

*The
Theology of the*
CROSS
for the 21st Century

Signposts for a Multicultural Witness

EDITED BY ALBERTO L. GARCÍA
AND A. R. VICTOR RAJ

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Editors' Preface

The twenty-first century is upon us whether we like it or not. This is true for every person and for every institution in North America. The Christian church is no exception to this reality. At the birth of this new century, we accept that people in North America live in a global village. Advances in telecommunications bring the world daily to our homes as friend and stranger. International commerce and global markets dictate that North Americans are not isolated from any region in the world. However, North Americans live in a global village because North America is a microcosm of the world. During a typical day, North Americans will not only swim in the currents of Western culture, but they will find that other major worldviews are also present in their village. Immigrants from South Asia, East Asia, Africa, and Latin America live here too. In particular Hispanics and Asians increasingly occupy a major role in North American culture. A decade ago *Cinco de Mayo* was unknown in North America; now it is celebrated at the White House by the president of the United States.

The evidence that we live in a global village can be clearly perceived in our religiously pluralistic communities. North America is no longer a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant society. Instead, we find mosques and Muslims, Buddhists, and adherents of the New Age Movement (which is inspired by Hinduism). The Dalai Lama is revered as an important religious leader, an equal to Jesus Christ. The Caribbean African folk religion of *Santería* is increasingly popular among non-Caribbean Americans in key urban centers such as New York, Miami, and Houston. The Roman Catholic Church is becoming increasingly Hispanic, accepting the folk religiosity of the people.

Our pluralistic situation is complicated by another important phenomenon in American culture. Postmodernism is characterized by many attributes. However, whether we consider postmodernism a

friend or a foe, it provides the Christian church today with opportunity to witness to the Gospel because of the postmodern culture's radical historical consciousness. Society no longer possesses the modernistic confidence in progress or human achievement; instead, the postmodern community is pessimistic. This pessimism is characterized by a radical social consciousness. Many social analysts are deeply pessimistic in their observations of postmodernism. They find that our culture is driven by little more than self-interest, whether in areas of power, gender, class, or greed. Our pluralistic society also offers conflicting options regarding truth. In this context people deeply long for a meaningful community because one characteristic of our present age is profound pain and suffering. People desire real relationships based on truth. They want to find healing for their pain amid postmodernity's narcissism and pessimism.

The Cold War may be over because of the fall of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, our world continues to be torn by hatred and war. Our global village seeks meaning and understanding at a time when divisions abound. Our historical wounds run wide and deep. September 11 has awakened new generations of North Americans to the reality of world chaos and division. Palestinian and Hebrew parents cry at the death of their children, a result of generations of hatred and division in the Middle East. Our world seems hopeless. This is our time, the right time, our *kairós*, for Christian witness in the twenty-first century. How may we offer a genuine biblical witness that is sensitive to our global village and to our postmodern times?

"CRUX sola est nostra Theologia" [The cross alone is our theology]. Martin Luther spoke these significant words at a time of crisis during the Reformation.¹ All the authors in this volume share a similar vision. We see the witness of the cross as the central witness of our Christian faith and our theology. Central to this witness are two dialectical or dialogical principles. In light of Luther's theology of the cross, we point to the difference between a "theology of glory" and a "theology of the cross." A "theology of glory" points to the human condition and our tendency to create idols that distort our value as God's creatures. A "theology of the cross" identifies our incarnate and crucified God, Jesus Christ, with our human sin and suffering. The witness of the cross is sensitive to our human context but also points to redemption only through the crucified and risen Christ. The authors also employ the principle of Law and Gospel. The Law points to our human predicament and our "theology of glory" so we might find grace and God's unconditional love in the "theology of the cross."

A key to this global witness to the cross is that we pursue and follow a discipleship of the cross. Our witness to the cross is not based on

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academic theology. We find in Jesus Christ the living God who comes to us in Word and Sacraments to stand with us in community. God cares for our pain and suffering in this global village. Luther's insight is that catholic evangelical Christians *are theologians of the cross*. He underscored the cost of discipleship in this witness to the cross: "For one becomes a theologian by living, by dying, by being damned and not by mere intellectualizing, reading and speculating."² Our proclamation is grounded in a living incarnational witness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A unique characteristic of this book is that though all the contributors share a common evangelical witness to the cross, they offer their witness in light of a specific world culture. Five of the authors were born and raised outside mainstream North American culture. They share perspectives and understandings sensitive to the cultures of South and East Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, and the African American context. One author has lived and worked among people who adhere to the faith of Islam; another has lived and worked among the people of Eastern Europe. Four of the authors write in light of their Western cultural context concerning issues and themes important for the witness of the Gospel in North America.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1, "Signposts for Multicultural Witness," discusses important theological signposts related to the theology of the cross that are crucial to the witness of the Gospel in our global village. The three essays lift high the cross to critique our present human situation while also offering a timely and sensitive witness to our multicultural and postmodern world. Part 2, "Global Themes for Witness," opens readers to an important dialogue with the major worldviews of East and South Asia, the Islamic world, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Themes such as harmony in *T'ai-Chi*, the use of the Law in relationship to *dharma* and *karma*, the Jesus of Islam, sacrifice in Africa, and mystical suffering in Russia are explored in light of the incarnate theology of the cross. Readers will discover how the authors affirm important values and perspectives within the specific world cultures without giving up the way of salvation in light of the theology of the cross. Part 3, "North American Themes for Witness," is the most diverse section. Three of the authors explore the specific needs and opportunities for witness presented by postmodernism, the present bioethical revolution, and the New Age Movement. These contemporary North American movements are explored in a pastoral and apologetic manner to offer a witness of the cross within the present situation. The final two authors explore specific cultural themes within the Hispanic and African American cultural experience in the United States. Important themes such as *mestizaje*, popular religiosity, human

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dignity, and worth amid suffering are explored to offer a faithful witness of the cross in a serious attempt to hear and lift high every voice.

