Historic Models of Teaching Christian Mission:
Case Studies Informing an Age of World Christianity

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Introduction

Christian higher education today occurs within a global context. Effective mission studies will recognize today’s age of world Christianity within its educational goals. Instructors should teach missions accordingly, using appropriate andragogical strategies. If the first expansion of the Christian faith spread across Europe and then from the continent towards the Global South, are we teaching mission in western colleges, universities, and seminaries aware of this explosion of Christianity? Are the global experiences that have shaped the contours of Christianity in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Oceania appreciated in our teaching institutions in North America? Can we learn lessons from these cross-cultural pathfinders in order to adapt resources for teaching mission in our age of world Christianity? I believe that there are historic mission movements that immersed themselves in a global vision that do provide models for teaching contemporary intercultural studies. We should allow these past paradigms to inform our approach to mission studies today, and select case studies that best promote practices of world missions.

In this paper, I will consider six case studies of educational institutions within five movements of Christian expansion from post-apostolic times to the beginning of modern missions. Because of their far-reaching influence on world Christianity, I will examine the Church of the East, Celtic Christianity, the Franciscan Friars Minor, the Reformation, and the modern mission platform of Pietism. Drawing from these findings, my essay will explain observable patterns across the movements, including the holistic training of students together with the emphasis of theology and languages. Historic perspectives of God’s past work through educational institutions can guide us toward a Spirit-inspired twenty-first century of teaching Christian mission in an age of world Christianity.

Church of the East Mission Education

The Church of the East has been described as “the most missionary church that the world has ever seen,” providing the earliest missionary thrust to the east into Asia (Stewart, 1928: 141). This movement spread beyond the borders of the Roman Empire from the third to the fourteenth centuries across Persia and Mesopotamia to Arabia, India, central Asia, Siberia, China, and Japan. One of the key reasons for this growth of Christianity was the use of training schools. After the Council of Ephesus in 431, a number of the Eastern bishops rejected the decision to anathematize Nestorius, and subsequently formed a separate church movement.
Its center was a school of theology developed in Edessa, Upper Mesopotamia at the end of the second century and expanded under Ibas (bishop of Edessa, c. 435-57), a friend of Nestorius. The school's curriculum majored in theology, philosophy, languages, and music.

In 489, the Christian theological and scientific center in Edessa was closed by the Byzantine emperor Zeno because of its Nestorian teachings. Students and teachers who believed in the claims of Nestorius transferred to the School of Nisibis (present-day Turkey), under the supervision of Barsauma, a pupil of Ibas. This led to a wave of Nestorian immigration into the Persian Empire. At Nisibis Church of the East scholars together with Hellenistic philosophers banished from Athens by Justinian in 529, carried out important research in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and theology (Cochrane, 2014: 80-82).

Another significant educational center was at Gundeshapur (present-day Iran). Under the rule of Khosrau I (531-579), the Sasanid emperor, the city offered training in medicine, philosophy, mathematics, science, and theology. Before 376, the Church of the East had established a monastery in Gundeshapur, yet under Khosrau I, the city became famed for its theological school. During the sixth century, Gundeshapur gave refuge to Greek philosophers and Syriac-speaking Nestorian Christians fleeing religious persecution by the Byzantine Empire. Emperor Khosrau I commissioned the refugees to translate Greek and Syriac texts on medicine, astronomy, and philosophy into Pahlavi, an exclusively written form of various Middle Iranian languages.

Gundeshapur was the most important medical center of the ancient world during the sixth and seventh centuries. Even though almost all the physicians of the medical academy were Persians, they wrote their treatises in Syriac since medicine had an established tradition in this dialect of Middle Aramaic that became a major literary language throughout the Middle East from the fourth to the eighth centuries. Additionally, qualified physicians systemized and transferred medical practices to their students who worked under supervisors in hospitals, and were required to pass exams in order to practice as accredited Gundeshapur medical doctors (Lewis, 2015: 1-10).

Khosrau I, furthermore, invited Indian and Chinese scholars to Gundeshapur who translated Indian texts on astronomy, astrology, mathematics, and medicine and Chinese texts on herbal medicine and religion. With educational centers in Nisibis and Gundeshapur, the Church of the East began to branch out beyond the Persian Sasanian Empire. For five hundred years, these educational institutes continued as major centers of theological and scientific education (Moffett, 1982: 248; Winkler, 2003: 26).
The Persian curriculum focused on instructing people in biblical understanding. Guided by its most famous teacher, Narsai of Nisibis in the fifth century, the teaching institutes combined the doctrine of Christ’s salvation with a universal calling modeled after Peter, Paul, and Jesus. Narsai was one of the most important Syriac poet-theologians whose poetic approach revealed the deep mysteries of the Christian faith. At the school in Nisibis, Syrian theology emphasized sharing the gospel to all peoples, which made it as much a training ground for missions as for the priesthood. A person needed to be a missionary to follow in the footsteps of Christ (Philip, 1996: 513-514, 518). Followers submitted to austere rules of spiritual discipline, and performed manual labor to support their educational outlay. A “son of the covenant” was a student who took an oath regarding celibacy, monastic life, and community sharing, whereby a person’s responsibility was as serious as receiving God’s grace (Jenkins, 2008: 77).

