

A RESPONSE TO K. STEVE MCCORMICK'S ECCLESIOLOGY

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It is an honor and privilege to respond to Dr. Steve McCormick's paper in this Global Theology Conference, the Church of the Nazarene. Actually, as I read the paper, I have to confess that I am a limited person to do an appropriate response to the paper. Rather I have found and learned new and important ideas about understanding and basis for expansion of the Church.

If good merchandises are not sold well, it is not the problem of the products but the salesman. The bible is God's story, which is the greater story than any other stories. If the God's story is not taken well by the people, then it is not the problem of the Bible but the storyteller.

We need better storytellers of the church than ever in this global epoch for effective expansion of the Church. In Dr. Steve McCormick's thoughtful and promising paper, I find encouraging and stimulating ideas for this task of the Church.

Taking the *missio dei* as the fundamental mandate for the church from God is a meritorious way to get into effectively carrying out the task of the Church. The emphasis of *missio dei* is meaningful, because the *missio dei* is dynamic and active than structural identification of the Church, such as the marks of unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. The dynamic and active aspect would provide a stronger basis for positive engagement in the missional activities.

The trinitarian elaboration for mission of the church seems to be new and advanced trinitarian ecclesiology. The Church of the Nazarene has a tendency to focus more on the trinitarian soteriology in relation to understanding and interpretation of the sanctification than other theological areas. I think Dr. McCormick's elaboration of the trinitarian ecclesiology deserve to be regarded as a valuable and innovative contribution to Wesleyan ecclesiology.

As I read his paper, one thing I would like to raise a question is that "isn't the *missio dei* public discourse?" *Mission dei* is public engagement of God into the world. *Missio dei* is not a monologue within the church but public discourse going beyond the Church.

The incarnational church is public discourse of Christ with the world. The pentecostal church is public engagement of the Holy Spirit into the world. "A new epiphany of God in history" at the pentecost is public event, that people could have a chance for fellowship with God. The *koinonia* of the triune love is communal activity. *Missio Dei* is public discourse of the divine character, love of christ, and spiritual holiness.

Practical *Messio Dei* is a public narration of God's story in the world. The Church is a Divine institution to search for the lost outside the Church. The Church's public engagement is not a choice but the ontological reality itself mandated from God.

If we maintain the Church as a greenhouse nurturing and raising those green plants and

doing monologue within the limited conditions, the church would not be strong enough to grow in the wild nature. It may not do the meaningful narrative to the public to reach out the lost. The world is getting more secular, complex, and wilder than ever. We need a tough and courageous spiritual endeavor to carry out the practical *missio dei* of the Church in this wild culture.

Stanley Hauerwas claimed "The Church does not have a social ethic; the church is a social ethic." John Milbank said "The church does not have a social theory; it is a social theory."¹ I think these people are talking like Wesleyan who believe social ministry of the Church. Public ethics could be important, but more urgent need seems to be public discourse with the world culture and other disciplines.

James K. Smith said "The church does not have an apologetic; it is an apologetic."² What this response can say is "The church does not have a mission; it is a mission of God," that is actually Dr. McCormick's thesis. I agree with him that the *missio dei* is not functional but ontological reality of the Church. Apologetic and *missio dei* are public discourses.

Church of the Nazarene has the unity in the identity of Wesleyan theological tradition and at the same time has the diversity in conversations with other cultures and disciplines for reaching out the lost. Three modes of the triune God have exercised the epiphany of God in each historical context for an effective public engagement. At this point, I wonder if I submit an idea of "conversational narrative-mission of the Church" as an effective *missio dei* and public storyteller of the Bible.

¹ James K. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 233

² Smith, 181