

THE POSITION OF THE TUEBINGEN PENTECOST CALL IN LIGHT OF THE TRINITARIAN-SALVATION-HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF MISSIONS

1. The theological-historical origin of the trinitarian-salvation-historical justification of missions

1.1 The concept of “*Missio Dei*”

The Trinitarian justification of missions, which is addressed in the topic I was asked to present, goes back to a lecture which the Basel theologian *Karl Barth* has held in Berlin in 1934. He contributed significantly to an incipient reconsideration of the nature of missions in its theocentric anchoring around the mid-20th century. Barth had drawn attention to the fact that in classical dogmatics the term “missions” has its place in the doctrine of the Trinity, which spoke in salvation-economic continuation about the intratrinitarian *processiones* of the Son and the Spirit of the *missiones Dei*.

About this Trinitarian justification of missions as “*Missio Dei*” in its salvation-historical perspective, the evangelical mission theology in the following years arrived at a far-reaching consensus. In the Trinitarian plan of salvation of God expressed by it, a match also in the Catholic and Orthodox missions theology was found. I want to start in my lecture from this ecumenical consensus, when I try to briefly explain first my own Trinitarian-salvation-historical view.

1.2 The prehistoric eternal plan of salvation of the Father

If we enquire into the deepest origin of missions, it is not related to time, nor to the Great Commission of the risen Christ to his Apos-

les (Matthew 28,18 to 20). No, the reason is given much earlier, namely in the mysterious life of the Holy Trinity itself, as it takes place “immanent” in the eternal emergence of the divine persons apart - through the generation of the Son and the spiration of the Spirit - and in their cognitive and loving giving to each other. Analogously, this inner divine life continues through the free self-determination of the Triune One to be the loving Creator and Lord of the world “economically” in a history of the self-communications of God to His creatures. These are foundationally the **sendings of God the Son and the Spirit into the world**. These were preceded, however, already by the sendings of Abraham, Moses, the angels, judges and prophets and proclamational the sending of Israel to the nations of the world (Ex 19,4 to 6), as reported in the Old Testament.

What is the *cause* of this significant alteration from eternity into time for this emergence of the all-sufficient God out of himself and his entry into history? The biblical writings refer us to his eternal *r e s o l u t i o n* made before the foundation of the world, in which the entire work of God in history and its ultimate goal is founded. This idea occurs in Holy Scripture – partly explicitly, partly implicitly – so often, clear and emphatically that we can denote with an exegetically and dogmatically good conscience the Trinitarian development of salvation history, centered in Christ, as the leitmotif of the Bible, which connects the Old and New Testament into a unity.

1.3 The missiological implication of the divine salvation resolution

The teleological center of meaning of salvation history lies in the revelation and unstoppable implementation of the divine plan of salvation. From this the sending of the Son, of the Spirit and of the church receive their definition in form and content. We can therefore say with reference to the former director of the Basel Mission, Karl Hartenstein (1894 -1952): *“Mission is an execution of God’s salvation plan with and in the world, entrusted to the Church of Jesus Christ, in the salvation-historical period between Ascension and Parousia of Christ, in continuation of his own salvation-historical sending. It happens in spirit-led obedience to His invisible, redeeming kingdom rule over the Church and the world.”*

The substantiation of missions in God’s plan of salvation is a cardinal indicator of a salvation-historical missions theology, both in its Protestant and its Catholic form, as it has been classically expressed in the conciliar missionary Decree Ad Gentes (1966 Chapter I, 2). Here the Council Fathers declared: *“The pilgrim Church is by nature missionary’... since in herself it derives its origin from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit according to the plan of God the Father. This plan corresponds to the ‘fountain-like’ love, the love-will of God the Father.”*

1.4 The Trinitarian-salvation-historical justification of missions as a characteristic aspect of classic protestant mission thinking

The Trinitarian-salvation-historical orientation has largely determined the protestant mission thinking up to the III. General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi in 1961. Already since the beginning of the 20th century, the protestant mission theology in Germany, Switzerland as well as in

other European countries such as Holland and Scandinavia had always wanted to carry out their special vocation by contributing critically yet constructively their salvation-historical understanding of missions to the International Mission Movement. It did so regarding both its ecumenical as - increasingly nowadays - also its evangelical form.