A number of the early writings in Edessa show the missional thinking of the education centers. Tradition proposed that the apostle Thomas sent Thaddaeus to share the gospel to the people of Syria. Consequently, the story of Thomas’ journey to India, _The Acts of Thomas_, was widely read, which indicates, “Edessa’s heroes were missionaries” (Moffett, 1975: 419). Even though the work was full of exaggerated miracles, the gospel message was central. The book begins, “And when all the apostles had been for a time in Jerusalem . . . they divided the countries among them, in order that each one of them might preach . . . in the place to which the Lord sent him. And India fell by lot and division to Judas Thomas the apostle” (Klijn, 1962: 65).

Another writing that shows the mission theology of the Eastern Church was _The Odes of Solomon_. Written in Syriac at Edessa during the first century, this Christian hymn was influential in Syrian Christology. Portrayed as the Savior of the world, Christ gathered the nations. In _Ode 10_ Christ proclaims, “I took courage and became strong and captured the world, and it became mine for the glory of the Most High and of God my Father. And the Gentiles who had been dispersed were gathered together” (Charlesworth, 1977: 48). Christ saves all people and the knowledge of the Lord flows like a river. “For there went forth a stream and it became a river great and broad . . . for it spread over the surface of all the earth and it filled everything. Then all the thirsty upon the earth drank. . . . Blessed, therefore, are the ministers of that drink” (_Ode 6_, Charlesworth, 1977: 30).

The training schools of eastern Christianity not only provided biblical education for the laity, but also for the leaders of their monastic communities. After prescribed study, monks could become teachers at the monasteries, or live as anchorites. Historians now consider that monasticism first started in Syria and Persia, independent of any Egyptian stimulus. Although Church of the East monasteries were similar to those of Egypt and southern Europe, there were differences with respect to education and mission (Philip, 1996: 505).
Beginning in the third century, the eastern monastic network grew throughout Persia and Central Asia, producing hundreds of celibate missionaries who proclaimed the good news of Christ, together with a love of Scripture, education, and mission. These monasteries were not only centers of prayer, worship, copying Scripture, and missionary activity, but also functioned as schools, inns, and medical facilities. John Stewart describes the monks as “men of great faith, mighty in Scriptures, large portions of which they knew by heart, fervent in prayer, gentle and humble in manner, and full of love to God on the one hand, and love to their neighbor and all mankind on the other” (1928: 47).

Celtic Mission Education

Parallel to the early monastic tradition of the Church of the East was the ascetic Christian movement of Ireland. Over the course of 800 years, thousands of Celtic men and women traveled across Scotland, England, and throughout Europe bringing the good news of Jesus to peoples ravaged by paganism and violence. They also transformed societies by establishing monastic centers of mission and education. Patrick of the early fourth century was the first major figure of missions in Ireland: a man who founded numerous monasteries, ordained priests, brought literacy, eradicated slavery, and cared for the poor. Patrick and his followers formed the Irish monasteries as centers of community, education, and missionary outreach.

In these monastic communities, the Celts did not separate the sacred and the secular since they were holistic in their ordered life of prayer, work, worship, and study. As men and women came and dedicated themselves to service, they would build a “church, refectory, kitchen, guesthouse, library, and workshops” (McNeill, 1974: 75). Within these committed communities that attracted scholars from Britain and the rest of Europe, the students were educated in reading and writing Latin (McNeill, 1974: 120). Some of the Irish monasteries, such as Clonard (founded in 520), were well known for their scholarship, and attracted pupils from as far away as Asia (Zimmer, 1969: 45-46). Many of the societies had extensive manuscript collections of classical literature, writings of the early church fathers, and the New Testament. The transcription of these works was of prime importance to the Irish monasteries from the sixth century (Ryan, 1972: 380).

Celtic monasticism was responsible for not only influencing Irish people to follow Christ, but also the inhabitants of England, Scotland, and parts of Europe such as Germany, Holland, and Italy. Ireland—this small nation that had only recently accepted Christianity—became the new mission center, flooding Europe with God’s word. Monks left their Irish monastic schools and planted monasteries outside their homeland to propagate their faith and learning. Seeking favor with local rulers, they cooperated with secular authorities wherever possible, even while
keeping their freedom of opinion. They not only preached the gospel, but also spread an understanding of the creative arts, languages, history, and the sciences; relaying the foundations of western culture after they were destroyed by the invasions of the northern tribes.

After Patrick, Columba became one of the first notable Irish missionaries to preach outside his country. He had established forty monasteries in Ireland, such as those at Derry, Durrow, and Kells before he led a team of twelve monks to the island of Iona off the west coast of Scotland in 563. Iona became a major missionary educational center, resulting in the establishment of twenty three monasteries in Scotland and thirty eight in England by the time of Columba’s death in 597 (Zimmer, 1969: 19-20).

Another remarkable Irish monk that wandered beyond his homeland was Columban. With his twelve Irish monks, Columban traveled to Brittany around 590, and preached to the populace with such success that Sigebert, the local king, gave them land to build a monastery. The monastery at Luxeuil became a center of Christian learning and western culture where scholars and artisans worked side-by-side. For Columban, the teaching of the Christian worldview included the secular sciences, as well as theological subjects. Unfortunately, King Sigebert was offended by the Irish monk’s preaching against immorality, and forced him to leave Luxeuil, as well as the other monasteries he had founded at Burgundy and Fontaines in Gaul. In spite of Columban’s banishment, monks from Luxeuil established another fifty three monasteries, and influenced the establishment of two hundred more. Jonas, Columban’s biographer, claims that 620 French missionaries left Luxeuil in one generation alone, establishing monasteries throughout France, Switzerland, and Italy.