We pray that this book guides readers to key signposts of our faith under the cross as they gather insights from our global village and seek to proclaim that Jesus is Lord of the nations.

Eve of Pentecost
Alberto L. García
A. R. Victor Raj

NOTES

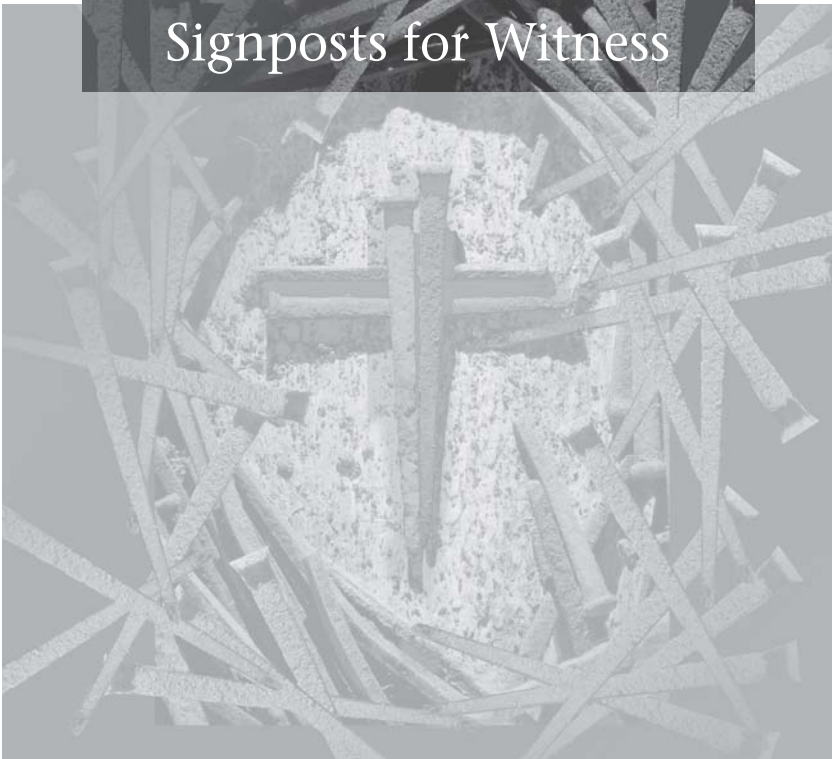
1. *The Commentary on the Psalms* (1519–1521) includes Luther's lectures on the Psalms, which he delivered during one of the most difficult periods in his life. The lectures were delivered as he waited to appear before Charles V at the Diet of Worms. These lectures offer a living witness of the cross by Luther, a disciple of the cross, even during difficult times in his life and in the church. Cf. WA 5:176.32f.
2. WA 5:163.29–30.

Abbreviations

ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
GWN	God's Word to the Nations
KJV	King James Version
LCMS	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LW	Luther, Martin. <i>Luther's Works</i> . American Edition. Gen. eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman. 56 vols. St. Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress, 1955–1986.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976.
WA	Luther, Martin. <i>D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Schriften</i> . 68 vols. Weimar: Herman Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883–1999.

PART 1

Signposts for Witness



Signposts for Global Witness in Luther's Theology of the Cross

ALBERTO L. GARCÍA

Christ must be apprehended as Man, before he is apprehended as God: and the cross of his humanity must be sought after and known, before we know the glory of his divinity.—Martin Luther, *The Commentary on the Psalms* (1519–1521)¹

Signposts are like road signs that point the way on a journey. Two important conditions are essential for a road sign to be effective. First, the sign must be clear to follow. Second, the sign must guide us along the right path. Everyone can relate to a time when a particular road was missed because the sign was not clearly marked or was not even posted at the crossroad. We also have been frustrated in our travels because we have been sent on a wild-goose chase with the wrong directions. The last thing that I want to do is to give you confusing signposts to follow for the witness of the cross in the twenty-first century.

My assignment, therefore, requires humility. It is risky at best to lead the reader through important elements in Luther's theology of the cross that will serve as signposts for global witness. As the late Reformation scholar Lewis Spitz Jr. once noted in jest when asked to illustrate Luther's incredible theological output: On the day Luther died, as his left hand was setting into *rigor mortis*, his right hand prepared to

write another treatise. Luther's theological output was astronomical and is still being digested by Luther scholars in this century. Therefore, I can only lead you through some signposts in Luther's theology of the cross and hope that they lead us along the way in a more faithful and dynamic global witness.