Since the IV. WCC General Assembly in Uppsala 1968 up to the present day, this tradition was continued in view of its general assemblies and mission conferences as well as on the three Congresses of the Lausanne Movement in Lausanne 1975, Manila 1989, and Cape Town 2010.

This was done also by the pronouncements of the *Theological Convention of Confessing Communities* until it was superseded by the *International Conference of Confessing Communities* in 2005. All these statements were directed by the classic salvation-historical understanding of missions as it has been established within academic missiology by *Gustav Warneck* (1834-1910).

The issue was always to give the reminder – against fanatical tendencies of anticipation of the coming kingdom of God – regarding the basic salvation-historical distinction between the “already” and the “only then” through the triple coming of Christ: once in the flesh, now in the Spirit, and finally in power and glory.

Even today, many current uncertainties about foundation, purpose, and the right configuration of missions, have a common theological cause: The salvation-historical perspective, the “view toward the end” (*Walter Freytag*), as it had determined the path of the protestant missionary movement in the past, has fallen into oblivion. This is a serious loss.

2. The questioning of the trinitarian-salvation-historical understanding of missions through transformation theology

On 1 and 2 March 2013, a symposium was held in Gomaringen near Tübingen, which was dedicated to the commemoration of the deceased (in November 2012) prelate and promoter of the missionary movement, Rolf Scheffbuch. The theme of this symposium was “The change in the evangelical understanding of missions”.

We worked out a mission theological declaration that has been published under the name “*Tuebingen Pentecost Call*” and has also been translated into several languages.

Not only the participants in the symposium have been concerned for some time that now also the evangelical mission theology begins to neglect its traditional *biblical-salvation-historical* justification. Step by step it draws closer to the *historical-theological* understanding of mission of the World Council of Churches (WCC), as this has developed under the influence of secular-ecumenical and political theologies since around 1960. This is done mainly by the mediation of the “Radical Evangelicals”, originally located in Latin America.

Salvation history and world history are unified in an inadmissible way to be put on the path to the desired establishment of the kingdom of God already on this earth.

Against this, we raised in Gomaringen with this public statement our warning voice as the Confessing Communities have done in previous times of crisis of the mission by guardian calls. I am thinking especially of the *Frankfurt Declaration on the Foundational Crisis of Missions* (1970) and the *Lausanne Covenant* in 1974.

2.1 “Transformation” as a new subject of evangelical mission theology

The contemporary theological thinking of evangelicals is moving increasingly in the field of tension between the *proclamation* of reconciliation with God through Christ’s atoning death on the one hand and *social change* as the alleged aim of missions on the other.

This understanding of missions is characterized by terms such as “*integrated*”, “*holistic*” or “*incarnational*”. Many missiologists operate their subject now under the name “*Missional theology*”. This is connected to a perspective where all spheres of action of the Church - including its social and political responsibility and the dialogue with other religions - are determined by its comprehensive mission to the world, under the promised goal “*Kingdom of God*”.

In this context the word “*transformation*” forms a key concept, which was unknown to many Christians up to now. Given its rapid spread and growing dominance it needs – so we thought – urgent clarification.

The word “transformation” as such is derived from the Latin *transformare* = to reshape. “Transformation” in the sense of a change of social and political structures is not a biblical term as such. Most closely it corresponds to the Greek *metamorphóo* = to remodel, to transform.¹ In the New Testament it denotes the transformation of the regenerated, brought about by the Holy Spirit, their sanctification and “transfiguration”, but it does not mean a transformation of earthly social conditions.

