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Gary M. Simpson

Luther Seminary, gsimpson@luthersem.edu

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For in Jesus Christ every one of God’s promises is a “Yes.” For this reason it is through him that we say the “Amen,” to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 1:20

“A mind is a terrible thing to waste.” So says the United Negro College Fund advertisement. My Grandma Klemm said it this way: “Waste not, want not.” Now Grandma usually meant the food on our plate — “our daily bread,” as she taught us to pray. Knowing Scripture as she did, she understood that Scripture also warned against waste. And not just the waste of our daily bread, which, as Luther taught her, meant our mind as well. Scripture pointedly warns against wasting Christ. Paul puts it poignantly: “I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing” (Gal. 2:21). If Christ were to die for nothing, what a waste! The ultimate waste!

The sixteenth-century Reformation decisively echoes that biblical warning. The Lutheran confessors, for instance, state this confessional caveat positively.1 They do theology for the sake of church and world with

1. In this essay I, as a Lutheran theologian, will speak from within that particular stream of the Reformation tradition. I will use the terms “Reformation,” “Reformation tradition,” “Reformation confessors,” “confessors,” and others with various shades of particularity. At
the stated purpose to make Christ “necessary” rather than “useless.”[^2] Christ emphatically did not die for nothing. These Reformers took Paul’s scriptural cue and inextricably linked making Christ necessary with a lively distinction between law and gospel, or — to follow the Apology of the Augsburg Confession’s more precise wording — the distinction between “law and promise.” Famously, they brought this distinction to bear in their articulation of justification by faith alone.[^3] For their fellow confessors ever since, justification by faith alone denotes “the hub” — as in hub of the wheel, as my teachers taught me way back in seminary — for critical theological reflection on Christian life and practice, indeed, reflection on all life and practice.

There are two ways to waste Christ. The church could miss, even distort, the promise in Christ; and the church could hoard to itself the promise of Christ for the world. Because of the sixteenth-century context, the Reformers majored in overcoming the distorting waste; increasingly today in North America, on the other hand, Christian churches are hearing the Holy Spirit’s sure call to overcome the hoarding of the promise of Christ. At those times when our Reformation heritages have attended to the hoarding waste, it has too often come at the expense of contesting with equal vigor the distorting waste of Christ. Likewise, when our Reformation heritages attended to the distorting waste, that attention also has come at the expense of vigorously contesting the hoarding waste of Christ.

Let us not be naïve about North America today. Our market economy projects the most powerful and expansive culture ever assembled. Our consumptive culture of the commodification of all things is on the move, colonizing everything it in its path and stopping at little so far. How many of us can already cite frequent instances in which economic models


[^3]: Apology, IV.5; see also Calvin, 3.11.17-19.
of marketing have passed themselves off as the missional character of the church? Again, let us not be naïve about contemporary America. Our political state aims to impose its power through our military prowess wherever it serves the United States' global advantage. How many of us can already cite frequent instances in which such crusading models of power have passed themselves off as the dynamics of a missionary church among the nations?

The Reformation surely could be wasted, and that would be a terrible thing. Furthermore, this waste would come under cover of a professed good and a much ballyhooed benevolent intentionality. That is, it could come under the guise of proclaiming Christ worldwide. Only the promise in Christ, freshly rooted in the distinction between law and promise, firmly fastens and forever frees the missionary promise of Christ for the world. To put our theme more positively, the Reformation is a wonderful thing to proliferate. And that's the best way to disrupt either the market's or the state's colonizing of the missional character of the church. God calls the church today to a double major: to proliferate the promise of Christ to the world by promoting the promise in Christ. And vice versa: to promote the promise in Christ by proliferating the promise of Christ for the world. This is "promising theology," and it lives precisely for an emerging missional church that is called, centered, and sent to promote Christ for the world.4

In this chapter I will exploit the Reformation's hub insight for a theology of mission. My reflections will focus on five themes: mission as promissio, as communicatio, as communio, as confessio, and as vocatio.5 In mission as promissio, I will dig deeper into justification by faith alone. In mission as communicatio, I will retrieve the Reformation's key insight regarding Jesus Christ, known as the communication of divine and human

4. "Promising theology" is an alternative to so-called "decision theology," on the one hand, and "sovereignty theology," which we will examine in the second section below, on the other. While "missional church" is catching the attention of some segments of American evangelicalism, American evangelicals seem too often to simply flip-flop back and forth between decision theology and sovereignty theology.

5. These themes surely do not exhaust what's needed. Reformation theology too often remains content with only the first and last, with promissio and vocatio, since these were the controversial issues for the Reformation's originating insights. But theological reflection neither began with the Reformation nor ended with it. Other worthy theological issues arise and, if ignored by Reformation reflection, could diminish the critical impact of Reformation insight.
attributes, the *communicatio idiomatum*. The *communicatio* overcomes a particularly "modern" sovereignty problem, which regularly creeps into the article of justification endangering the *promissio*. I will borrow a Christological metaphor from Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theology of the cross to make the point. In mission as *communio*, I will visit a turning point in twentieth-century missiology, the triune identity of God. We’ll explore how *communio*, as our trinitarian category, fits snugly with the Reformation’s *promissio* and *communicatio*, and how these three together innovate the emerging missional church. In this way, *communio* also initiates our ecclesiological reflections, which we will then intensify under mission as *confessio*. *Confessio* brings us to the question of public martyrological truth and to the horizon of world Christianity. We’ll culminate our considerations with mission as *vocatio* by expanding this Reformation standby through a public theology of civil society for the emerging missional church. In these ways we shall find our five themes mutually influencing each other as true correlates.

Mission as *Promissio*

In the Reformation’s doctrine of justification, the *sola fide*, by faith alone, has always been the “most embattled *sola* of all.” Already at the Diet of Augsburg (1530), those confessors testified that “the logic of promise,” of *promissio*, is the hermeneutical heart of the entire scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Faith alone justifies “based upon the nature of a promise,” they emphasized. St. Paul provided them with concise formulations of the entire biblical teaching, of the entire Bible’s chief truth claim. “For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and

be guaranteed.” Or again, “Scripture has consigned everyone under sin, so that, by faith in Jesus Christ, the promise might be given to those who believe.”7 Promise and faith go together like a hand and glove.