Our contemporary global village presents another important challenge to our witness. Many cultures coexist in the United States of America. Hispanic and Asian cultures, for example, are growing at a rapid rate on the North American continent. In terms of twenty-first century missions, the world regions that offer the greatest opportunity for global witness are Asia, Africa, and Latin America.² These regions express ways of life and ways of thinking, that is, cultures, that are different from the predominant North American or European ways of thinking. At the same time Christian missionary scholars face many challenges created by the Enlightenment and postmodernism. Andrew Walls, a world missions scholar from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, presents these realities as the most critical challenge for Christian scholars and missionaries.³ Walls, however, points to a theological sign that makes the missionary enterprise possible in our global village. He finds that there is "a certain vulnerability, a fragility at the heart of Christianity." He calls this fragility, this important signpost to our Christian witness, "the vulnerability of the cross."⁴ The theology of the cross points to the reality that there is not one culture that owns the Christian faith. There is no "Christian civilization" or "Christian culture." Sherwood Lingenfelter points also to this important realization.⁵ He uses the term "cross-cultural" as a double-edged sword or double entendre. In *Agents of Transformation: A Guide for Effective Cross-Cultural Ministry*, Lingenfelter wants to guide missionaries across cultures so they can live and proclaim the Gospel for the benefit of specific tribes and nations. His vision is directed by a theology of the cross as a criterion for this cross-cultural missionary work. In his own words:

An agent of transformation is one who brings the good news of the gospel to members of a community and who brokers that message in such a way that those who accept it become disciples of Jesus Christ and learn to live spiritually transformed lives within the context of their community and culture. The outcome of this process should not be the replication of western churches and communities, but rather the establishing of vital communities of faith that exert a positive effect on the wider culture in which they are found.⁶

Lingenfelter's efforts are directed under the Gospel to break our cultural biases and to proclaim within each cultural matrix and beyond the transforming message of Jesus Christ. He is primarily motivated by

the incarnational reality of the cross. This is at the center of his skillful cultural anthropological studies. This *modus operandi* permits Lingenfelter to engage other cultural value systems and methods of communication for mission. It also permits him to appropriate other cultural value systems and methods of communication in living the discipleship of the Gospel.⁷

You will read in this present book other essays that will point to specific ways the theology of the cross is able to navigate the waters of multiple cultural matrixes for global witness. For example, the essay offered by Professor Wong Yong Ji, "Luther's 'Theology of the Cross' and Eastern Thought," is a vivid example of a constructive missionary vision under the cross for global witness. Under Luther's incarnational theology of the cross, Dr. Ji is able to explore the fundamental Asian dimension of harmony as a key principle to theological discourse and the witness of the Gospel. He moves, therefore, beyond the boundaries of a Western theological discourse and witness, which is primarily linear and directed to explanations and contradictions within a subject and object pattern of thinking.⁸

What are some of the key elements in Luther's theology of the cross that allow us to be Christ's faithful disciples? How does Luther's theology of the cross provide faithful and clear signposts for the Gospel to create vital and indigenous communities of faith? Signposts for faithful and dynamic global witness need the light of the Gospel, as well as an honest look at the terrain that we must travel. I find in Luther's theology of the cross four key signposts for a faithful twenty-first century global witness of Christ's love for the world. These four elements are:

1. Countercultural
2. Incarnational
3. Eschatological
4. Sacramental

THE COUNTERCULTURAL DIMENSION

Lingenfelter reflects on Romans and Galatians to unmask the reality of our human condition.⁹ He makes reference in particular to Romans 11:32, where Paul speaks concerning how "God has bound all men over to disobedience." In this particular context Paul is making reference to the human condition of both Jews and Gentiles. Lingenfelter incorporates in his argument the theory of cultural bias in the social sciences. Several social science scholars, such as Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky argue that all human beings are constrained by the cultural bias inherent in the particular social environments in which they live

and work. Lingenfelter discusses in the first chapters of *Agents of Transformation* how to unmask our social and cultural biases. I agree with this author that the first signpost that we need to promote in our global witness is a self-awareness of our cultural biases and how these cultural biases hinder our witness to other cultures. The dynamics present in Luther's theology of the cross help us toward the same end. This is quite evident in Luther's Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 as he affirms the theologian of the cross in dialectical opposition to the theologian of glory.¹⁰

Luther clarifies who is a theologian of the cross versus a theologian of glory in thesis 19: "He is not worth calling a theologian who seeks to interpret the invisible things of God on the basis of the things that have been created."¹¹ Luther's critique in this thesis is not against a system of thought. He is not speaking against the use of reason in theology. His thesis is a critique of our human condition.¹²

When Luther wrote these theses, he had already lectured on the book of Romans. He was intensely aware, because of his study of Paul, of our totally sinful heart and lives before God.¹³ Luther's criticism of the theologian of glory goes beyond a critique of Rome's theology of works. It is a critique of our total human reality of sin, and it is a critique against building altars to the gods fashioned after our own image. These altars destroy our lives and our human culture. In this idolatrous vision, we call good those things that we fashion as evil. Also we look at the good and beautiful things that our God has made and call them evil and despise them. It is in this light that Luther offers his critique in thesis 21: "A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."¹⁴ In this thesis Luther refers specifically to our human condition of pride and our common rejection of God. He is not commenting specifically about human culture. However, every student of culture knows that culture is everything people do and fashion as human beings.¹⁵ God blessed His people at the time of creation to fashion a world, a culture, in light of His creative work (Genesis 1:28). Nevertheless, it is because of human sin and pride that the tower of Babel was constructed. Our human condition distorts the things we make in church and society. This is why we need to apply, in light of the theology of the cross, a countercultural dimension to our witness.

