

# Dangers and Opportunities in the Contextualization of the Gospel

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Of all the issues which have faced the Church in its history since the time of Christ and the Apostles, none is more crucial than the issue of what is universal and what is changeable in the Church's message and mission. In fact, a case could be made that all of the great controversies in church history have been over disagreements over what may be changed and what may not be changed. This question is at the root of problems in the church both on the congregational level and at the level of the church body itself. In the language of theologians, we must properly distinguish between that which is *jure divino* and that which is *jure humano*, of that which is universal for all cultures and times because it is ordained by God Himself in his Word and that which is of him, therefore a matter of Christian liberty and adiaphora.

This question is serious enough in our own culture among our typical Lutheran congregations as conflicts rage between the extremes of those who want change for its own sake or who want to set aside the Scriptures and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church in favor of their own reason and opinions, on the one hand, and those who resist any change and who are unalterably wedded to their own traditions and prejudices even on issues which God has left open in His Word on the other.

This question becomes all the more urgent, however, as the Gospel is brought to different cultures or when it faces a pluralistic society as ours increasingly is. This question is tested to its utmost on the mission field. Here the question is even greater than most suspect, even more than most missionaries suspect. This fact is brought home with telling force in the closely reasoned and very moving paper by Dr. Ralph Winter titled "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism" (Winter: 1975:213ff). Winter demonstrates the startling fact that four-fifths of the non-Christians in the world today will never have any straight forward opportunity to become Christians when the Christians themselves go more than halfway in the specialized tasks of cross-cultural evangelism." Let's say it again to let the force of this assertion sink in: four out of five people in the world cannot become Christians unless someone crosses cultural and/or language barriers to the culture or subculture which they have and which is different from their own in significant ways! This means that the more the Church is faithful in obedience to our Lord's Great Commission, the more it will have to wrestle with the question of how to make the universal (supracultural) gospel understandable in another culture. Alan R. Tippett was not overstating the case when he wrote in 1975:

The greatest methodological issue faced by the Christian mission in our day is *how to carry out the Great Commission in a multicultural world with a gospel that is both truly Christian in content and culturally significant in form.* (His italics) (Buswell, 1978: 13).

G. Linwood Barney put it this way: "The crucial question would seem to be: 'Can the supracultural find adequate and meaningful forms of expression in any culture?'" This missiologist believes the answer is a resounding yes. He then goes on to remark:

The essential nature of these supracultural components should neither be lost nor distorted but rather secured and interpreted clearly through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in "inculturating" them into this new culture .... Thus a relevant expression of the God-man relationship can preserve the integrity of a culture and in no way needs to compromise the essence and nature of the supracultural. (Buswell: 1978:16).

## I. The Need for Contextualizing the Gospel

In recent years a new terminology has been developed among scholars and missionaries to express the proclamation of the gospel in a meaningful way in new and different cultures. One of these words is “contextualization”. It was made popular in Evangelical circles through an influential essay presented at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974 and printed in *LET THE EARTH HEAR HIS VOICE*, entitled, “The Gospel, Cultural Context and Religious Syncretism.” Its presenter was a brilliant African leader who died before he could (humanly speaking) reach his full potential, Byang H. Kato of Nairobi, Kenya, General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar. Dr. Kato understood the term to mean “making concepts or ideals relevant in a given situation” and an “effort to express the never changing Word of God in ever changing modes for relevance.” (Kato: 1975:1217).

A decade ago, Stanley N. Gundry addressed the question in his presidential address before the Evangelical Theological Society, asserting that theologians often do not understand the issues missiology is raising even though they have profound theological implications. As a case in point, theologians urgently need to come to grips with contextualization. Contextualization, he wrote, “is concerned with the communication of the substance of divine revelation into the forms and structures of the recipients’ culture in such a way that the integrity of the gospel and Christianity are not compromised, but also in such a way that the gospel and the Christian way can be fully internalized by the person in that culture. Contextualization aims to address the person in his actual situation.”

