Dr. and Mrs. Eugene Bunkowske have taught Deborah and me more about oratio than what eventually became the topic of my doctoral dissertation—Luther's tentatio and its meaning for the theological formation of pastors and missionaries. Rarely did we pay a visit to Dr. Bunkowske's office or the Bunkowske's home, without taking any concern, whether big or small, to the Lord in prayer. For the prayers themselves, which brought comfort, strength, peace and guidance, we are forever grateful, but we are grateful too for the model of a spirituality that recognizes that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood" (Ephesians 6:12). Going to God in prayer with any and every need, and modeling that with others, is something that we have sought to emulate as God has put us, also, into positions of missionary leadership and influence. It is an honor to dedicate the following article to Dr. and Mrs. Eugene Bunkowske.

Luther's Concept of *Tentatio* and Mission

Douglas L. Rutt

> "*Vivendo, immo moriendo et damnando fit theologus, non intelligendo, legendo aut speculando.*"[1]

With these daring words, Martin Luther unambiguously set forth his understanding of the place of experience in the making of a theologian. For Luther, cogitation, reading and speculating were no substitute for a theological understanding cultivated in a context in which faith and knowledge are put to the test by the realities of life and ministry.

Luther's understanding of what makes a theologian has implications for 21st century theologians as well, for it addresses our tendency to separate theory from practice, theology from ministry, to exchange personal knowledge for secondary knowledge, formation for information, and ideology for practicality.

The context in which mission and ministry takes place are situations in which it is essential to have a clear and comprehensive understanding of how God and his word relate to the concrete realities the missionary faces. The challenges of Christian mission in today's society are seemingly endless and at times appear insurmountable. The expectations that church members have of their ministers can be unrealistic and unreasonable. The obstacles that a missionary faces in today's multicultural, pluralistic and relativistic society are great and many. In the midst of all of this, those who take on the missionary task sometimes create for themselves additional stress by comparing themselves to unrealistic ideals.

An understanding of what Luther meant when he spoke of the necessity of *tentatio* as a formative factor in the life and ministry of the theologian can help today's missionary face the challenges, demands, and trials of ministry of the 21st century. Luther's insights, while produced within a specific historical context of some 500 years ago,[2] have a timeless quality to

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1 "Living, nay, I should say, dying and being damned make a theologian, not understanding, reading or speculating" (Rupp 1953, 102, note 2).

2 Alister McGrath (1990, 73) has emphasized the importance of Luther's context in understanding his theology: "Luther began his theological career at Wittenberg in 1512 steeped in both the methods and the presuppositions of late medieval theology, and, as we shall see, acutely aware of at least some of its problems. It must therefore be regarded as

them because they pertain to basic theological truths as drawn from Scripture, and Luther's wisdom and comments are relevant to today's context in which those engaged in mission are challenged with temptations and buffeting on many fronts.

Martin Luther's way of approaching Scripture had much to do with his own life and faith experience. His personal struggles and self-doubt with regards to both his faith and his vocation were evident in his interpretation of Scripture. Throughout his life, Luther grew in the conviction that "God continued to tempt his chosen ones" (Hovland 1962, 49). Luther's commentaries, lectures and sermons make it quite obvious that as he interpreted Scripture he was engaged in a dynamic way, projecting many of his own trials and doubts into the struggles of the biblical characters. He commented once: "I find in the Scriptures that Christ, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Job, David and countless others have tasted of hell even in this life" (Luther quoted in Hovland 1962, 49). Luther himself felt that he too had tasted of hell in this life. He was one who felt all things with great intensity and reflected deeply upon the meaning of his experiences (Lohse 1986, 24). He believed God was involved in every aspect of life, including not only externals, but also matters of human thought and emotion. Many times his involvement was seen through *tentatio*.

