Every fall term here at Asbury Theological Seminary our doctoral students and faculty participate in an inter-disciplinary Post Graduate Colloquium. Themes of the colloquium change from year to year, but Wesleyan studies, biblical studies, and mission studies all play a large role, since our doctoral programs focus on that triumvirate of scholarly foci.

This year the theme focused on another triumvirate: the Bible, Theology, and Missions. It might be accurate to say that everything we do here at Asbury includes all three: The Bible as the foundation of our faith, theology as our Holy Spirit-directed reading of the scriptures, and mission as the everyday outworking of our commitments to bear witness to the truth of Jesus Christ. But it is especially true of our graduate programs—missions without the Bible and theology is unguided human activity; the Bible without theology and missions remains misunderstood and unpracticed truth; and theology without biblical roots and missional fruit come across as the foolishness of the Greeks.

Lawson Stone, professor of Old Testament, presented a keynote paper that “explores the role of biblical exegesis in the task of Christian theology and in the contemporary global mission of the church from the perspective of an Old Testament scholar.” In this essay, Stone argues that the expansion of the church in its early centuries was energized by “serious biblical study.” The resulting theologies and mission efforts then reflexively helped shape further biblical study and exegesis in an ongoing, fruitful interaction among the three dimensions of bible, theology, and mission.

Mark Awabdy, a biblical studies doctoral student, argues in his essay that revisiting the interpretation of the Hebrew phrase “resident alien” in Leviticus has the potential to reshape the way we do mission to populations today that we might consider similar to that sociological category. As such, Awabdy’s study is a test case of how biblical studies, in this case a proper, precise understanding of a biblical word, can and should readily influence the doing of theology and the practice of mission. This is not, Awabdy argues, idle scholarship, but immediate and important mission work of the highest order. Indeed, some of the most significant unreached people groups such as Muslims, might be redefined by the argument concerning “non-indigenous residents” in this paper.
Brian Ebel, a systematic theology doctoral student, adds some historical perspective to the mix of our theme. He highlights Wolfhart Pannenberg’s understanding of the “retroactive significance of the resurrection” as a way of understanding how important biblical hermeneutic principles. As Ebel states it, “the manner in which Jesus Christ is established to be the Messiah of Israel, united to God, and the reconciler of humanity to God” was the event of resurrection as retroactively understood by the church. “It is by means of his resurrection from the dead that the incarnation and cross are established.”

Kevin Lines, an intercultural studies doctoral student, draws a distinction between biblical hermeneutics and biblical translation—or rather shows their association one to the other. Through biblical translation, new insights into scriptural passages come to light from the understandings of the very people for whom the translation has been prepared. This, in turn, makes future translations of the Bible, to both the same and different people groups, richer and deeper and more faithful to what God intends for the whole world.

Together this package of essays raises important questions that pertain to biblical studies, theology and mission which are the very stuff of what is happening to the global church in our day and age.

Another of our Asbury students gives comment and critique of a recent essay in the Asbury Journal by Nathan Crawford, with both essays offering important insights on how recent insights from the neurosciences can be brought into conversation with the soteriological insights of Wesleyan theology.

Finally, we have included in this issue an address from the president of Asbury Theological Seminary, Timothy Tennent, that brings into sharper relief the implications of globalization on the global mission of the church, showing that a Wesleyan understanding of holiness is key to energizing the mission movements of today.

—Terry C. Muck

Editor, The Asbury Journal