Gundry went on to say that the problem is essentially a hermeneutical one, since “the gospel and Christianity are never known to exist outside of a cultural context, not even within Scripture itself. So we are the first faced with the hermeneutical problem of discerning essential substance from nonessential form within Scripture itself.” (Gundry, 12)

The ETS president then raised the kind of issue that this paper addresses, when he poses the question of bringing the receptor culture under the judgment of Scripture:

By what standard and methodology do we discern which aspects of a culture need to be adapted to and which to be judge? How can the gospel and theology be related to a culture without becoming relativized in the process? How do we avoid accommodation (in a bad sense) to a culture in the interests of communication to a culture? In short, how can contextualization avoid becoming syncretism? (Ibid)

It is the purpose of this paper to come to grips with the process of contextualization and to point out both the dangers and the opportunities which it presents to Lutherans as we face the great mission which Christ has given us. The space of this paper can do no more than just introduce the subject and suggest some guidelines on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Since the literature is vast and expanding rapidly, an adequate handling of this subject would easily fill a large book. The question is so complex as to require the skills of all of the scholars of our fellowship. Exegetes are needed to study what the Bible says about the subject in dealing with the diverse cultures of its time. How did the people of Bible times deal with the translation of the Gospel in a diverse society? Systematicians will have to evaluate the various proposals for contextualization and develop a “theology of contextualization” for our day in the light of Scripture and the Confessions. Historians will have to consider how other Christians, not just Lutherans but also Protestants, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox have interpreted the gospel to other societies in the past. And then practical experts will have to put it all into practice on the diverse mission fields of the world. I predict (and hope) that courses are taught on the subject in the future at our Seminary.

That the gospel needs to be proclaimed in a way that is understandable to the hearer should go without saying. As the Presbyterian missionary, F. Ross Kinsler, reminds us, the failure to present the gospel in terms which are understandable is the failure to present the gospel! He notes “that God always speaks to us in terms of concrete, living situations. The gospel is His Word of judgment and grace for our lives and our world today. If we do not interpret and apply it in our own particular context, we cannot say what we understand it -- or believe it -- at all.” (Kinsler, 1978:23)

The effectiveness of the gospel, therefore, depends in large part on how successfully we proclaim it in terms which take into account the culture, backgrounds, and thought patterns of the hearer. We must take a message which is supracultural (i.e., noncultural) and contextualize it into the cultural forms and social institutions of the other.

Some say that this cannot be done. Ernst Troeltsch believed that Christianity and western culture are so inextricably intertwined that a Christian can say little or nothing to a person of another culture. (Niebuhr, 1951:30).

The New Testament itself, however, has given us the pattern for cultural adaptations. Dr. Kato assures us that

“The incarnation itself is a form of contextualization. The Son of God condescended to pitch his tent among us to make it possible for us to be redeemed (John 1:14). The unapproachable Yahweh whom no man has seen and lived has become the Object of seeing and touching through the incarnation (John 14:9, I John 1:1). The moving old hymn on humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ, the Lord (Phil.2:5-8) was evidently an incentive to Apostle Paul in his philosophy of the ministry which was to become “all things to all men.” This in turn should motivate us to make the Gospel relevant in every situation everywhere as long as the Gospel is not compromised. (1975:1217).

Christ’s incarnation is the foundation for all subsequent evangelism as well as its supreme example.

The Apostles give us examples of a “contextualized” Gospel in the New Testament. Note the distinction in the preaching of Paul to the Jews and Godfearers at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13), and his message to the intellectuals on Mars Hill (Acts 17). Paul was, indeed, “all things to all men” (I Corinthians 9:16ff). He could use the language of the syncretizing Gnostics at Colossae in his letter to that church but without a hint of compromise with false teachings. In John’s first Epistle we also see the language of the Gnostics in a way that was understandable to them and again without compromise. The same may be said of the Hellenists in John’s “logos” terminology in John 1. Yet it remained the gospel. “Despite the flexibility of their message, it was always Christ centered and always carried the implication of decision in repentance, faith and Baptism.” (Green, 1975:165). The apostles knew how to put new wine in new wineskins without changing or corrupting the wine!

