheran Church in London, where he was mightily impressed with the English voluntary societies. He saw these as a pattern for mission advance in Germanic Europe. As a result Urlsperger founded the *Christentumsgesellschaft* in 1780 at Basel. It functioned through a network of auxiliary societies embracing most of central Europe. Their primary aim was combatting rationalistic theology, but their secondary purpose was the advancement of mission at home and abroad.[26]

Although Urlsperger's *Christentumsgesellschaft* provided a pattern for missionary societies in Germanic Europe it was left for others to develop the idea. For instance, at Berlin the former Catholic priest Johannes Gossner founded his own missionary society in 1826. He followed on from Johannes Jaenicke, and he developed the program so admirably operated in Berlin.[27] In 1834 Gossner sent out the first deaconesses to the mission field, a step that helped to open the field of missionary endeavor to women's ministries. In 1835/1836 he established another missionary sending agency to facilitate the involvement of laypeople in mission. During the existence of this particular society 141 missionaries were employed, and only fourteen of them had formal theological training.[28]

The financial basis of mission was also developed during this era. At Berlin, August Neander formed a blue-ribbon panel of mission-minded people. In 1823 he published his "Appeal on Behalf of the Heathen." Although no missionaries were employed for the first ten years, this committee amassed considerable funds for the cause.[29]

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[25] H. W. Gensichen, "Missionsgeschichte der neueren Zeit," *Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte: Ein Handbuch* (ed. K.-D. Schmidt and E. Wolf; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1963–69) 4, T33.

[26] Schlunk, *Weltmission* 122.

[27] F. Zange, *Zeugnisse der Kirchengeschichte: Aus denkwürdigen Schriften, Reden, Briefen und anderen Quellen* (2d ed.; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann [?], 1919) 409.

[28] Flachsmeier, *Geschichte* 282–283.

[29] *The Missionary Register* (London, May 1825) 220.

The same sense of urgency compelled Wichern to turn the concept of mission toward the burgeoning cities of industrializing Europe. Wichern founded his *innere Mission* at Hamburg. In his introductory statement he said,

> The Spirit of God must have freedom to transform the history of our national church into the history of a new kingdom of believing charity, for the responsibility remains the same whether here or overseas and irrespective of the form which the church takes: the lost, the abandoned, the forgotten and the poor must be given access to the preaching of the gospel.[30]

Although no full-blown missiology existed at this time, certainly the seeds were in the ground that would germinate and bloom into a missiology at a later date. There were the societies that would bear the burden of administrative support for missions. Methods of procuring funds for missionary activity were in place. Both women and men were employed by German agencies. This instrument for kingdom advancement was also turned toward needy areas in the homeland. These were some of the seeds of a modern missionary movement that were present.

IV. THE LIMITATIONS OF PRIMITIVE MISSIOLOGY

To state that a missiology had emerged by 1850 would be indefensible. Such a statement would require far too many qualifiers. Here are some of the limitations that had to be dealt with before a proper theory of mission could emerge.

1. *Shenk found no missions component in theological education on the universal level during the first fifty years of the modern missionary movement.* Mission was a stepchild of the Church, an activity fostered by clerical zealots and lay philanthropists. To be frank, one must also note that there is still little recognized missiology in the universities of England, although it may be found on the continent of Europe.

2. *Aargaard calls the period of 1800 to 1830 one of evangelical activism.* Its development was not planned and deliberate. More often than not, advance was determined by the desires of an influential person, one who was not necessarily versed in either theology or church strategy.

3. *Little cultural awareness shaped the activities of the missionaries.* Their sole concession to the culture seems to have been linguistic, as one might see from the translation works of Carey or Judson. There was no adaptation of the message to the mind of the recipients. Nor was any serious thought given to such adaptation.

4. *The indigenous church was seen to be only an extension of the sending church.* This explains the Anglican structures of Rhenius' work in India

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[30] *Fliegende Blätter* (Hamburg, February 1846) col. 25.

as well as the consecration of Gobat as the first bishop of Jerusalem. Of course the same could be said for Carey and Judson, who created a Baptist ecclesiology in India and Burma.

5.≥*There was little if any contextualizing of theology.*   One finds the homilies of the Church of England being sent out to other countries in an effort to guarantee proper worship.

Certainly there were significant limitations to the incipient missiology of the early nineteenth century. But there were enough impulses to create a movement toward the theory of mission that came to fruition in Warneck's day.