History is quite clear concerning the violence Christians have imposed on others in the name of the Gospel. The Gospel has been used as an excuse to impose another way of life or culture on other people rather than to proclaim the Gospel in their situation. I direct the reader to the seminal work of David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. He illustrates how the Western missiological enterprise has assumed other cultures to be inferior in

appropriating the Gospel in an indigenous and powerful manner.¹⁶ As we engage in the witness of Christ in the twenty-first century, we need to be conscious of how our human condition has created cultural idols that get in the way of the proclamation of the Gospel. As we proclaim Christ, we must look at the cross and reflect on how our human condition gets in the way of the witness. This requires, therefore, that we engage in what Walls calls the “vulnerability of the cross.” This is the fragile existence that the missionary appropriates as he or she witnesses to Christ cross-culturally. We call what a thing is in the context of our culture and in the context of the culture to which we bring the witness of the cross. Luther speaks to the vulnerability of our witness in his comments on thesis 11: “It is impossible to hope in God unless one has despaired in all creatures and knows that nothing can profit without God.”¹⁷ However, how does this vulnerable witness become the power of God to salvation? How, as God’s people, may we move away from our sinful offenses that get in the way of the witness so we may unconditionally embrace every tribe and nation in the name of Jesus Christ? The incarnational dimension of the cross leads us to plant another signpost toward our global witness in the twenty-first century.

THE INCARNATIONAL DIMENSION

In his course on faith and ideologies at the University of Chicago, Juan Luis Segundo began one of his lectures by quoting from Luther’s explanation of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism: “The faith and trust that the heart make . . . both God and idols.”¹⁸ Segundo quoted Luther to show that every person in her or his faith life has a perspective or point of departure in appropriating the object of faith. This is the reality of our human condition. Luther’s explanation of the First Commandment speaks against building idols in each of these human situations. Our Christian witness, however, directs us to find those cross-centered values that confront our destructive idolatry and allow us to live God’s gifts of grace to the world. This is where we will find the love of God.

I believe that Luther’s incarnational theology of the cross directs us in this important task. Luther writes in his Heidelberg Disputation, thesis 20: “But he is worth calling a theologian who understands the visible back side of God through the revelation present in suffering and the cross” [*“Sed qui visibilia et posteriora Dei per passiones et crucem conspecta intelligit”*].¹⁹ The greatest insight of Luther’s theology of the cross is that the cross reveals the crucified God for us. We can only know God’s stand for us in the incarnate God who died on the cross. God reveals Himself to us through the presence of His incarnate Son, who

hung on our behalf on the cross.²⁰ Jurgen Moltmann has succinctly summarized what is crucial and central to the dynamic of Luther's theology. He defines Luther's theology of the cross as a "radical development of the doctrine of the incarnation with a soteriological intent."²¹ While I disagree with Moltmann's parting with Luther's understanding concerning the atonement, I find that Moltmann has grasped quite admirably two constant realities in Luther's vision of the cross. Luther holds together in a powerful manner the reality of Christ's incarnation with the reality of Christ's death for us. It is in God's relationship of the incarnation to Christ's cross that we find the radical nature of God's presence for us.

Luther grasped this reality in a dynamic existential manner during his second lectures on the Psalms (*Operationes in Psalmos*, 1519–1521). I began this essay with an important quote from the *Operationes* that points to Luther's radical perspective of taking seriously Christ's incarnation in relationship to His death: "Christ must be apprehended as Man, before he is apprehended as God: and the cross of his humanity must be sought after and known, before we know the glory of his divinity."²² Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, lived a genuine life as a human being. He had compassion on the sick, the poor, the dispossessed, and on every sinful human being. We can read in the Gospel narratives how Jesus' life and work was driven by this complete love for people in their distress and human condition. For example, in Matthew, Jesus is overwhelmed with compassion for all the human problems the world faces (9:36–37). This is why He sends His disciples in the following manner: "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:7–8). While initially this task was given by Jesus within the context of the house of Israel, His approach was the same with the Samaritan woman (see John 4). Jesus is concerned to save and heal everyone in the context of their human relationships and specific locals. The lepers and the demon-possessed were especially disconnected from their communities. The Samaritan woman, because of her personal relationships, was disconnected from her family and her community. We may say that these individuals were also at the margins because of their social location. In each context Jesus brings a word of healing with the word of salvation. In his study of the meaning of $\sigma\acute{\omicron}\zeta\omega$, George Foerster points out that: "In the healings of Jesus, $\sigma\acute{\omicron}\zeta\omega$ never refers to a single member of the body but always to the whole man . . ."²³ This is quite evident in Jesus' healing of Bartimaeus (Mark 10:47–52).

In the Gospels, Jesus is concerned with the whole person. Unfortunately, the proclamation of the Gospel has been reinterpreted through different ideological explanations. In Latin America, for example, during the last three decades the witness of a theology of liberation that speaks to important human needs has often neglected the message of the forgiveness of sins and our cultural realities. At the same time, in our North American witness of the central scriptural teaching of the forgiveness of sin through faith in Christ, we have often neglected the plight of our sisters and brothers in their communities. This is exactly what has occurred in our North American witness to African American, Hispanic, and Asian communities. Often our witness is clothed in a subtle or not so subtle racism that has grown untamed under our false human pretenses of cultural superiority. I believe that the indictment of Dr. Martin Luther King during the civil rights movement is still relevant: "It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning."²⁴ We have often neglected the implications of God's salvation in light of the situation of the other.

Christ's imperative call to repentance and to believe in the Gospel because of the nearness of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14) is a holistic call. This call involves healing in all human dimensions. My reading of the Gospels suggests that Jesus Christ healed people not in isolation but by forgiving them and transforming them from outcasts to faithful disciples of the cross within their communities. Also He directed His witness to the specific communities that kept the outcasts at the margins. The witness of the kingdom of God was clearly directed to the integration of the ones at the margins as valuable members of the community. Luke's narrative of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus is a clear example of this witness of $\sigma\omega\zeta\omega$ (Luke 7:36–50).