The fact that the neo-evangelicals found the concept of social transformation helpful, is due to the fact that in much of the American missionary movement since the last quarter of the 20th century, the “*Kingdom-Theology*” has prevailed. This happened through repression of the hitherto existing missions theology aimed at personal conversion and church planting.

One facet of this “Kingdom-of-God-theology” is the *Dominion-* or domination theology. It emerged from the earlier American tradition of “postmillennialism”, i.e. the belief that the Messianic kingdom of peace, the thousand-year-reign (*Millennium*) of Revelation 20:1-6, proclaimed and incipiently built by Jesus, should be fully established before the return of Jesus on this earth.

These ideas have been taken over by the German-speaking authors of transformation theology, and through their publications and teaching activities they are disseminated to evangelical mission seminars and universities. Actions such as the “*Micha-Initiative*”² put them into action and elevate them to a new mission program.

Rolf Scheffbuch protested against this, supported by some other pietistic theologians. This is because here missions would be linked to political goals of a utopian nature (e.g. halving world poverty by 2015!) and which would overload the working power and financial resources of the missionaries at the expense of the priority of evangelization.

Representatives of the “transformative movement” have drawn attention to themselves by impressive book series that are written mostly by lecturers of the Marburg Bible Seminary. They achieve through their publications and conferences of the European Evangelical Alliance (Motto: “*Transforming Our World*”) a significant widespread impact.

This requires a theological debate with transformation theology. It has indeed an actual impact in the missionary practice. Socio-economic projects displace the evangelistic proclamation.

On its necessity most transformation theologians agree in principle. Nevertheless, we observe with concern that in their pro-

grammatic publications, social and, where possible, political actions occur as an equal, even preferred form of expression of the gospel and the kingdom of God besides the proclamation of the Gospel. Through this extension the *soteriological*, i.e. the dimension of the Gospel directed to the eternal salvation that Jesus accomplished through his atoning death of redemption, does not remain unaffected. On the contrary, both in theory and in missionary practice, the salvation of the soul avowedly recedes behind the creation of better social and economic living conditions.

2.2 The understanding of Scripture in transformation theology

Transformation theologians are in principle committed to the trustworthiness and reliability of Holy Scripture. However, dangerous decisions have to be watched, relating to the interpretation of Scripture. They are linked to the “*contextual hermeneutics*”, which attempts to understand a text from its *context*, in this case the socio-political situation. The problem is that the biblical texts are read here on the basis of the contextual interpretation methods as they are known from liberation and feminist theologies. The socio-political situation in which the biblical texts are read, provides the interpretive key.

Thus, a specific allocation of Old and New Testament is connected with it. Randomly selected historical events of the Old Testament, especially the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the prophetic sermon against abuse of power and injustice, are considered to be “paradigmatic” (exemplary) models, to which the mission of the church today also needs to be committed. Thus, the foundation of classical Protestant exegesis is abandoned. For this, Jesus Christ is the central salvation-historical content of Holy Scripture, who himself gives us the definitive indication of how the Old Testament should be understood as referring to him.³

One consequence of contextual understanding of Holy Scripture by transformation theologians is that *man* with his problems and desires becomes the *focus*, but not God, who reveals his actions in judgment and grace in Holy Scripture. Now, if the biblical text is read only with regard to the questions of today's context, it can no longer disclose what it wants to say by itself.

2.3 The image of Jesus in transformation theology

The contextual interpretation of the Bible has profound consequences for **Christology**, i.e. its view of the person and work of Jesus, the Christ. Its presentation of the central contents of the Christian faith also impacts the decisions for the overall understanding of the Church and its "missional" existence.

Christological aspects are occasionally mentioned by all authors of transformation theology. But what they mostly care about is the humanity of Jesus and his self-sacrificing service to the social needs of this world. This is done with substantial neglect of his divine being, as this is emphasized particularly in John's Gospel (Joh 1:1-14; 20:28) and has been formulated by the Early Church in its fundamental dogmas of Nicea 325 and Chalcedon in 451: According to these the Son of God is of the same being with God the Father, and in his person both natures, the divine and the human, are inseparably united.