The Reformation proposes a linguistic innovation of Christian mission.8 This innovation focuses on the public effects that God’s promissory speaking has on the world’s future for its redemption. Because communication always opens the future, the Reformation’s basic confessional insight concerns how the church, Christ’s missional body, speaks. And how does the Reformation propose the missional church to speak? It recommends speaking caringly.9 Indeed, the church’s sending Spirit authorizes this care.

And what’s to care about? “Well, it all depends,” we routinely say. Every worldly thing, of course, depends on meeting some condition; in fact, every tomorrow depends on some condition. Life is “conditional,” thank God! The Reformation confessors saw that clearly. Furthermore, they saw that the dependability of all things — or not — itself depends on God’s way of speaking according to conditions — or not. They urged the missional church to attend caringly to how it speaks in God’s name.

Conditionality is the deep logic of law, “law” being the category the Reformation used to name everyday conditionality. Under the deep logic of law, in one way or another, life’s possible futures exhibit an “if . . . , then . . .” conditional form. If you are this or that, or you do this or that, or you meet this or that condition, then you will be or have some resulting this or that. In the logic of promise, the promisor takes on the other’s condition as the promisor’s own, and thus opens up an unconditional, free future for the other. “Because I . . . , therefore you . . . ” Thus freedom is the deep logic of promise.10 “For freedom Christ has set you free,” Paul notes concisely. The “nature of a promise” constitutes the missional promise in Christ for the sake of the missional promise of Christ to the world. That’s

7. Apology, IV.40-56, 84, citing Rom. 4:16 and Gal. 3:22, respectively.
9. Apology, IV.188.
why Luther, for instance, raised up the “promising God” against the Babylonian captivity of the church in his era.\textsuperscript{11}

By caring in this way, the church participates missionally in the Holy Spirit’s promotion of Israel’s Jesus as the world’s Good News to the glory of the Son’s Father. The Reformation exhorts the church to always tend to the difference between the Holy Spirit’s speaking according to law and speaking according to promise. When you speak Christ Jesus to people, speak him in such a way that you communicate God’s unconditional freeing promise into the living reality of the world and your hearers. In this way God truly calls into existence a newly trustworthy creation that is populated by a people of faith.

For the emerging missional church this means a critical revision of the still current mantra, missio dei. Missio duplex dei, the twofold mission of God, commends itself as more congruent with the Reformation’s core confessional insight regarding law \textit{and} promise. We’ll explore this critical revision under our subsequent themes.

\textbf{Mission as \textit{Communicatio}}

One biblical theologian has proposed “God’s endangered promises” as the plot of the biblical story.\textsuperscript{12} This raises the question about the conditions placed on every promise ever made. Every promise yields up its spirit when it meets some condition or another that limits that promise’s lively future. Take the marriage promise as a case in point. Though it is divinely ordained to be the most endearing and thus the most enduring of promises, we know all too well how endangered this promise is. Even when marital promises outrun the usual slings and arrows, there is always that final “it depends”: “Till death do us part” stylizes even the best-kept promises as conditional promises.

God’s promises, likewise, travel dangerous terrain, and in the end they also come face to face with the condition that conditions all other conditions, namely, death — the death of sufferers, of sinners, even death

\textsuperscript{11} Martin Luther, \textit{The Babylonian Captivity of the Church}, in the American edition of \textit{Luther’s Works} (St. Louis and Philadelphia, 1955-1986) [hereafter \textit{LW}], 36:27, 60.

on the cross. The Holy Spirit's raising of the crucified Son is the Father's own truth claim that this promise, made in Jesus' own body, is the world's singular unconditional promise, that is, a promise that surpasses every condition, every limit, every enemy. The promise of Jesus' cross involves the Son's taking on conditionality itself and all humans subject to life's conditions. Here conditionality meets its end. Here promising theology meets the cross and thereby meets its origin and consummation.

We noted earlier that the nature of a promise entails that the promisor take on the condition of the other. In Christian theology this "taking on" is known by the old Latin phrase communicatio idiomatum, the communication of properties, the sharing of what properly belongs to one with another, and vice versa.13 Our shorthand will simply be the communicatio. Instead of engaging the doctrinal tradition regarding the communicatio, I will simply focus on a poignant moment in early twentieth-century theology that illustrates the significance of the communicatio for our new era of missional church: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's critique of Karl Barth's theology of sovereign lordship.

Bonhoeffer's 1930 critique was of Barth's concept of revelation. Barth introduced his understanding of "revelation" in his early dialectical, or "crisis," theology in order to criticize and go beyond the liberal German theology and church life of nineteenth-century Protestantism. Barth indicted liberal Protestantism for reducing theology to anthropology and Christian faith to mere "religion."14 He maintained that a singular focus on divine revelation would reveal the bankruptcy of liberal anthropocentrism. Bonhoeffer agreed with this basic criticism, even though some of his own Berlin teachers, such as Reinhold Seeberg, Adolf von Harnack, and Karl Holl, were among the targets of Barth's criti-

13. Luther's discussion is particularly poignant in On the Councils and the Church (1539), LW 41:93-106.
Liberal theology had, as Bonhoeffer would say years later, "conceded to the world the right to determine Christ's place in the world." It had "compromised" with modernity's assumed optimism, progressivism, and superiority. Still, Bonhoeffer did not find Barth's theology of revelation completely satisfying; nor did he find every basic insight of liberal theology totally bankrupt. Indeed, Bonhoeffer was quite dialectical: with insight, he upheld both a yes and a no to Barth, on the one hand, and to liberal Protestantism, on the other.

Barth framed "revelation" around the notion of God's absolute "freedom," and therefore the pure "contingency" of divine revelation. He portrayed God's glorious, sovereign lordship as God's absolute free will to do anything God wants to do — to reveal God's self or not. Only in this way, said Barth, is God's revelation safe from being objectified, distorted, manipulated, exploited, and controlled by human pretensions. Encapsulating Barth, Bonhoeffer noted: "Revelation is an event that has its basis in the freedom of God." God's revelation is pure act, "with all the instability of a deed being done right now," said Bonhoeffer in his summary of Barth. "How could it be otherwise," mused Bonhoeffer, since, as sovereign, "God has sole control?" This he referred to as Barth's "actualism."