However, we need to be careful in our witness that we do not engage in what Regin Prenter calls "a theology of the cross without the word."²⁵ A theology of the cross without the Word engages the theologian in an existential following of the cross that may be grounded in personal false idols of power. This theologian lives and proclaims a limited Gospel of redemption in light of his or her *status quo* in life. This theologian refuses to listen to God's judgments upon our idols of power. By not allowing the Gospel to become incarnate in all our human conditions, we become theologians of glory. The theologian of glory is not attentive to all the wounds of God's creatures. Luther's witness of the Word is grounded in Christ. His witness of the cross and incarnation finds in Christology a unifying theme for this witness. Luther's comments in his Heidelberg Disputation thesis 21 confirm this point: "This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know

God hidden in suffering."²⁶ The first two Heidelberg theses set the tone for Luther concerning what is central to this Christological vision. Thesis 1 clearly states Luther's intention. He theologizes from the perspective of the Epistle to the Romans to come to an important realization: "The righteousness of God has been manifested without the Law" (Romans 3:21).²⁷

To lead to a theology of the Word, Luther directs his first efforts to God's righteousness apart from all human effort. Thesis 2 affirms this. Luther unmasks our unrighteousness grounded on all human works. Prenter summarizes quite admirably what is central to the Heidelberg Disputation:

The theology of the cross according to which the cross in my own life destroys all my self-righteousness so that I am judged solely in the light of Christ's action on my behalf through which alone I am made righteous before God . . . The faith which justifies is in essence itself a bearing of the cross . . . because it demands that the sinner surrender every claim to self-justification and fly instead for refuge to the cross whereupon Christ suffered on our behalf.²⁸

God's righteousness is grounded on Christ's work for us as the incarnate God. In reality this is what is revealed by the "crucified and hidden God."²⁹ We are called righteous because the person of Jesus Christ hung in our place on the cross. We are called in that light to live Christ's incarnational love in the world.

The key to Luther's theology of the cross is to see the theology of the cross as an active, living act of discipleship. If you read Luther's Heidelberg Disputation carefully, as well as his *Commentary on the Psalms 1519–1521* (the *Operationes in Psalmos*), he does not engage in an abstract theology of the cross. Luther exhorts us in light of Jesus' call to become theologians of the cross. This is never a call to merely interpret and dissect the good news of God's love as distant and detached subjects. The theologian of the cross is called to a living discipleship. In the same way that we cannot separate the theology of the cross from the Word, we cannot separate the Word from the cross. Both dimensions belong together in Luther's perspective. This is also Regin Prenter's perspective. It was also the vision of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship* when he spoke against "cheap grace."³⁰ The cross must move us from proclamation to action. In the words of Christ: "[A]nyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 10:38–39). How is Jesus' imperative translated into Luther's theology of the cross? In Luther's life as a theologian of the cross, the crucified and incarnate God calls everyone

into question, yet in the same breath and at the same time, He calls His disciples to live and impart Christ's unconditional love and grace in every human situation. It is a call to call worthy those who are despised or considered unworthy because of our human pride and idols of power. God's witness to our unrighteousness and to Christ's righteousness becomes a call to a living discipleship.

This witness only occurs when we do not sit and rationalize the theology of the cross but instead become theologians of the cross through whom God's active love shown on the cross "creates the object of his love."³¹ See how Luther lives this act of discipleship as he concludes his reflection on his theological disputation at Heidelberg:

. . . [T]he love of God living in a man loves sinners, evil men, foolish men, weak men, so that the love of God makes them righteous, good, wise and strong. Thus sinners are lovely because they are loved: they are not loved because they are lovely. This is why human love shuns sinners and evil men. As Christ said, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners" [Matthew 9:13]. And that is what the love of the cross means. It is a love born of the cross, which betakes itself not to where it can find something to enjoy, but where it may confer good to the wicked and the needy. For "it is more blessed to give than to receive," says the Apostle [Acts 20:35]. Whence Psalm 41:1: "Blessed is he that considers the poor and the needy." Yet since the mind of man naturally cannot have as an object of its understanding or love something that is nothing (I mean by that the poor and the needy), but can have that which has being and is true and good, therefore, it judges according to the outward appearance. It looks to the person of men and judges by externals.³²

This love can only be created by the incarnate and crucified God who stood on our behalf. Luther reflects also on how this living reality of the crucified and incarnate Christ becomes our living reality of discipleship. He points to the "sweetest of miracles," a *dulcissimum spectaculum*, that occurs in receiving the incarnate life of Christ in our witness. This is a most "joyous exchange" in the life of the Christian because Christ's righteousness is exchanged for our unrighteousness as He lives with us and through us the life of the cross. Christ becomes our "identical twin" as we bring the incarnate witness of His love to those who are sinful, not loved, and marginalized.³³ In other words, the reality of Christ's alien righteousness implies more than a forensic declarative justification. Certainly it includes this justification in our witness. However, it is also an effective justification through which we seek to empower the poor, the helpless, and the destitute in our incar-

national witness to them of Christ's righteousness. Theologians of the cross live this witness, in Luther's words, as "Christophers," namely, as Christ-bearers in the world.³⁴ This is how Luther signals the life of the theologian of the cross in one of his sermons. We bring Christ to others, and we also carry others in their burden as Christ would have carried and embraced them. Luther reformed the art of doing theology in this vision. His theology of the cross requires becoming a theologian of the cross.

