

Global Mission and the Theology of the Cross: A Cross-Denominational Study

Chad Nelsen

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Dr. Chip Bouzard

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Peer reviewed by Kaily Eaton
kaitlynn.eaton@wartburg.edu
563-340-8099

The concept of “mission” has long been a part of the Christian church. Most, if not all, major denominations of the Christian religion place at least a small focus on mission work. This mission work is sometimes called the *Missio Dei*, or God’s Mission. There are many programs seeking to do Christian mission work in a global context. A few such programs are Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM), a program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Catholic World Mission, and The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM). The following text will attempt to give a brief description of global mission, and an analysis of the aforementioned programs, specifically focusing on how the programs reflect a theology of the cross, while also analyzing the work itself and the motivation for said work. The purpose of this analysis is see how global mission affects the church in the modern world, specifically in regard to living out a theology of the cross. While all programs are seeking to carry out God’s work in the world, it was found that the YAGM program most accurately aligned with the theology of the cross, followed by Catholic World Missions, and finally TEAM.

The ultimate mission from Christ was to spread the gospel, the good news of salvation to all men (Mark 16:15, Matthew 24:14 & 28:19-20). The ultimate mission to spread the gospel of salvation did only take place in preaching, but also in physical works. Thomas Kemper writes, “Augustine is credited with early use of the term *missio Dei* to describe an aspect of God’s work in which the church and the faithful participate.”¹ While this concept certainly did not begin with Augustine, it is

¹ Thomas Kemper, “The *Missio Dei* in Contemporary Context”, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 38, no. 4 (October 2014): 188.

important to note that one of the most significant theologians of all time felt that this work was of high enough value to the life of the church to coin a term for its regular use.

Missio Dei as a term may not have been around until the 4th century with Augustine, but the idea is certainly pervasive in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Most notably, God's work or mission is on display in the Sermon on the Mount. It is possible to begin to see that this is God's work in Matthew 5:16 "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." The acts may be your good works, but the glory is the Father's. Later in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), Jesus charges his followers to give to the poor, to treat others as you would wish to be treated, to love your enemies, not to judge, not to hold anger, not to worship money, and even teaches the Lord's Prayer saying, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Further, when Jesus is asked by a disciple what he should do, Christ responds in Mark 10:21, "And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.' " Paraphrasing Matthew 25: 34-36; 40 Jesus says that the blessed and those who will inherit the kingdom of God are those who do a variety of kindnesses to strangers, and thereby to Jesus himself. These good works are clearly not simply a human mandate, but rather the mission of God. The physical nature of mission work originated as the acts that members of the church could do to assist vulnerable populations in their own communities. This

assistance might take the form of education, preventing hunger, providing shelter, healing the sick, financial assistance to the poor, etc.

To further understand the history of mission, one must know the intended audience, or recipients of mission works. Whereas salvation in Judaism was contained to the descendants of Abraham, Christ went beyond that. Jesus “based the idea of divine sonship exclusively upon repentance, humility, faith, and love.”² No longer was salvation, being a child of God, tied to nationality, but rather it belonged to all those who repent, practice humility, have faith, and show love. This ideal was certainly present in the writings, teachings, and actions of Paul. The apostle Paul had been brought up in a strict Jewish household, one that would have never approved of the Gentiles.³ Yet after Paul’s conversion to Christianity, he clearly feels the gospel message of Christ’s life and resurrection is not restricted to the Jews, but to all, including the Gentiles. He writes in Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Similar statements are heard in Romans 3:29 and 10:12.

Paul not only described his belief, but lived it as well. One could argue that the whole of Christian mission today is based on the example laid out by Paul. He travelled the Roman Empire preaching and teaching, inspiring churches to do the work of Christ in the world. Much of Paul’s preaching was directed towards those in

² Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, Translated and ed. By James Moffatt, (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1908), 37.