15. For instance, the famous 1923 controversy between Barth and Harnack is reprinted in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Beginnings of Dialectical Theology* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), pp. 163-87. Bonhoeffer was quite indebted to Hall's focus on Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone. However, Holl's interpretation of Luther's theology "as a religion of conscience" left Holl vulnerable to liberal anthropocentrism. Holl's interpretation of Luther was defective, argues Bonhoeffer in his July 31, 1930, inaugural lecture at the University of Berlin, because Holl had "a remarkably scant estimation of Luther's Christology" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Man in Contemporary Philosophy and Theology," in *No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes, 1928-1936*, from the *Collected Works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, vol. 1, ed. Edwin Robertson (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 61.


Still, Bonhoeffer was not satisfied. A framework of Western modernism is "lurking here" in Barth, he noted. Like Immanuel Kant, Barth is out to limit human reason: that is, human reason is not in control; God is in control.20 But, argued Bonhoeffer, limiting reason in this way, that is, by keeping God "at a distance," meant that Barth had surrendered true temporality. "It follows that, even though Barth readily uses temporal categories... his concept of act still should not be regarded as temporal. God's freedom and the act of faith are essentially supratemporal." Barth's attempt was "bound to fail," said Bonhoeffer, because for Barth "no historical moment is \( \text{capax infiniti} \), capable of the infinite.21

Bonhoeffer countered Barth's formalistic-actualistic theology of revelation with an exposition of God's "substantial" freedom. "God freely chose to be bound to historical human beings and to be placed at the disposal of human beings. God is free not so much from human beings but for them. Christ is the word of God's freedom. God is present, that is, not in eternal nonobjectivity but — to put it quite provisionally for now — 'haveable,' graspable in the Word within the church."22 Indeed, the crucified Jesus constitutes the very form of God's lordship for Bonhoeffer. This innovation in lordship merits closer attention in order for us to appreciate how truly new and truly good this crucified Jesus really is.

Bonhoeffer's 1930 intuitions and insights leaned determinedly toward a theology of the cross. They eventually led him to his now-famous prison confession of July 16, 1944 ("only the suffering God can help"),23 not the typical omnipotent forms of divine lordship. In Discipleship (1937), Bonhoeffer uses a rich metaphor for this cruciform Christ: "God is a God

22. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, pp. 90-91. He credited Luther with these crucial insights (*Act and Being*, pp. 116-17, 120-21) and drew from Luther's "That These Words of Christ, 'This is my Body,' etc., Still Stand Firm against the Fanatics" (1527) (*I W* 37:13-150). Here Luther emphasized the God who gets "handled" by humans. "It is the honor of our God, however, that, in giving the divine self for our sake in deepest condescension, entering into flesh and bread, into our mouth, heart and bowel and suffering for our sake, God be dishonorably handled, both on the altar and the cross." I've used the English translation of Bonhoeffer's transposition of Luther into modern German (*Act and Being*, p. 82, n. 1; see *I W* 37:72; *WA* 23:127). See Robert Bertram's understanding of the faith-side of "having" in "'Faith Alone Justifies:'"
who bears.”24 He continues: “The Son of God bore our flesh. He therefore bore the cross. He bore all our sins and attained reconciliation by this bearing.” Such bearing, Bonhoeffer argued, constitutes “that kind of Lord” who Jesus is, rather than some other kind of lordship.25 With this metaphor, Bonhoeffer definitively tipped his critical Christology of lordship in a decisively cruciform direction.

Bonhoeffer saw clearly that Barth’s concept of sovereign lordship distorts and thus wastes the promissio, the promise in Christ. Barth’s lordship surreptitiously accommodated itself to the modern concept of the autonomous subject by using older nominalist means. By contrast, Bonhoeffer’s puts the promissio into the center of his theology by placing it at the heart of his homiletical practice.26 Finally, he portrayed the communicatio in everyday speech as the “bearing God” and thus as the true correlate of promissio. We turn now to the current critical retrieval of trinitarian theology and find there another true correlate of both promissio and communicatio: this trinitarian correlate is communio. In my account of communio, I will gather together what we have learned from promissio and communicatio for a missional theology of the church in the new era that the Holy Spirit is richly spreading out before us.

Mission as Communio

The sixteenth-century Reformation did not reflect in a sustained way on the doctrine of the Trinity. Reformation confessors and their papal interrogators all formally accepted the three ecumenical trinitarian creeds. Furthermore, both confessors and interrogators followed the Western, Augustinian tradition of trinitarian reflection, which we will review below.


25. Bonhoeffer, Discipleship, p. 85. In Discipleship, Bonhoeffer constantly uses the rhetorical metaphor of “bearing” rather than his more doctrinal category of “vicarious representative action” [Stellvertretung] or communicatio idiomatum. He uses Stellvertretung already in Sanctorum Communio (1927) and still uses it sparingly in Discipleship (e.g., p. 90). He uses communicatio idiomatum in Christ the Center (1933). Of course, “bearing” is a broadly based biblical metaphor. Luther, for instance, used it often in reference to “joyous exchange.” In Luther’s lecture on Gal. 3:13 he explicitly inquired “But what does it mean to ‘bear’?” (Lectures on Galatians (1531/35), LW, 26:276-91).

Gradually, however, the new, modern Protestantism of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe found Western trinitarian teaching to be no longer relevant to either the moral practice or the religious experience of the church in its day. Modernity’s world was becoming ever more secular while also, curiously, continuing the Christendom habit. As Immanuel Kant put it, “The doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, has no practical relevance at all. . . . Whether we are to worship three or ten persons in the Deity makes no difference . . . no difference in rules of conduct.”