This vision opens a powerful witness for the twenty-first century. Our theology of missions grounded in this reality is open to speak the Gospel in the context and lives of those we address. Our witness is not offered to speculate, to manipulate, or to intellectualize the message of the cross. It is offered as we proclaim and live Christ's call of unconditional love and righteousness in the world. In the words of Luther: "For one becomes a theologian by living, by dying, by being damned: not by mere intellectualizing, reading, and speculating."³⁵ This life under the cross involves a certain risk and vulnerability because we are forced to hear other voices in their context and need, rather than only listen to our theological cliches or the sounds of our human righteousness. It also may become a risk for us because when we are open to see things in a different manner through the eyes of Christ, we may be called to change our perspective and look at the world in light of our discipleship of the cross. After all this is what happened to Peter and Paul in the book of Acts.

It is important to see how this incarnational witness of the cross is important to our twenty-first century witness of Christ. I would like to show the relevancy of this witness by engaging the reader in a true narrative from my pastoral ministry. This narrative is directed to the witness of the cross in light of our human suffering, which should be the central focus of our witness in our postmodern culture.³⁶

In the summer of 1980 I served as director of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) office at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, during the unexpected influx of more than 125,000 Cuban refugees through the Mariel boat lift to the United States. I went to Fort Chaffee with great joy and expectation to serve fellow Cuban refugees. During the second week at this military camp, something happened that changed my pastoral practice and the way I witness to the Gospel. Early one morning a security officer brought a 13-year-old girl to me for counseling. These were desperate times, and I was the only one available. The previous night, this young lady had attempted suicide. Her bandaged wrists were signs of her desperation. The officers wanted to know why she had wanted to die. I spent two hours with this torn apart, fragile human being. Her immense suffering changed the way I

practiced my ministry of reconciliation and healing. This young lady told me how a young man had befriended her at Fort Chaffee. One night he raped her. The next day he tied her in chains and began to sell her as a prostitute. Although this did not represent the majority of the activities at Fort Chaffee, there was a small, strong criminal element operating in the camp. I was outraged. I also remembered how I came to the United States as a 13-year-old, full of fear but protected by my family.

My first reaction was to find this young man and grab him by the neck. I hated my brother. I wanted to kill him. As I listened to this child, a paradigm shift occurred in my pastoral work. She did not call for blood. She did not question God. She wanted to know, however, if her family would still love her because of the terrible perversions perpetrated against her. She wanted to know if the God of love of whom I spoke also loved her. She also wanted to know if I as a representative of that God loved her. She expressed these feelings in confusing terms. At this point I knew it was senseless to explain God's love to her. I also realized it was useless to assume a position of power. She would not be consoled by my assurances that the criminal would be punished. She wanted to feel the presence of God's love standing with her in her powerlessness. I turned to the cross, I embraced her, and I cried with her in the name of God. It is because God was there in her suffering that I was able to articulate Christ's witness to her.

This brings us to the witness of the cross between modern and postmodern times. The November 13, 2000, issue of *Christianity Today* published a roundtable discussion of six postmodern Christians.³⁷ Many conservative evangelical theologians want to protest such a dialogue. One of the problems in discussing postmodernism is that many theologians have used this term to underscore the relativism and consumerism of our culture. Many postmodernists have included this inner focus in their agenda. However, there are conservative theologians who also speak in light of postmodernism to confront the modernism present in our culture. In their criticism of our culture, they are antimodern theologians with a valuable metanarrative (namely, a compelling universal witness) of the cross for the twenty-first century. In this discussion, Andy Crouch, editor in chief of *Regeneration Quarterly*, brought into perspective what is central to this postmodernist critique of modernism.

For some, *postmodernism* refers to a renewed attention to "the other," "the marginalized." . . . This attention to the marginalized has led many postmodernists into a profound skepticism toward modernity's assumptions about knowledge, truth, and

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reason. These postmoderns question the extent to which modernity's attempts to make truth claims is valid.³⁸

We have inherited from the Enlightenment a modernist conceptualization of God in which God is always directing us to a universal idea of doing good and loving others. These general principles have been formulated with no view toward our real human problems or our human condition. This conceptualization of God's presence has been formulated by a false ideal of a progressive humanity. In this modernistic perspective, there is no room for the incarnational theology of the cross that questions our motives and sees behind the masks of our idolatrous actions. In this sense, the postmodern perspectives of some Christian theologians speak to the importance of the cross and the incarnation. In fact, this is what I discovered in this roundtable. Vincent Bacote, visiting professor of theology at Wheaton College, spoke about the necessity of the incarnation in the proclamation of the cross. He observes:

Relationships are so pivotal to impacting people with the message. In other words, you can't just use Evidence That Demands a Verdict to prove the faith anymore. I think a core aspect of incarnational theology is becoming incarnational. To use the phrase of some people, "You might be the only Bible anyone reads, the only Jesus anyone ever sees." We have to literally take that on and live that out to people which is an applied incarnational theology.³⁹

Lutherans do not usually proclaim the Gospel in rationalistic terms that "demand a verdict." However, we have reduced many times the proclamation of the Gospel to general explanations of the Gospel without exercising the incarnational theology of the cross in a life of discipleship. It is here where the most powerful witness of the cross can be given in our postmodern times.

This witness is also the necessary bridge between the Baby Boomer and the next generations in North America. Boomers have tremendous difficulty proclaiming the Gospel to those who follow them because we assume a general attitude of "father knows best" rather than joining with our children in a life of discipleship and love, in, with, and under the cross. Generation Next wants to see Jesus, not have us only talk about Jesus.⁴⁰ Generation Next wants to experience the presence of God as He hears their uncertain cry for the future. In the words of Sherri King, one of the participants in the roundtable: ". . . [T]he idea of the embodied Christ is extraordinarily timely and important in all areas of human life. And this gets to the issue of truth.