After Columban’s dismissal from Luxeuil, he traveled further into the European continent, where he established a monastery that dominated the European intellectual scene for nearly a thousand years. Bobbio, in northern Italy, became a center of education with an international reputation due to the work of the Irish monks. At Bobbio, scholars devoted themselves to study, writing, and teaching in both the spiritual and natural domains. They studied doctrine and creeds, and memorized Scripture, while learning the fundamentals of Latin grammar. In addition, these monks also considered rhetoric, classical writings (such as Virgil, Homer, and Ambrose), mathematics, music, and astronomy. The monastery became an academy of theologians, historians, artists, poets, and musicians—living in ascetic devotion to God.

The abbey of Saint Gall (St. Gallen in present-day Switzerland), the sister monastery to Bobbio, was described by J. M. Clark as being full of both scholarly and cultural activities. Established by Gall, a disciple of Columban, this monastery became the intellectual center of Germany by 610, and remained so for three hundred years. The monks wrote, copied, and illuminated books in the scriptorium
Columba and Columban, as well as those who followed them, were only the first of thousands of Irish missionaries who came to educate Europe. By the beginning of the seventh century, Irish monks were the preeminent scholars and educators on the continent. From Britain and Germany to northern Italy, they trained national leaders, developed the educational systems, and spread the Christian message to faraway places such as Iceland, Greenland, and Russia. Slowly and steadily, the monks and their students took dominion over the scholarship of Europe, as well as the leadership structure of the Catholic church. The majority of church leaders during the Early Middle Ages (c. 5th-10th centuries) were Irish monks, including a number of bishops in Austria, France, and Gaul. By the end of the seventh century, ninety four monasteries in Europe had sprung into existence directly attributed to the Irish invasion.

Franciscan Mission Education

Echoing the monasticism of Celtic Christianity and the Church of the East, the educational efforts of the early mendicant Franciscans set the stage for an explosion of Catholic mission throughout the thirteenth century. Ramon Llull followed in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi, dedicating his life to bring Muslim heretics to Christ by way of his apologetic writings, missionary training colleges, and willingness to embrace martyrdom. He endeavored to establish monasteries where monks could learn the languages of non-believing peoples, and receive appropriate instruction to preach the gospel.

For Llull, missionary education was essential in reaching the unbeliever, especially training in languages, theology, geography, and ethnography. His desire was to create monasteries in order to teach monks and laity Arabic, Hebrew, and other languages of non-Christians to share “the holy truth of the Catholic faith, which is that of Christ.” In *Felix, the Book of Wonders*, Llull wrote that he hoped that God would send apostles who knew science and languages to convert unbelievers, and set an example to the church (Llull, 1985b: 781).

After Llull’s conversion in 1263, he spent the next nine years in Majorca studying contemporary sciences, Latin, and Arabic (from a Muslim slave), as well as Christian, Islamic, and Jewish theologies and philosophies. Despite these extensive
preparations, he struggled with feelings of inadequacy as he pursued knowledge of the Arabic language (Llull, 1985a: 15-17). The Catalan influence in southwestern Europe, together with Llull’s aristocratic connections, however, enhanced his emergence as a respected scholar and prolific writer in interdisciplinary fields, and enabled him to gain access to ecclesiastical leaders and monarchs.

The prevailing European attitude to Mohammedanism (Islam) during the Middle Ages was one of “gross ignorance and great hatred,” with violence and torture considered justifiable in the spread and defense of Christianity (Zwemer, 1902: 50). In contrast, Llull believed that the first attempts to convert the Muslim nonbeliever should be of love and compassion, and called himself the procurator infidelium [“advocate of nonbelievers”] (Lorenz, 1985: 20). In his Book of Contemplations, he avowed, “Wherefore, it appears to me, O Lord, that the conquest of that sacred land [Palestine] will not be achieved other than as Thou [Christ] and Thy apostles undertook to accomplish it, by love, and prayer, and the shedding of tears as well as blood” (Mackensen, 1920: 29; Peers, 1969: 30-31). In other words, attempts at Muslim conversion should be through apologetics and dialogue by using principles common to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

In 1276, Llull founded his first missionary training school, Trinity College at Miramar, Majorca through the assistance of James II of Majorca, and the support of John XXI, the Portuguese Pope. There he established a curriculum for thirteen Franciscans in the liberal arts, theology, oriental languages, and Islamic doctrines, as well as his own teachings. The Catalan missionary tried to communicate the Gospel in a way that was most appropriate to his audience.

For instance, Llull wrote his novel, Libre de Blanquerna, in Catalan for Catalanians, incorporating narrative with theology and philosophy. The Book of Contemplation, though, he first composed in Arabic for the Muslim world, and later translated it into Catalan. He not only used the vernacular in written communication (Arabic, Catalan, and Latin; his writings were also translated into French and Italian), but also sought to use a commonality of thought in philosophic style and content. By way of illustration, Llull styled his work, The Book of the Lover and the Beloved, after the manner of Muslim Sufi writings; and well versed in the Qur’an and Muslim doctrine, he wrote about Saracen (Islamic) beliefs in his Book of the Gentile (Bonner, 1985: vol. 1: 20).

During the Middle Ages, religious scholars influenced each other and often embraced shared views. Because of the philosophic strength of Islam and Judaism in the age of scholasticism, Llull used Augustinian reason and logic to understand faith in dialogue with the Saracen and Jewish philosophers. He held that if a scholar could be overwhelmly convinced of the truth of the gospel through philosophy and rational debate, then that person would convert to Christ. Ironically, Llull’s approach was at odds with his own complex conversion process, which unfolded
not through philosophical debate, but through a series of supernatural interventions and traumatic encounters with people. He held firmly to the belief, nevertheless, that divine reason had placed in God’s creation an order that people could discover by the disciplines of language, mathematics, and poetry, in addition to music, geometry, and astronomy. Since the educated wealthy aristocrats were the shapers of society, Llull was convinced that in converting these elites there would follow a mass conversion of Jews and Muslims.