Friedrich Schleiermacher, the father of modern liberal Protestantism, needed only a radically monotheistic mode of belief in order to ground the modern religious experience of absolute dependence. Thus Schleiermacher relegated the doctrine of the Trinity to the equivalence of an appendix in his path-breaking magnum opus, The Christian Faith.

Karl Barth, to his credit, resurrected trinitarian theology and placed it at the very beginning of his Church Dogmatics. From there, trinitarian reflection found its way into the theology of mission, particularly by way of the meeting in Willingen, Germany (1952), of the International Mission Council. In fact, through Willingen, Barth’s trinitarian theology eventually became the heart and soul of the post–World War II theology of mission. Missio Dei is the concept that would eventually — not too long after Willingen — establish the basis for missional theology as well as for the inseparability of church and mission. This concept brought about a “Copernican revolution” in missiology.

The Willingen meeting stated the trinitarian basis of a theology of mission in this way: "The missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself." An interim report from Willingen captured the church-and-mission significance of the trinitarian breakthrough this way: "All were agreed that 'mission' is essential to the nature of the Church and not something super-added to it." Willingen's official report said: "There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world." Put summarily:

The classic doctrine of the missio Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. . . . Willingen's image of mission was mission as participating in the sending of God.

Therefore, missio Dei means erasing the "and" in the phrase "church and mission." Missio Dei also means the end of "missions" in the plural: "The age of missions is at an end; the age of mission has begun." Since Willingen, missio Dei has achieved a kind of ecumenical consensus. More recently has come the trinitarian missio Dei breakthrough to "missional .

sau, Bavaria, traces the missio Dei concept to Barth and, with insight, back to Augustine, the source of the Western trinitarian tradition (Vicedom, The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission [St. Louis: Concordia, 1965; originally published in 1958]). Vicedom was also the one who decisively promoted missio Dei as the breakthrough concept for a theology of mission (see Sundermeier et al., Dictionary of Mission; for Vicedom's role, see also Wilbert Shenk, "The Relevance of Messianic Missiology for Mission Today," in Wilbert Shenk, ed., The Transfiguration of Mission: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Foundations [Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1993], pp. 17-18). Norman Goodall, who edited the Willingen proceedings, was not himself convinced that Willingen had made a breakthrough: "There did not finally emerge," he said, "the one inevitable word in which theological clarity and prophetic insight were manifestly conjoined. Nor did there appear the one new directive which might set the world mission of the Church on a surer and swifter road towards its fulfillment" (Norman Goodall, ed., Missions under the Cross: Addresses delivered at the Enlarged Meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, in Germany, 1952; with Statements issued at the Meeting [London: Edinburgh House Press, 1953], p. 14).

30. Goodall, Missions under the Cross, p. 189.
31. Goodall, Missions under the Cross, p. 244.
32. Goodall, Missions under the Cross, p. 190.
“church,” a term — and a reality — that itself needed nearly another half century after Willingen to emerge.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century we have witnessed the most widespread and fruitful critical re-engagement with trinitarian thinking perhaps since the time of Augustine. I cannot even begin to recap the richness. While the trinitarian significance of *missio Dei* has effectively permeated “missional church,” the more recent trinitarian reflection has not yet reached, much less permeated, the emerging missional church. One figure at the Willingen meeting observed: “Any vital movement in theology ought to affect and be affected by the Church’s world-wide evangelistic obedience, yet at this very point it was evident that much had yet to be done before some of the most distinctive theological insights of our time could contribute to the re-formulation of a ‘theology of missions.’”

Shortly after Willingen, another figure lamented: “The harvest of missionary ideas from systematic theology has been extremely poor, partly because systematic theology has shown very little interest in the questions [about the missionary nature of the church].” It would be an added tragedy if in our new era of mission we would waste the new trinitarian abundance, especially now that an increasing number of systematic theologians prayerfully hear the Holy Spirit’s call rustling through the world of missional church. The emerging missional church will continue to flourish as it vigorously engages this new critical retrieval of trinitarian reflection. As this happens, we can anticipate another Copernican revolution.

I will now identify only six of the many fruits within this new trinitarian treasury that can help focus future interaction between missional church and theological reflection. First, modern Protestantism became moribund with respect to the Trinity in the context of an increasingly secularizing Christendom, which progressively privatized its faith and truth claims. This is no longer the case. Christendom habits continue to weaken, at least in the West, despite the dogged hope of some American evangelicals and fundamentalists to reinstate an American Christendom. The world’s great religions, as well as the world’s more local traditional religions, have today arrived in force. These religions are occupying the same turf, though surely with quite varied amounts of moral, social, economic,

35. Goodall, *Missions under the Cross*, p. 11.
political, cultural, and aspirational capital. Geographically we're all together now: *terra firma* is small, flat, fast, flexible, and reflexive. This context of multiplicity, fueled by modernity's many mobilities, makes trinitarian life lived on the level of missional congregations ever more necessary, interesting, and fruitful. No Trinity, no mission!

Second, Western Christianity has thought and lived its doctrine of God through a particular Western habit. It is time to reconsider an important aspect of Eastern Orthodoxy's trinitarian reflection. Karl Barth in Protestantism and Karl Rahner in Roman Catholicism both undertook their retrieval of the Trinity by refining the Western paradigm of thinking in a trinitarian way as it was forged by St. Augustine. Augustine starts the doctrine of God by giving priority to the oneness of God and only subsequently considering what threeness would mean in reference to divine oneness. Augustine's logic of beginning with divine oneness, which borrows powerfully from Neo-Platonic thought, has affinities going back to the Christological thinking embodied in the mid-second century, to the so-called Second Letter of Clement 1:11: “We must think about Jesus Christ as we do about God.” First, you discover everything you can about deity generally, then support these findings with matching biblical references, and then fit Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit as best you can into the generic deity framework. This line of theological logic appeared to the West to be the best antidote to ward off any return of the Arian heresy, which portrayed the Son as merely the firstborn of the one God’s creatures and the Holy Spirit as an angelic figure. However, the Augustinian trajectory, followed and solidified by Thomas Aquinas, subtly but significantly shared in the basic theological logic that was followed by Sabellius and others known as modalistic monarchians.