Now through the term "**incarnational**", the miracle of the Incarnation of God is addressed, which plays an important role in the contemporary understanding of missions in the neo-evangelical movement. But this involves just not so much the unique miracle of the incarnation of the eternal Logos in the person of Christ. Rather, in what we may call a "model-Christology", the following is highlighted: The Jesus Christ who became man, has willingly become a servant and living an existence of service in the midst of the needs of humanity.

What shall we say then?

Certainly Jesus of Nazareth called people to follow him, and he anchored in his sermons and teachings the basics of Christian ethics. But it must be remembered that the salvation-historical uniqueness of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word of God (Joh 1:14), his unique sacrifice, and his exaltation to the throne of God places a barrier to an "*Imitatio* (literally "imitation") of *Christ*". His atoning sacrifice on the cross to pay off our debt can not be imitated. It is inadmissible within the meaning of the biblical-Reformational understanding of salvation, to make from the "*Christ for us*" a unilateral "*We as Christ*"; as it would change the Gospel into a new law.

Today the missionary movement is in danger of being guided on the trail of an unreal Jesus by this kind of efforts of contextualization.

2.4 Church for the world

That which happens in transformation theology to *Christology*, the doctrine of the nature and work of God's Son Jesus Christ, has direct consequences also for *ecclesiology*, the understanding of the Church. Just as there in Jesus Christ the most important aspect is that he made himself a servant to the needs of the world, here, too, the church is regarded one-sidedly in terms of its service in the process of world transformation. This means that the *function* of the church becomes more important than its *essence*.

In the New Testament, it is well known that the church is in intimate connection with the exalted Christ, as the members of the body to their head.⁴ In its rebirth, the believers have gained *participation in the divine nature* (2 Pet 1:4), having *escaped the corrupting lust of the world*.

Through God the Son, the church is also in close connection with the other two persons of God. It is the *people of God* and the *temple of the Holy Spirit*.

In transformation theology, however, the church is regarded and evaluated in a different perspective. Here it is under the calling to dedicate its entire existence to the ministry in the world and to seek the transformation of the socio-economic and political structures of society, so that the kingdom of God would come to appearance step by step.

Among the neo-evangelicals in the US there was previously a similar development. Thus, *Dominion theology* represents the idea, that it is the task of the churches and Christians to build the kingdom of God already in the immanent history. Programmatically, this approach is represented in the “*Emergent Church*” movement. It sees itself as the new “paradigm” [guiding pattern] of a “missional church” for the 21st, postmodern century. The church is in this perspective the instrument of God to execute his kingdom plan. But he could also use other instruments, for example, the non-Christian religions as well as social-political movements, whose members may be atheists.

Transformation theologians formally hold to the triple fundamental task of the Church: *Leiturgia*, *Diakonia* and *Martyria* (adoration, service and testimony). But it is striking that also the worship of the congregation is reversed to a call to change the world toward the kingdom of God. Likewise, missions is not so much the offer to people alienated from God, to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life through conversion and faith in the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Instead, it is an invitation to participate in the building of the kingdom of God in the here and now.

2.5 God’s currently visible expanding kingship

As part of the transformation theology the concept of the kingdom of God plays a central role, but almost exclusively in its current dimension. God’s kingdom rule would be represented and extended *here and now* in this world by missions with its “social-transformative

commission”. The kingdom of God could be perceived everywhere, where the “values of the kingdom” prevail and the structures hostile to life, such as injustice, oppression and exploitation can be overcome. This applies even to non-Christian or extra-Christian operations. Such assertions overlook the “eschatological realism” of the Bible, i.e. what it predicts about actual eschatological events to be expected: the maturing of evil, the world empire of the Antichrist, the apocalypse and the Last Judgment. If all this would be converted to inner-worldly utopian programs, this would keep the church away from its primary mission task to proclaim the gospel to people alienated from Christ.