## II. The Problems of Contextualization

In the search for understandable, relevant and faithful forms of the gospel to proclaim in other cultures, the Church faces a whole range of problems and dangers. The Church of the Lutheran Confession must be involved in this search, for so many of those who have taken this task seriously have come up with proposals which are dangerous, inadequate and often based on an erroneous understanding of the difference between the *jure humano* and the *jure divino* in Christian theology and practice. The liberal and openly syncretistic are sometimes a more obvious danger than certain “conservative” attempts to deal with these issues, which, in their very plausibility, are perhaps more immediately dangerous.

Two examples of confused thinking on this question present themselves for our attention. S.O. Odunaike gives a Formula for “Inter-Mission Relationships” in *Let The Earth Hear His Voice*. In dealing with areas where mission boards may differ with indigenous churches, he presents the following as areas which may be open questions on which freedom and variety ought to be granted. Should we, he asks, make an issue over things like:

- infant baptism versus adult baptism?
- mode of baptism, immersion or sprinkling?
- charismatic operation of the Holy Spirit?
- ministerial dress?

- [doctrines of] millennialism? (Odunaike, 520)

Note that this author has no guidelines on what is or is not a matter of doctrine.

C. Peter Wagner, the Church Growth proponent, has suggestions on what are or are not “cultural overhang” which he alleges are wrongly carried into other cultures. Along with the matter of church polity, Wagner suggests that the following should be “re-examined:”

1. The need for professional pastors
2. The necessity that a pastor be full-time, with a salary paid by his church
3. The need for specially constructed church buildings
4. Sunday Schools as essential for Christian education
5. Certain days and hours for church services
6. Exaggerated educational standards for the ministry
7. Universal validity of specific liturgical forms
8. Superiority of democratic church government
9. Absolutizing certain musical values, such as four-part harmony
10. Transposing culturally determined ethical standards: degrees of dress or undress, truthfulness and promise-keeping, punctuality, cleanliness
11. Requiring certain standards of doctrinal orthodoxy on the basis of culturally and historically conditioned creeds. (Wagner, 1971: 105).

Orthodox theologians and pastors will not find much help in Wagner’s list either, but it does serve to help dramatize the kind of issues the church faces on the mission fields of the world.

For suggestions on “contextualization” which have implications which are potentially far worse, the reader is directed to an essay by another Fuller Seminary missiologist, Charles H. Kraft, “Toward A Christian Ethnotheology” published in a Festschrift for Donald McGavran, *God, Man and Church Growth*. (Tippett, 1973:199ff). These ideas cry out for urgent study and refutation where necessary as well as for sound alternatives based on Biblical and Confessional theology, since they are widely read and discussed in missionary circles.

The two extremes in proclaiming the gospel in another culture are: 1) that we proclaim the gospel without adapting the Western cultural baggage that we carry around with us; or 2) that the evangelist change what God has made absolute in an effort to reach the lost. In other words, how do we separate the content of the gospel from the cultural wrapper in which it comes? The great Dutch theologian and missiologist, J.H. Bavinck, is quoted as saying “Christians are to take legitimate possession of customs and cultures, give them new meaning and new contents, and enlist them in the service of Christ .... It is never easy to decide whether a custom may be retained or should be rejected...” (Octavianus, 1975:1242).

Sadly, however, especially in the past, Western missionaries became, consciously or unconsciously, agents of civilization rather than of the Gospel. James O. Buswell III quotes a black South African, Mokegethi Motihabi, as saying

Christianity was from the beginning brought to the black man wrapped in Western culture and Western values, and no distinction was drawn between . . . Christianity and Western culture. Thus any black man wishing to become a Christian had to embrace the whole of Western values ... and had to renounce his entire background as paganism and superstition. (Buswell, 1978a:103).

We need to remember that God has no favorites among the cultures of the world. He is Lord of them all and will someday judge them all. To ignore culture is to be condemned to being irrelevant in the world.

This problem is not even overcome entirely by importing people from other cultures to be trained in the West for service in the Third World or even in a subculture in America. William Bentley, a Black American

evangelical leader writes, “All of us who receive our (theological) training in white schools ... upon our return to the communities which produce us ... have to dewhitenize ourselves in order to speak meaningfully to the masses of our folk.” Another man, from Bali, expressed the fear of being “foreigners in their own country.” (Buswell, 1978a:101).