37. See Ted Peters’s helpful recap of this twentieth-century retrieval of Trinity (*God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993)).


This monistic and monarchical logic of God begins with the divine monad, the one God, who subsequently appears as Father, as Son, and as Spirit. The three only come into being functionally in order to reveal to humans the divine monad and to express, transport, and execute sovereign power in the form of the Father as creator, the Son as redeemer, and the Spirit as sanctifier or sustainer. But among the world’s religions, what deity worth its salt doesn’t function powerfully in some way or another as creator, redeemer, sustainer? While Augustine and Aquinas avoid modalism in the severe sense, nevertheless they set in motion a modalistic, monarchical tendency and piety that remains deeply inscribed in Western Christianity to this very day. Is it any wonder that the sovereignty problematic that we exposed under communicatio shows up as a trinitarian correlate?

Barth and Rahner, each in his own way, take up this single subject logic of God, as it was recovered in the modern German idealism of Georg Hegel, in an attempt to counter other modern trends set in motion by moral and experiential monotheisms. What Barth and Rahner failed to see with sufficient clarity is that moral and experiential monotheisms are the logical outcome of the very Western pattern of the doctrine of God that they themselves also promoted. Unintentionally, to be sure, but true nevertheless, they handed over “a late triumph to the Sabellian modalism which the early church condemned.”

Furthermore, as we saw in Bonhoeffer’s critique of the early Barth, Barth and Rahner reverse modernity and the modern sovereign subject by locating sovereign subjectivity in God rather than in the human, but they do not overcome modern single-subject sovereignty. Might not their failure to recognize this be due to their own embeddedness within the still persistently pervasive situation of Christendom and modernity?

The third fruit in the new trinitarian treasury is a partial turn to the East, to the Eastern logic. Eastern Orthodoxy has long been wary of the West’s modalistic tendencies. Several new trinitarians are exploring a logic for the Christian doctrine of God more in accord with the Eastern pattern set forth by Athanasius and the Cappadocian theologians — Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa. Remember, the Western pattern begins with divine oneness; the pattern that is more Eastern begins with the history of the relationships of the three persons as nar-

40. Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, p. 139; see also pp. 151-58. Pannenberg basically agrees with Moltmann’s analysis regarding Barth and Rahner (Systematic Theology, 1:333-36).
rated in the biblical witness and subsequently attends to what these relationships in communion mean for divine unity.41

Our fourth fruit, then, is God's being as communion.42 We've finally arrived at our third overall theme, *communio*. At the core of the Eastern logic of the doctrine of God lies the narrated history of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Son in rich relationship with his Father and with the Holy Spirit, and the relationship of the Spirit with each of the others as well.43 *Communio* highlights the nature and significance of the conspicuous reciprocal relationality of the Father and the Son. With *communio* we especially note the Father's dependence on the Son mediated in the history of Jesus Christ and him crucified, and raised by the Holy Spirit.44 *Communio* also highlights the Holy Spirit's liberating reciprocity not only toward Jesus the Son but also toward the Father; thus both Father and Son also live dependently on the Holy Spirit.45

41. Along with Moltmann and Pannenberg, I include among the major new trinitarians Robert Jenson, Eberhard Jüngel, John Zizioulas, Catherine LaCugna, and Ted Peters, notwithstanding the significant differences among them. While the Eastern logic of the doctrine of God is fundamentally true to Scripture, a basic flaw still persists in the Eastern pattern, i.e., a patriarchal monarchy of the Father and correspondingly a certain "kind of subordination" of Jesus the Son. This flaw appears in John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), p. 89. Critically engaging this crucial flaw lies beyond our scope here (see Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:319-25, and Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, pp. 240-41).

42. This apt phrase is Zizioulas's in *Being as Communion*.


The dominant Western logic precludes *communio*’s reciprocal relational dynamic. This rejection is the West’s Neo-Platonic ballast still in play. Consequently, the Western church’s modalism has often led it to worship the Father in the patriarchal and monarchical ways appropriate to a sovereign lord. Not surprisingly, the internal way of life of the Western church has been highly monarchical, patriarchal, and sovereignty-oriented. Likewise, externally, the mission of the Western church has too often readily adopted colonial sovereignty patterns. By not developing *communio*’s reciprocal personhood, Western theology exhibited “a defect which plagues the Trinitarian theological language of both East and West, namely, that of seeing the relations among Father, Son, and Spirit exclusively as relations of origin.”

The doctrine of the “relations of origin” deals with the trinitarian sendings, sometimes called “derivations.” Understandably, it is this “relations of origin” as sending that is taken up into the *missio Dei* concept that sprang from Willingen. But it is also this reductionism, from Augustine all the way through to Barth and Rahner, of trinitarian relationality to “relations of origin” that is problematical. This reductionism anchors Christendom’s fixation on sovereignty with its constant tilt toward colonialist attitudes, practices, and ways of life. Theology of mission naturally is invested in sending, and it found in this trinitarian reductionism a deep ally. Still,

> [i]t is the chief residual paganism of the way in which the churches descended from the mission in Mediterranean antiquity have thought of God, that all the derivations run one way, from the Father through the Son to the Spirit: the Father begets the Son and the Son is begotten; the Father breathes the Spirit and the Spirit is breathed. All active-voice relations run from origin to goal; the relations from goal to origin are but their passive voice. Therein unbaptized Hellenism’s celebration of beginning over ending, of persistence over openness, of security over freedom, maintains itself even within the doctrine of Trinity. The [pagan] God whose eternity is immunity to time lurks even within the church’s vision of the God whose eternity is faithful adventure in and through time.47

47. Jenson, *Unbaptized God*, p. 139. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the new Pope Benedict XVI, also exhibits this same Western reductionism (see, especially, Miroslav Volf’s analysis in *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]).
Trinitarian relationality, however, is richer than sending alone, and this richness is a treasury begging to be shared with emerging missional church life, practice, and reflection. The ancient Greek term *perichoresis* summarizes this rich *communio* relationality. Though it is an ancient term, "only in recent times"—in the new trinitarian treasury—has *perichoresis* "come to occupy a central position." Historically, *perichoresis* meant whirl, rotation, or circulation, the dynamic of going from one to another, walking around, handing around a possession to be shared, such as a bottle of wine: encircling, embracing, enclosing. It is the neighborly circulating and sharing of all things within a neighborhood, including sorrows and joys, fears and hopes, not to mention daily materiality. The Old and New Testaments testify precisely to this *perichoretic communio* of the trune life that is God. Here we have "the dynamic and creative energy, the eternal and perpetual movement, the mutual and reciprocal permeation of each person with and in and through and by the other persons."