Franz Pieper classifies Luther's *tentatio* as either internal or external. According to this understanding, internal *tentatio* are the doubts and despair over one's salvation which can occur without instigation from the outside. External *tentatio* are those attacks which come from the outside, such as Luther experienced at the hands of the papists (Pieper 1950, 189). Whether *tentatio* is classified as internal or external, the effect is the same. It is ultimately an *internal* struggle caused by the apparent contradiction between the promises of the gospel and the experience of evil and suffering in this world. Roland Bainton provides an apt description of *tentatio* as experienced by Luther: "It may be a trial sent by God to test man, or an assault by the Devil to destroy man. It is all the doubt, turmoil, pang, tremor, panic, despair, desolation, and desperation which invade the spirit of man" (Bainton 1950, 42).[3] While the prevailing piety of Luther's age concerned itself with the temptations on a "lower level," such as sexual temptation, or the temptation to lie or steal, Luther's temptations, as he said, were about "the really knotty problems" (Steinmetz 1986, 2). They were "spiritual temptations, temptations about faith and hope, temptations of worthiness and temptations about predestination" (Vogelsang 1932, 17

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methodologically unacceptable to attempt to study Luther's theological development in isolation from or with purely incidental reference to, this context." It is equally valid, however, to say that the truths that Luther discovered and upon which he expounded have present-day significance.

3Dr. Won Yong Ji describes *Anfechtung* from the perspective of an oriental worldview: "In brief, *Anfechtung* consists of a deep sense of being forsaken and lost similar to the experience of Jesus on the cross. It is the believer's personal encounter with the cross and tribulation in actual life, a feeling of being forsaken by the 'heaven' according to the Oriental concept." Ji then illustrates with the following example: "Admiral Yi Soun-Shin, for example, at the death of his son in a battle, which the Admiral himself commanded, lamented with a deep sense of loss: 'Alas, the heaven has abandoned me. I, not my son, should have died!'" (Ji 1989, 184).

quoted in Steinmetz 1986, 2). Luther described his experience of *tentatio* as if it were an experience of hell itself in his "Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses":[4]

> I myself "knew a man" [2 Cor. 12:2] who claimed that he had often suffered these punishments, in fact, over a very brief period of time. Yet they were so great and so much like hell that no tongue could adequately express them, no pen could describe them, and one who had not himself experienced them could not believe them. And so great were they that, if they had been sustained or had lasted for half an hour, even for one tenth of an hour, he would have perished completely and all of his bones would have been reduced to ashes. At such a time God seems terribly angry, and with him the whole creation. At such a time there is no flight, no comfort, within or without, but all things accuse. At such a time as that the Palmist mourns, "I am cut off from thy sight" [Cf. Ps. 31:22]. In this moment (strange to say) the soul cannot believe that it can ever be redeemed. . . . All that remains is the stark-naked desire for help and a terrible groaning, but it does not know where to turn for help. In this instance the person is stretched out with Christ so that all his bones may be counted, and every corner of the soul is filled with the greatest bitterness, dread, trembling, and sorrow in such a manner that all these last forever (Luther 1957, 129).

These temptations would take Luther by surprise. They were not necessarily related to some recent sin. It would come in a flash when he would recognize and agonize over his own unworthiness before God. Sometimes he would doubt his vocation, or the evangelical theology he was preaching in the face of fierce opposition (Holl 1977, 75). A recurring question that caused him great distress was: "Do you alone know everything? But what if you were wrong, and if you should lead all these people into error and into eternal damnation?" (Luther quoted in Begalke 1982, 5).

Therefore, *tentatio* were the times when Luther, being aware of his unworthiness, saw God as an angry judge, and wanted nothing more than to flee from him. It is apparent that Luther experienced this both with respect to his own personal standing before God (Pinomaa 1963, 96), and in relation to his vocation.

These temptations were much more difficult to deal with than the mere desire of the flesh, and were not overcome nearly as easily, for they have to do with the question of faith. Luther understood the real significance of faith and the difficulty of faith for the human will. Anyone who sees faith as an easy thing certainly does not understand faith in its profundity, as did Luther:

> And so faith is no sleeping thing, as the monks have preached. They laugh at us, as though we knew how to preach no other faith than is preached among the Turks. Such is their blindness, that they think faith is a light thing, and so they consider something else must come along, which is greater than faith alone. But we say, faith is a splendid, honest and busy thing, for it takes the field. You must fight against your own nature, and against all and everything, Poverty, Pestilence,

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4 Although Luther does not specifically state that this is *his* experience of *Anfechtung*, his use of the autobiographical statement of Paul from 2 Corinthians, the style, and his poignant description of inner struggle and despair leave little doubt that he was describing his own experience.