³ W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1896), 35-36

the lower classes.⁴ Roland Allen writes, “He did not come merely to teach a higher truth, or a finer morality than those who preceded him. He came to administer a spirit. Before St. Paul many teachers had inculcated lofty principles of conduct and had expounded profound doctrines. Men did not need another. They needed life. Christ came to give that life”⁵. Even from the time of Paul, mission work has been directed at the lower classes of society. They are the people who most desperately need life. It is in this very spirit that mission work continues today.

As the church progressed to form distinct factions and denominations, the form of mission changed as well. A large portion of the mission work in the Catholic Church was, and continues to be performed by the different religious orders that formed. These orders include the Augustinian, the Benedictine, the Franciscan, the Dominican, and the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, and others. The majority of the focus of their missions was initially on conversion, but a significant portion of the mission work was dedicated to education, working with the sick, and providing charitable actions. Eventually, foreign global mission became a large focus as well. The order that most exemplified foreign mission was the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits. The Society was formed in 1534 by Saint Ignatius of Loyola and several of his students, including Saint Francis Xavier.⁶ Within months of its formation, the order was sending global missionaries out, the most notable of course, being Xavier. Xavier is given much of the credit for starting and expanding the Christian church in India,

⁴ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours*, (London: Robert Scott, 1912), 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 196-197.

⁶ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Jesuit,” last modified November 3, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/302999/Jesuit>

the Malay Archipelago (Indonesia, the Philippines, New Guinea, East Malaysia), and Japan. The number of Jesuits in mission fields, particularly foreign mission in Asia and Africa, was larger than any other religious order. Education was and continues to be a very large focus for the Jesuits, including recognizable institutions such as Georgetown, Loyola-Chicago, Marquette, Xavier, Creighton, Regis, and Gonzaga universities.

While the Lutheran faith spread quickly in northern Europe, the Lutheran tradition took a little more time to become active in foreign mission. Most of the Lutheran foreign mission work started out sort of as a side function of colonization. As major Lutheran countries such as Germany and Denmark began to colonize in the 17th-19th centuries, Lutheran missionaries began to take root in the New World, Asia, and Africa.⁷ Lutheranism grew rapidly in the United States as more and more people immigrated, taking their faith traditions with them. As colonization grew, starting the global connections we have today, mission in the Lutheran church grew as well. In fact, the first Lutheran seminary in America, Hartwick Seminary in New York, started as a training center for missionaries. One major Lutheran figure to note is Wilhelm Löhe. He was a pastor stationed in Neuendettelsau, Germany who had a particular interest in mission work. Most of his foreign focus was on German immigrants in the United States and his supporters helped to form the Ohio, Missouri, and Iowa Synods. His focus on education gains living proof in the existence of both Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa and Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque,

⁷ Ted Vial. "Mission and Expansion," <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Lutheran/Historical-Development/Missions-Spread-Changes-Regional-adaptations.html> (accessed 30 March 2015).

Iowa. Löhe also formed a Foreign Mission Society that provided missionaries and assistance to the United States, Brazil, Ukraine, Australia, and New Guinea.⁸ Similar to the Catholic orders, much of the Lutheran mission focus was on education, working with the sick, and charitable work.

Another large tradition, and the last to be discussed in this essay, is American Revivalism. There have been several awakenings, or revivals in American Evangelicalism, but the following will focus specifically on the work of evangelist Dwight L. Moody. This revivalist movement was an interdenominational effort in which Moody “perfected efficient techniques that characterized the urban mass evangelistic campaigns”.⁹ He started Moody’s Mission Sunday school with a “desire to reach the ‘lost’ youth of the city, the children with little to no education, less than ideal family situations, and poor economic circumstances.”¹⁰ Moody’s Sunday school grew so rapidly and was so successful, he was encouraged to start his own church, the Illinois Street Church, now The Moody Church, which opened in 1864. He started several schools, including what is now Moody Bible Institute. Moody travelled to the UK for several years, hoping to feed the revival movement there. One of his education projects, the “College Students’ Summer School” sparked the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions. It is estimated that 5,000 student volunteers came out of this program by 1911. This mission program grew to include students from Europe and South Africa as well.