A fifth fruit in the new trinitarian treasury is new ecclesial reflection under the theme of *communio* ecclesiology. At the moment this is highly fluid and contested theological turf and thus holds promise as a theological resource for the emerging missional church. Furthermore, we dare not underestimate the reciprocal contribution that an emerging missional church might make to *communio* ecclesiology. Let the mutual influence increase. What is needed, for instance, in *communio* ecclesiology is the transformation of ecclesial power toward what I call "perichoretic power."

The emerging missional church could generate just such a social transformation of ecclesial leadership around the dynamics of perichoretic power. At present the emerging missional church appears still too interested and invested in leadership models largely generated within the

economic marketplace of late capitalism. The one-way arrows of missio Dei sending have too often made the emerging missional church susceptible to, when not just plain defenseless against, hierarchical management models of ecclesial leadership. It’s no wonder that certain missiologists worry that missio Dei has become “a Trojan horse through which the (unassimilated) ‘American’ vision was tethered into the well-guarded walls of the ecumenical theology of mission.”53 One of the new trinitarians, for instance, notes that perichoresis entails “neither leaders nor followers in the divine dance, only an eternal movement of reciprocal giving and receiving, giving again and receiving again.”54 Even though that formulation is not totally satisfying for ecclesial leadership, there is an intuition there that just begs to be developed into a real insight, and an insight that just can’t wait to be transfigured into an eschatologically institutionalized way of life together as emerging missional church.55

The sixth fruit in the new trinitarian treasury is how coherent perichoretic communio is with both promissio and communicatio. It is surely no accident that, before perichoresis became a term of trinitarian reflection, it was the Greek Christological category that in the Latin West became interchangeable with communicatio idiomatum.56 Perichoretic communio identifies an open roominess that is dense with mutual sharing within the triune life that’s fit for all creation’s finitude, frailty, failure, fault, and finery. It is the trinitarian signature of the “promising, bearing God,” a fitting and forming mark for an emerging missional church.

54. LaCugna, God for Us, p. 272.
55. Credit to George Cladis for making a first try through his Doctor of Ministry research at exploring perichoresis for church leadership (Cladis, Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999]). Credit also to Stephen Rasmusson for a similarly inspired Doctor of Ministry thesis (Rasmusson, “Campus Peer Ministry in the Name of the Triune God: A Training Model Grounded in Trinitarian Theology” [St. Paul: Luther Seminary Library, Archival/Manuscript Material, 2003]).
Mission as *Confessio*

Our fourth signature stroke of the emerging missional church is *confessio*. In our opening text, Paul utters his “Amen” to God’s promissory “Yes” in Jesus within a martyrological setting. This “Amen” comes in the face of a “death sentence,” when what’s at stake is the public “testimony of our conscience,” when what’s called for is “frankness and sincerity.” Similarly, Reformation confessors, whether at Augsburg or Westminster or Barmen or Birmingham’s jail, recognize the martyrological context of *confessio*. Precisely because churchly Christians have always and will always potentially face times for confession (*tempus confessionis*), the emerging missional church entails *confessio*. Mission devoid of *confessio* is a seed with shallow roots confronting the withering sun of pluralism and relativism, as well as absolutism. *Confessio* concerns public truth in a world Christianity context. In order to promote *confessio* for the emerging missional church, we need a critical retrieval of post-Reformation history, necessarily too brief.

One unintended consequence of the Reformation was the jarring loose of decades of growing nationalism, German and otherwise. The Holy Roman Empire had long been the lid on the pressure cooker of medieval ethnic-political-military stirrings. The Reformation turned the burners up so high that eventually the pressure cooker exploded. Military battles fought along papal and evangelical lines filled the decades after Augsburg of 1530. Aspiring peacemakers signed numerous treatises. The Peace of Augsburg of 1555 famously and disastrously became the pattern: *cuius regio, eius religio* — whoever rules, his religion also rules. Predictably, the formula failed for various reasons.

In 1618 most of central and northern Europe broke out in a series of wars that lasted until 1648, when the Peace of Westphalia took effect. This series of wars, known best as the Thirty Years War, are also known as the Religious Wars, or the Confessional Wars. There, ironically, is our word *confessio*. For tragic reasons, confessing churches quit confessing — that is, quit making testable public arguments regarding truth — and became confessional churches bent more on bearing military arms for intramural crusading. The Confessional Wars were Christians killing Christians: Catholics were killing Lutherans; Lutherans were killing Catholics; Calvin-

ists were killing Catholics; Catholics were killing Calvinists. Christians were killing Christians for many reasons, but always along the lines of Christian doctrine. Europe was devastated. Historians have estimated that the population of the German territories alone went from thirty-eight million people in 1618 to eighteen million by 1648. This was Sarajevo during the 1990s writ large, and for three decades. No one emerged unscathed.

A powerful undertow swirled during and after these wars and produced one of the greatest social movements of all time. Gradually, momentum built within Europe for a new age, and the movement came armed with its own two-edged sword: the modern mandate. People from different walks of life summoned European Christianity with this mandate. Imagine the following:

Listen up, Christians. Christianity has brought Western society to a grinding halt. More and more of us over the last decades are becoming enlightened about our European situation. It might have been the case for the last thousand years or so that Christianity and the church have been the public glue holding Western social life together. That is clearly no longer the case. The church and its faith are now the social dynamite bringing death and destruction on a massive scale.