War and Famine which rises against you, and drives you to believe that God has forgotten you (Luther, quoted in Rupp 1953, 114).

For Luther, *tentatio* is a part of faith and an integral part of the Christian life. And when Luther came to a knowledge of God's righteousness by grace through faith for Christ's sake, he was not thereby freed from the experience of *tentatio*. Indeed, Luther would even state that as one's faith increased, so also did the intensity of the *tentatio*. Correspondingly, the greatest concern for the Christian is when there is no *tentatio* (*Nulla tentatio: Omnis tentatio*) (Scaer 1980, 22).

Luther's concept of *tentatio* and its role in the formation of true theologians cannot be separated from his breakthroughs in his understanding of the justice of God and the formulation of his theology of the cross. In medieval theology, the Scriptural phrase "the justice of God" (dikaiosune theou, Romans 1:17) had been incorrectly understood in a secular sense: *Justice*, accordingly, meant that one should receive his just rewards.[5] Obviously, such an understanding provides little comfort for the contrite sinner. This concept was a source of tremendous distress for the Reformer.

When Luther came to the realization that the Hebrew concept behind Paul's terminology, that of *sedek* or, *sedekah* is basically soteriological and deals with God's acts of redemption on behalf of his people, his entire understanding of the nature of God and his relationship with man underwent a drastic paradigm shift. While in the medieval theological system, divine justice was interpreted according to a human/rational understanding of justice, now Luther saw that divine justice cannot be equated with human justice. Divine justice is, as he put it, "that passive justice, with which the merciful God justifies us, by faith, as it is written 'The just lives by faith'" (quoted in Rupp 1953, 122). While this dramatic realization opened up the true depth and meaning of God's mercy for Luther, it also presented a paradox—the paradox of Luther's theology of the cross.

Luther's emerging theology of the cross, and the paradox it presents, is seen in the first twenty-eight theses of the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518. These theses are directed against Scholastic theology, which Luther calls a "theology of glory." Of particular importance in relation to the concept of *tentatio* are theses 18 through 22:

> 18. It is certain that man ought wholly to despair of himself so that he may become fit to receive the grace of Christ.
>
> 19. He is not worth calling a theologian who seeks to interpret "the invisible things of God" on the basis of the things, which have been created.
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> 20. But he is worth calling a theologian who understands the visible and hinder parts of God to mean the passion and the cross.
>
> 21. The theologian of glory says bad is good and good is bad. The theologian of the cross says what is in fact the truth (i.e., calls them by their proper name).
>
> 22. The sort of wisdom which understands the invisible things of God as known from doing good works simply inflates a man, and renders him both blind and hard (Luther 1962, 277-278).

5As McGrath points out, this is a good example of how the common meaning associated with a term is projected into the original, biblical meaning, thus distorting it. The influence of concepts from Roman culture and law, such as that of *justice*, caused the biblical meaning of the term to be misunderstood (McGrath 1990, 101).

According to Luther's view, God is revealed in the things that men regard as the very antithesis of Deity; that is, in weakness, humility and suffering. Luther illustrates this with an episode from John 14, in which he identifies Philip as a theologian of glory when he asks Jesus to show him the Father. Luther says: "He [Christ] took him with his high-flying ideas of seeking God somewhere else and led Philip right back to himself, saying, 'Philip, whosoever sees me sees my Father as well'" (Luther 1962, 291). The *locus* of the knowledge of God, therefore, is Christ, and him crucified. In the cross of Christ God is revealed, yet paradoxically hidden. In other words, God is hidden in suffering and death, the very things that are the antithesis of deity.