⁸ “Johann Konrad Wilhelm Löhe,” Wartburg College, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.wartburg.edu/about/lohe.aspx>

⁹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Dwight L. Moody,” last modified November 3, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/391240/Dwight-L-Moody>

¹⁰ “D.L. Moody’s Story,” Moody Bible Institute, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://www.moody.edu/DL-moody/>

One of the many influenced by Moody was Fredrik Franson. He was born in 1852 in Sweden, but his family moved to the Nebraska when he was in high school. Fredrik was born at a time in Sweden when the “Rosenian” pietist awakening was taking place, which put an emphasis on the Bible, evangelism and personal conversion, the oneness of all God’s children, holiness, and missions.¹¹ The local Swedish Baptist Church in Nebraska shared these values and cultivated them in Franson. Franson apprenticed himself to D.L. Moody’s campaigns and learned about the work of the Spirit in mission work as well as the need for the preaching and Good News of Christ. Franson wrote, “Fellowship with Jesus and work for Jesus are two preoccupations that we can never assess too highly.”¹²

This influence of Moody also showed Franson the ability and importance of interdenominational cooperation. Eventually Franson’s belief in the importance of the mission of the church and that “the church is Christ’s Bride on earth”¹³ led him into action. He campaigned and preached in his native Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, Finland, India, Japan, China, New Zealand, Australia, Korea, Burma, South Africa, and Mexico. Franson’s teaching and preaching inspired mission programs to start in each of those countries. He or his ideas were involved in starting ten missions from 1890-1901. In short, Franson’s influence was expansive and he felt it was best and most effective to be hands-on in his approach, meeting his missionaries in person, where they are

¹¹ Edvard Torjesen, “The Legacy of Fredrik Franson.” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 12, no. 1 (July 1991): 125-126.

¹² *Ibid.*, 125.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 126.

working. He placed a large focus on being relatable to the people to whom he was ministering and putting that focus on the local church.

The traditions that have been outlined above are the Catholic, the Lutheran, and the interdenominational Evangelicals. In the remainder of this essay, specific programs from these traditions will be outlined. The programs will also be analyzed in the context of a theology of the cross. Several standard questions were posed to representatives from each of the programs. This will be the starting point for the analysis of the programs.

The Catholic World Mission operates obviously as a product of the Catholic tradition. The Mission has been in existence since 1998. Amber DeMartino was the contact person reached within the Catholic World Mission. The following responses to the questions are hers:

What is the mission of your program? “Typically, Catholic World Mission is the fundraising arm for impoverished children and families in third world countries. From Mexico to India, the Congo, Russia and beyond! The four pillars of our work are Education, Evangelization, Disaster Relief and Dignified Living. We ensure that every donation works to alleviate physical, spiritual and intellectual poverty while bearing fruit for generations to come. The heart of our work has been in undeveloped countries however we are expanding our work to combat spiritual poverty and dignified living in developed countries. We also partner with organizations such as the MOP and have referrals if young folks or others are interested in volunteering or doing mission work.”

Do you believe your mission is rooted in scripture? How so? “Yes to some degree, *whatever you do for the least of them, you do for me; in the evening of life we will be judged on how much we love.* The spiritual component of our work is also very important and we believe it is a blessing to pray for our benefactors and those submitting their prayer intentions.”

How might this program reflect the theology of the cross? “While we can't alleviate suffering completely we encourage those that are able to help to do so, we also communicate the dignity of life and help transform people and communities to reach their God given talents. Our appeals for supporting missionaries are there to help combat all the bad and evil things happening in the world.”

How do you believe that your program fits in with the mission of the church as a whole? “We are really authentically Catholic and in line with Pope Francis and the Church teachings. Any medicines that we ship or fundraise for are in line with

Church teachings. Additionally, we are blessed that Catholic World Mission's Executive Director is also an ordained Deacon.”

Is your model for mission one that could be sustainable and help the church continue moving forward? How so? “Yes, by promoting the culture of life.”

Has interest in your program been growing, dwindling, or remaining constant in the past few years? “Praise God, Catholic World Mission has been growing. This is mainly because of Deacon Medina's interest and sincerity to many areas in the world. We have been fortunate to increase our distribution of funds to the projects and locations over the past 3 years.”