3. Transformation in the understanding of missions of the World Council of Churches

Following this consideration of the evangelical use of the term “transformation” as the contents of a new understanding of world evangelization and of its task, I would now like to take a look at its interpretation in the recent foundational declaration on the subject of World Mission and Evangelism, as it has been advanced at the X. General Assembly in November 2013.

It bears the name “*Together Towards Life*” and it is written at first sight in a quite biblical language. It takes up the terms “spirit”, “life”, “creation” and “kingdom of God”. So it fitted well with the theme of the Tenth General Assembly in Busan, in which I participated as a correspondent for *idea*. It read: “**God of life – lead us to justice and peace**”.

The person of the Trinitarian Godhead, which was called upon in the guiding motto of Busan, and is called the “God of life”, is identified in the mission statement much with the spirit and sometimes called “Holy Spirit”. He is described as one who is present and acts in the world’s history and in creation, including the

entire cosmos. The spirit has a central mission to which we are called to contribute as well. The task of the spirit consists in establishing justice and peace between all parts of human society and to lead creation toward its goal, the kingdom of God. This ultimate goal is achieved not by an eschatological act of God. Rather, this would be done through a gradual *transformation*, a key concept in the present ecumenical theology.

As we have already pointed out, this term is now also used by some evangelical missiologists and mission agencies. The presence of the Spirit is recognized as everywhere where a transformation of the present state of injustice and conflict takes place, and the mission of the people of God also consists in working for transformation. Thus, the 10th paragraph of the declaration affirms: "The Church is God's gift to the world for its transformation into the kingdom of God."

In this understanding of missions, the Church has a much wider task than to undertake to save souls. "Both the earth and our bodies must be transformed by the grace of God, it is said in § 20. This means that missions is operative also in active political commitment, and the readiness to fight against all unjust structures. "Mission resists spiritually and seeks to transform all life-destructive values and systems wherever these are at work in our economy, our politics and even in the churches."

That is to say that Christian missionaries should not limit themselves to carry out their spiritual task in preaching, worship and service. Since the declaration tells us so, that "God's free gift of love urges us ("*compels*") to confront idolatrous assumptions, unjust systems, politics of domination and exploitation in our current world economic order (§ 30)."

What a tremendous task is assigned here to churches, missions agencies and individual Christians, regardless of whether they are professionally prepared for it, to become involved

in all areas of life! They are expected to solve all the inveterate problems of our contemporary world with which governments, business leaders, scientists and other professionals, and even the UN usually struggle in vain.

Another key concept, which plays an important role in the ecumenical missions statement is the word "*life*". The theme of Busan was indeed "Together Towards Life". The General Assembly also drew our attention to life by calling upon God as the God of life, imploring him to lead us to justice and peace. This meant that justice and peace are to be essentially understood in the socio-political sense as the main gift of life. In the introduction, the authors invite us to join in their commitment: "We believe in the triune God, the Creator, Redeemer and Supporter of all life." In particular, we should believe in God the giver of life, who maintains and strengthens life and who renews the entire creation. In the following § 2 the mission of the Church is described as the one, "to celebrate life and to resist all life-destroying powers in the power of the Holy Spirit".

Here the attentive reader is probably really asking what the nature of this highly esteemed "life" is. It appears as if it is identical with the creation itself, and that taking care of this life is identical with our responsibility for the conservation of creation and its integrity.

Such an approach will also be applauded by the followers of all religions and ideologies. This also applies to the *African traditional religions*, which, as the Belgian missionary *Placide Tempels* has shown in his book "Bantu Philosophy" build around the "*force vital*", the life force, on which depends all life.

But in what way is the new ecumenical mission statement successful to appreciate the genuine *biblical* understanding of life? As is known, it represents particularly in the fourth Evangelist, John, a key concept, which he often equates

with eternal life, which the three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are enjoying. Emanating from them it is also communicated to those who receive it in faith and love.