Ramon Llull sought endorsement of his training facilities in various cities without success since the popes (e.g. Nicholas IV) were more interested in fighting the Saracens than saving them. It is unclear, though, what happened to the students trained in his college at Miramar, which was the only training school established in his lifetime. Political changes forced Llull to abandon the program when James II’s elder brother, Peter III of Aragon, came to the throne in 1292 (Lorenz, 1985: 20). The insufficient support of the church for Llull’s training colleges was one of his major disappointments, and the prime catalyst for his missionary trips to North Africa. His educational appeals continued, until finally, at Pope Clement V’s Council of Vienne in 1311, his proposal aroused support for academic chairs in the study of Arabic, Chaldean, and Hebrew in cities where the papal courts resided; and at the universities of Bologna, Oxford, Paris, and Salamanca. The Council’s decision, regrettably, died with the martyrdom of Llull in 1316: all for the glory of God.

Reformation Mission Education

Similar to Llull’s motivation for the glory of God, Jean Calvin and Martin Luther during the early sixteenth century played crucial roles in the spiritual reawakening of Europe driven by a passion for the church, and a desire to see the kingdom of Christ established. A key component in achieving their Reformation goals was the belief that missional education was essential for the salvation of Europe.

Calvin’s Geneva Academy

As a result, Calvin established his Academy in Geneva, Switzerland to educate pastor missionaries who upon graduation were sent to teach the Reformation message throughout Europe and abroad. The training school was an important contributor to the Reformed movement because Calvin believed that as long “as this objective [the establishment of the Academy] was not realized, no permanence was assured for the work of reform” (McNeill, 1954: 192). In 1557, Calvin entreated the city council for land and a building; and two years later, he conducted the inaugural service. With the establishment of the Academy in Geneva, “Calvin had
achieved his task: he had secured the future of Geneva making it at once a church, a school, and a fortress. It was the first stronghold of liberty in modern times” (McNeill, 1954: 196).

The aim of the Geneva Academy was to make the church educationally self-perpetuating; and as such, Calvin established a school for children run by Antoine Saunier. The Geneva city ordinances of 1541 speak of the need to raise seed for the time to come, in order not to leave the church a desert to their children, and an obligation to prepare youth for the ministry and civil government. The opening of the Academy created stability to the Reformed message that it previously did not possess. Without such an institution, the Swiss Reformation might have died with its reformers.

The school began with an enrollment of 162 students, mainly Frenchmen, and in six years, the numbers had increased by ten-fold. In the first four years, out of 160 male students, thirteen were Swiss (three from Geneva), ten Dutch, ten German, 13 Italian, and 114 French (Lewis, 1994: 49-50). For the students, “the purpose of the Academy was mainly preparation for the ministry, with law and medicine as secondary interests” (McNeill, 1954: 194). This institution trained them to understand and propagate Calvin’s teachings. The Academy divided the pupils according to their location within the four sectors of the city, and arranged the sectors into seven grades. In the style of a renaissance school, the students learned French, Latin, and Greek New Testament languages, accompanied by Virgil, Ovid, and Cicero, with rhetoric and dialectic from classical texts. In addition, the students sang Psalms in French daily for one hour at eleven in the morning (McNeill, 1954: 194).

As early as 1555, Calvin trained French immigrants at his Academy in ethics, homiletics, and theology, sending them back home as pastor missionaries (“the gatekeepers of the Kingdom”). He believed that for proper gospel proclamation, trained ministers needed to establish churches. Carl D. Stevens writes, “Calvin’s interest was not the sending of men into France to preach the gospel to anyone who might listen; rather, Calvin’s intention was to restore the church in France as a gospel-preaching institution” (1994: 201). Further, Paul E. Pierson reflects, “Calvin was more intentional [than Luther] in encouraging mission. In some areas, Calvinism became the religion of the state; in other areas, local churches were established amidst persecution. Pastors were trained in Geneva and sent as missionaries; many were martyred” (2000: 814).

An example of Pierson’s assertion of pastors trained in Geneva and sent as missionaries occurred in Brazil. The Catholic Nicolas Villegagnon (a French naval officer)—from 1555 until they returned to France three years later—persecuted French Calvinists (Huguenots) trained in Geneva who had attempted the first Protestant missionary outreach beyond Europe (Hughes, 1966: 317). Calvinists such as Guillaume Charretier, Jean de Léry, and Pierre Richer had intended to
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colonize the Island of Serigipe in the Bay of Guanabara (present-day Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). In the words of de Léry, “As much as out of an earnest desire that God had given to serve His glory, as out of curiosity to see this New World . . . for the extension of the realm of Christ into so distant a country, even into so strange a land, and among a nation that was indeed completely ignorant of the true God . . . so we were fourteen in number who left the city of Geneva to make this voyage” (History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, quoted in Whatley, 1990: 5-6).

Luther’s University of Wittenberg

In comparison to Jean Calvin’s Academy in Geneva, I will now examine Martin Luther’s educational center at the University of Wittenberg, Saxony, which will challenge Paul Pierson’s assessment of Luther’s missional intent. Kenneth Scott Latourette argues that in the newly formed Protestantism, Luther, in forsaking Catholic monasticism, lost a valuable vehicle of missionary expansion. Consequently, there was an absence of mission practice, and no replacement structure for early Protestant missions (1975: 3). Yet, I find evidence of the mission praxis of Luther in the cavalcade of students sent from the University of Wittenberg that became a committed community of lay missionaries, and the subsequent unfolding of Lutheranism in northern Europe.