Luther spoke, in thesis 18, of the fact that man should despair of himself in order to receive the grace of God. He repeated this theme often as fundamental to a proper understanding of the meaning of God's grace (McGrath 1990, 151). Thesis 22 expresses the danger of the pride intrinsic to a theology of glory: One becomes blinded and his heart hardened to the true knowledge of God. To explain the role of *tentatio* in the face of such a theology, Luther employed the concept of the *opus alienum Dei* in tension with God's *opus proprium*. Typically these concepts are understood in the context of the Law/Gospel dialectic.[6] Luther, however, also saw these aspects of God's work as operative in the suffering and struggles of the believer in this life. In other words, God uses suffering for the good of the believer; indeed, God is hidden in such suffering. This idea runs contrary to the wisdom of the world, which seeks God in outward, visible displays of power and glory. But for the good of the believer, God performs his *opus alienum* in order to carry out his *opus proprium* (Kadai 1967, 259). In his explanation of Thesis 21 of the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther states:

> But God is not to be found except in sufferings and in the cross as has been stated already. Thus the friends of the cross say that the cross is good and that works are evil, because through the cross works are destroyed and the old Adam, who is rather inclined to be made stronger by good works, is crucified. For it is impossible for a man not to be inflated by his own good works unless the experience of suffering and evil, having previously taken all the spirit out of him and broken him, has taught him that he is nothing and his works are not his own but God's (Luther 1962, 291-292).

There is, therefore, a functionally practical purpose to the way God reveals himself, for the suffering (or *tentatio*) of Christ, to which the believer also, in a certain sense, is subject, is the avenue to deepened faith in and dependence upon God, which are requisites for theological formation, which, in turn, is necessary for the true missionary. Suffering and evil in this world are not merely a bothersome fact of life in a fallen world, but rather are the source of tremendous good, for in such things God is hidden. Luther, therefore, regarded *tentatio* as coming from God himself. Even if Satan is seen as the instigator of *tentatio*, he carries out his work as an instrument of God to accomplish God's *opus alienum* on God's behalf (McGrath 1990, 151).

6Luther uses this analogy in thesis 16 of the *Heidelberg Disputation*, when he says: "Thus, to those who are humble after this fashion God gives grace, and he who is humbled is exalted. The law humbles us, grace exalts us. The law works fear and wrath, grace works hope and mercy. Through the law comes the knowledge of sin. Through the knowledge of sin comes humility, and through humility grace is acquired. In this way, when God makes a man a sinner that he may make him righteous, God is bringing in his strange work that he may in the end bring in his proper work" (Luther 1962, 289).

When the sinner finds himself driven to despair, loses all confidence in himself, and considers himself to be damned under the wrath of God, he then is ready to receive the blessings of the proper work of God. Luther said that *tentatio,* "in so far as it takes everything away from us, leaves us nothing but God: it cannot take God away from us, and actually brings him closer to us" (Quoted in McGrath 1990, 152).

It is precisely in relation to these factors that Luther drew the connection between the experience of *tentatio* and the making of a theologian. Fundamental to understanding this relationship between *tentatio* and the making of a "theologian" is the fact that Luther's theology was intensely practical.[7] Indeed, it was impossible for the Reformer to divorce theory from practice. He criticized speculative theology for its impotence to arrive at a true knowledge of God. According to Luther, it is impossible to know God as he really is by theorizing or speculating: "The theology which is speculative, which, forgetting itself, soars upward into matters divine, is looking for the fall of Satan--and finds it" (Luther 1959, 1364).

Heino Kadai called Luther's way to true knowledge of God the "Paradox of the knowledge of God." He said, summarizing Luther, "The real knowledge of God, unlike metaphysical speculation, one must gain in a 'practical' manner. To know God, one must learn to understand his ways, His masks, His Gospel, His cross" (Kadai 1967, 252).

It is in light of these considerations that Luther stipulates the factors that work in a dynamic, interactive way to make the true theologian: *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*. His point is to emphasize that theological formation is not a matter of speculation or mere academic study. It requires the personal engagement of the theologian who experiences first-hand the meaning of God's revelation. Theology, therefore, and the task of the theologian is not a "neutral discipline like geometry, which can be studied dispassionately in abstraction from the self and its concerns" (Steinmetz 1986, 26). In other words, theology cannot be studied or understood in abstract, apart from the faith/life dialectic.

Luther's classic three-fold formula for the study of theology articulates the experiential dimension to theological study and true understanding of God. It is in his "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of his German Writings," where he sets forth most clearly the three rules for theological study.