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At the end of the day, truth is not a syllogism. Truth is embodied in the person and flesh of Jesus Christ."⁴¹

We also find some theologians in our postmodern times using the incarnation and the particularity of the cross to take a stand on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. Yet in some cases this critical stand is a witness to a particular ideology rather than to the Gospel of Jesus of Galilee, who truly stood in the corner of humanity in the name of God. This is the paradox of postmodernism. It is critical of an oppressive ideology, but it needs another ideology to overcome oppression. The history of the world points to this way of life as a tribalism in which the strong always vanquish the weak. Andy Crouch concludes the roundtable discussion in a similar manner to my arguments. The theology of the cross in the Word is needed as a metanarrative not only to see our human fragility through the incarnate eyes of Christ, but also to lead us to a future beyond our human situations of sin. Crouch argues also for the importance of a theology of the cross in truly living incarnationally:

I want to put in a plug for a Cross-centered postmodern theology. I take on postmodernism criticism quite deeply, and this has driven me to a rereading of the Cross, because the Cross is what guarantees the Christian gospel against the critiques of postmodernism, specifically the one that says that all metanarratives oppress. The gospel is a metanarrative: it is "the greatest story told"; it claims to tell the truth about the world. The problem of most stories is that they tell the truth in a way that benefits someone. But the Cross is a story in which the other is met by the non-other; God becomes the other and endures the full experience of marginalization.⁴²

Andy Crouch's perceptive arguments are, in my opinion, at the center of Luther's dynamic incarnational theology of the cross. God speaks to our sin and has compassion on us in light of the death of His Son, Jesus Christ, for us. The cross clearly reveals that God is there to welcome the alien and the outcast as worthy members of the kingdom. Luther's theology of the cross can also be understood in a dynamic and perceptive manner for twenty-first century witness as we reflect on the eschatological and sacramental dimensions of the cross.

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DIMENSION

In an important work concerning Luther's eschatology, Ulrich Asendorf has accentuated the relationship that exists for Luther between eschatology and justification by faith.⁴³ Asendorf points out that the eschatological nature of Luther's theology is always made pos-

A Missiology of the Cross

ROBERT SCUDIERI

Drawn to the cross, which you have blessed
 With healing gifts for souls distressed,
 To find in you my life, my rest,
 Christ Crucified, I come.

Then all that you would have me do
 Shall such glad service be for you
 That angels wish to do it too.
 Christ Crucified, I come.¹

INTRODUCTION

Mission is something that Christians do because they live under the cross. If there were no great commission (Matthew 28:18–20), would there still be a Christian mission? You might respond, “Yes, because there would still be Luke 24, where Jesus said, “[R]epentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in [My] name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:47–48). And there is Mark 16:15 (GWN): “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Go everywhere in the world, and tell everyone the Good News. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.’ ”

But suppose none of these passages existed, not to mention any of the dozens of Scripture texts that show God's love for all nations and His desire that the world hear the Gospel through His church—what then? Would there still be a mission for the Christian church?

From one point of view, no. There are Christians and Christian churches that understand Christian mission as the result of a command—an order—as in “these are our marching orders.” In this regard, God's commands are at the center of mission. But let me suggest another way to look at mission. We might call it an “evangelical missiology”—that is, mission is a result of being a Christian. Mission is something that Christians do because they live under the cross. These Christians would understand Acts 1:8 (GWN)—“You will be my witnesses to testify about Me in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”—not as a command, but as a promise.

In my opinion, too much mission thinking surrounds “technique.” Frankly, technique is an essential element of missiology, but at the beginning let us be grounded in a theological understanding of the cause of mission. The “how” flows from this. As Lutherans, let's talk about mission under the cross. Luther called the theology he advocated “*theologia crucis*,” the “theology of the cross.” Later in life he called it the “theology of the Gospel.”² The term was made well known in the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518. When he posted the Ninety-five Theses in 1517, Luther had called for a disputation, a discussion, of the theses. The discussion never took place. Instead, Luther was attacked as a heretic. Pope Leo X wanted to silence Luther, and he asked the general of the Augustinians, Gabriel della Volta, to do this. Volta turned the task over to Johann von Staupitz, the vicar general of the German Augustinians.

It was the practice of the Augustinians in Germany to meet every three years on the third Sunday after Easter. In 1518 the meeting was in April at Heidelberg. Staupitz asked Luther to share his views on theology—to introduce the Augustinians to the new evangelical theology. Luther wrote 28 theological and 12 philosophical theses for the debate. The most important of these, and the one that forms the basis for this essay, is theses 24, “Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner.”³

For a while now I have been considering what kind of missiology would clearly reflect Luther's theology of the cross. In my opinion, a “missiology of the cross” would look at Christian mission from two vantage points:

1. It would perceive that all mission flows *from* the cross.
2. It would perceive that all mission flows *to* the cross.

A Pastoral Perspective from the Cross on the Bioethical Revolution

RICHARD C. EYER

ETHICAL RELATIVISM AND BIOETHICS

Although the word *bioethics* has appeared in journals and news headlines for several decades, most people still have to ask for a definition, even for a spelling of the word, in conversations outside professional circles. I recently hosted a conference entitled “Genetic Interventions” and worked with an agency to record the various presentations. I used the word *bioethics* frequently in our conversations. After weeks of negotiating arrangements, the highly successful, intelligent CEO of the company suddenly asked me, “What is *bioethics* anyway?” It took a good deal of explanation and illustration before he could comprehend what his company would be recording.