The Christian Church has not always been successful at looking ahead in a dangerous world. Ernest G. Schwiebert in his work, Luther and His Times, describes the impact that Luther had on Europe radiating out from the University of Wittenberg. In 1514 Paul Lange, a Benedictine monk, traveled through central Germany looking for promising young university theologians to include in his Schriftstellerlexikon (“Who’s Who among Germany’s Teachers”). Lange did not even interview Martin Luther, a thirty-one year old Augustinian monk. Unnoticed by the academy, Luther from 1514-17 affected the faculty at the University of Wittenberg with his views on Scripture, the church, and justification by faith. The October 31, 1517 nailing of the Ninety Five Theses on the cathedral door was not an isolated act of a rebellious priest, but was the culmination of ideas forged from the faith community at Wittenberg (1950: 293). Martin Luther deeply embedded himself in the relationships of a small provincial town in Saxony-Anhalt, and we should not view him as a solitary genius. Heiko A. Oberman highlights this Saxon context in his Luther: Man Between God and the Devil: “Luther is to be regarded not so much as a lonely prophet—let alone as the Hercules of the humanists—but as a leading member of the Wittenberg team which, in keeping with the motto of the university, initiated its program in the name of St. Paul and St. Augustine” (1990: 151).

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The teaching at Wittenberg was rebellious: overturning the tables of the medieval church and transforming Christendom. Luther’s theology was the key catalyst of the change, especially his idea of justification by faith alone (MacCulloch, 2016: 1-14). Theologians preached his doctrines from an ever-increasing number of pulpits in the country. Monks and priests were leaving their religious vocation to proclaim the new reformation. Young humanists such as Philipp Melanchthon (the first systematic theologian of the Lutheran Reformation) were joining the “wild boar loose in the vineyard” at Wittenberg from all over Europe. Students at the University of Wittenberg had observed the rebel burning Leo X’s papal decrees. It was unrealistic that they would be content with only watching the uprising from the sidelines. Even though Luther disdained riots and violence, his writings and preaching accidentally unleashed a religious freedom within people that careered them towards tumult. “If there is a single thread running through the whole story of the Reformation, it is the explosive and renovative and often disintegrating effect of the Bible, put into the hands of the commonality and interpreted no longer by the well-conditioned learned, but by the faith and delusion, the common sense and uncommon nonsense, of all sorts of men” (Elton, 1964: 52). Between 1521 and 1523, rioting mobs of Wittenberg students stormed through Saxony threatening priests, destroying church altars, removing church pictures and side-altars, giving congregants both kinds of communion (bread and wine), simplifying the liturgy, and distributing the responsibility of church revenue into the hands of the laity (Chadwick, 1964: 58-59); and then Luther had to try to reign in the genie of his revolutionary ideas that had leapt out of the bottle.

Throughout these turbulent years, Luther remained committed to train young men for Christian ministry and to send them from the university in order to spread his Reformation message. Conversion of the unsaved was paramount for Luther, and he knew that education could play an important role in this goal. At Wittenberg, Luther emphasized understanding true doctrine, and at the same time took a personal interest in the students; realizing that on leaving the university, they would face hostile opposition. His mentoring of the students even included finding their first ministry appointments (Coats, 1969: 603).

Between 1520 and 1560, approximately 5,000 of the 16,000 at Wittenberg’s university were from nations other than Germany, making the institution an important center for missions’ training (Bunkowske, 1985: 170). Through his teaching at the university, Luther promoted a renewed interest in the gospel, and many of his students returned to their home countries across Europe bringing the Reformation, which resulted in social transformation. This was especially true of Scandinavia, which, similar to Germany, wanted to discard papal dominance. David J. Valleskey confirms, “Luther’s teaching at the University of Wittenberg also served the purpose of missions’ work. Students came from all over Europe to study under Luther and Melanchthon. When they returned to their homes, they brought along with them the restored gospel of salvation” (1995: 100).
The transforming effect of the Wittenberg students in northern Europe was considerable, and played a major role in the unfurling of Lutheranism. The Wittenberg influence in Denmark, for example, came through students and faculty such as John Bugenhagen, Andreas Carlstadt, Peder Palladius, Martin Reinhart, Hermann Tast, Hans Tausen, Eberhard Weidensee, John Wendt, and Wolfgang von Utenhof. In Finland, the reformer Mikael Agricola had studied at Wittenberg under Luther and Philipp Melanchthon. Moreover, in Sweden, Laurentius Andreae, Georg Norman, the brothers Olaus and Laurentius Petri, and Nicholas Stecker had attended Wittenberg, and on returning home, proclaimed and secured the Reformation message and methods. These reforming student-missionaries reinforce the notion that Luther’s mission theology at Wittenberg was practically effective (Gallagher, 2005: 131-32; cf. Peters, 1970: 40-46).

Pietist Mission Education

The Pietist movement of seventeenth-century Germany continued the tradition of missional educational institutions such as those founded by the Church of the East, Celtic Christianity, the Franciscans, and early Calvinism and Lutheranism. Pietism emphasized the practice of Christianity from a subjective and emotional perspective in contrast to the rational and intellectual manner of German Lutheranism. Pietists desired to transform society by improving the living conditions of the poor, reforming the prison system, abolishing slavery, reducing class distinctions, reforming education, increasing mission activity, and fostering programs for social justice. Philipp Jakob Spener, a leading reformer in this movement, influenced the formation of the University of Halle in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany in 1694, which became a formative location of Pietist missionary and church leadership development in the next century.