What might be the reasons of this? “Noted above and also some new marketing strategies, a new and improved website, and social media expansions.”¹⁴

As Ms. DeMartino mentioned, Catholic World Mission has four main pillars:

Education, Evangelization, Disaster Relief and Dignified Living. In regards to education, Catholic World Mission supports Mano Amiga, or “Helping Hand” which is a network of schools in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, and the Philippines serving impoverished children who otherwise may not get an education. Evangelism takes root in several ways through the Catholic World Mission: a program called the Gospel of Peace, attempting to bring peace to those afflicted by the violence of the drug cartels in Mexico, another program called ETC (Evangelizadores de Tiempo Completo) composed of nearly 5,000 full-time lay missionaries traveling to rural areas of Latin America bringing the gospel message, in India evangelizing to the tribal communities of Goa and Daman, also in India a program called Little Way Messengers who focus on doing the little things right and making small sacrifices out of love, through parish outreach to villages in Ghana, and lastly by supporting youth missionaries from around the world in a program called Mission Corps who spend a year of service in the United States. As for disaster relief,

¹⁴ Amber DeMartino, interview by author, Waverly, Iowa, April 4, 2015. Conducted via email.

Catholic World Missions is providing Ebola outbreak relief in Liberia, hunger relief in Kenya, typhoon relief in The Philippines, earthquake relief in Haiti, tsunami relief in Japan, and flooding relief in the Balkans. The common thread through each disaster relief is the distribution of food and supplies, largely medical as well as support for rebuilding homes, schools, and churches. Lastly, the pillar of dignified living takes form in an orphanage in the Congo, a clinic in Ghana, assisting with the Ebola outbreak in Liberia, providing clean and working medical supplies; all of these supports make the difference between life and death.

The next program to be outlined is Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM), a faction of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The program “invites ELCA young adults ages 21-29 into a transformative, year-long journey in international service. As they offer themselves in service, ELCA young adults are shaped by the witness of our global neighbors. They share in the journeys of companion churches and organizations in one of nine countries around the world.”¹⁵ The contact person for this program was Heidi Torgerson-Martinez. The answers to the following questions are hers:

What is the mission of your program?

“The ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program seeks to provide young adults with a year-long experience in international mission service. Through YAGM young adults share their gifts in service, receive the gifts of our global companions, and engage in intentional reflection on faith, identity, and global issues.”

Do you believe your mission is rooted in scripture? How so?

“Of course. I’d point to two texts. First is the Great Commandment, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:30-31, paraphrased). The second is 2 Cor 5:18, which calls God’s people to a ministry of

¹⁵ “Young Adults in Global Mission,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, accessed March 28, 2015, <http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Global-Church/Global-Mission/Young-Adults-in-Global-Mission>

reconciliation. Basically, the incomparable love of God in Christ frees us and compels us to love God's people actively. And because, through Jesus, we have been reconciled to God in spite of our brokenness, we are called to develop reconciling relationships with our global family."

How might this program reflect the theology of the cross?

"This will be grossly oversimplified, but the theology of the cross tells us that God is most fully revealed to us in the suffering of the cross. This does not mean that God creates suffering or blesses it as normative. Rather, it means that God is deeply present and most fully revealed not in power or wealth as many human cultures might expect. Instead, if we want to know what the face of God looks like, we look to unexpected places...places of brokenness, of pain, of suffering, of loneliness.

Through the YAGM experience our volunteers are placed in communities of need. As they live and learn and serve alongside our global companions they develop an ever-deepening hermeneutic that allows them to know Jesus more fully, to see God's face more clearly, at the foot of the cross, if you will. They witness the ways that God is revealed and present in the most painful of situations. And, they develop a broader understanding of the ways that we are tied together in God's story of love for a broken and suffering world. Many of our Western YAGM volunteers - especially those who hail from places of economic and social privilege - are culturally accustomed to see situations of poverty or oppression or abuse of power and call that "suffering." They are often less-attuned to the suffering that the dominant US cultural trappings of individualism, consumerism, etc., create in their own lives. As the year goes on, our YAGM volunteers come to understand in a visceral way that, though they are typically the ones with more in terms of financial/educational/political resources, they are not immune to suffering. They discover that we ALL suffer in this human experience. We all have need. And, just as importantly, we ALL have gifts to share as we find God revealed at the foot of the cross."