The following definition of *bioethics*, therefore, might be helpful to the nontechnical professional:

Whereas ethics might be understood to be about the morality of how we ought to live together, bioethics deals with the ethics of making choices available to us as a result of break-

throughs in medical technology: genetic engineering [and cloning, human embryo and fetal tissue research, reproductive technologies], the withholding or withdrawal of treatment in illness, physician-assisted suicide, and euthanasia.¹

If the word *bioethics* defies easy definition, the revolution accompanying it has nevertheless transformed our world for better and for worse. A woman, advised by her obstetrician, may choose to have an ultrasound examination to see visually how the child is developing. If it appears there is anything wrong with the developing child, abortion is always available. This is an issue in bioethics that has been with us for some time.

From the early 1970s and the debate over abortion to more recent discussions of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, hostilities and politics have made reasonable discussion of ethical concerns virtually impossible. Bioethics as the study of ethical questions relating to both secular and religious concerns has been stalled for lack of clear direction from either traditional or New Age proposals. For years Jack Kevorkian, a pathologist in Michigan, had been using what he called a "suicide machine" to accommodate the killing of people worn down with discouragement by their disease. The "machine" was nothing more than several bottles, tubes, and needles hooked up to the person who desired to die. At a given moment the person would open the flow of various drugs and within minutes the individual would be dead. Although the technology for this method of physician-assisted suicide was not sophisticated, the issues raised added to the plethora of bioethical issues already beginning to glut the agenda. The solution to the Kevorkian problem regarding physician-assisted suicide came when he was found guilty of murder and incarcerated. But the resolution was a legal, not an ethical, one. The debate about assisted suicide and euthanasia continues.

Although the blame for controversy concerning issues in bioethics is often placed on the complexity and rapidity of technological changes, paralleling these, and quite apart from them, has been the declining influence of traditional Judeo-Christian morality. Perhaps one of the most obvious changes that occurred in the 1960s was the introduction of the birth control pill. This small technological innovation revealed the fragile nature of moral conviction by removing the consequences of promiscuity and revealing the lack of moral character in those who only refrained for fear of pregnancy rather than out of respect for chastity as a moral virtue. The pill may be seen as the turning point of morality as displayed in issues involving reproductive technologies. In fact, it is the children of the parents who saw the pill as liberation that are enamored with the possibilities of reproductive

The Witness to the Cross in Light of the Hispanic Experience

ALBERTO L. GARCÍA

The crucified Christ is a powerful symbol in the popular religiosity of Latin Americans and U.S. Hispanics/Latinos. There is no doubt that the figure of the anguished, suffering Christ is also a significant religious symbol in Spain. One of the most moving Spanish visual images of the crucifixion is the painting by Diego Velázquez (1599–1660). *El Cristo de Velázquez* has been immortalized by the Spanish philosopher and writer Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936) in his philosophical work *The Tragic Sense of Life in Humanity and the People*. Unamuno saw Velázquez's Christ "as the highest catholic artistic expression . . . at least Spanish . . . where Christ is always dying without ever dying to give us life."¹ This gory image of Christ has been considered one of the most popular religious symbols inherited by Latin America from Spanish Catholicism. Georges Casalis, a Latin American theologian, criticizes this omnipresent image of the suffering Christ in the popular art and culture of the Southern Cone: "When the people pray before those images or venerate them, as they become inscribed in their spirits throughout a life of a subjected pedagogy and passive practice, it is no

doubt that the people find there their destiny, and worship or accept those images with a masochistic identification."²

We need to add to these images the processions of Holy Week as they are staged in many parts of Latin America and in some Hispanic Catholic parishes in the United States. Ignacio Ellacuría, former rector of the Central American University, and one of six Jesuit priests killed by Salvadoran troops in November 1989, saw as one of the most important images for witness in Latin America the portrait of "the crucified people."³ Ellacuría's depiction of the Latin American people as the crucified people corrects, in a sense, the masochistic interpretation offered by Casalis concerning the people's identification with Jesus' suffering. The Latin American and U.S. Hispanic/Latino experience of the crucified Christ may be seen from a different perspective. It cannot be merely interpreted as a fatalistic or masochistic symbol of human existence. It has to do with an incarnational and soteriological understanding of how the experience of Jesus' crucifixion becomes an important signpost in the reading of the Hispanic religious experience.⁴

This essay will unfold, therefore, the incarnational and soteriological reality of the cross in light of the U.S. Hispanic experience. We must take seriously the insights of Ellacuría in light of the catholic evangelical biblical teaching of the incarnation and soteriology. The fact is that the witness of the cross in light of the Latino experience must take seriously the experience and identification of Latinos with the crucified Christ. Our language about God in light of the cross is incarnational and relational. It takes into consideration the community's hopes and aspirations. I believe that the image of the crucified Christ is at the center of our reading and witness of Scripture. We need to hear the voice of the crucified Christ in humility. It is only in this *cross-cultural* reading and witness that we can take the next step to live the unconditional love of Jesus.

The catholic evangelical teaching of justification by faith through grace may be applied in this reading of Scripture. It is grounded on the theology of the cross that calls all our human sinful situations into question. It destroys our theology of human works. It calls idolatrous our rationalizations and our rejections of "the other" as God's creatures. The cross, however, calls also the messenger of God's Word, as well as the hearers, into repentance and new life as the living voice of the Gospel creates this miracle. This miracle of reconciliation creates a new community in Christ. This is at the center of Paul's witness of the cross:

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling. My message and my preaching