August Hermann Francke was similarly involved in the beginnings of the Pietist movement in educating and sending cross-cultural workers from the University of Halle to Greenland, Iceland, India, Lapland, and beyond. Francke became a professor of Greek and Oriental languages at Halle, and the pastor of St. George church at Glaucha, a poverty-stricken suburb of Halle. Because of Francke, Halle became a center of social ministry, cross-cultural mission, and Jewish outreach. His published correspondence inspired the church in Europe and North America to be involved in mission through prayer, giving, and fieldwork (Sattler, 1982: 78). At Halle, he established a Bible Society to study and apply the word of God as he had done in Leipzig and Erfurt. Francke upheld the Bible as the only rule of faith and doctrine, and taught the application of the Scriptures. He was not without his critics since many of the professors believed that their task was to make students more learned and not more pious.
The institutions at Halle included a free elementary school, trade school, classical school that prepared people for university, royal school for the nobility, teacher’s seminary, the Oriental College of Divinity (where Eastern languages were studied for Bible translation), an orphanage, drugstore, museum and bookstore, house for widows with chaplains, and a Bible Society. The university distributed Bibles and other Christian literature, and under Francke’s influence, many students converted to Christ, and were inspired to serve God in some of the most inhospitable places on earth. With Francke’s goal of bringing Scripture to every part of the globe, he established the Canstein Bible Institute in 1712; and in one hundred years, the Institute had printed and distributed two million Bibles and one million New Testaments. He maintained a tolerant attitude towards Catholicism, Reformed denominations, and Eastern Orthodoxy, which allowed the spread of his ideas throughout continental Europe.

Until August Francke’s death in 1727, he continued to appoint student missionaries who went out from the University of Halle; held correspondence with them, published accounts of their missionary endeavors, and demonstrated particular interest in mission to the Jewish people. Halle University was the heart of Pietist mission, sending young men from its academic halls to German settlements in eastern and southeastern Europe and colonial outposts in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. In 1695, for example, the university sent teachers and students to the courts of Peter the Great in Russia where Francke cultivated friendships with several ministers in the Tsar’s government. Shaped by Franke and Halle, a parade of Pietists followed in cross-cultural ministry. I will now briefly refer to six student missionaries: Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Plütschau, the Norwegian Hans Egede, Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, Anton Wilhelm Böhme, and Christian Friedrich Schwartz.

In 1705, it was the University of Halle in partnership with Frederick IV of Denmark that sent the first Pietist missionaries, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Plütschau, to evangelize the people in Tranquebar, along the southeast coast of India. The king and his Pietist wife, Queen Louise of Mecklenburg-Güstrow, concerned for the spiritual care of their colonial subjects, commissioned Franz Julius Luetkens, a German Pietist and the Danish court chaplain, to find suitable ministers to go to southern India. Luetkens contacted August Francke at Halle in Germany who recommended Ziegenbalg and Plütschau as worthy candidates.

One year later, the two Halle University students became the first Protestant missionaries to India for the express purpose of evangelizing the indigenous people. Putting into practice the principles and teachings learned at Halle, they sought to share the Scripture with cultural sensitivity. Their message was a blend of Lutheran theology and pietistic relevance believing that the word of God was “efficacious and
powerful” for personal conversion and holiness; and their cross-cultural adventures inspired a procession of Protestant missionaries. One of the participants in the procession was the Norwegian Lutheran Hans Egede.

While studying theology at the University of Copenhagen, Egede acquired an interest in missions and connected with Pietist believers in the court of the Danish king, Frederick IV. Egede witnessed the ordination of the Halle university students Ziegenbalg and Plütschau and their departure to the Danish colonies in southern India. This event ignited his mission desires. As a result, Egede, “Greenland’s Apostle,” became a colonist and trader for the Danish monarchy in early eighteenth-century Greenland motivated by his desire to pastor the descendants of forgotten Norwegian settlers and interact with the indigenous people.

Another Lutheran Pietist influenced by Ziegenbalg and the Danish-Halle mission was Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. Pietist missionary letters from Tranquebar were read in meetings at Zinzendorf’s grandmother’s castle at Gross-Hennersdorf in Upper Lusatia in 1708. “There and then the missionary impulse arose in my soul,” reflected Zinzendorf (Hutton, 1895: 179). From ten to sixteen years of age, Francke influenced the Count as he attended the Royal Paedagogium at Halle University. It was in Francke’s home that the Halle student met Ziegenbalg and Plütschau, which “increased my [his] zeal for the cause of the Lord in a powerful manner” (Gallagher, 2008a: 238-39). It was during this time that Zinzendorf, with four of his friends, formed a small group known as the Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed at Halle University, which focused on prayer and the cause of Christ. With one of his university friends, Count Frederick von Watteville, Zinzendorf vowed to “do all in our power for the conversion of the heathen, especially for those for whom no one cared, and by means of men whom God, we believed, would provide” (Hutton, 1922: 7). The Halle Pietists shaped the young Count’s theological views. They emphasized the heartfelt religious devotion of the individual, belief in the Bible as the Christian’s guide to life, and a complete commitment to Christ that would manifest itself in ethical purity and charitable activity. In doing so, they stressed the importance of experiencing God.