The first step, according to Luther, is *oratio*: prayer. In this context Luther does not develop a complete theology of prayer. His principal point is that God is the primary teacher in the study of theology. Indeed, in the paragraph on *oratio*, he talks mainly of Scripture and one's attitude as he approaches Scripture. Prayer is an expression of humility before God. It recognizes that God the Holy Spirit is ultimately the true teacher of theology. One prays to God in

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7When Luther and the orthodox fathers speak of the "practical" nature of theology, they are not referring to specific ministry skills, *per se*. Theology is practical in that it is something that has direct, practical application and is of immediate value. Theology is not concerned with curiosities or speculation regarding unknowable things, but rather with the proper application of the Law and Gospel to the lives of individuals for their salvation. Preus summarizes the teaching of Calov on the practical nature of theology: "All theology is for concrete living" (Preus 1970, 192-194). Robert Kelly echoes this understanding of theology's practicality: "A practical theology is not a theology that is up on the latest fad, but a theology that enables people to hear the Gospel and the call to discipleship in the midst of concrete life situations" (Kelly 1993, 25).

acknowledgment that he brings nothing to the task of understanding the true meaning of Scripture. One should despise his pride, learning and reason, and genuinely open himself up to the revelation of God. "Thus you see how David keeps praying in the above-mentioned Psalm [119], 'Teach me, Lord, instruct me, lead me, show me,' and many more words like these' (Luther 1960, 286).

The second facet of Luther's methodology for the study of theology, *meditatio*, is also tied intimately to Scripture. *Meditatio* must not be understood in a modern sense, such as in "transcendental meditation," nor should it be understood in the sense of the *contemplatio* of medieval monasticism (Kelly 1993, 13-14). *Meditatio*, for Luther, essentially meant study—arduous study—of Scripture. One should not be content with a mere reading once through, but should read and re-read, read aloud, and memorize the words of Scripture, "for God will not give you his Spirit without the external Word; so take your cue from that. His command to write, preach, read, hear, sing, speak, etc., outwardly was not given in vain" (Luther 1960, 287).

However, the formation of the theologian—the acquisition of true theological knowledge—cannot be accounted for through *oratio* and *meditatio* alone. The third rule, *tentatio*, is an important, theologically profound, dimension to the process of theological formation. It is in the realm of the theologian's experience of *tentatio* that he or she apprehends and internalizes the truths that have been learned cognitively. Luther said: "I did not learn my theology at one time, but I had to meditate deeper and deeper. Then my *tentatio* carried me thither. For this cannot be acquired without experience" (Luther, quoted in Bornkamm 1958, 73).

Luther's three components or dimensions of theological study should always be seen in continuous, dynamic interaction. They cannot be viewed in isolation, one from the others, for they all work together to create true theological knowledge, what the old theologians called *habitus*. If any one of the three parts is missing the process of theological formation is frustrated. It is the dynamic tension between the three that produces formation. *Oratio* is the recognition on the part of the theologian that he or she brings nothing of his or her own to the task. Prayer is not an escapist practice, but involves a real wrestling with the paradox of the cross. It is carried out in close relationship with *tentatio* and *meditatio*. Indeed, it is the arena for bringing the two into close contact, and by God's grace, apprehending the depth of his wisdom. *Meditatio* is the search of God's word for theological insight and knowledge, always done in conversation with *oratio* and *tentatio*. It is in *tentatio*, however, the experience of suffering and testing of what God's word says, where formation is cultivated and one becomes a capable missionary/theologian. *Tentatio* drives the missionary back to God's word, but with renewed conviction regarding his or her inability to reconcile the contradiction between one's experience and God's promises. The theologian then begins to see that true knowledge of God is to be found in the cross and not in human wisdom or power. *Tentatio* is the way God turns a theologian of glory into a theologian of the cross, the necessary process for missionary formation.

In this regard, Luther actually credits his adversaries with helping in his theological understanding:

> I myself am deeply indebted to my papists that through the devil's raging they have beaten, oppressed, and distressed me so much. That is to say, they have made a fairly good theologian of me, which I would not have become otherwise.

> And I heartily grant them what they have won in return for making this of me, honor, victory, and triumph, for that's the way they wanted it (Luther 1960, 287).[8]

It is clear, therefore, that Luther saw the experience of *tentatio* as fundamental to theological formation, without which, the theologian will not gain a profound appreciation for the power of the gospel, for it is in *tentatio* that the power of the gospel is experienced. "It is a bridge that brings the realities of revelation from the Biblical history into the personal life of the Christian" (Scaer 1980, 24).