The declaration of Busan, however, does not distinguish between two essentially different kinds of life, the one which in Greek is named βίος (*bios*), the other ζωή (*zoe*). A study of a biblical concordance teaches us that while *bios* basically means earthly life according to its functions and duration, *zoe* refers to a much higher form: it means the supernatural life that God and Christ possess already and in which believers will share fully after their resurrection but which they enjoy already now if they are closely connected with Jesus Christ in faith and love. It is especially in the Gospel of St. John that the term *zoe* occurs most frequently and where it is unfolded as that gift of salvation that Jesus grants to those who believe in him.

In John 5:24 Jesus assures his followers: “*I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*”

Unfortunately this genuine christological and soteriological understanding of the very key term “life” is lost in the mission statement for Busan. It is generalized into a universal force that can easily be capsized by adherents of any pantheistic religion or ideology.

This concept of life is also based on the introduction of the concept of “*transformation*” which now constitutes the central task of world mission and evangelism in the Geneva Ecumenical Movement.

But what must particularly alert us is the fact that the same process is indeed increasingly taking place in the worldwide movement of evangelicals. Here there is hardly a difference between the ecumenical and the evangelical understanding of mission today. In Busan, this has

even been expressly declared in the greetings addressed to the plenary assembly by representatives of the World Evangelical Alliance and the Lausanne Movement for World Evangelization who were participating as guests.

4. The Tübingen call to return to the salvation-historical understanding of missions

4.1 The anchoring of the Tübingen Pentecost call in the salvation-historical view of the Bible

The strength of the biblical salvation-historical view becomes obvious both in the theology and in the practice of missions in that it accommodates the Bible’s understanding of God, the world and time. It assumes the center of the saving work of God regarding time and content in Jesus Christ, it positions its two main parts of Old and New Testament to each other in the appropriate relation and observes the related distinctions. From this follows the above mentioned tension between the “*already*” and the “*only then*”.

Many contentious issues find a convincing answer from this perspective.

This includes, *first* and especially the position of the *people of Israel* among the nations. According to the testimony of Paul in Romans 11:25-32 the ultimate conversion and re-acceptance of Israel will take place when the mission to the nations has been completed, the “*fullness of the Gentiles*” has entered in and Christ will come again. To him the mission to Israel wants to open the hearts of the Jews.

Secondly, there is a question of the theology of religions about the nature of the *non-Christian religions* in their relation to the Christian faith and their response in their tripolar determination through God’s original revelation⁵, man’s response in obedience and resistance⁶ as well as the effectiveness of the demons⁷.

Thirdly, the salvation-historical view proves its worth also in the current struggle for a *shaping of the future*, which corresponds to the Gospel. The Church of Jesus Christ must give, in its socio-political co-responsibility, signs of the already inaugurated kingdom, while, however, attaching neither too large nor vice versa too little importance to them. Rather, it firmly trusts on the certain fulfillment of the biblical promise of the kingdom of God at the return of Jesus Christ in power and glory. In his kingdom peace and justice will finally be realized together (Rev 21:1,24).

4.2 Evangelistic proclamation and social responsibility in the past and present of missions

The objections of our symposium against transformation theology are not directed against their regard to the social responsibility of missions. We are by no means against the acts of love, but rather against the massive shift of emphasis between proclamation and social responsibility; because that threatens the gospel to become an *ideological program*. We concede to transformation theologians their legitimate concern that conversion and change of mind as well as following Jesus have also socio-ethical and structure-changing consequences. But we resist the impression given by them, that man would be the “maker” of the kingdom of God and the salvation received would only prove itself by action. Since this would be close to a new “righteousness of works”.

Certainly Christian missions should and can let those people who suffer poverty and other distress, also feel physically through diaconal acts of love that particularly God’s mercy and care is directed toward them. And certainly the kingdom of God can become evident, sometimes emblematically visible through the results of Christian social and diaconal work. However, such positive changes can also disappear again in the vicissitudinous course of world history. Appallingly, this is

visible today in the rapid moral decline in the formerly Christian occident.