Count von Zinzendorf in 1722 founded the Moravian missionary movement at Herrnhut, near Dresden in Saxony. He offered a part of his estate as a refuge for a group of persecuted believers from Bohemia and Moravia. From these Brethren came the first organized Protestant mission. By 1760, the year Zinzendorf died, the Moravians had sent 226 missionaries to ten different countries. Mission stations had been established in Danish St. Thomas, in the West Indies (1732); Greenland (1733); Georgia, North America (1734); Lapland (1735); Surinam, or Dutch Guiana, on the north coast of South America (1735); Cape Town, South Africa (1737); Elmina, Dutch headquarters in the Gold Coast (1737); Demarara (present-day Guyana), South America (1738); and the British colonial islands of Jamaica (1754), and Antigua (1756). In 1760, there were forty nine men and
seventeen women serving in thirteen stations around the world ministering to over six thousand people (Hutton, 1922: 55, 58; Latourette, 1975: 893, 897, 951, 956; Neill, 1986: 201-202; Tucker, 2004: 99-105). Even so, the greatest of the Moravian’s contributions, was to awaken Protestantism to its responsibilities for cross-cultural ministry. Over the years, for example, the Moravian influence extended to the lives of eighteenth-century leaders such as John and Charles Wesley, and William Carey (Gallagher, 2008b: 185-86).

Other Halle University influences include the following. Anton Wilhelm Böhme, a Halle graduate, in 1710 became the Lutheran chaplain at St. James’ Palace, London in the courts of Queen Anne of England and her husband, the Danish Prince George. Böhme translated many Pietist devotional tracts into English, including Ziegenbalg’s annual letters reporting on the Danish Tranquebar mission called *Propagation of the Gospel in the East*; and distributed the publication to Pietist communities in Germany, Denmark, and England (Zorn, 1933: 101, 103). This compilation of letters reached the courts of Denmark and England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and John and Charles Wesley, to name a few, and served as a catalyst to encourage financial giving and sending to the mission field. In addition, Böhme suggested to the Anglican Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge that they should send a printer and printing press to India for the service of the Danish mission to translate the Scriptures into the languages of southern India. Ziegenbalg, a German Lutheran in the service of a Danish monarch, eventually translated the New Testament into Tamil, and had it printed on an English press; funded by an Anglican mission society. Francke also used the Tranquebar Mission to promote missions and raise support. For instance, he published letters from his Halle missionaries in Germany and England that generated interest and financial assistance, especially among the nobility and royalty (Stoeffler, 1973: 34-35).

In 1713, Francke began sending Bibles, hymnals, and scriptural tracts, in addition to money, to Swedish prisoners of the Great Northern War (1700-21) in Siberia. In succession, Pietism established itself among the prisoners, and upon returning to their homeland, they formed schools modeled after Halle, including the Copenhagen Royal College of Missions of 1715, which became a significant Protestant missionary training center (Brown, 1978: 155). Further, there was a lack of trained pastors in the Lutheran churches of the American colonies in the eighteenth century, and Halle supplied the need. Justus Falckner, for example, studied theology under Francke in 1693, and ten years later began pastoring German and Swedish Lutheran immigrants in Philadelphia, New Jersey, and New York for twenty years (Stoeffler, 1976: 14-15).

The final Pietist Lutheran missionary I would like to review is Christian Friedrich Schwartz who inspired by the writings of August Francke and the pioneering work of Ziegenbalg and Plütschau began his studies at the University
of Halle in 1746. It was at Halle—as he grew in his understanding of Pietism under the guidance of Benjamin Schultz who had been a missionary in southern India—that Schwartz dedicated himself to serving Christ in that part of the world (Frykenberg, 1999: 130). Even before Schwartz left for India, he had learned Greek, Latin, and Hebrew through his secondary education; and at Halle University under Schultz, he had studied English and Tamil. He arrived in southern India in 1750, and began his missionary career as a chaplain in the English garrison. Less than four months after his arrival he had preached his first sermon in Tamil on Matthew 11:25-30. For over forty eight years, he witnessed to non-Christians, discipled new believers as he studied languages and committed himself to the physical needs of the people, trained indigenous pastors, and served in various diplomatic roles. With Schwartz’s unique ability to forge friendships with Muslims, Hindus, and English settlers and soldiers alike, the Halle alumni sought to transform society one person at a time, as did Francke his predecessor (Genischen, 1998: 606).

Implications

Following my exploration, I believe that we should study historic models of teaching mission to glean insights in order to incorporate Majority World Christianity in our teaching; and then ask the question: how do the cultural contexts and theological traditions of the historic movements examined affect our teaching and learning in North America?

Mission schools such as those of the Pietists at the University of Halle, the early Reformers, and the Church of the East, together with the monasteries of Celtic Christianity and the Franciscans were influential in the expansion of Christianity throughout Europe, and around the world. In this paper, I reviewed the training strategies of these early mission movements to provide insight into effective methods of contemporary mission teaching and learning. A number of patterns emerged across the five historic case studies.

First, the renewal movements that affected global missions had educational centers. That is, they provided resources to train their cross-cultural workers, and did not withhold the energy and effort involved to do so. All of the movements believed that furthering education was vital to their effectiveness and sustainability. In today’s milieu of financial stress for both mission candidates, agencies, and denominations, often preparation is the first issue deleted. The current inertia towards missional education is not because of a lack of opportunity. There are over seventy graduate programs in missiology in the United States alone, and others available in another thirty countries, compared to one graduate program in 1965 facilitated by Donald A. McGavran and Alan R. Tippett at Fuller Theological...
Seminary in Pasadena, California. Moreover, with advances in technology, field workers can conveniently study missions through online and hybrid delivery systems anywhere around the globe.