We insist, therefore, on the following:

You can be religious, if you want — Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, Anabaptist, whatever. You can even believe in God, if you want. That's fine. Some of us do as well. But a new command we give you, a new and modern mandate: Keep your faith private! Keep it in your heart, between you and God. In your family, that's okay, too. You can even get together voluntarily with other like-minded Christians on Sunday mornings, for instance, and worship to your hearts' content. We only insist that you keep your faith out of public view, out of public places, and especially out of city hall.58

Generally speaking, Christians obeyed the mandate with a whispered "okay." The Enlightenment movement, armed with its modern mandate, drew a line in the sand and gradually and progressively divvied up the Western world according to this line. On one side of the line sits the private world, the domain where faith stands as authoritative. On the other side of the line is the public world. But what stands as authoritative there?

58. This narrative is my own.
Gary M. Simpson

That was the $1 trillion question. Every society needs some authorizing glue to hold it together; the Enlightenment folks never doubted that for a nanosecond. They had ruled out religion for sure, and they were very skeptical about ethnicity because it was quite often fused with religion. Thus the Enlightenment looked to what it considered the opposite of faith, namely, "sweet reason." Reason, purified especially of religion — if not of everything else! Reason alone, they reasoned, would provide the social glue that would hold the public world together. 59 Here we have the other side of modernity's two-edged sword. After all, for decades, even centuries, natural science reasoning had been claiming victory after explanatory victory in reference to the natural world. Why not extend the sharp edge of reason to the public, social world as well? Reason is fully competent to identify the facts. Soon John Locke became the Joe Friday of the modern project, postulating a public world based on "just the facts, ma'am." Such positivistic objective reasoning would do for the social world what it had already done for the natural world, that is, it would define truth. Technology, science's fraternal twin, would provide instrumental reasoning, and together they would constitute the final frontier of the great society, efficient control, and endless progress.

In addition to faith and church, Enlightenment reason sent other goods packing to the private side of an ever-widening divide between public and private: moral values, other mere opinions, and the domestic family of women and children. Enlightened people saw the public world as the "real world"; indeed, this real world was "a man's world," including, of course, the world of work. 60 Under the modern mandate, the private family, whatever else it might be, became principally instrumental for men's public world, "a haven in a heartless world." 61

This devastating bifurcation of public and private still persists, though weakened somewhat, and mission as confessio remains an essential element of the emerging missional church. Confessio is the church's

60. See Warner Brothers, North Country (2005), written by Michael Seitzman, and directed by Niki Caro.
61. Christopher Lasch's account of the family, Haven in a Heartless World (New York: Basic Books, 1977), remains flawed precisely because he does not account for the heartlessness of the family "haven" itself, leaving him unable to locate and access the moral resources that families themselves desperately need today.
public mode of life that is always ready for martyrrological times of truth and testing. The Reformation confessors, already at Augsburg in 1530, clearly understood that confessio as a churchly mode of existence going back to its originating moments entails two irreplaceable traits, among some others: publicity (in the sense of full public accountability) and eschatological futurity (in the sense of desiring a future open for testing, correction, and confirmation).\textsuperscript{62} Confessio goes right to the head of the line of open opportunities for an emerging missional church, especially in light of the martyrrological situation of world Christianity and of the other religions.

Mission as \textit{Vocatio}

We have focused on two aspects of trinitarian thinking. First, with the Willingen meeting, we have affirmed that God’s own sending empowers and gives roots to the missional church. Second, we highlighted communio as God’s being in, with, and for the emerging missional church in the world, and the perichoretic power of communio as true correlate of mission as promissio and communicatio. Mission as vocatio finds its roots in the trinitarian scope of God as creator of all things.\textsuperscript{63}

As an old and familiar offertory prayer puts it, the emerging missional church dedicates itself “to the care and redemption of all that you [God] have made.” Vocatio attends to Christian participation in the Triune God's care for the creation. God's care keeps sinful, predatory human creatures and demonic powers from going hog-wild, so to speak, but it doesn’t cure sin or eliminate the demonic. Vocatio protects and promotes

\textsuperscript{62} See, especially, the preface to the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, in The Book of Concord, ed. Kolb and Wengert, pp. 107-9; see also pp. 635-40. Luther offers his most sustained analysis of confessio’s publicity in Dr. Martin Luther’s Warning to His Dear German People (October 1530) in \textit{LW} 47:11-54. See also Robert W. Bertram, “Confessio: Self-Defense Becomes Subversive,” Dialog 26 (Summer 1987): 201-8. Certain “confessional” theologies quite consciously eschew publicity in the sense of full public and global accountability, arguing that Christian confessing can only, by its very nature, be a self-contained, internal affair, a self-referential intra-Christian language game (see Martin L. Cook, The Open Circle: Confessional Method in Theology [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991]; see also Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 111-188.

\textsuperscript{63} Regarding trinitarian “scope,” see Bosch, Transforming Mission, pp. 391-92.
the world’s flourishing without pretending to provide the world’s salvation. Luther Seminary’s mission statement attends precisely to that difference: “Luther Seminary educates leaders for Christian communities called and sent by the Holy Spirit to witness to salvation through Jesus Christ and to serve in God’s world.” Here we can see the reason to revise missio Dei to be missio duplex Dei.

Reformation heritages have most often focused on the worldly vocations of individual Christians and how the church can equip and celebrate those vocations. That’s laudable. Here, however, I wish to pay attention to the corporate public vocation of the emerging missional church and the location within the contemporary global situation for that public vocation. The location for this vocation is global civil society; the name for this vocation is public companion. God is up to something new in civil society, and it’s time that an emerging missional church attends to this newness. What is God up to in and through civil society?

Civil society is that vast, spontaneously emergent, ever-dynamic plurality of networks, associations, institutions, and movements developed for the prevention and promotion of this, that, and the other thing. Civil society refers to a sociological space, not to a society that behaves itself civilly — with civil speech and the like. Civility is welcome, even necessary, but civil society is not reducible to civility. Civil society has gradually emerged since the eighteenth century as a critical component of the overall architecture or landscape of Western civilization. It is now emerging increasingly in other great civilizations around the world, which may lead to


a global civil society. A very basic sociological map will help us gain clarity and discern what God's up to in civil society.