On the other hand, it is possible that an “imported” form of worship, for example, may become so much a part of the Christian life in the new culture that “they don’t recognize their foreign origin and consider them as their very own!” (Octaviarius, 1974:1244).

Early in this century, Roland Allen put his finger on one reason why Western missionaries are reluctant to give converts the liberty to express their theology in their own terms: fear that the Holy Spirit may not rightly guide them as He guides us! “The consequence is that we view any independent action on the part of our new converts with anxiety and fear.” (Buswell, 1978b:15).

We dare not forget the second danger, however, that not only will matters of adiaphora be changed, but also matters which God’s Word makes absolute. This is the danger that instead of judging and transforming the culture, the gospel is itself transformed or at least modified by the culture! Dr. Kato reminds us that in our preaching, the “terminology of theology should be expression a way common people can understand. But theological meanings must not be sacrificed at the altar of comprehensibility. Instead of employing terms that would water down the Gospel, the congregations should be taught the meaning of the term as originally meant.” (Kato, 1975:1217)

The problem, of course, is that all cultures are combinations of good and evil and therefore must not judge the Word, but be judged by it. The preacher must always remember that he has a prophetic role to perform as well as an evangelistic one; indeed, the prophetic task is part and parcel (through the preaching of the law) of the evangelistic task. Romans 12:1-2 should certainly be applied here.

Rene’ Padilla makes a comment that is worth noting, especially as a counter balance to some of the fine insights of the Church Growth school. He writes, “Faithfulness to the Gospel should never be sacrificed for the sake of quantity. When the Gospel is truncated in order to make it easy for all men to become Christians, from the very outset the basis is laid for an unfaithful church... I am for quantity, but for quantity in the context of faithfulness to the Gospel.” (Padilla, p. 138).

Ultimately, the price of a wrong accommodation of the Gospel to the culture is syncretism, with which the Church has had to wrestle since the time of the fall into sin. Syncretism, of course, is the combination of Christianity with unacceptable parts of other religions. The gospel first is compromised and weakened, then distorted and finally lost altogether.

This is not a new problem. We find examples of it repeatedly in the history of Israel. Moses attacked it in Exodus and Leviticus. Later it is part of the polemic of Joshua and in the inspired writings of the chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah. It is rejected anew in the New Testament as In 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1. Another paper could be written on this biblical theme, but let this suffice for now.

Syncretism has written many a sad chapter also in the history of the missions of the church. Kinder notes that “in Latin America the Roman Catholic Church has for 500 years promoted, or condoned or accepted a vast confounding of Christianity with native animism and superstition.” (Kinsler, p. 26). Even Roman Catholic missiologists admit such “Christo-paganism”, for Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia in an article titled “The Incarnation of the Church in Indigenous Cultures” decries what he witnessed where

What appears as “Christian” is actually a covering, like the outer part of a sandwich, for the indigenous mythology, which remains intact as the content of the religion. “Christianity” thus provides new forms of expressing the indigenous mythology. The saints are a new version of the ancestors, who expect to receive worship, consume candles, flowers, incense, and wine... (This) tends to demonstrate that there is no real evangelization where there does not exist a confrontation with the values of the culture. The mere super imposition of a layer of Christianity produces what we have called “sandwich religion”, which is the best possible “culture medium” for the growth of religious syncretism.. (Kinsler:22-23).

LCMS Prof. Otto Stahlke describes syncretism on the contemporary scene:

The syncretistic tendency, the attempt to blend and reconcile various religions, is not new, but never before has it been so prominently espoused by a leading agency for many Christian churches. Promotion of this point of view has come from philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, comparative religionists, and some avant garde theologians. (Quoted by Byang Kato, op. cit. p. 1219)

In this context, Kato notes that one of the “incentives” for syncretism is that “the genuine desire to make Christianity truly African has not been matched with the power of discernment not to tamper with the inspired content of the revealed Word of God.” (Kato’s entire essay is well worth reading in this regard.)