Yet, crippling undergraduate loan debt, a pragmatic millennial ethos, overcapitalization of short-term missions, and a continuing financial recession has hampered suitable preparation of cross-cultural workers. A few years ago, mission agencies considered it appropriate to train their candidates for nine months or more before allocating their intercultural assignments. Because of changes in western culture, people are more resistant to allotting time and money towards preparation; and coupled with advances in technology whereby instructors conduct assignments via the internet, many mission organizations have gradually reduced their training periods from six to four months and then from three to two weeks; most of which concerns organizational branding, security training, and human resource information such as health insurance, financial reports, and payroll. There is no time for foundational teaching such as biblical theology of mission, the history of mission, contextualization, intercultural communication, or world religions.

Second, in many of the training schools, faculty trained students holistically—teachers expected students to excel not only academically, but also in character, discipline, and spirituality. As representatives and reconcilers of Christ, character and spiritual formation matter. The Church of the East school at Nisbis, for example, had students follow strict rules of spiritual discipline and oaths of celibacy. In Celtic monastic communities, the life of the monks revolved around their missional education, as they spent each day in prayer, work, worship, and study. Other teaching schools such as the University of Halle encouraged care of the poor and needy as well as academics. The schools connected this pattern of holistic training to the belief that a missionary’s work required faith and servanthood; submitted to the Lord’s will. Before committed communities sent their cross-cultural workers, they had opportunity to grow in character, ethics, discipline, and perseverance, together with experiencing a renovation of the soul as they sought the Lord Jesus in prayer and worship while practicing an ascetic lifestyle.

Third, the academic focus of the training schools explored was on theology and languages. Celtic monasteries educated students in reading and writing Latin; Calvin’s Reformed Academy at Geneva taught students French, Latin, and Greek New Testament languages, as did Luther’s University of Wittenberg; Llull’s Franciscan curriculum included theology and Oriental languages; and Pietist Francke also taught theology, Greek, and Oriental languages. These courses prepared students to minister cross-culturally with their language skills, and educated them in Christian theology to communicate to non-Christians the relevancy of the gospel of Jesus. Throughout the history of missions, the cross-cultural workers—whether Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox—who were successful in contextualizing the
gospel across cultural and ethnic barriers always spent extensive time in biblical studies, and learning the language and customs of the people before embarking on their mission.

Lastly, the purpose of the educational institutions was to raise up leaders and missionaries, who would not only evangelize, but disciple new Christians. The preparation in missions was cyclical, with cross-cultural ministries raising up indigenous leaders, so that as many people as possible would change their allegiance to Christ. Church of the East and Celtic Christianity infected the national leaders of Asia and Europe with the gospel of Jesus. The leaders in turn, affected their people towards adherence to Christianity. During the Reformation, Calvin intended the formation of the Geneva Academy to make the church self-perpetuating. Thus, Calvin sent his workers with the Reformed message to start churches across Europe, especially in the Netherlands and France. Likewise, Luther intentionally branded his Wittenberg students with his Reformation ideas who upon returning home to places such as Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, influenced the national king and church to break from Catholicism and embrace Lutheranism. Mentoring of younger leaders, both men and women, and providing opportunities for them to exercise their God-given gifts, is imperative for the survival and flourishing of the Christian faith.

Conclusion

In this essay, I reviewed historic cases of mission training to guide today’s church towards God’s future for missions’ education. For followers of Christ to spread the gospel effectively, they should contextualize the message of Christ in a way that allows the hearers to receive the Good News with understanding. This is especially important in today’s age of world Christianity. Instructors of mission today, therefore, need to recognize the global context of Christian education by incorporating educational goals and using effective andragogical strategies similar to the historic precedents investigated. I discovered that the historic preparation of missionaries took time and effort, and included holistic development of character and spiritual formation, alongside rigorous academics, especially in theology and languages. As we move forward into the twenty first century of teaching Christian mission, we should learn from these past educational institutions, and adapt their effective methods of cross-cultural training to our mission context.
Bonner, Anthony  

Brown, Dale W.  

Bunkowske, Eugene W.  

Chadwick, Owen.  

Charlesworth, J. H., ed. & trans.  

Clark, J. M.  

Coates, Thomas.  

Cochrane, Steve.  

Elton, Geoffrey R.  

Frykenberg, Robert E.  
Gallagher, Robert L.

Gallagher, Robert L.

Gallagher, Robert L.

Genischen, H. W.

Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe.

Hutton, J. E.

Hutton, J. E.

Jenkins, Philip.

Klijn, A.F.J.

Latourette, Kenneth Scott.
Lewis, Gillian.

Lewis, Paul W.

Llull, Ramon.

Llull, Ramon.

Lorenz, Erika, ed. & trans.

MacCulloch, Diarmaid.

Mackensen, H.

McNeill, John T.

McNeill, John T.

Moffett, Samuel Hugh.
Moffett, Samuel Hugh.  

Neill, Stephen.  

Oberman, Heiko A.  

Peers, E. Allison.  

Peters, Paul.  

Philip, T. V.  

Pierson, Paul E.  

Ryan, John.  

Sattler, Gary R.  

Schwiebert, Ernest G.  

Stevens, Carl D.  

Stewart, John.  

Stoeffler, F. Ernest.  
Stoeffler, F. Ernest.

Tucker, Ruth A.

Valleskey, David J.

Whatley, Janet.

Winkler, Dietmar W.

Zimmer, H.

Zorn, H. M.

Zwemer, Samuel M.