How do you believe that your program fits in with the mission of the church as a whole?

"I'd look to the previous answer about the program's scriptural grounding for one sense of this. In addition, I think that the YAGM program is providing for young adults a new way to understand themselves as people of faith living and serving within the institution of the church. The YAGM program is helping to raise a new generation of disciples. (And here I am naming specifically our YAGM volunteers as the disciples we are raising. Our young adults arrive in global communities where God is already very active and present. Our companions don't need converting. Rather, they often become agents of conversion for our young adults, who learn and experience new ways of living as Christians in the world.)"

Is your model for mission one that could be sustainable and help the church continue moving forward? How so?

"Yup. See the above answer. Also, all international mission work in the ELCA is lived out of a model of what has been named accompaniment. This is a model for mission that seeks to engage with global companions in relationships of solidarity, mutuality, and trust. Rather than having Western missionaries arrive with all the money and all the answers, mission in the spirit of accompaniment calls us to engage our global companions as co-equal partners in God's reconciling activity in

the world. As the globe continues to shrink, this model for mission can only support sustainable efforts at being church into the future. It recognizes the gifts and expertise present across an incredibly diverse span of cultures and experiences and assists us all in living more fully into our Christian life and witness.”

Has interest in your program been growing, dwindling, or remaining constant in the past few years?

“Interest in the YAGM program has been growing exponentially in the past few years. Our application numbers have more than doubled in the past three years and the program itself is now more than twice as large today as it was in 2009.”

What might be the reasons of this?

“I think there are lots of reasons for this. Visibility of the program has grown within the ELCA; financial support for the program has also grown, allowing us to provide more placements for YAGM volunteers. Young adults and their families trust the ELCA, and the YAGM program has established a reputation for supporting and caring for volunteers while engaging in mission activity that, in many ways, pushes against older mission models that looked a lot more like colonialism.”¹⁶

The YAGM program operates in the United Kingdom, Hungary, South Africa, Madagascar, Rwanda, Jerusalem/West Bank, Argentina/Uruguay, Mexico, and Cambodia. The majority of the activities consist of assisting in orphanages and women’s shelters, teaching English, teaching Biblical or theological studies, leading worship, helping with youth programs, working with the disabled, visiting indigenous populations, assisting the homeless, AIDS/HIV prevention, and providing support for societal injustices.

In the United States today, one of Fredrik Franson’s largest remaining legacies is an organization he started in 1890, The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM). The program “is a missions agency that partners with the local church to send missionaries and establish reproducing churches among the nations, going where the most people have the most need and proclaiming the gospel in both word

¹⁶ Rev. Heidi Torgerson-Martinez, interview by author, Waverly, Iowa, April 6, 2015. Conducted via email.

and action.”¹⁷ The contact person for TEAM was Kelsey Wales. The following answers to the questions asked are hers:

What is the mission of your program? Do you believe your mission is rooted in scripture? How so? How might this program reflect the theology of the cross? How do you believe that your program fits in with the mission of the church as a whole?

“TEAM is 125 years old and retains its core values and vision statement since that time. Our purpose comes from the understanding that “Missions exists because worship doesn’t”—to quote John Piper in reflection of the great commission themes not only in Matthew 28:19 but reflected as themes throughout all of scripture. Every bit of the purpose of our organization is based in Scripture.”

Is your model for mission one that could be sustainable and help the church continue moving forward? How so?

“Since our purpose is to help churches plant reproducing churches, a core value at TEAM is to do just this. Ultimately, this is through the leading of the spirit, continuing to learn and grow in our skills and work, collaboration, partnerships, etc. Our missiology is rooted in the idea that if there is no sustainable or reproducible work left in the hands of the local Christian community, we haven’t viewed our role as missionaries in a way that is ultimately the most sustainable for the church to grow around the world.”