We can summarize the problems presented by contextualization with a quotation from Samuel Rowen, who, in response to Dr. Buswell’s essay, said,

The concern in contextualization is that the gospel must not simply root itself in the soil, it must also judge it. There has been a tendency to regard culture and the status quo as sacred and inviolable. But every culture is subject to the fall and needs to be brought under the judgment of the scriptures. since the context is constantly changing either by new expressions of the depravity of man or by the positive effects of the advance of the gospel, the process of contextualization is continual. (Rowen, p.113).

### III. The Limits of Contextualization

We must now draw together what we have been saying.

First of all, before the gospel can be contextualized, we must first understand what the gospel is. Often the gospel is weakened and syncretism takes root because the gospel is not correctly understood. We understand the gospel on the basis of God’s inerrant Word, the Scriptures. They are the sole source and norm of our doctrine. When this is forgotten, the message itself suffers. The Spiritual gospel must be understood before we can ever hope to correctly proclaim it. We must see the gospel as the message that God has forgiven our sins for Jesus sake because of His bloody sacrifice in our place on the cross. The limits of change in the church, therefore, are set by the Bible itself. We have no other gospel to preach or “contextualize” except that which is found in the Holy Word.

On the other hand, Scripture, not our own traditions and culture, must establish doctrine. If we are not clear on this, we receive the condemnation of Jesus who warned us about teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. A study of Matt. 15:1-20 is very much in order at this point. Likewise, Paul called his colleague Peter to account for his failure to properly to “contextualize” the gospel in Galatians 2. The doctrine of Christian liberty gives the church great freedom in applying God’s Word to various situations and contexts. We have already noted how the great Apostle was flexible in his application of Law and Gospel in his own time. The Bible itself makes it clear that the Kingdom of God is not made up of meat and drink (Romans 14:17), but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Colossians 2 also gives guidelines on the limits on contextualization in the face of legalism in all of its forms.

Our Lutheran Confessions also provide specific guidelines on the limits of contextualization and change in the church. Article VII of the Augsburg Confession sets forth the marks of the church when it says, “It is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.” The *Augustana* is here dealing with the spiritual unity of the *una Sancta*, and not with conditions of fellowship.

Then the A.C. adds a statement which has great significance for our tonic: “It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian Church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all

places.” This clearly means that matters of cultural or local significance are not of the essence of the faith and therefore may vary according to circumstances.

The other section of the Book of Concord which directly applies to the contextualization question is Article X of the *Formula of Concord* on “Church Usages, Called Adiaphora or Indifferent Things,” in the *Epitome* and “The Ecclesiastical Rites That Are Called Adiaphora Or Things Indifferent” in the *Solid Declaration*. For the sake of convenience and brevity, we shall treat only the *Epitome X* in this paper. This article deals with the controversy which developed among “theologians of the Augsburg Confession concerning those ceremonies ...which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God but have been introduced into the church in the interest of good order and the general welfare.”

This Article is really an exposition, in a sense, and an expansion of A.C. VII. The Affirmative Theses and the Antitheses make several points which are helpful guidelines in deciding what is *jure divino* and what is *jure humano* in the Church of God. We summarize the salient points of each Affirmative Thesis as follows, with comments on how they apply to our problem:

1. The Confessors declared “we believe, teach, and confess unanimously that the ceremonies or church usages which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God, but which have been introduced solely for the sake of good order and the general welfare, are in themselves no divine worship or even a part of it.” Matt. 15:9 is then quoted as applicable, warning against making *jure divino* matters which are questions of Christian liberty, open questions, or adiaphora.

2. “We believe, teach and confess that the community of God in every locality and every age has the authority to change such ceremonies according to circumstances, as it may be most profitable and edifying to the community of God.” The principle of Christian liberty in matters not commanded by God is here underscored. This obviously applies to the right, when evangelistic necessity or the welfare of the people of God in the community see it necessary, to alter, adapt or innovate with customs in order to contextualize the unchangeable Law and Gospel to the particular situation or culture.

3. The formula adds a pastoral note, for in making changes even in adiaphora, “all frivolity and offenses are to be avoided, and particularly the weak in faith are to be spared (I Cor. 8:913; Romans 14:13ff.)”