While the first two of Luther's three fundamental rules for the study of theology seem to be well understood in this day, the reality of *tentatio*, as a hermeneutic for theological understanding, mission and ministry, has not been as specifically recognized or accounted for. Often it is believed, or at least practiced, that *oratio* is the primary *locus* of theological formation.[9] The renewed fascination with liturgical ceremonialism is an example of that belief. As demonstrated from the perspective of the writings Martin Luther (and Paul, too, for that matter), however, one sees that *tentatio* is of paramount importance. Robert Kelly said, regarding this aspect of theological formation:

> The most crucial element in the formation of theologians is *tentatio*, the cross of Christ experienced as *Anfechtung. . . . Becoming a theologian is arduous* not only liturgically and academically, but *especially personally*. The call to preach and teach the Gospel is a literal call to take up the pain of the crucifixion" (Kelly 1993, 17-18, italics added).

In Luther's methodology for theological study, his preoccupation with the ontological aspects are quite evident. While he does not deny the importance of cognitive knowledge, Luther's entire treatment is aimed at the formation of an *attitude* toward God's revelation, what has been called "a teachable spirit," more than the acquisition of certain facts. This is not to say that *meditatio* was not of great importance for Luther. His exhortation on the matter as well as his own scholarship testify to the importance he placed upon serious, academic study. The theologian, however, requires more if he or she is to carry out his or her task faithfully. Theological understanding and missionary competence requires the experience of God "who raises from the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9).

One of Luther's most famous statements regarding the importance of *tentatio* in theological understanding reflects this experiential dimension: "*Vivendo, immo moriendo et damnando fit theologus, non intelligendo, legendo aut speculando*" (Living, nay, I should say, dying and being damned make a theologian, not understanding, reading or speculating) (Rupp 1953, 102, note 2). It is through the experience of death, in a sense, and being damned, that one

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8It is interesting to note that Luther was fifty-six years of age when he penned these comments. No doubt he did not always see the attacks of the papists in such a positive light. Indeed, for *Anfechtung* to be *Anfechtung*, it is not normally seen in such a positive way during its experience. The arena for growth is precisely the very real temptation that it provokes.

9Alan E. Lewis in his fine article "The Makings of a Theologian," displays a keen awareness of the place of the cross in theological formation, however he asserts that the cross can be experienced "only metaphorically" in *oratio* (Lewis 1994, 31).

gains a more profound knowledge of God and his word. This is essential to theological formation and understanding of Scripture.[10]

True theology, then, requires engagement. It is learned and carried out in a context of *praxis* in the concrete situations of life, especially as those situations impinge upon the life of the missionary and those to whom he or she announces the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ. When the missionary learns for himself or herself the power of the gospel, he or she is then able to communicate that power to those within the missionary's realm of influence. This was, perhaps, the great difference between the theology of Luther and that of Erasmus. Luther's theology is a living, dynamic theology, which the "armchair theology" of Erasmus, as Gordon Rupp calls it, is not. Significant is the fact that Luther had the responsibility for the care of souls, while Erasmus never did. As Rupp says, Erasmus "did not understand the great heights and depths of the Christian faith: what it meant, with Luther and Augustine, to peer steeply down into the nauseating 'abyss of the human conscience,' with Luther and Bunyan to tremble in the Valley of Humiliation, and to weep upon the Delectable Mountains at the brave prospect of distant Zion" (Rupp 1953, 285).

The *tentatio* that came upon Luther as he lived a Christian existence in its concrete reality, with all the flaming darts of Satan, and practiced the ministry in a context of unrest and strife, were what taught Luther his theology. They taught him humility, and they taught him the depth of God's grace in Christ Jesus. They taught him the knowledge of God, who works and hides himself in strange ways, but who also restores, renews and empowers. Luther's *tentatio* also taught him to communicate the message of God's grace to others in a way that was faithful, credible and meaningful. Only as one learns to reflect theologically on his experience, especially the experience of *tentatio*, will that aptitude be acquired. Luther's last written words attest to the place of experience in theological formation:

> Nobody can understand Virgil who has not been a shepherd or a farmer for five years . . . nobody can understand Cicero who has not been a politician for twenty years . . . nobody can understand the Scriptures who has not looked after a congregation for a hundred years. We're beggars, that's the truth (Quoted in Rupp 1953, 285).