We start our map (Figure 1) with the political state within Western experiences, remembering that within the West there will always remain important contextual differences from country to country.

![A Sociological Map](image)

We can represent the political system as a giant sphere. Generally, there are three branches — executive, legislative, and judicial — though there are important national variations. The primary medium of the political system is power, administrative power. There is, in addition to the political state, another megasystem: the market economy. The medium of that megasystem is money. These are the two great systems that have come to dominate the landscapes of Western countries. The differentiations, autonomy, and overlap between and among these great systems vary from place to place and time to time; thus they are always empirical matters for inquiry and deliberative matters for interpretation and decision.

There is a third sphere, which sociologists call the lifeworld (see Figure 2 on p. 90). The lifeworld is where our personal lives unfold, where our values are formed, and where personal friendships develop. In the map represented here, the lifeworld appears flattened and squashed. Isn't that how we often feel about our personal lives and also about our personal values? The kinds of values that we have in the lifeworld of our families and friends do not seem to be nearly as strong or as vital or as determinative as do the two megasystems, with their respective media, that often drive and steer Western civilization and its values, virtues, and relationships. When this happens, and to the extent that this happens — again, this is always an empirical question — we experience the domination and colonization of
the lifeworld by the economy and the state. Lifeworld colonization generates and engenders injustices, diminished well-being, meaninglessness, suffering, oppression, and a host of seriously unpleasant things in various ways. In such contexts, civil society offers hopeful, emancipating possibilities for Western civilization, though there is no historical inevitability about civil society's emancipatory calling.

We can situate civil society on our map in the following way:
Figures 1 and 2 present a descriptive account accompanied by a critical aspect. Figure 3 flaunts, we might say, a normative hopefulness regarding civil society, which is held dear by civil society advocates. From here on I will exploit the normative aspects that do have empirical roots within existing Western experiences.66

The core medium of civil society is social solidarity, and we can imagine civil society's solidarity having two sides to it. These two sides correspond to the positioning that civil society has in reference to the everyday lifeworld, on the one hand, and the great systems of the state and the economy, on the other. We can call the side of civil society's solidarity that is turned toward the lifeworld the sleuthing aspect; and we can call the side of civil society's solidarity that is turned toward the state and the economy the sluicing aspect (Figure 4).

Sleuths, like their canine counterparts, always have their eyes, ears, and noses close to the ground. And thus it is with civil-society solidarity in its relationship to the everyday lifeworld. Civil society's teeming plurality of networks, associations, institutions, and movements for the prevention

66. For compelling international and cross-cultural research on civil society, see Center for Civil Society Studies, Johns Hopkins University, at http://www.jhu.edu/~ccss/.
and promotion of this, that, and the other thing regularly attune themselves like temperature sensors to how cultural, economic, and political problems, disruptions, and injustices resonate in the private arenas of everyday life as it really exists. As a sleuth, civil-society solidarity takes the form of research into the causative factors of, for instance, domestic violence. Civil-society organizations, networks, and movements identify, distill, and frame critical issues, and they give these critical issues a moral language and cultural energy. Often civil-society solidarity manifests itself through proposals, programs, and practices for moral and cultural formation within the lifeworld that alleviate, heal, liberate, and prevent problems, disruptions, and injustices.

Civil society also answers the vocation of solidarity with its sluicing side, which is turned toward the political state and the market economy. As a network of sluices with gates and canals connects uneven segments of a waterway, thereby facilitating the flow of goods across uneven sectors, so civil society regularly transforms and transmits its sleuthed critical intelligence, moral discourse, and cultural energy and practice about lifeworld problems into amplified forms of public opinion appropriate to the political and public spheres for democratic processing. By means of its sluice side, civil-society solidarity becomes a political public voice in a forthright way. More accurately, civil society becomes complex and multilingual political public voices that channel lifeworld dynamics toward the formation of political will and proposals to the political state for legislative, administrative, and judicial processing, decision-making, and implementation. Also in their sluicing aspect, civil-society networks, associations, institutions, and movements constantly and vigilantly assess the political state and its political processes. Civil society is thus the crucial sociological space for ongoing accountability all along the way. Civil society can also inform the market economy. At the present time, the sluicing processes related to the market economy remain less institutionalized and thereby less effective than those related to the constitutional nation-state. Civil society offers its critical, normative assets to the market economy with the goal of realizing corporate citizenship and responsibility for just and sustainable economies rooted in a more context-specific, stakeholder ethos. These public dynamics represent the publicity feature of civil society. Publicity as "making public" is the prime normative vocation of civil society. What God is up to here correlates with confessio's publicity, which we explored in the previous section. While the missional church's confessio makes God's redemption pub-
licitly available for testing and confirmation, the missional church’s vocatio makes God’s care publicly available for testing and confirmation.

Today an increasing number and variety of civil-society institutions need public companions who will encounter with them the moral meanings latent in the problems of contemporary life. There’s a calling here. It’s a risky vocation, of course, because the emerging missional church does not have a corner on the moral wisdom needed in many conflicted situations. As a public companion, the missional church becomes an encumbered community, encumbered with the predicaments of civil society and of its sleuthing and sluicing relationship with today’s lifeworlds and megainstitutions. But the emerging missional church is no stranger to an encumbered life, to a life of bearing the cross.

In summary, consider certain marks that characterize the missional church’s vocation as public companion: as such, the emerging missional church acknowledges a conviction that it participates in the Triune God’s ongoing creative work; in civil society the missional church exhibits a compassionate commitment to other institutions and their predicaments; this commitment, in turn, yields a critical and self-critical — and thus fully communicative — procedure and practice of public engagement; finally, the emerging missional church, as public companion, participates with civil society to create and strengthen the fabrics that fashion a life-giving and life-accountable world.

I long to see how the promising, cruciform, Triune God will produce fruit through this interaction of an emerging missional church with mission as promissio, communicatio, communio, confessio, and vocatio. It is appropriate that we, those who stand with one foot still planted in a bygone era and the other poised to step into another, into a new era of mission, join that ancient evening prayer:

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage,
not knowing where we go,
but only that your hand is leading us
and your love supporting us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.