Already at the beginning of the modern missionary movement the Lutheran, pietistic and evangelical mission societies knew in their theology and their practical operation the importance of social-ethical action. However, they noticed *Luther’s* doctrine of the two ways of God’s government to the right and left, i.e. church and state, respectively, the Reformed distinction between the two mandates, the cultural and missionary. This kept them safely away from the aberration to mix them with each other and to disburse social welfare as spiritual salvation, as did the enthusiasts at Reformation times.

Under these circumstances, Christian missionaries of all denominations in Africa and Asia have done considerable achievements in the fields of education, medical assistance and economic development. They showed their fruits as well in remarkable social improvements even into governmental organizational structures.

And yet for all of them, the concern to open the way to eternal salvation to lost people through the call to conversion and faith in the gospel stood in first place. Therefore, we must never neglect in the missionary commitment the most important thing we should bring as agents of Jesus to all people: the offer of reconciliation with God because of the atoning death of Jesus on the cross and the assurance of eternal life through his resurrection from the dead.

So the proclamation of the Gospel of salvation in Christ, is and will remain the primary task of mission and evangelism.

4.3 The coming of the kingdom of God in biblical perspective

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul shows his readers how in biblical perspective the coming of the promised messianic king-

dom is realized in *stages* that need to be considered in the Christian life in self-discipline and patience.

Therefore, the ecumenical humanization programs of the 20th century entered an erroneous path. Since in their connection with liberal theology and the demythologization program they did not take seriously the basic statements of the biblical history of salvation. This had to lead to the cooling of the evangelistic zeal. Now today, the same danger also threatens the evangelical mission agencies. This is done, insofar as they have been involved in projects of so-called “*integrated, holistic, incarnational*” or indeed *transformative* mission. For here the efforts toward the physical and social well-being easily marginalize the efforts toward the salvation of men.

This is not a judgment on the good intentions of their advocates. However, we have to take very seriously what Holy Scripture says *negatively* about the sinfulness of the human heart and the destructive power, which is left to the devil, the “*prince of this world*”⁸, provisionally, i.e. to the end of this world age. Therefore a salvation-historically oriented mission needs to emphasize the reality character of biblical prophecy over against the ideological and theological utopias of progress.

According to this the currently still effective influence of the demonic “principalities and powers” will be ultimately defeated only by the returning Christ (2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:20).

Paul describes in Ephesians 6:10-17 his mission as a struggle in which also the church should participate. That is why our participation in God’s trinitarian mission beside the *soteriological*, the task of bringing salvation, also has a *combative side*: it proclaims the victory of Christ over all powers of destruction.⁹

Positively, however, we may rely on the luminous promises of the biblical end-time

prophecy: The Returning One will, after the destruction of the world dominion of the Antichrist on earth, establish his kingdom. Then God the Father will create the new heaven and the new earth from which will have disappeared all suffering and where righteousness will dwell (Rev 21 and 22).

ENDNOTES

- 1 Mt 17,2; Rom 12,2; 2 Cor 3,18.
- 2 Cf. A. Kusch (Hg.), *Der Kampf gegen die weltweite Armut - Aufgabe der Evangelischen Allianz?: zur biblisch-theologischen Begründung der Micha-Initiative* (Bonn: Verl. für Kultur u. Wissenschaft, 2009).
- 3 Lk 24,27.45; cf. Ac 13,47; 2 Cor 1,20.
- 4 1 Cor 12,12; Eph 1,22; 4, 5; 5,23; Col 1,18.
- 5 Ac 14,17; Joh 1,9; Rom 1,19-20.
- 6 Ac 17, 27f.; Is 53,6a.
- 7 2 Cor 4,4; Eph 2,2.
- 8 Joh 12,31; 14,30; 16,11.
- 9 Mt 10,1; Mk 16,17; 2 Cor 10,4.

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