If one accepts that what Luther believed and taught regarding the profound significance of what he called *tentatio* in the life and ministry of the theologian, it is easy to see that there are great implications for missionary service. The study of contemporary and confessional literature makes it clear that the reality of *tentatio* in ministry and mission needs to be understood as a crucial factor which leads to a more credible and powerful witness

What is the significance in today's context for those who are faced with the reality of ministry in a fallen, corrupted, hostile world?

To understand the role and significance of *tentatio* in one's own life, ministry and mission, one must recognize three emphases, handed down to by the Lutheran fathers, of the Lutheran understanding of the nature of theology, and what it means to "do theology," that is, carry out mission and ministry. First, the reformers emphasized the practical nature of theology.

10Luther is quoted as once having said: "If I were to live long enough I would write a book about *Anfechtung* without which nobody can understand the Scriptures or know the fear and love of God, nay, he cannot know what the Spirit is" (Luther, quoted in Rupp 1953, 106, note 4).

Theology that was not practical, that is, that did not have as its goal the application of God's word to the lives of people in their concrete situations, for their salvation, was no theology at all. In contrast, the Roman and Reformed theologians asserted that there were some points of theology that were theoretical, i.e., only to be recognized as true, but had no practical implication. To this the Lutherans were quick to answer that while some things appeared to be only theoretical, they are indeed very practical, that is, they "are revealed for the sake of action" (Preus 1970, 199).

The second fundamental aspect of the nature of theology according to the Lutheran fathers is that it involves what they called a *habitus* on the part of the theologian. The word *habitus* should not be mistaken for the English word "habit." The Latin term comes from an Aristotelian category described by the Greek word *echein*, that is, to have or possess something. Theological *habitus*, therefore, means that the true theologian, that is missionary, possesses a certain ontological disposition and aptitude that reaches into his or her character, even one's "soul" (Fritz 1932, 2). In other words, theology is more than mere knowledge, as Martin Chemnitz expressed it: "theology consists more in a disposition {*affectu*} than in mere knowledge" (quoted in Preus 1970, 195).

These two aspects of theological prolegomena were integrated in a way that brought out the fundamentally missiological nature of theology, as demonstrated by the following statement of Calov:

> Theologians have as their aim not mere knowledge, but also practical application {*praxis*} and perseverance unto salvation. *Teachers and ministers in the church carry on their activity, or at least they ought to do so, in order to bring men to everlasting salvation.* Thus, their work centers in saving men, and for this reason they are called saviors in the sense that they are ministers of salvation (Acts 11:14; 1 Cor. 9:22; 1 Tim. 4:16) . . . . Hence . . . *it is the business of the theologian and teacher to bring spiritual healing to others*." (quoted in Preus 1970, 192-193).

According to this understanding of the nature of theology, one can safely conclude that theology is essentially missiological; that is, it always reaches outward, beyond itself. The true theologian always projects beyond himself or herself to bring salvation to others. Only in so far as one does so is one doing theology. Therefore theology is also called a *habitus practicus* (Fritz 1932, 2), something that one "has" for the sake of *praxis*.

Luther would say that *tentatio* is the arena, then, where that *habitus practicus* is formed. Through *tentatio* the theologian's comprehension of the message of the gospel is deepened and one becomes wiser in one's application of theological truth to one's own life, as well as to the lives of those to whom one ministers. Regarding *tentatio* Luther said: "This is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's Word is: it is wisdom beyond all wisdom" (Luther, quoted in Ebeling 1978, 168).

The suffering, which is experienced for the sake of the gospel, has a divine, missiological purpose--the extension of the kingdom. This truth, while perhaps understood cognitively, is comprehended in all its depth only when one, through experience, has found it to be so.

If missionaries can, with Luther, and with other great people of faith, such as the apostle Paul, begin to see the reality of all the pain, doubt, trouble, trials and challenges that are faced in mission from a theological perspective, as God forming, testing, and educating, in short, making true theologians of the cross, they will be able to also face those things with greater conviction

and joy in ministry, and preaching, teaching and giving witness will be done with greater faithfulness, meaning and power.

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