Has interest in your program been growing, dwindling, or remaining constant in the past few years? What might be the reasons of this?

“As an old organization, we have seen times and trends of missions for years. In the past few years we have seen increased interest of short-term work. We see this as a positive in general but specifically as a huge blessing when those who serve short term (less than 8 months) and that passion they have coming back from the short term trip leads to committing to longer (career) time of service overseas. The reasons for this could be many, but is commonly identified with millennial generations, accessibility of travel, different times and movements of missions, etc.”¹⁸

TEAM also provides purpose and vision statements. Their purpose statement is as follows, “The purpose of TEAM is to help churches send missionaries to establish reproducing churches among the nations to the glory of God.” The vision statement says, “From everywhere to everywhere: We will establish reproducing

¹⁷ “About,” The Evangelical Alliance Mission, accessed on March 28, 2015, https://team.org/about#section_about_1

¹⁸ Kelsey Wales, interview by author, Waverly, Iowa, April 6, 2015. Conducted via email.

churches wherever the most people have the greatest need in collaboration with churches anywhere.” Currently TEAM has more than 575 missionaries serving in 35 countries.¹⁹ Positions range from short to long term and can be in education, healthcare, church ministries, hospitality, creative arts, business, youth ministries, worship leading, church planting, evangelizing, etc.

Now that the basis for each program has been outlined, each will be analyzed in terms of how they convey the theology of the cross. To do this, the theology of the cross must be understood. As many things are, the theology of the cross is sometimes best understood by explaining what it is not. The theology of the cross is not the theology of glory, or triumphalism. Douglas John Hall describes triumphalism as humanity’s tendency “to present themselves as full and complete accounts of reality, leaving little if any room for debate or difference of opinion and expecting of their adherents unflinching belief and loyalty. Such a tendency...triumphs...over all ignorance, uncertainty, doubt, and incompleteness, as well... as over every other point of view.”²⁰ Hall later writes that the theology of glory silences doubt, and thus real humanity.²¹ A theology of glory would thus find God where you would expect to find a god, in the grandeur, in moments where all is good and as it should be. In contrast, a theology of the cross finds God in the unexpected places. Hall writes of Martin Luther’s idea of the hidden and the revealing God. This says that God simultaneously hides in human flesh, yet it revealed to us. It makes no sense to reason that the almighty God, creator of the

¹⁹ “About,” The Evangelical Alliance Mission.

²⁰ Douglas John Hall. *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003), 17.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

universe would exist as a human. Further, it makes even less sense to reason that God should do this willingly, and by doing so take on suffering in the form of sinful flesh and death on the cross. God truly takes on compassion. He suffers with us. A theology of the cross does not pack everything up in a nice little box and provide all the answers. Rather, it causes us to acknowledge our sinful humanity, and thus hands us over to the freedom of thought. It is also in our own thinking that we encounter the struggle of not having the answers. When tragedy strikes, what Andrew Root calls the monster of life, it is difficult to have an answer.²² How does one find the answer as to why God allowed the father of a five-year-old boy to die in front of him? We find no answer in our own thoughts. Our largest comfort is in solidarity, in compassion, in suffering with us. This requires being understood, being loved. God gives us his very person not just to provide encouragement, but to give a new reality. Andrew Root writes, "It is through our despair that we encounter the God of hope. It is through our broken places that we find the resurrected Lord bringing a new reality from within this one. Hope springs from death, because our hope is in the man of the future, Jesus Christ, who though he is overcome by death on the cross conquers death with life in the Resurrection...Now, though we are overwhelmed by loss, yearning, and brokenness, God seeks to bring life from these barren places."²³

Often it is the case that our loss and suffering stems out of injustices we have created. Thus, we are guilty of creating the suffering of others in the world. While

²² Andrew Root. *The Promise of Despair* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 1-2.