4. Next the question of giving the impression of agreement with false teachers or unbelievers is raised. Those who work in areas or cultures which tend to heathenism or where the majority religion (such as Hinduism) tends to be eclectic, syncretistic or inclusivist, and where pressures are applied to adopt customs and practices which have idolatrous implications or connotations, these areas need to be carefully and prayerfully studied and discussed for the implications of this crucial point. FC X has perhaps-even more relevance on today’s Third World mission fields than it did during the adiaphoristic controversy which was its occasion!

The Confessors declared:

4. We believe, teach and confess that in time of persecution, when a clear-cut confession of faith is demanded of us, we dare not yield to the enemies in such indifferent things, as the apostle Paul writes, “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:10). “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers, for what fellowship has light with darkness?” (II Cor. 6:14). “To them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you.” (Gal. 2:5). In such a case it is no longer a question of indifferent things, but a matter which has to do with the truth of the Gospel, Christian liberty, and the sanctioning of public idolatry, as well as preventing offense to the weak in faith. In all these things we have no concessions to make, but we should witness and unequivocal confession and suffer in consequence of what God sends us and what he lets the enemies inflict on us.

5. This paragraph spells out the principle that church fellowship is established on the basis of doctrine, not on agreement in ceremonies or culturally conditioned practices. “We believe, teach, and confess that no church should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God, as

long as there is mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the familiar axiom, “Disagreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in faith.” This last quotation is from Irenaeus, which is evidence of how old this principle is.

The Antitheses also have instructive observations to guide us. The first antithesis rejects the absolutizing of “human precepts and institutions.” They dare not, secondly, be “forcibly imposed upon the community of God as necessary things, in violation of the Christian liberty which it has in external matters.” This warning applies to missionaries from a white or Western society against forcing their customs on another culture without Scriptural warrant.

The fourth antithesis of Article X in the Epitome argues for the divine right of Christian communities to use rites which are Scripturally adiaphora according to circumstances which are beneficial to the church, and, one might add, to the effective proclamation of the Gospel to the lost.

These Confessional principles warn the church on mission fields against the adaptation of terminology, customs or practices which may imply accommodation or compromise with pagan ideology. Although this is a crucial question, it is not as simple as it might sound, for, even in American and Western Christianity we have customs where are pagan in origin. The Christmas tree and the term “Easter” have pagan beginnings but are now fitted with new meanings. This question was behind the “term controversy” over the Chinese name for God to be used on the China field early in this century.

The matter of contextualizing the gospel must be balanced also with the consideration that there is often much comfort in knowing that the Christian is using customs and practices with the church in all places and times, even if they are not commanded specifically by God in the Bible. We ought also mention that the very Christianizing process will transform the culture and bring new customs and practices to a culture.

#### **IV. The Opportunity and Challenge for Lutheranism**

On the basis of our study thus far, this observer would submit that Lutheranism is especially equipped theologically to give guidance and leadership to the Christian world in dealing with the dangers and limitations of contextualization in today’s world. Lutheranism has, in its Confessions, principles which make a clear distinction between what is adiaphora, and thus indifferent depending on situations, and what is universal and absolute.

Most denominational traditions have no such principles; indeed, some of them even take their names from what the Scripture and the Lutheran Symbols would place in the category of adiaphora. Examples that immediately come to mind are the Presbyterians and Episcopalians (whose names are based on their church polity) and the Baptists (whose name designates a particular mode of Baptism).

Lutherans have always, at least doctrinally, even if not in practice, considered matters of liturgy, clerical dress, church polity details, and even days of worship to be adiaphora. We have also, at least in our purest times, been able to avoid the sectarian concerns for do’s and don’ts which so often violate Biblical principles of Christian liberty. It is hard to think of any other denominational tradition which is able to make such a claim. Therefore, Lutherans need to speak and write, not only for themselves, but also for the whole Church to make available the guidance for which the missions fields of the world are crying out!

As we fulfill the Great Commission, and as the church reaches out to more and more new cultures, this question will loom larger and larger and take more and more time and energy. May the Lord keep us faithful both to the mission of world evangelization which He has set before us and also to His Holy Word and sacraments which are God’s means to carry out His commission!

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