²³ *Ibid.*, 146.

many people, especially members of the church, may not have had anything to do with the creation of this suffering, we are equally guilty of that suffering if we do nothing to stop it. We sin both by what we do and by what we leave undone. Jennifer McBride's *The Church for the World* makes precisely this argument. As the church of Christ, we need to take responsibility for the evil and suffering in the world, not necessarily because we caused it, but because we have been complicit in its existence. It is through taking responsibility that leads to acts of repentance. Further, it could be argued that these acts of repentance manifest themselves in global mission. If we are not seeking the dark, suffering places in the world and going to stand in solidarity with the people suffering there, just as God came to us to be in solidarity with our broken, sinful humanity, then we are not seeking repentance and forgiveness for the existence of those very places. We will likewise not find the hope that Root speaks of that is found when one discovers the face of God in the face of suffering.

The theology of the cross can, and should certainly be used to support global mission. The previously mentioned programs will now be analyzed in consideration of the theology of the cross. The program that seems to fit least is TEAM. The main goal of the program is to grow the church, gain more followers of Christ, around the world. A theology of the cross would, it seems, not be so concerned with growing the church as much as being present in the lives of those who need comfort. While certainly comfort and compassion could be by-products of the churches being planted and grown, it could be argued that addressing the needs of the suffering people comes first. Perhaps the church would in turn grow based on the comfort

and hope provided in the face of suffering. Certainly TEAM is doing great things in the world, but it is possible the purpose and focus could be shifted to better reflect a theology of the cross.

Next is the Catholic World Mission. It seems as though the Catholic World Mission does a better job at acknowledging the suffering of the people whom they serve. The interesting point is that they seem to be focused more on raising the money for already existing, long-term missionaries than being present in the lives of the people. There is certainly a focus on alleviating suffering, which is a good and wonderful thing. But, it is hard to see the focus on being in solidarity with those who are suffering. The two portions of the program that seemed to best fit the theology of the cross were the Little Way Messengers in India, who focus on doing the little things right and making small sacrifices of love, as well as the Mission Corps program, where youth spend a year living with and serving communities of need.

The program that best fits the theology of the cross is Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM). Heidi Torgerson-Martinez says it best in her response to the question about the theology of the cross:

“God is deeply present and most fully revealed not in power or wealth as many human cultures might expect. Instead, if we want to know what the face of God looks like, we look to unexpected places...places of brokenness, of pain, of suffering, of loneliness...As [the volunteers] live and learn and serve alongside our global companions they develop an ever-deepening hermeneutic that allows them to know Jesus more fully, to see God's face more clearly, at the foot of the cross, if you will. They witness the ways that God is revealed and present in the most painful of situations. And, they develop a broader understanding of the ways that we are tied together in God's story of love for a broken and suffering world. Many of our Western YAGM volunteers...are culturally accustomed to see situations of poverty or oppression or abuse of power and call that ‘suffering.’ As the year goes on, our YAGM volunteers come to understand in a visceral way that,

though they are typically the ones with more in terms of financial/educational/political resources, they are not immune to suffering. They discover that we ALL suffer in this human experience. We all have need. And, just as importantly, we ALL have gifts to share as we find God revealed at the foot of the cross.”

The point of focus is shared suffering. Through this program, the individuals are made aware of their own suffering, while standing in solidarity with the suffering of others. It is there, in the unexpected places that they find the face of God. However, the critique of all three programs that can be offered comes from McBride’s theology of public witness. It is not evident that any of the programs are taking *responsibility* for, or truly seeking repentance in the suffering of the world. It is possible that upon further investigation, which is not possible in the length of this essay, that these programs may well be living out this repentance in the field. But, it is not however evident upon initial research.

In summary, this essay has provided a history of global mission in the church, specifics on three different programs, and reflected upon how those programs convey a theology of the cross. Upon examination, of the programs listed, the Young Adults in Global Mission best seemed to live out a theology of the cross, followed by the Catholic World Mission, and lastly, The Evangelical Alliance Mission. Global missions programs are a vital function of conveying the gospel message of Christ’s love and reconciliation to the world. However, if these programs wish to continue to be effective and true, it is worth reconsidering the models on which they are based.

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